

AUTUMN
2013

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Army & You

{for everyone with a soldier in their life}

How will
YOU fit
into the
modern
Army

P

REVEALED:
3 Top trio
in 2013
education
excellence
awards

Meet people like you

Our entrepreneurs taking command of their careers

Best
things
about
CYPRUS

How you
can improve
your play park

REAL-LIFE STORIES

'OUR SON DIED
OF A CONDITION
NOBODY
KNOWS ABOUT'

WIN!
A SKIING
HOLIDAY
WITH PEAK
RETREATS

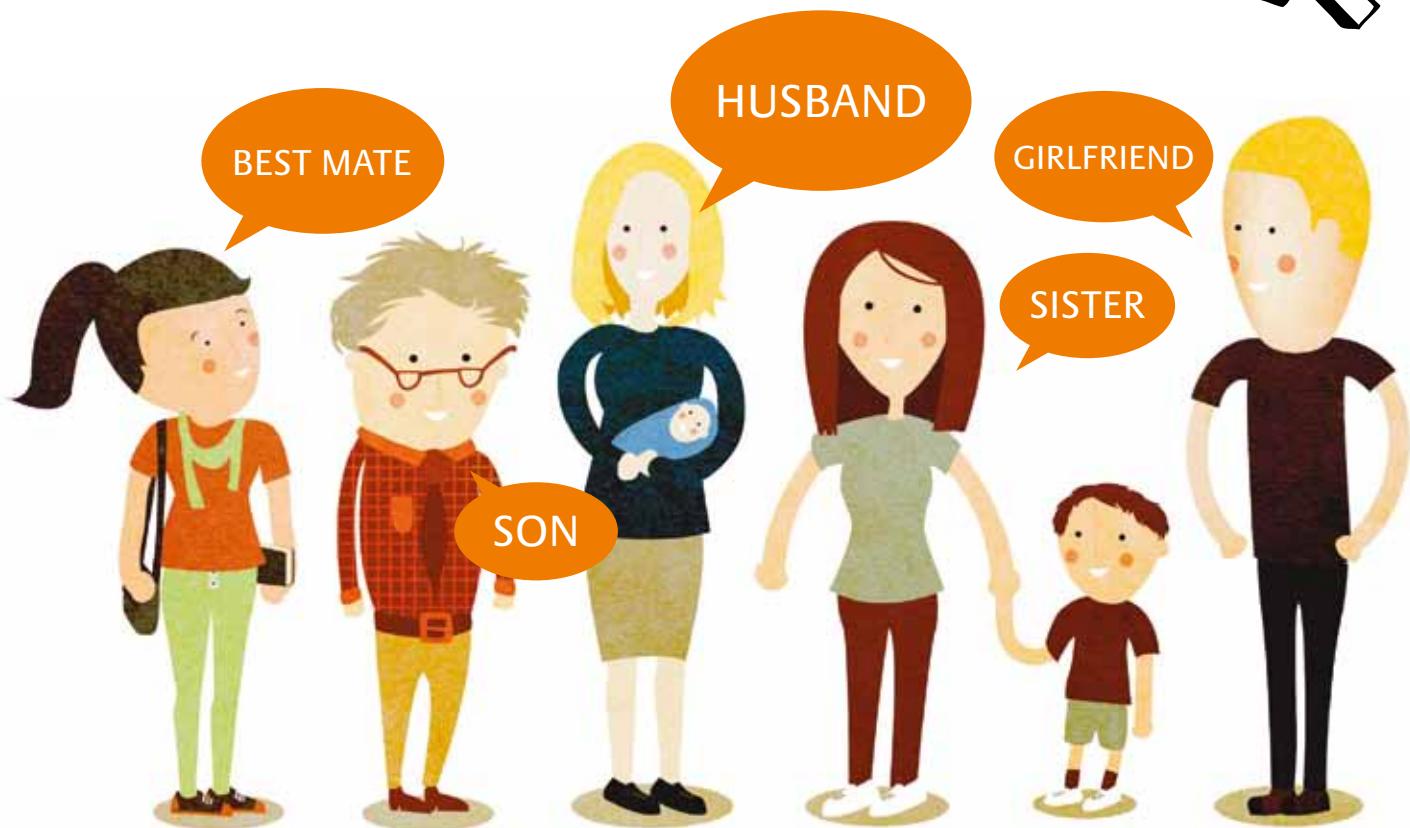
aff THE NEW MAGAZINE OF THE ARMY FAMILIES FEDERATION

WHO WILL YOU TOP UP?



You can now **Top Up WelComE Accounts**
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Simply visit www.mywelcome.co.uk



You will need a valid WelComE account number to Top Up an account.
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Welfare Communications Everywhere

Army & You

{for everyone with a soldier in their life}

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We love to hear from you. If you've got a story you would like to share about Army life, do let us know – email editor@aff.org.uk

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Email opcomms@aff.org.uk

PUBLISHER

Army&You is published quarterly by TylerBale Communications on behalf of the Army Families Federation. Editorial content and illustrations © Army Families Federation. Not to be reproduced without permission from the Editor.

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To enter, click the Reader Giveaways tab at www.armyandyou.co.uk and follow the links, or send a postcard to Army&You, IDL 414, Ramillies Building, Floor 1, Zone 7, Marlborough Lines, Monxton Road, Andover SP11 8HJ. Include your name, address, telephone number and name of the giveaway. One entry per household per giveaway. Your information will not be used for marketing purposes. Closing date for entries is 17 October 2013. Winners' names are published on the Army&You website at www.armyandyou.co.uk

{ FROM THE EDITOR }

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW MAGAZINE'

WELCOME to the first edition of Army&You – the magazine for everyone with a soldier in their life. As the Army reduces its numbers and we continue to live through times of change, it has become more vital than ever that Army families are recognised and listened to.

With this in mind, we decided to produce a new magazine to represent our changing Army; a magazine, which as its strapline states, is for everyone – the spouses, parents, grandparents, partners and friends of soldiers. It is your magazine. We hope you enjoy and contribute to it.

In this issue, we have looked at our Service community and the great initiatives and projects within it, from the Armed Forces Community Covenant to inspiring groups benefiting both our Army families and the local population; a netball squad that has created a team spirit in a remote location; a play park revamp aided by families; and a book illustrated by local schoolchildren.

What better way to celebrate our new magazine than to highlight the winning schools from our AFF Excellence for Forces Children Award. We showcase the schools who use the Service Premium to maximum effect to support our children. There's a round-up of AFF's summer events and as we look to the future, we uncover the MOD's plans for housing and mobility.

The importance of two incomes has never been more pressing. Our employment feature has lots of top tips for returning to work and starting a business. Dotted amongst the pages you'll find lots of prizes, including an incredible ski holiday! Look for the "win" logo to your right. We hope you will like Army&You's fresh new look – let us know what you think!



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OXFORDSHIRE - St Mary's Fields, Thame; King Stephen's Place, Wallingford

WEST SUSSEX - Kaleidoscope, Lindfield; Blackbridge Lane, Horsham; The Coppice, Burgess Hill; The Croft, Thakeham (opening this Autumn)

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CATHERINE SPENCER AFF Chief Executive

Look to the future

We have become used to change in the last five years. Next on the 'to-do' list is a thorough examination of the 'terms and conditions of service' for personnel. The New Employment Model (NEM), as this project has been called, is essentially the review of how your soldier is paid and the provision and cost of future housing.

However, the study is far more complex than just that and whilst the sceptics amongst us may believe it to be a cost-saving exercise, the NEM team stresses that it is about providing a cost-effective and attractive "package" with the aim of encouraging you and your soldier to remain in the Army.

Redundancy, rebasing and the cutting and amalgamation of units has been one step towards how the future will look.

Examining what our soldiers and our families need to entice us to stay in terms of housing, duration of posting, stability, partner employment and pay is the human side of restructuring the Army and you have a chance to influence the outcome of the review.

AFF has been involved from the start using the information we gather from families to inform decision makers of your priorities.

It's vital that decisions on what the future "package" will comprise are led by your views and the needs of our soldiers.

GETTING THE BALANCE

There are a range of ways in which the NEM team will determine what will be offered in the future.

The high number of volunteers for redundancy demonstrates that many of you are voting with your feet, and there must be a real fear that unless pay, housing and family life are in balance that many more

soldiers will opt to leave when the economy improves.

THE TWO MAINSTAYS

The NEM team is committed to getting that balance right. It's not, however, without questions from AFF. To dispel rumours, I am pleased that it has been made absolutely clear that families will continue to have access to Service Families Accommodation (SFA).

At our recent AFF Germany Conference, Major General Richard Nugee, Director General Personnel stated that there's no plan to remove Continuity of Education Allowance.

So with those two mainstays of the current offer remaining in place families should feel confident to feed in their views.

ENCOURAGING HOUSE PURCHASE

Whilst SFA will remain available there will be a range of incentives to encourage house purchase with the view that this will help you when you come to leave the Forces.

However, it's clear that for accompanied service to remain, SFA will still need to be affordable. We will be monitoring proposed changes to SFA charges.

RETENTION IS A FAMILY ISSUE

As well as an online survey – which is available on the AFF website at www.aff.org.uk – the NEM team will hold 60 focus groups in 19 locations to find out more about what you need.

Interviews with soldiers and partners will be held to find out what's important – a recognition that the Army may recruit the soldier but retention is a family issue. There is also the chance to submit questions to PersTrg-NEM-Mailbox@mod.uk



“

**The Army
may recruit
the soldier
but
retention
is a family
issue**

SERVICE PREMIUM: SPENDING IT WISELY

Earlier this year, we asked you to nominate your child's school for a special award to highlight the ways that schools with military pupils support our young people through Service Premium funding. We had lots of nominations and our independent judging panel divided the entries into three categories depending on how many military children they had. From these three class winners, we chose one overall victor. Lucy Scott, AFF Education & Childcare Specialist, reveals the winners and some of the praise in the nominations...



WINNER - WATCHFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

"The school has used its Service Pupil Premium to excellent effect. Military children are given tailored support through a Learning Mentor programme, as well as homework support groups. The Premium also allows for increased pastoral support, funding after-school clubs, including for children whose parents are deployed, Additional Needs support for newly-arrived military children and help for children moving from foundation stage to year one."



RUNNER-UP - SOLENT INFANT SCHOOL

"The school runs a weekly 'around the world' assembly where pupils share news about members of family overseas. It makes them feel special and this information is transferred onto a world map in the school reception. They invested some of the Service Premium in football coaching to help pupils who needed male role models whilst their fathers were deployed. Solent Infant School made a tough time a lot easier."



RUNNER-UP - WYNDHAM PARK INFANTS SCHOOL

"My children are young and the thought of dad going away was very upsetting for them. I wrote to my children's school and they invited us in for a chat. They discussed various things including the money they receive for Service children and how they spend it. This was just the beginning of the support they gave. My children had at least a weekly meeting with a teacher to discuss things, as well as emailing my husband updates and compiling talking photo books."

THE SERVICE PREMIUM

The Service Premium helps schools in England to provide additional support to Service children. Service parents with children in state-funded schools in England should ensure that their child's head teacher is made aware of their Service status for the Spring School Census, which will be conducted on 16 January 2014. For more information or to download a booklet, visit www.gov.uk and search for Service Pupil Premium.

THE PRIZE

- The AFF Excellence for Forces Children Award was kindly sponsored by Sodexo
- who has donated £500 for
- a fantastic cookery
- master class for
- the pupils of the
- winning school,
- Watchfield Primary,
- to enjoy.



OTHER GREAT IDEAS

From all the nominations we received, there were some inspiring initiatives to spend the Service Premium which you can encourage your school to adopt, including:

- Recordable diaries to use when a parent is deployed or to assist in the transition to new schools;
- A "Circle of Friends" which helps support children's transition into the school community;
- An after-school book club to help those Service pupils who have fallen behind in reading due to moving schools;
- Forces teddy bear mascots to develop diary writing and communication;
- A strong support network for children who have a parent deploying;
- Accurate assessments which pinpoint the next steps in a child's learning;

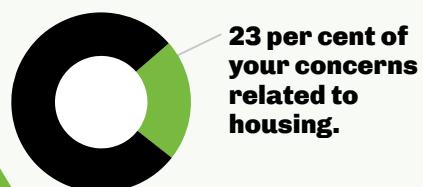


- An "Army Group" to help children talk about how they feel during their parent's deployment, making them realise their feelings are normal;
- Assemblies to tell other children and teachers about their experiences growing up in a military family;
- A "Military Mates" club to help children interact with each other and cope with the feelings they are having;
- A "progress tracking" computer programme so teachers can quickly assess a child's development in order to inform the next school accurately and cut down on repetition;
- Online portfolios, useful for working or deployed parents as all work can be viewed via the internet;
- An e-Bluey club.

Teddy tactic:
Stuffed toy Sgt Camopatch has been sent to Afghanistan and sends letters and photos back to the children at Wootton Primary School

AFF BY NUMBERS

Facts and figures
from Army Families
Federation HQ
www.aff.org.uk



2,242

People got in touch
with us about their
concerns in the second
quarter of 2013.

109
People contacted us
to campaign for the
reopening of the central
bank in Barker Barracks,
Paderborn, after it was closed without
warning. AFF helped to get it reopened.

222
The number of people
who were concerned
about services and
infrastructure provision
during the drawdown from Germany.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH AFF



FACEBOOK

AFF has Facebook pages worldwide. Go to Facebook and search for Army Families Federation, Army&You magazine, AFF Germany or AFF Cyprus.



TWITTER

Army&You magazine can be found at [@ArmyandYou](#). You can also follow AFF at [@The_AFF](#) or our Chief Executive, Catherine Spencer, at [@AFFChiefExec](#)



SUBSCRIBE

Live in a hiring, your own home or on an isolated patch? Far-flung overseas? Parent or friend of a soldier? Leaving the Army but want to stay in touch? Subscribe to Army&You for free! Go to www.armyandyou.co.uk



AFF WEBSITE

www.aff.org.uk has more than 130 pages full of essential information for Army families. If you're out and about, you'll be diverted to our mobile version!



LIVE CHAT

If you have a burning question about any aspect of Army life, click the talk online button and we'll respond! www.aff.org.uk

GRAPEVINE

Really useful bits about Army life

Snap shot

Our selection of the best images we have come across during the production of *Army&You...*



1. Auf wiedersehen

Families say a fond farewell to JHQ and Rheindahlen as German garrisons close



2. Colourful cruiser

An award-winning custom-painted Vespa from Cumbria Car Art



3. Hardest goodbye

Army photographer Rupert Frere (@Army_photo) captures a moving family moment



4. Flower power

Deepcut families win silver at Hampton Court Flower Show. More at www.armyandyou.co.uk

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT ON THE MOVE

A BRAND new app offering information and support on mental health disorders is now available to Service personnel around the world.

Joining Forces, which can be downloaded for free, boasts innovative functions designed to provide tailored information on 11 mental health problems including anxiety, post-traumatic stress and depression, as well as highlighting where to access help.

The programme features interactive videos from a lead psychiatrist pointing out many common signs and symptoms and encourages soldiers to seek advice if they feel they have any of them.



The app has been developed by a network of NHS Trusts. It's available now to download for free at www.appstore.com/joiningforces

THREE CHARITIES, THREE COLOURS

IT IS almost time for youngsters all over the United Kingdom to show their support for our Armed Forces by getting dressed up for Red, White & Blue Day.

The event takes place on Friday 11 October, so make sure that you get your school involved by asking them to register for a welcome pack with lots of ideas on how to



DID YOU KNOW?
54,000 kids took part in the first Red, White & Blue Day in October 2011

make the day special.

If every child donates £1 to sport their colours, more than one million pounds can be raised for Service families through ABF The Soldiers' Charity, The RAF Benevolent Fund and The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity. Go to www.redwhiteblueday.co.uk for more info.

A STICKER FOR SERVICE PERSONNEL

COMMUNITIES across the UK are being urged to support our Armed Forces in the Heroes Welcome scheme.

Businesses are encouraged to display a special logo that indicates a warm and special welcome.

They might like to offer a service upgrade, special acknowledgement or even a discount to Service personnel too, but it's really just a simple show

of support for our military.

Some London cabbies have joined several businesses and other organisations across the UK in displaying stickers, while a number of local authorities have also already signed up to the initiative.

You can see who has an active Heroes Welcome scheme in operation by clicking the links on the website at www.heroeswelcome.co.uk





ONLINE COMMUNITIES

FOR Army families, Facebook was a revolution. We move about so often that it used to be impossible to keep in touch with everyone and there was nowhere to find out what your new patch was like.

Nowadays, with a couple of clicks we can see how much our friends' kids have grown or find out what's happening locally.

There are lots of Facebook groups that bring together Regular and Reserve families and parents who share the same housing area, unit or interests, helping members feel more involved.

It's a great idea to invite your local Community Development Worker to join – they will be able to tell families what's on at the community centre.

If you've joined one of these, please remember to be respectful to other users. Don't:

- Trade insults – Facebook is no place for a public slanging match;
- Post rumours – what you think might be happening in theatre may

alarm other families who have their soldier deployed;

- Complain without reporting a problem – give the welfare team or MHS a chance to respond first;
- Pass your opinion off as fact – this is particularly unfair to new users as others may not share your view on a school for example;
- Post security alerts – these will be issued officially by the MOD and not via Facebook;
- Gossip – it's divisive and there may be no truth in what you're saying;
- Post images without permission – particularly of other people's children.

Facebook can be dangerous too. As Army families, we must always be mindful not to make our information available to any Tom, Dick or Harry. Switch your location settings off to be on the safe side and never make your profile public.

The MOD provides guidance for Service personnel on the best way to use social networking sites safely. Click on www.gov.uk and search for "Using social media".

ANSWERING YOUR QUESTIONS



Are you a member of a local Facebook group for Army families that would benefit from having AFF join? We are already a member of quite a few and can often help answer some of those commonly asked questions such as who to contact to get your street lights fixed through to who to talk to about finding a school place for your child.

We are an independent charity and provide free information and guidance to Army families; we'd like to reach as many of you as possible. Email website@aff.org.uk with the name and links and we will send a request to join!



PUT THE KETTLE ON

SSAFA's most loved fundraising event, the Big Brew Up takes place from 7-13 October.

Now in its 16th year, SSAFA's biggest annual fundraiser sees people get together with family, friends and colleagues for a cup of tea and a slice of cake wherever British Forces are based.

All money raised goes towards SSAFA's vital work supporting current and former members of our Armed Forces and our families.

If you're planning an event, it's not too late to register and get your fundraising pack from www.thebigbrewup.org.uk

Go on, put the kettle on and get baking!



HIVE OF ACTIVITY

BRITISH Army HIVEs, except for Northern Ireland, are now running blogs to extend their information coverage as far as possible.

The aim is to capture local information and many have links to regimental Facebook sites. They will also highlight key important updates and news from the Army and Service related agencies.

HIVE Blogs are easy-to-follow with details in user-friendly subject areas and are constantly evolving to meet your needs. Find yours at www.army.mod.uk/hives



THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT

THE Future Horizons Programme (FHP), a pilot project designed to support Early Service Leavers (ESLs), is celebrating an incredible 99 per cent take-up in its first year.

ESLs are those Servicemen and women who have been discharged from the Armed Forces, either compulsorily or at their own request, before they have completed four years of service.

If your soldier falls into this bracket, they will not currently be automatically entitled to resettlement support.

FHP's aim is to help ESLs into employment and the programme provides a wide range of training support and opportunities.

The scheme is funded by the Forces In Mind Trust and during the one-year-long period of evaluation, FHP engaged with 777 ESLs based at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

After an initial six months, more than 60 per cent were in employment or training and 90 per cent said they would recommend the programme to others.

The evaluation report urges the MOD to look at the possibility of adopting the FHP model across all three services.

If your soldier has served for fewer than four years and is leaving the Army, you can find out more by logging on to the website at www.futurehorizons.org

Cyber changes

ARMYNET has a new home. The online portal, now called the Defence Gateway, is a one-stop resource for accessing all MOD services and information. If you haven't already got an account, you will need your soldier to obtain a username and password for you by visiting www.defencegateway.mod.uk



SAUCY OFFERING

NEXT time you add a dollop of sauce to your sausages, send for Brigadier Brown or Corporal Ketchup!

Featuring an iconic soldier-shaped recyclable bottle, Forces Sauces have been launched to raise money for London-based charity Stoll and The Royal British Legion (RBL).

The table-topping idea is the brainchild of Service veteran Bob Barrett, who worked with Stoll to launch the products nationally in order to help more veterans get their lives back on track.

The sauces are available from Tesco, priced £2.19, and at least 6p from every bottle will be split between Stoll and RBL. Visit www.forcessauces.co.uk



Top tweets

What you've been saying about Army life on Twitter. Follow us @ArmyandYou and @The_AFF...

Both boys been on army camp this week & hubby been on exercise I've so much combat kit & laundry everywhere, it looks like the set of MASH!

@MrsAmandaProwse

Please tell everyone that SSAFA gives lifelong support to all serving veterans and their families in need. Signpost them to us, we're here.

@SSAFAShropshire

The family is the corps that holds it all together.

@TradesBrigade

@daddysasoldier look what summer camp did to my little trooper #Exhausted



@Vickyb74

@The_AFF – Thanks so much for the follow – the organisation does amazing work for the people that make the Army – you make a difference!

@GilesOHalloran



WIN!

ROCKING ALL OVER THE WORLD

BRITISH rockers Status Quo kick off their unmissable UK winter tour in Liverpool this December. The Bula Quo! tour comes on the back of the band's 2013 debut feature film and soundtrack.

Fronted by Francis Rossi and Rick Parfitt, the band have had more hit singles than any other, more hit albums than The Beatles and more appearances on Top Of The Pops than any other act.

The Bula Quo! set will feature a slew of massive hits from that amazing catalogue of classics, plus some new tracks from the album. It also features special guests, the mighty 10cc, on all UK dates – two massive bands on one bill. You can get your tickets from www.livenation.co.uk

- You could be rocking with the Quo thanks to Army&You and Live Nation. We have two sets of four tickets, worth £160 per set, to give away for any of the dates below. See page three for details on how to enter. Mark postal entries "Quo".

Status Quo December tour dates:

Fri 6 Liverpool Echo Arena
Sat 7 Birmingham LG Arena
Sun 8 Cardiff Motorpoint Arena
Tue 10 Plymouth Pavilions
Wed 11 Bournemouth BIC

Fri 13 Brighton Centre
Sat 14 Nottingham Arena
Sun 15 London O2 Arena
Tues 17 Leeds Arena
Weds 18 Glasgow Hydro
Thurs 19 Newcastle Arena



WIN: A JAR OF THE GOOD STUFF

UNION Spa Skincare is a range of luxury products, with carefully-selected ingredients. Army wife Gemma Zommerfield, the genius behind the brand, wanted to create a natural, organic skincare range that was paraben- and sulphate-free, yet still effective. Her Union Spa range includes cleanser, face wash, an exfoliator and mask combo, moisturiser, eye cream and a delicious selection of body products. Order or find out more at www.bestofbritishbeauty.co.uk

Give your skin a treat with Army&You's fabulous giveaway of a Union Spa bundle. The winner can choose any products from the range to suit their skin type, up to the value of £40. See page three for how to enter. Mark postal entries "Union Spa".



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Victory Services Club

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London | W2 2HF





WIN... A SKIING HOLIDAY!

We're celebrating the launch of *Army&You* magazine by teaming up with award-winning French Alps specialist, **Peak Retreats**, to offer you the chance to win a fabulous ski holiday!

You and four guests could be off to the charming resort of Aussois, based in the picturesque Maurienne Valley, France. There's 55km of varied piste to suit beginners and children to experts alike. Traditional Aussois makes an ideal base for anyone wanting to combine a ski holiday with the ambience of timeless rural France.

If you want a break from the slopes, there are lots of non-skiing activities too, including snowshoe wildlife safaris, paragliding and ice-climbing. Explore the surrounding plateau by dog-sled or try tubing – tobogganing on mini inflatable rafts, and don't miss a visit to the Fort Marie-Christine 19th century esseillon forts. Aussois hosts a variety of traditional restaurants serving superb local cuisine at great, affordable prices.

To book, or for more information on Peak Retreats, call 0844 576 0123 or visit www.peakretreats.co.uk

THE PRIZE

You will be staying in Les Flocons d'Argent ski-in/ski-out residence perfectly located at the foot of the slopes near the kindergarten and ski school meeting area. The private heated indoor pool and sauna make for ultimate après-ski relaxation.

The prize is for a two-bedroom apartment (for a maximum of five people sharing) for seven nights, self-catering and includes a self-drive return Eurotunnel crossing. Your party will also receive free lift passes for the Aussois ski area for the week, thanks to Maison d'Aussois, and free ski and boot hire courtesy of Sport 2000 Aussois.

TO ENTER...

Turn to page three to find full details. Please mark postal entries "Skiing".



Terms & Conditions

Open to all serving Army families and Reservist families – you will be asked for proof of this on notification of winning. Holidays run Saturday-Saturday and can be taken between 4 Jan and 8 Feb or on the weeks beginning 22 March, 29 March or 12 April, 2014.

Employees of AFF are not permitted to enter.

Debt – the Silent Assassin and Finding Courage in the Face of Uncertainty...

Not all dangers are obvious, especially when they are left to grow, unchecked and unchallenged. One such potential enemy to you as service personnel and families in these uncertain economic times is increasing personal debt. Not all debt is bad; however any debt that leaves you unable to make ends meet at the end of the month, or leaves you suffering from the stress and anxiety of unpaid bills or creditor demands and threats, is unhealthy for your wellbeing as well as your pocket. With Government cutbacks affecting the armed forces; no guarantee of low interest rates; and often unforeseen changes to family and personal circumstances, many Forces Families are balancing precariously between affordable debt and the pressure and anxiety that comes with an inability to pay. A worry made worse when your loved one is operationally deployed overseas and you don't wish to burden them further.

Fortunately, there are solutions out there which are aimed at providing either temporary or permanent relief from overwhelming debt. However not all solutions have your best long term interests in mind, and are often only suited to the provider offering them. The key to feeling that you are back in control of your debts, and seeing a very clear light at the end of what can seem a long dark tunnel, is getting clear, accurate and unbiased advice delivered by people who both understand your situation and will neither judge or penalise you for the situation you find yourself in. In essence, it has to be all about YOU!

**Our Mission is simple, to be:
“Accessible, Engaging,
Interactive and Accurate”**

Back in 2011, Darran Hughes, a former Corporal with The Royal Corps of Signals, found himself in such a position, and despite his successes and “get it done” attitude, after a sudden change in his circumstances, was frozen with embarrassment at being in significant debt difficulty. On the edge of despair, and confused by all the people trying to sell him solutions, he eventually sought help from a former Signals comrade WO2 (YofS) Melanie Giles – whose own business PJG Recovery, provided not just a sympathetic ear, but clear advice and options that really helped him to reduce the pressure, work out a solution and take control of his finances again. Wanting to ensure the same valuable and easy access to great unbiased advice was available to others in his position, in 2013 Darran and Melanie worked together to create a bespoke consumer debt advice

service with a single mission in mind – to be “Accessible, Engaging, Interactive and Accurate”.

With that mission in mind, PJG Recovery launched its Debt Advice TV initiative, which provides free access to debt advice using interactive web and social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, containing information and advice on a full range of debt related topics through video, articles, guidance notes and web-links, all giving you the ability to pose questions, post comments and get responses from a team of personally selected debt advisors.

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www.DebtAdviceTV.com

Or if you're ready to take the first step in getting help, call the team direct on **0808 168 9038** (it's free to call from UK landlines, though mobile networks may charge)



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IN THE HIRING LINE

FOLLOWING THE FLAG DOES NOT MEAN GIVING UP ON YOUR OWN CAREER PLANS. A&Y MEETS THE WOMEN TAKING COMMAND OF THEIR PROFESSIONAL PROSPECTS...



RETURNING TO EARNING

*Going back to work after having children can be a daunting prospect. **Caroline Mayne**, AFF's Employment, Training, Allowances & Money Specialist, has some guidance...*

MOST employees who return to work after a significant period of time away are women who have taken a career break to raise a family.

Lack of opportunities, loss of confidence, childcare costs and limited childcare options can make returning to work quite scary. Don't be put off though – there's plenty of advice out there to help you.

KEEP UP YOUR CONFIDENCE

You may feel that you have lost touch with the world of work and that your skills and experience have deserted you. Recognise and embrace your new parental talents – after all, running a home "Army style" combines management, budgeting and diplomacy!

STAY IN TOUCH

Try not to fall behind while away from work. Volunteering keeps your skills in use and gives you wider experience. Join a parent-teacher association or become a trustee for a charity, demonstrating commitment and time management.

UP-TO-DATE CV

It's important to think from an employer's perspective when articulating that your parental skills are directly applicable to work. Elaborate on your attributes from the rest of your working life and education. Describing how you have kept up to speed with issues in your field will help. Join social networking groups to stay in touch with former colleagues and industry experts.

ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

WHAT do we think of as a traditional career for an Army spouse? The jobs we consider most flexible are probably teaching, nursing and childcare, as there are often opportunities for spouses with qualifications wherever they are posted.

However, there is a whole world of possibilities out there, including traditional male roles like plumbing or HGV driving.

Many firms want a better male/female balance in their workforce and see military spouses as an ideal addition.

This is partly because spouses are almost 90 per cent female, but also because of our characteristics.

We are renowned for our resilience,



reliability and adaptability, all key skills which employers are increasingly valuing over experience.

DRIVERS WANTED

If you are interested in a career in driving, there are opportunities available nationwide.

Register with www.recruitforspouses.co.uk to hear about new opportunities. If you are not yet qualified there are plenty of places to train.

Check out www.easyashgv.co.uk or log on to www.hgvexpress.co.uk for more on how to go about qualifying as an HGV driver.

WHEN TO RETURN TO WORK

It all depends on your finances and needs. "I planned to head back to work months after my daughter was born but couldn't bear to when the time came," said one Army spouse. "I was actually grateful to the Army for posting us out Germany at the final hour and delaying that decision for me!"

WORK/LIFE BALANCE

You might not want to go back to your pre-children 14-hour-a-day job and your career choice could also change.

Another Army spouse told us: "I realised early on that the career-orientated, pre-baby me wouldn't be able to sustain the pace and time required."

A part-time job can help you to ease your way back in, fine-tune your skills and get used to the working world again without working below your skill set.

GETTING SUPPORT

There are plenty of websites offering great advice about how to achieve a successful return to employment whether you wish to work for someone or set up your own business. It can take some time, so try not to be disappointed if you don't find a job immediately.

The most important thing is to be positive. Have a look at our useful links on page 22 or contact me at etam@aff.org.uk

CHOOSING CHILDCARE

THERE are a number of childcare options you can explore including day nursery, child-minders, nannies or au pairs. Lack of facilities in some remote locations (especially overseas), being far away from our families and having your soldier away on deployment can make childcare choices more difficult for Army families. You'll need to work out which option will best suit your working hours, budget and family needs.

HELP WITH THE COST

All three- and four-year-olds in England are entitled to 15 hours of free early education each week for 38 weeks of the year. As from September, some two-year-olds are eligible.

CHILDCARE VOUCHERS

Can save you more than £1,000 a year. If your employer runs a voucher scheme, you can register to get help with your childcare costs. Vouchers are usable by any accepting childcare organisation (including nannies) as long as they are registered and regulated. Visit www.aff.org.uk for more information.

SURESTART MATERNITY GRANT

A one-off payment of £500 per baby, which you are entitled to provided you are getting a "qualifying benefit" and do not have any other children under 16. Go to www.gov.uk to see if you are eligible.

TAX CREDITS

There are two types of tax credits: Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. The former are payments to people with children with household incomes less than £41,300 to help with childcare costs. If you go back to work after having children you could also get a Working Tax Credit, including an extra payment to help with childcare costs. See www.hmrc.gov.uk/taxcredits for details.

CASE STUDY

A&Y Deputy Editor

Lisa Youd tells us how she made a successful return to work after a break to bring up her two children...

I was the Sports Editor on a local newspaper after working my way up the journalism career ladder – despite several postings! We moved half way through my first pregnancy so it was impossible to find another job straight away with a visible bump; potential employers didn't want to know.

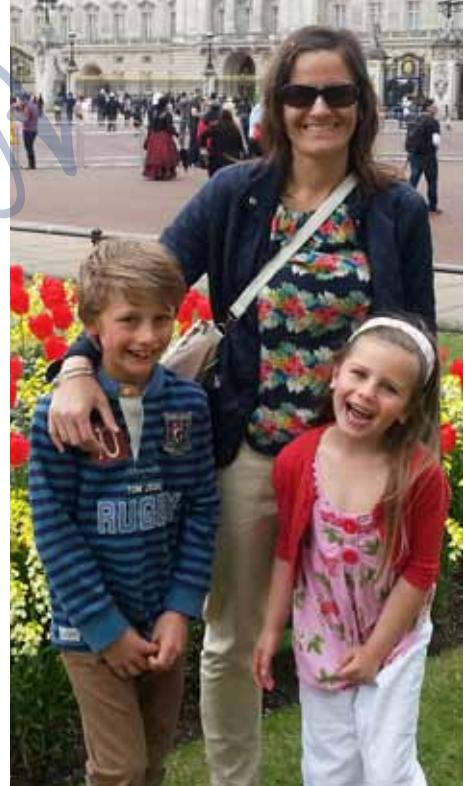
Being a journalist isn't a nine-to-five job, you have to be where the stories break, when they happen and working on sport meant a lot of weekends and evenings were taken up.

It wasn't ideal for us as a family, especially when my soldier was away. I was lucky to have no real financial pressure on me to go back to work, so I became a full-time mum and stayed that way until child number two started pre-school, five-and-a-half years down the line.

When the time came to find employment I did some volunteer work, adapted my CV to include those personal attributes you learn when you become a parent, and applied for all sorts of jobs that could fit around my childcare. It was a daunting prospect; the first interview I had was terrifying. I didn't even have a single item of appropriate clothing!

I tried to take positives from each interview and called the interviewers to get feedback. I kept a diary of my volunteer work and noted new skills that I was gaining.

It took a while but eventually I landed a part-time job editing this magazine. The first few months back in the workplace were a bit scary too, but my confidence soon returned and I'm now a happy working mum.



Free and impartial

information and advice on
UK Boarding Schools
for Forces Families



Visit our website

and complete an enquiry form. We shall recommend schools for your consideration; guide you through the process from short listing and arranging visits, until you have selected the best school for your child.

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THE MODEL PROFESSIONAL

Anna Shillinglaw started her model agency, Milk Management, from a bedroom in her Army quarter. A&Y caught up with her to find out how she's developed it into a successful international business...

IT ALL started when model Anna, went on a photoshoot to South Africa and happened to be staying in the same hotel as Edward Smith, who was on a rugby tour with the British Army.

"I was living in the USA at the time and had been modelling for 17 years. I didn't know how much longer it would last, so I was considering moving back to the UK – meeting Edward clinched it."

WORKING FROM HOME

Anna felt there was a niche in the market for recruiting girls of all sizes, from 8 to 18, and her philosophy for Milk Management is to nurture models, not just simply represent them.

With her mission clear, she established her own agency from the unlikely setting of her first quarter in West Byfleet.

"I converted one of the bedrooms into an office, set up a website and used contacts to recruit models I knew," she explained.

Anna started with five women on her books and found it was difficult to recruit people at first.

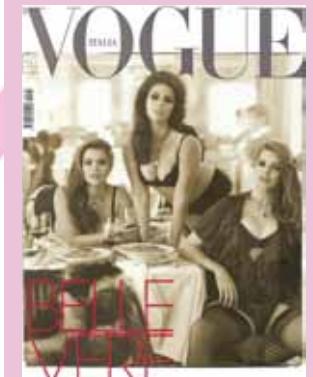
"Lots of models I knew would just say 'good luck Anna' but they wouldn't necessarily sign up with me," she continued. "So I had to prove myself and show that it was credible."

The next step was to set up a "virtual" headquarters in London and the company was soon registered with fashion websites.

Her client list has grown to more than 80 and she now has real offices in London, employing six people.

Her models work internationally across the fashion arena and have graced the covers, catwalks and screens of world-renowned institutions such as *Vogue*, Chanel and the

"I had to prove myself and show that it was credible"



International Fashion Week stages. She also books celebrities like Jessie J.

JUGGLING ARMY LIFE

So how has she managed to achieve all this while coping with the unique challenges posed by Army life, and becoming a mum to Oscar, now aged three?

"It was really hard at first, especially when Edward was away and looking back I don't know how I did it," she said.

"There have been times when we have just thought, let's get through these next couple of weeks and somehow we have done just that.

"Edward has been really supportive. I think he's wanted to divorce me once or twice but we've got through it!"

"He's seen how successful it's been so he knows that this could be our future. I've also been lucky that Oscar has been really good so I've been able to cope with being a working mum despite not having any family close by."

Anna's advice to other Army spouses who are thinking of starting their own business is simple.

"There's always a solution to a problem," she explained. "I'm quite driven and failure was not an option so nothing was going to stop me. All you need is an idea and the passion to make it work."

Thinking of starting your business from home? Check out "Business rules for SFA" and find information on the "Business start-up exhibition" on page 22. You can find out more about Milk Management at www.milkmanagement.co.uk

Top, Figurehead: Former model Anna used her knowledge of the industry to set up a niche agency recruiting girls of all sizes

Left, Looking good: Anna's clients at Milk Management have featured on the international stage, including the cover of fashion magazine *Vogue Italia*



Beacons for entrepreneurs

We all know that it isn't easy to find a job in each new location when your home life is uprooted every few years, but there are some military wives based in and around Brecon in Wales who have found a different solution to the problem – entrepreneurialism. AJ Stanning tells us more...

HERE'S a real burgeoning of talents and companies popping up on a local, national and even international level.

Take Sarah Bedford-Smith who is running a successful graphic design company, Hatch Designs, from her dining room in the Brecon Beacons.

She offers web and print design as well as full scale re-branding for all sized clients. There's Petra Tester who set up "Leads'n'Feeds" which provides one-to-one coaching for dogs and owners, dog walking, pet sitting and horse services.

'If you are thinking of setting up a company yourself, it's a lot easier than you might think'

Suzie Grant is a virtual PA, running the administration for a London-based company director, taking calls and arranging meetings from her dining room.

And there's me, AJ Stanning, I run a PR agency called Sharp Relations, specialising in food, drink and lifestyle clients, we help promote companies and organisations to their customers. I have around four members of staff at any given time all working remotely from across London and the UK.

PORTABLE BUSINESS

Sure it isn't all plain sailing, we all need to get out and about to make our companies work. Be that travelling to London or other big cities every week or so to keep in touch with key contacts, or meeting clients at their homes and offices.

HELPING HAND: TOP TIPS FROM OUR ENTREPRENEURS



USEFUL WEBSITES

www.gov.uk – How to set up your own business.

www.princes-trust.org.uk – Find out if your business idea is viable and if self-employment is right for you.

www.hmrc.gov.uk – All about tax and National Insurance issues when running your own business.

www.j4bgrants.co.uk – European and UK Government grants and other sources of funding.

www.followtheflag.com – Directory of businesses run by military spouses.

The one thing we all have in common is that next time our soldier receives their posting order, we can just pack up and follow on, with the knowledge that there will be a job for us at the other end.

If you want to set up a company yourself, it's easier than you might think and there are a number of organisations to support you.

X-forces helps Service personnel and their families and spouses become successful business owners through planning, mentoring and support. Visit www.x-forces.com for more details.



AJ STANNING
MANAGING DIRECTOR,
SHARP RELATIONS

"Never underestimate anybody. You never know when you might need their help or they might want yours."

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SARAH BEDFORD-SMITH
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"Take your business cards everywhere you go because you never know when you might bump into someone who is interested in your business."

www.hatchdesigns.co.uk



SUZIE GRANT
VIRTUAL PA

"Make sure you keep records of absolutely everything – whether that is receipts, phone calls made or hours worked. It's definitely a good habit to get into and will help you out when it comes to completing your tax returns."

IMPRESSED? WOULD YOU LIKE TO DO THE SAME?

X-Forces is currently the leading specialist provider of Start-Up Loan support for regular Service Leavers, spouses, veterans, family members and reservists who wish to become business owners – we provide mentoring support throughout your journey to successful business ownership and stick with you until you are fully up and running



See what we offer now at www.x-forces.com or contact our helpdesk on 01189-121212 also on LinkedIn and Twitter @OfficialXforces

HELPING YOU BE THE BEST IN BUSINESS



Business rules for SFA

RUNNING your business from your quarter gives you the benefit of low overheads and flexible childcare.

But you should be aware that it's a condition of your Service Families Accommodation (SFA) licence that you must seek prior written consent from your Local Service Commander and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation before undertaking commercial activities in your property.

Permission must be sought because there may be security and access considerations and the business must not adversely impact on neighbours, for instance through traffic or noise.

You are also responsible for limiting

damage to your property. Some businesses also require permission from your Local Authority.



MAKING CHANGES

The MOD will not fund any improvements to your home. You need permission to make alterations to your SFA and you will be required to put right any changes before you move out.

Unauthorised use of your SFA could result in legal action being taken, so do check the rules. If you are living in a hiring, you need to seek permission from the landlord.

- Full details on how to apply can be found at www.gov.uk

YOUR AFF EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING, ALLOWANCES & MONEY SPECIALIST

Do you have any concerns, questions or feedback to give us on employment, training, allowances and money issues?
Contact our AFF Specialist, Caroline Mayne, on 07799 045955 or etam@aff.org.uk

- This post is generously sponsored by ABF The Soldiers' Charity



BACK TO WORK AFTER HAVING CHILDREN: USEFUL CONTACTS

www.womenlikeus.org.uk – professional, free advice to women returning to work after having children

www.parentalchoice.co.uk – guide for professional parents on your childcare options as well as your legal rights at work

www.askamum.co.uk – has a great section on going back to work after having a baby covering topics including expressing breast milk at work and adjusting your baby's routine for childcare

www.womenreturners.co.uk – blog for parents thinking about returning to work

www.mumandcareer.co.uk – not-for-profit web portal that shows you how to combine career and family

www.womanswork.co.uk – provides support for start-ups, the self-employed, those wishing to get back into employment, those facing redundancy, and for established businesswomen and mums in business

www.workingfamilies.org.uk – charity helping parents, carers and employers balance responsibilities at home and work. Free helpline: 0300 012 0312

www.workingmums.co.uk – job search and community site

www.talking-talent.com – innovative coaching consultancy at the forefront of developing and maximising the female talent pipeline

www.nationalcareerservice.direct.gov.uk – offers advice about returning to work after having children and Government benefits that could help you

BUSINESS STARTUP: A DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

If you're looking for ways to turn your idea or passion into a career, The Business Startup Exhibition is a good place to begin your research.

The show is designed to provide you with all the information you need to get a business up and running with over 250 free seminars from business experts covering topics like business plans, cash flow, marketing, finance, tax, retail, ecommerce, catering, social media and much more.

So if you're thinking about starting your own enterprise, then make sure you put Business Startup in your diary!

The Business Startup Exhibition takes place at Olympia, London on 28-29 November and it's free to register for tickets. Visit www.bstartup.com for more information.



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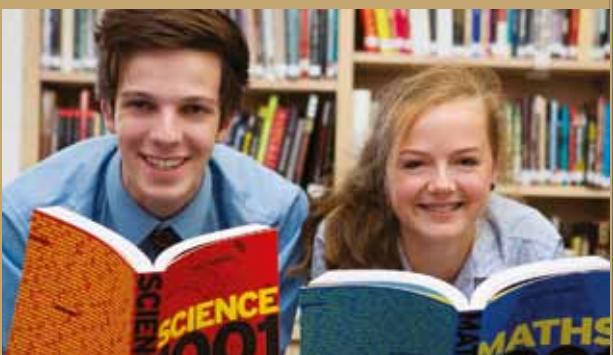
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PLANNING YOUR FINAL POSTING



YOUR AFF HOUSING SPECIALIST

Do you have any concerns, questions or feedback to give us on housing issues? Contact our AFF Specialist, Cat Calder, on 07789 551158 or housing@aff.org.uk

IS YOUR soldier in their penultimate tour before leaving the Army? Have they reached their pension point or Early Departure Payment? Do you know where you want to settle after your last posting?

If so, you need to make sure that your soldier has filled in Final Tour of Duty (FTOD) JPA form F024 in order to be eligible for removals and Disturbance Allowance.

The document must be filled in during your partner's second-to-last posting as it will let the manning department know where you would ideally like the final placement to be.

It must be a location within the UK and has to be with a unit or establishment at which an assignment exists that your soldier could fill if it were vacant.

For example, there's no point applying to go to the



One little form can make all the difference, so be proactive and fill it in!

Outer Hebrides if your partner is a bomb disposal expert!

If you are lucky enough to be posted within 50 miles or 90 minutes travel to your desired location, you won't be eligible for your final removals or Disturbance Allowance from that final posting – as a rule of thumb the MOD does not pay for first or last moves.

Should you be posted further than that, you will then be entitled and able to use the allowances at any stage during your final posting up to and including your soldier's final day of service – so long as you haven't moved and used removals and Disturbance Allowance within the six months prior to the FTOD move.

One little form can make all the difference and could save you a lot of money, so make sure you are proactive and fill it in!



Tell your soldier to talk to their admin office or check out the full details in JSP 752, Chapter 7, Section 4 on the MOD's Intranet.

CAN I?

YOUR QUICK HOUSING QUERIES ANSWERED

Lay decking in my garden?
Ask first and be prepared to put it back to its original state before you leave.



Put a cat flap in the door to my quarter?
Yes, but you need permission first.

Who do I ask?
The Housing Allocations Service Centre – 0800 169 6322

THE FUTURE OF SFA: AN UPDATE

Work is currently on-going to establish a better method of grading our Service Families Accommodation (SFA) to make the process fairer. **Cat Calder**, AFF Housing Specialist, looks at how this will work...

PLANS are currently afoot to establish a better method of grading SFA so that the two current systems (Standard for Condition and Grade for Charge) are combined into one which will make the

process fairer.

The move is to establish an enhanced version of the Decent Homes Standard (the measure used by local authorities); this will take into account the condition of the SFA, the size and its location

while at the same time acknowledging that there is a reduction to compensate for Army life – such as our lack of choice.

HOW WILL THIS AFFECT RATES?

Unfortunately, it will mean that some rent charges will go up.

The team is looking at how rent will be calculated in the future; be assured that as and when this happens the increase will be phased in very slowly over five to ten years and will be under the guidance of the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) – independent advisers to the Government on Forces pay and charges.

The plan is to establish

the national average for the various types of SFA and then, using various criteria, put in place discounts in order to come up with the final charge.

This is how it is done at the moment but the initial figure used in the calculation is no longer representative of civilian rents which are a mix of local authority rents, private rents, mortgage repayments and income.

There are also other factors still to be considered such as allowances and charges for Single Living Accommodation (SLA) for soldiers serving unaccompanied.

- If you have any concerns about how this process will work, do contact me at housing@aff.org.uk



IS GREEN DEAL A GREAT DEAL?

VARIOUS firms, including utility companies, advertise offers – including the Government's Green Deal – to help improve the energy efficiency of your home.

However, before those of you living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA) are tempted to take advantage, read the terms and conditions so you understand your liability as well as that placed on the property.

It may not be appropriate for our highly-mobile Service community to enter in to a long-term repayment arrangement linked to the SFA.

While the Green Deal allows you to get energy efficiency improvements installed without a large upfront payment, you pay the money back through small increases to your electricity bill – and this applies to future occupants of the property who will have no choice but to fund the extra.

Schemes such as the Green Deal require householders who do not own their property, which includes families living in SFA, to request permission from their "landlords", in our case DIO.

Therefore, before any commitments are made you should send full details of the offer and supporting documents to your Housing Officer – who will contact a local Technical Officer to undertake a condition survey.

No work should be agreed or commenced before approval has been given by DIO.

Carefully consider all costs as some schemes require an assessment survey that may be charged for and DIO cannot reimburse you. While these offers may appear attractive make sure you read the small print, understand your potential liability and get permission before you sign up for anything.

For more information check out www.gov.uk and search for Green Deal energy saving measures.

HELP FOR HOMEBUYERS

THE final details of the New Employment Model (NEM), a study looking into how the Armed Forces will be shaped in the future, are a fair way off yet.

One thing we do know, however, is that one of its aims is to reduce dependency on Service Families Accommodation (SFA) by giving soldiers more career stability – longer postings in fewer areas.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The good news is that SFA is here to stay. But the MOD will hope to encourage families to buy their own homes and is looking at ways to help those of you who want to do so.

The plan is to offer a higher salary advance to your soldier which will help with a deposit. There may be an option to draw down from Early Departure Payments for home ownership.

ADVICE FOR FAMILIES

A housing advice service to help you

plan and understand your options will be a key part of the MOD offer; 20 per cent of you currently say you haven't heard of Government schemes like Help to Buy, which reduces the cost of buying a house by 20 per cent and offers special terms such as the ability to let the property if you are posted.

The flipside of this is that if you use Home Purchase Incentive, you will lose your entitlement to SFA while you are posted to that area (as is the case now when you take Long Service Advance of Pay for a deposit on a property).

This is in order to support family stability rather than encouraging a buy-to-let culture. Obviously, if you are posted further afield you will be entitled to SFA in the new area.

- For more information on the NEM, see our article *Look to the future* on page 5 or if you have any questions on Service housing in the future, contact AFF Housing Specialist Cat Calder on housing@aff.org.uk

ARE YOU A SATISFIED CUSTOMER?

DEFENCE Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has launched a customer satisfaction survey to find out how you feel about various aspects of housing.

M.E.L. Research, the company carrying out the survey, will be contacting 200 randomly-selected families every month on weekdays between 10am and 6pm to help DIO build an accurate picture of Service Families Accommodation.

If you are contacted, answer the questions honestly. The results will be used to measure how DIO performs and to identify further improvements. If you have any questions, call M.E.L. on 0121 604 4664 or freephone 0800 0730 348.



THE VALUE OF PLAY

As an essential part of our children's lives, play develops wellbeing; cultivates emotional responses; improves skills, develops learning and increases ability to interact with others.

It can also help prevent obesity and increase resilience to mental health problems.

Rosie Brown, Play Parks and Community Projects Manager at MODern Housing Solutions (MHS), tells A&Y more...



WIMBISH PLAY PARK HAD SEEN BETTER DAYS...



...UNTIL IT WAS GIVEN AN IMPRESSIVE OVERHAUL

PLAY has particular value to our children at times of stress or change in their lives. This is especially true for our community where Service parents can be away for long periods and many of us move house on a frequent basis.

Our staff at Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) and MHS are aware of the importance of decent play facilities; many have either served in the Armed Forces, married military personnel or were themselves Service children.

WHO MAINTAINS OUR PLAY PARKS?

MHS is responsible for maintaining all play facilities, including multi-use games areas and teen shelters, in quartering areas in England and Wales and it runs a robust inspection regime with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

WHAT IS BEING DONE TO IMPROVE THINGS?

If a play park needs upgrading or new play facilities are required, then these have to be funded by DIO.

Improving your housing takes priority and, with limited MOD funds available, it's not always possible to enhance or build as many new play



FAMILIES HELPED TO RENOVATE A PLAY AREA AT HERMITAGE

£650,000

650,000 POUNDS OF MOD FUNDS HAVE BEEN PUT ASIDE FOR UPGRADES OVER THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS

parks as we would like to.

However, £650,000 of MOD money has been put aside for upgrades over the next couple of years.

There's good news for families living in the Tidworth and Bulford areas, Bicester, Brompton, Sandhurst, Gosport and Weeton, where play park facilities will soon be given a makeover.

DIO, MHS, the Armed Forces, charities and local authorities are now working together which is also having a positive impact on the DIO play park estate and, over the past few years, there have been some major initiatives that have seen new funding, including:

- Public and non-public funds on the Defence Estate can now be mixed, helping units to finance their own upgrades to play facilities using a variety of the different funding

pots available. See JSP 462 on the Army Intranet for additional details.

- Half of the UK's local authorities have now signed up via the Armed Forces Community Covenant scheme to support the local Service community.

Within these authorities, and where there are play parks in mixed civilian/military environments, individuals can submit a bid.

A £30m investment over four financial years has been set aside to help communities undertake projects which promote a

greater understanding of the military in the local community.

- Some of the £35 million fund created from fines levied on the banks for attempting to manipulate the LIBOR interest rate has been given to the MOD to support the Armed Forces community.

- DIO and MHS have produced informative guidance notes so that play park staff can provide units with expert advice. It is essential to follow the guidance before submitting any funding bids to ensure

that any new play park equipment is maintained in the future.

- DIO and MHS have introduced an annual projects programme including revamping community centres, installing allotments and gardens, painting play parks and decommissioning old play facilities.

Community projects provide a great opportunity for you all to join forces with DIO and MHS to improve your Service communities.

There's no doubt play parks are valued by all of us and there are now a variety of funding sources to enhance existing facilities or install new ones.

If you wish to see improvements to the play parks in your area, want to join in community projects or need guidance on third party funding, contact me at rosie.brown@mhs.mod.uk



COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS AT KINLOSS

A PURPOSE-built, multi-use games area at Kinloss Barracks is just one new project funded by the DIO to improve recreation facilities for older kids.

Two play parks for younger children near SFA have also been refurbished. Lt Col Andy Sturrock, the Commanding Officer of 39 Engineer Regiment, who officially opened the facilities, said: "I am very pleased to see this level of investment in our people. We work hard on operations and it is important that back at home our families have access to this sort of amenity."



YOUR AFF HEALTH & ADDITIONAL NEEDS SPECIALIST

Do you have any concerns, questions or feedback on health or additional needs issues? Contact our AFF Specialist, Karen Ross, on 07552 861983 or additionalneeds@aff.org.uk

- This post is generously sponsored by ABF The Soldiers' Charity



Picture: Cpl Steve Blake RLC, MOD British Crown copyright

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 95 per cent of men with testicular cancer are cured, compared to less than 70 per cent in the early 1970s.

Death rates from the disease have fallen by 80 per cent since the mid-1970s.



EQUIPMENT CHECK

MALE soldiers are being reminded to check their personal "equipment" as part of a new Army campaign to raise awareness of male-specific diseases.

Every year 20 soldiers are diagnosed with testicular cancer, which is becoming an ever-increasing issue in young men aged 20-35 – the main age that our troops serve their country around the world.

When caught early enough there's a 90 per cent survival rate, but male soldiers are often less likely to seek medical help and instead try to "tough it out".

The Army's awareness campaign has initially focused on testicular cancer and is urging soldiers to think about their health differently.

Light-hearted posters and leaflets have been produced to educate soldiers about how to carry out self-checks and highlight what to look for, helping to keep male-associated diseases such as testicular and prostate cancer in check.

Let your husband, partner, boyfriend, son or brother know where they can get more advice if they need it.

For further information, visit the charity checkemlads.com where fellow Service personnel share their stories of overcoming testicular cancer, or check out the health pages online at www.army.mod.uk

Overseas maternity care

IF YOU are being posted to or are already in Nepal or Kenya and you are pregnant, the Army Medical Directorate strongly advises that you return to the UK prior to reaching the 32nd week of your pregnancy in order to reduce the risk to both you and your child.

In these circumstances, it is mandatory that you inform your soldier's Commanding Officer so that either your partner's posting is adjusted or arrangements are made to return you to the UK. This will be funded by the MOD.

Further details can be obtained from the relevant country Land Forces Standing Orders, which are currently being updated.

For more information about this issue, visit the overseas health section at www.aff.org.uk or contact AFF's Karen Ross by emailing additionalneeds@aff.org.uk





Family connection: Inge Wise used the personal experience of her son Capt Adam Wise's deployment to set up the Coping Strategies Project

Stress-busting scheme

MANY of us take our soldier's deployment in our stride and get on with life as best we can, but some families will need more support and look for ways to cope with the stress that a longer period of separation might bring.

The requirement for greater backing was not lost on Inge Wise, a trained psychoanalyst with many years of experience and a son in the Army. It was while her son, Capt Adam Wise RLC, was serving in Germany that he became aware that some of us require more emotional support when our soldiers deploy.

He suggested that Inge become involved by providing professional assistance to families via Unit Welfare Officers (UWOs), giving her an invaluable first-hand insight into Service life and deployment.

The result was the Coping Strategies Project. First run in 2008 with relatives of a deploying regiment in Germany and enthusiastically welcomed by the UWO and families alike, the scheme offers group support, help for couples, individual families and even counselling and support to children. It consists of pre-, during- and post-deployment sessions looking at ways to cope with issues including:

- Marital stress;
 - Short-term single parenthood;
 - Children's anxieties;
 - Marital breakdown and its impact on operational effectiveness.
- The main aims of the project are to:
- Manage anxieties and stress;
 - Achieve a greater understanding of the emotional difficulties faced by partners;
 - Strengthen relationships.

UNRAVELLING EMOTIONS

Inge has found that when Service personnel are about to deploy, they generally look forward to it while their loved ones can feel more uncertain about the prospect, even though we understand and support our soldiers' commitment to the Army.

Deployment can be hard on those of us who stay behind and some people can experience high levels of anxiety.

Those about to deploy can feel guilty about leaving their families and have to manage their own anxieties about what going on tour will bring.

Some people talk about this to their partners and parents, but for those who don't they have to manage their own inner turmoil. Inge's work can help unravel some of these emotions to make the deployment process easier to cope with.

BUILDING TRUST

The importance of confidentiality has been the key to Inge's success with the projects. Families need to have a safe space to openly discuss their anxieties and to build trust, so Inge remains independent of the chain of command but works alongside them. Outcomes from the projects have been difficult to measure statistically, but Inge has received written praise and support from the UWOs she has worked with.

Inge is currently running a Coping Strategies Project at The Beeches community centre in Bulford, Wiltshire for families of 4 Rifles until December. These can be attended by spouses, parents and wider family members. Any sessions not taken up by 4 Rifles will be available to other units deploying or who have deployed within the last two years.

For further information, contact Inge by email at inge.wise@btinternet.com or call 07790 908145.

"DEPLOYMENT CAN BE HARD ON THOSE OF US WHO STAY BEHIND AND SOME PEOPLE CAN EXPERIENCE HIGH LEVELS OF ANXIETY"

LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS

When their 10-year-old son Charlie died from a rare epilepsy-related condition, Army family Jan and Barrie Burns embarked on a mission to raise awareness of the "silent killer"...

CHARLIE Burns, who was born in Osnabrück, was an apparently fit and healthy child until October 2011, when he suffered two seizures within days of each other and passed away.

His distraught parents, from Bulford in Wiltshire, were then left to face an agonising five-month wait until an inquest confirmed that he had died from Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP).

The condition claims at least 1,000 lives in the UK each year – more than AIDS and cot death combined – yet few people have ever heard of it.

The family's heart-breaking story was highlighted in the House of



My mission in life is to make as many people as possible aware of this silent killer

Jan Burns



Commons by a Conservative MP to help raise awareness of the deadly disorder.

Mum Jan said: "Charlie was a healthy, outgoing little boy who loved life and lived life to the full.

"It was a huge shock, but my mission in life now is to make as many people as possible aware of this silent killer.

"My main concern is that my son died of a condition nobody knows about – a lot of medical professionals don't even know what it is. All parents have a right to know this condition exists."

Initially, he was diagnosed with the less-serious febrile convulsion but their GP, who suspected an epileptic seizure, had booked Charlie in for emergency tests – which had a five-week waiting time.

"It is indescribable. It was just shocking – it all happened so quickly," said his dad Barrie, a WO2 in the Royal Engineers currently serving at HQ Infantry, Warminster. "On the Friday he was a cheeky chap without a care in the world. By the Tuesday night he had died."

Since then, Jan and Barrie, who have a 16-year-old daughter Izzie, have been diligently searching for answers.

"We were told categorically somebody couldn't die from SUDEP unless they were registered as suffering with

SUDEP: THE FACTS

- Occurs when a person with a history of epilepsy or seizures dies suddenly and prematurely and no other cause of death is found
- The first seizure or any seizure lasting longer than five minutes should be referred to a medical expert
- There are around 40 types of seizures and a person may have more than one type
- Epilepsy can affect anyone, at any age and from any walk of life
- 456,000 (or 1 in 131 people) in the UK have epilepsy
- Every day in the UK, 75 people are diagnosed as having epilepsy
- At least 1,000 people per year in the UK alone die of epilepsy related issues, more than Cot Death and AIDS combined
- 400 of the 1,000 deaths could be avoided
- Young adults with epilepsy are almost 24 times more likely to die of SUDEP
- SUDEP deaths in the UK have risen by 31% in recent years.





Fitting tribute (clockwise from bottom left): Charlie Burns, who died from Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy aged 10; the Burns family; Jan Burns with her son, who was apparently fit and healthy when he died; Charlie and sister Izzie.

epilepsy and Charlie hadn't been diagnosed yet," said Jan.

"We have since learned that Charlie fell into a high-risk category due to his age, gender and the fact his seizures appeared to be nocturnal."

The bereaved parents feel that epilepsy and SUDEP should be discussed more openly and that others should know more about the risks.

The family decided that some good must come out of such an awful situation.

Jan explained: "Our family and friends wanted to help and many people approached us with fundraising ideas.

"We began to run events, took part in interviews, and did everything we could to promote SUDEP Awareness."

On October 11 last year, exactly one year after Charlie died and just over five months into their campaign, the Burns' initial target of £10,000 had been hit.

"Izzie came up with an idea that every year Charlie would be a year older, so every year we need to add another £1,000 to our target," said Jan.

Claire Perry, MP for Devizes and now a patron of the charity, said a review was needed of the guidance given to medical professionals to help them look out for

seizures in otherwise healthy children.

As a result, SUDEP Action has launched the Government-supported Epilepsy Deaths Register, which makes every epilepsy case count. Visit www.sudep.org for more information.

YOUR HELP

If you are over 18 and know about a death in someone with epilepsy, you can help by providing information.

The data will assist medical professionals, but your personal details will remain confidential. The introduction of the Register will highlight the scale of the problem. If you can help the Burns family by organising an event to raise money for SUDEP Awareness, email bazburns@btinternet.com

Donations can be made through justgiving.com/SUDEP-Awareness or by texting "CHAZ96 £5" (or alternative amount) to 70070.

There's also a Facebook page called Charley Farley's SUDEP Awareness.

Barrie added: "We would love people to get together and create their own event, and as such we are calling it a Soldiers 4 SUDEP. Please get in touch via our Facebook or email." ■



WHAT IS A SEIZURE?

The person goes stiff, loses consciousness and could fall to the ground. This is followed by jerking movements. A blue tinge around the mouth is likely, due to irregular breathing. Loss of bladder and/or bowel control may happen. After a minute or two the jerking movements should stop and consciousness may slowly return.

WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE IS HAVING A SEIZURE

Do...

Protect the person from injury by removing nearby harmful objects

Cushion their head

Look for an epilepsy identity card or identity jewellery

Aid breathing by gently placing them in the recovery position once the seizure has finished

Stay with the person until recovery is complete

Be calmly reassuring

Don't...

Restrain the person's movements

Put anything in the person's mouth

Try to move them unless they are in danger

Give them anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered

Attempt to bring them round

Call for an ambulance if...

You know it is the person's first seizure

The seizure continues for more than five minutes

One tonic-clonic seizure follows another without the person regaining consciousness between seizures

The person is injured during the seizure

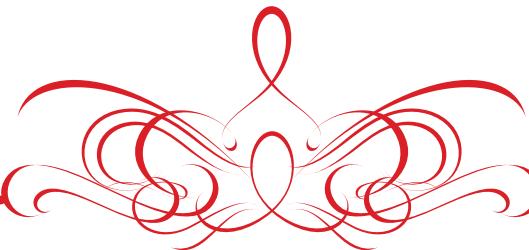
You believe the person needs urgent medical attention.



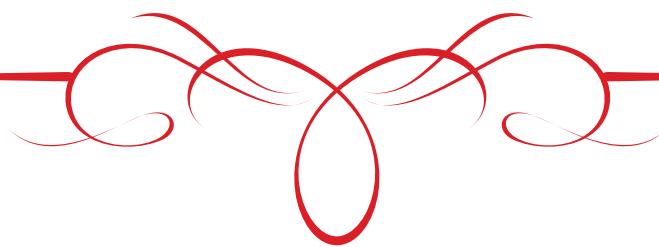
Picture: Cpl Mike O'Neill RLC, MOD British Crown copyright



Creating communities



The Community Covenant Scheme was created in an effort to encourage greater support and interaction between Armed Forces and civilian populations. Two years since its launch, freelance journalist Kate Viggers investigates how the Scheme is benefitting Army families...



THE Armed Forces Covenant, published in 2011, included a commitment from Government to encourage public service providers across the UK, along with private and charitable sectors, to enter into a "Community Covenant" – a voluntary, written statement of mutual support between civilians and their military.

More than 300 areas have now signed a Covenant, pledging to create opportunities for integration, address instances of unfair treatment of Forces personnel and nurture public understanding of the issues and sacrifices affecting them.

Some have appointed an "Armed Forces

Champion" to ensure Covenant promises are delivered. In return, Forces communities are engaging more effectively outside the wire.

"Community Covenants are increasing communication and knowledge, and ensure local authorities recognise the needs of the military," says AFF Chief Executive Catherine Spencer, who sits on the Covenant Reference Group which tracks progress in areas of concern and feeds into work at a local level.

AFF has appointed a Covenant Liaison to ensure open dialogue with local authorities and staff have undergone training to inform them of the Scheme's significance.



Thanks to the Covenant Scheme, advantageous initiatives for Forces families have sprung up countrywide

BENEFITTING COMMUNITIES

Gemma Sugrue, AFF Co-ordinator in Scotland, can already testify to its benefits. She was recently involved in a Covenant-funded initiative at Edinburgh's Colinton Primary School, where around 80 per cent of pupils are from Service families.

"The playground was looking tired and the Parent Council, which has an AFF representative, wanted to build something that both military and civilian children could enjoy," says Gemma.

"AFF was involved from the beginning, from discussions on apparatus to initial planning and fundraising. This was a fantastic project for the whole community and somewhere friends who are mixed within the area, some living on patch and



Picture: Mark Owens, MOD British Crown copyright

others on estates, can play as one."

The school was awarded £7,000 towards the cost of the new facility by the Community Covenant Grant Scheme (CCGS) – a £30 million Government fund for projects demonstrating a positive outcome for local Forces settlements.

Historically, applications to the CCGS were considered in London. However, the MOD has now delegated funding approval to regional bid panels, which have representation from all three Services.

Mark Logie, SO1 Military Civil Integration (York), explains: "Our panel considers value for money and looks for evidence of need. Since September 2011 there have been 67 applications for funding from this area – though not all were approved – from sports clubs and arts projects to community building improvements.

"The Scheme is proving successful because it is one of the few sources of funding available and brings tangible benefits to the local community."

COUNTRYWIDE INITIATIVES

Thanks to the Covenant Scheme, initiatives proving advantageous for Forces families have sprung up countrywide during the past two years.

Birmingham Council, for example, has appointed a dedicated Armed Forces Housing Officer to support Service leavers.

Vale of Glamorgan Council now has a policy of asking every customer if they have a military connection to ensure they are accessing all appropriate services.

In Buckinghamshire, the county council is examining issues such as using GP groups to help gather information on the Armed Forces community and skills-matching between Service personnel and their civilian counterparts.

In June, less than a year after signing its own Covenant, Bedford Borough Council joined with Service charities, RAF Henlow and volunteers from the RA and RLC to host a Forces Festival and Community Games in aid of SSAFA.

And in Hampshire, young people from Forces backgrounds are being invited to join The Edge Project (pictured above right), a theatrical event for 13-24 year olds which received £25,000 funding through the CCGS. Groups from Aldershot, Bordon, Odiham and Portsmouth are creating a new play to be staged in the autumn.

Noel Jones, Artistic Director, explains: "We





hoped to work with Forces families – there are strong military heritage connections throughout Hampshire – but recruiting young people from Army families has been a challenge!

"We contacted youth workers at different bases and local schools were very supportive. Unfortunately it's hard for some to commit as their family may be posted on.

"We currently have eight young people from Forces backgrounds but are still actively recruiting for 'behind the scenes' work. It's a free opportunity to learn new skills and work towards the bronze Arts Award. The children are sharing experiences and making friends."

Public support for Covenant principles has been expressed through participation in homecoming parades and repatriation ceremonies, whilst some businesses now offer commercial discounts for Forces personnel.

SUPPORT FROM THE PUBLIC

"Community Covenants may look quite different from one location to another," says Kim Hudson, SO2 Covenant (Army Headquarters). "The nature of support offered will be determined by need and capacity. [But] even simple demonstrations, such as displaying the Armed Forces Day sticker in cars, have had a positive effect and boosted morale."

Even in locations without a local military presence, Covenants have a relevant role to play in supporting veterans, as Spencer Martin, Voluntary/Community Sector Relationship Co-ordinator for the City and County of Swansea, explains.

"The main focus of our Covenant is [assistance] for serving personnel from this area, and former serving personnel and families," he says. "A database of agencies offers dedicated support and we have a helpline. We also offer guidance to organisations wishing to access Covenant funding."

KEEPING COVENANTS GOING

Councils, military bases and community groups across the UK are evidently working hard to ensure that the promises made in their Covenants are upheld to the benefit of Regular and Reserve personnel and families, by bringing them a greater sense of inclusion alongside improved access to opportunities and services.

But, as Catherine says, these achievements must be built upon if the Scheme's continued success



Picture © Sophie Dyke

is to be assured. "While removing disadvantage in terms of access to public services is making life significantly easier for families, until soldiers feel they have job security, decent homes, fair pay and pensions, we will need to continue to highlight areas of concern."

Kim adds: "Signing a Community Covenant is only the start; the real work for local authorities lies in ensuring those principles are embedded in their organisations and represented in policies for delivering each and every one of their services."

USEFUL CONTACTS

- ★ www.gov.uk/armed-forces-community-covenant
- ★ To get involved in The Edge Project, email info@discardednut.co.uk

COVENANT IN ACTION

Did you know that AFF continuously monitors the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant? If you experience any disadvantage in accessing local services, contact the appropriate AFF Specialist. Our Covenant Liaison, Julie Lowe, can be contacted with any Covenant questions or feedback on 07833 448352 or covenant@aff.org.uk





Mum's the word

Making a difference for EVERYONE in the community

THEN asked what Tidworth Mums is, my response used to be "a committee of military wives, who are also parents from the town, with an aim to improve the experience of anyone with children within the area." Now it is not that simple!

In November 2011, Mary Cullen from Wiltshire Council "ambushed" one of the Army Welfare Service coffee mornings to do research into what it was like to be an Army wife.

Looking back now, we were not forthcoming with answers to an outsider who didn't appear to understand aspects of our lives.

Nevertheless Mary ploughed on with her research, which resulted

in a DVD being made through the Wiltshire Voices Project.

It was later distributed to local schools, welfare units, childcare settings and councillors.

This DVD became our platform for change, making others aware of Army families' situations and giving them a true sense of understanding.

It has been through this process that we have made changes for ourselves and developed something which has become embedded in our community.

OUR AIMS

Having created a committee of four, the two aspects of Tidworth life we really wanted to change were the age-old issues of poor communication and helping

to make toddler groups much more accessible.

We created a Facebook page, which has been integral to our success. Membership currently stands at 800 and questions vary from "do you have a number for a particular contact?" to "can you give us advice on a specific topic?".

The page has now grown and we foster an online forum where anyone who feels able to can offer advice.

Our role as administrators on the page is to promote local services and activities and "police" what is written.

We are very firm about not allowing advertising for business, personal or political gain. We insist that the page is for all of

our community.

Both the Garrison and local councillors have access to the group so hopefully this too is shaping where we live.

We recognised the need for a mother and toddler group where children could release some of their energy.

We received a large grant from the area board for soft play equipment and by June last year, we had two groups running. Crafty Monkeys is a messy-play group with various tactile activities.

Parental participation is at the centre of this group which helps to make it so positive.

Active Monkeys, like its name suggests, is a high-energy play session using tunnels, balancing equipment, hoops, balls and bean bags.

More than 30 children attend; we are at capacity and if we were given more space and had more volunteers then we would run another session. It highlights just how successful this group is and shows there's a need for it in our community.

WHOLE COMMUNITY

We run coffee mornings where everyone is welcome; military,

civilian, childminders, au pairs, dads, grandparents and even the brave lone woman who enters without children!

It's important to get a good balance. I want my son to know that not all mums are in their twenties and not all dads dress like soldiers and drive tanks!

Having a real-life demographic in the room helps to focus the Khaki-coloured bubble.

Another of our aims was to provide something for mums. We know how lonely it is when your husband is away or when you move somewhere and don't know anyone.

We run a range of events every few weeks which vary from a ladies pamper evening, a baby boot sale and our most popular event the cupcake decorating evening!

This is also our chance to support local businesses and particularly the cottage industries that surround us.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Our groups and events are going from strength-to-strength.

We were thrilled to win the Pre-school Learning Alliance's Outstanding Volunteer Team



Award and come second in the Garrison Commander's Award for our efforts towards civilian and military integration.

Our biggest achievement was receiving an invitation to Whitehall by the Defence Minister, Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, to give him a presentation about Tidworth Mums.

The outcome was to produce a DVD which will be distributed to other garrison towns across the country.

When asked what Tidworth Mums is now I beam with pride. It's a group of inspirational ladies who make a difference to others in our community.

It's a group of welcoming women who will make you a cup of tea when that's just what you need!

We smile at the fact that when we discuss diary dates each week we say "next week we'll have a quieter one" – we're still waiting for this to happen! And as for what's next... just watch this space!

Find us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @TidworthMums



Tidworth Mums
is a group of
welcoming women
who will make you
a cup of tea when
that's just what
you need!

Wonder women
(clockwise from
top left): Group
members get to work
during a cupcake
decorating session;
Tidworth Mums run
two lively mother-
and-toddler groups;
Representatives
gave a presentation
to Defence Minister
Mark Francois during
a visit to Whitehall



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- The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a full boarding academy for forces families' children aged 11 to 18, as well as those buying into our military ethos and traditions.
- Established for over 200 years, and sponsored by the MoD, we understand the demands of military life and will ensure your child is well looked after.
- Our military ethos, ceremonial parades and Combined Cadet Force will help your child to develop essential life skills including character and resilience.
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MUSICAL CHAIRS

CAROLINE RAWLINS, VICE-CHAIR OF TRUSTEES FOR THE MILITARY WIVES CHOIRS FOUNDATION, SHARES HER EXPERIENCE OF MOVING HOUSE – AND CHOIRS...

NO SOONER had I settled in to life at Shrivenham that it was time to play postings roulette again. Despite a valiant attempt by my soldier to nail a job that did not require us to relocate, the powers that be had other ideas and a move to Andover was on the cards for the family.

It had taken me a while to feel at home in Shrivenham, despite being posted there before, as the location has a very high turnover.

We arrived last Easter and the majority of people left during the summer months – in July and August you had to thread your way around the endless removal trucks littering the patch.

To combat this I got involved with DAFFYS – a very proactive mob who run many of the local social activities – and started to make friends, but a whole new horizon opened up when another Army wife set up a ladies choir.

A CHOIR ON MY DOORSTEP

I loved singing at school but hadn't joined another choir and here was one on my doorstep!

I went along to the group's second rehearsal and barely missed another one. I met a completely different gang of ladies who all wanted the same thing – to come together to sing.

The choir grew and grew and the gigs ranged from

entertaining the local book club to the Jubilee Concert at Buckingham Palace.

My role also developed from that of a rusty soprano to chairman of the choir and a trustee of the Military Wives Choirs Foundation.

When the time came to up sticks for Andover I was sad to say goodbye to a great group of friends who had taken me under their collective wing.

Having unpacked the boxes and got the children settled in their new school, I took the plunge and went along to a rehearsal at Middle Wallop MWC.

The sense of trepidation I felt and worries about how different the experience would be with a new choir were misplaced – I

found a welcoming bunch of ladies, making a terrific sound and with a wicked sense of humour.

Between them they have helped me settle in, find my way around and I feel like I belong already.

For my money, the MWC Foundation does what it says on the tin – brings military women together through singing. Long may it continue!

If you are a lady with a military connection – Servicewoman, wife, co-habiting partner, mother, sister, daughter or support worker within the military community – and have just moved to a new area, contact enquiries@militarywiveschoirs.org and we'll connect you with your nearest choir, or for further information, visit www.militarywiveschoirs.org

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We understand the needs of service families with staff who are married to serving members of the Forces with years of experience in ensuring children settle well, are confident and highly successful. Our boarding facilities are the best in Europe. Every bedroom has its own private shower and toilet plus telephone, voice mail, music centre, large plasma TV/DVD player with gaming port (on timer), and hot drinks facilities. House staff are friendly and caring. We are the UK's top number 1 northern School for academic results yet we take a wide range of ability. £45m in new facilities. Successful CCF unit. Huge range of sports + £6m new Sports Centre + music and drama. 98% of A-Level students go on to University. Easy to get to by road, rail and air.



"Thank you for your prospectus it was a pleasing change over the usual. We loved your section on boarding - truthful and level-headed comes to mind. It gave us the reassurance we were looking for."

"Great prospectus and at last one, in fact the only one, we really believe. My wife said you 'hit the nail on the head' and address the issues that matter to parents and children."

"Our son read your prospectus. Wonders will never cease. He didn't bother with the others. He soon found the piece about all the things you put in a boarding bedroom. Now he is all smiles!"

"Thanks for sending your prospectus with details of your Forces Discounts. We have not found any independent school which can match you. You say it for real. We loved it."

We aim to only increase the £795 maximum personal contribution per child, per term, in following years, in line with the % Forces pay increases. This reduced contribution now means we rank as one of the most competitively priced boarding schools for Forces in the UK and you get a school that is increasing in size, has spent over £65m in recent years on improvements and upgrades, where the Academic results are brilliant and where children are happy, confident and successful.



My Hero Has My Heart

Kelly King tells Army&You about the inspiration behind her new book...

READING together is never more important in my household than when my husband is deployed.

My children are comforted by our story times and it was while sharing a book one night that I decided to pen *My Hero Has My Heart*.

I began writing from the viewpoint of a child, trying to capture my children's feelings about their parent's absence. I wrote simply and in rhyming verse to keep it fun and easy to read.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

My Hero Has My Heart is for the children of Forces families and so I felt it fitting that this group should also be involved in illustrating it.

They would know best how to depict the sentiments within the book, so I sought help from our community.

I approached the local school to help. The quality and quantity of the pupils' pictures really overwhelmed me.

I had a hard time shortlisting them for publication, so much so that I decided to include several pages of supporting illustrations too! The entire project was

complete and in the hands of the publishing company within weeks.

The first copy of my paperback arrived in time for Father's

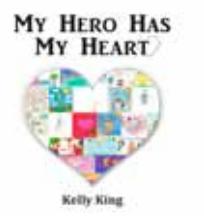
Day earlier this year and was a well-received gift.

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

I began work on *My Hero Has My Heart* only a few weeks into my husband's latest tour of duty. This project gave me something productive and positive to focus on, during what is often a lonely and difficult time.

I know as well as any spouse that life is busy and stressful being the sole care provider during a partner's deployment, but making the time to take on a personal challenge was very rewarding and I would urge others to consider doing the same. Whatever your interests may be – just look to your local community for support and you can succeed.

My Hero Has My Heart is available to buy and download from most major online retailers such as Amazon, Google Books and Lulu.com. Every copy sold is helping to raise funds and awareness for **SSAFA Forces Help**.



To win a signed copy of *My Hero Has My Heart* for your child, send an entry using the details on page three. Mark postal entries "My Hero".

THE DABBY PROJECT: BORROW A FRIEND FOR A MONTH

Melanie Kendrick, co-founder of the Dabby Project, reveals the inspiring initiative for UK Service children...

THE time that a parent goes away on deployment can be a difficult one for young children.

It's hard for many to understand why daddy or mummy has had to go away. Having a "friend" during this time, even for only a month can take a child's mind off what is happening in real life – Dabby and Wills are that "friend".

The Dabby Project was set up in the United States by Robin Curling Owens at the start of 2013.

A military child herself, she knew how difficult deployments can be and wanted to make things easier for military children in America. Robin came up with the idea of Dabby – a knitted doll that visits military families while a loved one is on tour.

In April this year, the Dabby Project became international – and now UK military children can host Dabby or her British cousin, Wills.

On becoming a host family for one month, you will receive Dabby or Wills, a personalised letter, a diary to fill in and a memory stick on which to store your photographs.

These are returned at the end of the period ready for the next host family. Adventures are shared on a Facebook page – **The Dabby Project UK** – allowing families to follow Dabby's adventures. If you are interested in becoming a host, go to our Facebook page or email melanie.kendrick1@btinternet.com



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Corporal Emma Allen C- Matthes, Year 8 boarder

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COURTING CAMARADERIE

FORMED FOR FUN AND FITNESS, WATTISHAM BLADES NETBALL CLUB HAS BECOME A MAJOR PLAYER IN SUFFOLK'S SERVICE AND CIVILIAN COMMUNITY. EMMA EVELEIGH, THE THRIVING TEAM'S PUBLICITY OFFICER, TELLS ARMY&YOU MORE...



S MANY of Wattisham Blades' members had not thrown a ball since school (which is a good few years ago for some of us), the club qualified for ten weeks of training from an England Netball Association "Back 2 Netball" coach.

This proved to be a fantastic starting point for the team and we all learnt a huge amount.

TEAM BUILDING

Over the last year, we have watched our club go from strength-to-strength.

After building our skills and confidence we joined the West Suffolk Netball League. Okay, so we are in Division 5, but we can only go up from here!

There were lots of nerves during our first competitive games but with plenty of support and encouragement, we are improving.

Due to the Forces lifestyle, the Blades' squad is forever changing. New people come in, which is fantastic, but on the downside valued team members leave when they are posted.

As we all know, Army life sometimes gets in the way when it comes to attending anything on a regular basis, but it doesn't matter if players cannot attend every session.

We are all in the same situation and everyone understands. If a partner is deployed or someone has childcare to contend with, they are always welcomed back eagerly and they are always eager to return!

GREAT OPPORTUNITIES

Playing a team sport is a superb opportunity to meet new people and some great friendships have been formed on and off court.

It's very easy to feel isolated when moving to a new area, especially somewhere like Wattisham, which is a fairly remote location.

Being part of the Blades means there's always someone around that you know and chances are you will bump into a teammate out and about.

We always welcome new members whether they are skilled, a complete beginner or somewhere in between.

We don't want people to feel intimidated at the prospect of joining an established



team. We have a wide range of skill and fitness levels and there's always someone on hand to give advice to the less proficient – like me!

The team's dedicated committee put a lot of hard work into keeping the club going. Our coach organises training schedules to keep us "on the ball" and we have members to raise funds, generate publicity and organise a knees up.

The reward of seeing everyone having fun, making friends and feeling a part of the team is definitely worth it. Nothing comes close to the feeling of hearing your teammates cheering each other on.

If anyone would like to meet the Blades for a friendly or would like some advice on how to set up their own club, get in touch at wattishamblades@gmail.com, find us on Facebook or follow us [@WattishamBlades](#) on Twitter.

- To find out more about Back 2 Netball schemes, click www.englandnetball.co.uk

Wattisham Blades pictures:
David Tombs, Avalon Images



SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN IN WALES

SEPTEMBER 2012 saw the Welsh Government take responsibility for Service children in the Vale of Glamorgan. Katie Coleman became a Forces Family Support Officer, as a result of the MOD's £3m fund for schools with Service children. Katie tells A&Y what her role entails...

MY JOB has enabled me to work closely with families, children, education providers and the unit welfare team to build links.

We have also established relationships with the Welsh Government and highlighted the need for support that is lacking in Wales compared to England.

Below, Welsh wonders: Year 10 girls from Llantwit Major School, who are the senior WAFA reps



My role is to support Service children and to also raise awareness of the Armed Forces to the local primary school staff and help them to fully understand the effects of deployment and how mobility can affect children.

The head teacher from St Illtyd Primary School explains: "It has been helpful to have support for our Forces families' children.

"It has helped us to realise some of the challenges they can face when mum or dad is getting ready for deployment."

AMBASSADORS IN ACTION

From the Service Children In Llantwit Schools Project, we have established a student support group called Wales Armed Forces Ambassadors (WAFA).

Each school has two representatives ranging from six to 13 years old and all of them were excited to be advocates for Wales Service children.

At our first meeting, we spent our time sharing our life experiences as Service families and the children dictated what support they



ACCESSING THE £3M SCHOOLS' SUPPORT FUND

Schools, academies/ free schools or local authorities in England, Wales, Northern Ireland or Scotland who wish to apply for funding, can email LF-PSC-CYP-3MSF-Mailbox@mod.uk for details or search "MOD Support Fund for Schools" at www.gov.uk

felt they would benefit from.

The local primary schools were invited to design the logo for the group; the entries were fantastic and imaginative and the winning logo is pictured above.

We hope during 2014 WAFA will become known throughout Wales, supporting all Service children and gaining an ever-increasing membership.

Over the next year, the representatives will become confident in their roles ready for all of the changes happening at MOD St Athan.

As new children arrive they will be welcomed and supported.

To find out more about the role of a Forces Family Support Officer, email Katie at colemank@llantwitschool.org.uk

CHOOSING A SCHOOL IN WALES?



Do you like statistics when choosing a school?

Do you want to compare the data of local schools?

If so, this is the perfect website for you!

<http://mylocalschool.wales.gov.uk>

YOUR AFF EDUCATION & CHILDCARE SPECIALIST

Do you have any concerns, questions or feedback to give us on education and childcare issues? Contact our AFF Specialist, Lucy Scott, on 07527 492869 or ec@aff.org.uk



Term-time teaser

THE excitement is rising...they are nearly home! But can your child miss school in term time? Many of you have asked us about taking your children out of school during your soldier's Post Operational Tour Leave (POTL) or R&R. Here, Lucy Scott, AFF Education & Childcare Specialist, tells us the answer...

ACCORDING to the www.gov.uk website there are two reasons that children can miss school:

- ✓ If they are ill;
- ✓ If you have advance permission from the school.

If you have R&R or Post Operational Tour Leave (POTL) coming up, then apply in advance to the head teacher so that they can consider the circumstances.

For example, your soldier's leave isn't flexible and cannot be taken in the normal school holidays.

AFF feels strongly that parents should be able to request time off for these reasons.

We would love to hear from you if you have been refused authorised absence for POTL or R&R. Contact me at ec@aff.org.uk

Educational assistance

THE Royal School Hampstead Trust assists in the educational funding of dependants of Servicemen and women, both serving and retired. It awards scholarships, maintenance allowances or grants at any school, university, college or institution of higher or further education.

Priority is given to applicants experiencing difficulties through death, injury or family disruption.

Grants are available to those up to the age of 25 up to a maximum of:

- 100 per cent of school fees;
- 75 per cent of university fees (for years two and three only);
- 50 per cent of further education.

For details on 2014 grant applications and further details about the Trust's work, visit www.rshtrust.com



SCHOOL RULES

THE Government has changed the law for how long children need to remain in education in England. Wherever you are posted, here are the options:

Full-time school or college education, an apprenticeship or employment combined with part-time education or training. Staying in school is only one option. This will affect all families with children in Year 11 or 12 currently in or being posted to England.

However, local authorities are able to use discretion with mobile Service families particularly those on temporary postings. The differences are:

England (www.gov.uk)

- Year 12: education or training until the end of academic year you turn 17
- Year 11: education or training until at least your 18th birthday

Northern Ireland (www.deni.gov.uk)

- Aged 16 between 1 September and 1 July: school until the end of that school year
- Aged 16 between 2 July and 31 August: return to school in September of the same year and leave school 30 June the following year

Scotland (www.gov.uk)

- Aged 16 between 1 October and end of February: school until the end of the autumn term that school year
- Aged 16 between 1 March and 30 September: school until after 31 May of that year

Wales (www.gov.uk)

- You can leave school at the end of the academic year that you turn 16

If you would like to know more, email ec@aff.org.uk

DYSLEXIA – AFF INVESTIGATES

This autumn, AFF is investigating Dyslexia in Army families. If you would like to share your experiences, we would love to hear from you. You can email, in confidence, our Education & Childcare Specialist, Lucy Scott, with your story and to ask any questions at ec@aff.org.uk



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THE BENEFITS OF STATE BOARDING

At state boarding schools, the education is free and parents pay only for the boarding, reducing the demands on bank accounts should they leave the military but want their child to continue with a boarding education. **Annie Hughes**, Development Director at Gordon's School, highlights some of the advantages to this option...

There are still many parents out there who are unaware of the benefits of state boarding, but this is changing with news of some of the top independent schools now opening and supporting partner schools in the state boarding sector.

Wellington College has already set up the successful Wellington Academy in Wiltshire and elsewhere Eton is planning to launch its own partner school, Holyport Academy, in 2014.

In fact, in the first few months of 2013, the State Boarding Schools' Association (SBSA) received 20 applications from those interested in opening new institutions.

With some 38

state boarding schools scattered around the country, there's now more choice and with the benefits of boarding much better understood, the demand for these services is growing.

Boarding provides benefits including development of social responsibility and extra-curricular activities.

Some state boarding schools have a well-developed culture

and ethos and, in the case of Gordon's, a tradition of ceremony. Each year, many state boarding schools top the academic league tables.

Students are able to make the most of their abilities through an excellent state-funded education and a stable boarding environment.



With 38 state boarding schools around the country there's now a growing choice

If you would like to find out more information on state boarding, log on to www.sbsa.org.uk



ARMY SPOUSE JULIE MCCARTHY HAS THREE BOYS, ONE OF WHICH STARTED AT A STATE BOARDING SCHOOL LAST YEAR. HERE, SHE SHARES HER FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE...

Location, academics and pastoral care were all important to us, but I have to admit that the financial advantage of a state boarding school was the deciding factor. With the uncertainty of my employment each time we move and the threat of redundancy, we had to make a sound financial decision.

I feel that by choosing state boarding, my sons have the continuity they need while my husband serves, but they are attending a school that we can afford should our circumstances change and we leave the Army (by choice or otherwise). We're not in the dreaded "CEA trap".

When we started looking at boarding schools, I knew my "must haves". Knowing we would likely be abroad at some point during their schooling, there had to be good road and rail links and family close by.

This has proved essential while we've been in America as family and friends have stepped into the breach for us to care for the boys during term time. It's hard to put into words, but at state boarding school the boys are mixing with children in similar financial circumstances and so there is less of a "keeping up with the Jones'" feeling and the activities and trips tend to be more reasonably priced.

WHY IS IT A SUCCESS?

The most important thing is does the school fit your children? Can it provide what your child needs while you are following the flag? In our case it does, and it happens to be a state boarding school.



#younggeneration

HEROES FIND THEIR VOICE

Her Majesty's Schools Heroes is a national pupil group formed for the support of Service children and young people, working actively to ensure that every member has a voice and is able to use it.

Members of HMS Heroes are ambassadors and advocates for Service families nationwide as well as friends for each other, especially in times of need.

The group started in Devon and has seen its membership increase to 4,500 schools across the UK, with Heroes joining from pre-school age up to 18.

They meet regularly to share their challenges with friends, such as having to move home and change schools and having a parent away, as well as creating events and projects in a

safe, supportive environment.

Talking with people of all ages is a key focus, and so is making a difference in the community. Supported by The Royal British Legion, young people can receive Standard Bearing training and become involved in raising funds for the RBL's Poppy Appeal.

Any school can join, so if yours has a strong Service community, get in touch at www.hmsheroes.co.uk



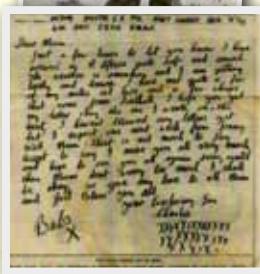
FIELDTRIP TO THE PAST

A UNIVERSITY visit to Sicily gave student Zoe Hughes the chance to become the first member of her family to visit the war grave of her great, great uncle.

Charles Smith, a private in the East Surrey Regiment, died aged 22 during the Allied invasion of the island in 1943 and his remains rest with those of 2,134 fallen comrades in the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in Catania.

Pte Smith's family, including his late wife Joany, who miscarried after hearing of his death, never had the opportunity to visit the grave until now, 70 years after he lost his life. Zoe, a 21-year-old second year Geography student at the University of Brighton, was on a trip with fellow students and asked if she could take time out to make the visit.

She said: "It was a sad occasion and I was upset for



Generation game: Zoe Hughes (top) and her great, great uncle, Pte Charles Smith

everyone in my family, especially those who knew him. My nan and Charlie's sister were especially pleased that I had been able to get there."

PRESERVING THE MEMORY

Zoe's family, from Bournemouth, have kept a photograph of Pte Smith in uniform and the "killed in action" telegram to his widow.

He and Joany had married just seven months earlier, on Christmas Day, 1942.

The family also has a letter from Pte Smith to his mother (pictured below), written when he first arrived in North Africa before the Sicily invasion.

Zoe laid flowers at the grave, which included a single red rose with a letter attached, written to Pte Smith. The envelope also contained a photograph of Zoe's grandmother and mother.

● If you would like to find out more about war graves, click the learning and resources tab on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website at www.cwgc.org



Poppy facts

✓ Some 350,000 volunteers help to organise and collect for the Poppy Appeal each year

✓ 45 million poppies are distributed each year for the Poppy Appeal

✓ Poppies are made at the Poppy Factory in Richmond, Surrey

✓ A poppy can be worn at any time, but they are usually available two weeks before Remembrance Sunday.

Read more at www.poppy.org.uk

WIN!



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Plus, there are plenty of trails, quests and hands-on activities to get involved in over October half-term too.

To find out more, head online and visit www.english-heritage.org.uk/dayout

We've teamed up with English Heritage to offer lucky readers the chance to win one of five family day passes (two adults and up to three children) to an English Heritage property of your choice. To be in with a chance of winning, follow the rules on page three.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

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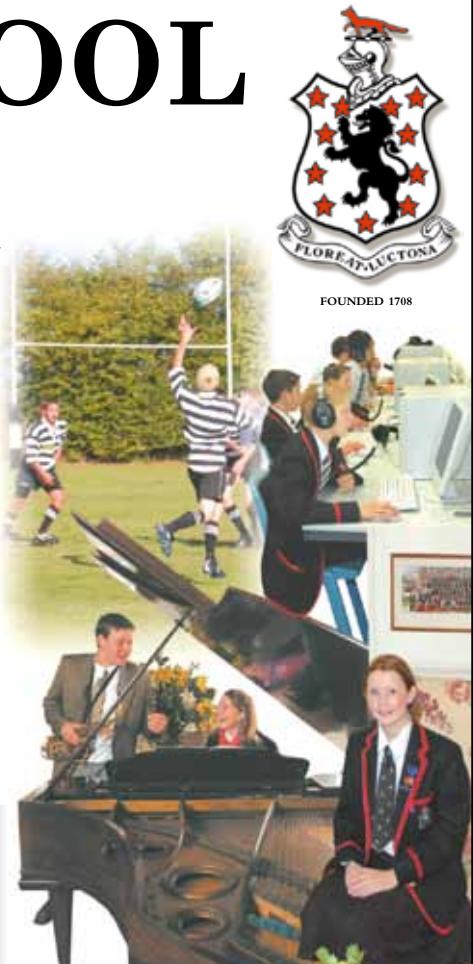
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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

THIS SUMMER'S AFF ROADSHOWS KICKED OFF ON 22 MAY WITH OUR FLAGSHIP SALISBURY PLAIN EVENT FOLLOWED BY STOPS IN COLCHESTER AND BALLYKINLER. THEY'RE NOW AN INTEGRAL PART OF OUR CALENDAR, OFFERING YOU THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK TO SENIOR CHAIN OF COMMAND ON A VARIETY OF ISSUES. HERE, **JILL BAINES**, AFF UK DIRECTOR, TELLS US WHAT CAME UP...



OUR local pre-Roadshow surveys, to which we got an amazing response from all of you, gave us an early indication of your feelings, with low morale and lack of understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant being issues in the Salisbury Plain and Colchester areas.

Not surprisingly, given the remote location and security issues, employment opportunities were of concern to those of you in Ballykinler and other NI locations. Strongly

supported by the chain of command, there was a lively debate at each Roadshow.

The topics of discussion, venues and attendance all showed how varied the lives of Service spouses are, underlining the value of our AFF Co-ordinator network reporting on local issues.

THE VALUE OF MEETING YOU

From an AFF perspective, the value of these events goes far

beyond the numbers of people attending.

It's you, the families, who through our marketing become more aware of what we do and it gives us value as an evidence-based organisation; and there's the value to the chain of command too – in giving them the opportunity to meet you and so they can hear first-hand about what's affecting your lives.

Roadshows were established to address your local concerns as the location of our biennial Families' Conference in London is hard for some of you to get to. It is important we vary our Roadshow location, so last time we held them in Aldershot, Catterick and Edinburgh.

THE ISSUES THAT MATTER

You certainly used the Roadshows as an opportunity to voice your opinions by asking questions and also writing on our Graffiti Wall – a new concept where you could pin a postcard with your key concern or question about Army life to our portable brick wall.

Quotes ranged from "Schools

are oversubscribed meaning I cannot get my children into the local school when we move" to "I love our Army life, I just wish that my husband was away less" and "Have the Generals been gagged? Why are they not standing up to the Government's defence cuts?". All your comments will be added to our AFF enquiries database and used as evidence of issues local to these three locations.

In Colchester, not surprisingly given the tragedy in Woolwich, security was on the agenda. One attendee, who had recently moved in to SFA after many years living in a remote village, said: "Never have I felt as vulnerable as I do in this location." As a follow up to this issue, the local community safety officer made arrangements to help reassure families.

Employment and access to childcare was a very hot topic in Ballykinler. Employment is hampered by concerns over security in Northern Ireland. The Roadshow was an opportunity to remind families to use Families Employment and Training (FEAT) for advice on applying for civilian positions.

Email FEAT at featni@detlsa.co.uk

SOLVING PROBLEMS

At Tidworth, it was reported that some families at Worthy Down had suffered problems with mould in their SFA for some time and despite reporting this issue, they had seen no progress. The HIVE Information Support Officer, Emma Thomson, spoke eloquently on behalf of local families. She engaged the support of Kevin Stewart from DIO and action has already been taken to survey the properties.

There were some very honest and frank answers given by the panel; there was no sugar coating and you seemed to appreciate this. You might not have been given any guarantees, but the honesty was appreciated.

A new topic for this year's Roadshows was the Community Covenant, with a representative on the panel in Tidworth and Colchester. This gave us the opportunity to gather

your opinions and reinforce the relationship between the Service community and local authorities. An issue was raised regarding a school crossing point at Perham Down and, since the Roadshow, it has already been addressed by Wiltshire Council – a great example of the value of having a local council representative member present.

FURTHER ROADSHOWS PLANNED

We are very conscious that there are a large number of families of Reserve soldiers and families choosing to live in their own homes away from the serving person's duty station who would normally not have access to events such as these.

So, we will be running two more events next year – keep an eye on www.aff.org.uk for confirmation of the exact dates and locations.

In the meantime, if you would like to know more about our Roadshows or you have an issue you would like to raise, contact us at us@aff.org.uk

CONTACT AFF UNITED KINGDOM

AFF Central Office, IDL 414, Ramillies Building, Floor 1, Zone 7, Marlborough Lines, Monxton Road, Andover SP11 8HJ. T: 01264 382324

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CO-ORDINATOR:

REGIONAL MANAGER SOUTH

07824 534345
regmgrsouth@affgb.org.uk

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AFF GERMANY CONFERENCE: A DAY OF DEBATE AND ACTION



THREE GENERALS, THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF SERVICE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION GERMANY, THE MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, PERSONNEL, WELFARE AND VETERANS AND AFF'S CHIEF EXECUTIVE TOOK THEIR SEATS ON THE PANEL FOR OUR CAPACITY AUDIENCE AT THE 2013 GERMANY CONFERENCE. FOR THOSE OF YOU WHO COULDN'T BE THERE, DIANE WEIR, AFF GERMANY DIRECTOR (PICTURED LEFT), SUMS UP THE DAY...

AS THE voice of the Army family, our aim was to provide the forum for you to put your concerns and opinions to those in charge. In his opening address, The Rt Hon Mark Francois (pictured right) reassured us that where possible we should face no disruption to the services we receive in Germany during the drawdown process. He recognised that families rightfully feel concerned about rebasing and the period of transition back to the UK. He stressed that units moving must try to prioritise children who are taking important exams and accommodate those families moving back from Germany.

YOUR QUESTIONS

SCHOOL PLACES

We started the morning forum with a question about sourcing school places when moving back to the UK.

One person stated that Service families are disadvantaged as their family was having difficulties registering for a school place in the UK without an address.

The minister agreed more work needs to be done to communicate what the Armed Forces Covenant was set up to act against; not to disadvantage Service families.

SCHOOL CLOSURES IN BFG

A delegate raised the point that SCE generally outperforms UK state primaries in all academic tests, so why are we closing these schools down? Why are we not taking this body of knowledge back with us?

Kathryn Forsyth, Acting Chief Executive of SCE Germany explained she has already spoken with local authorities about this matter.

She recognised the importance of understanding the needs of your children and explained that the Adjutant General has commissioned a project called "Education Change" to look at how the process of children moving back to the UK is managed.

AFF will let you know the details of the report at the end of this year.

Many questions were asked relating to the retention of good quality teaching staff in Germany, as families fear teachers may leave schools early to secure a good job in another location. SCE and the chain of command reassured us that they are currently working on this issue.

NHS WAITING LISTS

An Army spouse highlighted that she had gone to the bottom of a hospital waiting list, not once but three times.

Again the minister reiterated the point that the Covenant is there to stop us being disadvantaged and he has agreed to speak with his medical counterpart, Dr Dan Poulter MP, on this subject.



FUTURE HOUSING

"Why can't Army spouses apply for SFA?" was a question which raised some strong debate.

Audience members felt not being able to apply for SFA added to the feeling of being a dependant and did not make sense at a time when many families are preparing





THE PANEL

Our thanks go to the panel members who answered your questions (from left):

- Kathryn Forsyth, Acting CE SCE Germany
- **Maj Gen James Chiswell CBE MC, GOC HQ 1st Armd Div**
- Rt Hon Mark Francois, MP Minister for DPWV
- **Kate Gerbeau, BFBS TV**
- Catherine Spencer, CE AFF
- **Maj Gen John Henderson, GOC BFG**
- Maj Gen Richard Nugee CBE, Dir Gen Pers

Pictures: Liz Rhodes

to leave BFG whilst their Service person is on tour.

General Nugee said he will take the issue away to look at it in more detail.

ASSIGNMENT ORDERS

The timeframes for assignment orders was another point raised and both General Chiswell and General Nugee agreed that more work is required.

The earlier families can be in receipt of an assignment order, the better. General Nugee did remind us that it is not as straightforward as it sounds; £1billion worth of housing and infrastructure is being built back in the UK and, without postcodes being available, this may hamper early assignment orders.

LONGER WORKING HOURS

Unsurprisingly the issue of longer working hours for our soldiers raised its head. AFF Chief Executive, Catherine Spencer mentioned in her opening address that those who have either left the Army by choice or are being forced to leave through redundancy have left many gaps which need manning.

General Chiswell spoke of being at a particularly high water mark where working hours were involved.

He recognised the high tempo that



people were working to and felt that this would settle as we withdraw from commitments such as Afghanistan. AFF will be carrying out a survey later this year into working hours for Army personnel so please keep a lookout for this on our website – www.aff.org.uk

PRESERVING OUR COMMUNITY SPIRIT

Our panel did not shy away from the issues that you raised and indeed challenged some of our service providers to step up to the plate. General Henderson spoke of recognising the challenges faced in the forthcoming years; he also alluded to a sense of pride



that we are a very resilient population and we are in fact making history. He encouraged our community spirit and emphasised that he will continue to improve as many services as possible to make the remainder of our time here as stress free as possible.

OTHER ISSUES RAISED...

- Could the opening hours of base admin offices be "user friendly"?
- Many problems surrounding the new postal service
- The ability to maintain adequate welfare services was a hot topic
- Reduction in NAAFI's products
- Lack of grass cutting around unoccupied SFA causing security worries
- Difficulties with SFA repairs

HEAD ONLINE TO FIND OUT MORE
 This is just a taste of some of the questions asked. For more details on the day, check out the Germany pages at www.aff.org.uk.
 AFF is liaising with command and service providers on all the issues which were not fully addressed at Conference.
 We will report back in future issues of Army&You. In the meantime, if you have any questions about Army life in Germany, contact us at admin@affgermany.org

WELFARE WINNERS

WE were delighted to announce at the Germany Conference the winners of the 2013 Unit Welfare Award, which was generously sponsored by Sodexo.

The award seeks to acknowledge the exceptional hard work of our Unit Welfare teams in supporting Army families around the clock, to recognise their resilience and dedication.

A total of 20 nominations were made for 12 unit welfare teams.

Nominations consistently inspire the judging panel and choosing the winner is always a difficult task.

This year the very deserving winners were 26 Regiment Welfare Team.

They were selected for supporting

families during what was a very difficult year of operational deployments, Op Olympics, and sadly, bereavements and injuries.

All loss of life when a regiment is on operations affects both deployed individuals and those families at home deeply. This team not only supported one such family through this extremely harrowing time but also fundraised to enable the family to travel home to Fiji.

The team provided a great service for the regiment demonstrating a very "go to" attitude.



sodexo
QUALITY OF LIFE SERVICES

ANNE ARMSTRONG WINNER ANNOUNCED

THIS prize seeks to recognise an individual or group whose voluntary efforts have made an outstanding contribution to the wellbeing and quality of life of their Army community.

This year our inspirational winner was Joanna Rowell, from Hohne, who was picked by our panel of judges as someone who has gone that extra mile to create a welcoming, fun environment.

Joanna supports and encourages everyone to take part in play days, buggy fit classes and lunch clubs.

Upon receiving the award at the Conference, Joanna encouraged others to volunteer, saying: "It's been the best thing I have ever done."



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www.kingswood.bath.sch.uk

BFG-ING YOUR CAR

ANYONE who lives, or who has lived, in Germany will understand the stress of having to "BFG" your car. In the past the process of registering your car was confusing, old-fashioned, time-consuming and quite frankly a bit of a nightmare! Lisa Horder, Paderborn AFF Co-ordinator, tells us more about the revised scheme...

A new BFG Vehicle Licensing one-stop-shop is now open in Paderborn, which means that you can complete the BFG

vehicle licensing programme in one visit if you arrive with the correct paperwork.

Registration, re-registration and de-registration services are available and UK style number plates, tax discs and fuel cards are offered on the spot – bringing to an end the need to wait for extended periods whilst documents travel through the postal system.

The feedback from the service is extremely positive and those of you that I have spoken to have been impressed by the quick turnaround and the fact that



the office is accessible over lunchtime – making it easier for those who are working. This welcome change is part of an on-going review into how to make life better here in BFG.

For more details on how to BFG your car, visit www.bfgnet.de

PRESCRIPTION CHARGES

PREScription charges may be introduced in British Forces Germany in the same way that they are applied in England. This is in line with MOD policy and whilst it's not welcome news, fewer than 25 per cent of the Service population will end up paying.

BFG HS will make sure that you are given full information, including:

- Notice of the date when they will be introduced at medical centres;
- Cost of prescription fees, currently £7.85 per item, converted into Euros;
- Details of exemption regulations and categories of patients who are exempt from charges;
- Details of how to apply for exemption certificates;
- Details of prepayment certificates. Look out for leaflets, articles in *Sixth Sense* and updates on www.bfgnet.de and www.aff.org.uk



ADD SOME SPARKLE TO POPPY DAY

TAKE a look at the stunning 2013 Kleshna Poppy collection. The set is inspired by the symbol of Remembrance for our British Armed Forces – and 15 per cent from each sale goes straight to The Royal British Legion.

Kleshna Jewellery London is a boutique creating high end costume jewellery, iconic for contemporary glamour. The brand is renowned for statement design, vivid colour ways and serious sparkle. See the collection at www.kleshna.com

Army&You is giving away a goody bag filled with a hand-painted silk scarf, sparkling poppy earrings and a poppy lapel pin, worth £180.

You will also receive 15 per cent off Kleshna's main

collection (valid until 28 November) when you buy something from the 2013 Poppy collection. See our competitions box on page three for your chance to win.

Mark postal entries "Poppy".

Terms & Conditions

Kleshna Jewellery London will donate 15 per cent of the total prize value to The Royal British Legion Trading Limited which gives its taxable profits to The Royal British Legion (Charity no. 219279).



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POSITIVE POSTING



WHETHER YOU'VE JUST ARRIVED IN BRITISH FORCES CYPRUS (BFC), ARE DUE TO ARRIVE IN THE NEXT FEW MONTHS OR ARE CONSIDERING A POSTING, IT'S GOOD TO KNOW WHAT TO EXPECT.

PHIL ROBERTSON, AFF CYPRUS DIRECTOR, HIGHLIGHTS THE BEST ASPECTS OF A POSTING TO CYPRUS...

1 SCHOOLING

- IF your child is under 18, then Cyprus offers the same education that you would get in the UK.
- Whether you need a crèche, nursery, primary or secondary school, you will have access to one no matter which station you live on.
- The schools in Cyprus follow the English national curriculum so there's no need to worry about your child's education being disrupted by a Cyprus posting.
- Two of Cyprus' schools have been inspected by Ofsted this year under the strict new regime and both schools – King Richard's in Dhekelia and Episkopi Primary School – have both been rated "outstanding".
- Learn more about these Ofsted inspections at www.armyandyou.co.uk



Picture: Charlotte Fife, BFBS

2 FURTHER EDUCATION

There are wonderful educational opportunities throughout BFC. This is particularly useful when employment can be limited and can help you to learn new skills or brush up on existing qualifications to add to your CV. Whether you want to work towards an NVQ or follow a course in your local education centre, there are lots of options. One spouse from Akrotiri told us that she was really surprised at the number of courses on offer and loved having the chance to learn basic Greek. If you don't fancy a classroom-based course you could sign up for something like sports, photography or archaeology. Find out more in your local education centre or HIVE.



3 HEALTHCARE

FAMILIES go to the Polyclinic in Limassol for much of their secondary healthcare after the Princess Mary's Hospital in Akrotiri closed last year. Before the healthcare changes took effect, some of you told us you were nervous about receiving treatment in the Republic of Cyprus but we have only received positive feedback from families who have been to the Polyclinic. One lady expecting her first child had been to the hospital twice for scans. She said: "The staff were really polite and lovely – they put me at ease." You have also told us that waiting times for referrals to the Polyclinic have usually been short. Just remember that you can only receive treatment at the Polyclinic if you have been referred there by your local medical centre. If you want to learn more about the hospital, have a look at www.ygiapolyclinic.com

4

CITIZENSHIP

From this year, families wishing to sit the "Life in the UK" test can do so in Episkopi. If you're not a British citizen but want to become one, you can start that process without having to leave Cyprus. Remember to look at the F&C pages of www.aff.org.uk or to book a test, visit lifeintheuktest.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk



5

TRAVEL

It's not every day that your employer sends you to the Eastern Mediterranean! The island has a really interesting history and Cyprus is surrounded by great places to visit so instead of flying all the way back to the UK, you could pop over to somewhere like Greece or Turkey to explore new environments.

6 CLUBS, SOCIETIES & SPORTS FACILITIES

No matter what age you or your children are or whatever your interests, you will definitely find something to do in Cyprus. Every station has vibrant clubs, societies and sports facilities.



7

WELFARE SUPPORT

Families often remark that the wide range of welfare agencies available in Cyprus provided by both the MOD and outside organisations, means that the vast majority of welfare cases which arise can be managed quickly. If a problem presents itself it can often seem so much worse than it would at home but rest assured that BFC's welfare system kicks in and scoops up anyone in need of help.

■ WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

■ Cyprus is a great place for you to spend quality time with your family. With most people starting work earlier in the morning and finishing by mid-afternoon, families tend to have more time to spend at home. ■ There's a strong sense of community spirit and extremely low crime rates which means that you and your family can lead a safe and happy life here. As with any posting, Army life can throw challenges at us and issues do arise. So if there are aspects to your posting in Cyprus which are less positive, do contact us here at AFF and we will do everything we can to help. Email admin@affcyprus.org

WIN!

PLUSH PUSH-ALONG

LUXURY online boutique Mousehouse has a passion for providing quirky, innovative children's products – at sensible prices. Their gorgeous push-along toy will encourage learning and aid walking for when your little one takes their first steps and it comes in a colourful zebra or pretty natural wood mouse design. All Mousehouse's cute products come in distinctive Mousehouse packaging featuring the loveable mouse mascot. Visit www.mousehousegifts.co.uk

Army&You is giving two readers the chance to win a Mouse or Zebra decorated wooden push toy, worth £8.95. Find details on how to enter on page three. For postal entries, mark your entry "Mousehouse". Good luck!



CONTACT AFF CYPRUS

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F: Local 25 211677

E: admin@affcyprus.org

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL CO-ORDINATOR:

ESBA: esba@affcyprus.org

WSBA: wsba@affcyprus.org

AFF Co-ordinators can be contacted through the AFF Cyprus Branch Office, via local HIVEs or find us on Facebook

YOUR AFF FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANT

Do you have any concerns, questions or feedback to give us on Foreign & Commonwealth issues?

Contact our AFF F&C Assistant, Michelle Prince-Burnett, on 07785 939626 or email fcassist@aff.org.uk

Clearer guidance - FLR(M) applications

Katherine Houlston, AFF F&C Specialist, gives guidance on making FLR(M) applications under the transition rules...

WE are aware that a number of Army spouses are being assessed under the wrong immigration rules when making applications for an extension as the spouse of a British soldier.

Instead of being granted two years at the end of which you can apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR), some of you are being given a visa for 30 months and told that you will be eligible for ILR after five years in the UK. This is wrong. If you are the spouse of a soldier, you should be assessed under the old rules and given a two-year route to settlement.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If you have been granted a visa for 30 months, contact AFF via our F&C Assistant at fcassist@aff.org.uk or 07785 939626. We will raise your case with UKBA which has agreed to assist us in correcting these visas.



NEW RULES

THE new immigration rules for Armed Forces were announced in July.

The rules will come into effect on 1 December 2013 and will only apply to:

- Spouses and children of military personnel applying for a visa to enter the UK
- Spouses and children applying for your first visa as dependants of personnel (as a result of marriage/civil partnership to a soldier).

The rules will not affect spouses or children in the UK who already have visas as dependants of Armed Forces personnel – you will continue on your current route to settlement.

Families on accompanied overseas assignments with no current UK visa, or only a visit visa, will need to apply for a visa before 1 December 2013.

Further information can be found on the F&C webpages at www.aff.org.uk

If you have exhausted all other avenues and still need help with the new immigration rules, email the dedicated UKBA Armed Forces enquiries service at armedforcesenquiries@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

MYTHBUSTERS FOR SOLDIERS

Q: I don't have to take the Life in the UK test to apply for citizenship because I have served for more than ten years.

A: **WRONG!** Everyone has to take the Life in the UK test regardless of length of service and nationality.

Q: My child is eligible for citizenship as soon as I have become British.

A: **WRONG!** If your child was not born in the UK or on an overseas assignment then it is likely that he/she will not be eligible for citizenship until both parents have citizenship or ILR.

Q: I have to wait for a year after gaining ILR on discharge before I can apply for citizenship.

A: **WRONG!** You can apply for citizenship as soon as you have your ILR, this is because your exempt stamp gave you the same status as someone with ILR during service. However, your spouse does have to wait for twelve months, so if you wish to make a joint application then it is advisable to wait.

Increasing enquiries – and our solution

LAST year AFF received 2,544 enquiries from those of you in the Foreign & Commonwealth community; our F&C Specialist, Katherine Houlston, dealt with 95 per cent of your questions, which average out at around 200 each month.

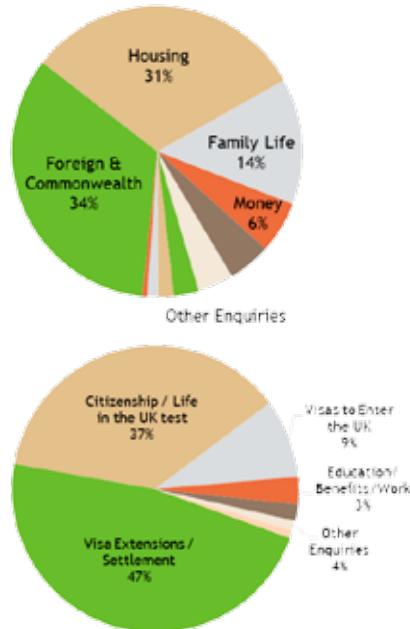
Immigration enquiries can be tricky and complex, so AFF needed to ensure that we are giving out the correct information

To this end, Katherine trained to become an immigration adviser and AFF became a member of the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC), which is responsible for regulating immigration advisers by ensuring they are competent to guide and act in the best interest of their clients.

This was done to reassure our F&C families that the advice you are given comes from a reputable, regulated source.

The new immigration rules for Armed Forces will not come into effect until October, but we believe whatever the decision, the transition period will generate even more enquiries.

In light of this, we have employed an F&C Assistant, Michelle Prince-Burnett, who introduces herself to you below.



YOUR FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH POINT OF CONTACT

MICHELLE PRINCE-BURNETT EXPLAINS HER NEW ROLE...

My role is a new position created specifically for our F&C serving families. I will assist Katherine Houlston, your Foreign & Commonwealth Specialist, to answer all your enquiries and immigration questions, and signpost you to relevant organisations. This should ensure that your enquiries are dealt with in a timely manner.

I was born in Guyana, a multi-cultural country and the only English speaking country in South America. I did my undergraduate studies in public communications at the University of Guyana and worked in several countries throughout the Caribbean. It was in these roles I saw the need to expand my knowledge of different countries' immigration rules and regulations. As a consequence I proceeded to work with many non-governmental organisations and private companies, and travelled extensively.

My journey into Army life began when I moved to the UK in 2006 and what a change it was! My first posting sent us to Germany where we spent three years. Now seven years, three postings and two naturalisations later, we have a beautiful little boy and are settled in the UK.

As a Commonwealth soldier's dependant, I have deep knowledge and understanding of Foreign & Commonwealth issues and its impact on families. My extensive knowledge of UK immigration laws and regulations came from my family's experience in naturalising. I look forward to starting my new role and can't wait to hear from you all.

If you have any F&C issues which you need help with, contact me on fcassist@aff.org.uk or 07785 939626.





Nursery Fresh
'A FRESH APPROACH
TO FLORISTRY.....'

Star letter



The writer of this letter wins a £30 bouquet from Nursery Fresh Postal Flowers, to give or receive anywhere in mainland Britain.



Nursery Fresh offers discounts to Army personnel and their families. Beautiful presentation bouquets can be sent anywhere in the UK by overnight carrier, via our secure online shop www.loveflower.co.uk



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Log on to www.nurseryfresh.com to place your order or find out more.

GET IN TOUCH

To have your say on the issues affecting you, send your letters or emails to:
The Editor, Army&You Magazine, IDL 414, Ramillies Building, Floor 1, Zone 7, Marlborough Lines, Monxton Road, Andover, SP11 8HJ or email editor@aff.org.uk

GOT AN ISSUE WITH ARMY LIFE? TELL US ABOUT IT

If you feel strongly about something, put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard – you don't need to worry that it will affect you or your spouse's career. Please include a contact telephone number and address. We do not print anonymous letters but are happy to withhold names and addresses. These details will not be revealed to anyone outside AFF without the writer's permission.



★ STAR LETTER: COUNTING THE PENNIES ★

I REMEMBER reading a letter in the *AFF Journal* from an Army spouse who highlighted the fact that the chain of command were not taking into account the strain on Army families' finances when planning events and activities where soldiers are required to pay from their own pockets to attend a compulsory social event. The

response from command to that letter was good – it promised to make units more aware of the need to think about families' already stretched budgets when planning activities so that it was affordable or not compulsory to attend.

I am writing to highlight that I don't think that message has yet sunk in to some units and regiments. Some people are carrying on like before. Like our civilian counterparts, we are all feeling the strain financially, eating out has become a very rare treat and our soldiers' pay has not gone up with inflation.

It really is so important that senior officers take note. It doesn't matter whether it's an informal barbecue or a dinner in the Mess, it really is time that organisers of such events thought about what people can realistically afford or give people the option to not attend without it being frowned upon.

It is still really important for morale and team spirit that we continue get-togethers but let's all be mindful of how much things cost these days. The Army will always know how to party when we need to, but we don't mind if it's not a three-course meal with fine wines. My soldier was recently told by his boss to attend a working pub supper – a three-line whip. This would have been fine if it had been pub grub but it wasn't; it was one of those pubs that has gone from serving pie and mash to fine dining and his bill at the end was £40!

The Army needs to realise that people cannot afford to go on as we have done in the past and quite honestly we've got other things we would rather be spending our money on.

Name & address supplied

Response from PS4, Army Welfare: Thank you for your letter; this is not the first report of this sort that I have seen.

I am very supportive of your comments and agree that not all get-togethers have to be lavish events.

As you say, social gatherings are important for morale and they do indeed build cohesion, but commanders must be aware of the context in which they take place.

I have already written to the chain of

command to remind them about this issue and I will be using my quarterly *Welfare Matters* newsletter to inform and remind commanders further.

Mindful of the current financial situation, The Royal British Legion in partnership with Standard Life Charitable Trust developed MoneyForce, an online financial awareness and management tool for the Armed Forces community. You can find the site by visiting www.moneyforce.com



WIN!

OUR AJAX TICKETS

By Timberlake Wertenbaker,
Southwark Playhouse, London

AN epic drama of heroism, love and homeland, Sophocles's Ajax is brought urgently to life in this thrilling new play by Olivier Award-winner Timberlake Wertenbaker.

Developed from interviews with current and former Service personnel and Combat Stress, Our Ajax follows legendary commander Ajax as he's torn between Army politics and the love of his soldiers on the frontline, and explores the history and effects of combat-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. For more information or to book tickets, visit www.southwarkplayhouse.co.uk

We have a pair of tickets, worth £32, to give away for the opening night of the show on 8 November at 8pm. See page three for info on how to enter. Mark postal entries "Ajax".

Picture: Simon Blakey



WIN!

Homecoming countdown

Imagine an advent calendar counting down to the best present of all – the safe return of your loved one from operations. That was the brainchild of Service wife Nicky Cunliffe as a way of helping her husband Stuart mark off the days of an Afghanistan tour and serve as a reminder of happy times the family has shared.

Chuff Chuff Designs creates personalised

countdown calendars online which can be posted to family homes or directly out to your soldier in theatre.

All you need to do is select your photos, images and messages and then create your own calendar on the easy-to-use website at www.chuffchuffdesigns.com

A&Y has ten vouchers, worth £10 each, for these fantastic Chuff Chuff calendars. Find full details on how to enter on page three to be in with a chance of winning one. For postal entries, mark your entry "Calendar".



Q

DRY CLEANING DISCUSSIONS

IN MARCH 2012 my husband contacted HMRC in relation to claiming a tax allowance for the cleaning of uniforms. We received a letter which said that discussions were taking place with the

MOD regarding laundry facilities.

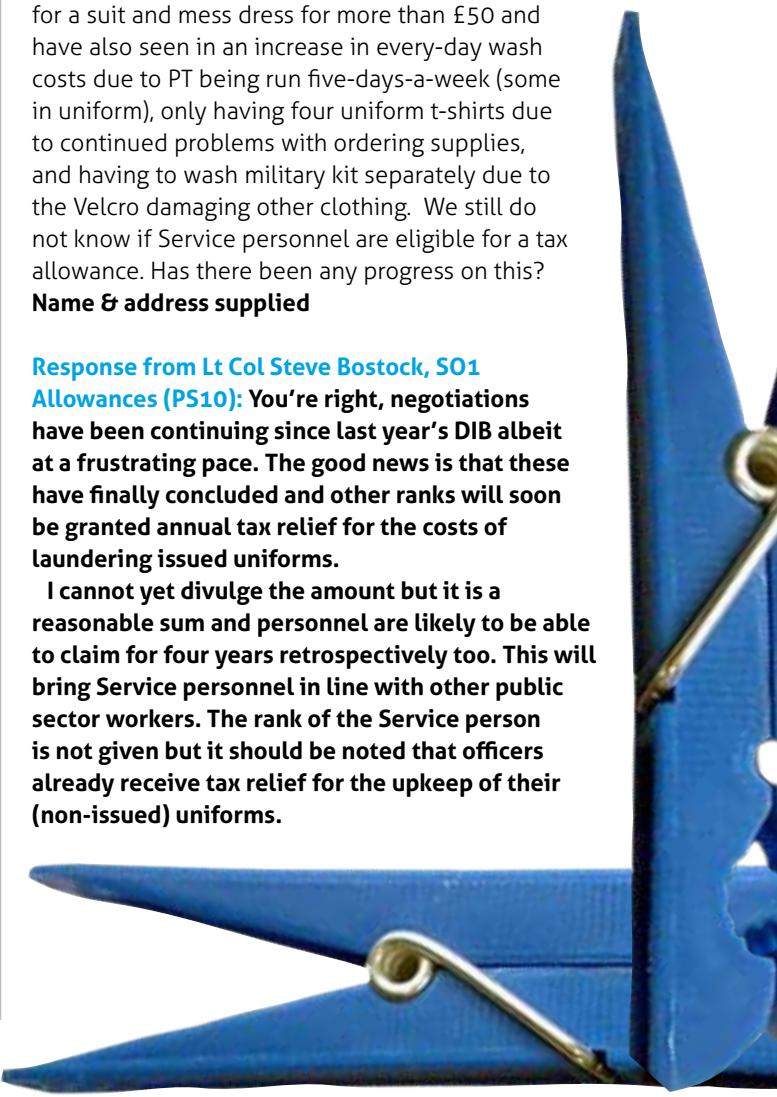
The MOD published a Defence Information Brief (DIB) in April 2012 which did not actually contain any helpful information. We have recently had dry cleaning bills for a suit and mess dress for more than £50 and have also seen an increase in every-day wash costs due to PT being run five-days-a-week (some in uniform), only having four uniform t-shirts due to continued problems with ordering supplies, and having to wash military kit separately due to the Velcro damaging other clothing. We still do not know if Service personnel are eligible for a tax allowance. Has there been any progress on this?

Name & address supplied

Response from Lt Col Steve Bostock, SO1

Allowances (PS10): You're right, negotiations have been continuing since last year's DIB albeit at a frustrating pace. The good news is that these have finally concluded and other ranks will soon be granted annual tax relief for the costs of laundering issued uniforms.

I cannot yet divulge the amount but it is a reasonable sum and personnel are likely to be able to claim for four years retrospectively too. This will bring Service personnel in line with other public sector workers. The rank of the Service person is not given but it should be noted that officers already receive tax relief for the upkeep of their (non-issued) uniforms.



PUNISHING THE SOLDIER – AND THE FAMILY TOO

Q

MY HUSBAND was recently charged while serving in Afghanistan and fined 21 days' pay. However, our most recent bank statement shows the fine has been taken from his wages in one lump sum. I understand

that inattentive behaviour will be punished, but taking 21 days' pay from a single wage packet is unjust and puts strain on my daughter and I. In addition, at no point have I received any notification from the Army that this was going to happen. A letter of intent would have allowed me to prepare for the huge drop in income and kept me in the loop instead of making me feel excluded from a matter that has had repercussions on my daughter and I, more so than my soldier, as I am managing our budget while he is fighting for his country. Where is the consideration for us as a family?

Response from Directorate of Personal Services (Army):

The facts as you describe them should not have happened. Regulations for Pay and Charges, in Joint Service Publication 754, state that soldiers cannot have their pay stopped below a minimum drawing rate of 50 per cent of net pay. That would mean that a 21-day fine should be paid over at least two months. The Armed Forces Act 2006 allows the fine to be paid in instalments and the accused should ask for that when the fine is awarded. The limitation to ensure the soldier receives the minimum drawing rate should kick in automatically. Something seems to have gone wrong and your husband should contact his Admin Office in Theatre.

Taking your second point, that a letter of intent should have been sent; notwithstanding the size of the deduction, the Army cannot legally divulge personal matters like pay to third parties, even spouses. The responsibility for warning about the salary deduction is your husband's. If the system has broken down and you have received less than the minimum drawing rate we can only apologise and urge your husband to contact his Admin Office to sort out the error.

PROMOTION POSTPONEMENT

Q

but will have to remain in his current regimental post because his replacement will not be available until the very end of the ten-month window in which he can take up his next post. I am irritated that through no fault of his own we will be significantly worse off than his peers who will be released to take

THE ARMY has a bizarre way of rewarding promotion. My husband was selected for advancement

up new posts at the beginning of the window. In addition, there's the even more ridiculous scenario that those that missed out on the real promotion board can be promoted earlier than those who scored more highly as they are picked up on the reserve list. Why not pick a date after the promotion

board is produced to increase everyone's pay so that the system is fair? We are losing out and while I am not in Army housing, I would be chomping at the bit to get my hands on a bigger house if I were.

This should be reviewed in the short-term but must be resolved by the start of the New Employment Model.



Response from Army Personnel Centre: At any stage in an Army career, promotion reflects the performance and potential of our officers and soldiers, and your husband is to be congratulated on his selection.

Candidates for promotion are considered against their capbadge peer group in a selection year, and normally gain their next rank in the following promotion year. This promotion year will include a set date (dependent on rank) for all those selected to promote – this is their substantive promotion date. However, the promotion year will also include a window to promote, where acting rank may be awarded. The date on which a pre-selected Serviceperson takes up their new post depends on finding the balance between the needs of the Service and the needs of the individual; the individual's career manager, their future employer and the individual all play a role in this process. Individuals are selected for the best appointment available for their career progression, job aspirations and knowledge, skills and experience.

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Demobbing dilemma is damaging morale



RUNNING THE redundancy gauntlet for two years has had a terrible effect on the morale of our family – how many others feel the same? My husband has been on the eligibility list for every tranche; to be told you may be surplus to requirements is demoralising in itself. So each time we've sat down as a family and discussed the viability of volunteering for redundancy.

Weighing up the pros and cons and going through everything with a fine toothcomb – finances, housing, schools, jobs for us both; and each time we've decided to wait it out, see if we are pushed rather than jump ourselves.

I've seen many of our friends going through the same thing; some reluctantly left, some have been desperate to leave

but been told they're staying.

So what kind of Army do we have left behind? One that's overworked, and arguably underpaid given the paltry pay rises of recent times, and one that's undermanned given the unrealistic expectation that 30,000 reservists can be recruited and trained quickly. I hope AFF will be keeping a close eye on the morale of those who are left.

Name & address supplied

Response from Catherine Spencer, AFF Chief Executive: Thank you very much for your letter which neatly sums up the views of many families who have faced redundancy.

AFF has highlighted concerns such as these to the highest level of Army command and Government. We are keeping a close eye on families who are left behind. Our Working Hours' Survey, launched in September will give you a

chance to express your views – details will be on our website – www.aff.org.uk

My husband has been eligible for redundancy in tranche two and three and I am acutely aware of the feeling you describe. However, I am heartened by the largely empathetic way in which Army command have dealt with redundancy.

Director Manning Army has briefed me before each announcement to ensure that AFF is well-informed. It is clear that making soldiers redundant is not something they wanted to do and they are very aware of the effect it is having on the morale of those left.

AFF will continue to work to ensure that command is aware of the grass root views and we will report to the Armed Forces Pay Review Body in October to express these opinions further.

AFF's next Families' Conference will be in autumn 2014 and I urge families to attend to raise these issues.

Unfair allowance for families' capital move



WE ARE a group of wives from a regiment due to move to the London area. While our Welfare Team has been excellent in helping to prepare us, there is one aspect we feel is completely unfair.

Now the MOD has removed the London Allowance from Senior NCOs, it's making London a less attractive posting for Service personnel. Not only has the cost of living gone up in general, but we foresee that our car insurance and household insurances will rise.

However, Junior NCOs will receive

allowances which increase their wage by more than £400. This would be welcomed by SNCOS and their families.

We believe this is a case of indirect discrimination, defined as "when a working condition or rule disadvantages one group of people more than another". Surely part of the incentive for gaining promotion is also financial reward?

We read with interest a letter sent to Postbag last year and quote: "The Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) has been unable to review the Recruitment and Retention Allowance (London) because of insufficient evidence from the MOD. On visits to London, the AFPRB said that they heard strong views from Service

personnel, who considered this a divisive measure and unfair, as all ranks faced the same issues."

During the last year, can anyone confirm if subsequent visits to London have taken place and if a new review is underway or due to be carried out?

Name & address supplied

Response from PS10 (Allowances): The MOD is resubmitting a paper of evidence to the AFPRB on the RRA(L) broadly seeking to restore a fairer allowance to all ranks within the bounds of what is affordable. The AFPRB will publish their findings in March 2014 in their annual report.



Slow response



MY SISTER has recently left the Army and has had several

difficulties from being a single soldier, one of which is highly frustrating.

She needed to contact Manning and Career Management Division (MCM Div) for information to send to a company who could become her employer.

As she has served out of the country with the Army the

organisation asked for a Criminal Record Bureau check. She informed MCM Div that this was something that needed to be done quite quickly to help her get the job.

She received an email thanking her and stating she would receive something in 40 days!

I think this is outrageous and this could stop her from securing employment.

I can actually see the headline now: "Soldier made redundant loses out on new job due to the MOD being short-staffed!"

Name & address supplied

Response from Miss Fiona McCulloch MBE, SO1 Parliamentary & Disclosures Branch: Regrettably, because of civil service cuts and increasing volumes of enquiries we cannot answer enquiries as quickly as we would like.

In the last financial year, my Branch received 66,892 written enquiries (the ninth increase in ten years) and 62,156 telephone enquiries, while we have had a 12 per cent reduction in staffing.

We try to answer enquiries as quickly as possible and do prioritise requests where employment or health issues are the focus.

However, the volume of these types of requests is such that they are completed in date order of receipt so that individuals are not being disadvantaged.

We do tell enquirers of the likely time scale for completion – 40 days for these types of enquiry which is in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 – to manage expectations.

However, other less urgent requests are taking considerably longer to be actioned. I regret that the situation is unlikely to improve in the near future given the recent announcements on further cuts to the civil service.

The Service Leaver's Pack which is issued just prior to discharge is intended to assist individuals in obtaining civilian employment.

If your soldier has not yet received this, they should contact their last unit in the first instance.



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Family tickets are for two adults and two children. Tickets subject to availability and must be used between 22 November and 6 January (closed on Christmas Day). Session times must be stipulated for Ice Skating and Zippos Circus. Tickets cannot be exchanged. To enter, see page three. Mark postal entries "Wonderland".



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