

Changing family accommodation entitlements

1. Who will be entitled to family accommodation in future?

Service personnel in an Established Long Term Relationship will be given the same accommodation entitlement as those who are married or in a civil partnership.

Service personnel who have eligible child(ren) who stay with you for more than 80 nights per calendar year, you will be able to benefit from Service Family Accommodation.

Single Service personnel will also be able to apply for family accommodation.

2. What will the size of family accommodation be based on?

Service personnel of all ranks will receive an entitlement to accommodation based on their need, for most this will be linked to the size of their immediate family. Where availability allows, personnel will have greater flexibility to choose a property that is above or below their entitlement if they feel that would suit their family better.

3. Does basing accommodation on need rather than rank erode 'the offer'?

Some Service personnel will see a reduction in their accommodation entitlement under the New Accommodation Offer, but many will have access to subsidised accommodation in a way they have not previously. We should not forget that many personnel do not live in Service accommodation and therefore do not receive any 'reward' from rank-based entitlements – moving to a needs-based model means all personnel will be supported equitably to meet their accommodation and Service needs. All Service personnel in MOD-supported family accommodation will still receive heavily subsidised housing in comparison to those who reside outside the system.

4. Will charging be based on 'need' or will it remain with rank?

Under a needs-based model, Service personnel will pay the appropriate charge or rent for the property they occupy, and this will not differ by rank. Offering greater flexibility between Service Family Accommodation types, may mean personnel have more opportunity to pay more, or less for their property based on what they want from their accommodation and their own assessment of their spending power and lifestyle priorities.

5. Will those Service personnel whose entitlement will reduce on transition to the New Accommodation Offer be protected?

If personnel experience a reduction in their entitlement because of the new offer, they will be eligible to 'Transitional Protection'. This will give them access to a similar property to what they are current entitled to for a three-year transition period after the launch of the new offer on the 11 March 2024.

6. Do the new entitlements apply to those overseas?

This policy currently only applies to all those who receive an assignment order for a UK based role. The overseas offer is being considered as a separate piece of work.

7. Will Single Living Accommodation entitlements change?

Longer term accommodation policy work is looking at how Single Living Accommodation structures can be used to support the wants and needs of Service personnel better. This includes considering the role of rank in allocating accommodation.

8. If I am in surplus accommodation in a Established Long Term Relationship, do I need to move?

No. If you are already in an Established Long Term Relationship and occupying surplus Service Family Accommodation under legacy policy, you will remain on your surplus license until your next assignment post the launch date when you can apply under the New Accommodation Offer.

9. Is support for parents with children who only live with them some of the time going to be continued under the New Accommodation Offer?

Yes. If eligible, parents with child(ren) who stay with them for 80 nights or more per year will be entitled to subsidised family accommodation.

Use of private rental accommodation

10. What happens if Service Family Accommodation is not available?

At some locations, there may not be enough Service Family Accommodation for all entitled Service personnel who request it. At these locations, the private rental sector will be used, and personnel will be given practical and financial support, adjusted for the local market, to source a home. Where possible, preferences for MOD-provided Service Family Accommodation or self-sourced rental accommodation will be met. If there are specific reasons why a Service family cannot source their own rental accommodation, substitute Service Family Accommodation may be sourced on their behalf.

11. Why are you using rental properties when they are becoming more expensive?

Changes to how we manage the estate will help maximise the use of Service Family Accommodation, but it is likely there will be some locations where there are not enough MOD-provided properties for every family that wants one. Rental payments will be reviewed regularly to ensure Service personnel placed into the Private Rental Sector receive appropriate financial support.

12. What support will be available to Service personnel placed into the Private Rental Sector?

When a Service person is placed into the Private Rental Sector, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation will pass their details onto the Accommodation Support Cell, a national team designed to support personnel and their families through the process and answer any questions on the new policy. The Accommodation Support Cell will signpost to resources available to secure a property, help personnel through the process, and review any evidence presented if there are difficulties in finding a property.

In addition to this, Unit HR, Chain of Command and the Accommodation Colonels will be on hand to support Service personnel with any immediate questions.

13. Does using the Private Rental Sector place too great an administrative burden on Service personnel and their families?

Lord Ashcroft's 2014 review of transition and more recent work by Forces in Mind Trust (Rolfe, 2020) identified lack of awareness of civilian housing matters as a significant factor in poor accommodation outcomes at transition – supporting Service personnel to learn these skills whilst still in Service is one way we can help address this.

Lessons have been learned during the Future Accommodation Model Pilot and Service personnel will be supported by the dedicated Accommodation Support Cell. Personnel, their families and partners will be able to contact the cell to help them navigate the private rental sector and we are also rolling out dedicated training to HR points of contact.

To contact the Accommodation Support Cell email: People-Accom-ASC@mod.gov.uk

14. Do you anticipate removing Service Family Accommodation under The New Accommodation Offer?

No. Service Family Accommodation continues to play a key role in providing subsidised accommodation for Service personnel now and in the future. The New Accommodation Offer will not directly result in any being removed from the Defence Portfolio.

15. Will private rental accommodation be used in Northern Ireland?

The policy applies equally in Northern Ireland. Given security considerations a tailored process will be in place for those who may need to find accommodation in the Private Rental Sector.

16. What's the role of the Accommodation Support Cell?

The Accommodation Support Cell is a dedicated team of Civil Servants who, from the 19 Sept 2023, will provide support on the New Accommodation Offer.

The Accommodation Support Cell core role is threefold:

- A. to provide support to Service personnel with policy questions and queries on the New Accommodation Offer, including the different allowances available and how to claim them.
- B. to provide support to Service personnel placed into the Private Rental Sector, and signposting to resources available to secure a property.
- C. to review evidence presented by a service person who has difficulty finding a property in the Private Rental Sector and either directing that further action is needed or escalating the case to the Accommodation Colonel for decision.

The Accommodation Support Cell is being set up to complement the existing Defence Infrastructure Organisation, Industry Partner and Accommodation Colonel teams in the services they will provide to Service personnel on the New Accommodation Offer.

17. So, the Accommodation Support Cell can help me find and secure a property if I'm placed into the Private Rental Sector?

The Accommodation Support Cell will provide you with policy, geographical and logistical support in your search, and offer advice on any additional resources and support that may be available to you. They are not designed to source properties in the way that Mears, our industry partner, has sourced SSSA and SSFA in the past. However, over time, the Accommodation Support Cell will build local area knowledge which will assist you in your search. They do not have legally qualified personnel; therefore, they cannot offer advice on leases etc.

Timelines for the New Accommodation Offer

18. When will the New Accommodation Offer be available for SP?

Starting from March 2024, the MOD will begin introducing a New Accommodation Offer for our Armed Forces. Some of the changes will be available immediately whilst others may only apply to you when you are assigned to a new role or at the end of the three-year transition period.

19. Why has the New Accommodation Offer been delayed from the October launch date?

We have learned lessons from the FAM pilot and other Defence programmes. We need to ensure that we have thoroughly tested all our systems ahead of launch to ensure that Service Personnel have the experience that they expect and deserve. We have therefore had to delay the roll out to 11 March 2024 to enable us to ensure we're ready for launch.

20. Is there anything I need to do right now?

No, you will continue to use the current accommodation policy, as set out in JSP 464, until further notice.

Those who believe that they might be entitled when the policy goes live on the 11 March 2024 are encouraged to ensure that their Established Long Term Relationship status is formally recorded on JPA in accordance with Paragraphs 0116 and 0117 in JSP 464, Vol.1 Part 1.

21. How are Service families updated and informed of the New Accommodation Offer progress?

We will run an extensive communication package ready for the launch of the New Accommodation Offer starting in September 2023 and beyond.

We have actively consulted Service personnel, families, partners and representatives to understand their preferences and use this information to help develop the communication plan. We continue to seek innovative platforms including face-to-face opportunities, social media and online briefings.

Over the coming months the Defence Accommodation Policy team will deliver three 'New Accommodation Offer Roadshows' open to personnel, their families and partners on:

- 28 September at RAF Brize Norton
 - Morning 10:00-11:30 Afternoon 14:00 to 15:30 Evening 18:00-19:30
- 11 October at Catterick Garrison
 - Morning 10:00-11:30 Afternoon 14:00 to 15:30 Evening 18:00-19:30
- 25 October at HMS Collingwood
 - Morning 10:00-11:30 Afternoon 14:00 to 15:30 Evening 18:00-19:30

For more information on how to attend email: People-Accom-Comms@mod.gov.uk

22. Who can I talk to for further information?

There will be a lot more detail on the New Accommodation Offer over the coming months including the publication of the updated JSP in November and specific information packs designed for the

Service person and the Chain of Command. In the meantime, if you have any questions on the new offer, you can find further detail on:

- Gov.uk (Defence Accommodation Policy page)
- Discover My Benefits (General Accommodation)
- Defence Connect (Defence Accommodation Policy)

In addition, from 19 September a new Accommodation Support Cell team will be on hand to answer any questions or queries Service personnel have on the New Accommodation Offer. They will then be in place to fully support Service personnel through their search for private rental when the process goes live in March 24.

For more information contact: People-Accom-ASC@mod.gov.uk

