

Message to military personnel from Service Chiefs

Many of you will have already heard details of the Modernised Accommodation Offer (MAO), previously the New Accommodation Offer, through roadshows, outreach events, or shared on defnet, Defence Connect and social media. We recognise that the offer was well received by many, but there were aspects that have caused concern for some of our people that we must consider during the review announced by Secretary of State for Defence.

In response to feedback from many of you, we have been able to improve the Offer relating to Single Living Accommodation (SLA) so that from Monday 11 March 2024 all personnel who have a Privately Maintained Property or retained Service Family Accommodation (SFA) will receive the SLA waiver for a minimum of 12 months, in accordance with current single Service rules, irrespective of rank, age or marital status. Any further change to this waiver will be communicated with 3 months' notice. We are also pleased that plans to improve support for Service Personnel who wish to purchase their own property now includes the ability to claim back up to £1,500 of legal expenses if buying a first home on assignment to a new location.

However, as many of you will know, and also in response to feedback and concerns raised, it was announced by the Defence Minister on 26 February that the rollout of all elements of the MAO relating to SFA will be paused, to enable a further review to take place. We have listened, and we will continue to do so, while trying to maintain momentum on this important policy change. Central to the review will be acknowledgement and consideration of the views raised. We recognise that this pause has left you with uncertainty with regards to SFA allocation, with many expecting to be entitled to family accommodation from 11 Mar. We are sorry for this delay; however, it is necessary in order to consider the concerns which have been raised. We want this review to be conducted as quickly as possible.

To reassure you, we remain committed to improving SFA standards, to widening entitlement and while the review is undertaken, the current accommodation policy set out in JSP 464 will remain unchanged. This will mean:

- A pause to plans to enable those in Long Term Relationships (LTR) and/or parents with non-resident children to become entitled to subsidised family accommodation.
- A pause to plans to allow single SP to become entitled to subsidised family accommodation.
- A pause to plans for those SP who would have been newly entitled and already renting in the private market to be able to apply for a subsidised rental payment.

If you are affected by the above, you can still apply for surplus accommodation in accordance with JSP 464 on an 'if available' basis.

We want to emphasise that we understand the importance of subsidised family accommodation as part of the offer to you and your family and commit to retaining it as a key element of the Armed Forces offer for the foreseeable future, as we work to

deliver all the improvements recommended in the Haythornthwaite Review. Officials are now working to consider all possible options going forward, and we will keep you updated with further information on the progress of the review by the summer to allow you and your families to make informed decisions.

Enabling your voice to be heard in the review process is key. We want to capture the breadth of views from all Service Personnel and families. You will be aware that we have issued a survey to ensure we understand your future accommodation choices. We encourage you to complete this, as it will greatly assist the review team with forecasting demand and understand your requirements. To help us get the revised offer right, we need to know as much as possible about who is in a relationship and who has children; we therefore need you to make sure your JPA is up to date before the middle of April. As well as helping us develop the new policy, updating JPA now also means you will be ready for when the new offer comes in. In parallel to this, the team will conduct visits across the Front-Line Commands and use a broad representation of Service Personnel to help red team and contribute to the proposals going forward.

At the heart of the MAO is a modern Defence, which can maintain a mobile, deployable, and winning force, whilst also meeting the varying needs of all its people.



First Sea Lord Admiral
Sir Benjamin John Key
KCB CBE ADC
Chief of Naval Staff



General
Sir Patrick Sanders
KCB CBE DSO ADC GEN
Chief of the General Staff



Air Chief Marshal
Sir Richard Knighton
KCB ADC FREng
Chief of the Air Staff

What does MAO look like from the 11 March:

Service Family Accommodation (SFA)

In addition to the £400m of additional investment in SFA already announced in the Defence Command Paper (Refresh) last summer, we will deliver a further £200m of investment over the next three years to modernise accommodation.

Single Living Accommodation (SLA)

From 11 March 24 we are extending the SLA charges waiver so that all personnel – irrespective of age or marital status – who require SLA at their duty station but have a Privately Maintained Property or retained SFA elsewhere, are not paying for this additional accommodation requirement.

Those who have previously benefitted from an SLA charges waiver will continue to pay nothing; but it also means that further personnel who have not previously benefitted from the waiver will now do so – saving between £30 and £258 per month in SLA charges. This modernised approach is fairer for all and emphasises Defence's commitment to improving the offer for everyone. Front Line Commands have committed to work together over the next year to develop plans to optimise the SLA estate and bring it up to the Defence Minimum Standard set in the Defence Accommodation Strategy.

Supporting Home Ownership

Our Modernised Accommodation Offer continues to support those who wish to own their own home. Forces Help to Buy is now a permanent feature of our offer but is now further enhanced by the ability to reclaim up to £1,500 of legal expenses if buying a first home on assignment to a new location.

Overseas Offer

A pilot scheme, which began in January, based in Cyprus and the Falkland Islands, extending accompanied deployments matching the experience of those personnel who are married or in a civil partnership. This pilot remains open and remains so until 31 March 2025 and will help inform our commitment to further widening of entitlement.

Established long-term relationships

While Defence remains committed to widening entitlement to Service Accommodation, Service Personnel, their families and partners in long term relationships, currently living in surplus SFA on an eligible basis under current policy, will remain on their present occupancy agreement.