



The Service Families Task Force (SFTF) continues to work on your behalf to resolve issues that affect Service families. The SFTF needs evidence from you to take issues forward. So let your Families Federations, your local HIVE or your unit office know of your difficulties or contact us through the MOD Service Community website: [www.sftf.mod.uk](http://www.sftf.mod.uk).

The current SFTF top issues, in alphabetical order, are:

- Childcare
- Communication
- Education
- Health
- Housing

#### **Childcare**

The Childcare Voucher Scheme fact sheet has been updated and is available on the Service Community website. We will continue to update this when any new information becomes available. We still anticipate that a salary sacrifice scheme can be put in place by the end of next year.

#### **Communication**

A JPA Families Leaflet has been developed to provide Service families with access to a JPA Centre helpline number for advice or action in certain specific circumstances, particularly when the Serving spouse is deployed or otherwise unavailable. Of course, the JPA Centre is in addition to using unit admin office and welfare staff, your Families Federation, local HIVE or the SFTF website for information or guidance.

We are looking at being able to use JPA contact information to send information and advice direct to families in specific cases, including when the Serving member is away on detachment. This would enhance the current arrangements which usually rely on Service personnel passing information from the Services to their families.

#### **Education**

The Defence Committee report is now available and can be viewed online at [www.parliament.gov.uk](http://www.parliament.gov.uk) under publications and committees. We are working closely with DfES to address the recommendations made in the report.

Having to sort out new schools before a move is a demanding process. The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) provides advice and support to Service families, particularly if considering an admissions appeal. The Service Community website has comprehensive advice, including the guide for service families on moving, and CEAS can be contacted on 01980 618244 or view the CEAS website at [www.ceas.mod.uk](http://www.ceas.mod.uk).

#### **Health**

Access to NHS dental treatment is a nationwide problem but one which can be exacerbated by Service life. It is hoped that changes with NHS dentists now coming under Primary Care Trusts will help alleviate this problem over the next couple of years.

Families should continue to use NHS Direct in England and Wales (and the equivalent in Scotland and Northern Ireland) to access NHS dental services and any problems, including access to private dental treatment, should be reported to the local HIVE, the Families Federations or direct to the Service Community website.

We are investigating problems in accessing orthodontic treatment and with continuity of care being affected by mobility.

#### **Housing**

The Key Worker Living Programme has been extended to include eligible Service personnel and their families who are living in London, the south and south-east of England. Further work is ongoing to include Service personnel in similar schemes in other parts of the UK. Also, there is now a commercial shared equity scheme tailored to Service families. More information from the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) [www.army.mod.uk/jshao](http://www.army.mod.uk/jshao).

Difficulties are continuing with repair calls made to MHS. Defence Estates (DE) and Modern Housing Solutions (MHS) are working closely to resolve the problems experienced since the roll out. If you have had any problems please report these to your local HIVE or Families Federations.

DE have agreed to expand the category of evidence that people requiring Special Needs adaptations can use to get changes made. In future as well as reports from Occupational Therapists, other authoritative evidence (such as Consultant's letters) may be used.

#### **Other Areas of Interest:**

##### **Relocation Aide Memoire**

Version 7 of the "Relocation Aide Memoire – guide to Service families on moving" has been published and is now available on the Service Community area of the MOD website at [www.sftf.mod.uk](http://www.sftf.mod.uk).

#### **National Lottery**

Anyone living outside the UK cannot play the National Lottery through an interactive account, even if using a BFPO address. This is because some countries or states are subject to gambling laws which restrict residents from participating in games for which wagers are required. Credit agencies are used by The National Lottery to prove that a player is over 16 and is resident in the UK. This is not a BFPO issue.

#### **Nationality at Birth**

If a person or their husband, wife or civil partner, is a British citizen *otherwise than by descent*, their child born outside the United Kingdom will automatically be a British citizen when born. But, the child will be a British citizen *by descent* unless that person or their husband, wife or civil partner is a British citizen in Crown Service. When a child is born in these circumstances, no official action need be taken when the child is born to confirm his or her status, but for subsequent actions (such as applying for a British passport for the child) the application may require the support of further documentation:

- If the child has been registered as a British citizen, the certificate of registration will normally be enough evidence for him or her to get a British passport.
- If the child automatically became a British citizen at birth (as in most Service cases) it will normally be necessary to produce the child's birth certificate, a marriage/civil partnership certificate, and evidence that the applicant (person with parental responsibility) is a British citizen *otherwise than by descent*, or their husband, wife or civil partner is a British citizen *otherwise than by descent*.

#### **Partners Working Group**

A MOD survey of single Service personnel has been conducted in order to assess the numbers who feel they are in a long term relationship and accept responsibility for the children of that relationship. This information will be analysed to assess the impact of any change to entitlements (such as accommodation and allowances) for those in such relationships. The Partners Working Group will reconvene after this to consider any change in policy in this area, should it be considered appropriate.