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# Families First Newsletter

Issue: 15 | Date: March 28, 2024

Welcome to DIO's monthly newsletter designed to provide families living in SFA with useful updates and information on their homes.

Included in this issue of Families First:

- A Message from DIO Director of Accommodation, Phil Riley
- Modernised Accommodation Offer survey
- Investment across the estate
- DIO SFA Townhall sessions

## A message from DIO Director of Accommodation, Phil Riley

Dear families,

Earlier this month, a truly appalling case of damp and mould appeared on social media. I want to address the entirely unacceptable conditions and offer my sincerest apologies for the severity of that situation. This is not the standard of accommodation service our Service families deserve, and we have been engaging with our suppliers to gain robust assurances that such cases are proactively identified and managed with compassion.

In relation to this case, an offer of alternative accommodation was made within hours of the post, work has already been completed to rectify the immediate problem and the installation of a new bathroom has been scheduled. However, we recognise that we should never have reached that position and we absolutely should not be managing Service family accommodation through social media!

There is a great deal to be proud of in the way services to families have progressed over the last 12 months and the way our industry partners have responded to a wet winter with a record number of named storms. However, cases like this are a reminder that there is still much work to do. Over the next 12 months, £29million will be spent on damp and mould works for around 4,000 families, prioritising those with vulnerable family members. This will however take some time to fix, at least 2-3 years of work is required along with significant investment, which we continue to lobby for.

I am keen that we work with our industry partners on a 'back to basics' approach, where our focus is on working together to ensure that routine tasks such as reactive repairs, move-in & move-outs, and communications are delivered to the standard that Service families deserve.

You of course will be key in judging how successful we are and I will, as always, make time to speak to families whenever I visit sites and walk around SFA. Over the next few months, I'll also be dropping into some local housing surgeries. Dates and times will be advertised very soon so please do take the time to engage with us - all feedback, good or bad, is welcome and important to us.

Phil



## Investment across the SFA estate: Void refurbishments

As part of the Defence Command Paper Refresh funding, £58M this financial year was allocated to fund a nationwide programme of high-quality refurbishment works to bring around 1000 homes back online. The selected homes were previously unavailable for allocation due to their condition and are in areas where there is high demand for SFA.

As part of this programme, 19 properties in Topcliffe, North Yorkshire are being fully refurbished to enable them to be brought back online and help ease allocation issues in the area.

The homes selected were surveyed to confirm they meet the required specific criteria for internal and external upgrade work. The refurbishment works include replacement of bathrooms and kitchens, new internal doors, new garden fencing and extended patios and full rewiring and plastering.

The Garrison Commander Lt Col Waller visited the first two completed homes on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 and commented: *“How fabulous the refurbished quarters are looking here at Alanbrooke. The two we visited were of the highest standard I have come across and the contractor and associated parties should be highly commended for the level of finish. I am delighted to see the progress being made with ongoing upgrades and improvements.”*

*It is clear that Project team and Local delivery have put real thought into how best to utilise this recent inject of funding and how enhancements to the lived experience for our families are being made. As part of this initiative, kitchens, bathrooms, internal and external doors, fence and patios across the SFA are being improved and it is so important that our SFA is a home from home for our families”.*



## Modernised Accommodation Offer survey

The MOD People Team is undertaking a review of the Modernised Accommodation Offer (formerly the New Accommodation Offer) in collaboration with Front Line Commands, following the pause in rollout of elements relating to Service Families Accommodation (SFA).

As part of the review the MOD seek to gain a clearer picture of your personal circumstances and your future accommodation choices. This data will be used to improve understanding of the potential demand for family accommodation, including where, how and with whom Service personnel would like to live. It will help to create an improved accommodation offer for the Armed Forces

You are strongly encouraged to complete the [Modernised Accommodation Offer Survey](#) by Monday 1st April. Your service number is your access code.

## Coming soon – DIO SFA townhall sessions

DIO is to deliver a series of townhall sessions across the UK with the aim of engaging with personnel and families directly – sharing updates, listening to experiences and resolving any issues.

We will share details of dates and locations via Defence Connect and GOV.uk very soon!



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## Useful Links

[Contact Pinnacle](#)

[Make a request for compensation](#)

[Reporting damp and mould](#)

[Join the SFA Defence Connect page](#)

[Forces Help to Buy is here to stay](#)