



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

ARMED FORCES COVENANT Interim Report (2011)



The Armed Forces Covenant
Interim Report (2011)

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Foreword by Rt Hon Andrew Robathan MP

Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans

This is the first Armed Forces Covenant report since the publication of the Armed Forces Covenant in May 2011. Whilst there has been much progress, there is still much to do. Some of that work falls to Government, but many of the workstrands to embed the Covenant are dependent on the support and active involvement of our strategic partner charities and Families Federations. The Government and the Nation are indebted to them for their continuing support and drive.

The Armed Forces Act received Royal Assent in November. It will be a statutory duty for the Secretary of State to lay before Parliament an annual report which considers the effects of service, areas of potential disadvantage, and the need for special provision where appropriate. Whilst there is no such obligation this year, the aim of this report is to continue the momentum of robust reporting following on from the Today and Tomorrow document (published in May 2011, outlining the commitments the Government has made in support of the Covenant) and also to act as a 'trial run' to develop the best way of gathering evidence from a large variety of stakeholders. We must ensure that the statutory annual report is a robust and credible report, demonstrating where progress has been made, but reflecting the issues of today to allow us to prioritise work and resources.

This report has been initiated by the Ministry of Defence but from the outset has involved consultation and input from other Government Departments, the Devolved Administrations and from Service Charities and Families Federations. We are grateful to all those who have contributed. I am particularly pleased to include in this report the observations of the external members of the Covenant Reference Group. I hope that this report and its successors will promote debate at all levels so that we can continue to make progress in support of the Armed Forces community.



Introduction

This report is the first of its kind since publication of the Armed Forces Covenant. From 2012 there will be a statutory duty to lay before Parliament an annual report which considers the effects of service on Regulars and Reservists, those who are serving and have served, their families and the bereaved.

In compiling such a report, the most important element must be evidence of what current and former Service personnel, and their families, experience in their everyday lives. To obtain this evidence, MOD aims to draw upon a wide variety of stakeholders and sources. These include reports from the chain of command, inputs from the voluntary and community sector, surveys such as the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey (AFCAS) and the Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS), and statistics collected by other Government departments. Only through a systematic approach to measuring the progress in reducing disadvantage faced by Service people will we be able to understand why difficulties still arise in the access to public and commercial products. As this strategy matures it will enable us to build up a picture of trends, which in turn enables us to make more informed balance of investment decisions to tackle priority areas. The evidence used in this report predominantly dates from between July 2010 and July 2011. This means that for the more recent commitments we do not yet have evidence of their impact on the ground.

In writing this report we have engaged with policy areas within MOD itself, the Departments of Health, for Business Innovation and Skills, for Transport, for Work and Pensions, for Education, for Communities and Local Government, the Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, Home Office, Ministry of Justice, HM Revenue and Customs, the Devolved Administrations, charities (The Royal British Legion, COBSEO - the Confederation of Service Charities, the Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA-FH), the War Widows Association), the three single Service Families Federations and with Prof. Hew Strachan of Oxford University. Together they form the membership of the Covenant Reference Group (formerly known as the External Reference Group). In line with the commitment made by the former Secretary of State in the House of Commons, we are also publishing alongside this report the further observations made by the external (non-Governmental) members of the Covenant Reference Group. In this interim report those observations appear after the Summary of Conclusions.

This report was prepared whilst the Armed Forces Bill was still the subject of consideration in Parliament. We have not, therefore, sought to anticipate in detail the final shape of the legislation. Rather we have focused this year on ensuring that we give voice to the full range of issues and concerns which our many contributors have raised in connection with the Covenant. Together they will influence our programme of work for the coming year.

A number of areas covered in the report have already been extensively discussed elsewhere – for example in Dr Murrison’s review of prosthetics provision, the Hutton Review of pensions, the Armed Forces Pay Review Body evidence and the Armed Forces and Families’ Continuous Attitude Surveys. Where these reports have relevance to Covenant commitments they are referenced but we have sought not to repeat large amounts of their content.

When we published the Armed Forces Covenant in May 2011, we also outlined what we saw as the expectations and aspirations implicit in the Covenant, grouped into 15 themes. We noted that the demands of Service and other constraints might prevent these expectations and aspirations being met in some circumstances. However, they should still serve to influence policy, service delivery and standards.

We have structured this report along the same fifteen themes. For each theme we set out how the Covenant applies¹, how Service people may face disadvantage in relation to that particular theme and then describe progress made since the last Covenant Reference Group report in November 2010 and the Today and Tomorrow document of May 2011 - as well as highlighting the key issues that remain outstanding. Each chapter ends with a summary of work in hand and/or key actions. An annex at the end of the report summarises progress against the (some 100) commitments relating to each theme of the Covenant.

Many of the services delivered by Government to members of the Armed Forces Community are provided in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland by the Devolved Administrations. In drafting the report, we have taken care to ensure that we distinguish clearly between the situation in different parts of the UK where that is a relevant factor. It will be apparent from the text that our relationship with the Scottish and Welsh Governments is well advanced in these areas, but also that there is further work to be done in building links with the Northern Ireland Executive.

In compiling this report we have been mindful of the need to capture lessons prior to the statutory duty to produce such a report. Whilst a formal lessons learnt exercise will take place with stakeholders post publication, some key themes have already emerged: how best to engage stakeholders, how to capture the most important issues and work up realistic, costed proposals for addressing them; how to look at disadvantage and special treatment; the format of the report; and the evidence that we use.

Regardless of statutory footing, all contributors to the report want to ensure that it is used across Government to direct programmes of work that respond to the areas of disadvantage that the Armed Forces Community continue to face and to consider special treatment where it is appropriate to do so – these are the two key principles of the Covenant.

1. Taken from the Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant, published on 16 May 2011.

Summary of Conclusions

1. Terms and Conditions of Service: The nature of service in the Armed Forces makes fair Terms and Conditions of Service particularly important. At the same time, the constraints imposed by the UK's budget deficit must be taken into account, as elsewhere. The Government has sought to protect those earning under £21k, who are not subject to the pay freeze. However, the cumulative effect of the pay freeze, changes to allowances and the prospect of pension reform continues to cause concern within the Armed Forces at a time when demands on them remain high. Development of the New Employment Model (NEM) is addressing terms and conditions of service in a holistic manner to ensure that the financial and non-financial elements of the offer are fair in response to the commitment we ask of our people.

2. Healthcare: Satisfaction with Service-provided medical and dental treatment remains high. Achieving consistency in the provision of health services across the four administrations of the UK for the highly mobile Armed Forces community remains challenging. However, much work is being done to improve communication and provide the right services to the people who need them most. As the NHS in England changes, Government must ensure that progress is built on rather than lost. Key areas of work include implementation of both of Dr Murrison's reports (Fighting Fit and Prosthetics Provision); the raft of mental health initiatives that have recently been put in place to support serving personnel, their families, veterans and the bereaved; the Care Quality Commission's review into the work of the Defence Medical Services and the increased capacity at Headley Court. The Government will carefully consider the report by the House of Commons Defence Committee into support to the wounded, injured and sick and monitor the Defence Recovery Capability.

3. Education: Much progress has been made here, but it is clear that specific disadvantages are still in evidence for serving personnel, their partners and children. There is a significant amount of work in train to address these areas: the pupil premium and additional £3m support fund for Service children; childcare sufficiency audits; fair access protocols; work to remedy transfer of records issues when Service children move schools; a review of the issues faced by partners in transferring education or training courses, and qualification equivalency issues for Foreign and Commonwealth personnel, as well as life skills training for serving personnel to aid them on transition to civilian life.

4. Housing: The quality of MOD-provided housing and the ability to access private housing are clearly factors in the level of morale of serving people and their families. The three year pause in accommodation upgrades from 2013 was a difficult decision to take. Due to the unique nature of Service life and the disadvantage that frequent mobility obligations bring to accessing loans and mortgages there are a number of special provisions in place to help serving personnel and veterans get on the housing ladder. Key areas of work include the Future Accommodation Project (as part of NEM); the Next Generation Estates Contract; improvements to Defence Infrastructure Organisation customer care; continued working with lenders to increase access to secured loans to achieve home ownership and improvements in communication on the support already available through Government assisted affordable housing schemes.

5. Benefits and Tax: There is generally a good story to tell on benefits and tax. For example we have been able to double council tax relief to 50% for those on eligible overseas operations. We will continue to improve communications on National Insurance credits for Service spouses and civil partners, seek to ensure clarity on the process to obtain council tax discounts (and where possible encourage Local Authorities to offer the maximum discount) and continue to drive work on resolving access to benefits for dependents of serving Foreign and Commonwealth personnel.

6.Responsibility of Care: The MOD monitors its responsibility of care policies closely. It is clear that a continued relationship with our voluntary and community sector partners is critical to the continued provision of welfare support to our personnel and families. We will look at what more could be done, through partnership working, to support Foreign and Commonwealth families more effectively.

7.Deployment: The general picture of the welfare package and support available to families is positive. Much has been done to address issues that families have raised in the context of Iraq and early operational tours in Afghanistan. We will look at what further support individual augmentees could be given and look in greater detail at the concerns expressed by serving personnel about the support given to their families when they are away.

8.Family Life: The MOD takes the provision of support to enable a quality family life very seriously. Progress has been made but there is more to do, including: continuing the work to look at the effects of mobility on Service children; developing a charity co-ordination strategy to make best effect from the increased generosity of charities and members of the public; development of the NEM to balance demands on our people and their families; ensuring the transferability of courses and qualifications to enable Service partners to gain employment; and development of the Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champion system.

9.Commercial Products and Services: The MOD will continue to work with banks and building societies on improving lending to Service personnel. The Defence Discount Scheme is already in operation and enhanced access will be available next year. The Community Covenant may encourage local businesses to offer further tailored support to Armed Forces Personnel in the access to public and commercial services. Finally, we hope to have a solution to BFPO addresses to contain a UK postcode by Spring 2012.

10. Transition: Much progress has been made in the areas of employment and education opportunities for Service personnel and in advice surrounding housing. Work will continue on when Foreign and Commonwealth personnel can apply to settle in the UK to ensure that it is at the earliest appropriate time in order to alleviate the problems encountered with lack of access to public funds whilst they are awaiting a decision. MOD will take forward research into transition of those leaving the Armed Forces (due to report in Spring 2012). We look forward to working with COBSEO and the Forces in Mind project which will support veterans and families in the transition to civilian life.

11(A). Support After Service: Again, support after service is an area where we have worked across government and with charities to ensure improved levels of support. We have improved the awareness amongst Service personnel of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (and supporting financial advice); improved the MOD online portal for veterans and implemented the automatic entitlement to a blue badge and concessionary travel for injured Service personnel.

11(B). Support to Inquests: The Government understands the unique nature of Armed Forces inquests and the different, and often complex, issues that they raise. On 29 November 2011, the Public Bodies Bill was amended to allow implementation of the office of the Chief Coroner – expected to become functional in 2012. The Chief Coroner will have specific functions in relation to investigations into deaths of Service personnel aimed at minimising the inconvenience and additional distress that can be caused to families suffering the traumatic loss of a loved one. The MOD provides support to bereaved families throughout the inquest process, and has worked with the MOJ and others to ensure that coroners have all the support they need in order to hear inquests thoroughly and promptly.

12. Recognition: The Government understands the importance of recognition for serving personnel, their families and veterans. Good progress has been made in supporting Armed Forces Day across the country and we will announce details of a fresh review of the rules governing the award of Armed Forces medals and CDS's commendation scheme shortly.

13. Participation as Citizens: Progress needs to be made on reducing disadvantages faced by Foreign and Commonwealth personnel and their families. It has already been made on arrangements for Service personnel to vote and this will continue to be developed. The Community Covenant is starting to deliver tangible results and it will be vital to maintain momentum in this area. Research around public perceptions of the Armed Forces Covenant will continue, helping us to ensure that the people of the UK – including charities and businesses – are aware of the principles of the Covenant and what they can do in support of it, alongside Government.

14. Changes in Defence: Further to the Strategic Defence and Security Review announced last year, there have been important announcements this year on defence reform, basing, and the future of the UK's Reserve Forces. The implementation of these changes will take further detailed planning and MOD will engage with stakeholders throughout this process. The Armed Forces redundancies which have been announced by each Service will take effect over the period February 2012 to March 2015. We will ensure that Service leavers are adequately supported in their transition to civilian life.

15. Recourse: Service personnel have particular pathways of recourse open to them – a key facet being the presence of a Service Complaints Commissioner. An update on the review of the complaints system and recommendations of the SCC herself will be reported to the SCC by the end of this year. We will continue to work with the Ombudsmen.

Observations from External Members of the Covenant Reference Group

Naval Families Federation, Army Families Federation and RAF Families Federation

The three Service Families Federations have been actively involved in the production of this Annual Report, as evidenced by the many references to family-related issues. We have welcomed the opportunity to influence the Report on behalf of the family members we represent and are confident that their key concerns have been recognised and appropriately reflected in the Covenant work to date. Clearly there is more to be done and, in setting priorities for scarce resources, we recognise that Service families are but one element of the Armed Forces community and that all members merit due consideration, with the needs of those still serving, and their families, to be balanced against the needs of those who have served, or have been bereaved as a result of service. In trying to address the needs of such a large and varied constituency, it is inevitable that this first Report is lengthy and detailed. However, we welcome this as a comprehensive reference document, against which all future progress can and should be measured.

In response to the key conclusions, on Terms & Conditions of Service, we strongly support the continued need for an independent Armed Forces Pay Review Body and remain deeply concerned at the cumulative effect of the pay freeze, allowances cuts and changes to pensions indexing. Whilst we recognise the work being undertaken to develop a New Employment Model aimed at providing more stability and better career management, we are unsure as to the impact this model will have for those still required to maintain mobility and the families who wish to accompany them.

Much progress has been made in Healthcare but we remain concerned at the impact of mobility on Service family members required to cross either PCT or country boundaries as a result of an assignment and who find themselves faced with differing funding provision and eligibility criteria. We acknowledge that health is a highly devolved function and that policies for funding of treatment and eligibility criteria are based on local considerations. However, we would urge that more is done to encourage all UK health practitioners to recognise the impact of Armed Forces mobility and be as flexible as possible in terms of funding and eligibility for treatment.

In Education, we have also seen good progress to address identified disadvantage for Armed Forces children but we await the results of the Schools Admissions Code consultation process before we can confirm that schools access for mobile Armed Forces children has been appropriately enhanced. We have welcomed the opportunity to contribute to the allocation of funding from the £3m support fund and we await feedback as to how schools are making use of the Service Pupil Premium before judging its impact on enhancing support to Service children.

Housing continues to be the most-reported issue to all three Federations and dominates our workload, despite varying levels of occupation across the three Services. We continue to express very real concerns about DIO Transformation and the Next Generation Estate Contract and the potential impact on Service families living in SFA. The pace of change and the high level of staff rationalisation are creating genuine concerns as to the quality of customer service that will be delivered during the transition period and beyond. We were also extremely disappointed and frustrated to learn of the 3-year “pause” in funding for SFA upgrades and feel that higher priority must be given to maintaining and enhancing the quality of Service-provided accommodation, since where and how an airman/soldier/sailor lives has a direct impact on his or her operational effectiveness and willingness to serve. Whilst we welcome efforts to ease the transition of Service families into privately owned or rented accommodation, we emphasise the continued need for families to have a choice and to be able to serve accompanied in good quality, affordable accommodation if that is their choice and it contributes to operational effectiveness.

On benefits and tax, we have been pleased to note progress in removing clear disadvantage experienced by the partners of serving personnel, particularly when accompanying the uniformed partner overseas.

In Responsibility of Care and Deployment, we have noted good progress in the delivery of welfare support, particularly to those deployed and the families they leave behind. However, those deployed as Individual Augmentees, particularly those with families living “beyond the wire”, can sometimes slip between the safety nets of provision. We have particular concerns that Reservists and their families, and F&C personnel and their families, receive appropriate welfare support, shaped to their unique circumstances. We continue to hope that a Joint Personnel Administration process can be developed that would allow welfare staffs direct access to non-serving family members in order to enhance communication and raise awareness of the support that is available, particularly during deployments.

With regard to Family Life, our key area of interest, we will monitor progress on the New Employment Model and continue to assess commitments made to support employment of Service partners, improve childcare accessibility, enhance access to schools and health services, and improve the benefits system so that it better reflects the inherent mobility of Service families. Anything that the commercial sector can do to support the Armed Forces family would be welcomed, as would the continued support of so many excellent Service charities, which often step in when the public sector fails to provide.

Finally, with regard to Transition and Support After Service, we re-emphasise the point that, at the end of a Service career, no matter what the duration, it is often not just a Serviceperson transitioning back into civilian life but the entire family. Support to partners and children, particularly in terms of finding employment and family accommodation is essential. Due consideration must also be given to the mental health of family members as they leave the relative security of the Service environment, often taking with them unresolved issues arising from the impact of deployment and separation on the family.

A general observation we would make is the need for all parties to continue working towards equity of treatment across the boundaries of the Devolved Administrations. Given the mobile nature of Armed Forces life, disadvantage can be created simply by responding to an assignment order that takes a serving person and his or her family across a country border, where different rules and processes apply. Anything that can be done to harmonise treatment across the UK would ease the transition of mobile Armed Forces families.

As members of the Covenant Reference Group, we will continue to monitor implementation of the many and varied Covenant commitments and look forward to reporting on progress from a families' perspective again in 2012.

COBSEO, RBL, SSAFA, WWA and Professor Hew Strachan

As external members of the newly formed Covenant Reference Group, we welcome the opportunity to comment upon the first (non-statutory) annual report on the application of the Armed Forces Covenant. The progress made with regard to the Covenant and its surrounding issues since the former External Reference Group's establishment and the publication of the Service personnel Command Paper (SPCP) in July 2008 is truly impressive. It is nevertheless the case that much remains to be done and, realistically, the ongoing evolution of the Armed Forces Covenant over time, in response to changing expectations, will mean that the search for improvement in the way in which the Nation responds to the needs of its armed forces, present and past, will require constant vigilance.

Whilst the number of people serving in Her Majesty's armed forces is declining, the total armed forces community i.e. including veterans, is estimated to exceed 9 million. The welfare needs of veterans young and old and their dependents has been the subject of extensive research which we would expect to influence the future work of the Covenant Reference Group.

In acknowledging the very considerable progress made, we wish to draw particular attention to two points that we would expect to see addressed in the next annual report to be published in the autumn of 2012. The first is the application of the principles underlying the Covenant in Northern Ireland and, associated with that, the absence of Northern Ireland representation on the Covenant Reference Group. The Annual Report reflects this point but it is one which we hope could be addressed with the devolved administration sooner rather than later.

The second is the difficulty of communicating the benefits accruing to Service personnel and their families as a result of the work of the SPCP and now of the Covenant. Undoubtedly, awareness has increased with recent legislation and its attendant publicity, but that has also been accompanied by some cynicism, reflected in the views of some Service personnel that the Covenant is a sop to cover the reality of reductions and redundancies. The Ministry needs to review its communications strategy for engaging its own personnel.

Two changes in defence (Chapter 14) have a potential bearing on the Covenant, one of which attracts some attention in the report but needs to be stressed, and another which is overlooked.

The reform of Reserves (14.3) assumes a greater reliance on Reservists and also greater demands in terms of training and operational deployment. The applicability of the Covenant to Reservists is acknowledged by the report, but there are specific areas of support in which Reservists' needs are not sufficiently recognised or in which they may well be or become greater. One is the use of the Pupil Premium for the support of Reservists' children while they are deployed. Another is the medical support given to Reservists on return from operations, particularly in the area of mental health since Reservists are reported to suffer more in this respect than Regulars. In general the impact of the reform of Reserves on the families of Reservists, who do not enjoy the same levels of unit support afforded Regulars, will need careful monitoring.

The second issue, that is not addressed in this report, is that of Defence Reform (14.2) as a result of the Levene Report on Defence Reform published in June 2011. The implications of proposed changes for personnel direction in the Ministry of Defence main building are

profoundly worrying, and the direction of travel is in direct contradiction to the principles underpinning the Armed Forces Covenant. Personnel now accounts for over 30% of the defence budget and its costs are rising at a higher proportional rate than those of equipment. The complexity of the problems with which the MOD unit responsible for personnel has to deal is increased not just by the Covenant itself but also by legislation both in the UK and in the EU. Logically, the status of the unit, which is led by the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel) would be enhanced through Defence Reform and, just as in a major company, human resources and personnel management would be represented on the main Defence Board. In practice, the Levene Report gives little attention to the resource which Defence frequently acknowledges as its major asset, its people. The responsibilities of the post of the Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Personnel and Training) are to be reviewed in 2013. The position of the DCDS (Personnel and Training) could be further complicated by the proposed enhancement of the responsibilities of the single service chiefs. The logic which takes power from the centre runs counter to the demand for centralised delivery which the Covenant Reference Group encounters through its liaison with other government departments, the devolved governments and now (through the Community Covenant) local government. The Task Force on the Military Covenant noted the tendency of individual services to produce bespoke solutions to what are joint problems and to produce procedures which confuse those other bodies which have to deal with them as well those who have to operate them. We urge the Ministry of Defence to reconsider its policies for the administration of Personnel.

The Annual Report acknowledges the role of the Service Complaints Commissioner in relation to disadvantage and special treatment, and we welcome this (chapter 15). However, we observe the inequity that this creates for Veterans. The need for Regulars to have an external body to which they can take their complaints should logically be matched by similar provision for Veterans. In July 2011 the High Court decision to allow Veterans who were present at atomic bomb trials to take their cases to the Supreme Court shows how having the Ministry act as both judge and jury in such cases can antagonise those whom it should be supporting as well expose it to reputational risk.

Finally, we welcome the specific references in the report to disadvantage and special treatment which reflect the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant now included in the Armed Forces Act 2011. We are concerned to secure greater understanding of the long term application of the principle of special treatment for wounded, injured and sick personnel and veterans. We would expect this subject to be addressed by the Covenant Reference Group during the next 12 months and to feature in the next annual report.

1 Terms and Conditions of Service

“Service personnel should be sustained and rewarded by Terms and Conditions of Service (TACOS) which recognise the freedoms and choices that they have voluntarily given up. These TACOS should be fair to personnel and wherever possible give flexibility to match family circumstances, whilst meeting the needs of the MOD and conforming to wider Government policy. They will be held under regular review by the MOD.

The terms under which individuals serve, such as enlistment and engagements, are binding in every sense. The conditions offered, in return for the commitments and risks to which Service personnel are subject, should be fair in terms of both the financial and non-financial package. The recommendations of an independent body should constitute an integral part of the process used to determine pay.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Service personnel do not have the right to take industrial action and (with the exception of doctors and dentists in the Defence Medical Services) do not have trade union or federation representation. The Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) provides independent advice to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Defence on the remuneration and charges for members of the Armed Forces. The AFPRB make recommendations for pay, broadly comparable with pay levels in civilian life, appropriate to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people, taking account of the particular circumstances of Service life. The differences between Conditions of Service for members of the Armed Forces and conditions in civilian life, which cannot be taken directly into account by pay comparability, are reflected in the X-Factor (a percentage increase to the Armed Forces salary). The independent nature of the AFPRB is critical to retaining Service trust in the fairness and parity of pay awards.

Service spouses and partners can face particular difficulty in obtaining and sustaining well paid employment – particularly due to mobility obligations and the fact that their serving partner is often away from the home for long periods, making childcare challenging. Single income families are therefore often a practical reality for the Armed Forces. In such circumstances the pay freeze, changes to allowances and changes to Government benefits may have had a compound effect on some Service families.

1. Pay

As this report was going to press the Chancellor outlined the Government’s future policy towards public sector pay in his Autumn statement. This policy applies to members of the Armed Forces as well as other public sector staff. The impact will be addressed in future reports.

The Government has imposed a pay freeze in 2011/12 and 2012/13 for those public sector workers, including the Armed Forces, earning £21,000 a year or more. However, unlike many other public sector workers, those Service personnel who are eligible will continue to receive a pay increment each year. Nevertheless, the pay freeze has clearly hit the Services hard at a time where they feel demands on them are still high. According to the MOD Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2011, only 29% of respondents agreed (21% were neutral) that the

X-factor in their salary is enough compensation for Service lifestyle, working conditions and expectations. However, this does represent a 3% point increase on 2010 results.

The AFPRB will continue to submit recommendations for those Service personnel earning less than £21,000, for any targeted measures proposed for particular groups, and on food and accommodation charges. Pay rates for Service personnel up to and including the ranks of Commodore/Brigadier/Air Commodore will be recommended by the AFPRB after the pay freeze has ended. The need to recruit, retain and motivate suitably able and qualified people lies at the heart of the AFPRB's approach to its task. In reaching their recommendations the AFPRB take account of broad comparability with the pay of civilian occupations of similar job weight and responsibility within the UK, wider economic considerations and the MOD's financial position.

2.Allowances

The purpose of MOD allowances is to reimburse Service personnel for justifiable expenditure incurred either when on duty or as a result of the unique nature of Service life.

Overall, the allowances system is complex and costly, and requires reform over the longer term. The Government's priority in the short term has been to support those on operations, while looking for ways in which sensible savings measures can be taken elsewhere. The doubling of the tax free Operational Allowance from £14.51 per day to £29.02 per day by the Coalition Government in July 2010, backdated to 6 May 2010 – which means personnel now receive a lump sum of just over £5,000 at the end of a six month deployment – has been widely welcomed as has the doubling of council tax relief (to 50%) for those on specific overseas operations (see Chapter 5 section 2).

Subsequently, the Strategic Defence and Security Review envisaged savings in allowances expenditure of £250M per annum by 2014/15 (out of an annual spend of over £800M). About £80M of that will be achieved as a result of reductions in numbers of personnel and measures to reduce the number of movements which generate claims. The remainder will come from changes in allowance eligibility criteria and rates. The changes have ensured where possible that no group was disproportionately affected, and effects have been further mitigated by phasing in some changes by up to two years.

Where possible, allowance savings measures were taken in accordance with the following principles:

- all actual, unavoidable expenses incurred for Service reasons should be reimbursed;
- where expense is incurred for Service reasons but there is some element of choice in incurring this expense, Service personnel should make a contribution towards it;
- operations, mobility and separation should be the highest priorities for reimbursement; and
- lower earners should be protected as much as possible.

Many personnel claim only a few allowances and therefore have not been significantly affected by these changes. The summary of changes to allowances is available on the MOD website.

Allowances are not arbitrary expenditure, or an additional element of pay, but have been developed to provide either recompense for actual costs incurred as a result of Service or as a compensation for it. Where there is a Service need, adequate financial provision will continue

to be made, within the bounds of current financial constraints necessarily imposed on the Department. In reviewing the Continuity of Education Allowance (Chapter 3, section 10) the purpose of the allowance has been re-emphasised to ensure that it gets to those people for whom it is intended.

The MOD's AFCAS 2011 survey registered a sharp increase (19%) since 2010 in dissatisfaction with allowances, with 43% of respondents stating that they were dissatisfied (an additional 20% were neutral). It is accepted that these changes have been unpopular and that some of them may require adjustments to lifestyle, but they have formed a necessary part of the Department's contribution to the Government's programme to reduce the UK deficit.

3. New Employment Model

The MOD recognises that the current employment model for Service personnel has not changed much in the last 40 years and requires improving to better meet the needs of today's modern Armed Forces. In the SDSR, the Government made a commitment to:

- ensure that service in the Armed Forces remains an attractive choice in a rapidly evolving employment market;
- better balance the demands placed on our people and their families, providing the greater domestic stability which is central to partners' employment and children's education, while continuing to support mobility where this is essential to Defence requirements.

Consequently the MOD has set up a long term programme to develop a New Employment Model (NEM). The NEM programme comprises five project teams which are addressing: Manpower Utilisation and Terms of Service; Financial and Non-Financial Conditions of Service; Future Accommodation; Training and Education, and NEM Delivery.

Work to date has involved extensive data gathering including the establishment of a detailed baseline and understanding of the existing model. Research is being undertaken to determine personnel aspirations, understand the future context and model costs. This will include widespread consultation with key interest groups. Initial analysis of data already obtained is under way and will help inform where changes need to be made. Subsequent work will see the development and down-selection of a range of options to deliver the NEM benefits.

The individual NEM projects are currently on track to report their findings in the summer of 2012. These will be drawn together into a consolidated package of options for consideration by the Defence Board in the autumn. Once a way forward has been agreed, it is expected that some major changes would take effect from 2015, with some measures taking up to 10 years to complete in full.

Conclusions

The nature of service in the Armed Forces makes fair Terms and Conditions of Service particularly important. At the same time, the constraints imposed by the UK's budget deficit must be taken into account. The Government has sought to protect those earning under £21k, who are not subject to the pay freeze.

However, The cumulative effect of the pay freeze, changes to allowances and the prospect of pension reform (see chapter 11) continues to cause concern within the Armed Forces at a time when demands on them remain high. Development of the New Employment Model (NEM) is addressing terms and conditions of service in a holistic manner to ensure that the financial and non-financial elements of the offer are fair in response to the commitment we ask of our people.

2 Healthcare

“The Armed Forces Community should enjoy the same standard of, and access to, healthcare as that received by any other UK citizen in the area they live. For serving personnel, including mobilised Reservists, primary healthcare is provided by the MOD, whilst secondary care is provided by the local healthcare provider. Personnel injured on operations should be treated in conditions which recognise the specific needs of Service personnel, normally involving a dedicated Armed Forces ward, where this is appropriate for them, and medical rehabilitation in MOD facilities. For family members, primary healthcare may be provided by the MOD in some cases (e.g. when accompanying Service personnel posted overseas). They should retain their relative position on any NHS waiting list, if moved around the UK due to the Service person being posted.

Veterans receive their healthcare from the NHS, and should receive priority treatment where it relates to a condition which results from their service in the Armed Forces, subject to clinical need. Those injured in Service, whether physically or mentally, should be cared for in a way which reflects the Nation’s moral obligation to them whilst respecting the individual’s wishes. For those with concerns about their mental health, where symptoms may not present for some time after leaving Service, they should be able to access services with health professionals who have an understanding of Armed Forces culture.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Service families may suffer disadvantage through Service mobility (the Armed Forces are not free to choose where they work and therefore live, which can mean reduced ability to access NHS treatment and a lack of continuity of treatment on moving). Positive measures are required to mitigate the impact of Service life on Service families’ health – for example through provision of mental health initiatives that specifically look at the effect of deployment; retention of place on waiting list if forced to move location; MOD flexibility on postings if a Service person or their partner is undergoing IVF.

England

In England, the NHS Constitution ensures that the NHS provides a comprehensive service, available to all irrespective of gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. It has a duty to each and every individual that it serves and must respect their human rights. At the same time, it has a wider social duty to promote equality through the services it provides and to pay particular attention to groups or sections of society where improvements in health and life expectancy are not keeping pace with the rest of the population.

Access to NHS services is based on clinical need. The Department of Health and the NHS in England are continuing to take forward a programme of work to ensure that the Armed Forces, their families and veterans are not disadvantaged in accessing NHS services. Special provisions are being put in place to ensure that those who have been injured in Service continue to receive the best possible treatment by the NHS when they are discharged from the Armed Forces. A number of initiatives are also in place to ensure that those with mental health problems that present after they leave service are able to access NHS services with a particular understanding of the needs of Armed Forces veterans.

Scotland

In July 2008 the Scottish Government published 'Scotland's Veterans and Forces' Communities: meeting our commitment' which set out its commitment to Armed Forces personnel, their families and to veterans. It also set out the Scottish Government's action within its devolved responsibilities. One of the first commitments to be achieved was to extend the Priority Treatment scheme to allow all veterans priority access to treatment for Service-related conditions.

Priority treatment for veterans is publicised through leaflets that are widely available at locations such as GP practices. In addition, the new patient registration form to register with a GP practice in Scotland includes a question about former Armed Forces service which helps to raise the GPs' awareness of patients' veteran status. The voluntary sector in Scotland is actively involved in raising awareness among veterans about their entitlements to priority treatment in NHS Scotland, under certain circumstances.

If a patient informs the GP of their veterans' status and the eligibility for priority treatment in the NHS, the GP includes this information in the referral letter, where a referral is considered clinically appropriate, and agreed with the patient. The patient is then offered an accelerated appointment at the discretion of the consultant, taking account of the clinical need.

Wales

In June 2008 the Welsh Government published Welsh Health Circular 051, setting out its commitment to prioritise improving the health and well-being of Service personnel and veterans in Wales. This extended the provision of priority NHS treatment from war pensioners to all veterans who have a health problem as result of their Armed Forces Service.

In February 2011, the Welsh Government also wrote to all GPs reminding them of this commitment and the process they should follow to ensure veterans are identified for the receipt of priority treatment.

In 2010/11 the Welsh Government published an Annual Operating Framework target for Local Health Boards (LHB) which reminded them of their obligations to veterans, by requiring them to specifically consider the needs of Service personnel and veterans when planning services. This requirement is supported within LHBs by the appointment of Veterans' and Armed Forces Champions who advocate for veterans and Service personnel to ensure that their needs are reflected in service plans and information is shared between LHBs and other relevant organisations.

The Welsh Government is currently considering further training and information needs, which complement work currently under way both within the NHS and working with voluntary and community sector partners in Wales.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the provisions of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 prevents the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) and the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector in Northern Ireland in providing veterans with priority over other individuals with respect to healthcare treatment.

The DHSSPS drew up 'A Protocol for Ensuring Equitable Access to Health and Social Care Services' in 2009. This commits the Department and HSC to ensuring that veterans receive

equality in access to healthcare provision across Northern Ireland and that the HSC must be responsive to the needs of veterans as a particular population group amongst other population groups within Northern Ireland.

To give effect to this commitment an Armed Forces Liaison Forum was established consisting of representatives of the Department, HSC, Service Charities and other Armed Forces stakeholders. The Forum meets on a regular basis.

Working together

1. Partnership Board

The MOD has a close working relationship with the UK Departments of Health at both strategic and working levels. A high-level Partnership Board meets three times a year to manage policy and strategic issues with the aim of ensuring that the MOD and UK Health Departments work together to improve the health and healthcare of the UK Armed Forces, their dependants and veterans. Under the umbrella of the Partnership Board, numerous other official level discussions and meetings take place to address the health needs of Service personnel, their dependants and veterans across the entire patient care pathway.

Since 2010, the Department of Health in England has put in place Armed Forces Networks in each of the 10 Strategic Health Authorities in England. These networks work closely with local Armed Forces in their areas, the voluntary sector (such as Combat Stress, SSAFA, Royal British Legion and others), the NHS and the wider community. The networks were put in place, amongst other reasons, to support the delivery of Dr Murrison's recommendations (made in his Fighting Fit report and his report on prosthetics (see below)). These networks are key to troubleshooting problems arising for serving personnel who are discharged from the Services to NHS care, families accessing health services following frequent mobility obligations, and veterans.

Similarly, **Scotland** has put in place Armed Forces Champions in each of the NHS Regional Health Boards. The Champions have a remit to spearhead resolution of problems arising in connection with access to medical care for Armed Forces personnel, their families and veterans. They interface closely with local Armed Forces Firm Base Battle Group Commanders and individual Unit commanders, providing a route into the Armed Forces chain of command in Scotland. The NHS Champions meet twice yearly with representatives of the Scottish Government, voluntary and community sector and senior Armed Forces figures under the chairmanship of the Armed Forces Advocate for Scotland (DG Health & Social Care and CE NHS Scotland). Mental health care for veterans benefits from the Veterans First Point Organisation which provides a dedicated service for ex-Armed Forces personnel in Edinburgh and the Lothians, whilst Combat Stress are proactive in providing support in Scotland. Prosthetics services are delivered under NHS auspices and enjoy close liaison with the Armed Forces Personnel Recovery Unit, enabling a cohesive service to be delivered to patients.

In **Wales**, each Local Health Board (LHB) has a named Executive Member responsible for Armed Forces Personnel, their families and veterans. They will advocate their needs, ensuring that they are reflected in local service plans and will improve links between health and social care, relevant groups and UK Government to the benefit of the Armed Forces community.

2. Working with charities

The Department of Health in England has appointed The Royal British Legion and Combat Stress to its Strategic Partnership Programme. This is aimed at ensuring better understanding and dissemination of policy direction from central government to the wider Service charity sector. The Royal British Legion and Combat Stress hosted a conference earlier this year on behalf of the Department of Health where representatives of the wider Armed Forces Community were able to meet and discuss delivery of the various projects put in place and being developed. The Strategic Partnership has also launched a new website (www.armedforceshealthpartnership.org.uk), to be used as a reference for Service personnel, veterans and families, and also clinicians and the Armed Forces Networks.

The Big White Wall is another recent highlight in this respect – see section 17 below.

The **Scottish** Government enjoys an excellent relationship with Combat Stress, with commissioned service arrangements introduced for Scottish residents for provision of specialist mental health services at Hollybush House, Ayr, since April 2009 (currently being reviewed by NHS Ayrshire and Arran). They are a key partner in the development of community outreach services and in working with the wider veteran community to improve services and foster better relationships, including with Veterans First Point. The potential to extend that service to other areas is under consideration.

The **Welsh** Government provides funding to Combat Stress who are also part of the Health and Wellbeing Service for Veterans' Steering Group. Combat Stress already organise a support network in North Wales and are extending this across Wales. The Royal British Legion are also part of this Steering Group. Cruse Bereavement Care is funded by the Welsh Government to provide support for bereaved families. This includes funding the development of support for Armed Forces' bereaved families. In addition, the Health and Wellbeing Service for Veterans is working with veterans groups to develop information and support networks for veterans.

In addition the MOD provides Combat Stress with around £3M annually to deliver remedial treatment to war pensioners with accepted mental health disorders across the UK.

3. GP awareness

In September 2011, the Department of Health in England launched an e-learning package developed in partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) to help GPs understand the issues impacting on the health of those serving in the Armed Forces, Reservists, the families of those serving, the bereaved and veterans. In particular it will raise awareness with GPs of the need to ensure that those seriously injured in service continue to receive the best possible care after being discharged from the Armed Forces. GPs who complete the course will be more likely to be able to identify a veteran and address their needs in a way which is appropriate to them.

Although funded by the Department of Health in England, the service is part of the suite of online training products accessible to all GPs who are members of the RCGP. The Department of Health will continue to work with the Devolved Administrations through the MOD/UK Departments of Health Partnership Board to explore further development of the package and look for other ways to improve health professionals' awareness of the issues facing the Armed Forces Community.

The Welsh Government is currently in discussion with the Welsh Deanery and Health and Wellbeing Service for Veterans about training health staff on the health needs of veterans.

The MOD is working with the NHS to improve the transfer of Service personnel medical records on discharge. By 2013, MOD will have entered all Service personnel onto the NHS database (which is used in England, Scotland and Wales) which means that on recruitment, the Defence Medical Services will receive the NHS medical record. On discharge, DMS will update the NHS record so that when a veteran registers with a new GP, their record has a summary of their in-Service care, along with information on how to apply for the full medical record. This will facilitate GP awareness of the status of new patients, enabling more proactive monitoring of veterans' mental health and help to ensure they receive their entitlement to priority treatment.

Healthcare in Service

4. Overview

The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2011 found that satisfaction with Service-provided medical and dental treatment remains high; these are cited as retention factors by Service personnel. 79% of those who received Service-provided medical treatment in the previous two years were satisfied with being able to access the medical care when they needed it. 80% were satisfied with the medical facilities. 72% were satisfied with the effectiveness of the medical treatment. Moreover 87% of those who received Service-provided dental treatment in the previous two years were satisfied with their treatment.

5. Review by the Independent Care Quality Commission

Defence Medical Services continuously strive to deliver the best health care to the Armed Forces. In order to ensure that medical services continue to be of the highest standard the MOD has asked the independent Care Quality Commission (CQC) to carry out a further review of the work of the Defence Medical Services in the UK and overseas. Between October 2011 and March 2012, the CQC will visit some 60 Armed Forces medical treatment facilities, including local single Service facilities; the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court; Departments of Community Mental Health; and Regional Rehabilitation Units. The CQC's predecessor, the Healthcare Commission, carried out a similar review in 2008/09, which highlighted some areas of outstanding performance (such as trauma services) while pointing to others where improvements needed to be made (such as infrastructure and infection control away from the front line). As part of our commitment to meet the Commission's recommendations, we introduced a Defence Medical Inspector General whose remit included addressing those areas where improvement was needed. The new review will provide a useful benchmark of our progress since then, ensuring that we continue to provide a high standard of care for our Service personnel.

6. Operational medicine

The MOD continues to improve medical treatment protocols and equipment for the delivery of healthcare on operations. For instance, Defence has recently procured new medical equipment across the aeromedical evacuation services for the Medical Emergency Response Team,

Critical Care Air Support Team and tactical and strategic air evacuation. The devices have been introduced in Afghanistan since October 2011; the roll-out should be complete by the end of the year. The benefits of Computed Tomography (CT) in major trauma management are well documented, such that Defence has procured a containerised CT Scanner that can be used on future operations to support the Very High Readiness Hospital. Advances in resuscitation and trauma care continue to be introduced as swiftly as technological developments allow.

7.Rehabilitation

The Department continues to invest in both the capability and capacity of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Headley Court. Although only approximately a third of admissions to the Centre are for injuries sustained whilst on operations, in late 2010 the numbers of referrals and readmissions to DMRC began to approach its capacity. As a result, measures were put in place to deliver an additional 20 beds within the existing structure and planning was begun to identify the capacity that would be required to take the unit through to the end of current operations.

At present 144 beds is the predicted required capacity to take the unit through to the end of operations in Afghanistan. This requires the development of an additional 48-bed unit Patient Clinical Accommodation Project (PCAP) on site that will also include the therapy space required to bring those beds to full operating capability. The PCAP has been approved, contracted for and should be fully operational by the summer of 2012. A number of temporary measures are in place at Headley Court to provide a number of additional in patient beds prior to the PCAP being delivered.

In addition to the capability at Headley Court, there are fifteen Regional Rehabilitation Units in the UK and Germany. They provide specialist assessment and opinion through multidisciplinary injury assessment clinics staffed by specialist doctors, physiotherapists and exercise rehabilitation instructors. Where necessary the RRU can refer patients for surgery at their local fast track provider (where surgery is provided within six weeks).

8.Recovery

Each Service is responsible for the management and support of their respective personnel recovering from serious injury and illness. All three Services have recently modified or enhanced their existing structures to deliver a more coherent recovery pathway for all wounded, injured and sick Service personnel, ensuring that they have access to all the key services and resources needed to help them return to duty or make a smooth transition to an appropriately skilled civilian life. These are known as the Naval Service Recovery Pathway for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines; the Army Recovery Capability; and the Personnel Holding Flight for the Royal Air Force. This care, collectively known as the Defence Recovery Capability (DRC), is delivered across the Defence Community by the combined efforts of the Services and the Service Charities responding to carefully tailored Individual Recovery Plans setting out a recovery pathway.

Key to the DRC is the provision of Defence Personnel Recovery Centres (PRCs). Experience shows that injured personnel find a military environment conducive to the best possible recovery. PRCs and Personnel Recovery and Assessment Centres (one in the North and one in the South), which combine a PRC with an Assessment Facility, are managed by the Army on behalf of Defence. They offer a residential capacity to those wounded, injured and sick personnel from across the Armed Forces undergoing recovery as well as providing

facilities to day attendees; they are not hospitals, rehabilitation or physiotherapy centres. A bespoke Personnel Recovery Facility will also be provided in Germany. The Centres are being established in major garrisons where they will be in a position to take advantage of the full range of facilities require for effective recovery, including welfare, medical, rehabilitation, education and resettlement.

The Defence Recovery Capability has recently opened two of its interim PRCs. The first opened in June 2011 at Tedworth House in Tidworth, Wiltshire, in partnership with Help for Heroes, where a £20m building and refurbishment programme is in progress. Help for Heroes has pledged a further £24m over ten years to the running costs of the centre with the Royal British Legion contributing £50m towards operating costs. The centre will eventually provide accommodation for up to 50 wounded, injured and sick personnel as well as the ability to host an additional 30 personnel attending day courses. The second was opened in October 2011 in Catterick, North Yorkshire, and is also being delivered in partnership with Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion. This interim PRC is currently providing accommodation for up to 35 wounded, injured and sick personnel until the final purpose built PRC is delivered in early 2013 providing accommodation for up to 50 personnel and 30 day attendees. These interim PRCs are in addition to the 'Pathfinder' PRC in Edinburgh which opened in August 2009.

Support for Families

9. In Vitro Fertility (IVF) treatment

The MOD has previously issued guidance to Service personnel and manning branches to encourage Service personnel considering accessing assisted conception services to consult their chain of command and their assigning authority early to ensure that wherever possible those undergoing a course of IVF treatment are not moved before it is completed. According to FAMCAS 2011, 2% (146) of all respondents stated that they had been undergoing or were on a waiting list to receive assisted conception (e.g. IVF) treatment in the last 12 months. Of those that had moved whilst undergoing or awaiting treatment, 51% (26) stated that their serving spouse or civil partner had informed their Chain of Command or Assisting Officer prior to a move, indicating that the policy has directly benefited around half of those affected. A discussion should have occurred regarding each individual case and there are several factors that impact the decision; there is sometimes an overriding Service need to move the individual and sometimes the move in question is in the interests of the Service person to aid their career progression. We will continue to encourage more affected personnel to take advantage of the policy – accepting of course that some people will continue to choose not to inform their Service about what is a very personal matter.

In the small number of cases when assignment (during IVF treatment) to a different Primary Care Trust (PCT) area means that the provision differs in the new area, assistance should be sought through the Armed Forces Network in England and Armed Forces Champions in Scotland and Wales. This is a live issue, with the RAF Families Federation indicating that three cases were referred to the Department of Health to ensure continuity of care/funding in July alone.

For veterans and Serving personnel suffering serious genital injuries, in May 2011 the Government announced that it was committed to ensuring that they are guaranteed three cycles of IVF, as recommended by the Independent Medical Expert Group (set up as a result of

the Lord Boyce review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme). In addition, lump sums of £60,000 are now paid under the Scheme, where an injury due to service has led to infertility.

The Government in **England** is committed to implementation of this commitment. The MOD is working with the Department of Health on the implications.

The Scottish Government agrees that recipients of compensation under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme for injuries which result in infertility should be entitled to appropriate infertility treatment including IVF treatment within the NHS in Scotland. The number of cycles will be dependent upon best practice in each NHS Board area and individual clinical outcomes. Currently the Scottish Government is reviewing all criteria, both clinical and social, with regard to access to infertility services, including IVF, with a view to equity of access throughout Scotland. In respect of Armed Forces personnel requiring these services as a result of an injury sustained in the line of duty, we would expect NHS Boards to respond sympathetically and review each case individually.

In Wales, Local Health Boards (LHBs) are responsible for planning and securing specialised assisted fertility treatment, such as IVF, for their resident populations. Specialised IVF services are planned on an all Wales basis through the LHBs' collective work on the Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee (WHSSC). As from 1 April 2010, couples in Wales who meet the access criteria can expect to receive two cycles of treatment on the NHS. In respect of Armed Forces personnel requiring these services as a result of an injury sustained in the line of duty, the Welsh Government expects LHBs, through their joint work on WHSSC, to respond sympathetically and review each case individually. The Chief Executive of the NHS in Wales has written to LHBs to draw their attention to these expectations.

10. Retention of place on NHS waiting lists

Armed Forces families who are awaiting treatment from the NHS and have to move geographical area should have their waiting time taken into account by their new health area. In the MOD's FAMCAS 2011 survey, 25% of respondents indicated that they or members of their family had been on a waiting list for an operation or consultant's appointment in the last year. Of these, 34% reported that their previous waiting time had increased as a result of moving location. The Departments of Health continue to seek opportunities to raise awareness of these issues, through the Armed Forces Networks or Champions and other initiatives (see next section). It is important that individuals identify themselves as Service family members in the new health area as early as possible in the process of moving. However, it is also important to ensure that Service personnel are aware that the waiting time for a particular service varies from area to area and the retention of place in the waiting list is relative to the waiting list in the new area.

In Wales, each Local Health Board (LHB) has a named Executive Member responsible for Armed Forces Personnel, their families and Veterans. This champion is expected to take responsibility of ensuring that if a member of the Armed Forces, or their family, is on a waiting list for secondary care treatment, and they have to move from one location, either in Wales or outside of Wales, to a location within Wales due to a new posting, then any accrued waiting time will be taken into account when they are placed on the waiting list.

However, all patients should still be treated in order of clinical priority, and within the Welsh waiting time target.

Support for Veterans

11. Transition Protocol

The Transition Protocol is an inter-departmental agreement which has been developed under the auspices of the MOD/Departments of Health Partnership Board. Alongside extant arrangements governing the coordination of medical and welfare support to those leaving the Services, the MOD has put in place a Transition Protocol working in partnership with the Department of Health, the Devolved Administrations and the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services to ensure a seamless transition for ill and injured Service personnel from Armed Forces to civilian life. The scheme includes the transfer of medical records from MOD to GPs (see section 3 above).

The Protocol was agreed by departments in September 2010 and the initial trial period concluded in March 2011, at which point it became policy for the three Services, Department of Health and the Devolved Administrations. The pilot studies initially focused on those personnel who had been seriously injured. MOD is now working with the Department of Health to broaden the arrangements to encompass those who may not be so seriously injured or ill but who still will require medical or social care when they leave the Armed Forces.

12. Prosthetics

The Government announced on 21 October that it was accepting Dr Murrison's report on prosthetic services for veterans in England. It has allocated £15 million to support the recommendations to improve prosthetics services for Armed Forces veterans who have lost a limb due to activities while serving their country. The Department of Health in England, working with the NHS, MOD and Devolved Administrations are in the process of delivering on the recommendations made by Dr Murrison – in particular, the Department of Health will now introduce a number of national specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation centres for amputee veterans across the country. The Government will work with service charities, including Help for Heroes and BLESMA (The British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association) as well as specialists within the NHS to ensure that high quality NHS facilities are available to our injured personnel.

The Department of Health will also use the experience and feedback from providing these specialist services to veterans and apply these to the wider NHS, so that all patients will benefit in the future.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government pledged (in 2008) that veterans who lose limbs whilst on active service will receive a similar standard of prosthetics from NHS Scotland to those provided by Defence Medical Services. There are plans to establish a multidisciplinary centre in Scotland which will be funded by the Scottish Government.

The **Welsh** Government support the recommendations in principle, and have established a working group of key service leads to look at the issues in order to establish how the recommendations can be implemented in Wales.

13. Priority treatment for veterans

As stated above, veterans receive their healthcare from the NHS, and should receive priority treatment where it relates to a condition which results from their service in the Armed Forces, subject to the clinical need of others. Anecdotal reports suggest that GP awareness of priority treatment continues to be an issue. Many of the initiatives reported on elsewhere in this chapter are aimed at raising awareness of veterans' health needs with health professionals and encouraging veterans to identify themselves.

14. Veterans' health research

The MOD continues to fund work with the King's Centre for Military Health Research on a cohort study of some 20,000 veterans. In addition the MOD has funded an independent Health Needs Audit in order to gather and record the direct experience and views of nuclear test veterans about their health and social care needs. The findings were published in October 2011 and are available at the following link: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/HealthandSafetyPublications/NuclearTests/UkNuclearTestVeteransHealthNeedAudit.htm>

MOD has sponsored a study by Cardiff University into rehabilitation of Gulf veterans. This has identified a range of potential interventions to help rehabilitate ill Gulf veterans. The MOD is currently facilitating discussions between Cardiff University and COBSEO with a view to identifying possible Forces in Mind funding (see chapter 10, section 9) to enable this work to be expanded to allow scope for a broader range of veterans. The UK and the US have undertaken a substantial amount of research into Gulf veterans' illness. The research has indicated that there is no illness which is specific to Gulf veterans. We will continue to monitor Gulf research that is published around the world.

MOD is undertaking research into the causes of death (including suicide) among those who served in the Falklands campaign. This research is expected to be completed by Spring 2012. MOD is also undertaking a similar study on veterans of operations TELIC (Iraq) and HERRICK (Afghanistan). This will monitor the causes of death of all serving members of the Armed Forces from 2003 until the end of Op HERRICK.

15. Healthcare provision for veterans overseas

Whilst most veterans reside in the UK with healthcare funded from the NHS, a number choose to live or settle overseas. In his review of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, Lord Boyce made recommendations to support those personnel, seriously injured as a result of their service and who choose to live abroad and these provisions (that the Scheme should be able on a discretionary basis to defray certain costs associated with ongoing treatment arising from the injury caused by Service) were implemented in the new provisions of the scheme with effect from May 2011.

Mental Health

Since Dr Andrew Murrison MP published his report 'Fighting Fit – A Mental health Plan for Servicemen and Veterans' in October 2010 to improve identification, treatment and awareness of mental health problems, the Government has made significant progress on delivering the 13 recommendations. While these recommendations were England-only, the Ministry of Defence and Department of Health are in discussion with the Devolved Administrations about them.

16. Increase in mental health professionals providing services to veterans

The Department of Health has funded 25 interim veteran mental health projects across all 10 English Strategic Health Authorities (SHA) to stimulate veterans' mental health services to support initiatives ahead of full implementation of Dr Murrison's Fighting Fit report. All of these projects commenced during 2011. They included initiatives around improving networks of care for veterans, identification of mental health needs for younger veterans, needs assessments and signposting services for veterans.

The increase in the number of mental health professionals providing services to veterans is to be met through implementation of an NHS Veterans' mental health capability, which will provide a dedicated mental health outreach and assessment team for veterans and families within each SHA in England. SHAs and the NHS are working closely with Combat Stress in building this capability. This will be in place by the end of 2011. Although Dr Murrison was asked to report in relation to mental health services to those serving and veterans, the Department of Health believe that it is equally important for the families of those serving and veterans to access these services where appropriate. The teams will:

- Provide a specialist veterans and families outreach and assessment capability, which will aim to complete assessment and care plan development within two weeks of referral
- Working with Combat Stress Community Mental Health Teams, other charities, the NHS and other statutory services, provide services across the region and link with existing points of veterans care
- Manage referrals from a wide range of sources, develop and case manage individual care plans using the most appropriate mix of NHS, charitable and other services to best support the individual's recovery
- Working as part of the National Veterans Mental Health Clinical Network, act as a centre of veterans mental health expertise to support and train colleagues in mainstream health and wellbeing provision.

Of note in **Scotland**, the Scottish Government has funded the East of Scotland Community Outreach Team to a level of £200,000 in 2011.

The **Welsh** Government provides funding for access and support for veterans in this area through the Health and Well Being Service for Veterans. This is supported by a Steering Group which includes stakeholders from Local Health Boards, Combat Stress, Royal British Legion and the MOD.

17. Big White Wall

The Government has committed £250,000 to fund a one-year pilot of the award-winning Big White Wall online support network specifically for serving personnel, veterans and their families. This is supported by a commitment of £100,000 from Help for Heroes for the first year with additional funding after this should the pilot prove successful. The website, www.bigwhitewall.com, is a pioneering online wellbeing service, staffed by professional counsellors, that has already helped many other people. Since September 2011, UK servicemen and women, veterans and their families have had access to specialised help from the 24/7 service for free. Amongst other services, Big White Wall users can chat anonymously to others who may have gone through similar experiences, with a team of specially trained counsellors always online to offer support. A limited set of demographics will be collected on registration to assist with the evaluation of the pilot (after 12 months).

Scotland looks forward to receiving feedback on the level of utilisation of the Big White Wall by users resident in Scotland.

In Wales, the Health and Wellbeing Service for Veterans has developed a website with information on each Local Health Board area for veterans to access. The Welsh Government awaits the evaluation of the Big White Wall pilot.

18. Helplines

The Department of Health in England has worked with Combat Stress to procure a professional 24-hour mental health helpline aimed at the Armed Forces community. The tender was won by Rethink and the Department of Health provided a grant to Combat Stress to cover its set-up and one year's operations. The Combat Stress 24-Hour Helpline was opened on 28 February 2011 and officially launched on 11 March 2011. As at 12 July 2011 over 3,000 calls had been taken and the phone line is open to Regulars, Reserves, veterans, families and bereaved. Although the service is funded by Department of Health England there is no restriction on calls from other parts of the UK.

The **Welsh** Government funds the free phone 24-hour Mental Health Community Advice Listening Line (CALL) which is available to veterans.

Scotland looks forward to receiving feedback on the level of utilisation of the telephone helpline by callers resident in Scotland.

In addition, the Department of Health is taking forward the following initiatives:

NHS Direct: is the NHS national health line, providing expert health advice, information and reassurance, using a world class telephone service and website. Work has commenced to update the Armed Forces community information on the website and ensure that NHS Direct operators have access to information on available services and contact details.

NHS 111: the introduction of a single number (111) for every kind of urgent care was a Coalition Agreement commitment. Work is ongoing to include the 24-Hour Helpline, Big White Wall, regional Veteran Mental Health Capability, voluntary and community sector and Service personnel Veterans Agency contacts within the directory of services.

19. Veterans Information Service

The Veterans' Information Service (VIS) is being designed to satisfy Fighting Fit recommendations to ensure that the VIS can be used for up to 12 months after a person leaves the Armed Forces and that Regulars and Reserves are followed-up approximately twelve months after they leave.

The VIS will be a postal questionnaire and information leaflet detailing how to access or request access to a range of relevant services. The VIS will have the dual role of providing key information to the veterans' home and, via the questionnaire responses, building a significant evidence base to inform service provision. The questionnaire will include an opportunity for the veteran to ask for further information or to be contacted on a range of relevant issues including mental health. Where appropriate, requests will be passed on by the VIS operator to the NHS, SPVA or other relevant agency or service charity. VIS will be a key vehicle by which the veterans' community will be reminded and informed of the range of mental health and other services available. The VIS is necessarily the final service to be put in place of all the projects being taken forward by the Department of Health as it relies on consent gained 12 months in advance and will be referencing services that are mobilising and embedding during 2011/12.

20. Increasing Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

The IAPT service at Catterick Garrison is called Vulnerable Veterans and Adult Dependents (known as VVADS). This service is a unique two year pilot project that for the first time has seen an NHS IAPT service collocated within a Armed Forces Department of Community Mental Health. VVADS provides IAPT services to veterans, adult dependents of Service personnel, as well as to members of the public. MOD has been closely involved in providing facilities for the project. The project provides evidence-based talking therapies for individuals aged 18 or over, and of the four therapists, three are ex-Armed Forces. The project has had 400 referrals so far, 50% coming from the Catterick Garrison community itself. VVADS are working in partnership with numerous organisations, including Service charities, the NHS, HIVE information centres and Big White Wall.

21. Enhanced Mental Health Assessment

The pilot of the new Enhanced Mental Health Assessment, which incorporates a mental health questionnaire as a routine part of discharge medicals, was successfully completed in July 2011 in a small number of units across the Services. Following the evaluation of the pilots, the mental health assessment is now being rolled out on a regional basis.

Conclusions

Satisfaction with Service-provided medical and dental treatment remains high. Achieving consistency in the provision of health services across the four administrations of the UK for the highly mobile Armed Forces community remains challenging. However, much work is being done to improve communication and provide the right services to the people who need them most. As the NHS in England changes, Government must ensure that progress is built on rather than lost. Key areas of work include implementation of both of Dr Murrison's reports (Fighting Fit and Prosthetics Provision); the raft of mental health initiatives that have recently been put in

place to support serving personnel, their families, veterans and the bereaved; the Care Quality Commission's review into the work of the Defence Medical Services and the increased capacity at Headley Court. The Government will carefully consider the report by the House of Commons Defence Committee into support to the wounded, injured and sick and monitor the Defence Recovery Capability.

3 Education

“Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area they live. The Services should aim to facilitate this in the way they manage personnel, but there should also be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting. For personnel posted overseas, the MOD provides early years and educational facilities where the numbers support it, although the range of provision and choice may not be as great as in the UK. In certain cases assistance will be available to support Service children’s continuity of education, given the requirement for mobility.

Service personnel should expect to receive appropriate training and education for both personal and professional development, including the opportunity to gain nationally recognised civilian qualifications, in order to support them throughout their Service career and to prepare them for life after leaving the Service.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

The mobility of Service families remains the most significant likely cause of disadvantage in the field of education, with many Service children subject to frequent changes of school and potentially losing out in the schools admissions system. The disruption of the move can thus be aggravated by the inability to get a place at the school of choice. Although the evidence suggests that educational attainment amongst Service children is high, families can suffer inconvenience and the children distress, particularly if the family also has to cope with the Service parent deploying on operations. The risks of disadvantage can be countered by a range of measures including greater stability for families and the earliest possible notice of moves, changes to the Admissions Code, and help for schools with large Service populations, but there will be a need for continued vigilance. The issues reported below show that concerns remain in some areas.

In terms of through life education of Service personnel, this remains a central tenet of Service personnel policy. Service personnel can be disadvantaged in terms of the inability to transfer certain Armed Forces skills into civilian life. These skills are transferable but not all are professionally accredited. Civilian employers can also fail to recognise/understand the worth and skills gained through Armed Forces service. There is a clear need for Defence to develop a portfolio of transferable skills, not just for personal development but also to prepare for transition into civilian life. The Armed Forces need to recruit and train personnel from a breadth of vocational and academic backgrounds. The recruitment of people from civilian life with poor basic skills abilities, though not evenly distributed, drives the need for an Armed Forces Basic Skills Policy. Providing Service personnel with the funding opportunities for personal and professional development throughout their Service careers, through the Standard and Enhanced Learning Credit (SLC and ELC) schemes, is a core commitment to achieve educational betterment. In addition, the Higher Education/Further Education scheme, which can provide free tuition for Service leavers undertaking a first HE/FE qualification, can give an opportunity for higher study perhaps otherwise denied by Armed Forces service.

Service children

The MOD's Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP) and its partner organisations have a duty of care towards Service children, wherever they reside in any part of the world. In particular they promote the interests of Service children on the issues of deployment, mobility, loss and change.

The Department for Education in England introduced a pupil premium payable to schools in April 2011 to provide additional support for those children in the schools system who need it most, and this included recognising the disadvantage that Service children may face (see section 5 below). There are other areas in which work has been done to recognise the nature of Service life. In Scotland the current legislation² and updated Code of Practice 'Supporting Children's Learning' recognise that children or young people may require additional support, long or short term, for a variety of reasons including if they have experienced a bereavement, have interrupted learning (for example if their family is subject to regular moves), or have emotional or social difficulties. DCYP works closely with the Scottish Government through the Children from Service Families Stakeholder Network and is also beginning to forge closer ties with the Welsh Government.

1. Early years provision

The Department for Education remains strongly committed to ensuring that all young children, whatever their background or current circumstances, receive the best possible start in life and the opportunity to fulfil their potential; and that their parents have the help they need to balance their work and family commitments. Armed Forces families can, however, find it difficult to access good quality foundation years and childcare support due to their unique circumstances, which involve a far higher level of mobility than the average civilian family.

However, improvements have been made, with the Families Continuous Attitude Survey (FAMCAS) results for 2011 showing that only 3% of those questioned had considerable difficulty in obtaining a place at the childcare facilities of their choice, while 7% had some difficulty. This is a significant improvement on last year where 11% had considerable difficulty and 14% had some difficulty.

Liaising with Forces support services, Local Authorities are well placed to ensure that the needs of Service families and communities are identified and met. Many Children's Centres already have close links with Service families, including through outreach support. The Department for Education is keen to build, and help make available, the evidence base for best practice in this area to ensure that we learn from those Centres with an established track record in working with Forces communities. For many parents, finding and sustaining work is dependent on the availability of good quality, affordable childcare at times when they need it, including during school holidays. The Department for Education has funded the national charity 4 Children to test out how best to offer suitable holiday provision that enables parents to work, and gives children the opportunity to try new experiences, gain skills and have fun in a safe environment.

There is an intent, where resources allow, that childcare provision in overseas environments will align with the offer provided to UK families. However the infrastructure and support network is not always in place overseas and is further complicated by drawdown in Germany and small number of Service children present in other parts of the world. There is a need to examine resources available, priorities and the implications of not providing appropriate

2. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended)

childcare in all overseas locations and of introducing priority criteria for access to early years provision beyond the statutory entitlement. DCYP has started work to identify and audit the current provision overseas; this will help to inform further policy work.

2. Childcare Sufficiency Audits

In the UK, DCYP are liaising with those Local Authorities with high proportions of Service children to determine where there are significant areas of shortfall or other areas of concern. DCYP will be working closely with the Services and the Families Federations to ensure that their concerns are also captured to encourage a partnership approach to finding solutions, where possible, in those areas where issues are identified. This work has already commenced with Hampshire County Council; engagement with more Local Authorities will take place over the coming months.

As noted in the previous section, delivery of 0-5 year old provision overseas is currently being reviewed. This work includes an audit to identify any risk areas, providing strategic direction on governance, regulatory and inspection functions as well as the delivery of continuing professional development and quality assurance functions.

For those requiring early years childcare, the MOD operates childcare voucher schemes for its employees. For serving personnel this is the Armed Forces Childcare Voucher Scheme (AFCVS), with some 6,500 Service personnel taking advantage of the scheme which provides over £900 of tax savings per year per working parent in the MOD (if the maximum amount of £243 is sacrificed each month).

In Wales, all Local Authorities have a statutory duty to maintain and strengthen the diversity of childcare, giving all parents including families in the Armed Forces a choice of high quality provision in a variety of settings. Local Authorities have a duty to assess sufficiency of childcare locally and then, to secure sufficient childcare for parents in their area. Childcare sufficiency audits are undertaken annually.

The Welsh Government provided a toolkit to assist Local Authorities in producing their audits in 2011, which specified that Local Authorities with significant Armed Forces communities should consult with families of those in the Armed Forces to listen to their views and reflect their needs. Progress has been noted, including consultation with community and other representative groups, however the Welsh Government recognise that there could be a more proactive and detailed focus in some Local Authority areas. Where gaps have been identified, they will look to see that these are being fully addressed in the Local Authorities Annual Review in 2012, so that if needed Local Authorities can enhance childcare provision for families in the Armed Forces in their areas. DCYP will work closely with colleagues in the Welsh government to learn from the lessons they have already identified in meeting the needs of Service families.

3. Allocation of school places

For the many individuals moving during term time it can sometimes be difficult for Service children to gain entry to their first choice schools. Public consultation on the Schools Admission Code for schools in England closed on 19 August 2011. DCYP has worked closely with colleagues in the Department for Education to highlight concerns of the Service community and in consultation with our partners, including the Families Federations, have submitted a strong response highlighting the specific concerns of the Service community.

Following this work, the Department for Education (DfE) has taken significant steps to understand the specific needs of Service children and to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in any way, when applying for a school place. DfE intend to publish a full response to the consultation and a revised set of draft Admission and Appeals Codes by the end of the year and aim to bring the Codes into force in early 2012, subject to the passage of the Education Bill and Parliamentary process. The School Admissions Code already includes the ability to apply for a school place for a Service child on receipt of an assignment order and the ability for schools to exceed admissions numbers to make a place available for a Service child. Further to this, Fair Access Protocols have been included in the School Admissions Codes and these must include Service children to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when applying for a school place.

The revised draft School Admissions Code will include children of UK Service personnel in the list of infant class size excepted pupils. Subject to the Parliamentary process, this will benefit children of Service personnel as schools will no longer be able to refuse an in-year admission purely on the grounds of the class size having reached 30.

The current School Admissions Code, and the revised Code, give second highest priority in their oversubscription criteria for boarding school places to Service children who qualify for Ministry of Defence financial assistance with the cost of boarding school fees. The Department for Education intend to do what is possible to give Service families more support and priority when they are trying to find a school place.

FAMCAS 2011 results indicate that there has been a marked improvement in accessing a school place with only 7% questioned having either considerable difficulty or difficulty with obtaining a place at the school of their choice compared with 15% last year.

Where difficulties continue to arise, the DCYP's Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) provide support to those Service families to secure appropriate provision for their children offering specialist support, (non-legal) advocacy and representation in meetings, hearings and appeals forums. DCYP recognises the importance of this service to Service families and has taken steps to ensure that CEAS are properly resourced during peak operating hours so that they are better able to meet the demands placed upon them.

Although no specific admissions difficulties have been highlighted by the Welsh Government (the Admissions Code already recognises challenges faced by Service families), DCYP will continue to work closely with Devolved Administrations to ensure that this remains the case.

4. Flexibility in Service accommodation provision at key educational stages

MOD already recognises that there are specific special circumstances regarding the education of Service children under which exceptional retention of Service accommodation is admissible. These are cases where children are reaching critical examination periods, cases where it is not possible for the child to transfer schools whilst within three years of certain public examinations and cases where a child is already undergoing statutory assessment for special education needs at their current school. The MOD has reviewed its accommodation policy to look for further areas of flexibility in this area; however, the limited supply of Service accommodation in many areas means that extending this exceptional provision further would lead to the potential to disadvantage other families (and children) seeking Service accommodation. Thus, on balance, the existing provision is considered to be the best balance for all families concerned.

5. Pupil Premium

The Department for Education in England introduced a pupil premium in April 2011 to provide additional support for those children in the schools system who need it most. Service children were identified as a group who would benefit from the pupil premium in recognition of the particular challenges that Service children face. For 2011-12 the Service premium has been set at £200 per pupil and schools have the freedom to spend this money on activities or services that best meet the needs of the individual pupil. For example schools may use it to provide academic support for pupils studying a GCSE syllabus not available in their new school or to give extra pastoral support. The Government is providing over £9 million in 2011-12 to support the 45,000 Service children identified in the school census. Schools will, from September 2012, be required to report on the use of the Service premium and its impact, but not separately identifying the Service children's premium for security reasons. For 2012-13, the Service Premium will rise to £250 per child.

DCYP will continue to work closely with DfE and the Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) network to ensure that all Service children are identified and that schools are receiving the premium. DCYP will encourage Service families to register their status with their children's schools and will monitor the use of this resource over the next year as well as arranging information-sharing seminars during this period to identify best practice (such as local areas working with the Service community to ensure the most appropriate ways of spending this funding).

Although there is currently no pupil premium available in Scotland or Wales, DCYP will work with the relevant authorities to monitor and highlight areas of potential disadvantage to Service children and will, where possible, provide evidence of good practice and success stories from the use of this premium in England.

While there is currently no intention to extend the pupil premium to Reservist children, a fund of £3M per annum over the next four years to support State schools catering for significant numbers of Service children or the children of Reservists has been announced (see next section). At present it is not possible for MOD to identify, with any certainty, the children of Reservists; therefore the department is reliant on parents who are in this group to make themselves known to schools and academies.

6. Further support to schools affected by deployment and mobility

The Support Fund for Schools with Service Children, which was announced in May 2011, will provide up to £3M over the next four years to help mitigate the effects of mobility and deployment for those schools or academies in the UK with a Service children population, be they Regular Forces or Reservists. This fund is provided by the MOD and is in addition to the Pupil Premium described above (which is provided by the Department for Education).

Schools or academies can apply for grants either individually or as groups, or a Local Authority can bid on behalf of a number of schools/academies with similar requirements within their region. The MOD Directorate of Children and Young People are the lead organisation in managing the fund and schools will need to provide evidence of their requirement, indicate what success will look like and have consulted with their Service population.

265 bids for a total of £7.8m were received in September 2011 for the current financial year. Of these, 139 bids amounting to £2.98m were awarded by a funding panel which included a representative from the Families Federations and an independent member. The definitive

measure of effectiveness will come from the bidders in their subsequent report to the MOD on delivery of the outcomes described in their bids and evidence of successful bids may be provided in future issues of this report.

7.Data transfer of children's schooling records

Inevitably schools have varying approaches to curriculum organisation, its content and approaches to learning, the subjects taught and the courses or specifications offered. Unsurprisingly, therefore, children moving between primary schools can be taught the same 'topic' or history unit more than once. Equally at secondary level children who have been studying one particular foreign language find that it is not offered at the new school; even in core subjects the specifications can vary considerably and so in science, for example, approach and content in one school can be very different from that in the next.

Without high quality information about the attainment and progress of the pupil at their previous school, it is very difficult for the receiving school to quickly meet the pupil's needs and a range of information is needed to ensure continuity. In primary schools this mainly relates to reading, writing and mathematics, while in secondary schools this applies to the full range of subjects being studied and specifications being followed.

The Department for Education has recommended that schools do more to collaborate with other schools in order to improve information transfer and develop corporate protocols and guidance. Schools should also encourage new pupils to bring work from their previous school and use this information to make judgements on early progress and quick assessments to establish baselines and determine learning priorities. Where gaps in knowledge and understanding are identified, 'catch up' or intervention programmes are organised immediately, making use of flexibility that is deliberately built into the staffing structure. However, all early assessments should be handled sensitively to ensure that the pupils do not see it as a very stressful start to the new school.

In the 'Children in Service families' report published on 20 May 2011, Ofsted examined the quality and impact of partnership provision for children in Service families (in England and overseas). It identified issues relating to the transfer of pupil records when children moved between schools. DCYP, supported by Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) and Service Children's Education (SCE) are developing an action plan in response to the Ofsted report. This will identify key areas of improvement, which could be assisted by the Support Fund for Schools with Service Children.

In **Wales**, when a pupil leaves a school for a new school a Common Transfer File containing a range of pupil performance and personal data, including the pupil's educational record, must be generated and sent to the new destination school (or to a Lost Pupil data store if the school cannot be ascertained). Similarly, whenever a pupil joins a school from another school within England or Wales, a Common Transfer File (CTF) must accompany him/her. However, pupils joining from Scotland, Northern Ireland or outside of the UK will not necessarily have a CTF.

For detailed information please see Educational Records, School Reports and the Common Transfer System – the keeping, disposal, disclosure and transfer of pupil information, Circular No: 18/2006³.

3. See link: http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/educational_records;jsessionid=bh4sMZhYRn4VpLGcCfLNTtCQQWvltGmqJvr5v24ZLCvCQhsGykCy!318297629?lang=en

8. Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme

The Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme (AFBSS) was launched in April 2011, and aims to give the children of those who have died on active duty⁴ since 1990 a head start in life by enabling them to progress to further and higher education should they wish to do so, providing certain eligibility criteria are met. The scheme is administered by the MOD and funded by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department for Education, and the Devolved Administrations for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The scheme provides a Further Education (FE) scholarship to enable a bereaved child to stay in FE in order to obtain the qualifications necessary to secure a place at university. This is normally paid for the last two years at school when GCE A Levels, or equivalent, are undertaken, but may be extended to three years if required by the syllabus being studied.

The scheme also provides a Higher Education (HE) Scholarship to contribute towards the cost of a first undergraduate course at a publicly-funded UK higher education institution. The scholarship contributes towards both the tuition fees and maintenance costs. Since tuition fees vary across the UK according to place of domicile and place of study, the scholarship is adjusted to provide an equivalent level of support for all applicants across the UK.

A total of 10 Further Education scholarships and 24 Higher Education scholarships were awarded for the academic year 2010/11 (the first year of the scheme's operation) and as of 20 October 2011, 12 Further Education scholarships and 37 Higher Education scholarships had been awarded for the academic year 2011/12. The Further Education scholarship is currently fixed at £1,500 per annum and the Higher Education scholarship is up to £8,240 per annum.

9. Service children and Special Educational Needs

Ofsted reported in May 2011 that "a considerable number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities arrived in Service Children's Education (SCE) schools without clear information about their needs and past provision being transferred with them. These were referred to as 'under the wire' pupils. In Cyprus alone, in October 2010, 49 of the 126 pupils identified as having special educational needs had arrived in schools with no record of their needs." The report also states that "this situation occurred for a number of reasons but primarily because parents had not registered with the Children's Education Advisory Service".

Last year, the Department for Education worked closely with SCE to trial a 'Special Educational Needs (SEN) Passport'. The aim of the SEN Passport was to provide information regarding a child /young person identified with SEN to support effective transfer to a new school. Three schools in Germany participated, and a total of 25 SEN Passports were completed and sent to five schools: four in Gloucestershire and one in Cyprus.

Feedback from the participating schools indicated that they found the quality of the information provided to be very good. The SEN Passport provided a 'potted history' to the child's new school, so that the school knew what to expect in terms of the child's needs and the provision required. The schools also endorsed the approach of sharing information between schools (rather than putting the burden on parents).

4. By this we mean those who died while serving in HM Armed Forces and whose death was deemed attributable to their service.

Some issues were identified, such as the challenge of completing the SEN passport as part of a block or battalion move. The DfE continues to consult with schools on the Passport – most recently at the DfE Service Children conference in November 2011.

In addition, between March and June this year, the Department for Education consulted on a SEN and disability Green Paper titled 'Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability'. The Green Paper put forward radical proposals to improve provision for disabled children and those with SEN. These included proposals to replace the current Statement of SEN and to introduce a single, integrated plan which would cover the areas of Education, Health and Social Care for children and young people from birth to age 25 and require providers to meet any identified needs. In particular, the Green Paper asked how the assessment process and the Education, Health and Social Care plans could be used to improve the continuity of care when children move between Local Authorities. The Green Paper also proposed that the parents of children with Plans should, if they want to, have access to personal budgets so that they have more control over the provision their children receive.

From September the Department for Education will be funding pathfinders which will test some of the proposals in the Green Paper, including the transferability of the support set out in the new Plans. The Government will be setting out how it will take forward developments in SEN and disability by the end of the year. When any changes to the SEN framework are made the Department for Education will publish a revised SEN Code of Practice which will include guidance on the education of Service children with SEN.

10. Continuity of Education Allowance

Changes to the eligibility rules and the governance of claims for the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) were announced in December 2010 and came into effect on 1 April 2011.

The aim of CEA is to assist Service personnel to achieve continuity of education for their children. It is designed to support family mobility when maintaining a stable family home in one location is not possible because of frequent assignments to different areas (both at home and overseas). However, where Service personnel choose to serve unaccompanied, or where consecutive assignments occur within the same area, there is no requirement to support family mobility with CEA.

In addition to these measures, the Secretary of State for Defence directed that a review of CEA should be conducted given the current climate and the need to be clear that this expenditure is fully justified. Results of this review were announced in Parliament on 13 October 2011. The review confirmed that CEA policy contributes to operational effectiveness by supporting family mobility and accompanied service, and for at least the near to medium term there will be no changes to the principles of Continuity of Education allowance and only minor changes to the allowance itself (with one new restriction on the age range for eligible children).

11. Provision Overseas for children aged 14-19

The Ofsted report on Children in Service families (20 May 2011) identified a need to review the overseas provision for 14-19 year olds in order to better meet the needs of young people. This is an ongoing challenge led by Service Children's Education (SCE) and supported by the Directorate of Children & Young People; the intention is to provide access to a range of learning pathways to enable young people to meet the challenges of adulthood and enter into the world

of work. The outcomes will be monitored by the MOD Children and Young People Trust Board (which meets quarterly).

Training and education

12. Education as a career enhancer and retention tool

Opportunities for learning are a defining feature of the Armed Forces due to the benefits they offer our people in developing them personally and professionally.

From the outset, life in the Armed Forces is busy and challenging, particularly so for recruits and trainees as they begin work to acquire the skills and professional knowledge they need to join their chosen Service. Ofsted, reporting on the welfare, care and support arrangements in place for new joiners, judged the provision as 'satisfactory' or better in the locations visited during FY 2010/11. The expectation that skills will be developed throughout a career in the Armed Forces is set and supported during initial training and sustained from then on.

Education also enhances retention within the Armed Forces, and this underpins the MOD's commitment to schemes such as Enhanced Learning Credits and access to Higher and Further Education.

Wherever possible, accreditation is to be sought for all mandatory education and training, subject to it being able to meet all the relevant criteria and the necessary resources being available. Accreditation is the gaining of a whole or partial civilian qualification (which may be expressed in credit-rated units) through recognition of the internal education, training and experience of MOD personnel, against the qualification's specific requirements. Where accreditation does not meet the requirements for the full national qualification, an accreditation scheme should provide opportunities for individuals to "top up" their learning, to enable them to achieve that full qualification. Any accreditation scheme related to MOD education and training courses must be offered to all course attendees on an equal opportunity basis. The focus of this policy is on gaining nationally recognised civilian qualifications rather than awards or professional memberships.

13. Transferring education and training courses (Service spouses and partners)

It has been brought to the Department's attention that spouses/partners often face difficulty in transferring education or training courses when moving as a result of an assignment. There may be differences in the fees being charged by the university or difficulty in transferring the place (the Government sets limits on the number of students an institution can accept, so the 'receiving institution' would need to have space to accept the new student, otherwise it could be fined or otherwise penalised) and there may be different institutional entry requirements to satisfy as individual universities are able to set their own admissions policies.

To put this in context, the FAMCAS 2011 results state that for 46% of families, transferring education or a course was not applicable, but for those for whom it was, 12% did experience difficulties with accessing further or higher education due to the mobility of Service life. 37% did not experience this difficulty. In terms of continuing courses that the spouse or their family started in a previous location, 9% experienced difficulty continuing that course due to Service mobility, while 34% did not.

The issue of Qualified Teaching Status (QTS) has also been raised. Primary legislation for the award of QTS does not allow partners to train and or continue their training in Service Children's Education (SCE) schools overseas. This is a significant disadvantage to the Service community as many partners have degrees and QTS would allow them to continue their career in UK and overseas. MOD will look again at what might be possible to mitigate this.

14. Life skills training

Each of the Services has training programmes designed to improve the skills of Service personnel in areas such as financial capability, securing housing, drawing up a will and responsible social behaviour. These were detailed in the Government Response to the Taskforce Report on the Military Covenant and therefore are not repeated here, except to give further detail below on plans for improvements in financial training.

Financial Capability focus groups are being held at various Phase 1 (initial) training establishments across all three Services which are helping to inform the financial training need. In tandem, a User Design Group meets fortnightly with Standard Life Charitable Trust and the Royal British Legion to test and comment on developments in the proposed training package. The aim is for the resultant training solution to go live from April 2012.

Veterans who receive significant sums of money through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme are also provided with generic advice at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court. The purpose of this is to provide patients with a better understanding of basic personal financial issues. Our aim is to build on that foundation by making available regulated independent financial advisers who would initially provide general presentations on issues such as Trust Funds and investing in properties via buy-to-let mortgages, after which they would make themselves available for one-to-one consultations. The MOD is working with the Institute for Chartered Accountants in England and Wales to meet the need for regulated advice at DMRC Headley Court. We are also working with the White Ensign Association and Service charities to establish methods of improving access to regulated independent financial advice by all Service personnel.

15. Qualification Equivalency

A similar issue to that faced by Service Partners in transferring courses / qualifications to locations outside the UK is one which particularly affects Foreign and Commonwealth Service personnel. Qualifications – such as degrees – that have been gained in countries of origin are not recognised as a UK equivalent. Foreign and Commonwealth applicants can be enlisted as unqualified soldiers rather than officers, and potentially in cap badges which do not make the most of their skills. Work needs to be undertaken with NARIC (National Agency responsible for providing information, advice and expert opinion on vocational, academic and professional skills and qualifications from over 180 countries worldwide) to establish the level of recognition and equivalency so that recruiting staff can ensure that individuals are given the opportunity to use their qualifications to the full extent. Individuals can pay NARIC to translate their qualifications but in practice many do not do so – MOD will consider (with stakeholders) the extent to which this affects careers and explore the possibility of obtaining equivalencies on behalf of applicants.

16. Training and Development for those transitioning outside the Armed Forces and Veterans.

Support is available for all Service personnel in order to assist their transition from Service to civilian life. Provision includes training, education and job finding assistance. The provisions are detailed in Chapter 10 – Transition.

Conclusions

While much progress has been made here, it is clear that specific disadvantages are still in evidence for serving personnel, their partners and children. However, there is a significant amount of work in train to address these: the pupil premium and additional £3m support fund for Service children; childcare sufficiency audits; fair access protocols; work to remedy transfer of records issues when Service children move schools; a review of the issues faced by partners in transferring education or training courses and qualification equivalency issues for Foreign and Commonwealth personnel, as well as life skills training for serving personnel to aid them on transition to civilian life.

4 Housing

“In addressing the accommodation requirements of Service personnel, the MOD seeks to promote choice, recognising the benefits of stability and home ownership amongst members of the Armed Forces where this is practicable and compatible with Service requirements, and also that their needs alter as they progress through service and ultimately return to civilian life. Where serving personnel are entitled to publicly-provided accommodation, it should be of good quality, affordable, and suitably located. They should have priority status in applying for Government-sponsored affordable housing schemes, and Service leavers should retain this status for a period after discharge. Personnel may have access to tailored Armed Forces housing schemes or financial arrangements, depending on their circumstances, to help them in purchasing their own property. Those injured in service should also have preferential access to appropriate housing schemes, as well as assistance with necessary adaptations to private housing or Service accommodation whilst serving. Members of the Armed Forces Community should have the same access to social housing and other housing schemes as any other citizen, and not be disadvantaged in that respect by the requirement for mobility whilst in service.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Service people regularly have to move location. This means that they are often reliant on accommodation provided by the MOD and have limitations imposed upon them in terms of the choice of house available. Because of frequent moves, it is often difficult to access mortgages. In recognition of this, Service personnel benefit from a significant housing abatement (estimated to be in the order of 65% of the national open market average for Standard 1 equivalent) for Service accommodation in order to compensate for the exigencies of service, which also takes into account the lack of security of tenure, the right to buy and an institutional living environment.

The most recent findings from AFCAS state that the majority of personnel live in Service accommodation during the working week and are generally satisfied with the standard and value for money, but lower scores are reported for maintenance, repair and fairness of allocation. Almost one third own their own home, but of these less than a quarter are satisfied with the opportunities to live in their own home (a large decrease on last year). Of those who do not own their own home, most state inability to afford to buy as the main reason but nearly a quarter also say they are making financial preparations to buy.

Armed Forces accommodation

1. Standard and condition

According to AFCAS 2011, 57% of respondents were satisfied with the overall standard of Service accommodation. This represents a 3% point increase on 2010 survey results. In addition 65% of respondents were satisfied with the value for money of Service accommodation (a 2% point increase on 2010). However, only 43% of respondents were satisfied with the response to requests to maintain or repair their Service accommodation (this is a new question so

cannot be compared with 2010 data) and similarly only 42% were satisfied with the quality of maintenance and repair to their Service accommodation. The following sections of this report look in more detail at the different types of Service provision.

a) Service Family Accommodation (SFA)

Standard for Condition (SfC) is used to assess the state of MOD SFA, with Standard 1 being the highest and Standard 4 the lowest. Currently, some 96% of the UK housing stock is considered to be in good condition, which is assessed to be a minimum of Standard 2 and broadly equates to the Government's Decent Homes Standard. Plans are in train to dispose of or upgrade the remaining properties to meet the Department's commitment that SFA at Standard 3 or below will not be allocated with effect from January 2012.

It is anticipated that around 700 properties will be upgraded to Standard 1 in FY 11/12, against a target of 800. A further 800 properties are planned to be upgraded in FY 12/13. Meanwhile, the Department is planning to complete up to 2700 elemental upgrades (e.g. replacement bathrooms and kitchens) this year with a further 2250 in the next financial year. Thereafter, as part of the Department's reduction of its funding gap, there will be a three-year pause in the upgrade programme from April 2013, although the Department will continue to seek opportunities to mitigate some of the effects of this pause. During the pause, the comprehensive response repair and maintenance service and the elemental upgrade programme will continue to be funded. We understand that the pause will cause concern to Service personnel and their families but difficult decisions have had to be made in order to reduce the Department's budget deficit.

b) Single Living Accommodation (SLA)

Single personnel are provided with accommodation at their duty station and, as with SFA, benefit from a significant abatement (around 75% of the national open market for bed-sit accommodation) to compensate for the exigencies of service and living in barracks.

Currently only 40% of SLA is considered to be in good condition but this is partly a consequence of historic oversupply. The Department has built and modernised some 47,300 en-suite bed-spaces over the last 8 years with just under 5,900 delivered in FY 10/11. In the period to March 2013 it is expected that the Department will deliver a further 8,700 modernised bed-spaces. Thereafter, there will be a 3-year pause on some SLA upgrade programmes, such as Project SLAM, although other projects delivering SLA will not be affected. For example, Project Allenby/Connaught – which has already delivered 7,200 bed spaces at Garrisons across Salisbury Plain and Aldershot – will deliver a further 3,279 bed spaces by 2014.

The MOD continues to recognise the importance of improving SLA that will not be subject to modernisation for at least four years and has allocated, under the banner of Service Personnel First, £10m in FY 10/11 and again in FY 11/12, for more limited but valued improvements that bring immediate benefit to our people.

2. Impact of the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR)

It is acknowledged that there is a short term shortage of SLA, particularly in the Portsmouth and Plymouth areas due to the disposal of several RN Ships under the SDSR. This issue is being addressed, but in the meantime, some RN personnel are having to share SLA rooms.

3.Future Accommodation Project (FAP)

The Future Accommodation Project is a project within the New Employment Model programme (due to be implemented from 2015) and will look at how Service personnel and their families should be housed in the future. All three Service Families Federations have provided evidence to the FAP project to help shape the options being considered.

4.Next Generation Estates Contract (NGEC)

NGEC is a Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) programme to develop the most cost effective mix of estate contract models to meet the future needs of defence. The Service Families Federations are stakeholders in the NGEC project and their focus is to ensure that there is appropriate attention on customer service, with a strong emphasis on timely, relevant and helpful communications on all housing matters between the DIO, its contractors and the occupants.

5.Improvements to Defence Infrastructure Organisation customer care

The standard and condition of Service Family Accommodation (SFA), particularly the maintenance service and allocations processes, remains a cause of concern for Service families, especially in the light of the ongoing DIO transformation process, the award of the new NGEC National Housing Prime Contract for the UK and the three year pause in the SFA Upgrade Programme from 2013. Marked improvements have been achieved in the maintenance service in recent years but further improvement is necessary and there is a concern from Family Federations that the progress made may be placed in jeopardy during the transition to the new contracts and processes. DIO are aware of these concerns and have developed plans to mitigate the risks.

With respect to allocation of housing – according to AFCAS 2011, 71% of respondents were either satisfied or neutral about how fairly Service Accommodation is allocated (42% satisfied, 29% neutral); this represents a 3% point increase in respondents who state they are satisfied, compared with AFCAS 2010 results. The implementation of the improved SFA allocation process in 2012 is one of the first elements of the DIO Transformation Process. This change programme will comprise two key projects. Firstly, the introduction of an automated SFA application process which allows Service personnel to specify their preferences for their housing; this will offer families visibility of the housing that is available and provide greater transparency within the allocations process. Secondly, the centralisation of the eight regional Housing Information Centres will achieve greater standardisation, consistency of approach and efficiency for DIO in allocating SFA. It will allow regional housing staffs to focus on the needs of Service families and keep in close touch with the local Chain of Command and welfare agencies.

To test the concept of the Customer Assistance Point (CAP, formerly known as Drop In Centres), DIO and the current maintenance contractor MHS (Modern Housing Solutions) launched a three month pilot scheme at Larkhill in September 2011 to offer families an additional way of accessing services and resolving any problems that arise. It is open to customers who wish to discuss issues about their SFA in person. It is operated by a specially trained coordinator who can offer advice and work in support of the Housing Information Centre and the MHS Helpdesk. It will not replace nor be a substitute for the specialist services provided by other providers such as Unit Welfare Officers and the local HIVE. The pilot scheme in Larkhill will run

until the end of 2012 and further trials may then be conducted in other areas. If these trials are successful, Customer Assistance Points could be opened across the UK.

Home ownership & adaptations

According to AFCAS 2011, 32% of Service personnel currently own their own home, with approximately half of these respondents living in their own home during the working week. This represents a 6% point decrease on 2010 results. Of these home owners, 42% were dissatisfied (33% neutral; 24% satisfied) with the opportunity to actually live in their own home, which represents a 9% point increase in dissatisfaction compared with 2010 results. An additional 24% were making financial preparations to buy a home (an 8% point increase on 2010 results).

For those who owned their own home, the most prevalent reason (stated by 76% of respondents, a 5% point increase on 2010 results) was "to give stability for myself and my family". For the non-home owners, affordability of a suitable home was the most prevalent reason for not owning their own home (indicated by 78% of those it applied to).

As for FAMCAS 2011, 56% of respondents (Service spouses) indicated that they own their own home, of which 32% live in it. Home ownership was more prevalent among RN respondents. The Army had the lowest percentages of people living in the home they owned and the highest percentage of people never having owned a home. For those who did not own a home, the most prevalent reason (60%) was they could not afford to buy a suitable home at the moment.

As outlined in the Today and Tomorrow document, the Government has worked with lenders to increase support for home ownership – this is detailed in the Commercial Products and Services chapter. These changes and the further measures detailed below will help to reduce the problems faced by Service personnel in accessing mortgages (and thus buying their own home) due to their mobile lifestyle.

6. Armed Forces Home Ownership Scheme

The Armed Forces Home Ownership Scheme (AFHOS) Pilot was launched on 1 April 2010 as a bespoke shared equity product, aimed specifically at Service personnel with between four and six years of service. £20m funding was secured to cover a four year period with demand far outstripping supply for the £5m allocated each year. AFHOS was jointly set up by the MOD and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and Radian are contracted to administer the scheme. Between 1 April 2010 and 31 July 2011, 93 Service personnel have completed on a property purchase through the scheme. Of the 93 completions, 45% are RN, 33% are Army and 22% are RAF personnel.

7. Home ownership schemes

There is considerable appetite amongst members of the Armed Forces to own their own home, and home ownership aids both family stability and transition to civilian life. Consequently, Government has introduced a number of measures to make it easier for Service personnel to own their own home: in England (a) members of the Armed Forces are being placed at the top of the priority list for the FirstBuy scheme, which will see Government and house-builders together providing around £400 million to help 10,500 first time buyers to purchase a new

home; (b) members of the Armed Forces are being placed at the top of the priority list for all other Government-funded home ownership schemes (e.g. shared ownership); (c) Government is instructing HomeBuy agents from the Homes and Communities Agency to visit Armed Forces bases to explain to Armed Forces personnel how the FirstBuy scheme works, and discuss options with them if they are interested in applying for other affordable home ownership schemes. Service personnel can retain this priority status for 12 months after leaving their Service and in the event of death in Service it can be transferred to a bereaved spouse / civil partner. The first sales of properties through the HomeBuy Scheme have come through including to members of the Armed Forces. FirstBuy homes became available in the summer and members of the Armed Forces are already being helped through the scheme to purchase a home of their own.

The role of the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) is to provide specialist housing advice and information to Armed Forces personnel and their dependants while serving and to ex-Service personnel and their dependants who are still occupying Service Family Accommodation. The JSHAO focuses heavily on those prior to the resettlement phase and aims to educate and encourage Service personnel to consider how they might use civilian housing provision through a range of communication methods. It also provides advice for those nearing the end of their service to assist their transition into civilian life and delivers a worldwide housing resettlement programme. The housing resettlement programme is delivered through the Regional Resettlement Centres (UK) and Army/RAF Education Centres (Overseas) and provides detailed advice on civilian housing options.

The JSHAO has established and maintained links with the Department of Communities and Local Government, Devolved Administrations, Homes and Communities Agency, Local Authority Housing Departments and Housing Associations. Links have been extended into the Private Sector (such as mortgage providers, house developers, estate agents etc) and the voluntary and community sector such as Soldiers, Sailors and Air Force Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA-FH), Housing Advisory Service, Haig Homes and other organisations who offer advice and make housing provision for the ex-Service community. This allows the JSHAO to effectively communicate to the Service community worldwide the full range of housing schemes that are available from both the public and private sectors that may aid them as they seek civilian housing.

The **Scottish** Government's Low-Cost Initiative for First Time Buyers (LIFT) shared equity schemes (which includes the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme, the New Supply Shared Equity Scheme and the New Supply Shared Equity with Developers Scheme) will continue to provide priority access to people in the Armed Forces or veterans, widows, widowers and other partners of Service personnel killed in action for up to one year after their partner has been killed. In Scotland, Registered Social Landlords administer the LIFT shared equity schemes on behalf of the Scottish Government and they are asked to promote the schemes to Service personnel and veterans in their area.

In **Wales**, the Homebuy Scheme, administered by Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords, gives priority to Veterans and serving members of the Armed Forces. When assessing the financial criteria for the HomeBuy scheme Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords should disregard any lump sums paid as a result of loss or injury. The FirstBuy scheme is not available in Wales.

In the AFCAS 2011 survey, of those who answered a question on Government Affordable Housing Schemes, 1% had used one in the last year to buy or rent their home (1% point decrease on 2010 results), whereas 18% had not heard of these (unchanged from 2010). The FAMCAS 2011 survey found that 10% of those who owned their own home had bought it in the

last 12 months, and 30% of them had used a scheme to buy their home. Schemes that were used included LSAP, HomeBuy /AFHOS, Shared equity, Forces discount (particular to certain developers) and Right to Buy.

8. Self-build housing Custom Build Homes

The Community Self Build Agency (CSBA) is working on a scheme to help ex-Service personnel currently living in hostel accommodation develop the country's first specialist housing scheme built by ex-Armed Forces personnel. The former soldiers have started their skills training with the contractor Leadbitter and Bristol College and construction on the scheme started on 6 June 2011, and is expected to last up to a year. The scheme is being developed in partnership with Bristol City Council, Knightstone Housing, Leadbitters, Onsite Bristol and Bristol College. Group custom (self)-build housing schemes such as these, have the potential to provide ex-Service personnel with cost effective housing, and valuable building skills and experience that may lead to jobs within the construction industry.

The Government is examining the barriers that adversely affect the self-build industry, and is working with the CSBA to see what can be done to encourage more enabling organisations to bring forward schemes that will make it easier for more ex-Service personnel to build their own homes. DCLG and CSBA are looking to host a workshop to promote Group self-build projects and promote best practice.

A Government-Industry working group set up by the Housing Minister Grant Shapps in January 2011 has produced an action plan which was published in July (<http://www.nasba.org.uk/Media/NASBA2011%20Action%20Plan.pdf>) setting out clear proposals to enable more self-building. The Government and Industry leaders have now formed an Implementation Group and are working together to implement this Industry action plan, to boost the number of self-builders across the country by addressing the common barriers aspiring self-builders face.

The Industry action plan asks the Government to:

- Make more land available for self-builders. The MOD, other Government Departments and Local Authorities will look at the opportunities for self-builders within their public land disposal strategies to gauge the demand for self-build in their area and reflect this in their planning strategies.
- Encourage Lenders to offer more finance products for those building their own home;
- Remove and simplify over-burdensome regulations hampering the growth of the sector.
- The action plan challenges Industry to:
- Develop new implementation models, such as making serviced plots available to self-builders;
- Make 'revolving funds' available to support group self-build schemes;
- Provide clear independent information to would-be self-builders via a new online self-build 'portal', to enable more people to get a project under way.

The Government has outlined its support for the action plan in its Housing Strategy '*Laying the Foundations: A Housing Strategy for England*⁵'. The Strategy also sets out how we will be supporting and encouraging more individuals to build their own homes through a Custom Homes programme, which includes making available up to £30m of new funding to support provision of short-term project finance on a repayable basis.

There have been cases where injured ex-Service personnel have had difficulty getting planning permission to build homes to meet their particular needs. We are ensuring that the national planning rules are sufficiently flexible to support applications from disabled ex-Service personnel for homes that suit their needs. The draft National Planning Policy Framework was published for consultation in July, providing an opportunity for comment on the draft planning policies. The consultation closed on 17 October and DCLG is considering the comments received.

In Scotland, Army Firm Base Commanding Officers, in consultation with veterans' charities and Local Authorities, are confident that the Firm Base system of co-operation and discussion in Scotland, will smooth any planning issues as they arise, without undue stress to the veteran.

In Wales, planning applications are dealt with at a local authority level and therefore it is up to the local planning authority to judge the planning application, but Welsh officials are not aware of Service personnel in Wales being prevented from building homes to meet their needs.

9. Assistance with the cost of home adaptations for injured Service personnel

The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is an entitlement administered by local housing authorities. Subject to a means test, it helps to fund the provision of adaptations that enables disabled people to live as comfortably and independently as possible in their homes. Young people under the age of 17 are exempt from the DFG means test.

The eligible work is wide-ranging, providing for access to the basic facilities within a home, including ramps, door-widening, stair-lifts and walk-in showers and the grant is subject to a maximum limit of £30,000.

Up to £1.5 million of DFG funds were set aside by the Department for Communities and Local Government in England to reimburse Local Authorities in 2010/11 regarding meeting the costs of home adaptations for injured Service Personnel. This is the result of the commitment within the 2008 Service personnel Command Paper to help the most severely disabled ex-Service personnel in their DFG applications.

More generally, funding for DFG has been protected within the 2010 Spending Review (SR) and by the end of the SR period the national allocation to Local Authorities for DFG will increase from £169 million in 2010-11 to £185 million in 2014-15.

5. DCLG, November 2011. Available from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/2033676.pdf>

Social housing

10. Access to social housing

Some ex-Service personnel and their families require a social home when they leave the Armed Forces. Armed Forces redundancies may well increase demand for social housing as families move out of Service-provided accommodation. To ensure that Service families are given appropriate priority, Government will consult on a change to the law so that councils in England would be required to give 'additional preference' (i.e. high priority) for social housing to those who have a pressing housing need when they leave the Armed Forces. At the same time, Government will consult on regulations which make sure that Service personnel who have to move from base to base do not lose their qualification rights to social housing. Additionally, DCLG plan to publish for consultation shortly, new statutory guidance to Local Authorities on social housing allocations. The new guidance will provide advice on the different ways in which authorities can ensure that the needs of Service personnel are taken into account when setting priorities.

In Scotland, there are many places where there are not enough council or housing association homes for those who want one. This means there can be long waiting times for all applicants including ex-Service personnel. In Scotland, priority for social housing is based on an assessment of an applicant's need and circumstances. Under this framework, ex-Service personnel who have a high level of housing need, who are homeless or threatened with homelessness will be given priority for social housing. In March 2011, the Scottish Government published a new practice guide on social housing allocations. This aims to help social landlords understand the requirements and the flexibilities they have in allocating their housing. The guide also supports social landlords to consider the needs of those leaving the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel. In addition, the Scottish Government has published a Scottish Housing Guide for people leaving the Armed Forces and ex-Service personnel. This leaflet gives an overview of the housing options in Scotland and sets out where to go for further advice and assistance. It was widely distributed in 2010 and is also available online at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/24165717/0>.

Homes Fit for the 21st Century The Scottish Government's Strategy and Action Plan for Housing in the Next Decade: 2011-2020 made a commitment to consult on changes to legislation to minimise constraints on landlords' allocations policies giving Local Authorities and housing associations more flexibility and responsibility to determine their own approach to meeting need. As part of this process the Scottish Government will consider whether these measures would assist social landlords to address the housing needs of ex-Service personnel and ensure they are not disadvantaged.

The **Welsh** Government has recently consulted on changes to the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness. In the document the Welsh Government gives its full commitment to delivering the undertakings in the Service Personnel Command Paper of 2008. The guidance covers Service personnel who need suitable adapted accommodation, need accommodation as a result of leaving the Armed Forces and loss of Armed Forces accommodation, and establishing a local connection.

11.Cessation certificates

For those Service personnel who have a requirement for social housing on leaving the Service, work has been on-going between the MOD and DCLG in England to improve the transition process and ensure Service people are not disadvantaged because of their mobility. Following an earlier change in legislation enabling Service personnel and Service leavers to establish a local connection in an area in which they have served, focus is now on ensuring that the Cessation to Occupy Certificate is recognised by all Local Authorities as formal notice of impending homelessness. A letter was sent to all Local Authorities in early July 2011, reminding them to have regard to statutory guidance in respect of Cessation to Occupy Certificates when Service-leavers are threatened with homelessness.

In Scotland, this advice was restated in the Scottish Government's Social Housing Allocations: A Practice Guide published online in March 2011. In addition it has been reflected in guidance on prevention of homelessness for ex-Service personnel and in preventing homelessness more generally.

The **Welsh Government**, in its consultation on changes to the Code of Guidance for Local Authorities on allocation of accommodation and homelessness, provided updated guidance on the application of Certificates of Cessation.

12.Homelessness and Resettlement Support

A small proportion of ex-Service personnel become homeless after leaving the Armed Forces, finding it difficult to adjust to civilian life. Government has worked closely with homeless charities to tackle homelessness amongst ex-Service personnel. Progress has been made with the proportion of rough sleepers in London who had previously been in the Armed Forces falling from 4% in 2008/9 to 3% in 2010/11 (according to the Combined Homelessness And Information Network – or CHAIN – database, funded by the Department of Communities and Local Government and Greater London Authority and managed by the homelessness charity Broadway).

The trials of enhanced resettlement support for Early Service Leavers (see also chapter 10, section 3) should also contribute to eradicating the chances of Service leavers becoming vulnerable to homelessness, through the trials' provision of a more bespoke and sophisticated service of resettlement centred on individuals. Its aim is to ensure Service Leavers are better prepared, tracked and connected to full-time employment and other additional support services based on individuals' needs. The trials are due to begin in late 2011 and January 2012.

The **Scottish Government** Homelessness Taskforce recommendations for Service personnel are: 'In preparing their homelessness strategies, Local Authorities should take full account of the needs of those leaving the Armed Forces and their spouses or partners. Guidance for Local Authorities should stress that people due to leave the Armed Forces should be classified as threatened with homelessness where their licence to occupy service accommodation is due to expire and they have no other accommodation. Local Authorities and other bodies which may come into contact with people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, should have procedures in place to identify ex-servicemen/women amongst this group and to signpost the assistance available to them. Following evaluation the Ministry of Defence should extend the Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services (SPACES) project to parts of Scotland where there are significant numbers of accessible contact points providing resettlement advice and assistance to those who have left the services.' Veterans Scotland run an Ex-Services Action Group to focus on issues of homelessness and resettlement.

In Wales, people leaving the Armed Forces are automatically granted priority need status under Homelessness Legislation. The Welsh Government has also funded development of a website resource which provides details of all services that may be appropriate for veterans at risk of homelessness.

13. Supported Accommodation for ex-Service personnel

In recognition of the issue of homelessness amongst a small percentage of former Service personnel, and following on the success of Mike Jackson House in Aldershot, a further Supporting People accommodation unit opened in September 2011 in Catterick, North Yorkshire. The Beacon provides 31 single self-contained flats for Service Leavers and veterans at risk of homelessness or rough sleeping, for up to 18 months until residents are able to move into permanent accommodation in their area of choice. In addition to providing accommodation, it will support ex-Service personnel back into education, training and employment, and host on site access to other professionals as necessary. It will facilitate social enterprise to give valuable training and much needed skills for life support, opportunities for long term employment, including assisting residents with addressing health issues.

The project is the result of an innovative partnership between Government departments (MOD and DCLG), Local Authorities (North Yorkshire County Council and Richmondshire District Council), and voluntary and community sector organisations (TRBL and Church Housing Trust), all having contributed to its development. The Beacon will be managed by Riverside English Churches Housing Group, who also manage Mike Jackson House, and have supported homeless veterans since 2000. They have a good track record of providing tailored, specialist assistance to veterans to aid with their successful transition to civilian life.

14. Use of public land

Recognising the significant amounts of surplus formally used public land, which could be used to build new homes (it has been estimated that forty per cent of land suitable for development sits within the public sector), Government is taking steps to accelerate the release of public land for development. Some of this land could benefit ex-Service personnel. For example, as a first step, the rationalisation of office accommodation owned by the Ministry of Defence will free up sites in Bath which will be brought forward for disposal over the next few years. Subject to planning, the sites may have potential for homes that can benefit ex-Service personnel. Major landholding Departments, including MOD have published their land release strategies and these are available at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/2001979>

In Wales, the Land Release Protocol was introduced in 2006. Under this protocol all surplus Welsh Government Land has to be considered for affordable housing before it is sold on. In 2010, fifteen sites were transferred to the Housing portfolio for transfer to Housing Associations for affordable housing and these sites are in the process of being disposed of. The Welsh Government is keen to continue with the Land Release Protocol and see more sites released for affordable homes from the Welsh Government itself, Welsh Government Sponsored Public Bodies, the NHS in Wales and from Local Authorities. The programme can provide affordable homes including HomeBuy shared equity housing for which Service personnel are prioritised. It is currently being reviewed.

Conclusions

The quality of MOD-provided housing and the ability to access private housing are clearly factors in the level of morale of serving people and their families. The three year pause in accommodation upgrades from 2013 was a difficult decision to take. Due to the unique nature of Service life and the disadvantage that frequent mobility obligations bring to accessing loans and mortgages there are a number of special provisions in place to help serving personnel and veterans get on the housing ladder. Key areas of work include the Future Accommodation Project (as part of NEM); the Next Generation Estates Contract; improvements to Defence Infrastructure Organisation customer care; continued working with lenders to increase access to secured loans to achieve home ownership, and improvements in communication on the support already available through Government assisted affordable housing schemes.

5 Benefits and Tax

“Members of the Armed Forces Community should have the same access to benefits as any UK citizen, except where tailored alternative schemes are in place. They will also contribute through taxation, but the taxation system may be adapted to reflect their particular circumstances (a current example would be the Contribution in Lieu of Council Tax arrangements).”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Due to the mobility obligations for Serving Personnel, the location of deployments and the fact that they may use more than one house, a number of special provisions have been made in the area of benefits and tax. In recognition of their service, War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payments to those in Service or to ex-Service personnel are not taxable at the point of payment; and there may be no liability to inheritance tax if the cause of death is found to be Service attributable (this includes veterans). This does not extend to Survivor’s Guaranteed Income Payments which remain taxable.

1.Improving access to benefits for the spouse or civil partner of Service personnel returning from overseas postings

In April 2010, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) introduced an award of Class 1 National Insurance credits for Service spouses and civil partners to cover periods in which they were accompanying a member of the Armed Forces posted overseas. The credits, which have been in effect since April 2011, will help protect the eligibility of Service spouses and civil partners to a basic state pension and contribution-based working-age benefits. According to FAMCAS 2011, 15% of respondents had accompanied their spouse on overseas assignments in the last 12 months. Of these, 35% reported having had difficulties maintaining a National Insurance contribution record and 31% did not. Of the 31% who reported having no difficulties, 8% attributed this to having applied for National Insurance credits. Given that the new credits have only been in use since April 2011, the MOD will be looking at FAMCAS results closely next year to gauge whether there has been any improvement in this area.

To enhance that protection further, from January 2012, DWP will provide Service spouses and civil partners with an easement to the condition for contribution-based working-age benefits (Jobseeker’s Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance) that requires contributions to have been paid in one of the two complete tax years prior to the year in which the benefit claim is made. Relaxing that condition will make it easier for Service spouses and civil partners who have accompanied Service personnel on an overseas posting to be entitled to contribution-based working-age benefits on their return to the UK.

2.Council Tax

For those serving overseas on specified operations, such as in Afghanistan and more recently Libya, MOD’s Council Tax Relief (CTR) Scheme is available. Previously a 25% discount applied, but since 1 July 2011 it has doubled to 50% of the average council tax per dwelling in England. CTR is paid as a tax-free lump sum on completion of duty, based on the number of days in the qualifying operational location and amounts to approximately £296 for an average six month tour. This increase has been welcomed by eligible Service personnel.

A local authority 50% council tax discount may be claimed by Service personnel living in Service accommodation in Great Britain who have an unoccupied private property in England, Scotland or Wales (providing it remains furnished). The discount is only available to Service personnel and civilians who live elsewhere in job-related accommodation; it does not apply to Service personnel or civilians serving overseas. Individuals must apply directly to their local authority. The Army Families Federation has reported that families are being asked for varying degrees of evidence (from a letter of allocation from the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to a letter from a commanding officer proving that the Service person is required to live in Service Family Accommodation) in order to receive this discount, leading to confusion over what is required. Regulation 14 of the Council Tax (Administration and Enforcement) Regulations 1992 (SI 1992/613) requires billing authorities to take reasonable steps to ascertain whether a council tax bill is subject to a discount. What steps they take is a matter for the individual local authority to decide. However, the Department for Communities and Local Government will work with key business partners to consider whether there is scope for providing guidance.

For Service personnel living in England, Scotland or Wales in a private property, who own a second private property in England, Scotland or Wales, Local Authorities offer a council tax discount, which they have the discretion to set between 10% and 50% (0% - 50% in Wales). This regulation applies equally to Service personnel and civilians.

3. Universal Credit

The Government is developing Universal Credit, which will restructure the benefit system to create a single income-replacement benefit for working age adults. This will unify the current system of means-tested out-of-work benefits, Tax Credits and support for housing. It will also provide additions for disabled people and carers. The contribution-based forms of Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance will continue alongside Universal Credit.

Universal Credit will be designed to improve work incentives by allowing individuals to keep more of their income as they move into work, and by introducing a smoother and more transparent reduction of benefits when they increase their earnings. Removing the distinction between in-work and out-of-work support will also reduce the risks associated with moves into employment. This should benefit families of serving personnel, who can experience short periods of employment as a result of Service mobility. Universal Credit will also be more responsive to the needs of people whose health circumstances fluctuate and who may have to adjust their working hours on a regular basis.

Universal Credit is being designed from the outset to support efficient delivery and provide high quality service. It will be rolled out in October 2013 for all new cases and there will be a gradual transfer of existing cases until 2017.

4. Access to benefits for dependants of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel

Dependants of serving Foreign and Commonwealth personnel (including Gurkhas) who are injured, including on operations or during training for operations, may not be able to access benefits such as Carer's Allowance if they do not qualify to settle in the UK.

Special provisions already exist, whereby if a Foreign or Commonwealth member of the Armed Forces is medically discharged as a result of injury sustained during operations, the requirement for them to have completed four years of service in order to qualify for settlement would normally be waived. However all other criteria would have to be met. If appropriate, any

dependants would have their application for settlement granted in line with that of the serving person.

For those medically discharged as a result of injuries sustained when not on deployment or pre-deployment training, the four year Service requirement would not normally be waived. However, where a substantial part of the minimum four years Service has been completed prior to discharge, discretion may be exercised to grant settlement, depending on the circumstances of the case.

For bereaved dependants of those killed whilst deployed, settlement can be granted outside the Immigration Rules via the exercise of discretion in light of the particular circumstances of the case. Gaining this status would provide access to certain benefits, such as tax credits and income support.

However changing the immigration status of Service personnel and their families to enable the acquisition of settlement whilst in service would require a change to primary legislation. The MOD and UK Border Agency remain in discussion over this issue.

Conclusions

There are a number of circumstances where Service life impacts on a Service family's ability to access benefits and to receive eligible treatment with respect to taxation; however, positive work continues to be done to address these areas of disadvantage concerning benefits and tax. For example, we have been able to double council tax relief to 50% for those on eligible overseas operations. We will continue to improve communications on National Insurance credits for Service spouses and civil partners; seek to ensure clarity on the process to obtain council tax discounts (and where possible encourage Local Authorities to offer the maximum discount) and continue to drive work on resolving access to benefits for dependents of serving Foreign and Commonwealth personnel.

6 Responsibility of Care

“The Government, working with the chain of command, has a particular responsibility of care towards members of the Armed Forces. This includes a responsibility to maintain an organisation which treats every individual fairly, with dignity and respect, and an environment which is free from bullying, harassment and discrimination. Special account must be taken of the needs of those under 18 years of age. The Government has a responsibility to promote the health, safety and resilience of Servicemen and women; and to ensure that they are appropriately prepared, in the judgement of the chain of command, for the requirements of any training activities or operations on which they are to be engaged. However operational matters, including training and equipment, fall outside the scope of the Armed Forces Covenant.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Responsibility of care is an integral theme throughout all Service personnel policy and training. The unique nature of Armed Forces life means that certain measures are put in place to ensure the Government and chain of command are able to carry out their responsibilities of care. The work of each of the three Services in providing this support was highlighted in the Today and Tomorrow document.

Service personnel, particularly those that are young, are often moved away from their support networks (the people and places with which they are familiar and from which they draw support) due to the location of the main training bases. As well as being removed from their usual support structures, they are required to undertake challenging and sometimes dangerous activities. It is critical therefore that systems and resources are put into place which recognise this and provide the appropriate support – be this via the chain of command or through the training activities that recruits undergo to build up an esprit de corps. There is a wealth of MOD welfare services; however, it is also important that community resources are accessible and responsive to Service personnel.

1. Welfare provision

Welfare is a broad concept that has both a direct and indirect bearing on almost every aspect of Armed Forces activity. It concerns the wellbeing and motivation of personnel both individually and collectively and physically, materially, morally and socially. Welfare provision needs to take a range of forms in order to genuinely meet the needs of Service personnel and their families. It is recognised that the needs of our personnel are evolving, reflecting the increasing diversity of the society they represent and defend. There is a growing demand to continue to meet and, indeed, exceed these expectations; it is vital therefore that in these financially difficult times, adaptable and coherent welfare policies are developed that balance individual expectations with the capability and organisational needs of the Armed Forces and the resources at its disposal. Welfare of course also contributes directly to operational effectiveness.

Charitable funding provides a vital contribution in the provision of welfare services; this may include additional messing facilities, social and sporting facilities and tailored support for the wider Armed Forces Community.

Encouragement of a healthy lifestyle is also a factor. The Armed Forces support the adoption of a sensible drinking culture as an important contribution to overall good health. Contractors

providing messing facilities on site are being increasingly encouraged to provide 'coffee shop' type facilities to meet changing demand. The Armed Forces Act which received Royal Assent in November provides for Service personnel to be tested for alcohol or drugs where a Commanding Officer reasonably believes the ability to perform a duty is impaired with consequent serious safety risks.

2. Management of equality and diversity initiatives

The Today and Tomorrow document set out the initiatives in place to ensure that all personnel are treated fairly, with dignity and with respect and highlighted the initiatives to advance Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Since that report, the RAF has commenced a programme to address longer-term under-representation in technical specialisations. This programme (DRIT) has implemented initiatives to improve female recruitment into these specialisations by raising awareness of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) and challenging gender stereotypes. The RAF has developed innovative engineering, work-experience courses at DCAE Cosford for girls and a primary school education Roadshow with BAE Systems. Following the success of this work-experience programme, a similar programme for high achieving but low-aspiring Afro-Caribbean boys has been implemented. 'Generating Genius' seeks to encourage Afro-Caribbean boys in STEM subjects and provide positive, working, male role-models for these individuals who have usually grown up in a predominantly matriarchal environment.

3. Foreign and Commonwealth Service communities

Foreign and Commonwealth communities have particular welfare needs. This is especially true of those whose immigration status is dependent on their relationship to a Serving person exempt from immigration control. For dependants wishing to end a relationship due to domestic abuse or violence, this process is greatly complicated by the practical issues of leave to remain in the UK and access to public funds. If they have no recourse to public funds as a result of their immigration status, they may have few support options available to them and be particularly vulnerable. In the experience of the Army Welfare Service, Local Authorities and other relevant services have been largely unable to support families in these circumstances.

While dependants of Armed Forces personnel are currently not eligible to apply for settlement under the immigration rules relating to domestic violence, the UK Border Agency's policy is to consider applications for permission to remain in these circumstances on a case by case basis.

In the short term, the Government will continue to investigate what further support can be provided to those in need of it.

Changing the immigration status of the Service personnel and their families to enable the acquisition of settlement whilst in service would require a change to primary legislation. The MOD and UK Border Agency remain in discussion over this issue (see chapter 13, section 1).

Conclusions

The MOD monitors its responsibility of care policies closely and will continue to measure its management of equality and diversity initiatives. A continued relationship with voluntary and community sector partners is critical to the continued provision of a range of welfare support to personnel and their families. We will look at what more could be done, through partnership working, to support Foreign and Commonwealth families more effectively.

7 Deployment

“The special impact of operational deployment on both personal and family life should be recognised. Depending on the nature of the operation, this may include financial support to deployed personnel, welfare support to individuals and family members, and where possible facilities to enable good communications with home.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Deployment may bring constraints on freedom of action, risk to life, and increased anxiety for the Service person and their family due to separation. Positive measures are necessary to help mitigate these effects of deployment on family life and recognise the unique situation of deploying to an operational environment. MOD provision includes, for example, access to telephones, email, parcels, pre- and post-deployment leave, operational allowance and council tax relief. Deploying units maintain the vital contact with Service families when their partners deploy and provide specialist welfare support.

1. Deployment Notice

The amount of notice given prior to operational deployment is clearly an important factor for Service personnel and their families. According to AFCAS 2011, 76% were satisfied with the amount of notice they received for their current/last operational deployment; this represents a 4% point increase on 2010 results. The majority (65%) reported receiving eleven or more weeks' notice, while some 12% stated that they had received 6-8 weeks' notice. 3% stated that they had received less than a week's notice (although this was more prevalent in the Royal Marines and Royal Navy).

The start of operations in Libya in March 2011 led to many people being deployed at short notice, in some cases as little as 48 hours. However as the operation moved to a more stable footing, personnel received increasing notice of deployment, approaching historical norms. There is recognition that the unique role Service people play in such events may lead to short notice deployments in the future but these will continue to be in exceptional circumstances.

2. Operational Allowance

The aim of the Operational Allowance is to recognise the significantly increased and enduring nature of the danger in specified operational locations, over and above that compensated for within the X-Factor (see chapter 1). The qualifying locations are identified by an assessment of the risk and rigour of the operating environment. On 13 July 2011 it was announced that this included Libya. It is a tax-free allowance and was doubled from £14.51 per day to £29.02 per day by the coalition government in July 2010 (backdated to 6 May 2010). Those based day-to-day in such a location for a six-month deployment receive just over £5,000, whilst those who fly over, or are at sea within 12 nautical miles of the location, receive the allowance for each day they fulfil those criteria. The payment is made as a single lump sum on completion of the deployment.

3. Deployed Welfare Package (Operational)

The DWP(O) package is under constant review to ensure it meets the needs of individuals deployed on operations and their families, within financial and practical constraints of the operation. Although there has not been an uplift in DWP(O) entitlement, over the last year significant advances in the delivery of the existing package have ensured that communications such as Iridium phones, text link, email and WiFi internet access are now being provided at even the most austere locations. British Forces Broadcasting Service have introduced an iplayer facility to allow individuals to watch what they want, when they want and continue to broadcast digital TV in the Mobile Operating Bases.

These improvements appear to be reflected in the satisfaction rates reported by Service personnel. AFCAS 2011 found that 84% of those who have been on operational deployment (Sea-Going for RN) since 1 January 2008 were either satisfied with or neutral about the Operational/Deployment Welfare Package; this represents a 3% point increase on 2010 findings (for those who had been on operational deployment since 1 January 2007).

Due to the unanticipated nature of the deployment, delivery of the DWP(O) package for Libya earlier this year was not without its initial difficulties, however it was later deployed successfully to the operational theatre and well received.

4. Support to families

Support to families remains a critical component of the deployment cycle in order to sustain effective operational effectiveness and promote resilience. Pre-deployment briefings and information for families are key in managing the expectations of families, particularly over frequency of communications with deployed family members.

There are many initiatives in place and further measures proposed to enhance welfare provision and support to families in particular. Some examples of recent initiatives include deployment diaries for young people, staying positive charts for children, the provision of enhanced deployment support folders by HIVEs, the availability and use of Families Welfare Grant expenditure by units, families' briefings, online chat forums and DVD briefings for those who are located away from their home base.

The delivery of welfare support occurs primarily at unit level and involves the Chain of Command and a wide range of specialist welfare support.

However support to personnel deployed as Individual Augmentees (IA) rather than as part of a unit presents significant challenges. For example, of those RAF personnel deployed on operations since January 2008, AFCAS 2011 reported that 65% of both Officers and Airmen had been deployed as IAs. Welfare support is particularly difficult as the majority of families are located away from parent units and beyond the perimeter fence.

The Army has similar difficulties in supporting the families of IAs and those who are geographically distant from the Barracks of the deploying unit (this particularly impacts on Territorial Army families). Progress has been made in this area – Reserves Training and Mobilisation Centre (RTMC) Chilwell in particular has improved the situation for IAs – but it is felt that more investment is needed to provide appropriate resources.

Units deploying sub-elements (i.e. a single squadron or company) can also struggle as they receive a Families Welfare Grant according to the number of Service personnel deployed and

do not have any additional manpower or resources to provide specific deployment support to those families. It is a particular issue for Explosive Ordnance Disposal regiments who always have a single squadron deployed and have relatively high instances of injury and bereavement. Consultation with the single Services will take place to explore how to resolve these issues.

Overall, 35% of Service personnel who responded to the AFCAS 2011 survey stated that they were dissatisfied with the support their spouse/partner gets from the Service when they are absent (note this would include other periods of absence such as training). These concerns are not taken lightly by the MOD and show that there is more work to be done in this area. Voluntary and community organisations also play a role in providing valuable welfare support. For example, the storybook projects⁶ involving the production of CDs by trained volunteers, recording serving personnel reading stories for their children to listen to while they are deployed, are much appreciated (see chapter 8, section 3 for further examples).

As noted in the Government response to the Report of the Task Force on the Military Covenant (published on 16 May 2011), the MOD has previously investigated the possibility of allowing welfare staff access to next of kin and emergency contact addresses on the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system for Service personnel who are deployed, to enable welfare staff to contact families to offer welfare support directly. We will continue to work towards a practical solution.

5. Rest and Recuperation

The Coalition Government recognised the importance of respite from the operational tempo during and after long deployments, therefore amendments have been made to the leave policy for the three Services to ensure that any days missed during a period of Rest and Recuperation due to delays on the airbridge will be added to Post Operational Tour Leave. This initiative has been welcomed as mitigation for the delays sometimes incurred en route home.

In addition, over the last year significant effort has been made in improving the dependability of the airbridge and this continues to be a high priority. Measures have included the increased use of civilian charter and the improved utilisation of the RAF Transport fleet to provide greater resilience in event of aircraft technical issues. There will always be circumstances beyond the control of the MOD, for instance Air Traffic Control restrictions or severe weather conditions, however the MOD strives to minimise the effect of these by prudent contingency planning. These measures have shown significant improvement in the reliability of the airbridge over the last two Reliefs in Place and we will continue to strive towards minimising avoidable delays.

From an engineering perspective, significant analysis of the TriStar maintenance programme has been undertaken to improve aircraft availability and reduce the probability of experiencing faults leading to unscheduled maintenance events. Although it is not possible to completely eradicate technical faults, the work undertaken over the past six months will greatly reduce the probability of faults arising and unscheduled maintenance that cause delays. Finally, for the future, significant investment has gone into the introduction of the new platforms such as Voyager which will undoubtedly improve passenger carrying capability.

6. Storybook Links, Storybook Soldiers, Storybook Waves and Storybook Wings are part of the Storybooks Alliance.

Conclusions

The general picture of the welfare package and support available to families is positive. Much has been done to address issues that families have raised in the context of Iraq and early operational tours in Afghanistan. We will look at what more support individual augmentees could be given and look in greater detail at the concerns expressed by Serving Personnel about the support given to their families when they are away.

8 Family Life

“Service families give up certain freedoms and choices in order to support the Service. To sustain family life, family members should have the same access to childcare, training and employment opportunities as any other citizen. Support should be available to minimise the impact of mobility caused by Service, drawing on active monitoring by the chain of command. Support should also take into account the effects of postings to remote locations, often away from family connections, for example in promoting transport and accessibility measures.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Families suffer disadvantage in a number of areas (some of which are covered under separate headings elsewhere in this report). Frequent mobility often leads to difficulty in chosen employment and loss of income; the fact that a spouse/partner is often away for extended periods of time presents additional challenges, both practical and psychological – particularly for those with childcare requirements. The unique nature of Service life and the distress that operational environments and press reporting bring mean that support networks play a vital role in supporting families.

1. Impact of Service life

In the FAMCAS 2011 survey, 34% of respondents indicated that they had moved home in the last 12 months; the reason for the move was unspecified and as such may not always have been due to a Service requirement, however it gives an indication of the level of upheaval experienced by Service families. In particular, during this period 15% of respondents had accompanied their spouse on an assignment overseas. The AFCAS 2011 survey reported that 72% of Officers and 49% of Other Ranks surveyed stated that the impact of Service life on family and personal life would influence them to leave the Service. This was the highest rated reason.

2. Service children and young people

Priority One of the MOD Children and Young People’s Plan looks at ways of mitigating the effects that mobility and deployment have on Service children and young people. This is an ongoing role of the Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP). DCYP, and its strategic partners, report quarterly to the MOD Children and Young People Trust Board on the progress that is made in mitigating the effects of mobility and deployment and have been instrumental in setting up the process of the new Support Fund for Schools with Service Children, which is one example of the mitigating action undertaken by the MOD (see chapter 3). The Directorate has arranged for research to be commissioned on the effects of deployment and mobility on Service children and young people and will look to share its findings when it is concluded. Other resources are being developed and shared through the links in the SCISS forum (Service Children in State Schools), Scottish Stakeholder Group and Northern Ireland SCEF (Service Children Education Forum).

Another priority of the MOD Children and Young People’s Plan is to provide a structured and coordinated range of opportunities for Service children and young people to have their voice heard and to help shape the services available to them, be this in or out of school. DCYP are

keen to promote the voice of children and younger people in wider community agencies and will revisit this priority following the publication of the Department for Education (DfE) "Positive for Youth Policy Statement" later this year. DCYP will work with DfE to ensure that the principles of this policy statement are met and that strategies to seek the views of children and young people about what they want are developed.

In addition DCYP are engaging with a number of charities, and other organisations, to help support the children and young people of bereaved Service personnel to continue with their education by assisting with investigating bursaries for these children and young people. The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) under DCYP has conducted a survey of schools on the offer of benevolence that may be available to the children of Service personnel who are killed or seriously injured in the line of duty. This information has been provided to welfare branches and other benevolent organisations to assist them with any families that they are supporting as a result of serious injury or death of the Service spouse/partner.

3. Voluntary and community support

The MOD recognises the importance of Service charities in supporting personnel, veterans and their families. To this end, the Department is dedicated to addressing issues raised by the voluntary sector, such as use of the Defence estate, the prioritising of charitable projects, and the communication of offers throughout the Services. In the light of the increasing support from the general public for Service charities over the past few years, the MOD is in the process of developing a charitable co-ordination strategy, with the intention of furthering a positive and collaborative relationship between MOD and the voluntary community. Each of the Services has its own Service-linked charities and there are many other organisations, national and local, which provide support to members of Service families. The RAF Benevolent Fund for example, is engaged in such varied activities as the AirPlay initiative (£10m invested in enhancing support to young people on RAF units via qualified Youth Workers, Multi Use Games Areas and refurbishment of play parks), a partnership with RELATE to fund counselling sessions for RAF couples facing relationship difficulties, and a partnership with TRBL and the Citizens Advice Bureau to deliver money and benefits advice to serving personnel and families. Details of Service linked charities can be found on the Navy, Army and RAF websites.

The Community Covenant initiative launched in June this year (see chapter 13) provides a framework for the needs of Service families to be communicated to those organisations who have pledged their support to their local Armed Forces Community and we hope that many more initiatives will come to life in this way.

4. New Employment Model

As stated in chapter one, in the Strategic Defence and Security Review White Paper published last year, the Government made a commitment in respect of Service personnel to "better balance the demands placed on our people and their families, providing the greater domestic stability which is central to partners' employment and children's education, while continuing to support mobility where this is essential to Defence requirements."

Consultation with key interest groups such as the single Service Families Federations is ongoing and the different strands of the New Employment Model (NEM) programme are currently on track to report their findings in the summer of 2012. These will be drawn together into a consolidated package of options for consideration by the Defence Board in the autumn. Once a way forward has been agreed, it is expected that implementation will start in 2015, with some measures taking up to 10 years to complete in full.

Employment opportunities

5. Spouse/partner employment opportunities

According to AFCAS 2011, 50% of respondents' spouses/partners were in full-time employment, 21% in part-time employment and 24% were not employed. However 47% of respondents stated that they were dissatisfied with the effect of Service life on their spouse or partner's career. These are similar results to the 2010 findings. In addition, while 45% of respondents stated that their spouse/partner's career had no effect on their intentions to stay or leave, 40% stated that it increased their intention to leave, making it the second most prevalent factor in increasing personnel's intention to leave.

With dual income families increasingly the norm in the UK, many personnel and their partners feel that they are financially disadvantaged as a result of Service life, with implications for home ownership and the partner's private pension provision. The main concerns revolve around the lack of suitable employment in many Forces locations, the transferability of skills and qualifications and some local employers not wishing to employ Armed Forces partners due to the posting cycle. Frequent moves can also have a cumulative effect on overall career earnings since partners will often take lower-paid jobs in order to get back into employment after moving location and the financial effect of gaps in employment add up considerably over time.

The situation can be more difficult for those accompanying personnel serving overseas. 61% of FAMCAS 2011 respondents who had accompanied their spouse overseas in the last 12 months stated that they had experienced difficulties obtaining paid employment. Coupled with cuts to Local Overseas Allowance and associated allowances, some feel that they are significantly worse off financially than their UK-based counterparts.

The Government is committed to providing appropriate support to the spouses or partners of Service personnel. Partners of currently serving and ex-Service personnel have access to the full range of Jobcentre Plus services and can be considered for early access to the new Work Programme from three months into their claim for Jobseeker's Allowance. The Work Programme is an intensive, personalised employment support programme for those at risk of long-term unemployment. Providers are free to innovate and design support that addresses the needs of individuals. They will be paid primarily for the results they achieve for supporting people into sustained employment, and will be paid more to help those who may be further from the labour market. For example, a provider can earn up to around £6,000 to help former Service personnel and their partners find sustained work, compared to around £4,000 for a typical Jobseeker's Allowance claimant. Further information on the Work Programme can be found at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/the-work-programme.pdf>.

Although the focus of Jobcentre Plus is more on those entitled to state benefit, working or non-benefit customers can still access light touch support through Jobcentre Plus, for example using the Jobseeker Direct service and all the help finding work information on DirectGov. Jobcentre Plus has an ongoing role in providing light touch support and assistance to customers who are not receiving benefit and who are either in or out of work.

Jobcentre Plus now has a network of Armed Forces Champions in each Jobcentre Plus district, to ensure that the support, advice and guidance offered reflects the needs of Service personnel and their families. They are in contact with the Service Community in their District, and have

the task of raising awareness and understanding of Jobcentre Plus services. The initiative has been a particular success in areas of high Service populations; however consistency of advice remains a challenge. Jobcentre Plus is working on guidance (and possibly also some learning) for the Champions and advisers to help them understand the rules and the support available to Service personnel and their partners/spouses. There is also an Armed Forces Intranet site, which brings together all the information about Service personnel and their families and what help is available. The feedback on the site so far has been extremely positive. In addition the Royal British Legion has developed sections to help partners and dependant young people into work on its Civvy Street portal: www.civvystreet.org.

The support for ex-Service personnel and their families has recently been subject to a review by the DWP Labour Market Inclusion Division (LMID). Whilst the review was very positive about the Champions, one recommendation was to have a refresh and refocus of the Champions at district level, working to promote best practice and strengthen capability. This is something Jobcentre Plus will be working on with LMID colleagues in the coming months.

There have been reports from the Services of problems regarding claims for Jobseeker's Allowance, particularly when spouses give up their job voluntarily to accompany their serving partner overseas. Jobcentre Plus has confirmed that 'Spouses of Service personnel who leave employment to follow their partner will have just cause for leaving that employment provided they did not leave earlier than was reasonably necessary in order to arrange the move. This means they should not be precluded from receiving Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) on the grounds of voluntary unemployment. Each case should be considered on an individual basis using the relevant legislation and the information provided by the person claiming JSA.' The MOD will work with Jobcentre Plus to enhance understanding of the process.

Finally, since the launch of the Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme in June (see Chapter 13), the Champions have been working very closely with the Local Authorities where these Community Covenants are being introduced to make sure Jobcentre Plus is involved. This should help with consistency of information provided across different areas.

6.Criminal Record Bureau Checks

In February 2011 the Government introduced measures, via the Protection of Freedoms Bill, which will improve the portability of Criminal Record Bureau checks within the same employment sector. That, in turn, will help improve Armed Forces family members' employability. The Bill is expected to become law in 2012. This will also benefit those who wish to work in a voluntary capacity with young people or vulnerable adults. The measure has been welcomed by the Service Families Federations.

Transport and accessibility

7.Blue Badge Scheme

Currently Blue Badges may only be issued to disabled people who are resident in the area of the issuing authority. There are, however, some disabled people who are unable to prove residency, e.g. people who are serving in the Armed Forces and their families who are posted overseas on UK bases. These people are no longer resident in England but remain the responsibility of the UK Government. They are not eligible to apply for a Badge in the country

in which they are living as they do not become residents there. The MOD is working with the Department for Transport (DfT) to explore the possibility of making the MOD an issuing authority, which would alleviate this problem. This would apply to countries which operate a Blue Badge scheme only.

Conclusions

The MOD takes the provision of support to enable a quality family life very seriously. Progress has been made but there is more to do, including: continuing the work to look at the effects of mobility on Service children; developing a charity co-ordination strategy to make best effect from the increased generosity of charities and members of the public; development of the NEM to balance demands on our people and their families; ensuring the transferability of courses and qualifications to enable Service partners to gain employment; and development of the Jobcentre Plus Armed Forces Champion system.

9 Commercial Products and Services

“It is for the commercial sector to determine its approach to members of the Armed Forces Community. The Government should work with the commercial sector towards a situation where they have as good access to commercial products and services, including financial services, as any other citizen. Providers of products and services should be encouraged to understand and mitigate the circumstances faced by this community, such as mobility and deployment, and to welcome and cater for its members as good and valuable customers.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Many serving personnel continue to experience difficulty in accessing commercial products and services, due in part to their mobility and time spent outside the UK on overseas postings. This mobility makes it difficult to maintain a credit history; and British Forces Post Office (BFPO) addresses do not have a postcode, which is required for individuals to access many online services.

1. Working with banks and building societies on lending to Service personnel

As highlighted in the Housing chapter, a number of Service personnel who wish to buy their own home have experienced difficulty in securing a mortgage. It appears that the credit referencing system can lead to lenders automatically declining applications, due to difficulties in matching information to an applicant, for example those with a history of inconsistent or BFPO addresses. This can disadvantage Service personnel who frequently move address.

The Government has worked closely with credit reference agencies (CRA) and other partners, including the Royal Mail, to address this problem. Through the Home Finance Forum, work has been undertaken to introduce a new system for handling credit rating assessments for Service personnel living at BFPO addresses. A technical solution has been developed by the BFPO, in conjunction with Royal Mail, which will allow the allocation of a ‘shadow postcode’ against a BFPO address. As well as assisting CRAs, this will better enable individuals to access online retail and other financial services and will allow the completion of Government online forms. In addition, Service personnel will be able to voluntarily declare their Service number as a unique identifier, which will assist CRAs in maintaining individual credit histories. The new system is expected to be rolled out in Spring 2012.

In addition the Government has worked with representative bodies for the financial sector⁷ to raise awareness within their membership of the unique nature of life in the Armed Forces and of the need to avoid discrimination. They have produced a series of ‘top tips’ offering practical help for serving personnel applying for secured and unsecured loans which will be distributed shortly, advising them for example to make sure they have all the information available which a lender might need to assess their application for credit. These changes will enable fair access to credit, including mortgages, for Armed Forces personnel, helping to give them the same opportunities as their civilian counterparts.

Finally, the Government is pleased to note that a number of mortgage lenders already allow Service personnel to retain their residential mortgage status on vacation and letting of their

7. British Bankers’ Association, Building Society Association, Council of Mortgage Lenders, Finance & Leasing Association and UK Cards Association

property following an assignment move, rather than enforcing a change to a 'buy to let' mortgage.

2. Discounts

The MOD provides, through an agreement with a contractor, a Defence Discount Scheme (DDS) which is open to all those who are serving, have served, their families, MOD civil servants, cadets, reservists and NATO personnel serving in the UK. The scheme has partnered with over 1,200 businesses offering thousands of discounts across the UK. The scheme has an active membership of over 190,000 members; is free to join, and is easily accessed through the website: www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk.

The existing agreement will expire on 31 March 2012, by which time a new contract should be in place. The new contract will provide additional benefits, including a new website, which will be more intuitive and easy to use, and membership cards, which will make accessing discounts easier. Additionally, the revised governance will encourage freedom of development by the contractor in order to ensure that the outputs remain relevant and of interest. The proposals for further initiatives through the DDS are under continuous development and more announcements will be made throughout the coming year.

The MOD is also aware of many individual schemes that look to provide discounts to members of the Armed Forces, their families and Veterans – such as Heroes Welcome; where individual towns, cities and councils display the Heroes Welcome logos and local businesses can offer specific discounts to Service personnel. (www.heroeswelcome.co.uk)

3. Raising Awareness of Disadvantage

The Community Covenant (see chapter 13) aims to improve the awareness of the local community, including businesses, on issues faced by Armed Forces personnel – this is likely to raise awareness of why Armed Forces personnel may face specific disadvantages in the access to public and commercial services, and allow local areas to address such areas of disadvantage.

Conclusions

The MOD will continue to work with banks and building societies on improving lending to Service personnel. The Defence Discount Scheme is already in operation and enhanced access will be available next year. The Community Covenant may encourage local businesses to offer further tailored support to Armed Forces Personnel in the access to public and commercial services. Finally, we expect to roll out a new system to enable personnel to maintain a credit rating while living at British Forces Post Office addresses in Spring 2012.

10 Transition

“Support should be available for all Service personnel in order to assist their transition from Service to civilian life. Provision should include training, education, appropriate healthcare referral and job-finding preparation and assistance. It should also include information, advice and guidance on such matters as housing and financial management, and the availability of support from Government Departments and the Voluntary and Community sector. The level of support will be dependent upon individual circumstances.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Departure from the Armed Services is a major transition for Armed Forces personnel and adjusting to civilian life can be challenging. Life in the Armed Forces often means that everyday life transactions (managing a mortgage, food shopping, daily routines, entertainment, medical provision, security etc.) are not required of individuals. In recognition that serving in the Armed Forces is a way of life, there is a wealth of support available to assist on transition. This is provided by MOD, often in partnership with other Government Departments, and the voluntary and community sector. Over the past year there have been significant improvements and further work is under way, including bespoke support to those being made redundant. Key initiatives are described below.

1.Preparation for civilian life – finding employment and / or education.

The HM Revenue and Customs’ Business Education & Support team have been working closely with the Ministry of Defence in order to develop education for Armed Forces personnel who are leaving the Forces. This education is now taking place nationally with the Royal Navy, Army and the RAF, supporting Service personnel through this major change.

The programme has been put in place, in conjunction with MOD at regional level and the Careers Transition Partnership, and offers education on a wide range of subjects. These include: working for an employer, starting out as a sole trader / partnership, setting up a limited company, pensions, tax credits, claiming benefit and income from property. The project was set up in February 2011 and to date HMRC has held 112 events nationally, educating 2,123 people leaving the Armed Forces, across all ranks. It is expected that this work will continue to increase. The support via a personal career consultant extends two years post discharge. In addition, the Regular Forces Employment Association and Officers Association continue to support former Service personnel for life.

2.Preparation for Civilian life - housing

The JSHAO (Joint Service Housing Advice Office) focuses heavily on those prior to the resettlement phase and aims, through a range of communications methods, to educate and encourage Service personnel to consider how they might make civilian housing provision. Chapter 4, section 7 provides detail on the function of JSHAO. It also provides advice for those nearing the end of their Service to assist their transition into civilian life and delivers a worldwide housing resettlement programme.

3.Improving outcomes for Early Service Leavers (ESL)

The trials of industry-provided enhanced resettlement services for Early Service Leavers are due to begin in late 2011 and January 2012. The trials' aim is to demonstrate the possibility of improving employment outcomes for ESL by offering them a more bespoke and intensive service of resettlement.

4.Troops To Teachers

DfE are currently taking forward planning for the launch of the Troops to Teachers programme as set out in the 2010 Schools White Paper. Armed Forces leavers will be encouraged to become teachers, through sponsorship of their teacher training. DfE will pay tuition fees for PGCEs for eligible graduates leaving the Armed Forces, and work with universities to explore the possibility of establishing a bespoke compressed undergraduate route into teaching, targeted at Armed Forces leavers who have the relevant experience and skills but may lack degree level qualifications. Teach First (whose mission is to address educational disadvantage by transforming exceptional graduates into effective, inspirational teachers and leaders) are being encouraged to work with the Services as they develop Teach Next, so that Service leavers are able to take advantage of new opportunities to move into education. The development of Free Schools has provided additional opportunities for Service leavers to enter into teaching following a report by the Centre for Policy Studies setting out proposals for the Phoenix Free School. It is anticipated that this Free School will be opened by next year and will be run entirely by former Service men and women.

For those in the Army, work on the Army Instructor Capability will enhance the training and development of Army instructors to enable the Certificate To Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector or the Diploma To Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector qualifications to be gained. These support the option for PGCE / Foundation degree qualifications.

Service leavers also have a great deal to offer young people as mentors; this pathway was launched in September this year. The charity Skill Force does valuable work in this area enabling more former Armed Forces personnel to work alongside the children who benefit most from their support.

5.Further and Higher Education (FEHE) Support Scheme

The Further and Higher Education (FEHE) Support Scheme pays the tuition fees for Service leavers taking a 'first bite' at further or higher education, providing certain eligibility criteria are met. It is administered by MOD and funded by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, the Department for Education, and the Devolved Administrations for Wales and Scotland. 2010/11 showed a substantial year on year increase in the number of Service people taking advantage of the scheme, with a total of 142⁸ participants. Also, the recent relaxation of the eligibility rules commencing in 2011/12, that reduces the qualifying time for eligibility and removes it completely for medical discharges and spouses/partners taking up the entitlement because of bereavement or injury of a discharged Service person, means that more ex-Service people (or, if appropriate, their spouses or partners) will qualify for support in the future.

8. 133 in England, 7 in Wales and 2 in Scotland

6. Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme

All former Service personnel have access to the full range of Jobcentre Plus services. In addition, a person who has served in the Armed Forces for a period exceeding three months within the last three years can be considered for early access to the new Work Programme. This support includes the partners of currently serving and ex-Service personnel who have a claim in their own right or as part of a joint claim. Additionally, Employment and Support Allowance claimants can volunteer for the Work Programme at any time if they are in the Work Related Activity Group or the Support Group.

The Work Programme was launched in June 2011 and is replacing much of the complex range of contracted employment support previously on offer including the New Deals, Employment Zones and Pathways to Work. Work Programme providers have complete flexibility to innovate and to design support that addresses the needs of the individual and the local labour market, rather than having to follow one-size-fits-all processes dictated by Central Government. Jobcentre Plus Districts have Armed Forces Champions to ensure an increased level of understanding around the issues affecting Service personnel in accessing employment following discharge.

7. Foreign and Commonwealth personnel

Foreign and Commonwealth personnel (including Gurkhas) who apply to settle in the UK on discharge, are not able to seek employment or access any public funds while they are waiting for a decision to be made by the UK Border Agency. This is because of the change to their immigration status, and it can leave them homeless and relying on Service charities for financial support.

Service personnel are currently eligible to submit applications for settlement in the UK 10 weeks prior to discharge. Changing the immigration status of Service personnel and their families to enable the acquisition of settlement whilst in service is not currently possible, as it would require a change to primary legislation. However the MOD and UK Border Agency are in discussion over this issue (see chapter 13, section 1), including on whether personnel can apply for settlement before the current 10 weeks prior to discharge.

For those Serving personnel facing redundancy a streamlined process for submitting applications for settlement will be put in place from March 2012. This will include allowing those affected to submit applications earlier than the current 10 week period. The process should also enable the UKBA to accept bulk applications accompanied by a covering letter from the MOD and dispatch grants relating to straightforward cases within two weeks of the date of discharge.

8. MOD research

The MOD is researching how best to monitor Service people undergoing the resettlement process and to follow these people into their civilian life. The aim of this research is to produce a survey that can be used over time to measure a number of aspects of the transition path. The use of a structured survey will ensure that we can measure changes in experiences and monitor the impact of Government policies over time. The research is due to report in Spring 2012.

9. Forces in Mind

In November 2010, COBSEO – the Confederation of Service Charities together with three partner charities was awarded ‘preferred bidder status’ for the Forces in Mind project. The aim of the project is to support the psychological well-being and successful and sustainable transition of Service men and women, veterans and their families into civilian life.

The project will establish an architecture to provide a focus for leadership and cohesion in the provision of successful and sustainable transition. The Forces in Mind Trust hopes to receive a grant of £35M from the BIG Lottery and an award decision is expected later this year. The Ministry of Defence supports this initiative and looks forward to working with the Forces in Mind Trust to develop a more holistic approach to the often complex issue of transition.

Conclusions

Much progress has been made in the areas of employment and education opportunities for Service personnel and in advice surrounding housing. Work will continue on when Foreign and Commonwealth personnel can apply to settle in the UK to ensure that it is at the earliest appropriate time in order to alleviate the problems encountered with lack of access to public funds whilst they are awaiting a decision. MOD will take forward research into transition of those leaving the Armed Forces (due to report in Spring 2012). We look forward to working with COBSEO and the Forces in Mind project which will support veterans and families in the transition to civilian life.

11A Support After Service

“The Covenant involves an obligation for life, and the commitment and sacrifices made by veterans in the past, as well as their continuing value to society, should be properly recognised in the support they receive. In accessing services, former members of the Armed Forces should expect the same level of support as any other citizen in society. Pension schemes should be fair and appropriate to the particular circumstances of Service personnel. All veterans will be able to access advice and in some cases additional support, from the MOD (Service personnel and Veterans Agency), elsewhere in Government, and the charitable sector, although their access may be affected if they do not live in the UK.

Those who have been injured in Service, or have a health condition relating to Service, should receive additional support which may include a financial element depending on their circumstances (e.g. through the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or War Pension Scheme). Bereaved families should receive assistance commensurate with the loss that they have suffered, including help during the vital, but difficult, inquest process.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

As detailed above, a career in the Armed Forces is like no other. It is right that the Government have in place a number of special provisions to ensure that the unique role and sacrifice by our Armed Forces is appropriately recognised.

1.Pensions

In the Emergency Budget in June 2010 the Government announced that from April 2011 the indexation of benefits, tax credits and the State Second Pension would be based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) instead of the Retail Prices Index (RPI). In October 2010 the Government also announced changes to Pensions Tax Relief, including reductions to both the Annual Allowance (AA) and the Lifetime Allowance (LTA). On 10 March 2011 the Independent Public Service Pensions Commission, chaired by Lord Hutton, published its final report on public service pension provision.

Taken together, these developments have understandably caused some uncertainty and concern amongst Service personnel about the effect on the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS). Although the MOD Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2011 showed that 50% of respondents were satisfied with their pension benefits, this represented a 7% point decrease compared with 2010 results. Nevertheless, pensions remained the most influential retention factor, with 70% of respondents stating that the pension increased their intentions to stay in the Service.

On indexation, while it is acknowledged that CPI has historically been lower than RPI, the Government considers that CPI is the appropriate index to use going forward, and will provide protection against inflation. CPI is used to set the inflation target for the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and is the headline measure of inflation reported by the Office of National Statistics. The Government believes that CPI is a more accurate measure of price increases experienced by individuals because it takes account of consumer behaviour in switching down to cheaper goods when prices rise.

The reforms to pensions tax relief are designed to ensure that it remains fair, affordable and sustainable. The impact of the changes will depend on individual circumstances, but it is unlikely that any individual below the rank of Major (or equivalent) will be subject to a tax charge because of the reduced Annual Allowance, or that officers below Major-General (or equivalent) will exceed the revised lower Life Time Allowance limit of £1.5M. Public service schemes including AFPS will be providing additional support through the introduction of 'Scheme Pays' under which members can choose to have Annual Allowance tax charges paid by the scheme and recovered from pension benefits paid on retirement. Fixed Protection is also being introduced to assist individuals who expect to have pension savings in excess of the new LTA limit after 6 April 2012. Fixed Protection allows an individual to fix their LTA at a maximum of £1.8M after 6 April 2012, rather than £1.5M.

Lord Hutton's Independent Public Service Pensions Commission published its report on pensions reform in March 2011. It set out recommendations for future pension arrangements that are sustainable and affordable in the long term, fair to both the public service workforce and the taxpayer and consistent with the fiscal challenges ahead, while protecting accrued rights. The Government accepted Lord Hutton's report as a basis for consultation with the aim of setting out formal proposals for most public service pension schemes by the end of the year. This process does not cover the Armed Forces but work on a new AFPS is going forward with a view to producing outline proposals in the first few months of 2012. The Armed Forces (and interested parties) will be fully consulted before a decision is made. From a defence perspective, we are keen to ensure that a future Armed Forces scheme meets the operational requirement to support the New Employment Model being developed following the outcome of the Strategic Defence and Security Review, and in particular to be retention positive in pulling personnel through to key career points. We are also committed to ensuring that a new scheme remains highly competitive in relation to other public service schemes in recognition of the Armed Forces' unique commitment.

2.Support to wounded, injured, sick (WIS) and bereaved

The House of Commons Defence Committee is currently conducting an inquiry into the support given to members of the Armed Forces wounded in the service of their country and to their families. The Committee has received a wealth of evidence which can be viewed through the UK Parliament website: www.parliament.uk. Once the Committee has reported the Government will outline what it is doing in response to the observations made by the Committee.

Chapter 2 (Healthcare), section 7 provides details of the current rehabilitation arrangements. These were also reported in the Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow document published in May.

3.Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) awareness

The AFCS is a compensation scheme for all members of the Regular and Reserve Forces. The scheme provides compensation for all injuries, ill-health and deaths that are mainly attributable to service which occurred on or after the introduction of the scheme in April 2005.

One of the issues identified by Lord Boyce, in his comprehensive review of the AFCS in 2009, was the lack of awareness and communication of the scheme within the Armed Forces Community. Steps have been taken to improve levels of awareness of AFCS in the Armed Forces Community and the provision of financial advice for those in receipt of compensation (see chapter 3). Information on the AFCS is available at www.mod.uk/afcs. The AFCS

Communications and Training Working Group are assessing the impact of these steps and the AFCAS team are considering specific questions in this area in the 2012 survey and beyond.

All of Lord Boyce's other recommendations addressing issues in the Scheme have been implemented, and the Stewardship Review of the preceding War Pensions Scheme is nearing completion.

4.Improved veterans' online portal

MOD has been looking at ways to strengthen the www.veterans-uk.info portal to provide more detail on the services provided by Service and ex-Service charities. Service and Ex-Service charities are being contacted directly offering a dedicated page within this website for their organisation. MOD has also made the StartHere (www.starthere.org) service, which is an independent charity, more prominent within the site by placing a link to the StartHere service from all main menu pages on the www.veterans-uk.info site as well as from the home page.

With funding from the Scottish Government, Veterans Scotland has developed an e-portal that will draw together in a single website links to all the material available online from organisations providing support to veterans. The e-portal will be live by the end of 2011 and directed at veterans, voluntary organisations, public bodies and the Armed Forces community. It will contain a wide range of basic information on the types and levels of support available, where it can be found and how it can be accessed. The portal will also provide links for direct access to the wider veterans support network. There will be links to Local Authorities in relation to housing, education, social services in respect of rights and contacts, along with the names and contact details of Council Armed Forces and Veterans champions. The portal will also contain a range of links to the Firm Base Forum, MSPs and MPs, the Department for Work and Pensions, the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency and the Scottish Government. In addition the names of NHS Armed Forces and Veterans champions will be listed, along with details of and links to the many organisations providing support and welfare services to veterans, including the three Services themselves.

As part of the Welfare Pathway, MOD also launched a national telephone point of contact⁹ to act as a one stop shop for all veterans advice. This pilot will be evaluated at the end of the year for a fuller assessment of the requirement for provision.

5.Blue Badge

On 17 June 2011 regulations came into force in England to provide severely disabled Service personnel and veterans with continuous automatic entitlement for a Blue Badge. SI 2011/1307 Disabled persons (Badges for motor vehicles) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011 refers. The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) will issue a letter to an applicant who is in receipt of an Armed Forces Compensation Scheme award, under tariffs 1 to 8, and who has also been assessed by the MOD as having a permanent and substantial disability which causes inability to walk or very considerable difficulty in walking. This letter confirms the level of their award under the AFCS and the results of their assessment.

The applicant needs to present the letter to the local authority, in which they are resident, to apply for a Blue Badge. Local Authorities have been informed that any applicant that provides a letter from the SPVA, dated from 9 May 2011 onwards, will be eligible for a Blue Badge without

9. The freephone number is 08000 223366.

further assessment. On receipt of the letter the authorities are asked to contact the SPVA to verify the eligibility of an applicant.

The MOD is currently discussing with legal teams whether there is a need to amend legislation to allow disabled Service personnel and their families who are posted to UK bases overseas to apply for a Blue Badge for use in the UK. Currently Local Authorities are only able to issue badges to applicants living in their area (see chapter 8, section 8).

Automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge was introduced in Scotland with effect from 09 May 2011 and in Wales from 01 August 2011.

6. Concessionary travel for the seriously injured

In England, guidance was issued in August 2011 so that seriously injured veterans and Service personnel who fall within the categories of disability set out in the Transport Act 2000 are automatically eligible, without further assessment, to concessionary bus travel.

In **Wales**, Welsh Government officials have implemented changes to guidance following discussion with representatives of Local Authorities and bus operators. New arrangements came into force in October 2011.

In **Scotland**, Transport Scotland offers free bus travel to a varied group of Armed Forces personnel with disabilities. Their website (www.transportscotland.gov.uk) offers direction on who is eligible.

7. Veterans In Custody Support Officer (VISCO) initiative

VISCO is an initiative that Government and voluntary and community sector organisations of the Ex-Service Offenders Working Group have been advocating across prison establishments in England and Wales. Prison establishments are encouraged to nominate an officer to fulfil the VISCO role (not necessarily a prison officer, it could simply be the person in the Advice, Information and Guidance role for example), essentially to identify veterans in prison and promptly signpost them to the help and support available from ex-Service charities and other voluntary and community sector organisations. The initiative is currently in operation in 120 prison establishments across England and Wales (there are 127 public prisons and 12 private ones).

A similar arrangement has existed informally in some Scottish prison establishments, where staffs (usually ex-Service personnel themselves) have taken a pro-active role in promoting veterans' issues and providing an information link to appropriate service provision. Following its endorsement by the Scottish Veteran Prison In-Reach Group, the Scottish Prison Service now intends to implement the scheme formally across the prison estate, subject to the necessary approvals within the Prisons Directorate.

8. Housing

Housing for those Service personnel in transition to civilian life is detailed in the Transition chapter (chapter 10). In relation to veterans, the Joint Service Housing Advice Office has continued to develop, manage and monitor the contracts for the provision of Specialist Housing Information, Advice and Placement for single and vulnerable Service leavers through the Single

Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services (SPACES). This is currently provided by an external body (English Churches Housing Group).

Conclusions

Again, support after service is an area where we have worked across Government and with charities to ensure improved levels of support. We have improved the awareness amongst Service personnel of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (and supporting financial advice); improved the MOD online portal for veterans; implemented the automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge and concessionary travel for injured Service personnel.

11B Support to inquests

On 29 November 2011 the Government agreed to the amendment of the Public Bodies Bill, allowing it to implement the office of the Chief Coroner with a more focused remit and on a more cost-effective basis. The new office will address a number of administrative and procedural problems within the current system and improve the service received by the bereaved. The office of the Chief Coroner is expected to become functional in 2012.

The Chief Coroner will have specific functions relating to investigations into deaths of Service personnel aimed at minimising the inconvenience and additional distress that can be caused to families suffering the traumatic loss of a loved one. These include, for the first time, a duty to monitor investigations into Service deaths and to secure that coroners are suitably trained to investigate such cases, and the power to recommend that an investigation be transferred to Scotland where appropriate (for example an investigation may be transferred in order to reduce the distance travelled by the family if they are located in Scotland).

The Chief Coroner will be under a duty to produce an annual report on issues that he wishes to bring to the attention of the Lord Chancellor, including an assessment of the consistency of standards between coroner areas and investigations lasting more than a year. This is intended to complement the Armed Forces Covenant Report and the Chief Coroner will consider how issues relating to Service personnel are highlighted in both reports.

The Chief Coroner's post is intended to support other measures being undertaken by the Government to improve the service provided by coroners. The Government plans to publish a new National Charter for the Coroner Service in early 2012 which will set out for the first time the standards that those coming into contact with the system can expect and how to seek redress for those who feel that these standards have not been met. This is designed to help people to understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to the coroner system. It is intended that the Charter will provide the base for statutory guidance issued by the Lord Chancellor once relevant provisions in the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 are commenced.

The Government also intends to establish a group of bereavement organisations who will be able to advise the Chief Coroner on issues affecting the bereaved and who will have a specific remit in monitoring the impact of the Charter.

The MOD's Defence Inquests Unit (DIU), which was established in 2008, coordinates and manages all Defence-related inquests into the deaths of Service and MOD personnel, who die on, or as a result of, injuries sustained while on operations; and those who die as a result of training activity. The Unit's key role is to assist coroners so that they complete relevant inquests fully, thoroughly and as quickly as possible.

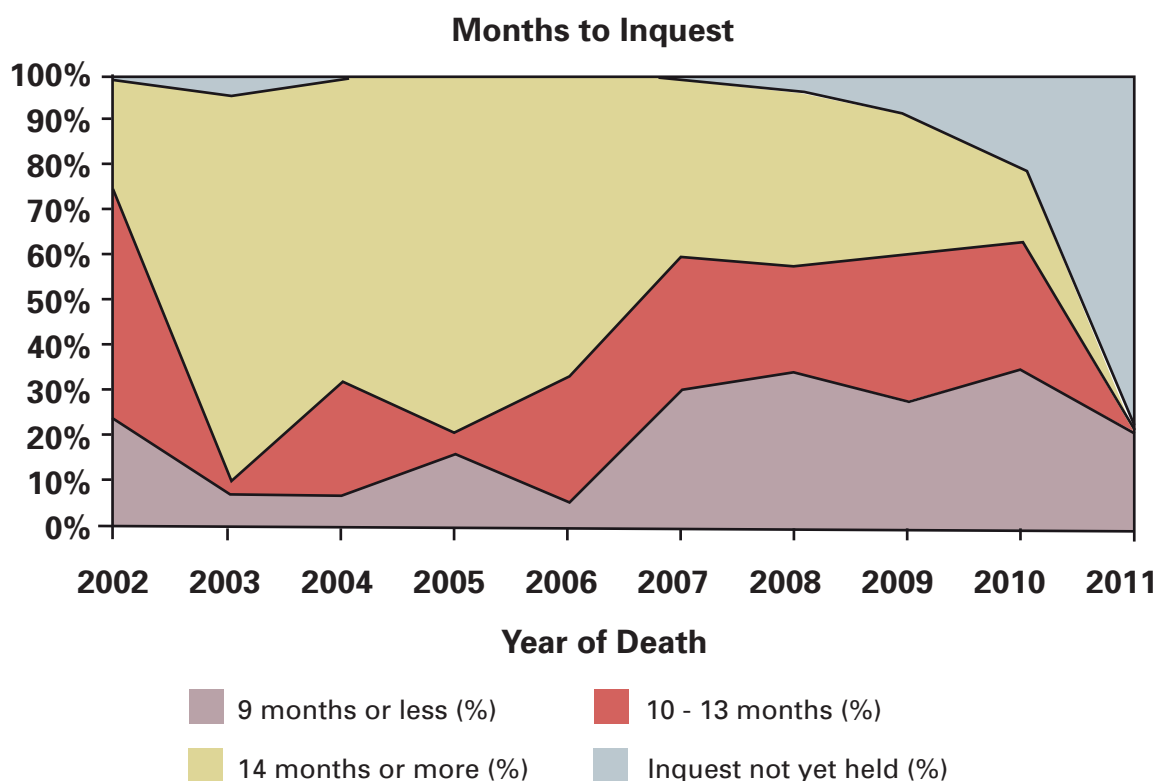
The DIU work with coroners to help their understanding of complex military-related issues, as these are generally outside of their experience. MOD-related deaths are often more complicated and involve complex internal procedures and technical details

These initiatives will help to ensure that bereaved families are provided with an accurate account of how their loved one died. Whilst the timing of an inquest is a matter for the coroner we try to help them to conclude inquests for deaths where there is no Service Inquiry (SI) within nine months and for cases where there is a SI within eighteen months.

Support is available to families before, during and after an inquest. Families are kept fully informed of preparations through dedicated teams within each Service. The MOD provides funding for attendance by three family members at inquests into deaths deemed attributable to service, and consideration of additional family members on application. Where possible, inquests are transferred to the coroner nearest to the next-of-kin, which is less stressful for families and helps prevent backlogs. The MOD has produced a DVD which is sent to both the family of the bereaved and MOD witnesses, with the aim of improving their understanding of what to expect from and at an inquest.

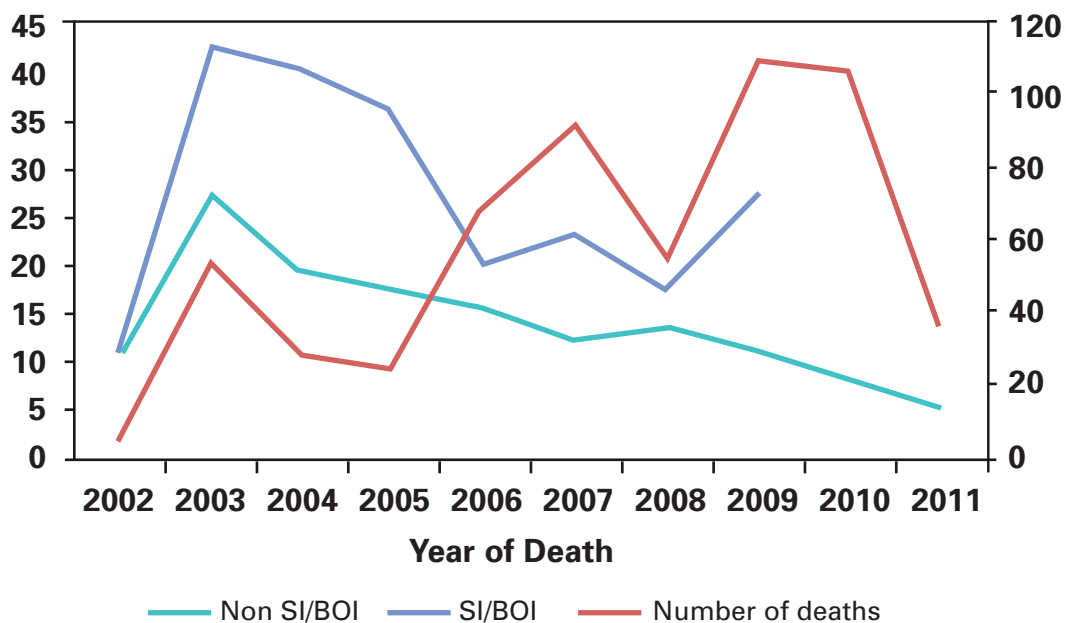
The Independent Inquest Advice Service (IIAS), a service run by the Royal British Legion and jointly funded by the MOD, is offered to the families of those who have died in service faced with the prospect of an inquest; it can provide free legal advice and assistance, but will not represent bereaved families. The service has now completed its first full year and reported providing legal advice and guidance to 80 bereaved family members during 46 inquests. Family members approaching the service have included parents, siblings and partners and the inquests have related to both operational and non-operational fatalities. The service is meeting a clear need, but will be reviewed formally at the end of its second year when start-up funding from the MOD Veterans Challenge Fund ends.

The graph below shows that whilst the proportion of inquests being completed within 9 months has been broadly stable over the last four years, the proportion of inquests subject to significant delay has been steadily reducing since the worst period between 2003 and 2006.



The following graph shows that the average time taken to conduct an inquest into an operational death where there was no Service Inquiry (or Board of Inquiry) has been consistently falling since 2003, even though the number of deaths increased dramatically over this period. Final data points for 2010 and 2011 are not yet available because not all these inquests have yet been completed.

Average Time to Inquest
 Figures for 2010 and 2011 are preliminary



Conclusions

The Government understands the unique nature of military inquests and the different, and often complex, issues that they raise. On 29 November 2011, the Public Bodies Bill was amended to allow implementation of the office of the Chief Coroner – expected to become functional in 2012. The Chief Coroner will have specific functions in relation to investigations into deaths of Service personnel aimed at minimising the inconvenience and additional distress that can be caused to families suffering the traumatic loss of a loved one. The MOD provides support to bereaved families throughout the inquest process, and has worked with the MOJ and others to ensure that coroners have all the support they need in order to hear inquests thoroughly and promptly.

12 Recognition

“The Armed Forces Community is entitled to appropriate recognition for the unique service which it has given, and continues to give, to the Nation, and the unlimited liability which the Service person assumes. This recognition will include national commemorations and celebrations such as Remembrance Sunday and Armed Forces Day. The award of campaign medals and individual gallantry awards will continue to be used in recognition of individual sacrifice and meritorious service. The HM Armed Force Veterans Badge is available to all veterans in recognition of their service.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Recognition plays an important part in maintaining the morale of the Armed Forces. There are a variety of mechanisms to recognise the unique role that our Armed Forces and their families play and the sacrifices they make.

1. Medals

The Coalition government stated its intention in the Programme for Government, published in May 2010, to review the rules governing the award of medals as a part of its commitment to rebuilding the Armed Forces Covenant. This commitment was driven by both a desire to ensure that personnel serving in today's Armed Forces are receiving proper medallic recognition by the nation for the service that they give, and also to revisit some of the cases where veterans of previous conflicts remain aggrieved that, in their view, their service somehow went unrecognised. A draft medal review was completed in early 2011 and, in order for the views of the various campaign groups to be further considered by the review team, extracts of the draft report were circulated to campaign groups, along with an invitation to submit their comments.

The Government has since agreed that there should be a fresh review of the rules governing the award of Armed Forces medals. This will be conducted by an independent reviewer with full consultation with interested parties. The scope of the review and who is to lead it are expected to be announced shortly. The MOD's initial review took a largely internal look at how the existing rules on medal issues had been applied. This new review will go wider and will review the rules themselves. It will make use of all of the work already undertaken as a part of the MOD review but will have a broader scope and an independent lead.

There have been a number of announcements on changes to medals in the last 12 months which will see additional recognition for Service personnel:

- a. The previous requirement to spend 30 continuous days in theatre to earn the Operational Service Medal Afghanistan has been extended to allow those serving 45 days aggregated service to earn the medal. This ensures that, for example, medical teams who deploy regularly to theatre and return with casualties but do not achieve the 30 days continuous service also receive a medal.
- b. A reduction in the qualifying period for the Accumulated Campaign Service Medal from 36 to 24 months which will ensure that those deploying on repeat tours to Afghanistan and elsewhere have that service properly recognised.
- c. The introduction of a Diamond Jubilee Medal to be presented to Regular and Reserve

Armed Forces personnel who have met the qualifying criteria of five years service on 6 February 2012.

There have been two operational honours lists during the period of this report which have resulted in 268 awards being made in respect of gallantry or distinguished service on operations in Afghanistan and the rest of the world. The former included over 70 decorations ranging from the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross to the Queen's Gallantry Medal. Also included in these lists were awards for services in non-deployed operational environments such as search and rescue.

2. Armed Forces Day

The aim of Armed Forces Day is two-fold. First, it provides the ideal opportunity to raise public awareness of the role and contribution of the Armed Forces. Second, and related, it provides an opportunity for the general public, local communities and businesses to show their support for the Armed Forces, their families, veterans and cadets.

The benefit is significant although it may not be immediately obvious. By increasing awareness of the Armed Forces, we generate support, trust and understanding at a national, regional and local level. This keeps the Armed Forces in the 'public eye', particularly in areas of the country where there is no obvious Armed Force presence. It also builds a constituency of support that either immediately, or over time, generates benefit for the Armed Forces and their families. This benefit may be expressed through the Armed Forces Covenant, the Community Covenant or as discounts in local shops, for example. Conversely, it may be no more than a letter of appreciation from the general public or a generous round of applause as personnel march through their nearest town.

Armed Forces Day plays an important part in this and while some personnel may be required to give up a weekend to support such events, the support it generates, nationally and locally, both in the short-term and the long-term, is invaluable.

Another successful Armed Forces Day was held on 25 June 2011. The City of Edinburgh was the host for this year's national event when a parade of over 2000 serving personnel and veterans marched from Edinburgh Castle to Holyrood Park cheered on by an estimated crowd of 100,000. HRH The Duke of Rothesay took the salute and other dignitaries attending included HRH The Duchess of Rothesay, the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for Defence and the First Minister of Scotland. Some 300 other events took place in cities, towns and villages nationwide where the Armed Forces Flag was flown for the week at the heart of the community.

3. Veterans Card

As mentioned in the Commercial Products and Services chapter, the MOD is working to incorporate a card for Service veterans as part of a new contract for the Defence Discount Scheme. It is also intended to incorporate cards for other membership groups of the Scheme, which include other key elements of the Armed Forces Community. The aim is to facilitate access to a wide range of discounts and privileges, as recommended by the Military Covenant Task Force report, and enhance the recognition of former members of the Armed Forces. Delivery is dependent on successful negotiations of the next Defence Discount Scheme contract, and we envisage the roll out of veterans' cards in the first half of 2012.

4.CDS Commendation Scheme

Plans are being developed for the introduction of a Chief of Defence Staff's Commendation which it is envisaged will be presented to non-Service/MOD people and organisations to recognise achievements of outstanding support and commitment to the Armed Forces community of a rare and exceptionally high standard. The nomination process and design and manufacture of the award are currently being developed and we hope to introduce the award in the next few months.

Conclusions

The Government understands the importance of recognition for Serving personnel, their families and veterans. Good progress has been made in supporting Armed Forces Day across the country and we will announce details of a fresh review of the rules governing the award of Armed Forces medals and CDS's commendation scheme shortly.

13 Participation as Citizens

“The Armed Forces Community should be able to participate as citizens to the same extent as any UK citizen, subject to the necessary constraints on the activities of public servants. This includes taking a full part in the electoral process. Members of the Armed Forces Community who are not UK citizens should be able to access routes to citizenship as easily as others seeking citizenship, unaffected by any Service overseas.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

Disadvantage in being able to participate as a citizen may arise for UK members of the Armed Forces when they serve abroad. Disadvantage can arise for non-UK citizens who are members of our Armed Forces due to citizenship rules.

1. Immigration and visas

The UK Border Agency (UKBA) is currently reviewing the fees arrangements for Armed Forces dependants as part of the UKBA 2011/12 immigration fees review, the outcome of which is expected in early 2012.

As part of a wider review of the employment-related settlement rules, the Home Office and the UKBA are considering options for shortening the journey time for those who are already on a route to settlement and who undertake operational deployment as Reservists. In addition the Home Office and UKBA considered whether those who undertake operational deployment as a Reservist while in the UK on a temporary route, but who later switch into a route leading to settlement, should also have their time to settlement shortened. The outcome of this work is expected early next year.

The UKBA is also considering the viability of changing the immigration status of Service personnel and their families to enable the acquisition of settlement whilst in service. Any such change would support the transition to civilian life for Foreign and Commonwealth personnel (see section 10.7) as well as vulnerable families (see section 6.3) and those of injured personnel (see section 5.4). This proposal is a complex one which would require primary legislation. It is in the early stages of consideration and is being taken forward as part of the UKBA/MOD Joint Working Group.

2. Route To Settlement For Foreign Spouses of F&C Personnel Who Naturalise

Under current immigration provisions an F&C Service person who serves five years or more is able to apply directly to naturalise as a British citizen under section 6 of the British Nationality Act 1981 without firstly being required to acquire settlement (ILR) provided they meet the relevant statutory requirements.

If an F&C Service person chooses to naturalise as a British citizen while serving, their dependants will subsequently have to switch from their current route to settlement to that for foreign dependants of British citizens. This means they have to complete the two-year probationary period required of all foreign dependants of British citizens before they can apply for settlement.

This situation can be avoided if the serving member of the Armed Forces delays their naturalisation application until such time as their dependant has asserted their right to settlement. However, it might also be desirable as an additional safeguard for the dependants of F&C citizens who have already become British to be able to count earlier time spent accompanying their spouse towards the settlement probationary period. The MOD and UKBA are in discussions over this.

3.Ability For Foreign Spouses Of British Citizens To Apply For Settlement From Overseas

Eligible dependants accompanying an F&C Service person outside the UK are able to submit an application from overseas to settle in the UK. Eligible foreign spouses of British citizens serving in the Armed Forces are currently unable to do the same. The MOD and UKBA are in early discussions to consider how this issue could be resolved.

4.Mandatory English Language Test

Dependants of F&C Service personnel are currently exempt from taking the mandatory pre-entry English language test required for visa applications. Foreign dependants of serving British citizens are required to take the test. The MOD is in discussions with the Home Office and the UKBA about the future application of the test to all Armed Forces dependants requiring a visa.

5.Voting

The Government is committed to ensuring that Service personnel can participate fully in elections. For the May 2011 referendum and elections, the MOD and the Cabinet Office worked with the Electoral Commission, BFPO and Royal Mail to make specific provision for Service personnel in Afghanistan to register to vote and use proxy or postal votes. 281 Service personnel chose to use proxy votes, as recommended by the Electoral Commission and MOD. For Afghanistan there were 61 new applications made to vote by post through this initiative and 40 completed ballots were returned through the dedicated system. Counting Officers and Returning Officers were asked to prioritise the production of all postal ballot packs that were to be sent overseas. Those heading for BFPO addresses were treated as a priority by BFPO to facilitate Service personnel participation in the polls more widely.

For the longer term, the Government is looking at how changes to the timetable for elections would better support voters based overseas, including Service personnel and their families. Under the current timetable for UK Parliamentary elections, the point at which postal ballot papers are sent to electors who are based overseas is 11 working days before the day of the poll. This may cause difficulties for Service voters based overseas if it is for any reason not possible for postal votes to be sent to Service personnel and their families in good time for ballot papers to be received, completed and returned before the close of poll. The Government is progressing draft legislation on electoral administration that includes a provision to extend the timetable for UK Parliamentary elections by a further eight working days which will help to support the participation of Service voters.

The Government is committed to making registration as a Service voter more straightforward and is considering how the current system may be improved in a way that takes account of Service mobility. MOD is working with the Cabinet Office on its data-matching pilots with a number of Local Authorities to look at improving the way Service personnel are registered so

they all have the chance to register and vote in elections, including only having to register once on the Service register. Under this proposal a Service person's registration would remain in a particular Local Authority, but their contact details would be updated as part of the arrivals process at any new posting to ensure that any electoral correspondence (including postal votes) are sent to their present location. The operation of this system will be considered as a provision in the third Political and Constitutional Reform Bill, which is due to be introduced in early 2012.

6. Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme

The Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme, which aims to encourage two way support between local communities and the Service community in their area and promote understanding and awareness amongst the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces Community, was launched on 20 June in Oxford. This was followed over the course of the following two weeks by launches in Hampshire, Vale of Glamorgan and North Yorkshire. The scheme has been well received by Local Authorities across the UK: at the time of writing, Community Covenants have been signed in twenty areas and many more new areas are working closely with local Service contacts to develop their own Community Covenants.

The MOD and the Local Government Association hosted a successful Community Covenant Conference on 1 November for Local Authorities in England, which was attended by 150 delegates including representatives from the Armed Forces Community and voluntary and charitable sector. This was an opportunity to share best practice and encourage further Local Authorities to participate in the scheme. The strong interest from delegates demonstrated the importance that Local Authorities are placing on this work. Similar events are expected to be held in Wales and Scotland next year.

The Community Covenant scheme is producing some very positive work, details of which can be found on the MOD website¹⁰. For example, a number of councils have improved partnership working arrangements in order to assist Service personnel recently made redundant to gain skills, education or employment; specialist help for those with mental health issues and working with education providers to raise awareness of issues that are particular to Service children.

In August we launched the Community Covenant Grant scheme which has been established to give financial support to projects, at the local level, which strengthen the ties or the mutual understanding between members of the Armed Forces Community and the wider community in which they live. Up to £30m has been set aside over the next four financial years to fund tangible projects, in areas which are of benefit to both the Service and civilian community. In October an MOD-led panel with representatives from HM Treasury and the Families Federations considered an initial round of 38 bids totalling £1.8m, supported by £1.3m of matched funding. 16 bids (£611k) have been approved as at end of October with further bids still being considered in more detail – potentially enabling a further £530,000 to be approved for this initial round of bids. Further bidding panels will also take place before the end of 2011 and in March 2012.

Research

A telephone interview with 1000 adult members of the UK public took place between 26 August and 6 September 2011 on behalf of Defence Media and Communications. Out of those

10. <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/WhatWeDo/Personnel/Welfare/ArmedForcesCovenant/CommunityCovenantInAction.htm>

surveyed, 63% did not know anything about the Armed Forces Covenant; of the 37% who did know something, most of them had got their information from the TV or newspapers. There is a clear need to do more to educate the public and businesses on the Covenant and what it means.

An independent piece of research by Lord Ashcroft into the perceptions of Service people on how they are perceived in society was started in September 2011. This work will investigate perceptions of Service personnel on how they are seen and recognised by society. It will also look at business perceptions of Service people and compare experiences of veterans in the US with those in the UK. It will report in Spring 2012.

We aim to keep abreast of any relevant research conducted in this field. For example, the Royal British Legion has published several research reports over the last year, which are available on their website:

- Health, welfare and social needs of the Armed Forces community: a qualitative study (March 2011);
- Legion welfare in the 2010s: a decade of change (Centre for Future Studies, March 2011);
- Honouring the Armed Service Community (in partnership with the Local Government Information Unit, December 2010).

Conclusions

Progress needs to be made on reducing disadvantages faced by Foreign and Commonwealth personnel and their families (particularly around visa fees and reducing the route to settlement for those deployed as reservists). Progress has already been made on arrangements for Service personnel to vote and this will continue to be developed. The Community Covenant is starting to deliver tangible results in the areas that have signed up to it; with grant funding being released to successful projects from October this year it will be vital to maintain momentum in this area. Research around public perceptions of the Armed Forces Covenant will continue, helping us to ensure that the people of the UK – including charities and businesses – are aware of the principles of the Covenant and what they can do in support of it, alongside Government.

14 Changes in Defence

“The Armed Forces will always need to evolve to meet the challenges they face. That will inevitably lead, from time to time, to turbulence and uncertainty in the lives of Serving personnel and their families. Such changes should be managed in a way which treats individuals fairly and minimises uncertainty wherever possible.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

The public sector as a whole is undergoing a great deal of change. The Armed Forces must be receptive to change too if we are to ensure a force fit for the future challenges we face.

1. Basing Review

The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), announced last October, marked the start of the process of transforming Defence to meet the challenges of the future. It set out a path to a coherent and affordable Defence capability in 2020 and beyond; and some of the key building blocks – such as the return of the Army from Germany, and a RAF structured around fewer, more capable fast jets – had significant estate and basing implications. So did other issues, such as the future location for Defence Technical Training and the restructuring of the Army’s non-deployable regional footprint. Finally, the MOD has also taken account of the need to realise receipts from high value sites Defence no longer requires.

The Basing Review announcement on 18 July 2011 gave the strategic, long-term, direction required for planning the future defence basing and estate priorities. It included direction to bring the Army back from Germany; the basing laydown for the RAF, and a plan for receipts from the sale of estate assets.

MOD recognises that there was a difficult waiting period for all those affected due to the delay in making this announcement. This was a complex piece of work that had to consider multiple factors. It inevitably took time to ensure that the outcome would provide the most effective outcome for defence, whilst bearing in mind the socio-economic considerations. It was only right that the Secretary of State for Defence announced on 18 July the overall impact across the UK, rather than making partial announcements.

The Army will now take on the detailed planning of individual unit moves working with the new Defence Infrastructure Organisation; deciding who goes where, and in which sequence. The Defence Infrastructure Organisation will begin planning the work that needs to be done at each of the individual sites to make sure the facilities are available to receive the incoming units. This includes technical accommodation to support their operational role and domestic accommodation for Service personnel and their families.

There will be extensive consultation during this phase with Local Authorities, Devolved Administrations, and local communities, including the statutory impact assessments. Although defence was the primary factor in MOD’s decision making, we recognised that Defence decisions have broader regional, economic and social consequences. Continued engagement with the local communities affected by the plans announced will remain very high on the agenda. MOD recognises the need to manage the transition period as effectively as possible not only for the benefit of our own personnel but also because of the implications for

the local communities. MOD will work with Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to minimise variations in the population of the bases concerned so as to avoid any unwelcome fluctuations on demand for schools and health facilities.

2. Defence Reform

Lord Levene was appointed by the then Secretary of State for Defence in August 2010 to chair the Defence Reform Steering Group. This group undertook a fundamental review of how Defence was managed and structured and made over 50 recommendations in its report, published in June this year. This report can be found at: http://www.mod.uk/NR/rdonlyres/B4BA14C0-0F2E-4B92-BCC7-8ABFCFE7E000/0/defence_reform_report_struct_mgt_mod_27june2011.pdf

The key recommendations – which are relevant to how both the Armed Forces and civilians are managed, structured, work and behave – found that: the current model and behaviours have contributed to the financial crisis faced by the department; the department is unable to take tough, timely decisions; the Head Office has difficulty thinking and acting strategically; delivery arms are disempowered and not held to account; MOD needs to do more to capitalise on the joint approach to operations (involving all three Services); the business model is complicated and often duplicated; and that Service people and civilians are not used or managed as effectively as they could be. This work has led to the construction of a simpler, smaller and more effective operating model that will strengthen financial management; strengthen decision making and individual accountability; enhance our joint focus, improve the delivery of enabling services and get the best out of our people. Work continues to implement this model over the coming months.

3. Volunteer Reserves

The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserve Forces reported its conclusions in July 2011. The Commission recognised the remarkable contribution that our Reserve Forces continue to make to operations – particularly on recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan – and concluded that their potential remains invaluable. However, four broad conclusions, all of which support the need for change and early action, were as follows: our Reserve Forces are in decline; we have failed to modernise Reservist roles; we are not exploiting the potential of our Reserves; and we are not using the Reserves efficiently.

The Commission's Vision for the Reserve Forces in 2020 is:

A Reserve Force that is an integral element of the Whole Force; that is optimised to deliver assured capability across all military tasks on operations at home and abroad; that harnesses for Defence the widest pool of talent in the UK; and that upholds the volunteer ethos. A force for good in the community, which effectively represents both Defence and society; and which is sustained by formal governance safeguards and an appropriately resourced and equitable Reserve Proposition.

The Commission made the following recommendations to enable the vision:

- **Stabilisation and Betterment.** Resources are needed immediately to stabilise, rejuvenate and significantly improve the state of the Reserve Forces.

- **Revised Roles.** The National Security Council should examine the breadth of roles which Reservists undertake. This could include greater roles in Homeland Security and UK Resilience and other specialist tasks e.g. Cyber.
- **Enablement.** The availability of a larger and more usable Reserve has to be guaranteed. Legislation must support greater ease of mobilisation and provide better employee protection as well as employer recognition. The potential for forming skill-sharing partnerships should be exploited for the mutual benefit of Industry and Defence.
- **Adjusting the Regular: Reserve Balance.** Defence should adopt a Whole Force Concept. The Whole Force Concept seeks to ensure that Defence is supported by the most sustainable, effective, integrated and affordable balance of Regular Armed Forces personnel, Reservists, Ministry of Defence civilians and contractors. By 2015, the trained strength of the Reserves is recommended to be: RNR/RMR 3,100, TA 30,000 and RAuxAF 1,800.
- **Force Generation.** Once the commissioned and non-commissioned officer structures have been restored, the requirement for Regular training staff should be reviewed.
- **Governance.** A revised governance structure will be required to oversee the implementation of this report and to provide an independent mechanism to report to the MOD and Parliament.

It has been agreed that implementation of these recommendations will be structured over two phases: Phase 1 - 2011-2015: Focus remains on Afghanistan and force 'betterment'. Phase 2 - 2015-2020: Implementation of the Whole Force Concept. The single Services will develop their own plans for the implementation of the recommendations.

The full report can be found at: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/CorporatePublications/ReserveForcesandCadetsPublications/DRFC/Fr20FinalReport.htm>

The Armed Forces Covenant applies to all Reservists; some of the commitments made in support of the Covenant will apply to some reservists more than others (e.g. if they are deployed, training to deploy or returning from a deployment). As the recommendations for FR20 are implemented, the principles of the Covenant will be integral to the approach adopted to reach the vision for the Reserve Forces.

4. Armed Forces Redundancy Programme

The Strategic Defence and Security Review announced a reduction of 17,000 posts from the Regular Armed Forces (5,000 each RN and RAF and 7,000 Army). Whilst reduced recruiting and fewer extensions of service will account for some of the reductions, a redundancy programme is needed to ensure the right balance of skills across the rank structures is maintained.

The two Armed Forces Redundancy Schemes (broadly matched with the two pension schemes) are laid down in statute. They are compulsory schemes, though we seek volunteers (applicants) from announced redundancy fields (areas of current or predicted surplus) who wish to be considered for redundancy. All compensation is tax-exempt.

Each Service operates its own redundancy programme within a tri-Service policy framework. There will be up to four tranches per Service, with co-ordinated timings where sensible but with Service need the over-riding factor.

Redundancy fields for tranche 1 were announced, together with maximum numbers of redundancies to be made, on 1 March (RAF – 1,000) and 4 April 2011 (RN – 1,600 and Army – 1,000). Tranche 2 announcements will be in early 2012, tranches 3 and 4 follow and all are expected to be completed by end March 2015.

Selections are made by the single Services through a system of selection boards, using scoring against published criteria, to ensure that the individuals who remain provide the best fit of skills and competences (employability) to meet the future Service need. Applicants may be rejected in favour of non-applicants to ensure that the right balance of skills across the rank structures is maintained. Selection of an individual for redundancy does not imply that the post they occupy at the time of selection is no longer required.

Those in receipt of Operational Allowance (OA) on the notification date (i.e. 1 September 2011 for the Army and RAF and 30 September 2011 for the RN) are exempt from selection, unless they have applied to be considered. Similarly, all those preparing for, or recovering from such an operation (on post-operational leave or entitled rest and recuperation) are exempt, unless they have applied. OA-earning locations include Afghanistan and until recently, Libya. Those in support of operations but not in OA-earning locations are not exempt, nor are those who have previously served in OA-earning locations, as it would be impractical to exempt so many people.

No personnel who are medically downgraded will leave the Armed Forces through redundancy or otherwise until they have reached a point in their recovery where leaving the Armed Forces is the right decision, however long it takes.

Applicants selected for redundancy receive 6-months' notice and non-applicants 12-months' notice from notification to their last day in Service. An individual can ask to bring this date forward, subject to agreement by their Service.

Notifications are made through the Chain of Command, or nominated notifying officers, in person or in extremis by telephone. No notifications to individuals are made by email, though information for the Chain of Command and other notifying officers may be sent electronically. Support is available for all personnel.

Individuals selected for redundancy are entitled to the resettlement package to which they would have received had they completed their Service commitment, to assist them in making the transition to civilian life.

A detailed analysis of the applications and selections for redundancy was published by DASA and recently made available via the MOD Internet. This gives a breakdown by Service, Gender, Age Group, Length of Service, Rank, Marital Status, Branch/Trade, Nationality, Ethnicity and Redundancy Field.

An appeals system is in place for those selected, or applicants rejected, where they can show evidence that was not available to the selection board. A service complaint can be raised at any time.

Tranche 1 Notifications – Fact and Figures (rounded to nearest 10)

The tri-Service Tranche 1 summary is:

Tri-Service	Valid Applications	of whom selected	Applicants			Non-Applicants			Total
			No	%	Exit date	No	%	Exit date	
Naval Service	810	83%	670	66%	31 Mar 12	350	34%	30 Sep 12	1,020
Army	870	76%	660	72%	29 Feb 12	260	28%	31 Aug 12	920
RAF	620	71%	440	48%	29 Feb 12	480	52%	31 Aug 12	920
TOTAL	2,300	77%	1,770	62%		1,090	38%		2,860

Tranche 1 by Officers and Other Ranks:

		Applicants		Non-Applicants		Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%
Naval Service (30 Sep 11)	Officers	70	78%	20	22%	90	9%
	Ratings	600	65%	330	35%	930	91%
Army (01 Sep 11)	Officers	180	78%	50	22%	230	25%
	Other Ranks	480	71%	200	29%	680	75%
RAF (01 Sep 11)	Officers	140	36%	250	64%	390	42%
	Other Ranks	300	56%	240	44%	540	58%
TOTAL	Officers	390	55%	320	45%	710	25%
	Other Ranks	1,380	64%	770	36%	2,150	75%

Gurkhas feature heavily in the Army redundancy figures as the alignment of their terms and conditions of service in 2007 has allowed them to serve longer, thus creating a surplus. UK Border Agency officials are working closely with the MOD to ensure F&C personnel being made redundant have a smooth transition to civilian life. This includes introducing a streamlined process for submitting applications for settlement (see chapter 10, section 7).

Army	Applicants		Non-Applicants		Total
	No	%	No	%	
Ghurkhas	10	7%	130	93%	140

RAF redundancies included those from the **Flying Training and Weapon Systems Officer pipelines**. 7 of the 170 officers removed from the flying training pipeline have successfully transferred to other branches of the RAF.

RAF	Applicants		Non-Applicants		Total
	No	%	No	%	
FT Pipeline	~	~	160	100%	160
Student WSOs	0	0%	20	100%	20

Conclusions

Further to the Strategic Defence and Security Review announced last year, there have been important announcements this year on defence reform, basing, and the future of the UK's Reserve Forces. The implementation of these changes will take further detailed planning and MOD will engage with stakeholders throughout this process. The Armed Forces redundancies which have been announced by each Service will take effect over the period February 2012 to March 2015. We will ensure that Service leavers are adequately supported in their transition to civilian life.

15 Recourse

“Members of the Armed Forces Community should have means of recourse open to them, if they believe that they are not being treated in a fair and appropriate way. Established routes of recourse such as complaints processes or Ombudsmen should be sensitive to the particular circumstances of the Armed Forces Community. In addition, for serving personnel and those who have recently left service, there should be a responsive system for handling complaints relating to their service in the Armed Forces, overseen by the Service Complaints Commissioner.”

Disadvantage and special treatment

The Armed Forces do not have a Trade Union, therefore there are particular paths of recourse that are open to them if they are unhappy with the treatment that they receive whilst employed by the MOD.

1. Service Complaints Commissioner

The post of Service Complaints Commissioner was created by the Armed Forces Act 2006 with a remit which covers any complaint made after 1 January 2008. The Act introduced a number of significant changes to the Service complaints system to make it fairer, more independent and more transparent. As well as the Service Complaints Commissioner, these include new joint standards for the three Services and a new Service Complaints Panel, with an independent member to consider some complaints on behalf of the Defence Council.

The Commissioner’s role (currently fulfilled by Dr Susan Atkins) is to provide a rigorous and independent oversight of how the complaints system is working and to report back to Ministers and to Parliament. The Commissioner also provides an alternative point of contact for Service personnel (or someone acting on their behalf, such as a member of their family, a friend or MP) to raise concerns.

Because of concerns that Service men and women should be treated properly, the Commissioner has special powers where a complaint is about unacceptable behaviour such as:

- bullying
- harassment
- discrimination
- victimisation
- dishonest or improper behaviour

In these cases the Commissioner has to be kept informed by law about the handling of a complaint and the outcome.

The Commissioner presents an annual report to Parliament on how efficient, effective and fair the complaints process has been during the year. This report is available to the public. The 2010 Annual Report published on 31 March 2011 gives credit for improvements made by the MOD as a whole and the Services individually but highlights the shortcomings of the system as it is currently designed, stating that it is over engineered and complex. The MOD’s

response was published on 11 July 2011 and can be found at the following link alongside the report: www.armedforcescomplaints.independent.gov.uk/

The MOD accepted as reasonable the SCC's new three-year goals, and commented on the 20 new recommendations in this year's report. Ten of those recommendations relate to changes that the SCC suggests should be considered if the complaints system is to be fair, effective and efficient, and include in particular her assertion that to be so, her role needs to become that of an Ombudsman. In December 2010 direction was given by the Service Personnel Board that the complaints system be subject to a review to determine the scope for substantial reform and shortening of the process. This review is being taken forward in tandem with the review recommended subsequently by the SCC. That work is considering in detail the ten recommendations referred to above. The SCC will be updated on progress with the review work before the end of 2011 to inform her next annual report. Whilst she is not involved directly in the review, by mutual agreement and to preserve her independence, we are working with the SCC and her team to understand more fully the detail of her report and recommendations, and to learn from her experience of our own complaints process and that of comparators.

2. Programme of Ombudsmen Familiarisation

The role of Ombudsmen, route to recourse, and accessibility of Ombudsmen are not widely or well understood across the Armed Forces community. This is, in part, because the Ombudsmen themselves and the processes that need to be followed vary depending on the complaint. The MOD will develop further communications material to help promote understanding of each Ombudsman's role, how they can assist and where to go to report a matter to an Ombudsman.

MOD has started a programme of familiarisation visits for Ombudsmen which has included a visit to Portsmouth in September 2010 and a further visit to RAF Benson in June 2011. This provided the opportunity to look at equipment, talk to serving personnel and have an informal discussion with Service families on the issues that affect them.

We will look to see whether the network of Ombudsmen is able to provide statistics of the number and type of cases that are reported to them by Service personnel to help us develop targeted responses.

3. Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CAB)

Contact has been established with the CAB to understand what data they hold on the types of issues on which Service people are likely to approach them for assistance. If relevant, we will look to provide information on these issues in the next report.





Conclusions

Service personnel have particular pathways of recourse open to them – a key facet being the presence of a Service Complaints Commissioner. An update on the review of the complaints system and recommendations of the SCC herself, will be reported to the SCC by the end of this year. We will continue to work with the Ombudsmen.




Annex A Implementation of commitments

The following table lists commitments from the Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP, July 2008) and the Service Families Employment & Skills Taskforce (SFEST, March 2010) which were still in progress in November 2010 (date of ERG annual report) alongside the Covenant-related commitments made in the Programme for Government (May 2010) and all the commitments made in The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow (T&T, May 2011). The latter includes commitments arising from the Government’s response to the Report of the Task Force on the Military Covenant. The table outlines when these are expected to be implemented and whether they apply across the UK or in specific areas of the UK.

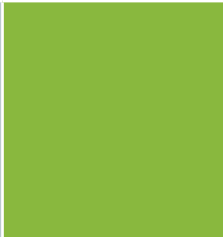
Key to progress status

Implemented	
To be completed by mid 2012	
To be completed by end 2012	
To be completed post 2013	

Terms and Conditions of Service

No.	Origin	Commitment Title	Applies	Progress status
1.1	T&T	Annual pay awards for lowest ranks while the public sector pay freeze is in force	UK-wide	
1.2	T&T	Inclusion of Armed Forces in the Hutton Fair Pay Review	UK-wide	
1.3	T&T	Development of a New Employment Model	UK-wide	

Healthcare

No.	Origin	Commitment Title	Applies	Progress status
2.1	T&T	Access to a mental health wellbeing website for Service personnel, families and veterans, to engage those reluctant to access traditional clinical services.	UK-wide	

No.	Origin	Commitment Title	Applies	Progress status
2.2	T&T	Building a greater focus on mental health into routine service and discharge medical examinations	UK-wide	
2.3	T&T	Better information for GPs on available help for Reservists via the Reserves Mental Health Programme	UK-wide	
2.4	T&T	Service medical professionals in NHS bodies	UK-wide	
2.5	T&T	A healthier approach to alcohol	UK-wide	
2.6	T&T	Midlands Medical Accommodation Project	England	
2.7	T&T	IVF treatment for seriously injured veterans	England	
2.8	T&T	NHS Reform	England	
2.9	T&T	Mental health support for families (as per 2.1)	UK-wide	
2.10	T&T	Follow-on treatment available after discharge from the defence Departments of Community Mental Health	UK-wide	
2.11	T&T	Introduction of a (GP) E-learning veterans' health package	UK-wide	
2.12	T&T	Launching a Veterans' Information Service	England	
2.13	T&T	Implementation of the Mental Health Pilots Evaluation Report	England	
2.14	T&T	Study on prosthetics provision	England	
2.15	Coalition Commitment	Providing extra support for mental health needs	England	
2.16	Coalition Commitment	Ensure injured personnel are treated in dedicated Armed Forces wards	UK-wide	
2.17	SPCP 3/2.7	Prosthetic Limb Provision	England, Scotland & Wales	

2.18	SPCP 5/2.9	NHS Waiting List Retention of Place	UK-wide	
2.19	SPCP 4/2.8	Access to NHS Dentistry	UK-wide	

Education

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
3.1	T&T	Expansion of training opportunities for under 18s	England & Wales	
3.2	T&T	Improvements to the Army's education programme	UK-wide	
3.3	Coalition Commitment	Pupil Premium for Service children	England	
3.4	T&T	£3m Support Fund for State Schools with Service Children	UK-wide	
3.5	T&T	Development of a new strategy to address the impacts of mobility on the education of Service children and young people	UK-wide	
3.6	T&T	Consultation on Schools Admission Code	England	
3.7	T&T	Supporting Service children's education through flexibility in Service accommodation provision	UK-wide	
3.8	T&T	New State Boarding School places	England & Scotland	
3.9	Coalition Commitment	Financial Support for Service leavers to study at University	UK-wide	
3.10	Coalition Commitment	Scholarships for bereaved children to study at university	UK-wide	
3.11	SPCP 21/2.24	Assessment of Educational Attainment	England	
3.12	SPCP 22/2.25	Ensure uninterrupted Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision	England, Scotland & Wales	

Housing

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
4.1	T&T	Look at whether there is scope to refurbish Armed Forces accommodation from efficiencies within the MOD	UK-wide	
4.2	T&T	Develop an alternative approach to the provision of accommodation for Service personnel and their families	UK-wide	
4.3	T&T	The Next Generation Estates Contract (NGEC) programme	UK-wide	
4.4	T&T	Continued support to the Armed Forces Home Ownership Scheme	UK-wide	
4.5	T&T	Raise awareness of the Government's low-cost home ownership schemes	England, Scotland & Wales	
4.6	T&T	Improvements to Defence Infrastructure Organisation Customer Care	UK-wide	
4.7	SPCP 13/2.15	High Priority for Adapted Social Housing	England, Scotland & Wales	
4.8	SPCP 16/2.19	Social Housing – Establishing Local Connection	England, Scotland & Wales	
4.9	SPCP 17/2.20	Acceptance of Certification of Cessation	England, Scotland & Wales	
4.10	SPCP 19/2.22	Homelessness – New Supported Housing	England, Scotland & Wales	

Benefits and Tax

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
5.1	T&T	Increase in Council Tax Relief	UK-wide	
5.2	T&T	Development of the Universal Credit	England	
5.3	SPCP 32/2.35	State Benefits – Improved access for Service Families	UK-wide	

Responsibility of Care

There are currently no specific commitments to report on in this area.

Deployment

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
7.1	Coalition Commitment	Double Operational Allowance	UK-wide	
7.2	Coalition Commitment	Changes to Rest and Recuperation	UK-wide	

Family Life

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
8.1	T&T	Balance demands on Service personnel and their families through a New Employment Model	UK-wide	
8.2	T&T	Additional support for Service families within the reformed Work Programme	England	
8.3	T&T	Improving portability of Criminal Records Bureau checks to improve Armed Forces families employability	UK-wide	
8.4	T&T	Removing residency requirements for disabled Service personnel and their families who are posted overseas on UK bases	UK-wide	
8.5	T&T	Childcare Sufficiency Assessment	UK-wide	
8.6	SFES TF3	Changes to Vocational Qualifications System	England	
8.7	SFES TF7	Review of Accessibility	England	
8.8	SFES TF8	Flexible career options in the Public Sector	England	
8.9	SFES TF9	Private Sector Support	England	

Commercial Products and Services

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
9.1	T&T	Make BFPO a recognised UK postcode	BFPO addresses	
9.2	T&T	Working with the banks and building societies on lending to Service personnel	UK-wide	

Transition

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
10.1	T&T	Improving resettlement support for Early Service Leavers	UK-wide	
10.2	Coalition Commitment	Launching a Troops to Teachers scheme	England	
10.3	T&T	Attracting Service Leavers into the Volunteer Reserves	UK-wide	
10.4	T&T	Work with the Forces in Mind Trust to support veterans and their families	UK-wide	
10.5	T&T	Opt-out rather than opt-in for contact with Service charities	UK-wide	
10.6	SFES	Improved Employment of Service Leavers in the Public Sector	UK-wide	

Support after Service

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
11.1	T&T	Changes to Service pensions	UK-wide	
11.2	T&T	An improved veterans' online portal	UK-wide	
11.3	T&T	Continuous automatic entitlement to Blue Badges for seriously injured Service personnel and veterans	UK-wide	
11.4	T&T	Easing access to concessionary travel for seriously injured Service personnel and veterans	UK-wide	

11.5	T&T	AFCS Compensation payments and link to other benefits	UK-wide	
11.6	SPCP	Inquests – Independent Support to Families	England & Wales	

Recognition

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
12.1	Coalition Commitment	Rules governing the award of medals	UK-wide	

Participation as Citizens

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
13.1	Coalition Commitment	Improving the ability of Service personnel to vote	UK-wide	
13.2	T&T	Life in the UK Test will be made available overseas		
13.3	T&T	Foreign and Commonwealth Citizens – Time spent in service outside the UK		
13.4	T&T	UK Border Agency Review of fees for Armed Forces Dependents		

Changes in Defence

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
14.1	T&T	Managing the return from Germany to the United Kingdom	UK-wide	

Recourse

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
15.1	T&T	Programme of Ombudsmen Familiarisation	UK-wide	

The Covenant and Wider Society

No.	Origin	Commitment title	Applies	Progress status
16.1	T&T	Legislate for the production of an annual Armed Forces Covenant report	UK-wide	
16.2	T&T	Develop and support a new Community Covenant Scheme	UK-wide	
16.3	T&T	Community Covenant Grant	UK-wide	
16.5	T&T	A Veterans' card	UK-wide	
16.6	T&T	Launch a CDS Commendation Scheme	UK-wide	
16.7	T&T	Working with Service Charities to identify how they can best use their resources	UK-wide	
16.8	T&T	Sharing Service facilities with civilians	UK-wide	
16.9	T&T	Encourage Olympic involvement	UK-wide	
16.10	T&T	Build on links between Reserve Forces and Cadet Associations and youth groups	UK-wide	
16.11	T&T	Conduct a Future Reserves 2020 Study	UK-wide	

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