



Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Plan 2022

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General

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1. Background and Context

MOD Context and Framework

1. MOD Responsibilities for Families.

a. **In Overseas Locations.** In overseas locations, where reasonably practicable, the MOD provides, or provides access to services that replicate, so far as possible, services that would be provided by statute in England. It is important to understand that the MOD does not have the same duties and powers as a local authority in England but owns a Common Law Duty of Care for its people whilst they are overseas and will, where necessary, exercise this duty through the application of the Armed Forces Act (2006).

b. **Within the UK.** Within the four Home Countries of the UK, where statutory responsibility remains with LAs and equivalents, the MOD seeks to ensure that Armed Forces families receive their full entitlement to statutory services and support; and suffer no disadvantage because of their Armed Forces status. This is also the underpinning principle of the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC).

The Armed Forces Families Strategy

2. The Armed Forces Families Strategy 2021-31 is a call to arms for policy makers and service providers to acknowledge the challenges Armed Forces families face balancing military life with the demands of the modern world. It is an ambitious, 10-year strategy that seeks to raise the bar for Armed Forces families by collaborating across organisational boundaries to increase understanding and provide more coherent, improved support.

The Armed Forces Families Plan

3. This Armed Forces Families Plan is derived from the Workstreams within the Armed Forces Families Strategy and identifies key priorities for action based upon a robust, evidence-based audit of current performance and future needs related to Armed Forces Families.

The Armed Forces Families Steering Group

4. The Armed Forces Families Steering Group (AFFSG) provides the leadership, vision and strategic direction to ensure that all Armed Forces families have the opportunity to achieve the best possible outcomes.

The Armed Forces Families Working Groups

5. Each of the Workstreams/Objective Leads for the Armed Forces Families Strategy and Plan will normally convene their own Working Group to conduct detailed work on their Workstream/Objective. They are subordinate to, and report to, the AFFSG.

The Armed Forces Covenant

6. The Armed Forces Covenant is the nation's commitment to those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, that they should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives. The Armed Forces Act 2021 introduces a new Covenant Duty on relevant public bodies, when exercising certain aspects of their public functions in the areas of housing, healthcare and education to have due regard to the three principles of the AF Covenant:

- the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces;
- the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces; and
- the principle that special provision for Service People may be justified by the effect on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

This will mean that in the future service providers will have to demonstrate that they have considered the principles of the Covenant when making decisions in these key areas. The new Duty is likely to come into effect in mid-2022.

The Defence Safeguarding Plan

7. The Defence Safeguarding Plan is maintained by the Defence Safeguarding Partnership Board (Def SPB). The Def SPB is the lead strategic pan-Defence partnership that is responsible for ensuring consistent and rigorous approaches to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, and vulnerable adults across Defence. The Def SPB is responsible for reviewing progress and assessing strengths and areas for development in the safeguarding system. The Def SPB is chaired at 2-Star level by D AFPPol; assisted by an Independent Scrutineer providing senior level advice, support, and challenge.

8. The Def SPB works closely with the AFFSG to ensure that the Defence Safeguarding Plan and the Armed Forces Families Plan remain closely linked, mutually supportive, and coherent.

2. Armed Forces Families Plan 2022

General

1. The Armed Forces Families Plan is derived from both the Defence Plan and the Armed Forces Families Strategy. Like the AF Families Strategy, it reflects – but is not exclusively driven by – the commitments in the Government’s response to the Selous Report. The Plan provides direction to those organisations with policy and/or delivery responsibilities related to Armed Forces families, wherever those families are based across the world.
2. This Plan has a 2-year horizon (to reflect the formal review cycle of the AF Families Strategy) but is written with a one-year focus.
3. The Plan is dynamic and will be updated routinely to reflect changes in the wider context, and the continuous development and improvement in families-related policy and delivery.

Structure and Objective Leads

4. **Structure.** The Armed Forces Families Plan is structured around eight key Objectives derived from the Workstreams of the Armed Forces Families Strategy, plus a ninth Objective dealing with cross-cutting and coherence elements. Objectives and Objective Leads are as follows:
 - a. **Objective 1 - Family Life (AHd Families AFFS).** Family units that are supported to understand and cope with deployment, mobility, and separation. Wherever they live, they are aware of what support is available, where, and how to access it. When children and adults are at risk of harm, they are protected through a multi-agency approach facilitating a swift response.
 - b. **Objective 2 - Service Life (DHd Welfare AFPSp).** Coordinated career management and welfare processes that focus on nurturing the Service Person with their family alongside them and preparing them for successful transition to civilian life.
 - c. **Objective 3 - Family Home (DHd Policy Accn).** A flexible accommodation policy that reflects modern family constructs, allowing families the choice and freedom to nurture a family home.
 - d. **Objective 4 - Children's Education (AHd Education AFFS).** Service children's opportunities are maximised through robust research, effective collaboration, and dissemination of best practice. This informs the wider policies and practice that underpins how the MOD and its partners support Service children.
 - e. **Objective 5 - Childcare (AHd Childcare AFFS).** Families have access to good quality, affordable childcare which meets their needs, improving wellbeing and providing greater opportunities for all the family.

- f. **Objective 6 - Non-UK Families (DHd Welfare AFPSp).** Non-UK families are valued and reflected in supportive and accessible UK Government and Defence policies, enabling recruitment and retention of the best people across the Services.
- g. **Objective 7 - Supporting Partners (AHd Families AFFS).** The skills and experiences of partners and spouses are widely understood, valued and sought after. This enables them to navigate extensive cross-sector provision to access timely support which meets their needs.
- h. **Objective 8 - Health and Wellbeing (AHd Families AFFS).** Families are able to access integrated, mental and physical health and wellbeing services. Continuity of support is provided by professionals cognisant of the military context, sharing information, to ease transition between regions, especially for the most vulnerable.
- i. **Objective 9 - Enabling, Supporting and Coordinating (DHd AFFS).** Enabling, supporting, and coordinating activity required to underpin Armed Forces Families Plan outputs, and to maintain coherence between individual Objectives, particularly where there are cross-cutting issues/elements.

5. Each of these Objectives is broken down into a number of Sub-Objectives containing the constituent tasks that underpin each Objective, as shown at **Annex A**. At working level these Sub-Objectives are further broken down into appropriate Sub-Sub-Objectives.

Management, Governance and Assurance

6. Governance and assurance of the Armed Forces Families Plan is the responsibility of the Armed Forces Families Steering Group and its subordinate Working Groups, who will hold to account Objective Leads, and others with responsibilities linked to the Armed Forces Families Plan. Membership of the AFFSG includes all key stakeholders from across the DPT, empowered representatives from the three single-Services and UK StratCom, and the Chief Executives of all three Family Federations. Full details are contained in the AFFSG TORs.

Measuring Effectiveness and Research

7. Key Performance Indicators (or appropriate measures of effectiveness) are being refined and maintained for each Objective. Research activity to confirm the continuing validity of detailed objectives and sub-objectives, and to measure their impact, will continue to be conducted in accordance with guidance and support from the People Research and Analysis Centre of Expertise within the DPT.

Risk Management

8. Risks associated with the Armed Forces Families Plan will be reflected in the AFFSG Risk Register, which will be managed in accordance with JSP 892. Risks that require transfer will normally be passed upwards to, or via, the Military People Leadership Team (MPLT).

Link to AF Covenant

9. DHd Covenant, AFPSp, is a core member of the AFFSG in order to ensure that the delivery of the Plan is coherent with any parallel activity within the Covenant Space. This link will also allow any issue involving OGDs, DAs or the Third Sector to be escalated for resolution through the CRG to the MCVB.

Holding to Account and Reporting

10. Delivery of the Families Plan will be held to account quarterly by the AFFSG. The AFFSG will agree RAYG and narrative input to the Quarterly Performance and Risk Reporting (QPRR) against the Defence Plan, for submission via People Strat. Progress will also be reported twice-yearly through reporting to SofS on progress against the AF Families Strategy, and annually through the AF Covenant Annual Report.

Communications

11. See **Annex B**. (To follow - extract of current AFFS/AFFSG Communications Strategy).

Annexes:

- A. Families Plan 2022 - Detailed Objectives and Sub-Objectives.
- B. Families Plan 2022 - Communications. (To Follow)

Annex A - Families Plan 2022 - Detailed Objectives and Sub-Objectives

Objective		Objective Lead	Sub-Objective	
1	Family Life: Family units that are supported to understand and cope with deployment, mobility and separation and the unique stresses of the military lifestyle. Wherever they live, they are aware of the support that is available, and how to access it. When children and adults are at risk of harm, they are protected through a multi-agency approach facilitating a swift response.	AHd Families AFFS	1.1	Establish and maintain support for families with additional needs and carers.
			1.2	Establish and maintain support for families in developing and maintaining healthy relationships.
			1.3	Establish and maintain effective safeguarding support for vulnerable families including those suffering domestic abuse.
			1.4	Establish and maintain a variety of effective communications channels to keep families informed and included.
			1.5	Enhance the recognition of the role families play and disadvantages they can face.
2	Service Life: Coordinated career management and welfare processes that focus on nurturing the serviceperson with their family alongside them and preparing them for successful transition to civilian life.	DHd Welfare AFPSp	2.1	Review accessibility of MOD welfare policy.
			2.2	Consider family wellbeing to minimise the frictions associated with meeting the needs of the Service and maintaining operational effect.
			2.3	Review welfare content within the transition and resettlement process.
3	Family Home: A flexible accommodation policy that reflects modern family constructs, allowing families the choice and freedom needed to nurture a family home.	DHd Policy People-Accom	3.1	Improve the Service Family Accommodation offer.
			3.2	Sustain support to modern family constructs.
			3.3	Deliver a fairer and more flexible accommodation model through the Future Accommodation Model programme.
4	Children's Education: The opportunities available to children from armed forces families are maximised through robust research, effective collaboration, and dissemination of best practice. This informs the wider policies and practice that underpins how the governments of the UK and external partners support these children.	AHd Education AFFS	4.1	Conduct Consultation and Research in conjunction with key stakeholders to fully understand lived educational experiences of families.
			4.2	Establish and maintain measures for effective and efficient Engagement & Delivery within the UK.
			4.3	Establish and maintain measures for effective and efficient Engagement & Delivery in overseas locations.
			4.4	Establish and maintain effective and efficient sources of Information, Advice and Support.
			4.5	Address the particular needs of children and young people that are most vulnerable, with a particular focus on children with Special Educational Needs (SEND).
			4.6	Identify and implement sustainable strategies to support the changes, transitions and life events associated with operational deployment.
			4.7	Deliver high-quality education and other children support services to the Defence Whole Force and their families in order to support accompanied service in the UK and overseas (through Defence Children's Services).
			4.8	Support Service children along their Educational Pathway (through DfE and devolved equivalents).
			4.9	Early Education: Provide guidance to stakeholders who deliver high-quality early education to Service children, in the UK and overseas.

5	<p>Childcare: Families have access to good quality, affordable childcare that meets their needs. This allows service personnel to fully engage with their duties, and the greater flexibility gives the family more opportunities, improving general wellbeing.</p>	AHd Childcare AFFS	5.1	Manage the wraparound childcare (WAC) pilots in order to gather evidence to support a Full Business Case for Full UK Rollout.
			5.2	Meet the manifesto commitment of funding toward wraparound childcare (WAC) Full UK Rollout for Sept '22.
		AHd Education AFFS	5.3	Deliver the Early Learning & Childcare fund (ELCF) in order to assist Early Years settings to meet the specific needs of the Armed Forces families that they serve; particularly in looking at actions that will encourage greater availability or accessibility of/to provision.
			5.4	Create and maintain a service children's Early Years Provider Network (EYPN) that will share best practice, communicate, collaborate, and celebrate to the betterment of service children in the EYS sector.
			5.5	Establish, maintain, and potentially grow the MOD Local Authority Partnership - Early Years (MODLAP-EY) in order that Defence is able to encourage and hold LAs to account for their performance in the provision of EYs to their Armed Forces communities.
			5.7	Investigate the specific issues faced in obtaining childcare during periods of deployment/separation and develop options for mitigation.
			5.9	Act as the Defence voice on policy matters relating to childcare on x-Dept and Devolved Administration policy development committees.
6	<p>Non-UK Families: Non-UK families are valued and accommodated in supportive UK government and Defence policies cognisant of their experiences. This helps to mitigate potential disadvantage conferred by their immigration status wherever possible and provide wider support that is sensitive to cultural backgrounds.</p>	DHd Welfare AFPSp	6.1	Identify and manage issues faced by non-UK SP and non-UK families.
			6.2	Mitigate any disadvantage experienced by non-UK SP and non-UK families due to their service.
7	<p>Supporting Partners: The skills and experiences of partners and spouses are widely understood, valued, and sought after. Partners and spouses can navigate extensive cross-sector provision to access timely support that meets their needs and helps them to develop and pursue their own career path.</p>	AHd Families AFFS	7.1	Raise awareness in the private sector of instances of disadvantage caused by service to partners. Promote the skills and experiences of partners through active stakeholder engagement and effective Communications.
			7.2	Measure the impact of existing cross-sector support, identify possible gaps and ensure easy access to support to partners and spouses.
			7.3	Improve public sector support by working collaboratively with cross-government stakeholders.
			7.4	Improve access to training for partner and spouses and help them further their own development/career.
			7.5	Assist families by developing more flexible, supportive MOD career management policies.
			7.6	Achieve and maintain effective communication of existing partner/spousal support.
8	<p>Health and Wellbeing: Families are able to access timely integrated, mental and physical health and</p>		8.1	Establish, maintain, and improve the MOD's involvement in supporting the delivery of partnership products and services to AF Families.

	wellbeing services. Continuity of support is provided by professionals cognisant of the military context, sharing information, to ease relocation between nations and regions, especially for the most vulnerable.	AHd Families AFFS	8.2	Maintain and improve current partnership arrangements with key stakeholders in OGDs and DAs.
			8.3	Exploit current programmes of work provided by stakeholders, maintaining strong links where appropriate.
			8.4	Drive coherence across the Nations of the UK and encourage the sharing of best practice.
9	Enabling, Supporting and Coordinating Activity: The enabling, supporting, and coordinating activity required for the effective and efficient delivery of the overall Armed Forces Families Plan.	DHd AFFS	9.1	Establish and maintain the formal MOD policies required for the effective and efficient delivery of the core Objectives of the AF Families Plan.
			9.2	Establish and coordinate the data activity required for the effective and efficient delivery of the core Objectives of the AF Families Plan.
			9.3	Establish and coordinate the communications activity required for the effective and efficient delivery of the core Objectives of the AF Families Plan.
			9.4	Establish and coordinate the research activities required for the effective and efficient delivery of the core Objectives of the AF Families Plan.
			9.5	Deliver the support to Children & Young People required for the effective and efficient delivery of the core Objectives of the AF Families Plan (Hd CS, AWS as HoP).
			9.6	Deliver the MOD Education Support Fund, in order to assist publicly funded schools throughout the UK to mitigate the adverse impact of exceptional family mobility and/or parental deployment/separation.