

# News story: New initiatives introduced to support modern service life

These new measures, including new flexible working arrangements, expanded accommodation options and new co-habitation rules are designed to modernise the armed forces and ensure the military remains a competitive employer that meets the changing needs and expectations of service personnel and their families.

As of today (April 1st) regular personnel can apply for Flexible Service, allowing them to work part-time for a defined period, and giving them the option to restrict the amount of time they would spend away from their home and their families, such as by limiting their deployability.

A new pilot scheme is to be launched that will allow service personnel more choice in their accommodation, allowing them to rent homes off base, potentially with partners, friends, or military colleagues, rather than living on site.

Finally, new policy is being introduced to allow couples in long-term relationships, including same sex couples, to live together in surplus Service Family Accommodation (SFA), subject to availability. Currently only married couples, those in civil partnerships, and those with legally dependent children can live in SFA.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

It's hugely important that the armed forces keep pace with modern society, creating a more attractive option to live, work and bring up a family.

By making our policies fairer and more flexible, we will help retain our diverse and talented workforce and give them greater freedom as they carry out their service.

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

Personnel have told us that they want more flexible working arrangements and so I'm delighted these measures are now in place.

This new package of modern measures will help us retain personnel who want a more flexible approach to how they live, work and serve.

## **Flexible Service**

The new legislation means personnel can apply to temporarily work part-time

and restrict their separation from their home-base, should their personal circumstances change – whether it's to care for young children or elderly relatives, or to embark on training or further education. It will also improve work life balance, and ensure the military is able to cater for an increasingly diverse work force. The operational capability of the armed forces will still come first, and will be the most important consideration when assessing all applications.

Surveys show that the impact of a military career on families and personal lives is the most important factor that might influence personnel to leave service, which is why the new measures aim to retain those with invaluable training and experience.

## **Future Accommodation Model**

From September 2019, the new pilot for the Future Accommodation Model (FAM) will be rolled out to three military bases, starting with HMNB Clyde. The pilot, which will last for approximately three years, will also be established at Aldershot Garrison and RAF Wittering in 2020, ensuring the new policy is keeping pace with changing requirements and 21st century expectations, while also gathering evidence to inform future decisions.

The FAM will provide more choice to service personnel regarding where and with whom they live, making use of the private rental sector, alongside existing options. This means personnel will be able to live near their children's school or their partner's work place, if they choose, and their rent will be in broadly the same as the equivalent type of SFA.

Personnel are already supported by the Forces Help to Buy scheme which offers the opportunity to borrow up to 50% of their salary for a deposit, interest free. Currently, nearly 17,000 personnel have benefited from some £255m of loans.

Under FAM, entitlement to SFA will no longer be allocated according to the rank of individuals, but will instead focus on the size of the family, promoting fairness and ensuring homes are fit for purpose.

## **Cohabitation**

The MOD has taken steps to broaden access to Service Family Accommodation (SFA) by amending current accommodation policy. From today, all service personnel, who have more than four years' service in the armed forces and who are in a long-term relationship or have residential responsibility for a child will be able to apply to live together in surplus SFA at all UK bases where properties are available. This important change in policy to allow cohabitation will benefit all services and all ranks.