

News story: New nurseries open for UK forces families in Cyprus

The opening of the early years facility is a significant milestone for BFC, DCYP and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO), which has overseen the project, funded through LIBOR fines set aside by the government to support MOD infrastructure improvements for childcare facilities on the defence estate.

BFC currently has over 3,000 military personnel serving abroad, over 300 civil servants and over 3,700 spouses and children. The return of UK troops from Germany within the next 2 years will see BFC become the UK's largest permanent overseas military base.

Before this year, childcare for forces families on the island consisted of crèches that were housed in military buildings that were not designed as creches. In 2014, BFC, DCYP and DIO began a project to build 4 bespoke nurseries for the children of British families serving in Cyprus.

Full design work began in 2015 through DIO SD for 4 nurseries. DCYP, the MOD's professional lead on all matters relating to service children and young people, managed the funding for the improvements. DIO worked with them and BFC to scope locations, develop plans and manage the construction and launch of new nurseries in Ayios Nikolaos, Dhekelia, Akrotiri and Episkopi.

Ayios Nikolaos, Akrotiri and Dhekelia nurseries were completed in July 2017 and opened for business after staff training for the September 2017 term. The Episkopi nursery will be complete later this year and will open in early 2018.

Speaking at the ribbon cutting ceremony, Major General Illingworth was keen to highlight this key issue and congratulate all those involved in seeing the project through to completion. He said:

I am delighted to be here alongside our colleagues from the Directorate for Children and Young People, to officially open this fantastic early years facility.

This is the culmination of a lot of hard work and demonstrates our commitment to early years learning here in Cyprus.

Investing in early years education is very important, and I have no doubt that the children of our military and civilian personnel based here in Cyprus will reap the benefits of this wonderful facility for some years to come.

DCYP director, Mike Cooper was equally enthusiastic:

I echo the comments from Major General Illingworth. The importance of education, even at an early age, cannot be overstated.

These fantastic new settings in Cyprus offer an excellent foundation for lifelong learning and support the government agenda for extending access to high quality childcare.

They also provide great employment opportunities for spouses seeking a skill that will be valued on their return to the UK.

Gary Brownlee, DIO area manager, said:

This project is a good example of how DIO works together with our armed forces customers to deliver a project that meets their requirements, taking into account their needs, respecting the local environment and contributing to the quality of life for armed services personnel and their families abroad.

We are pleased to see the nurseries being enjoyed by children, families and staff. It is very rewarding to see the many years of planning and construction come together successfully.

Thank you to all of the staff within DIO, our contractors and our colleagues in BFC and DCYP for their hard work.