

Defence Secretary hails support for military families

Speaking as he officially received Andrew Selous MP's 'Living In Our Shoes' report into the needs of service families, which was published last June, the Defence Secretary said progress has already been made against many of the report's recommendations.

These include a £200 million cash injection for vital improvements and renovations to service family and single-living accommodation and the launch of the Partner Career Support Programme Pilot, which provides online career advice and mentoring to spouses and partners of service personnel.

In addition, military families across several defence sites have benefitted from the roll out of the 'wraparound childcare' pilot, which so far has provided children of service personnel aged 4-11 with free breakfast and after-school care.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

My thanks go to Andrew Selous and his team for compiling such a thorough and valuable report. I'm pleased we've already made significant progress with initiatives such as free childcare and giving service families more choice and flexibility about where they live.

Without service families, our Armed Forces couldn't do their job, so it's vital they receive the best support possible to live, work and bring up a family.

We will shortly be introducing new legislation to strengthen the Armed Forces Covenant and make the recognition and care of service families a national priority.

Fulfilling a manifesto commitment, the Armed Forces Bill will seek to strengthen the Covenant in law, helping ensure that service personnel, their families and veterans are not disadvantaged because of their service.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said:

Armed Forces families are at the very heart of our military and it is only right that we do everything we can to guarantee service personnel and their loved ones are not disadvantaged due to the unique nature of service life.

The wellbeing of our Armed Forces goes beyond the MoD and we will continue to work with the devolved administrations, the charitable sector and across government to take forward Andrew Selous' recommendations as we refresh our UK Armed Forces Families Strategy.

The refreshed Forces Families Strategy, to be published this summer, seeks to make life in the Armed Forces community an attractive place to raise a family, helping them to embrace the rewarding aspects of service life and overcome its unique challenges.

To build on a range of government initiatives brought in to support veterans over the past year, the Ministry of Defence will also introduce new measures to help Armed Forces personnel and their families prepare for transition to the civilian world from the beginning of their service career.

These include the development of a life skills training package such as personal monitoring and assessment tools. This follows last year's publication of the Defence Holistic Transition Policy which provides an additional layer of support for service personnel during their departure from service into civilian life.