

Living in our Shoes – Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces Families – Government Response

Introduction

This is the Government's formal response to the recommendations made by Andrew Selous MP in his independent report, 'Living in our Shoes – Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families', published on 30 June 2020.

The Government welcomes the findings and recommendations in this report. The response has been formulated in consultation with the Welsh and Scottish Governments¹ and other government departments and will provide a baseline from which to improve support for Service families through to 2030.

Commissioned by Defence in January 2019, the scope of the inquiry was to seek to understand the impact of the current and likely future support structures and needs of Service families and assess if the Government is equipped to respond to their needs.

The report was initially published on 30 June 2020. Publication of the response has been delayed in recognition that the Governments of the UK and partners in the charitable sector have been focused on responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. The delay has allowed comprehensive consultation to take place, ensuring a fully informed response. The report was presented to the Secretary of State for Defence on 12 January 2021 via a webinar event hosted by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT).

In the report, the review team notes that key themes emerged about the challenges experienced by military families today which are regarded as detrimental to modern day family life and relationships. These refer to: Service Family Accommodation (SFA); mobility; deployment; the impact of Service life on military children and young people; the employment and careers of

¹ Consultation with the Northern Ireland Executive will take place in due course.

spouse/partners; the health and well-being of Serving personnel and family members; and the impact of Service life on personal relationships.

The report makes 110 recommendations, focusing on the current lived experiences of Serving personnel and their families and uses quotes from them to bring personal reflections throughout. The Summary report provides an overview of the issues raised and is designed to be the key reference document for those taking forward the recommendations.

Since the June 2020 publication, the MOD has strengthened governance on activity to support Service families by creating a cross-sector Steering Group with representation from the Devolved Administrations, other key government departments and the charitable sector. This forum has oversight of the development of the refreshed UK Armed Forces Families Strategy. Alongside other research, the 'Living in Our Shoes' Report will inform the development of the Strategy, which will be published by the end of 2021. The Strategy will be underpinned by a two-year rolling Action Plan setting out the timetable for delivering specific, measurable and improved support for families. The Steering Group will submit a six-monthly update to the Defence Secretary reporting on progress in delivering the Action Plan.

The Defence Secretary would like to put on record his thanks to Andrew Selous MP and his research team of Professor Janet Walker and Dr Gabriela Misca for their professionalism, time and commitment in delivering this comprehensive report.

The response to the 110 recommendations is set out below. Chapter 1 'Supporting Military Families' and Chapter 2 'Changes in Family Life' set the context for remainder of the report and do not include any specific recommendations.

Chapter 3 A Place to call Home: Increasing Choice		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
1	<p>The Ministry of Defence to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there is continued and urgent significant investment in poor quality SFA that is intended for occupation • remedial maintenance and high quality repairs are carried out swiftly and efficiently, and continued preventative maintenances is ongoing • the Amey call centre is better equipped to respond to calls from Service families and that staff understand the challenges of military life. 	Accepted
Response	The Ministry of Defence (MOD) acknowledges that investment in accommodation should be a priority and this was underlined by the announcement on 17 July 2020 that an additional c£200M fiscal stimulus funding is to be invested in FY 2020/21 and 2021/22; £122M of this will be invested in upgrades to Service Family Accommodation (SFA).	

	<p>Only SFA that meet the Government Decent Homes Standard are allocated to Service families. Additional urgent investment in SFA has been recommended as part of the Department's Integrated and Spending Reviews and also within a fiscal stimulus proposal.</p> <p>Within the constraints of the current National Housing Prime contract, MOD will continue to hold Amey to account for the delivery of a timely and effective response maintenance service. In parallel, delivery will incentivise suppliers to shift from a fix-on-fail approach to a preventative maintenance philosophy.</p> <p>The Amey Customer Service Centre for Defence is ServiceMark accredited by the Institute of Customer Service and its 'guiding principles' behavioural framework was designed in collaboration with Service personnel. The Centre receives very positive feedback from military stakeholders which increases the understanding of HelpDesk staff of the challenges faced by military families.</p>	
2	<p>The Ministry of Defence to remove the four year rule and the distinction between eligibility and entitlement to SFA for couples in long-term partnerships, and render SFA accessible with the same requirements as for couples who are married or in a civil partnership, including in the FAM pilot areas.</p>	
Response	<p>Cohabitation Policy was introduced with effect from 1 April 2019 for those Service personnel with more than four years' Service who can meet the criteria to show they are in a Long-Term Relationship (LTR) which has endured for more than 365 days. This enabled Service personnel to access surplus Service Family Accommodation (SFA). As at January 2021 there have been 4,233 applications to cohabit and of these, over 1,900 have been approved. The applications that were declined were, in the main part, because the Service person had not served for the required four years. Since 1 February 2020 that requirement has been removed. Another reason is that surplus SFA was not available in the requested location at the time the application was made.</p> <p>The Cohabitation Policy and the evidence requirements placed on Service personnel in LTR continues to be refined to ensure it is as fair and inclusive as possible.</p> <p>The definition of LTR and the evidence needed to support it has been developed through comparison with Other Government Departments' expectations and the legal requirements for showing an established relationship. The criteria used by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) are in some respects less stringent than those required by some other organisations, such as UK Immigration and the Australian Defence Force, as we do not require couples to have previously cohabited for a set time before applying to cohabit in SFA.</p> <p>The policy relating to LTR is reviewed periodically. For example, three months after its introduction, the policy was amended to ensure that those in a LTR who already had children were not disadvantaged.</p>	Accepted

	The MOD is considering other ways in which couples can provide evidence of LTR, including through social media posts, statements from individuals' Commanding Officers, and wedding venue invoices.	
3	The Ministry of Defence to provide every family with the fullest information possible about the houses available so that more informed choices can be made regarding facilities and location, and ensure that non-serving partners are fully aware of the process which enables them to apply for housing.	
Response	The Future Defence Infrastructure Service housing contracts that will replace the National Housing Prime contract in November 2021 will require suppliers to provide comprehensive details of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties (including photos, video, floorplan, street view etc) to allow Service families to make informed decisions about their next home. Details of how to apply for SFA, together with wider details of the new accommodation delivery model, will be made available via the Internet as well as Ministry of Defence websites, to facilitate access for non-serving partners.	Accepted
4	The Ministry of Defence to review the rule about time-limited payment of removal expenses in order to fully support children's educational needs and spousal/partner employment options.	
Response	The Ministry of Defence (MOD) acknowledges that stability and the needs of the whole Service community are enablers of retention and the Department continues to review existing policy initiatives and related allowances to support stability and explore wider opportunities. Policy already allows for publicly funded moves to be supported more than three months from the date of assignment, where a child's schooling is involved (e.g. to complete an academic term/ year/ key stage exam). For those living in Service Family Accommodation (SFA), approval to retain the property can be sought through the Occupancy Service Centre and funding for a deferred move aligned with the date of retention. For those moving from a privately owned or rented home, the Commanding Officer can authorise a move up to six months from the assignment date and, beyond this, approval can be sought through the Pay and Allowances Casework and Complaints Cell. In all cases a move can only be authorised if the Service person has at least six months to serve at the new duty station.	Accepted
5	The Ministry of Defence to review the current 'improvements' policy to promote greater pride in Service Family Accommodation, and update the information to make it clear that families are allowed to undertake approved improvements to their home.	
Response	Any DIY task carried out by Service families is notifiable as an Encroachment under the Standard Operating Procedure Encroachments, Service Family Accommodation (SFA). The encroachment process currently in	Accepted

	<p>place allows the Service person, on application, to carry out certain work, following an assessment of the task and its implications within UK Legislative requirements and MOD mandated requirements.</p> <p>Under previous arrangements, if agreed, SFA occupants were required to return their property to its original condition prior to moving out. However, MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation has responded to the recommendation by modifying its guidance to allow greater judgement and discretion to be exercised in allowing approved home improvements and modifications to remain in place when an occupant moves out, encouraging the Service family to take some pride in their home.</p>	
6	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reconsider the three month rule on a case-by-case basis when families split up and ensure every possible assistance is given to the non-serving partner to access accommodation for themselves and their children in a timely manner • ensure appropriate family accommodation and contact facilities are readily available on every military base for separated/divorced Serving personnel who live in SLA to execute shared parental responsibility. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has processes in place to manage the transfer of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) sensitively and in consultation with the Chain of Command (CoC), should a marriage or civil partnership break down. It is already possible for SFA to be retained for longer than 93 days in certain circumstances, for example to support key schooling periods. The Department keeps these provisions under constant review to support Service personnel and their families during such stressful times.</p> <p>The MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) Loss of Entitlement Team works closely with local authorities and Service charities to support non-serving partners in moving to alternative accommodation once their entitlement or eligibility to SFA ceases. To support the serving partner, DIO is always sympathetic to requests from the Chain of Command for appropriation of SFA as 'Contact Homes' to allow parental responsibilities to continue. Nearly 200 properties across the UK have already been provided for this purpose.</p> <p>Proportionality exercises are undertaken to ensure families are supported as much as possible. However, failure to enforce a Notice to Quit can lead to loss of local authority housing. Claims are considered on a case by case basis though further work is required to understand the impact on SFA in extending the time frame, acknowledging it would remove some of the anxiety felt by families in this position.</p>	Accepted

7	<p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to facilitate speedy eligibility for and access to social housing via local authorities for partners of Serving personnel who have no accommodation to go to and no local connection when they leave SFA following separation and/or divorce.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government published new statutory guidance in June 2020 to improve access to social housing for members of the Armed Forces, veterans and their families which delivers on this recommendation. Amongst other things, the guidance makes clear that local authorities are expected to disapply any local connection requirement from divorced or separated spouses or civil partners of Service personnel who are required to move out of accommodation provided by MOD. The guidance, published in June 2020, encourages local authorities to engage with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation Loss of Entitlement Team to ensure the best outcome for Service families when seeking social housing provision. In addition, further work will be carried out to consider how the Homelessness Code of Guidance could address issues relating to the status of spouses or civil partners residing in Service Family Accommodation in the event of a relationship breakdown.</p>	Accepted
8	<p>The Ministry of Defence to review the complaints process to render it more responsive, transparent and better able to resolve disputes quickly and effectively via a web-based complaint system.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence is focused on delivering a robust and fair complaints process. The last review imposed clear timelines for Stages 2 and 3 and concluded that the “Special to Type” complaints process was successful in resolving a large number of housing complaints quickly and at the lowest possible level. The Department is committed to regular reviews of this process to ensure the policy is aligned with best practice and delivers an efficient and effective service.</p> <p>In line with customer wishes, it is now possible to raise a Stage 1 complaint via text message, Facebook Messenger, Twitter Messenger, Webchat, and telephone. This approach ensures that Service families can confidently raise a Stage 1 complaint should the service provided fall short of their expectations, and that their issue will be dealt with appropriately.</p>	Accepted
9	<p>The Ministry of Defence to allow families to organise for urgent repairs (for example, when ovens have broken or heating systems have failed) to be undertaken by approved local contractors if Amey fails to respond quickly and appropriately.</p>	Not Accepted
Response		

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) understands the frustrations and stress that can arise with delays to urgent home repairs and is committed to addressing this by monitoring performance against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the National Housing Prime Contract (NHP).

The MOD's Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) is responsible for ensuring that properties remain compliant with Health and Safety requirements such as Gas and Electrical safety. All NHP supply chain partners are certified competent in their respective trades. All personnel are security cleared and networked into a system that provides full oversight of maintenance tasks, response times, quality of workmanship, and provenance of the supply chain.

The main difficulty in allowing occupants to engage local contractors direct to conduct repairs is ensuring that any works are carried out safely and do not contravene statutory or MOD standards and requirements, set out in policy. The MOD would not be able to assure the relevant Health and Safety legislation is adhered to if responsibility for arranging repair works was to be delegated to individual occupants. As the Department has a duty of care to both current and future occupants, this would expose it to legal risk.

The Department would need to maintain a complete, national network of pre-approved local contractors across multiple trades, parallel to the contractor's network. The MOD would have responsibility and liability for their competence, quality of work and suitability (e.g. security clearances) to operate on the Defence Estate. This position is different under law from that of a domestic client engaging a contractor. This network would have to be managed by DIO and would require substantial additional resource to vet potential contractors; agree appropriate terms of business, including liability for faulty works, damage or injury; make arrangements for call-out and payment; and assure the maintenance of appropriate standards. Establishing and maintaining such a network would be a very considerable undertaking. This is the principal reason why the Department has historically chosen to award large-scale contracts for its facilities management services rather than maintain an in-house capability to manage multiple local supply chains. Moreover, many contractors may not be willing to engage on standard MOD commercial terms if not guaranteed significant work.

Amey's contract will expire in November 2021, to be replaced by new contracts through the Future Defence Infrastructure Services Programme. The new contracts will provide a more robust performance management framework and will incentivise the contractors to exceed, rather than simply meet, the minimum contracted standard. Any requirement to establish a network of approved local contractors would very substantially detract from DIO's ability to prepare for the introduction of the new contracts which – if implemented effectively – should bring about a substantial improvement in the lived experience of SFA occupants.

10	<p>The Ministry of Defence to allow families to retain Service Family Accommodation to enable non-serving partners to manage their work commitments and protect their career; and/or children to complete the school year, whenever possible.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence welcomes the recognition in the report that military life is essentially mobile and the link made between stability and retention. Recent policy changes support this, with the three-year extension to the Forces Help to Buy Pilot (FHTB) and the launch of the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) pilot, which gives Service personnel and their families greater choice over where and with whom to live, to support stability.</p> <p>Provision already exists in policy to allow continuity of education for Service children who are reaching critical examination periods, including retention of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) for up to three years to allow participation in public examinations when it is not possible for the child to transfer schools.</p> <p>The Department acknowledges that stability and the needs of the whole Service community are enablers of retention. Since April 2019 Service Leavers have been able to apply to remain in SFA for a year, as they and their family transition to civilian life. Policies are regularly reviewed to support stability and explore wider opportunities.</p>	Accepted
11	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that families continue to have choices in accommodation, and that future options take account of the outcomes, both positive and negative, from the three FAM pilots • continue to maintain sufficient SFA stock at an acceptable standard and reduce the amount of SFA only if it is surplus to current and predicted requirements. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Future Accommodation Model (FAM) will more flexibly accommodate a Service population with evolving and diversifying housing needs and preferences. Through use of the private rental sector, support for home ownership and existing subsidised Defence accommodation, personnel will have greater choice of where, how and with whom they wish to live. The MOD has rolled out a communications package for Service personnel and their families, the Service Families Federations, HIVE information services and to Chains of Command, informing Service personnel of the development of FAM and emphasising the choice aspects. Under the pilot, evidence is being collected to evaluate and evolve the policy and to ensure accommodation choice remains available, wherever possible.</p> <p>For Service personnel moving to bases being piloted under FAM, the Department believes (based upon our modelling and assumptions) there will be sufficient choice, for either living in private sector rented</p>	Accepted

	<p>accommodation or Service Family Accommodation (SFA). No SFA will be sold during the pilot period, as a result of the FAM Pilot. SFA requirements will continue to be reviewed in line with ongoing demand in order to determine business requirements.</p>	
<p>12</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reconsider the expectation that families are required to move SFA on assignment • promote geographical clustering of military bases where operationally possible • retain sufficient SFA to enable families to remain in the same SFA while the Serving partner commutes between different military establishments in the same area, if they wish to do so. 	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) welcomes the acknowledgement in the Report that military life is essentially mobile.</p> <p>The Forces Help To Buy (FHTB) and Future Accommodation Model (FAM) policies support Service personnel who want more stability for their families, with FHTB payments made to around 23,200 applicants since the scheme began in 2014.</p> <p>The Department continues to evaluate and draw lessons from these pilots as they develop to support Service personnel and their families.</p> <p>The Defence Estate Optimisation Programme Team is focused on ensuring that the Service Family Accommodation (SFA) estate can support, to the greatest extent possible, the geographical clustering of military bases.</p> <p>As indicated, the Department is committed to reducing the number of void properties to the required management margin of 10% by autumn 2021; this level of vacant properties is considered as sufficient to meet any policy-compliant requests from Service families for the retention of their current SFA.</p> <p>Retention of SFA to enable commuting between more than one military base is already being looked at by the Royal Navy with a view to base-porting Submariners (Scotland), Royal Marines (Plymouth), Aviation (Yeovilton or Culdrose) and Fleet (Portsmouth). This work is in its infancy but is being considered. This will bring much greater stability for Service personnel and their families but there will likely be investment required to ensure enough SFA is available.</p> <p>The MOD recognises that children who are reaching critical examination periods may need to continue to attend a particular school. In these circumstances, SFA or substitute SFA can be retained for up to four months (e.g. one academic term). If it is not possible for a child to transfer to another school within three years of the time when public exams will be taken because of things such as the availability of a school in the new location; differences in exam syllabus; or the requirements of continuous assessment work, it is possible for families to retain their SFA up to the time when the relevant exams are taken.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

	<p>In cases where a child who has Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND) in England, Additional Support Needs (ASN) in Scotland and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) in Wales is undergoing statutory assessment at their current school, SFA may be retained for two academic terms or until the end of the academic year.</p> <p>When a Service person is assigned at short notice to a new location it can have an impact on their partners if they are undertaking adult education or training to improve their skills for employment or they need to give a particular period of notice to their employer. In these circumstances, a case can be made to the Unit HR office for the SFA/Substitute SFA to be retained for the length of time that the education or training takes to complete (in the expectation that it would have been completed in the period of the Service person's original assignment had it not been changed) or for the time necessary to complete a period of notice.</p> <p>Service in the Armed Forces is an inherently mobile lifestyle, often based in remote areas. For this reason, subsidised accommodation near to the Service person's place of duty is provided to help compensate for, and smooth, the challenges that mobility brings to family life. If the requirement to move regularly on assignment were to be changed, this would have a fundamental impact on the principle of providing subsidised accommodation to compensate for regular moves.</p> <p>This principle remains within FAM, simply with the private rental sector being an alternative option for the "mobile" Service person.</p>	
13	<p>The Ministry of Defence to consider whether offering additional incentives in remote areas would encourage home ownership in the future.</p>	
Response	<p>The Forces Help To Buy (FHTB) pilot is available across the UK to all first time buyers within the Armed Forces, to support the defence commitment to homeownership.</p> <p>For the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) planning, and modernisation of the accommodation offer, the MOD will be considering a range of options to help enable Service personnel and their families to benefit from the accommodation offer. More detail will be provided in future updates against the Families Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>The FAM pilot already offers incentives to Service people who are buying a home for the first time as a result of being posted to a pilot site. Key to considerations will be the evidence and feedback received from the FAM pilot.</p>	Accepted
14	<p>The Ministry of Defence to continue to improve the messaging around the Future Accommodation Model to reduce suspicion and fear of it being seen as a cost-cutting exercise, and to enable families to make fully-informed choices that are appropriate for them.</p>	Accepted

Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) has consulted widely with Service families to understand their needs and views regarding the Future Accommodation Model (FAM), and has ensured the single Services have had substantial input in designing what the FAM Pilot will look like. The Department will continue to work with each Service and the Families Federations, the Army/RAF HIVE information services and Naval Service Family and People Support organisations to ensure regular communication with Service personnel and their families about the details of FAM, and what it means for them and their loved ones.</p> <p>The focus of FAM has been on improving the offer as well as keeping it affordable for MOD. Therefore, the FAM Pilot design reflects the issues and messages that we know are important to Service personnel, including how the MOD delivers welfare and the potential impacts on unit cohesion. Messaging has emphasised improving the current accommodation offer for Service personnel, through greater choice over where and with whom they live. It is acknowledged that the system is not as efficient as it could be, and there are opportunities for savings to be made on overheads so that funding can be refocused on what Service personnel want. Equally important is the need to inform families about how to make the right FAM choice and how to access support if required, so that they can make fully-informed choices about their homes.</p>
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Chapter 4 Growing Up in the Military: The Impact of Service Life on Children and Young People		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
15	<p>The Governments of the UK to make ‘Getting It Right for Service Children’ a national education priority in all nations of the UK, and take all necessary steps to ensure that Service children, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities, are not disadvantaged by Service life.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The recommendations in this report provide welcome focus for further engagement through the inter-Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board and the Covenant Reference Group.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is continuing to work with the Department for Education (DfE) and Devolved Administrations around the supporting of the educational pathways of all Service children. At the current time, there are 16 local authorities that have signed up to the MOD Local Authority Partnership Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND²) Principles. These authorities have agreed to work towards</p>	

² The Welsh Government uses the term Additional Learning Needs and the Scottish Government refers to Additional Support Needs.

	<p>an enhanced SEND Code of Practice offer for Service families. The MOD continues efforts to expand the network.</p> <p>In addition, a group of SEND Officers from local authorities has been formed, in order to generate local authority best practice documents, monitor the implementation of the principles with MODLAP authorities and inform any subsequent refresh of the SEND Code of Practice by the DfE. A MODLAP Cymru group has been established similar to the one created for England. The membership includes local authorities, Welsh government representatives, the MOD and the Families Federations. The current focus is the new Welsh curriculum, Additional Learning Needs (ALN) and the Welsh Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.</p> <p>The Welsh Government's plan for Education for the current administration (2017-2021) is set out in Education in Wales: Our National Mission - "Our national mission is to raise standards, reduce the attainment gap and deliver an education system that is a source of national pride and confidence." A new system for supporting learners, including Service children, with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) will be implemented on a phased basis from September 2021. The ALN Code will include specific guidance relating to Service children with ALN.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has a 'Getting It Right For Every Child' model in place within the education system for several years now, which places the child and their individual needs at the heart of service delivery. This, alongside the Additional Support to Learning frameworks, provides a robust level of support for Service children.</p>	
16	<p>All three Services to ensure that their career managers have a consistent understanding of the issues facing vulnerable families, especially those with special educational needs or disabilities, and take all necessary steps to ensure that children do not have to change schools unless this is absolutely unavoidable and necessary for operational reasons.</p>	
Response	<p>Service personnel have an opportunity to provide details of welfare/family issues and these will be considered as part of the assignment process. The Career Manager will work to ensure wherever possible the Service person's needs and those of their family are considered and any negative impact minimised. Where children have Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND) requirements Service personnel are advised to register them with Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS). Service families can obtain support through CEAS when considering a retention application. There is more work to be done in emphasising the importance of sharing this information, particularly for children with complex needs. The Ministry of Defence will focus communication to Service personnel to better explain the beneficial outputs are not solely for the Career Manager, but for the benefit of the family.</p> <p>The Armed Forces has a mobile population by its nature, however, through enhanced career management there is much more ownership for the Service person and therefore the opportunity to communicate the wider family circumstances during the career management process. The HR system also provides an opportunity to place notes for the Career Manager on requirements for the Service person and their families.</p>	Accepted in part

	Digitisation of processes and informing better communication is already in train. The more informed Career Managers are, the better, and this can be achieved through improved access to digital platforms which enhances communication.	
17	The Ministry of Defence to ensure that SFA is allocated as soon as possible when a posting in England is known, to enable families to select and apply for the most appropriate school.	
Response	The Ministry of Defence understands how important it is for Service families to receive notice of their accommodation options early, to give as much time as possible to help with school admissions; housing is already allocated on this basis. The timescales for the allocation of Service Family Accommodation (SFA) are set out in policy. As part of the National Housing Prime contract, our Industry Partner is required to make a first offer of SFA within 15 days of the application being received; they consistently meet the KPI target of 95% allocation within that timeframe.	Accepted
18	The Armed Forces to minimise short-notice postings wherever possible, enabling parents to apply for school places in the normal admissions timeframe, and to develop a common agreed short-notice posting timeframe.	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) acknowledges the problems which short notice postings can cause with school admissions, especially if children are in the school year prior to normal entry points (i.e. Reception Class and Year 7 in England) and the associated national deadlines for school applications. Lack of notice can also be particularly detrimental for families who have to move if their child has Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND), especially if supported through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The MOD is working to minimise short-notice postings and is also working with Department for Education (DfE) to ensure local authorities have clearer guidance and better awareness of some of the challenges Service families face with school admissions, so that special consideration can be given where possible.</p> <p>Short notice assignments are avoided and notice periods are adhered to where possible. A minimum of 90 days' notice is required - anyone moving inside of this is required to give their personal permission to Career Managers. Future guidance on assignments during Term time may be useful, taking into account not only families with children, but single parent families who may need a longer lead time than 90 days as they would be carrying out handover, movement of family and their needs as well as taking over a new role.</p> <p>In circumstances where this is not possible, every effort is made to engage, signpost and support, including engagement with the local authority to ensure a smooth school transition.</p>	Accepted

19	<p>The Armed Forces to limit the number and frequency of relocations and facilitate extended postings to allow for more educational stability for military children.</p>	
Response	<p>The report backs up what we know about educational stability, in so far as it is seen to be a more important factor when considering postings and family relocations. Department for Education data in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Reports shows that academic progress and attainment decreases in children who move more often.</p> <p>Wherever possible the Ministry of Defence will work to deliver stability (when sought) but this is not always possible depending on the location/rank and specific circumstances of the Service person's career. The aim is to balance stability and career progression, but an appropriate posting offering progression is not always available in a location offering stability.</p> <p>The Future Accommodation Model is looking to increase choice by allowing some families to consider the merits of dispersed living either by using the private rental sector or investing in their own home.</p>	Accepted
20	<p>The Armed Forces to take account of the needs and situation of military children and the non-serving partner when posting a Serving person to another area, and ensure, wherever possible, that the assignment process aligns to a much greater extent with defined stages of education and school years.</p>	
Response	<p>Service personnel have the opportunity to highlight family considerations within HR management systems. It is important that the Department increases awareness among personnel of the importance of sharing such information, so that Career Managers can make an assessment which empowers the Service person with the knowledge of the implications for their family.</p> <p>Options for improving awareness will be considered for inclusion in the Families Strategy Action Plan, alongside options to further mitigate the impact to defined stages of education.</p>	Accepted
21	<p>The Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence to ensure that appropriate, high quality, information guides for Serving and non-serving parents and age-appropriate guides and books for children (such as that written by the Naval Families Federation) are routinely provided directly to all parents and to children and young people in all three single Services to help them understand and cope with the emotions they might feel during parental separation and deployments.</p>	
Response	<p>The Families Deployment Support Guide is available through service HIVE information services (last edition 2017). Unit Welfare Teams are also positioned to provide more direct support to families whose Service</p>	Accepted

	<p>Person is to be deployed. Further resources and support are also available to families through HIVE networks.</p> <p>The Royal Air Force (RAF) piloted this with the RAF Benevolent Fund who worked with an organisation to produce the Cloud 9 range of books (age appropriate). There was limited uptake and feedback received by families and so it was decided not to roll this out across all stations. Airplay Connect also provides an additional source of support for RAF children & young people to access.</p>	
22	<p>The Department for Education, the Devolved Governments and the Ministry of Defence to prioritise more detailed, robust research into Service children’s academic choices, attainment levels, educational outcomes and career progression, and explore the factors which might hinder educational outcomes.</p>	
Response	<p>Both government departments and the Devolved Administrations agree the need to strengthen and expand the evidence base on Service children’s experiences and outcomes in education. Stronger evidence will help ongoing development of policy on how the challenges that Service children can face in education may best be met.</p> <p>The Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance has made significant progress since its launch in 2016 in conducting research on this overlooked group of pupils and establishing an infrastructure to support further research in this area across the UK. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) part funds the SCiP Alliance and will work with the Department for Education and the Devolved Administrations to help ensure that the research activity undertaken by the Alliance is methodologically rigorous and of relevance to both policymakers and practitioners. A SCiP Alliance Hub Cymru has been established to support research and evidence into the outcomes for Service children. The Welsh Government is part of the network and the issue of research is being actively considered as part of that network.</p> <p>The MOD is committed to working with the Devolved Administrations to develop a UK-wide database which maps Service children outcomes and has commissioned a UK literature review to identify research around Service children. SCiP has completed an international equivalent.</p> <p>In Scotland, funding has been provided through the Royal Caledonian Education Trust for a literature review of all research involving Service children and young people in Scotland. National Transitions Officer (Scotland) and the MOD transitions practice work with school leaders to facilitate engagement between school leaders, to improve the quality of transitions between England and Scotland.</p> <p>The recent review into Additional Support for Learning identified several areas for improvement in how the Scottish Government addresses barriers to learning for all children and young people, and the Scottish</p>	Accepted

	Government has committed to an action plan to enhance these areas. The Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG), chaired by the Scottish Government, will also consider opportunities for research into this specific group of learners.	
23	The Department for Education to review the funding for schools where the high mobility of Service children leads to ‘funding gaps’ and a ‘funding lag’.	
Response	The Department for Education will review funding arrangements for schools that experience significant growth in pupil numbers as part of the consultation on the introduction of a “hard” national funding formula for schools. This consultation will be published in spring 2021.	Accepted
24	The Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education to continue to work urgently with Local Authorities in England to ensure a more coherent and consistent interpretation of the provisions for Armed Forces families in the School Admissions Code. (see also Recommendation 32 below)	
Response	<p>The School Admissions Code sets out the requirements on admissions authorities when allocating school places. For several years the Code has included specific provisions to benefit Service children, as well as a general requirement on admission authorities to ensure that admission arrangements in their area support the Government’s commitment to removing disadvantage for Service children.</p> <p>In June 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) launched a consultation on proposed amendments to the Code including changes designed to improve the in-year admissions process, which will benefit Service children, as they are more likely to move outside the normal admissions round. The consultation also included a proposal to amend the address requirements for Service children when applying for a school place, to better reflect the current living arrangements of these families.</p> <p>We believe these changes will have a positive impact on Service families who need to find school places for their children when moving to a new posting.</p> <p>The consultation closed in October and the response will be published in the spring of 2021. DfE will continue to work with MOD colleagues and the DfE Admissions Group (which includes MOD representation) to monitor the implementation of the new provisions and emphasise their importance across the admissions sector.</p> <p>In addition, the DfE and MOD are working on new guidance for Service families, which will explain the admissions process and give help and advice to families when navigating the school admissions system.</p>	Accepted

	<p>Armed Forces Covenant legislation, within the Armed Forces Bill that was introduced to Parliament in January 2021, will impose a duty to have due regard to the three principles of the Covenant on local authorities and, in the field of education, this will cover the admissions process. This means that local authorities will have to actively consider the principles of the Covenant when developing policy and making decisions in this area.</p>	
<p>25</p>	<p>The Department for Education and Devolved Governments to ensure that all children with a parent in the military are identifiable with a marker that enables them to be tracked throughout their education between different schools and education systems, and that their educational outcomes are reported at all Key Stages, alongside destination data.</p>	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Department for Education (DfE) has collected information from state-funded schools in England about pupils with Service child status since 2008, through the school census. The data is used actively for analytical purposes – for example, in assessing the relationship between the number of times a Service child has moved school and their attainment at the end of primary and secondary school. The Department is also committed to continuing to publish comprehensive statistics on the academic progress, attainment and post-16 and 18 destinations of Service children as a group; these are included in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report.</p> <p>The Common Transfer File 'flag' and 'Service child tab' have made it easier to track Service children as they move between schools in England. UCAS was going to enable a similar feature in 2020, but this has been postponed by 12 months. There is still a potential gap of tracking opportunities in Further Education Colleges. Comparative educational outcome data is provided by the DfE for the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report.</p> <p>The Scottish Government's view is that this data is most impactful when gathered and used locally to understand and enhance the support offered to Service children and their families. Responsibility for supporting additional support needs sits with education authorities, so they are best placed to utilise this data in evaluating their practice. Through an initiative by the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) National Transitions Officer, in partnership with SEEMiS, Scotland has a marker on schools' management information system allowing data to be collected at establishment and at local authority levels. This is not reported nationally, nor analysed centrally by the Scottish Government. There are plans for the National Transitions Officer in Scotland to build on work with each of the 32 local authorities, to further develop Scottish local authorities' use of the SEEMiS marker, extending the range of data sets available and establishing a national dataset.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to collect data on the numbers of Service children in Wales. This requires changes to regulations. The Welsh Government is looking at other changes that need to be made to bring the regulations in line with current data needs. However, work has been paused on regulations this year as a result of the lack of space in the legislative timetable following the Covid-19 pandemic. Work will resume on this as soon as it is possible.</p>	<p>Accepted in part (Scotland adopts different approach)</p>

26	The Ministry of Defence to distribute MODLAP papers and outcomes to all Local Authorities in England and strongly encourage them to engage with MODLAP.	
Response	The MOD Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) papers are distributed between the 15 LA members. Plans are in place to produce a page on GOV.UK website outlining MODLAP and sharing work from the group.	Accepted
27	<p>The Department for Education to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) is available in England throughout the child’s final two years of sixth form education • require all schools in England in receipt of the SPP to provide evidence of the pastoral care or other practical support given to Service children • make it clear that the SPP can be used to assist a child to make up lost learning in key subjects • build a more comprehensive evidence base as to the use of the SPP • promote the sharing of good practice. 	
	<p>While the Department for Education (DfE) remains committed to allocating SPP funding to primary and secondary schools, it does not feel there is sufficient evidence of need currently to warrant extending the policy to cover current and former Service children in sixth forms and further education colleges – particularly at a time when there are significant other demands on the national education budget. (It should also be noted that the disadvantage pupil premium, which was introduced at the same time as the SPP in 2011, does not extend beyond the end of Key Stage 4 either.)</p> <p>DfE is keen to ensure that all schools in receipt of SPP funding are making effective use of this resource to support their eligible pupils – and one way of achieving this is to encourage schools to be more transparent and open about how they are spending the Premium. To date, schools have not been formally required to publish information online about the amount of SPP funding they have been allocated and how it has been used. This has principally been due to concerns about individual Service children being made identifiable in those schools which only have a small number of Service children on roll. While it is important to balance the benefits of transparency with the need to minimise risk to pupils, our view is that it would be acceptable to encourage schools that have above a specified number of SPP-eligible pupils on roll to report, via the school website and on a voluntary basis, on how the SPP has been used to benefit those pupils for whom it has been allocated. The template that has been developed to help schools report on their disadvantage pupil premium spend in a structured way has been amended to include a field about the SPP, and we are</p>	Accepted in part

	<p>actively promoting this tool to schools. In the longer term there are plans to explore what more could be done to encourage schools to be more open about their use of their SPP funding allocations.</p> <p>Schools have always had freedom to use the SPP flexibly – and while the policy intention is that schools look to use it principally to address pupils’ pastoral needs (given that the academic progress and attainment of Service children is generally on a par with that of non-Service children), it is entirely legitimate for schools to use the funding to provide additional academic support to Service children in line with their individual needs. DfE will confirm this in its forthcoming guidance to schools, to be developed in partnership with the MOD Directorate for Children and Young People, on how to support Service children’s wellbeing and education effectively, and in other communications about the SPP.</p> <p>The Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance, which is part funded by MOD, continues to further develop its SPP self-review tool.</p>	
<p>28</p>	<p>The Department for Education and the Devolved Governments to encourage all Local Authorities to appoint a Service Pupils’ Champion.</p>	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Department for Education (DfE) is very supportive of this recommendation and will take forward actions to encourage those local authorities with Service pupils in state-funded schools in their locality to appoint a Service Pupils’ Champion. While DfE considers that it should be for individual local authorities to define the specific functions that the Champion would provide, reflecting local levels of need and priorities, the Department will outline what the role could involve – for example, acting as point of contact for schools on Service child-related issues; advising on effective Service Pupil Premium expenditure; and generally maintaining and increasing the profile of Service children in the local area. The Department will also appoint both a minister and a Director General as Service Pupils’ Champions, to support this policy agenda further.</p> <p>Armed Forces Covenant Champions can be a highly effective way for local authorities to organise and uphold their commitments under the Covenant. Appointing additional champions for specific issues, such as Service Pupils may also be helpful for many local authorities.</p> <p>The MOD will continue to encourage all local authorities to develop methods of delivering on their Covenant pledges, which are best suited to their local context, and will continue to share and promote best practice in local Covenant delivery. Further training and support for local authorities is being developed to complement the forthcoming introduction of new Covenant legislation.</p> <p>The equivalent of the Champions in Scotland are the Armed Forces leads nominated by each of the 32 local authorities in Scotland. These leads meet at the Armed Forces Working Group, which is facilitated by the National Transition Officer (Association Directors of Education Scotland).</p>	<p>Accepted in part</p>

	<p>Local authorities in Scotland with high numbers of Service pupils often already have similar roles to coordinate support to these children and young people. The Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group is exploring ways in which this good practice can be developed further across Scotland.</p> <p>Service Pupils Champions can only be identified in certain local authorities in England, but where this works well, approaches are being shared more widely.</p> <p>Wales has Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru and Regional Schools liaison Officers in key areas to support Service children.</p> <p>Working with 160th (Welsh) Brigade, SSCE Cymru secured funding for four new Regional School Liaison Officers to champion the needs of Service children and work with schools and local authorities / partners. These posts have developed training resources to increase awareness around Service children and this training will be offered to the sector in Wales and available to key stakeholders, local authority Armed Forces Champions.</p> <p>Armed Forces Liaison Officers in Wales work across local authorities to increase awareness of the Armed Forces Community and to champion the interests and needs of the community in Wales.</p>	
29	<p>The Department for Education and the Devolved Governments to ensure that teaching staff in all schools, including Early Years professionals, undertake training in supporting the needs of Service children.</p>	
Response	<p>The Department for Education (DfE) agrees that it is desirable for teachers in schools to have an awareness of Service children and the particular needs they can have as a consequence of Service life, however the policy position remains that it is for individual school leaders to determine their own priorities for school workforce continuing professional development, in line with local needs. The Department will, however, produce and promote comprehensive guidance for schools that sets out what they need to know in order to support their Service children effectively. This will cover key evidence on Service children and the challenges that they can face in education; information about current policies in support of this pupil group; examples of effective practice by schools in supporting Service children's wellbeing and attainment; and links to externally-produced resources that schools can utilise in developing their provision.</p> <p>In the longer term, the Department will seek opportunities to work in partnership with MOD to support the development of further high-quality continuing professional development (CPD) resources, as the evidence base on effective practice grows.</p> <p>While it is not possible to mandate 'the support of Service children' in teacher training programmes in England (although one or two teacher training establishments have done so), CPD materials for school staff are being developed by the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance for launch at their annual</p>	Not Accepted

	<p>conference. Consideration of how to promote access to these materials for schools with registered Service children will be a focus of the Families Action Plan.</p> <p>In Scotland, an independently-chaired review into the implementation of additional support for learning has identified recommendations on the need for wider understanding of inclusion and how to support children and young people with an additional support needs (including Service children). The Scottish Government would not want specific focus on needs of Service children but to be part of wider focus, on how to support all children with an additional support need.</p> <p>The National Transitions Officer and Education Scotland have collaborated on the development of a package for education professionals in Scotland, titled An Introduction to Armed Forces families for Education Professionals. The General Teaching Council for Scotland has published updated professional standards which highlight that focus is on inclusion training generally and support for the needs of individual children.</p> <p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru has launched a suite of new resources for schools and teachers to increase awareness of Service children and their potential needs. The Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs) for Service children are offering CPD Training on supporting Service children in education in Wales to all schools in Wales that have identified Service children.</p>	
30	<p>The Department for Education and the MOD to support the development of evidence-based tools, resources, and practitioner guides for all education professionals working with Service children throughout the UK. (see also Recommendation 29 above)</p>	
Response	<p>Good quality evidence-based resources are seen to be important means of ensuring educational professionals are aware of the bespoke experiences Service children may encounter on their educational journey.</p> <p>In late 2020 MOD committed to providing Grant funding over the next five years in support of the Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance, a partnership progressing many of the issues outlined in the report. SCiP has recently published the Thriving Lives Toolkit which provides schools with evidence of what works, advice on how to support Service children and guidance on self-assessment. As a founding partner, the MOD continues to support and work alongside the SCiP Alliance.</p> <p>The MOD’s Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) has been working with representatives from the Devolved Administrations to share resources and develop good practice. This project evolved from discussions around the Thriving Lives Toolkit. This group has highlighted the excellent work from key stakeholders and ensured the sharing of resources is taking place and duplication is reduced. The group</p>	Accepted

	includes members from DCYP, SCiP, Supporting Service Children in Education Cymru, Royal Caledonian Education Trust and Service Children in State Schools.	
31	<p>The Ministry of Defence to continue to work with the Welsh Government to introduce a greater degree of flexibility offered to some Service children with regards to the learning of the Welsh language as an additional language, focusing especially on those children who may already need support for English as an additional language (EAL), and take into account the nature/length of a particular posting.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) will continue to work in partnership with the Welsh Government to ensure the needs and experiences of Service families are fairly reflected in policy. MOD is working with Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru and the Welsh Government to share the concerns of some families (mostly in North Wales) about the learning of Welsh whilst attending Welsh schools. Where the Welsh language is most prevalent, options include attending an English medium school, accessing schools that offer a range of learning opportunities to immerse the child in the language and using day school allowance at a local English medium independent school.</p> <p>Considerable work has been done to support schools and families at RAF Valley. The MOD understands the challenges and concerns for parents but has seen many children successfully integrate the language into their learning or bypass this via English medium schools.</p> <p>Additional support for learning the Welsh language is available across Wales for both children and adults. Children do not have to speak Welsh to attend a Welsh language or bilingual school – they will have the best opportunity to become fluent in both Welsh and English. Schools will provide support for children learning Welsh or English as an additional language.</p> <p>Head teachers can use their discretion as to whether all children should learn Welsh. Consideration on whether or not to grant disapplication is undertaken on an individual basis and taking all factors into consideration. Any decision should be taken in discussion with the pupil, parents or guardians, and with the local authority. The school’s Governing Body should also be informed.</p> <p>SSCE Cymru provides information and resources for Service families about the Welsh language and Welsh in the curriculum. SSCE Cymru also provides information and advice and shares good practice examples to educators in Wales about supporting Service children with learning Welsh.</p>	Accepted

32	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education to continue to work together through the Admissions Working Group to revise guidelines relating to normal points of entry and in-year school admissions. (see also Recommendation 24 above)</p>	Accepted
Response	Refer to response to 24.	
33	<p>The Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence to encourage the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) to focus on investigating the needs of pupils with a parent in the military entering higher education and developing support to widen participation of this group of students.</p>	
Response	<p>This is core Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance business alongside Ministry of Defence (MOD) engagement with Office for Students. In late 2020 MOD confirmed that it would continue to part fund the core costs of the Alliance for a further five years.</p> <p>The Department for Education (DfE) is planning to hold a roundtable with Armed Forces representatives and key organisations from the higher education sector to discuss improving the rates of progress of children from military backgrounds to university.</p> <p>Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) is engaged in developing a rigorous evidence base of 'what works' in eliminating equality gaps in higher education. While funded initially by the Office for Students (OfS), the Centre is independent of Government and the OfS. The OfS has highlighted children from military families as an under-represented group in higher education and has encouraged higher education providers to better support their access and success in higher education through their access and participation plans. The Department will explore with TASO and the OfS whether there are gaps in the evidence base to understand the support needs and challenges for this group of students.</p>	Accepted
34	<p>The Department for Education to work with the Office for Students and higher education establishments to: increase guidance for students with a parent in the military on the UCAS website; place a marker on their applications and admission to higher education colleges and universities; and monitor their academic achievements and onward career choices.</p>	Accepted
Response		

	<p>The Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance, working together with Ministry of Defence, UCAS and Office for Students will continue to increase guidance for Service children, veterans and spouses on the UCAS website to support those who wish to consider Higher Education. A 'Service child indicator flag' was due to be launched in April 2020 but has been postponed due to UCAS ICT and policy issues – hopefully this will be released in April 2021.</p> <p>The Department for Education (DfE) is working closely with the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), which is independent of Government, to take forward the recommendations related to admissions to higher education. The UCAS website has already been improved to provide more information and advice for Service children and providers. UCAS has also committed to introducing a flag into the application form to allow Service children to identify their circumstances in a future cycle.</p>	
35	<p>The Department for Education to update the SEND Code of Practice in England so that it mirrors the duties placed on local authorities through the School Admission Code and requires them to allocate a place to a Service child with special educational needs ahead of the child arriving in a new area. Devolved Governments are asked to consider equivalence.</p>	
Response	<p>Department for Education (DfE) officials are in dialogue with Ministry of Defence (MOD) counterparts about how some of challenges facing Service families with school-age children with Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND) could be addressed through the review of the SEND Code of Practice that is currently taking place.</p> <p>The departments agree with the principle that Service children, including those with special educational needs, should access appropriate school places and specialist support without unnecessary delays, to help them have as much continuity of education as possible. The SEND Code of Practice already sets out the mechanisms that should be in place to enable effective and timely receipt and dispatch of all relevant records for Service children with SEND moving between schools in the UK and overseas – to enable effective planning, ideally in advance of the child’s arrival in school. A number of the issues set out in the report are about how this is being carried out in practice, and we welcome the work already being undertaken by Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) to help address these through developing principles and spreading best practice among local areas. We will consider these recommendations in further detail as part of the Department’s forthcoming consultation on updating the SEND Code of Practice.</p>	Accepted in part (Scotland takes a different approach)

	<p>In Wales a new system for supporting learners, including Service children, with additional learning needs (ALN) will be implemented on a phased basis from September 2021. The ALN Code will include specific guidance relating to Service children with ALN.</p> <p>In Scotland, should your child have additional support needs the local authority has a duty to grant your request for a place in a specified school, subject to certain circumstances that must be explained to you in writing. You can make a request for a special school (this includes independent and grant-aided as well as council special schools) or a mainstream school.</p> <p>Following the Additional Support for Learning (ASL) review, Scotland has committed to a refresh of the statutory Code of Practice for the ASL (Scotland) Act. This includes guidance on transitions and specifically references Service pupils. This will be enhanced in the Code's refresh.</p>	
36	<p>The Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence to explore how to avoid Service children's Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) lapsing as a result of accompanying their parents on deployments outside of England, to ensure a continuity of provision for Service children with EHCPs.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>See 35 above.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership Principles have been agreed by the 15 members plus one other local authority.</p>	
37	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education to encourage all local authorities in England to develop a collective approach to providing consistent support for all Service children, especially SEND children, throughout their education, by adopting the MODLAP principles, and work with the Devolved Governments to extend this collective approach throughout the UK.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>See 35 above.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is continuing to work with the Department for Education (DfE) and Devolved Administrations around the supporting of the educational pathways of all Service children. At the current time, there are 16 local authorities that have signed up to the MOD Local Authority Partnership Special Educational Needs and / or Disability (SEND) Principles. These authorities, which have the highest numbers of Service children, have agreed to work towards an enhanced SEND Code of Practice offer for Service families. In addition, a group of SEND Officers from local authorities has been formed, in order to</p>	

	<p>generate local authority best practice documents, monitor the implementation of the SEND Principles with MODLAP authorities and inform any subsequent refresh of the SEND Code of Practice by the DfE.</p> <p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru and the MOD coordinate the MODLAP Cymru meetings, where members are developing a local authority action plan based on good practice examples and SSCE Cymru knowledge and evidence in Wales. Focus at present is the Welsh new curriculum, Additional Learning Needs and the Welsh Special Educational Needs Code of Practice.</p> <p>In Wales, a new system for supporting learners, including Service children, with additional learning needs (ALN) will be implemented on a phased basis from September 2021. The ALN Code will include specific guidance relating to Service children with ALN.</p> <p>Scotland takes a collective approach and the Additional Support for Learning review and action plan outlines ways to further enhance this support.</p> <p>The Scottish Government continues to work closely with stakeholders, including Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES), local authorities, the MOD and Royal Caledonian Education Trust (RCET), to secure more positive experiences for all children and young people from Armed Forces families. To this end, the Scottish Government has worked with its partners in the Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group (SAFESG) to ensure that Scotland has benefitted, and continues to benefit, from the MOD's Education Support Fund.</p> <p>Scotland wants to improve the consistency of support for Armed Forces children in schools. In partnership with SAFESG members, a Scotland-wide good practice event for Education professionals and Armed Forces personnel was held in May 2020 to celebrate and share work. There is work that is happening across local authorities, with support from ADES, the National Transitions Officer, and the RCET, to learn more about the educational experiences of Service children.</p>	
38	<p>The Department for Education to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strengthen the SEND Code of Practice to ensure local authorities make full use of assessments made by Ministry of Defence professional disciplines as part of the MOD SCAN (Service Child Assessment of Need) documentation • require local authorities to use assessment of needs contained within MOD SCAN documentation, to inform the Special Educational Provision within Section F of the Education Health and Care Plan, in order to reduce the time taken to convert SCAN documentation to EHCPs • consider making SCAN documentation statutory documents. 	Accepted
Response	See 35 above	

39	<p>The Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence to work closely with the Devolved Governments through MODLAP to ensure EHCPs, SCANs and other similar records are fully transportable and transferrable, and ensure that they include information from previous schools, including those overseas.</p>	
Response	<p>See 35 above A Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) meeting has been established in Wales, involving Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE), MOD's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) and the Welsh Government.</p> <p>The new Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code for Wales accommodates the transfer of ALN information between the UK nations.</p> <p>In Scotland this would need to be done through Association of Directors of Education. A child in Scotland does not need a diagnosis to enable them to get the support they need. A parent/carer would be able to speak to the school their child was attending to discuss any support needs without sight of any previous plans. They would of course be considered by the school if they were available.</p>	Accepted
40	<p>The Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the identification of young carers within Serving military families • ensure that appropriate support is available • provide information directly to children and families about the support available • ensure that the education, accommodation and support needs of families with a young carer are taken into consideration when the Serving person is assigned to a different area. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) allocated a specialist youth work lead for Young Carers in 2019, and a toolkit for Defence youth workers to identify and support young carers is in development. A programme of work to assure knowledge and strong links with UK-wide external Young Carers projects within Community Support and 2nd Line Welfare Support teams is in development.</p> <p>Through the delivery of Airplay Youth Support and Benevolent Clubs MOD seeks to support all children & young people, and specifically those with additional needs and facing significant challenges, including young carers.</p>	Accepted

41	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces, together with the Devolved Governments, to ensure research is undertaken to extend understanding of the additional challenges faced by Service children who have caring responsibilities and the kinds of support they need.</p>	
Response	<p>The 2018 Carers Survey has shaped direction in this area. However, further targeted research will be required. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) plans a research programme to evolve from MOD and Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance literature reviews of the UK and Globally.</p> <p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru conducts various research / surveys including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School surveys to explore issues including challenges facing Service children, funding, engagement with the Armed Forces Community; • Focus groups with Service children to explore and record their experiences. <p>The SCiP Alliance / Hub Cymru is developing research priorities and activities for children with caring responsibilities.</p> <p>The Scottish Government can consider including the experience of Service children with caring responsibilities and Young Carer Grant in the full evaluation of the Grant to be published in 2023.</p>	Accepted
42	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • remove the requirement to re-apply for CEA on entry to the Sixth Form to ensure the continuity of boarding education for pupils already in receipt of CEA • ensure that decisions about continuing eligibility for CEA are based on the educational needs and best interests of each child, with an emphasis on ‘continuity’, while managing the cost to the public purse. 	Accepted in part
Response		

	<p>Any future decisions on CEA will be carefully considered. Further work is needed to understand whether removal of the requirement to re-apply for CEA would in fact be of detriment to some Service families who might therefore have less time to make alternative arrangements.</p>	
<p>43</p>	<p>All UK Governments to include the voices of Service children and young people in the development of all policies and support services that impact on them.</p>	
<p>Response</p>	<p>Through the Government's Family Test policy officials have a duty to introduce an explicit family perspective to the policy making process, and ensure that potential impacts on family relationships and functioning are made explicit and recognised in the process of developing new policy</p> <p>Emphasising the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) continued commitment to this important agenda, the Department has created a new deputy directorate focusing on policy which supports families and children.</p> <p>The MOD already captures the voice of young people through the Defence Children and Young People Plan: Objective 5.3 offering opportunities for children and young people to develop their skills as active citizens through becoming involved in the running of service delivery, contributing to policy decision making and having a political voice. The Army Welfare Service (AWS) has an established professional working group for Youth Voice with links to Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Air Force (RAF) colleagues. RN, RAF and AWS specialist youth and community work provides local youth fora, links to local youth voice structures and engagement in Tri Service Youth fora. Young people attend and present on issues affecting them at the Defence Children and Young People's Board meetings. RAF Benevolent Fund support Airplay Connect an online forum through the Airplay Youth Support Project. AWS assures the appropriate election, preparation and training for the Members of Youth Parliament British Forces Overseas in collaboration with the British Youth Council. AWS is engaged in the development of youth voice web-based platform with Army Digital and Defence Digital. The Defence Secretary plans to host a youth voice event in 2021 subject to Covid-19 restrictions.</p> <p>Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru has since the outset, engaged with Service children and families including via digital stories, focus groups and surveys including the Listening to our Service children report 2020.</p> <p>The Royal Caledonian Education Trust is a key charitable partner in Scotland for supporting the voice of children and young people. The Scottish Government has laid out clear action to further engage young people in policy/service delivery in the Additional Support for Learning action plan. In addition, the Young Ambassadors for Inclusion and the Youth Parliament are engaged in policy development. The Scottish Armed Forces Education Support Group is looking into working with this group even further as we move forward.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

44	<p>The Armed Forces to collect information to understand how dispersed living impacts on the time families spend apart over and above normal Harmony Guidelines.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) will continue to collect information and draw on existing research to inform policy which supports Service personnel and their families. Existing research in this field, which is informing the strategy refresh includes the RAF Dispersed Living Project, The Defence Science & Technology Laboratory (DSTL) geographically dispersed families research, the Naval Families research on separation and the Army Families Federation 2013 report on geographical separation. The University of Northumbria's Map of Need Project also provides some valuable insight into the dispersed footprint of Service families.</p>	Accepted
45	<p>The Department for Education to work with the Devolved Governments to consider how their respective education management information systems might be aligned to enable data relating to Service children to be transferred more smoothly across the whole of the UK.</p>	
Response	<p>The Department for Education (DfE) has been working closely with the Welsh government on its introduction of a Service child flag in the school census in Wales, and also on use of the Common Transfer File to facilitate information transfer about individual pupils moving between schools in England and Wales. We will continue to engage with the Devolved Administrations to share expertise and explore possibilities for collaborative development.</p> <p>Work is ongoing to collect data on the numbers of Service children in Wales. This will then be used to work with all nations across the UK including providing regular metrics on Service children.</p> <p>The Scottish Government supports the sharing of data where it can facilitate smoother transitions for all learners. However, the Scottish Government has some concerns about the scope of this recommendation and is not currently persuaded of the value or deliverability of overhauling the existing management information systems in place across the local authorities to support this. The Scottish Government would appreciate further discussion around what this system may look like, the scope of any changes and the resources required before committing to it.</p>	Accepted

Chapter 5		Not Just a Partner: Employment Challenges and Opportunities
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
46	The Ministry of Defence and Devolved Governments to continue to raise awareness amongst employers through the Employer Recognition Scheme of the significant skills and expertise offered by military spouses/partners and about the commitment in the Armed Forces Covenant that Service families should be treated fairly and not be disadvantaged.	Accepted
Response	<p>As part of the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) review of the criteria for the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS), consideration is being given to strengthening the emphasis on support for partners. Since 2020, registering with the Forces Families Jobs Platform is part of the 'Essential Criteria' for an ERS Gold Award, and is included in the 2021 nomination form.</p> <p>In November 2020, the Welsh Government, Business in the Community and Scottish Government launched 'Capitalising on Military family talent' – an addendum to the Capitalising on Military talent toolkit, originally launched in 2017 Business In The Community (BITC) Scotland and in 2018 with Business In The Community (BITC) Cymru to highlight to businesses the skills and experience that partners and spouses of Armed Forces personnel possess.</p>	
47	The Ministry of Defence to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant Employer Recognition Scheme by requiring employers to support the whole military family and giving awards only to those who provide tangible demonstration of this commitment through job interviews and job offers.	Accepted
Response	<p>See recommendation 46.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) review of Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) criteria reinforced the need to provide support to spouses and partners. The requirement to sign up to Forces Families Jobs (FFJ) is also essential for any organisations applying to revalidate their Gold award which is required every five years. The MOD works closely and routinely with the Families Federations and with the FFJ team and reviews the statistics on those using the platform. This informs our internal engagement teams on which employers to target in order to improve on employment initiatives for the whole Armed Forces Community. The provision of a 'guaranteed interview scheme' is briefed to nominees for the Gold award as being highly desirable when assembling their evidence for the award.</p>	

48	<p>The Ministry of Defence to challenge the FSB, IOD, CBI and Chambers of Commerce to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • apply the Armed Forces Covenant more effectively to partners of Serving personnel • facilitate continuity of employment when spouses/partners are relocated • eliminate real and perceived discrimination. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) Defence Relationship Management (DRM) Team works closely with an increasing number of trade and professional bodies across the public and private sectors including all of those listed above. MOD account managers work to reinforce the importance of all elements of the Armed Forces Covenant and how the Employer Recognition Scheme embeds the advocacy for that cohort by those organisations. Critically this applies not just to these organisations in their own right as employers but also the part they play in advocating these messages to their memberships.</p> <p>Recent activity with these organisations has resulted in the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) launching a national Chamber Military Network to raise the profile of the Armed Forces Covenant and its application across the national membership. A similar project, ChamberFORCE, is already running in Scotland following a successful pilot. The Federation of Small Businesses has also recently linked with X Forces Enterprise to form the 'Supporting the Military in Business' Network. X Forces and DRM are committed to a mutually beneficial messaging initiative to embed an understanding of the often special requirements of the Armed Forces community in regard to spousal/partner employment within Small and Medium Enterprise organisations.</p>	
49	<p>The Department for Work and Pensions to ensure that staff in JobCentrePlus offices understand the challenges that mobility and frequent relocation create for military spouses/partners seeking employment, and to advise and support them appropriately.</p>	
Response	<p>The Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Armed Forces Champions work with other DWP frontline staff to support them and raise awareness of Armed Forces issues and the particular difficulties that members of that community may face, such as the impacts of frequent relocation for spouses/partners.</p> <p>The champions role is focussed on developing a thorough understanding of the challenges experienced by the Armed Forces community, including those of military spouses/partners and to use this knowledge to upskill the wider DWP/Work Coach community who work with customers on the frontline. The champions develop strong local partnership relationships to ensure the right support is available to customers. Many of the champions have lived experience which they bring to the role and share with colleagues and individuals, having either served themselves or as military spouses/partners. The champions support each other as a community and have monthly sessions to share their knowledge and experiences.</p>	Accepted

50	<p>The Armed Forces to enable non-serving partners to take advantage of training opportunities which are already available on a base, where resources allow, to advance spousal/partner employment opportunities.</p>	
Response	<p>The feasibility of transferring learning credits to partners and spouses has been investigated in the past and advice was received that this would constitute a Benefit in Kind and therefore be taxable. If this advice changes the option will be considered again. Until then various initiatives are available designed to support partners' and spouses' careers and to help them into employment. The Families Federations are working in partnership with MOD to develop an employment pathway which clearly identifies what support is available at various stages. In November 2020 the MOD launched the Partner Career Support Programme Pilot, providing bespoke online advice and support to partners in preparing them to re-enter the workplace.</p>	Accepted
51	<p>The Ministry of Defence to encourage Barclays and other employers to promote the Armed Forces Covenant, and promote partnership with the Armed Forces to develop employment initiatives for non-serving spouses and partners.</p>	
Response	<p>Advocacy of the Armed Forces Covenant is a key criterion of advancement in the MOD's Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) scheme and is underway. The ERS is under review which will include partner employment criteria suggestions.</p>	Accepted
52	<p>The Ministry of Defence and Devolved Governments to support the development of Forces Families Jobs to become the 'go-to' place for high quality information, advice, guidance, training and job opportunities, and partner employment support.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is fully supportive of the excellent Forces Families Jobs Platform (FFJ), promoting it through its various networks and with stakeholders on its Partner Employment Steering Group. As the recommendations suggests, the platform has an important role to play as a focal point for general advice, guidance and information on partner employment and career support.</p> <p>Since 2020, registering with FFJ is part of the 'Essential Criteria' for an ERS Gold Award, and is included in the 2021 nomination form.</p> <p>The recently issued revised Armed Forces Covenant signatory template includes details of FFJ and all national and regional account managers get a monthly update on FFJ.</p>	Accepted

	<p>Since 2020, FFJ includes a link to the Civil Service Jobs website. Several government departments also directly advertise jobs on the site.</p> <p>The Welsh Government, working with the Families Federations, launched Forces Families Jobs website in Wales in 2019. The website is the go-to place for family members of Serving personnel. The Welsh Government will continue to promote this.</p> <p>Details of the FFJ Portal are listed on DWP’s national provision tool, used by DWP staff to identify jobs and employability support for the Armed Forces Community. The DWP’s network of Armed Forces Champions promote FFJ to veterans and their families and raise awareness of the service among Work Coaches at their regular office meetings.</p> <p>The DWP’s local engagement teams encourage the employers they work with to sign-up to the Armed Forces Covenant and to make use of FFJ. The DWP also does this at a national level; many of the employers’ accounts managed by the DWP use FFJ; for example, BT Open Reach is using the Portal to encourage applications from veterans and their family members as part of a new campaign for civil engineering job opportunities.</p> <p>Currently, Scottish Government jobs are advertised on Work for Scotland through FFJ. Moving forward opportunities will be looked at to expand this across the rest of the public sector in Scotland.</p>	
53	<p>The Ministry of Defence to undertake comprehensive evaluation of the revised spousal support programme that allows further understanding of the drivers for participation, the outcomes in respect of employment uptake, sustainability and satisfaction, and the impacts on retention.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The Partner Career Support Programme pilot launched in November 2020, runs through to the end of May 2021. The Chief of Defence People Research and Evidence (CDPRE) team will conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the programme against the agreed KPIs to consider whether it has enduring value for partners and spouses. It will be important to gauge value carefully in the wider context of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>	
54	<p>The Ministry of Defence to enable military partners to apply for ‘gapped’ civil service jobs via the Forces Families Jobs portal where appropriate and when a post remains vacant.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The Forces Families Jobs (FFJ) Platform is now linked to the Civil Service Jobs platform. As Civil Service recruitment is “fair and open”, partners already have an established route to apply.</p>	

	<p>In light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the shift to remote working, the MOD will work with the Cabinet Office and wider government to consider whether there is scope to make better use of the wide partner and spouses talent pool that is available across the UK and overseas.</p>	
<p>55</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • undertake an assessment of the demand for childcare by military families living on or in the vicinity of each UK military establishment • encourage the establishment of affordable nursery and child care facilities at every military establishment wherever the demand is shown, and where it would enable continuity of childcare provision and facilitate non-serving partners to seek and take up employment • work closely with local schools in the provision of before- and after-school clubs • support families with ‘right to request’ applications, and provide evidence that articulates to schools the needs of the local military community • provide local authorities with the evidence to incorporate childcare needs of Service children within their statutory sufficiency assessment processes and action plans • enforce mandatory completion of the Community Needs Assessments by Commanding Officers. 	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Defence Secretary has committed personally to addressing the challenges Service families face with childcare and underlined this commitment with the roll out of the wraparound childcare pilot in September 2020. Delivering on a manifesto commitment, the pilot is funding before and after school childcare for families of Service personnel assigned to RAF High Wycombe, RAF Halton, Catterick Garrison and Plymouth Naval area. The evaluation of the pilot programme will provide evidence to test what families want and inform the design of future provision.</p> <p>Alongside the pilot, the Defence Secretary directed that a Childcare Support Team be created to address the wider childcare challenge. The team supports local establishments in conducting Community Needs Assessments and is working with the Families Federations to improve understanding of the specific issues that families face with childcare. The team also advises local Commands to work with parents, schools and local authorities; specialist play, youth and community staff are also available to assist.</p> <p>Work on the review of the Childcare Offer is being taken forward and a gap analysis of existing programmes of support for parents in education and training is underway.</p> <p>The Community Development process, including Community Needs Analysis, is undertaken by professional staff in consultation with the local community, Chain of Command and other welfare providers. Review of the process will take place on a regular basis to test effectiveness and fitness for purpose.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

	<p>In England the MOD supports parents in approaching their child's school, applying the Department for Education policy on "the right to request" access to wraparound care.</p> <p>In Scotland the MOD supports parents in contacting the Scottish Out of School Care Network which provides guidance to parents and Out of School care providers. MOD advises local Commands to work with parents, schools and local authorities.</p> <p>The Scottish Government published a draft framework for Out of School Care for consultation in 2019, and is committed to developing a final strategic framework for school age children.</p> <p>The Welsh Government is in discussions with MOD regarding supporting childcare providers and how they can offer services for Armed forces families.</p> <p>In capturing the youth voice, children and young people are to be consulted on their experience of after school and holiday provision, to better understand their needs and the quality of the provision they access. A collaboration between single Services, led by Defence Children and Young People and specialist play, youth and community staff, is planned for a summer 2021 consultation programme.</p> <p>The Defence Youth Offer, administered through non-registered provision funded by the charitable sector, also includes 14 days holiday provision (where resourced).</p> <p>In Wales, all children who go to a local authority-maintained primary school can have a free breakfast at school, if their school provides free breakfasts. If their school doesn't provide free breakfasts, parents can ask if they could start providing them. Local authorities must provide schools with free breakfasts if the schools ask for them, unless it is unreasonable to do so. https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/free-breakfast-in-primary-schools.pdf</p> <p>Non-public funded one-week residential programmes are provided, on a tri-service basis, led by specialist youth workers. Army Welfare Service has funding available 2021 - 2023 via the Army Benevolent Fund and further funding is to be sought for RN and RAF places.</p>	
56	<p>The Ministry of Defence to consider ways in which the variations in childcare costs in different bases and localities can be addressed so that families who are moved around the UK are not disadvantaged and spousal/partner employment is facilitated.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The Defence Secretary's commitment to funding of before and after school childcare will help to address the issue of affordability and variation in regional costs. This issue is also part of the Childcare Support Team</p>	

	<p>remit but will be looked at in the medium to longer term and captured within the Families Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>The three single Services are considering the challenge of childcare from their own perspectives, and engaging the central Childcare Support Team. The Royal Air Force is developing a nursery procurement strategy that it hopes will address some of the concerns related to the perceived 'postcode lottery'. The approach and lessons will be shared with the Military People Leaderships Team.</p>	
57	<p>The Department for Education and the Devolved Governments to ensure that childcare professionals are provided with information/training to enhance understanding of the needs of Service children and the specific challenges of the military lifestyle.</p>	
Response	<p>Work is fully underway in response to the joint Department for Education (DfE)/Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) Transforming Children and Young People's Mental Health Provision Green Paper, which sets out three core elements for transformation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The creation of Mental Health Support Teams (MHSTs) to introduce mental health expertise and strengthen existing support in education settings, bridge the gap between education and the NHS and develop a more collaborative approach to tackling mental health issues in children and young people. • Expanding and transforming NHS Children and Young People Mental Health Services to ensure that young people can access support quickly and easily. This is being tested through the four-week wait pilot and is also being delivered through the NHS Long Term Plan commitment to expand mental health services for children and young people. • Establishing a holistic approach to mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges, including training a senior mental health lead to support embedding an integrated, positive mental health ethos in educational settings. <p>In 2018/19 59 MHSTs were launched in 25 areas across the country. These teams are now operational. Twelve of these sites are also piloting a four-week waiting time. In 2019/20, an additional 123 MHSTs were commissioned in a further 57 areas. These teams are in their set-up phase and despite the pandemic should become fully operational during 2020/21. Good progress has been made on the commitment to reach 20% to 25% of the school-aged population by 2023.</p> <p>The DHSC-led Health of our Services Families Working Group has met with the joint DfE/DHSC team to discuss the inclusion of Service family needs within the guidance issued to MHSTs, and this dialogue continues.</p>	Accepted

	<p>The Scottish Government recognises the need to support children from a variety of different backgrounds to ensure high-quality learning experiences for all children. Realising the Ambition (published 2020) is the national practice guidance for early years in Scotland. This guidance has a focus on attachment and child development and supports Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) practitioners to understand the needs of all children and their families. It includes guidance on supporting children as individuals and recognising the culture which surrounds the child. Practitioners are encouraged to seek Continuous Professional Development which supports the children within their care.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has produced an online directory of CPD available to the sector. Any training that is available to the ELC sector can be registered on this directory and practitioners are expected to ensure they have undertaken sufficient training to support the specific needs of children in their care.</p> <p>Local authorities in Wales will be undertaking full Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (CSA) in 2022 to assess supply and demand for childcare in their areas. The Assessments will need to include information about barriers facing working parents in accessing childcare. Any evidence that the MOD and Armed Forces can provide to local authorities to inform the CSA can be used to help local authorities to develop action plans to address any gaps in availability of childcare for Service families in their area.</p> <p>We are in discussions with MOD regarding supporting childcare providers and how they can offer services for Armed forces families.</p> <p>The Welsh Government recognises childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing working parents in Wales. Through our Welsh Government funded Childcare Offer we are providing 30 hours a week of government-funded early education and childcare for working parents of three and four year olds, for up to 48 weeks of the year. This support is available across all local authorities in Wales and can be accessed by working parents. Service families are able to access this offer.</p>	
58	<p>The Armed Forces to encourage and facilitate military spouses/partners to train in childcare and/or train in child minding if they wish to do so as supported by the Defence Childcare Strategy.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Childcare Support Team will engage with the single Services to look at options to provide additional support. The MOD's Partner Employment Steering Group, which includes key academic institutions such as Wolverhampton University and its Support Unsung Heroes programme, can also assist in supporting this recommendation.</p> <p>Whilst the RAF Association (RAFA) established 'RAFA Kidz' primarily to deliver childcare provision on stations, it also offers childminding training for military spouses and partners. Training in the actual 'RAFA Kidz' settings includes an apprenticeship type scheme which the MOD will consider supporting in principle. It</p>	Accepted

	<p>will depend on whether settings already have apprentices and what the need in each nursery is. The length of training determines the qualification. One is the childminding certificate, the other is an Early Years Practitioner.</p>	
<p>59</p>	<p>The three single Services to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take account of the nature of a non-serving partner's employment when relocating the Serving partner and to ensure that a period of time is allowed in which to manage a shift of employment (including retaining SFA) • review the necessity for frequent postings every two or three years and to consider whether the current military model could be redrawn to allow families to stay longer in one location or commutable area without compromising operational effectiveness. 	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) accepts the need to commission a piece of work to initiate looking at a more flexible approach to the career management process and implications for Service families and partners/spouses. The timing and resource implications of this work will be considered through the Families Strategy Action Plan.</p> <p>Through various programmes of work, military career structures are being reviewed and adapted to ensure the way in which we manage, retain and develop our people supports a more flexible and agile career management process.</p> <p>Career Managers can assign for any period as directed by policy guidelines. Under the New Employment Model, officers are routinely assigned for three years and Ground Trades for five years. However, Career Management will consider requests from individuals for extension of tours, re-tours and new assignments within the same geographical location, on the understanding that Service need will always take precedent and that opportunity of assignment must be fairly available to all.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

60	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to encourage research to understand the needs of early years Armed Forces childcare and to discern the most appropriate evidence-based practice which should be employed by the sector to enhance the positive aspects of childcare provision, mitigate any risks, and encourage the sharing of good practice across the Armed Forces community.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence Childcare Support Team will work with the single Services to understand the early years childcare needs among the military community.</p>	
61	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to ensure robust evaluation of the individual employment initiatives to assess the role they play in supporting non-serving partners, the resources they need, the numbers of partners they are able to support and the demand for using them, their effectiveness in promoting and sustaining employment and other outcomes in respect of partner satisfaction and wellbeing, the appropriate governance structures, and their impact on retention.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>Through the Partner Employment Steering Group (PESG), the MOD is working in partnership with the Families Federations to develop a partner career pathway that will provide clarity on the range of provision available across the sector.</p> <p>The PESG will also consider the evaluation of the MOD's Partner Career Support Programme (PCSP) in the context of what other support schemes are available. This piece of work will help to identify demand for existing programmes as well as any gaps in provision, to help refine future initiatives, including PCSP.</p>	
62	<p>The Ministry of Defence, through the Partner Employment Steering Group, to develop greater understanding of what works best for which military partners/spouses, and foster collaboration and joined-up initiatives to enable better coordinated partner employment support across the nations of the UK</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>Through its Partner Employment Steering Group, the Ministry of Defence is working in partnership with the Families Federations to consider the landscape of partner support and develop a pathway to help partners and spouses navigate what is available.</p>	

Chapter 6 Health and Wellbeing: Looking After Military Families		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
63	The National Health Service England and Improvement (NHSEI), NHS Scotland, NHS Wales and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland to ensure that information leaflets, guidance and top tips for delivering healthcare to Service families are provided to all GPs in the UK.	Accepted
Response	<p>In England, NHS England and NHS Improvement has produced a top tips document for GPs. This has been drafted in collaboration with the service Families Federations and the MOD. The findings from recent Armed Forces families engagement, will be used to further inform and strengthen this document. It is anticipated these will be published in spring 2021. Information on service families is also included in the veteran friendly GP practice accreditation material, which is always in the process of being refreshed to make it more inclusive to the wider armed forces community, including service and veteran families.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is happy to build this into conversations with NHS Boards and other stakeholders as a matter of course moving forward.</p> <p>The Welsh Government is working with partners to explore the development of a resource for Wales and roll-out across Health Boards has been deferred during the Covid-19 pandemic. Welsh Government health officials will be reviewing the Clinical Priority Welsh Health circular guidance and provision of information.</p>	
64	The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Devolved Governments to require GPs to transfer records speedily when Service families are relocated.	Accepted
Response	<p>In England, since 2018 the GP-2-GP system allows patients' electronic health records to be transferred directly, securely, and quickly between their old and new practices, when they change GPs. This improves patient care by making full and detailed medical records available to practices, for a new patient's first and later consultations.</p> <p>GP Connect, enables GP surgeries to make appointments for patients at other GP surgeries, and for those GPs to access "read only" versions of the patient records. Patients are expressly asked at the point of care if they're happy for their record to be accessed.</p>	

	<p>NHS England/Improvement have also been working on a review into improving access to primary care services, working with stakeholders. The main objectives of the review are to consider how to improve access to general practice services both in hours and at evenings and weekends (out of hours); to reduce the variations in patient experiences around the country and to reduce the inequalities in access for specific groups in society. The review was due to complete Summer 2021, though this may have been impacted by the pandemic. Initial actions from the review were included in the updated GP contract agreement for 2020/21, including a commitment to establish a GP Access Improvement Programme.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) Project Cortisone due to go live in 2021 will also help here for those families registered with Defence Primary Care Units (MOD GP-to-NHS IT systems are stand-alone and currently paper-based for patient note transfer).</p> <p>In Wales, the transfer of physical records is handled centrally by NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership which ensures a secure and consistent service. Whilst systems are in place to allow secure transfer of electronic patient records between GP practices, clinical system suppliers are working to develop improvements where the transfer is between different clinical systems. GPs are aware of the need to transfer records promptly; this is a professional duty.</p> <p>The Scottish Government supports this recommendation. Delivery would need input from Primary Care in case there are any issues relating to the GP contract. The Scottish Government has ensured health information in the 'Welcome to Scotland' pack is current and includes information on how to register with GPs and Dentists. In addition, The Scottish Government is participating in the Defence Primary Health Care (DPHC) Scotland/NHS Scotland IT connectivity cross organisation steering group.</p>	
65	<p>The NHSEI, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland to require GPs to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinforce the veteran-friendly GP practice accreditation scheme to include Serving military families • routinely ask whether adults and children are members of a Serving military family • identify previous GP/dental practices for transference of health data relating to military families, upholding the requirements of confidentiality, as stated in the Armed Forces Covenant. 	Accepted in part
Response	<p>In England</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Veteran friendly GP accreditation scheme resources include information on serving military families. This is always being further developed as part of routine refresh of accreditation materials. 	

- As part of the updated GMS1 GP registration form, there is a question for GPs to ask if the patient is a family member of a member of the Armed Forces. However, this form is voluntary from a patient perspective. As part of the top tips information leaflets we will reiterate the need to ask and record this information.
- For GP records this issue depends on whether the family is 'currently' DPHC registered, or NHS GP registered (see 64 Cortisone comment).

For Defence Primary Health Care, the same rules and processes as Service Personal leaving will apply, until Project Cortisone is operational this is mainly a paper driven process.

For families already with an NHS GP, their notes will be automatically be transferred to the new NHS GP on move as mentioned in recommendation 64 response.

We will investigate the details of transferring Dental records further. NHSEI and the Families Federations recently did an educational piece for Orthodontists on the need to continue treatment for families when military personnel move around. Currently, regions are undertaking orthodontic procurements, the specification requires providers to transfer orthodontic records for patients if there is a change in provider.

The Royal College of General Practitioners has produced a Veterans Healthcare Toolkit as a resource to support GP practices on how to deal with veterans' healthcare needs. The Welsh Government is working with partners to explore the development of a resource for Wales however, roll-out across Health Boards has been deferred during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Veteran Friendly GP Practice roll out in Wales was also paused due to Covid-19. The Welsh Government are keen to pick this up again as soon as possible. This will also be considered as part of the review of Clinical Priority Welsh Health Circular guidance.

In collaboration with NHS colleagues, The Welsh Government developed a national poster for display in GP surgeries and wider community to further raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant – Healthcare Priority for Veterans policy and encourage veterans to self-identify so medical staff are aware of any Service-related conditions. Electronic versions were issued in June 2019, to all GP practices for display on television screens or print. Further print versions were sent to Local Health Board Champions in October 2019 to ensure wider coverage across primary care settings.

The GMS form includes questions on military service to enable identification when registering with a GP practice.

Routinely asking whether adults and children are members of a Serving military family isn't a current requirement in Scotland but the Scottish Government is supportive of the recommendation to do so.

	<p>The Scottish Government also supports the recommendation to adopt the veterans aware accreditation for hospitals and GP surgeries in principle and are working towards implementing it at a point when there is capacity to do so.</p> <p>The Scottish Government is not entirely clear on the final recommendation around transfer of data and how this is intended to be taken forward, and would appreciate further discussion or the opportunity to consider proposals before agreeing to it.</p>	
66	<p>The Royal Colleges to require medical and healthcare professionals across the UK to undertake an accredited programme of training to increase awareness and understanding of the health needs of military families.</p>	
Response	<p>In England the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) has previously developed training on understanding the health needs of veterans, which forms part of the curriculum for new GPs. This includes information on military families. NHS England and NHS Improvement are progressing plans to update and refresh all armed forces health training for the RCGP and the other (independent of Government and NHS) Royal Colleges; which will include further information on the different patient groups within the armed forces community, including armed forces families. As part of this part of the overall strategy to continue to raise the profile to general practitioners nationally, NHSEI continue to engage with the RCGP via events and conference.</p> <p>NHSEI have also had several conversations with the Royal College of Emergency Care who at this time has asked we revisit them with this request after Covid-19.</p> <p>The Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and the associated specialisation Royal Colleges are independent bodies and have separate sister organisations in Scotland. Officials are willing to engage with NHS on RCGP matters of interface with Scottish GPs.</p> <p>The Wales Deanery has a module on military healthcare for healthcare professionals as part of their Continuous Professional Development.</p>	Accepted
67	<p>The Ministry of Defence to continue to work with the national health services across the UK to ensure that an Armed Forces Family Code articulates what is required to deliver appropriate continuity of care for Service families as they move around the UK, and to ensure that information is available to advise families about maintaining continuity of care on posting to a new area or healthcare system.</p>	Accepted

Response	<p>This work will be taken forward by the Ministry of Defence (MOD)/UK Departments of Health Partnership Board and Health of our Service Families Working Group.</p> <p>The Welsh Government welcomes any engagement from the MOD on this issue to ensure devolved arrangements are considered. The Welsh Government has produced a 'Welcome to Wales' document which is included on the CTP website, providing information and advice on health services in Wales.</p> <p>The Scottish Government has ensured health information in the 'Welcome to Scotland' pack is current and includes information on maintaining continuity of care when families arrive in Scotland. The Scottish Government is also happy to work with the MOD to support any future work in this area.</p>	
68	<p>The DHSC in England and national health services across the UK to ensure that family members of Serving personnel are able to retain their relative place on waiting lists when they move to another area, and that GPs and other healthcare professionals support their transition from one area to another, in line with the commitments made in the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>	
Response	<p>This already takes place; however, work is in progress to strengthen this. In England, schemes, such as the veteran friendly GP accreditation, Veterans' Covenant Hospital Alliance and e-learning modules will help, as will work coming out of the Armed Forces families engagement and the top tips guidance. In addition, NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to work with other commissioners and providers of healthcare to ensure that this community is not disadvantaged by the frequency or unpredictability of their moves when accessing services. NHS England and NHS Improvement will also continue to work with the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces families to reduce the impact and disruption to treatment plans.</p> <p>Any time accrued on an NHS waiting list for family members when outside Wales, will be transferred across so they are not disadvantaged when they access treatment in Wales. All Local Health Boards in Wales are aware of this commitment.</p> <p>In Scotland, there is an expectation that Armed Forces family members would retain their place on waiting lists when they move to another area, or transition from one geographical area to another. NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champions can advise on this, as will the new UK Armed Forces Covenant legislation.</p>	Accepted
69	<p>The Clinical Commissioning Groups in England to be required through the Armed Forces Covenant to ensure timely access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and paediatric services and that children and young people maintain their relative place on waiting lists when their parents are required to relocate to another area.</p>	Accepted

Response	<p>First and foremost, access must be based on clinical need. As promised in the Armed Forces Covenant, all dependants should be able to keep their relative position on a waiting list, however, understanding and application of this needs to be strengthened. The awareness programmes will help as will the top tips guidance. NHS England and NHS Improvement will continue to work with other commissioners and providers of healthcare to ensure that children and young people are not disadvantaged by the frequency of their moves when accessing services. NHS England and NHS Improvement will also continue to work with the Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces families to reduce the impact and disruption to their treatment plans, particularly when parents are required to relocate to another area.</p>	
70	<p>The Ministry of Defence to take account of the healthcare needs of military families when posting Service personnel to a new area.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) takes seriously the needs of families when posting Service personnel to new areas, especially those posted overseas. There is opportunity for Service personnel to share this information as part of the career management process. In developing the Families Strategy and Action Plan, MOD will work with the single Services to consider how to promote sharing of such information by explaining the benefits to the Service person and their family.</p> <p>Generally, for UK moves, it is a local authority responsibility to ensure provision; the Duty to Refer will further encourage local authorities to consider the needs of families when moving within the UK.</p>	Accepted
71	<p>The NHSEI, NHS Scotland, NHS Wales and Health and Social Care Northern Ireland to ensure that all Armed Forces families have access to an Armed Forces Care Coordinator or an Armed Forces Champion if they need support and help in accessing healthcare services.</p>	
Response	<p>Both the Veterans Covenant Health Care Alliance and the Veteran friendly GP practice accreditation ensure that Armed Forces leads / Champions are identified in health settings. These are being built on to support the co-ordination of care for Armed Forces families. Furthermore, and as part of the Armed Forces families engagement, NHS England and NHS Improvement is exploring the need for care-coordinators and how these could be established across the country.</p> <p>Every Local Health Board (LHB) and local authority in Wales has a designated Armed Forces Champion and Executive lead in place.</p>	Accepted

	<p>The Welsh Government host a LHB Champion network meeting where all LHBs share best practice and raise issues of concern to policy colleagues within Welsh Government.</p> <p>Every NHS Scotland Board area has an NHS Armed Forces and Veterans Champion and it is open to any veteran or member of an Armed Forces family to contact their local Champion with regard to access to healthcare. Contact details are available on the Veterans Assist Scotland website.</p>	
72	<p>The Ministry of Defence to work with the providers of national health services across the whole of the UK to evaluate new models of integrated primary care being established in some military bases and consider how to extend effective models to other military bases.</p>	
Response	<p>The review highlights the Catterick Integrated Care Centre (CICC) project which is a joint Ministry of Defence (MOD) and NHS venture to deliver an innovative approach in primary and community healthcare to MOD personnel, their dependants and local residents in Catterick Garrison and the surrounding areas. CICC will take integration of all elements of primary care to a new level and will supply the blueprint and proof of concept for integrated primary health and wellbeing facilities in the future.</p> <p>The current priority level assigned in the review is medium term. MOD is currently transforming Defence Primary Healthcare (DPHC) through the Defence Healthcare Delivery Optimisation (DHDO) Programme. DHDO offers opportunities for joint commissioning for joint benefit and will consider how to extend integrated primary care models to other military bases. The CICC model of integrated care is fully aligned to DHDO. The review acknowledges the significant infrastructure costs and delivery of this recommendation would require new funding both for larger projects and smaller extensions to existing facilities.</p> <p>The Welsh and Scottish Governments are happy to see any proposals on this and to then work with the MOD and other stakeholders to take them forward if appropriate.</p>	Accepted in part
73	<p>The Ministry of Defence and Defence Medical Services (DMS) to consider allowing family members to access Defence primary care services wherever possible and appropriate, and particularly when national health facilities are not easily accessible in the immediate locality.</p>	
Response	<p>The Defence Medical Services (DMS) provides care for families at selected bases in the UK. This, primarily, supports the training of new General Practitioners and Primary Care Nurses and allows DMS primary care clinicians to maintain their family medicine skills in order to remain suitably experienced to be assigned overseas where family support is necessary or deploy to operational theatres where treatment of the local population may be required. In addition, in a limited number of other UK locations, primary healthcare is</p>	Not Accepted

	<p>provided by the DMS at the request of the NHS because civilian primary care services do not have the necessary capacity to include Service families.</p> <p>At all times, whether receiving primary medical care from a DMS or NHS practice, Service families remain registered as NHS patients. Any request for additional access to DMS primary care for Service families would need to consider the effects on local NHS practices and therefore, require a request from DHSC and NHS and an appropriate transfer of resources as DMS is only funded to provide healthcare to serving members of the Armed Forces. It is also important to consider the effect on the NHS and potential negative impact on GP practices that would lose patients or be in competition with the DMS.</p>	
74	<p>The Ministry of Defence to consider how families of Serving personnel can be more involved in breaking down the stigma of mental health issues, and can benefit from the comprehensive activities and treatments to support Serving members of the Armed Forces, in order to promote better mental health and wellbeing for the whole family.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence's (MOD) approach to Health and Wellbeing (HWB) is to engage with families through relevant and supportive networks, promoting education on HWB topics and signposting further avenues for support when needed.</p> <p>HeadFIT is an externally accessible website which provides the user with a suite of mental resilience tools to improve confidence, mood and mitigate the stressors of everyday life. The target audience is currently Armed Forces personnel and Defence Civil Servants but there is an opportunity to expand the scope to include Service families and veterans. This may include filming extra video content and altering the 'look and feel' of the website to make it more applicable to the wider Defence Community. This will be explored through the Families Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Service families can currently access the Combat Stress helpline 24/7, as well as Togetherall and Samaritans. HWB communications will explore platforms to communicate and advertise this to target families.</p>	Accepted
75	<p>The Ministry of Defence, in consultation with the DHSC and the Devolved Governments, to ensure that future mental health and wellbeing plans include mental health awareness activities and communication strategies aimed specifically at families of Serving personnel, perhaps via a designated App.</p>	Accepted

<p>Response</p>	<p>All NHS Mental Health and Wellbeing activity in the NHS in England has, inherently, the AF community included. When any initiatives are put in place NHS England and NHS Improvement Armed Forces Teams have a robust communications sharing package with key AF family stakeholders for serving and veteran families, as well as updates to the specific Armed Forces community-facing NHS Webpages. The Devolved Administrations will have their own responsibilities and processes including work on the Mental Health Service Team - trailblazers.</p> <p>Families' Health is a core pillar of focus for the HWB team in the Ministry of Defence. Mental Health and Wellbeing plans for families will be considered as part of the HWB strategy review as well as the Families Strategy. HWB is a stakeholder in the UK Health Service Families Working Group to ensure that families are considered in decision making.</p> <p>The Mental Health and Wellbeing Pillar of the draft Royal Air Force Health and Wellbeing Strategy reflects the Living in our Shoes recommendations on Mental Health. In 2020, the Royal Navy developed a Families Mental Health Awareness Brief.</p> <p>Army HIVE has developed specific Mental Health and Wellbeing support and activities via three key platforms: Army HIVE Twitter, Facebook and local online blogs for families in UK and overseas.</p>	
<p>76</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence and Defence Medical Services (DMS) and the national health services across the UK to explore ways in which a range of mental health services could be better integrated to provide holistic care for Serving personnel and their partners and children.</p>	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) recognises that there may be clinical benefits to holistic family care when managing chronic disease and especially when managing mental health issues; however, Defence Medical Services specialist mental health services are specifically designed to provide occupationally focused mental health support to the serving population. The MOD has no experience with child and adolescent mental health services and therefore, the recommendations that families are treated within DMS facilities beyond the current level cannot be supported.</p> <p>Personnel leaving the Armed Forces who have had mental health issues during their service are able to access the MOD Departments of Community Mental Health for up to six months after discharge, to complete therapeutic work in progress and to provide continuity of care during the transition period until appropriate handover to other services can be completed as required. In England this can be supported by Transition Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), with equivalent programmes available in devolved administrations.</p>	<p>Accepted in part</p>

	<p>The MOD recognises the need for greater interoperability with NHS systems in the treatment of Armed Forces personnel and to provide a seamless transition of medical records at the end of their service. Project Cortisone will provide improved capacity to share information with the Devolved NHS Administrations and other organisations, to provide more coherent, holistic care for Service Personnel and their families at home and overseas.</p> <p>In Wales, a consultation on the Whole School Approach to Wellbeing Framework guidance, which will be statutory for maintained schools and LAs, closed on the 30 September 2020. It will require schools and partners including Educational Psychologists and CAMHS to work together to ensure the wellbeing needs of learners are met in a holistic fashion. The framework was published in March 2021 and includes Service children.</p> <p>An example of good practice is Aneurin Bevan University Health Board upholds their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by having access to a priority treatment service for Service children and young people, who need emotional wellbeing and mental health support under Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Hywel Dda also provide a similar priority treatment for Service children for CAMHS. It is hoped this service can be rolled out to other Health Boards in the future.</p>	
77	The Ministry of Defence and DMS to consolidate and refine a Parental Support Programme and facilitate roll out to bases in all three Services.	
Response	<p>For those who need help, options to address this will be considered through the 'Family Life' workstream of the refreshed Families Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Lessons can be learned from the existing programme at Devonport to consider the potential for wider roll out. The Royal Navy have launched the REBALANCE (Women's Health) Pre/Peri Natal mental Fitness programme and support network parents. HWB will examine if additional commitments are required.</p>	Accepted

Chapter 7	Returning to Civvy Street: The Ultimate Transition?	
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
78	The Ministry of Defence transition and resettlement pathways should always include family members to ensure a holistic approach to support before, during and after the Service Leaver has exited the military. Transition and resettlement pathways: medium term.	Accepted

Response	<p>Family inclusion in Transition Life Skills is a fundamental strand of the Ministry of Defence's Transition Policy. However, facilitating family access to this information and support would likely need to be achieved digitally through an app which the MOD's Transition Working Group (TWG) is currently considering.</p> <p>The TWG and Defence Transition Services (DTS) are working on an engagement strategy that will better enable us to reach families directly. Social media and partnering with the Families Federations is likely to feature in this strategy.</p> <p>The Defence Holistic Transition Policy has been developed and work is continuing to drive improvements for family support. This includes the introduction of Training packages and monitoring & assessment tools that will be accessible/advertised to families going forwards.</p> <p>The Royal Navy (RN) and Royal Air Force (RAF) always strive to improve the resettlement and transition support to families. Service personnel are briefed and advised to encourage spouse/partner attendance at finance and housing briefs and to discuss their resettlement journey with them.</p>	
79	<p>The Ministry of Defence to continue to work with other government departments, local authorities, Devolved Governments, the Families Federations, and the private and charity sectors to provide joined-up, consistent and seamless transition and resettlement processes for Service Leavers and their partners.</p>	
Response	<p>The majority of Service families require no additional support in making extremely successful transitions from Service life back into the civilian environment. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) works closely with the Single Services, other government departments and other stakeholders to ensure a seamless transition for Service leavers and their families. Defence Transition Services work closely with local authorities, the Devolved Governments, as well as charitable and private sector partners to ensure that those who need extra help in their transition have access to tailored support and localised information, as well as clear pathways to housing, employment and other support.</p> <p>Through the Career Transition Partnership, the MOD work with thousands of employers to ensure that Service leavers can access career opportunities when they leave. The Department is currently also working to deliver the Life Skills package of training, which will allow families and Service personnel to prepare for civilian life, throughout the Service person's careers. This will be developed in consultation with local authorities, the Devolved Governments, the Families Federations and other Charitable Sector partners to ensure the training is of the highest quality and tailored for local needs, as well as being presented with a style, format and tone that makes it truly accessible to a non-serving audience.</p>	Accepted

	<p>The Welsh Government has worked with the Defence Transition Service since its inception providing office locations for DTS staff and facilitating engagement with providers across Wales. DTS chair the Welsh Government 'Transition Action Group' taking forward the Veterans Scoping Exercise activity as part of the UK Veterans Strategy delivery work in Wales. Work is underway to develop a Welsh Re-settlement Guide. Building on the Welsh Government's Package of Support the new guide will provide transition support and advice for Service leavers and their partners.</p> <p>There is clear relevance here to the recent publication – Positive Futures - by the Scottish Veteran's Commissioner recommending further action to support more veterans/Service leavers and their families to transition successfully into work training or learning. The Scottish Government accepts the content of the report and looks forward to working with UKG on implementation beyond the work already undertaken to ensure a smooth transition into civilian life in Scotland for veterans/service leavers who choose to live here. The Scottish Government welcome any further progress or proposals on joint working, dependant on the resource needed to achieve them.</p> <p>The Scottish Government provides partial funding support to the Military Matters project delivered by Housing Options Scotland. This project delivers housing advice, advocacy and support to veterans including those with disabilities and service personnel/ families transitioning to civilian life. Since it began in 2012 the project has helped over 700 people, with 117 new referrals in 2019-20.</p>	
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Chapter 8 Duty of Care and Moral Responsibility: Supporting Service Families		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
80	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to take a pro-active approach to supporting families and preventing relationship breakdown by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being more aware of the cumulative pressures on couple relationships • ensuring every family is given information about the potential stressors on their family relationships as a result of Service life, particularly before, during and after deployment, and about the support available • providing clear information in plain language, avoiding military acronyms, about how to access confidential help and support • ensuring early intervention and personal support are available and accessible for all families. 	Accepted

Response	<p>Communicating clearly and in timely, meaningful and accessible ways will be a critical enabler of the refreshed Families Strategy. Alongside the strategy, MOD is reviewing the mechanisms in place for communicating with families to ensure these are used effectively and to consider new innovative ways of providing up to date and relevant information to those who need it. More details will be provided in the Action Plan when it is published later this year.</p>	
81	<p>All three Services to take steps to aid the retention of Serving personnel in dual-serving relationships, particularly those in different Services, and ensure that career managers liaise with each other to manage work requirements and deployments in order to minimise relationship stress.</p>	
Response	<p>The Army Career Management Continuous Improvement Project 4.1 will address career management for Service couples. It has conducted an audit of Army Service couples, engaged with Service couples, Career Managers and with the other Services. The project will refresh Army processes and policy in line with recommendations from Career Managers to ensure the process is coherent and consistent. It will also make recommendations to change Army Policy and for Tri-Service Policy changes (Joint Career Reviews being one of the recommendations).</p> <p>It is mandatory for Army dual-serving couples to inform their respective Career Managers and complete the serving couples form. This should ensure that managers liaise with each other during the assignment process. The MOD will always try and support parents and ensure that personnel are, where possible, posted to locations that are suitable to their needs).</p> <p>The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force Career Managers already take account of the unique circumstances that dual-serving couples experience, and recognise these challenges when planning assignments and deployments; NCHQ and Air will support further work to address the additional challenges that dual-serving couples face to ensure that this cohort does not suffer disadvantage.</p>	Accepted
82	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to work in partnership with an established helpline, such as ChildLine, to set up a confidential helpline specifically for children and young people from military families.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence is fully committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people in the Armed Forces Community. Options to improve current provision will be considered, with input from external charitable sector experts, through the development of the Families Strategy and Action Plan. Previous bespoke support has been discontinued due to lack of use, so it is essential that any new provision is well informed and meets the needs of Service children.</p>	Accepted In part

	<p>The RAF Benevolent Fund has just extended their listening and counselling service to include children and young people aged 11-18yrs.</p> <p>Both the Army and the Royal Navy Confidential Support lines were discontinued due to lack of usage and poor value for money. It is considered more effective to work with existing provision and enhance military awareness</p>	
83	<p>The Chain of Command and Welfare staff to ensure greater awareness of factors which increase loneliness and social isolation and pro-actively reach out to families who are especially vulnerable as a result of deployments, mental health concerns, additional needs or disabilities, postings to new areas, and dispersed living arrangements.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is engaged with the cross-Government agenda, considering how to support these cohorts through the Armed Forces Families Strategy refresh.</p> <p>This is a new Armed Forces Covenant Fund programme launched by the Trust in July 2020, will provide grants of up to £70,000 for two-year projects which actively engage veterans and armed forces families experiencing loneliness and isolation. "Tackling Social Isolation". This targeted programme funded by the Armed Forces Covenant will offer support to Tackling Loneliness grant holders, in order to help them provide better outcomes for the veterans and Armed Forces Families accessing their projects. Outside of these initiatives, in many cases this already occurs. It does rely on the SP making the Chain of Command welfare staffs aware of any issues.</p> <p>The Royal Navy Family and People Support staffs conduct pre-deployed briefs to both the Command, Service Personnel and families. During CV-19 these briefs were also provided in the virtual space; therefore, increasing accessibility. The Royal Navy uses the emotional cycle of deployment (ECOD) model, yet recognise this is based on research, which whilst dated, appears to remain valid.</p>	Accepted
84	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure all Serving personnel and their partners are aware of the confidential support available for those experiencing intimate-partner violence, domestic abuse and stalking, and how to access it • undertake research to better understand the incidence and nature of intimate-partner violence and domestic abuse in Serving military families. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is developing a whole-force policy to complement our published strategy "No Defence for Abuse". The policy will reflect the Domestic Abuse Bill 2020 including the definition for</p>	Accepted

	<p>domestic abuse in order to maintain continuity across Government publications and provide a clear and unambiguous message of what domestic abuse entails.</p> <p>The policy will advise Serving personnel, their partners, and civilian staff of support available either through the management chain or through specialist welfare providers with emphasis on assured confidentiality – except where there is a legal obligation to report a crime.</p> <p>In developing the policy, the Department has had the support of the Hestia ‘Everyone’s Business Programme’ and as well as fellow members of the Employers’ Initiative Against Domestic Abuse</p> <p>During Covid-19 extensive guidance and support has been promulgated, including promotion of resources from the Home Office #youarenotalone campaign, directing personnel and families to the ‘UK Says No More’ Safe Spaces initiative and the ‘Bright Sky’ app for remote support. Additionally, MOD has in partnership with Royal Mail, launched Online Safe Spaces.</p> <p>Training requirements are being reviewed across the Department, with the aim of agreeing a common understanding of the level of knowledge Defence people should have about this important issue, from bystander through to welfare practitioner.</p> <p>In delivering the commitments under the No Defence for Abuse Strategy, the MOD is working closely with several academic institutions including KCL and Bristol University, to improve understanding of the nature of domestic abuse in the military context. The findings of this research will shape future strategy and policy development.</p>	
85	<p>The three single Services to work together to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure there are no gaps in welfare support when Serving personnel and their families relocate • offer welfare support to all military families irrespective of whether they live on the patch or are dispersed, and to find new ways to reach the most vulnerable families • ensure appropriate support is available and accessible to all military families without stigma or fear • break down barriers to seeking help • harmonise terminology and move away from references to ‘welfare’ (following the Royal Navy lead). 	Accepted
Response	<p>This is business as usual but technological advances are assisting e.g. welfare meetings via Skype etc. messaging to families via online methods. Associated stigma is removed as much as possible through employment of frontline/ second line welfare support to Service Personnel and families.</p>	

	<p>RAF 'welfare' provision has been bannered under 'Community Support' for over 20 years; Jan 2020 RAF policy update, retitles individual 'welfare' provision as Personal Support, alongside Community Support and Wellbeing.</p> <p>RN Family and People Support has well-established partnership networks with the third sector, always seeking to extend working relationships in response to the emergent needs of RN families. Information (leaflets, website, social media, RN Forum etc) provided already meets this criterion. The RN FPS Portal since the CV-19 pandemic extended its opening to 7 days per week. Looking to the future RN FPS are actively exploring the use of future tech to proactively engage with families as part of the RN Transformation Programme. More specifically related to the impact of separation on the family, in support of a study conducted by King's Centre for Mental Research (Non-operational separation), funded by Greenwich Hospital, MOD could look to replicate the Naval Families Federation work with the children's mental health charity Young Minds.</p> <p>The Navy fully supports this. To reach dispersed and potentially vulnerable families RN FPS need permission to use JPA data – currently we understand that this is not feasible owing to GDPR/DPA restrictions; however, this should be explored from a legal perspective to give a definitive answer.</p> <p>Full implementation of this recommendation will require a Defence Case Management System (DCMS) to achieve this. Work is underway, but it will take time, resources and require funding.</p>	
86	<p>The Armed Forces to actively explore the integration of specialist welfare support with deployed units and ways to provide better coordinated support across the Armed Forces community.</p>	
Response	<p>Improving coherence of welfare support and consideration of greater integration will be actively explored through the development of the Families Strategy and Action Plan. Proposals would need to consider that the single Services have different delivery models for specialist welfare support and there is no welfare Management Information System that can track personnel within or across the Services.</p> <p>Deployed personnel remain the responsibility of their parent unit and have the option of reach back to the unit specialist personal support staff.</p> <p>For example, for the Army to deliver this, it would require an uplift in Army Welfare Service personnel. There are potential options to extend capacity of existing Welfare Specialists contracts some of which were previously supplied however financial investments would need to be applied.</p> <p>The Royal Navy has already started on aspects of this following successful trial of an embedded Royal Navy and Family People Support Chief Petty Officer on HMS Queen Elizabeth's deployment last year. More</p>	Accepted in part

	<p>information should be available in September 2020, when the RN FPS Transformation Implementation Plan is finalised.</p>	
<p>87</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review and refresh the Tri-Service Welfare Policy to encourage a more integrated and pro-active approach to welfare which includes prevention, early-intervention and specialist support available to all military families in all three Services • establish a more coherent, consistent Tri-Service offer of support for all military families, including the use of modern technology, recognising that one size does not fit all • realise the benefits of greater harmony across the three single Services and a Defence-wide approach to specialist welfare provision to ensure parity of support and better reflect the increased joint working environment. 	
<p>Response</p>	<p>There is always a balance to be struck in a Tri-Service approach that also has to reflect the single Service needs. The MOD is actively exploring the use of technology to enhance service provision (i.e. via secure VTC consultation).</p> <p>The Army has just initiated a project to improve the provision of primary and secondary (specialist) welfare. It will consider how the other Services deliver welfare, noting both are different, and where appropriate will look at opportunities for harmonisation. Headfit Mental Health resilience is available both on and offline with free licences to service families along with support from the RN (My Navy App). The RAF Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Mental Health and Wellbeing Plan will improve access to mental health resources for families by hosting external to MOD networks allowing access to personal devices (My RAF App). Collaboration with RAF Families Federation and the promotion of Aneurin Bevan University Health Board as good practice giving service children priority access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).</p> <p>The three single Services are already broadly aligned in their approach where welfare is the responsibility of the Chain of Command and are supported by specialist welfare support staff, although there are differences in the models used for specialist support. These differences help mitigate the nuances of the Services themselves. It should be recognised that frequently the biggest barrier in delivering support is the individual themselves and their unwillingness to engage with the available support. This is an area where collaboration could help reduce this barrier through adoption of many emerging technologies and this will be further explored and driven forward under the Families Strategy and Action Plan.</p>	<p>Accepted in part</p>

88	The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to establish a Defence Case Management Information System to ensure continued support for all military personnel and their families.	
Response	<p>This will be a key component in delivering a number of other recommendations and the timing, resource and funding requirements will be considered in developing the Families Action Plan.</p> <p>The Royal Air Force is a strong advocate for a case management system, contributing significant support to its development over the last two years; its importance was recognised in the RAF's 2019 Review of the Personnel at Risk Study.</p> <p>Although addressed as “longer term” MOD would wish to explore early options to bring this recommendation forward a potential option would be to utilise current established systems under a current contracted service with a Charity Welfare supplier.</p>	Accepted In part

Chapter 9 Small Acts of Kindness: A Pro-Active Approach to meeting the needs of Service Families		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status
89	<p>The Armed Forces/Military Charities to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continue to facilitate access for Serving personnel and their families across all three Services to independent, professional relationship support services outside the Chain of Command • promote through-life support and encourage Serving personnel and their families to seek timely and appropriate help. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the single Services continue to foster good relationships with the charitable sector organisations and this is underpinned by engagement with the Service charities Partnership Board (SCPB) and the Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO). Further work continues the via the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust grant schemes. Service welfare personnel are encouraged to network with charitable organisations and MOD will undertake to ensure key welfare personnel are adequately trained to signpost accordingly.</p> <p>The MOD could investigate further as some charitable sector partners offer this service, but this would need to be a costed and contracted option.</p>	Accepted

90	<p>The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support the use of a range of robust, validated and appropriate evaluation tools to measure outcomes, benefits and the effectiveness attributable to each project/programme of work • consider the appropriateness and modifications needed to use the Outcomes Measurement Framework with UK Serving personnel and their families • ensure learning is widely disseminated and best practices identified to enable replication of projects which are effective and which meet a clear support need • continue to encourage greater coordination of support services for military families and ensure the long-term sustainability of effective interventions • take the lead in building a directory of evidence as to ‘what works’ in supporting military families. 	Accepted
Response	<p>The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) supports this and it is in-line with work it has already planned. The recommendation aims to improve the way the AFCFT evaluates and measures effect of its programmes, in relation to service personnel and families, and MOD supports this. Sharing of best practice and learning is welcomed and encouraged; as too is the desire to co-ordinate support for military families and having a codified document of 'what works' is helpful for the work of the wider department. As the work suggested was already planned to be delivered by the AFCFT there are no budgetary implications or time limits known that would affect delivery.</p>	
91	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • take into account the learning from welfare approaches elsewhere • encourage increased international research to build the evidence base of ‘what works’ in providing welfare support for Service families • encourage further research into the effectiveness of early intervention programmes which aim to enhance the wellbeing of military families and prevent relationship breakdown. 	Accepted
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is closely engaged with partners in the charitable sector and academia, to investigate options to address this through the development of the Families Strategy Action Plan. The MOD is closely engaged with the Five Eyes Community at Ministerial and senior official level through symposiums on a range of issues, sharing best practice and reviewing developing policies.</p>	

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The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to:

- **encourage the replication of good practice across the Armed Forces to support military children and young people**
- **strengthen the delivery of the Defence Youth Offer through appropriate resourcing and investment in community spaces for military children and young people**
- **ensure that all children and young people from military families are able to access specialist, confidential counselling if they need it.**

This is already a priority for the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and being delivered through Defence Children and Young People Plan. Objective 5.3. is Delivery of the Defence Youth Offer. The Defence Youth Offer asks all Services and community support teams to assure the delivery of quality play and youth activities, including where resourced holiday provision and where need is identified youth work intervention within Schools. Children with a Serving parent have access to trained and professional youth and community workers.

All single Services community support teams are focussed on the development of youth voice forums and assuring the voice of young people is heard at all levels. The next Tri Service Youth Voice event will be held in 2022.

Army HIVE information services provides a plethora of information aimed at Children and Young People, via a range of platforms including face to face, online through social media, and across its network of local HIVE Blogs. New arrivals receive HIVE Arrivals Packs which contain information around Health, Education, Accommodation, Employment, and local community information; the latter is focused on facilities including access to provision such as AWS Community Support. Information support for Children and Young People is also provided through engagement with local services including schools. Deployment support, delivered through HIVE Deployment Packs, provides information aimed at supporting families including Children and Young People.

The Army Welfare Service (AWS) Community Support delivery programme includes youth work, play work, holiday provision and some schools work.

The RAF Benevolent Fund has just extended their listening and counselling service to include children and young people aged 11-18yrs. Work is ongoing within MOD to identify external partners and funding to support access to specialist wellbeing mental health advice, guidance and counselling support for young people.

Accepted
In part

Response

The Royal Air Force (RAF) HIVE information service has developed online fora and utilises social media and email to ensure that families moving to a new unit receive a 'welcome pack' and are offered the opportunity to participate in Station events. The RAF HIVEs on different units interact to ensure that families receive support from their new unit and any concerns can start to be addressed even before they have arrived. This interaction also extends to families already in situ who can receive regular updates via email, newsletter or a raft of other platforms that they can choose from. RAF HIVE will continue to seek out innovation to continually improve the comms experience for our SP and their families.

The RAF currently delivers an Airplay Youth Support Programme which includes youth work, play work, holiday provision and some schools work.

The Royal Navy has close liaison with other Services in the delivery of play work, youth activities, and holiday provision, including Social Work and Case Work provision for Service families. Children and parents have access to trained and professional youth and community workers.

The RN Family and People Support Community Support delivery programme includes targeted and Universal provision including deployment support programmes, youth work, play work, and holiday provision. Kings Camp are commissioned by Royal Navy Royal Marines Charity to deliver holiday play activities in Naval establishments.

RN Family and People Support Information Support provides bespoke information to Service personnel and their families as well as local Education Facilities. Topical Information Sheets are available at all times but especially at time of relocation and deployment. Arrival packs are sent to all those who move into SFA and Deployment Packs as the serving person deploys. Further to this Information Officers are proactive in pushing information out via the RN Forum and Officially moderated Facebook Page and Groups. For Covid-19 a thread holding various support networks regarding 'Things to do at Home' was set up and is regularly updated. A Schools resource pack is sent to Schools regularly to ensure they are up to date on the support services/documentation available for Service Children and Young People. A new RN Forum is due into service in April 2021 which will provide a modern communications platform for family engagement and support.

Scotland has developed a strong youth voice forum (RN, Army, RAF) supported by the Caledonian Trust.

<p>93</p>	<p>The Armed Forces and the Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage small acts of kindness, including a welcoming committee to engage with families moving into a new area • promote pro-active support to enhance wellbeing through a family centre/family hub on every military base as the safe 'go to' place for information, group activities, education, co-working hubs, children's activities, informal peer support and professional support programmes, and to encourage community integration • develop support through webinars, FaceTime/zoom/skype and Apps to include dispersed families unable to access family centres in person • break down barriers to help-seeking by reaching out to families and adapt the military culture of maintaining a 'stiff upper lip' to make it acceptable and normal to ask for help. 	
<p>Response</p>	<p>Meet and Greet opportunities are typically routine in Armed Forces communities. Most Unit establishments have Community Centres and Units and Bases conduct annual Community Needs Analyses; community support provision is a key aspect of these analyses and needs to ensure adequate focus on the growing virtual community. This has been an area of particular growth during Covid-19 with Community Support teams utilising zoom and other online forums such as Airplay Connect.</p> <p>During Covid-19 a pilot by Army Welfare Service considering virtual delivery provided an early test of practice. A blend of face to face community-based practice, and virtual practice will continue moving forward. Reach to dispersed families will need to be monitored. The Army is exploring the development of a digital presence to more effectively engage with the community.</p> <p>The Royal Navy and Family People Support Team is engaged with families (including those dispersed) via social media and the Royal Navy Forum, although more needs to be done to promote these services. With an increasingly dispersed population, focus needs to be on social media and digital applications.</p> <p>From a strategic perspective, the Families Action Plan will consider various ways in which to help families to feel more valued and to continue to feel part of the military network, even when living dispersed. Initiatives like the Military Co-Working Network are important tools and further work will be done to consider how to improve access to the nearest geographical base.</p>	<p>Accepted</p>

94	Charities and organisations offering support to Armed Forces families to work closely together; cooperate, collaborate and combine their resources wherever possible; reduce complexity; and ensure clear information and referral pathways to provide better coordinated support for military families.	
Response	<p>It is envisaged that the charitable sector will respond to this recommendation. The Government works in partnership with the charitable sector, which is represented in Families and Covenant governance, thereby ensuring contribution to the refreshed Families Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>In parallel with this Report, the Service charity sector had through FiMT commissioned the Directory of Social Change to review for the first time the work the Sector does in support of Service Families. This report was published early in 2021 and provides a very timely overview, furnishing the Sector with information and clear recommendations to help improve provision, which get to the heart of Recommendation 94. COBSEO, its clusters and the three Service Families Federations look forward to implementing these key recommendations whilst working closely with the MOD and its refreshed Families Strategy.</p> <p>The MOD jointly funds a post in SSAFA to support families with additional needs.</p>	N/A
95	The Ministry of Defence to establish a dedicated Serving Families Gateway, separate from the Veterans' Gateway, to collate information and advice about the support available, and ensure greater coordination of the range of interventions and how to access them.	Accepted in part
Response	The HIVE information services already provide similar functions. Further developing the HIVES to act as a Gateway for Service families, and making better use of these valuable communication platforms will be an early focus of the refreshed strategy.	

Chapter 10 Recruit the Person and retain the Family: Strengthening the Armed Forces Covenant		
Recommendation number	Recommendation	Status

96	<p>The Prime Minister to spearhead a change of culture to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make the recognition and care of Armed Forces families a national priority • ensure that the UK population understands the critically important role played by the Armed Forces in keeping our country safe • promote pride in and respect for Serving personnel and their families; and ensure that all Serving personnel and their families feel valued. 	Accepted
Response	The Secretary of State for Defence has corresponded with the PM who has agreed to spearhead and support change.	
97	<p>The Armed Forces to ensure that families are recognised and thanked for their Service and commitment whenever possible.</p>	Accepted
Response	The Ministry of Defence (MOD) fully supports this and will run a stakeholder workshop to explore how this can be taken forward. The contribution of the Service family is recognised through a variety of means, from formal recognition in messages of thanks from senior leaders to practical support for families through access to appropriate support (particularly when the Service partner is deployed), the provision of community facilities wherever possible, to considering their needs in new and updated policies.	Accepted
98	<p>All Ministry of Defence and Armed Forces policies and procedures should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fully embrace a range of family structures and remove any disadvantage • apply the Family Test and actively consider the impact on Service families. 	Accepted
Response	The Ministry of Defence is drafting additional internal guidance on the updated Family Test which will supplement the refreshed Families Strategy, so that policy teams are clear about how to apply the test within the Defence context. The strengthened governance of the Families Strategy will help to bring greater coherence and consistency of messaging.	

99	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to address improvements in communication with families as a key priority by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploring and implementing changes to the JPA DPA questions to encourage Service personnel to give permission for their spouses/partners to receive direct communications • supporting the development and availability of online Apps for family members to access and receive information. 	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence agrees that a top priority of the refreshed UK Armed Forces Families Strategy should be improving communication with families. Lessons have been learned during the pandemic and a project is underway to review the effectiveness of various mechanisms of communication with a view to taking a more coherent and proactive approach. Encouraging better use of JPA and considering the merits of online apps will be part of this work.</p>	Accepted in part
100	<p>The Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces to review legislative requirements and remove the use of terminology which is regarded as being out-of-date, demeaning and disempowering, particularly references to non-serving partners/spouses as ‘dependants’, in all policies and procedures which relate to everyday military family life.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence understands that loaded and out of date terminology can be demeaning and disempowering. Where possible terminology will be amended to reflect modern, inclusive values that emphasise the value and agency of the partner, spouse, and family. In certain circumstances however, it remains necessary for statutory reasons, to use such terms. For example, with allowances policy, where the term “dependants” is both a shorthand term referring to a specific group of people (e.g. child, spouse, parent) and is used in the context of that dependency providing an entitlement to something which they otherwise wouldn’t get.</p>	Accepted in part

101	<p>The three single Services to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • review current policies which require frequent moves and repeated upheavals in family life • make a commitment to facilitate greater stability and choice for military families while maintaining operational effectiveness • review the length of deployments and associated training activities pre- and post-deployments to minimise the additional time spent away and provide greater certainty about return dates wherever possible. 	
Response	<p>Through programmes such as the Pan-Defence Skills Framework, segmentation and UCM, more focus is being placed into recognising and building depth of experience and broadening of skills as an equally valued way to develop a career in the military alongside more traditional promotion and advancement processes</p> <p>Choices in civilian life for advancement may also require mobility but the geographical extent of the mobility can have a detrimental impact on non-serving partner's career and children's schooling as well the friend and support structures that people build. Where possible, the single Services aim to meet the assignment aspirations and needs of Service personnel. However, the specific circumstances of each Service person, and that of their peers, means that it is not always possible to meet every person's career and family aspirations. Single Service career management services aim to balance stability and career progression; however, there are occasions when a role is not always available at the location of choice, especially in more popular locations.</p> <p>It is recognised that there is a balance to be achieved between the length of deployments and associated training activity acknowledging that these decisions are necessary to deliver Defence outputs, but also have impact beyond the individual to their family.</p>	Accepted
102	<p>The Armed Forces to ensure that as far as is possible, Ministry of Defence Harmony Guidelines and reasons for breaching them are fully understood by military families and that they are adhered to and breached only in unavoidable and exceptional circumstances.</p>	
Response	<p>This issue is being further looked at, but different Services have different needs and separation is inevitable but is managed as well as possible given the requirement for global Operations and necessary multi-national training and integration exercises etc.</p> <p>The Department is looking at easing the pressure through other means. One example is Programme HECATE, which is seeking to redistribute personnel from within our existing headcount to both fill the gaps in the front line and ease the burden of those unable to take the off-watch time they would normally be</p>	Accepted

	<p>allowed. In future, a more flexible and intuitive approach, will allow: the redistribution of military personnel to fill gaps in high readiness units; the introduction of dual-crew models; a more adaptable workforce model; and more sustainable crewing options.</p> <p>To reduce the Royal Navy Harmony threshold in a meaningful way requires more personnel; the Department is focused on meeting the required trained strength, including an enduring uplift in capacity at HMS RALEIGH for Initial Navy Training (Rating) and by opening concurrent streams at Britannia Royal Naval College alongside the Officers and, from the New Year, at HMS COLLINGWOOD.</p> <p>Furthermore, the Royal Navy is actively managing its crew models and uplifting workforce numbers which will further reduce gapping, reduce pinch points, build in much needed resilience that will improve the lived experience and improve Harmony. Across all the Services behind the average figure and overall picture lies the detail of individual branches/capbadges/trades and ranks/rates and individual units such that for individual Service Personnel a combination of factors, for example branch/spec/rank/unit/programme and perhaps absence due to sickness of another serving person, can lead to individual hardship, the measures that the Royal Navy are taking should mitigate this.</p>	
103	<p>The Ministry of Defence to promote research to develop a greater understanding of ‘what works’ to support Serving families to aid recruitment and retention.</p>	
Response	<p>In responding to this comprehensive piece of research and refreshing the Families Strategy, the Ministry of Defence is working with partners in the devolved administrations, across government and in academia (UK and internationally) to understand how to improve the offer for families. Where gaps in knowledge are identified, further research will be prioritised in the Families Action Plan.</p>	Accepted
104	<p>The Ministry of Defence to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure that, prior to coming to the UK, recruits to the Armed Forces from Foreign and Commonwealth countries and their families are always very well informed about the immigration, settlement and visa requirements and costs that could have a significant impact on their family life • implement a series of Tri-Service recommendations underpinned by an Action Plan to improve the support to non-UK personnel • review the availability of a ‘get-you-home allowance’ on an annual basis for single and unaccompanied Foreign and Commonwealth members of the Armed Forces. 	Accepted
Response		

	<p>Support for non-UK Service Personnel and their families is one of the core workstreams for the refresh of the Families Strategy.</p> <p>Work is being undertaken through the Army Non-UK Working Group to improve support to non-UK Service Personnel and their families. RG directs the attention of all Commonwealth candidates to https://apply.army.mod.uk/how-to-join/can-i-join/nationality . This site provides basic information to help applicants from Commonwealth countries. The revised Unit Guide for Non-UK Nationals and Unit Support, to be published Sep 20, will have a part aimed directly at those considering a career in the British Army, and will amplify the current advice.)</p> <p>During the Royal Air Force's (RAF) processing of non-resident Commonwealth candidates, R&S informs them, in writing, that they must be able to fund their own travel, visa costs and accommodation in order to attend the full selection process. When they are successful and ready for loading to Phase 1 Trg they will be directed to OGD websites for further information. Furthermore, this link on the RAF Recruiting website (Commonwealth Recruiting Information) offers greater detail on the relevant issues, which is available before they register, submit an application or travel to the UK.</p> <p>MOD is looking to address this in the longer term. Although there's no current project to introduce a get you home allowance for Foreign and Commonwealth service personnel the RN has circulated a discussion paper on the wider topic of improving the offer for Commonwealth and Non-British service personnel. This included a proposal to introduce an annual contributory allowance for those maintaining a residence/normally domiciled overseas.</p>	
105	<p>The Home Office to undertake a review of the policies relating to the Minimum Income Threshold and settlement requirements as applied to Foreign and Commonwealth members of the UK Armed Forces, and take action to reduce the negative impacts on their families and their family life as required by the Family Test.</p>	Accepted
Response	<p>The Minimum Income Requirement (MIR) remains a fundamental component of the Immigration Rules and is applied equally across all family routes.</p> <p>The Home Office is undertaking a review of the operation of the MIR as it approaches 10 years since its introduction. The findings will be reviewed in the context of the Armed Forces.</p>	
106	<p>The Home Office and the Ministry of Defence to review the cost of visas and the settlement process for Commonwealth Service personnel and their families in the light of the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>	Accepted
Response		

	<p>The Home Office provide for non-UK veterans discharged from HM Forces to obtain settlement (indefinite leave to remain in the UK or indefinite leave to enter the UK after having served for four years or more or having been discharged for medical reasons due to their service.) The current fee is £2,389 per person. Non-UK personnel applying by themselves are not required to meet an income or assets threshold, do not need to be sponsored by an employer, and do not need to meet any requirements regarding their skills, knowledge of the English language or knowledge of life in the UK.</p> <p>The Home Office is currently undertaking an internal review with input from MOD on the processes surrounding enlistment and discharge. Recommendations will be made to the Second Permanent Secretary later in 2021.</p> <p>The Ministry of Defence and Home Office intend to launch a public consultation on the issue of settlement fees to find a suitable policy solution in February 2021.</p>	
107	<p>The Ministry of Defence, Government Departments in England, and the Devolved Governments to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reinvigorate and strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant through legislation to drive recognition of the critical role played by the Armed Forces and their families, and raise ambition across society to harness better targeted support for Service families • ensure that the Armed Forces Covenant eliminates real and perceived discrimination of Armed Forces families • ensure children and young people are not disadvantaged in pursuing sport and leisure activities in their local community because of frequent relocations • ensure all organisations and agencies that sign up to the Covenant are held accountable for acting on their pledges and delivering them to Serving personnel and their families • work together with all organisations that have signed the Covenant to actively promote it throughout society • ensure that those who deliver their pledges are recognised and rewarded. 	Accepted
Response	<p>Armed Forces Covenant pledges are reviewed annually and organisations are required to demonstrate an action plan where effort is lacking. Through the 'Measurement of Effect', the Ministry of Defence (MOD) is able to identify those accounts that perform well and have demonstrated evidence of that. Organisations are encouraged to perform beyond the level of their AFC, and to re-write their pledges accordingly and re-sign an AFC as appropriate. Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) awards are resubmitted for renewal every 5 years; this is not a routine process and renewal is not guaranteed. MOD is also seeking to establish a panel to consider those organisations thought to have breached the Covenant or principles of ERS with a view to imposing sanctions including expulsion from either scheme.</p>	

Armed Forces Covenant legislation, which was introduced within the Armed Forces Bill in January 2021, places an obligation on certain public bodies to have due regard to the principles of Armed Forces Covenant in key areas of health, housing and education. This means that those who are subject to the legislation must consciously consider the Armed Forces Community, and the principles of the Covenant, when developing policy and making decisions in these areas – and be able to prove that they have done so if requested, including by the relevant Ombudsman or by a judicial review.

The legislation will be supported by statutory guidance and wider supporting information which will explain the unique obligations facing Armed Forces families and how these can affect the way in which they access public services, and how their requirements may differ from those of their local civilian counterparts.

The new Duty, by encouraging the uptake of Covenant guidance among relevant public bodies, will also increase awareness of the wider issues affecting the Armed Forces Community. This will improve the overall service that our Service families receive and lessen the variation of service delivery across local areas that can inadvertently cause disadvantage for the Armed Forces Community, who are a very mobile population.

In addition, the legislation gives the Secretary of State powers to broaden the scope of the Duty to include other bodies and functions in the future. This will be kept under review as the new Duty is implemented.

- The Welsh Government, along with Local Government, Health Boards and charities in Wales, are working with the MOD on the proposals for UK Armed Forces Covenant legislation.
- In Wales, governance arrangements are well established for monitoring delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. These include local and Regional Armed forces fora, Welsh Government-funded Armed Forces Liaison Officers, the Ministerial Expert Group and Welsh Government representation on the Covenant Reference Group and work taking forward the UK Veterans' Strategy. The MOD and OVA also sit on the Programme Board taking forward the Wales Veterans Scooping Exercise.
- The Welsh Government voluntarily produced a Covenant Annual report to publicise the support available in Wales for the Armed Forces community:
<https://gov.wales/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2019>

Many organisations in Wales are delivering their pledges under the Armed Forces Covenant and achieving Gold, Silver and Bronze ERS Awards. RFCAs in Wales continue to support employers to deliver this success. In October 2020 a further 9 Gold and 13 Silver awards were achieved.

The Scottish Government is committed to continuing to support improved understanding and delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Scottish Government is working closely with the MOD as it develops its proposals to further embed the Armed Forces Covenant into Legislation.

	<p>The Scottish Government provides annual updates to the Scottish Parliament setting out progress and achievements in delivering the Covenant. Scotland was the first part of the UK with a dedicated Veterans Commissioner to hold us to account for our delivery against the covenant.</p> <p>The First Minister has accepted an invitation from Michael Gove for the Scottish Government to become a member of the Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board and we look forward the support it will provide to effective cross-UK cooperation at Ministerial level on all matters relating to support for the Armed Forces and Veterans community.</p>	
108	<p>The Ministry of Defence, in collaboration with the Chain of Command and the Families Federations, to ensure every Serving member of the Armed Forces and every spouse/partner knows about the Covenant and understands how it can benefit them.</p>	
Response	<p>The Ministry of Defence (MOD) supports this as an ongoing activity, involving regular briefs to Military Covenant Champions in units across the Armed Forces and wider Defence, conferences and engagement with the service Family Federations and HIVES. The MOD closely monitors awareness of the Covenant and, through the Families Strategy, will be setting challenging yet realistic targets to increase this in meaningful and impactful ways year on year. Covenant Communications is routine activity which will continue and we will look at improving this as part of our business as usual processes and evaluation from service attitude surveys.</p> <p>The annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference which brings together Service covenant champions across the country, last took place on 16 September 2020 and was a great opportunity to share good practice and reflect on the progress that is being made.</p> <p>In January 2020, a note about the Service Pupil Premium was added to Service personnel's payslips, and we plan to use this comms channel again in future to promote the Covenant as we have done in the past. Ongoing support and guidance materials on the Covenant are being planned, to complement the introduction of new legislation. Two of the key target audiences for these materials will be members of the Armed Forces and Service Families.</p>	Accepted in part
109	<p>The Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence to work together to introduce the Armed Forces Covenant in schools and colleges to increase awareness among children and young people of the nation's promise to Armed Forces personnel and their families.</p>	
Response	<p>This should be part of a wider programme to explain the role of the Armed Forces within our society and the concept of democratic accountability - possibly as part of the Citizenship syllabus in the National Curriculum. Through the refreshed Families Strategy and the Covenant, the Ministry of Defence,</p>	Accepted in part

	<p>Department for Education and partners such as the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance will contribute to the development of materials about the Armed Forces Covenant.</p>	
<p>110</p>	<p>The Ministry of Defence to establish a robust mechanism for an independent review of the recommendations in this report, monitoring their implementation every six months, noting the progress made, and ensuring public accountability.</p>	
<p>Response</p>	<p>The current reporting structures have been reviewed and, to secure ownership at an appropriate level within MOD and across government, a new Service Families Steering Group (SFSG) has been created reporting to the Director level MOD Military People Leadership Team and linking to the Covenant Reference Group chaired at Director General level. The Covenant is a key lever to delivering many of the report's recommendations. The new Steering Group will sit biannually ahead of each formal update to the Defence Secretary against the Families Strategy and Action Plan. The Steering Group includes representation from the devolved administrations, other government departments, the Families Federations and the Charitable Sector.</p> <p>Updates will also continue to be included in the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, which includes the unedited comments of the external members of the Covenant Reference Group: key military charities and the Families Federations.</p> <p>The new governance arrangements will be reviewed annually and consideration will be given to the merits of additional independent scrutiny.</p>	<p>Accepted in part</p>