



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Ministry of Defence

The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans





The Nation's Commitment: Cross-Government Support to our Armed Forces, their Families and Veterans

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Defence
and the Minister of State for the Armed Forces
By Command of Her Majesty

July 2008

Cm 7424

£13.90

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ISBN: 978 0 10 174242 9

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Foreword

Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP



Our Armed Forces are second to none. The demands we impose on them in the course of their duty are unique. These obligations set them apart from others who serve and protect society. Their hardships are also felt by their families, and by many veterans too. I am determined to ensure that they are fairly treated.

The nation has a commitment to our Service personnel, their families and veterans. This requires us to ensure that the unusual demands of serving in the Armed Forces do not result in unfairness for those who serve and to recognise the special sacrifice made by some members of the Armed Forces and their families.

This is why I commissioned this work. It builds upon the recent study by Quentin Davies MP to achieve appropriate recognition for the Armed Forces. But it goes much further. It is aimed at all the Armed Forces - regular, reservist, veteran or family. On behalf of the nation, this Government will deliver the pledges it has made in this Paper.

Gordon Brown

GORDON BROWN

Introduction

Secretary of State for Defence

Minister of State for the Armed Forces



Our Armed Forces are a force for good. Working with them is a privilege. It brings home just how much is being asked of them and how difficult their lives can be. In Iraq and Afghanistan in particular they are risking injury and death as they provide the security, space and expertise necessary for the Iraqis and Afghans to rebuild their countries. But all around the world every day they demonstrate their courage, dedication and professionalism in the service of their country. They are a credit to the nation.

As a government we decided to ask all departments what more could and should be done to demonstrate our commitment to the Armed Forces and our gratitude for their service and sacrifice.

This Command Paper is the result of that process, and it offers a comprehensive framework to address these issues. Two principles underpin it. First, it is designed to end any disadvantage that armed service imposes on our people, their families, or our veterans. It specifically seeks to counter the difficulties that follow from being required to move around the country or the world, and identifies those areas where special treatment is needed to achieve this. Second, the Paper sets out how we can better support and recognise those who have been wounded in the service of their country.

This is the first time that this has been done across Government and we are determined to make it endure. We are grateful for all the work that has gone into it, from the Ministry of Defence, other government departments, the Devolved Administrations and the three Services themselves. We believe it represents a significant change, but it is the Armed Forces who must be the judge.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Des Browne', written over a horizontal line.

DES BROWNE

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Ainsworth', written over a horizontal line.

BOB AINSWORTH



Chapter 1: The Context

- 1.1** Providing security for the nation and for its citizens is the most important responsibility of Government¹. Crucial to this are the regular and reserve Armed Forces. Together they serve to protect and safeguard the United Kingdom and its overseas territories and to support the Government's foreign policy. The Armed Forces are a force for good. In recent decades they have: liberated the Falkland Islands; contributed to a peaceful resolution of the troubles in Northern Ireland; helped to liberate Kuwait; contributed to the restoration of legitimate government in Sierra Leone; relieved suffering in the Balkans and Africa; countered narcotics and supported security on the high seas; provided our strategic nuclear deterrent; and, at home, played a pivotal role in response to flooding, the foot and mouth crisis and in sustaining essential public services. At present they stand ready for every eventuality whilst nation-building and fighting global terrorism on two fronts in Iraq and Afghanistan.
- 1.2** The Armed Forces are also vital national institutions. Reservists live and work in our communities, spreading experience, skills and values acquired from the military. The Cadet Forces play a key role in developing the young. On average, over 20,000 people leave the Services every year. They leave better educated, fit, skilled and with compassion, confidence, a strong work ethic and team spirit. These qualities provide employers with valuable employees and society with responsible citizens. They are an important asset to the nation.
- 1.3** The demands of service in the Armed Forces are unique, notably the absolute requirement to follow orders whatever the danger. Servicemen and women have a legal liability to exercise lethal force, often in violent circumstances, and to accept without question the risk of harm and living with the consequences of their

actions. These obligations set them apart from all others who serve and protect society. They must continue to stand apart and we must continue to be able to rely on them.

- 1.4** Key to achieving this is ensuring that the relationship between Service people, Government and the nation is mutually supporting. Each must play its part in cementing that complementary relationship.
- 1.5 People and Society.** Increasingly few people have experienced National Service and the number passing through today's Armed Forces is smaller than it was – so personal knowledge of the Armed Forces is diminishing. Those who might join the Armed Forces have aspirations and expectations that are higher than ever. Their families are more complex and often find it harder to accept the demands of Service life. Routinely moving our forces around makes it harder for them to achieve home ownership and exercise choice in their lives. These factors all impact on the Armed Forces' ability to recruit and retain their people.
- 1.6 Military Commitments.** The Armed Forces must always be ready. They prepare for every eventuality and deploy whenever and wherever they are needed. Since 2002 they have operated beyond what was planned in an environment in which neither recruitment nor retention is easy. Consequently, many serving personnel and their families are finding it increasingly difficult to reconcile life in the Armed Forces with their expectations of a normal life. The impact of this is considerable, particularly on families. We underestimate it at our peril. In response, a range of measures has already been put in place by the Ministry of Defence (MOD). There have been improvements to the deployment welfare package and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, full acceptance of Armed Forces Pay Review Body recommendations commitment bonuses, financial retention initiatives and increased spending on accommodation and healthcare. These – and others delivered by the UK Government and the Devolved

¹ 'The National Security Strategy of the United Kingdom, Security in an Independent World', Mar 08: http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/documents/security/national_security_strategy.pdf

Administrations – are laid out in Chapter 3 of this Paper. Support for our Service personnel, their families and veterans extends beyond MOD alone. We recognise that more must be done.

The Essential Starting Point – No Disadvantage

1.7 Life in the Armed Forces is rewarding. It is also characterised by willing acceptance of the need for selfless duty (often involving dangerous operations that can result in terrible personal sacrifice) and acceptance of restrictions on lifestyle. These conditions apply not only to those in uniform but also to their families and to the many veterans who live with the consequences of their service. Government has a moral obligation, on behalf of the nation, to honour its responsibility towards its Armed Forces. *The essential starting point is that those who serve must not be disadvantaged by virtue of what they do* – and this will sometimes call for degrees of special treatment. The nation's commitment to the Armed Forces is laid out in this Command Paper, and applies the following enduring principles:

a. **As Much Lifestyle Choice as Any Other Citizen.** Despite the unique demands of their profession, Service people and their families should be able to manage their lives as effortlessly as anyone else. Serving the nation as a sailor, soldier or airman must not be a barrier to routine life events such as getting a mortgage, opening a bank account, finding a dentist, accessing benefits, applying for social housing, or applying for residency or citizenship for oneself or one's dependants. And since about 70% of officers and 40% of other ranks serve for well over a decade, their needs and the demands of the Service will change whilst their uniform is worn – such people must be offered real and sustainable choices to achieve their own balance between the demands of military life, personal development, Service mobility and family stability.

- b. **Continuity of Public Services.** Service personnel and their dependants are obliged to move home much more frequently than most people – often they have no choice of where or when. This risks disadvantaging them in relation to others – for example, in the allocation of school places, or provision for special educational needs for their children, and in access to benefits and core NHS services. And this may happen repeatedly. Service people and their families have borne this for generations. This is not just. Service personnel and their dependants must receive continuity of public services wherever they are based and whenever they are obliged to move.
- c. **Proper Return for Sacrifice.** Servicemen and women accept conditions that impose limitations on how they live their lives, and they can suffer terrible physical and mental injury – since 2001, in the course of operations and training exercises, over 2,000 people have been seriously injured or wounded and over 350 killed including 285 Service personnel in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001². Service personnel will receive the treatment and welfare support they need for as long as they require it. And that need often extends through life and is equally applicable to families.
- d. **The Armed Forces' Constituency Matters.** The Armed Forces' constituency is larger than many people imagine – at its core are those currently serving and their immediate families, the volunteer reserve forces and the immediate families of those currently mobilised, veterans, and those receiving widows and widowers pensions. This is a total of over 5 million people. Extended families, regular reserves and cadets, the immediate families of veterans, and others, would bring

² As at 15 July 2008.

the total to over 10 million. Formally acknowledging this fact for the first time, Government departments, and where appropriate the Devolved Administrations, will take account of the impact on the Armed Forces' constituency and the strategic effect upon the Armed Forces when making policy or considering legislative proposals.



Chapter 2: What We Will Do

- 2.1** This chapter sets out the new measures being taken to complement existing provision. Combined, they aim to remove the disadvantage imposed by Service life on our personnel, their families and veterans. Moreover, they address the circumstances where Service justifies special treatment. Chapter 1 has set out the context and rationale for them. More detail where needed on individual measures is at Annex A.
- 2.2** The initiatives and commitments set out here include some which require the support of more than one Government Department and/or Devolved Administration, and some which are wholly the responsibility of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Service personnel and their families make a vital contribution to the whole of the United Kingdom. Many of the recommendations in this Paper are devolved matters in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and decisions on their implementation fall to the relevant Devolved Administration. This is recognised by the close working between the UK Government and the Devolved Administrations of Scotland and Wales in making the commitments that follow. This collaboration will continue as we work to deliver on these promises. The proposals, as they apply to transferred matters, have also been sent to Northern Ireland for its Executive to consider collectively.
- 2.3** The cost of each measure laid out here will unless otherwise stated fall to the Department and, where relevant, Devolved Administration responsible for introducing the measure. In delivering many of these initiatives, we will be seeking the support and active involvement of Service charities that play (and will continue to play) a vital role in supporting Service personnel, their families and veterans.
- 2.4** These initiatives have been informed by wide consultation, including with the regular and reserve Armed Forces, families, veterans, their advocates and supporting charities (further details are at Annex B).

Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

- 2.5 Armed Forces Compensation Scheme Review.** Under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), payments are made to members of the Armed Forces who are injured or fall ill due to service. It was introduced in 2005 replacing the War Pension Scheme (WPS). An AFCS award to Service or ex-Service personnel can be made up of two parts – a lump sum payment from a tariff graduated according to the seriousness of the condition and, for more serious injuries or illnesses, a Guaranteed Income Payment.
- a.** The upfront lump sum payment for injury under the AFCS will be doubled for the most serious injuries, including, for example, loss of a limb or the most severe burns. All recipients, according to severity of injury, will have an uplift of between 10 and 100% in their upfront lump sum payments. MOD also intends to confer additional benefits to extend this effect to those who have already made claims under the Scheme. We will conduct a short consultation as we did with the changes we made to the rules governing multiple injuries, and then lay amending legislation before Parliament.
 - b.** The Guaranteed Income Payment element will remain unchanged. It will continue to provide the most seriously injured with a substantial tax-free income following discharge for the rest of their lives to compensate for their potential loss of earnings and pension. This aspect of the current arrangements has not always been well understood in the media when AFCS payments have been falsely contrasted with other kinds of compensation payments designed to cover lifetime costs. To give an example, under the current arrangements, a 25 year old seriously injured soldier receives the maximum lump sum of £285,000, plus a guaranteed income payment of £19,000 a year tax free and index-linked for life. If he lives to average

life expectancy, this is a further million pounds, tax free, on top of the lump sum payment. This will continue, but the lump sum payment will be doubled from £285,000 to £570,000, meaning that the maximum total compensation under the new arrangements is now likely to be over £1.5M.

Health

- 2.6 Continuation of the Military Ward in Birmingham.** We will establish a military ward within the Birmingham New Hospital, building upon the military-managed ward at Selly Oak established in 2007. The new military ward will offer the best possible care to Service casualties and support to their families, recognising that their needs are often distinct from those of civilian patients. We will continue to invest in Headley Court, building on the recent announcement of £24M to expand its facilities.
- 2.7 Prosthetic Limb Provision.** The standard of prosthetic limb provision to injured personnel by the Defence Medical Services will as a minimum be matched post-Service by the NHS in Great Britain.
- 2.8 Access to NHS Dentistry.** Service mobility and the frequent need to find an NHS dentist in the new location can make access to dentistry difficult for Service families. We will address the needs of families in a variety of ways, including making use of facilities on military bases or providing mobile services in those areas, or making use of spare capacity elsewhere. Trials will begin in England by December 2008 and complete by December 2009; results will be rolled-out as soon as possible. In addition to their wider programmes to improve access to dentistry, the health departments have highlighted the need to ensure that Service families can obtain the NHS dental services they require. They will work with the NHS to ensure that health areas with significant Service populations plan with their military communities in mind to achieve this.
- 2.9 NHS Waiting List – Retention of Place.** Service mobility can cause repeated loss of place on waiting lists. We will address this. When patients move across the UK, previous waiting time will be taken into account with the expectation that treatment will be within national waiting time standards. As with any person moving between hospitals in the UK, Service members and their families will be treated as quickly as possible in order of clinical priority. This could mean in practice that an individual sometimes has a different time to wait.
- 2.10 NHS-delivered IVF.** Mobility undermines IVF treatment. MOD will ensure that those undergoing IVF do not move until the cycle of treatment is complete.
- 2.11 Veterans’ Health Needs.** We need to improve our information about how veterans’ health needs differ from those of the population generally. Most healthcare professionals do not have direct knowledge of the Armed Forces and may not be sensitive to their particular needs. We will look at whether more needs to be done to assess the healthcare needs of veterans. We will raise awareness among healthcare professionals about the needs of veterans so that these needs are met.
- 2.12 Roll-out of Community Mental Health following Pilots.** Mental health services do not always fully address the needs of veterans. We are establishing pilot schemes to provide community mental health services for veterans in 6 locations across Great Britain. These pilots concentrate on improving veterans’ access to mental health services. Community Mental Health Services will be provided across Great Britain, taking into account the lessons learned from these pilots. In addition, meeting the needs of veterans will be an important element in the selection of the next round of psychological therapies sites in England for 2009/10. In Northern Ireland, this commitment is met by the Royal Irish Aftercare service.

Housing

- 2.13 Affordable Homes.** Welsh and Scottish Ministers are making Service people a priority group within their shared equity schemes. This will be equivalent to the provisions for Armed Forces personnel in the existing Key Worker Living scheme in England. The Prime Minister announced that a £20M pilot scheme to promote home ownership for Service personnel would be launched in 2009 by the MOD. This will be based on shared equity or rent-to-buy principles. We will announce its details this year. Discussions are taking place with commercial providers, housing associations and other stakeholders to establish how we will provide a practical vehicle to deliver increased home ownership. Our aim will be to maximise the number of servicemen and women who can get onto the housing ladder.
- 2.14 Defence Estates.** MOD owns, leases, manages and maintains substantial land and housing assets. By the end of the year Defence Estates will publish a strategy of how these will be managed over the next 10 years.
- 2.15 Adapted Social Housing.** Seriously injured Service personnel can face delays in obtaining suitable adapted social housing where they are not given sufficient priority. Seriously injured personnel in England and Wales should be given 'additional preference' (i.e. high priority for social housing) and we will issue statutory guidance to reinforce this message. Scottish Ministers will remind landlords of the existing high priority that seriously injured personnel in Scotland receive for adapted social housing and will repeat this in future allocations guidance.
- 2.16 Adapted Affordable Homes.** Service people in England have Key Worker status and are therefore entitled to the Key Worker Living scheme. For injured personnel, the cost of adapting homes to cater for specific needs is not always covered (by the Key Worker scheme). However, injured Service personnel who buy a home through this scheme may be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which covers the cost of adaptations. The Welsh Assembly Government will also support this initiative. Injured Service personnel buying a home through the Low-cost Initiative for First Time buyers in Scotland may also be eligible for a grant from the local authority to cover the cost of any necessary adaptations.
- 2.17 Disabled Facilities Grant Means Test – Disregard of AFCS/WPS Payments.** AFCS and WPS payments for the most seriously disabled, as set out in the supplementary annex, will be disregarded in the means test for DFG in England and Wales. In Scotland this means test is being considered for discontinuation. This means that grants for housing adaptation, up to £30,000, will not be reduced by AFCS/WPS compensation payments.
- 2.18 Affordable Homes – Extending Access.** Although Servicemen and women in England have Key Worker status, many do not have the opportunity to purchase a home. We are therefore extending Key Worker status to enable Service leavers to access the Key Worker Living scheme 12 months after discharge. Scottish Ministers have agreed to extend access to their affordable housing schemes to Service leavers for a similar 12 months after discharge. The Welsh Assembly Government will reflect this commitment in its ongoing review of its scheme.
- 2.19 Social Housing – Local Connection.** Local connection can be a factor in the allocation of social housing. Current legislation prevents Service personnel from establishing a local connection with the area in which they are serving. We are changing the legislation in England and Wales, enabling Service personnel to establish a local connection, so improving access to social housing. Scottish Ministers are consulting on changing legislation so that employment/residence connected to the Armed Forces constitutes a local connection for the purposes of homelessness legislation in the same way as civilian employment/residence.
- 2.20 Certificate of Cessation.** Service people occupying Service family accommodation

and approaching their discharge date can request a Certificate of Cessation up to six months before their last day of service. Some local authorities may not accept that this certificate demonstrates impending homelessness, and may insist on MOD obtaining a possession order before providing housing assistance. We have issued statutory guidance, advising authorities not to insist on a possession order. We will establish the extent of the problem and take further steps as necessary to ensure that local authorities do not insist on a possession order where a Certificate of Cessation has been issued. Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Assembly Government have endorsed this approach.

2.21 Using MOD Void Property. Service leavers can occupy void MOD property as an interim measure after leaving. Where this is the case we will work with Local Authorities to ensure that the use of surplus stock in this way does not inadvertently disadvantage Service leavers who are seeking social housing. MOD is also looking at whether it could make some of its existing empty properties available long-term to injured personnel who prefer to remain within a familiar military environment.

2.22 Homelessness. To help prevent homelessness, the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) will contribute £400,000 to provide new supported housing for Service leavers in England to enable them to make a successful transition to civilian life. We will work with the Housing Corporation to deliver this initiative which will also be supported by MOD gifting land. We will explore opportunities with Welsh and Scottish Ministers and ex-Service charities on housing ventures that would do more to meet the accommodation needs of veterans in Wales and Scotland.

Education and Skills

2.23 School Place Allocation. Access to schools is more difficult for Service children due to the frequency and short notice postings of their parents. In the Devolved Administrations the Service community

broadly is content with school place allocation. In England, the Department for Children, Schools and Families is seeking Service families' views on improving admissions. As part of his review of school admissions for 2009, the Schools Adjudicator will identify whether there is any disadvantage for Service families so that it can be removed.

2.24 Educational Attainment. We will review the educational performance of Service children in England and identify where there is underachievement. Any disadvantage identified will be addressed, if appropriate including through the review of the Dedicated Schools Grant for 2011. Additional funding is already provided to schools in Northern Ireland with Service children. We will share any evidence of underachievement with the Devolved Administrations so that they can act accordingly.

2.25 Special Education Needs (SEN). Children with SEN receive learning support, continuity of which can be undermined by mobility. In England, we will ensure SEN support for Service children will be uninterrupted even when moving. This will be achieved by sending guidance to schools and local authorities and reflecting this guidance in the next revision of the statutory SEN Code of Practice. Following its review of the statutory assessment and statementing framework for SEN, the Welsh Assembly Government has agreed to do likewise. Northern Ireland will be consulting all relevant stakeholders, including the Service community, on the delivery of SEN support. Scotland operates a different system, focussed around Additional Support Needs (ASN) rather than SEN. Scottish Education Authorities are under a statutory duty to manage transitional arrangements for children with ASN as they move within, or out of the Scottish education system, and to respond quickly and appropriately when such children arrive into the system from outside Scotland.

2.26 State Boarding Schools in England – Priority Access and Increased Provision. Boarding school education can reduce the

impact of Service mobility on children's education. Boarding schools are expensive but MOD supports parents through the Continuity of Education Allowance (worth up to £15,333 tax free per child per year). We will prioritise Service children's access to state boarding schools, second only to children in care. We will also increase the number of places at state boarding schools by well over 100 over the next 3 years. Additionally, through the academies programme, 3 new state boarding schools are planned. Two of these (Wellington and Lincoln Priory) are well situated for the Services and will provide an additional 160 places by 2011.

2.27 Education and Training for Service

Leavers. Those joining the Armed Forces often commit to this career path before they can take advantage of opportunities in further and higher education. All Service leavers with over 6 years' service will have the opportunity to achieve their first Level 3 qualification (A-level or vocational equivalent) free from tuition fees. Alternatively, for those who want to progress to higher levels, we will fund all tuition fees for a first Foundation or full degree. This means that a sailor, soldier or airman can join the Armed Forces from school, secure in the knowledge that six or more years' service will be rewarded with the opportunity of a college or university education without tuition fees. Although they have differing national qualification frameworks and fee arrangements, Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Assembly Government have agreed to put in place similar measures.

2.28 Basic Skills for Families. The impact of Service mobility can make it difficult for families (partners and adult children living at home) to access further education. We will open up new opportunities to access Basic Skills training, improving literacy and numeracy, by funding delivery through Armed Forces education facilities spare capacity. Although they have differing national qualification frameworks and funding and fee arrangements, the Devolved Administrations will encourage or continue similar provision.

Transport

2.29 Concessionary Bus Travel. By 1 April 2011, the statutory bus concession in England will be extended to include Service personnel and veterans under the age of 60, who were seriously injured in service and who are resident in England. A similar scheme already exists in Northern Ireland. Scottish Ministers will consider by April 2009 how to take forward this proposal as part of the three year review currently being carried out on the Scotland-wide Free Bus Scheme for Older and Disabled People. The Welsh Assembly Government is also undertaking a review of its concessionary fares scheme and this will include plans to extend eligibility to concessionary bus travel for Service personnel and veterans who were seriously injured in service.

2.30 Blue Badge – Continuous Automatic Entitlement. The Blue Badge Scheme provides a range of parking concessions across the UK for people with severe mobility problems. We will now introduce a scheme so that severely disabled veterans in England will receive automatic entitlement to a Blue Badge without further assessment. Scottish Ministers will also implement this change. The Welsh Assembly Government is consulting on plans for a Reform Strategy for the Blue Badge Scheme in Wales. An intention to implement this proposal will be considered as part of the review.

Support for Families

2.31 Childcare Provision. Access to flexible and affordable childcare is made particularly difficult for many Service families because of dislocation from extended family, the remote location of many establishments and the absence of one parent at short notice and often for long periods. English and Welsh local authorities now have a duty to ensure there is sufficient childcare available for them, and we will ensure that Service families' needs are fully addressed in both assessments of childcare sufficiency and in closing gaps in the supply of childcare. In Scotland, contacts will be established

between MOD and childcare partnerships in local authorities where there is a significant concentration of Service personnel and their families in order to ensure that Service needs are taken into account in the childcare partnership review of supply and demand. Decisions on local service delivery matters will continue to rest with local authorities and their partners.

2.32 Local authorities will also ensure that the provision of new integrated family services being delivered in England through Sure Start Children's Centres and Extended Services are fully accessible to Service families and their children. This will involve taking into account the location and particular needs of Service families, including using outreach services to improve access on military establishments. The Welsh Assembly Government will make equivalent arrangements.

2.33 Inquests – Independent Support to Families. MOD remains committed to the full, independent investigation of Service deaths by coroners' inquests. Over the last two years we have provided additional funds and support to coroners - we will continue to work with them to improve the process. We recognise how important, but also how difficult, an inquest can be for a bereaved family. We will explore, with partners such as the Royal British Legion and the War Widows Association, how we can make the inquest process as rapid and supportive to families as possible.

2.34 Support to Bereaved Families. We recognise that the loss of a Service person affects the whole of the bereaved family, not just the next of kin or nominated emergency contacts, on whom we traditionally tend to focus our contact and support. We will review our procedures to ensure that in future sufficient account is taken of the needs of the wider family.

Benefits

2.35 Access to State Benefits. Service life overseas can impact on accompanying families in two ways. First, it may reduce the ability of spouses and civil partners to

obtain paid employment and maintain a National Insurance contribution record – this may adversely affect their contribution record for basic State Pension as well as their access to contribution-based working-age benefits. Second, families may not always be treated as if they were in the UK when assessing eligibility to certain entitlements. We will tackle both these areas of disadvantage.

2.36 Service Family Access to Employment Programmes. The impact of Service life reduces the ability of accompanying family members to obtain paid employment. Partners of Service personnel will be added to the groups who have most difficulty getting into the labour market and receive special access to the New Deal and successor programmes.

2.37 Seamless Transfer onto Benefits. Incapacity Benefit (from October 2008 the new Employment and Support Allowance) is paid weekly to sick and disabled people under State Pension age who are unable to work. To claim Incapacity Benefit/ Employment and Support Allowance, a person must be medically assessed. When a Service medical board decides a severely disabled person can no longer be employed in the Armed Forces, the person is discharged. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will now use the Service medical board evidence, in place of a face-to-face medical assessment by DWP, up to 3 months in advance of eligibility.

Building Careers

2.38 Flexible Careers in the Armed Forces. Defence Career Partnering is an innovative project seeking flexible careers to allow individuals, employers and MOD to co-operate. We will continue to develop this project to optimise the two-way flow between Service and civilian employment. All Government Departments will support this as 'partners' if asked to do so. Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Assembly Government have agreed their Administrations will do likewise.

2.39 Support to the Volunteer Reserve Forces. Volunteer reserves are vital to defence.

There has been an unprecedented increase in their deployment in the last decade. This continuing is contingent upon the support of their 'main' employers. We will champion the reserve forces, addressing where possible the limitations of some public sector employers. UK Cabinet Ministers and First Ministers of Scotland and Wales endorse the following SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers) Statement of Employer Support:

"Thousands of members of the Reserve Forces (Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve, Territorial Army and Royal Auxiliary Air Force) have been mobilised for full-time service overseas in recent years. When called upon, these men and women serve alongside their colleagues in the regular Forces with courage and dedication, and often at considerable personal sacrifice. We admire their commitment and are determined to support all current and future employees in the Reserve Forces."

2.40 Support to Employment of Service Families. When a Service person moves location, their family often moves too. This causes unemployment for partners and children beyond full-time education but still at home. We will help Service families to change their public sector jobs when Service life obliges them to move. Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Assembly Government have agreed their Administrations will do likewise.

2.41 Employment of Service Leavers in the Public Sector. We will develop with public sector employers tailored access routes for Service leavers. An example in England is 'Transition to Teaching' which aims to address national shortfalls in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) teaching. Service leavers with high levels of technical and instructional expertise have much to offer this scheme. There are many other such opportunities. Scottish Ministers and the Welsh Assembly Government have agreed that their Administrations will support this commitment.

Foreign & Commonwealth Service Personnel

2.42 Foreign and Commonwealth (F&C) citizens have a long and distinguished history of Service. Nearly 12,000 of today's Service personnel, including Gurkhas, are from F&C countries. We recognise their unique circumstances. UK Borders Agency (UKBA), an agency of the Home Office, will continue to work closely with MOD to resolve immigration and nationality issues affecting F&C Service personnel.

2.43 As soon as practicable, UKBA will:

- a. Create an avenue to settlement for dependants of F&C Service personnel who have been in continuous service for a minimum of five years, subject to conditions set out in Annex A;
- b. Create an avenue to enable unmarried/same-sex partners of F&C Service personnel to apply for Leave To Enter/Leave To Remain, subject to conditions set out in Annex A;
- c. Treat F&C Service personnel on operations or postings outside the UK at the start of the residential qualifying period for naturalisation as a British citizen as though they had been in the UK at that time;
- d. Modify the content and delivery of the Life in the UK Test for F&C Service personnel on operations or postings outside the UK to facilitate their naturalisation as a British citizen;
- e. Allow children born outside the UK to F&C Service personnel on operations or postings overseas to be able to acquire British citizenship where this has the consent of both parents.

2.44 An important effect of the first of these changes will be that once the family members of F&C Service personnel gain settlement they will be eligible for Home Fees status and student support (providing normal criteria are met).

- 2.45** In addition to these specific changes to immigration and citizenship arrangements, the UKBA has agreed to a general principle that F&C Service personnel should not be disadvantaged in comparison with non-military individuals permitted to enter or remain in the UK and gain employment through the Points Based System (and, by extension, their families should similarly not be disadvantaged).
- 2.46** The Earned Citizenship project will both simplify and strengthen the UK's immigration and citizenship system. In designing the Earned Citizenship architecture, UKBA will ensure no detrimental impact on the dependants of serving personnel on operations or postings overseas. UKBA will consider the circumstances of such dependants in developing the new journey to citizenship.

Pay

- 2.47 Armed Forces Pay Review Body.** The peculiarities of Service life are such that independent review is the appropriate way to establish pay. We have implemented in full every basic pay recommendation of the AFPRB in the last ten years, including in the last two years among the highest awards in the public sector, and we reiterate our commitment to this process.



Chapter 3: What We Have Already Done

- 3.1** Chapter 2 set out the new commitments and pledges that Government and the Devolved Administrations are now making to Service personnel, their families and veterans. This chapter details that which is already in place. Together, both chapters will begin to deliver the support our Armed Forces need as they face the future.

What We Have Done in the Last 6 Months

- 3.2** The following are recent developments:

- a.** An improved commitment bonus payment has been agreed. Effective from 1 April 2009, it will be worth up to a maximum of £15,000. This is to encourage other ranks in their early years to serve longer in the regular Armed Forces and to reward their loyalty in doing so.
- b.** The first ever tax free Operational Allowance, introduced in Autumn 2006, has increased. This daily allowance is paid to personnel on specific operations. It is now worth £2,380 to those who undertake six month tours. In the last year, £64.7M from the Reserve was spent on 43,827 Operational Allowance payments.
- c.** Over £100M was spent in 2007/08 on Longer Separation Allowance payments for nearly 10.5 million days of separation experienced by Servicemen and women and the qualifying period previously required for this allowance has been removed.
- d.** Additional Ministry of Defence (MOD) funding of £24M has been allocated to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court. It will enable MOD to expand the Centre's clinical facilities. This includes enhanced provision for prosthetics, treatment areas, imaging facilities and accommodation.
- e.** Reservists who are seriously injured on duty are now able to be treated by the Defence Medical Service.
- f.** The Armed Forces Childcare Voucher Scheme has provided the opportunity for Service personnel to save up to £1,200 a year on their childcare costs through reduced tax and National Insurance contributions.
- g.** In addition to the new home ownership scheme set out in the previous chapter, Service personnel now have access to the Open Market Home Buy scheme and the Key Worker Living scheme in all English regions. In Scotland, Service personnel now have priority access, alongside social rented tenants, to the shared equity scheme, the Low-cost Initiative for First Time buyers. This all improves access to affordable housing for Service personnel.
- h.** In partnership with the Royal Mail, we have extended indefinitely the free post scheme for small packages for those serving on operations.
- i.** MOD became a national Awarding Body for qualifications in early 2008. It is now being strongly supported by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in the future development of accreditation schemes. We can now give Servicemen and women nationally recognised qualifications for areas of Defence training where, previously, no formal civilian recognition was available.
- j.** A Council Tax relief payment, worth £142 tax free for an average six month tour, is given by MOD to personnel on operations.
- k.** Scottish Ministers have launched the new Scottish Veterans Fund, complementing MOD's Veterans Challenge Fund, to assist projects which support veterans and their families.

What We Have Done in the Last Decade

- 3.3 Defence Funding.** The 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review signalled

the continuation of the longest period of sustained real terms growth in the Defence budget for over twenty years. The Defence budget will be 11% higher in real terms by 2010/11 than it was in 1997. The top priorities in allocating these resources are success on operations, and support to our people. Although this is not well known, the net additional cost of current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan is met from the Treasury Reserve, not the Defence budget. Around £10Bn has been spent in this way since 2001, £3Bn of which has been on urgently needed new equipment.

Health

3.4 Healthcare. The last decade has seen significant improvement in healthcare provision for our Armed Forces:

- a. At the heart is the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine and its partnership with the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. This is now widely recognised as a world class centre of best practice for military medical education, research, polytrauma care and the treatment of operational casualties.
- b. State of the art deployed field hospitals using the latest medical techniques and innovations can deliver to the front line specialist care normally found only in a major trauma centre. Constantly improving aero medical evacuation capability can transfer critically injured and ventilated patients back to the UK within 24 hours of injury. Prospects for survival and subsequent quality of life for the seriously injured have improved significantly compared with even a decade ago.
- c. The Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court is a centre of excellence for rehabilitation and prosthetics. It is supported by 15 regional rehabilitation units in the UK and Germany.
- d. Fifteen military departments of community mental health, together

with satellite centres overseas and mental health professionals deployed on operations, have improved access to mental health care. They work to National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence standards and are tuned to the particular needs of the Services. A reserve forces mental health assessment and treatment programme was launched in November 2006 for those demobilised after operations since 2003. Veterans with operational service since 1982 now have access to expert mental health assessments through MOD's Medical Assessment Programme at St Thomas' Hospital in London.

- e. The long standing arrangements for priority NHS treatment in Great Britain for war pensioners have been extended to all veterans in relation to Service related conditions.
- f. A scheme to speed up vital secondary care for Service personnel through 'fast track programming' and 'accelerated access' has been established. This treatment can be in the public or private sector and enables the return of injured Service personnel as quickly as possible to the front line.

Housing

3.5 MOD Accommodation. The Government recognises that much needs to be improved across the defence estate after decades of under-investment. But a great deal has already been done or put in place for the future:

- a. Between 2001 and 2013 MOD will have invested some £1.4Bn in delivering new or improved single living accommodation. Since 2003, 26,000 bed spaces have been delivered with a further 30,000 planned by 2013.
- b. Since 2001, 13,000 Service family accommodation properties have been upgraded to the highest

standard and by 2013 all properties in Great Britain currently classified in the two lowest standards will be upgraded or disposed of. The number of properties classified in the top standard will increase from 59% to 68%.

- c. Over the next decade, some £8.4Bn will be spent on accommodation.
- d. The receipt, almost £1Bn, from the disposal of Chelsea Barracks will be channelled back into Armed Forces accommodation.

Education and Skills

3.6 Service Personnel Training and Education.

We continue to invest heavily in training and educating Service personnel from basic skills up to post graduate level. Supported by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS), MOD is one of the largest providers of apprenticeships in the country with over 7,300 completed annually. There is also a wide range of in-Service professional development schemes and sponsorships including the Learning Credits Scheme introduced in 1999. Learning Credits provide Service personnel with transferable skills for eventual return to civilian life. The last year alone saw 18,950 Standard Learning Credits paid at a cost of £2.2M. Furthermore, 25,400 Enhanced Learning Credits for higher level learning totalling nearly £22.4M have been made since April 2004. DIUS also invests significant resources in support of learning and skills development for all adults, including Service leavers.

- 3.7 Educating Service Children.** The Service Children's Education Forum has enabled MOD to work with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the education departments of the Devolved Administrations. This work includes a study into mitigating the effects of mobility. In 2007, as part of its work to make the Schools Admissions Code a statutory code, DCSF revised it to introduce measures that address the disadvantages of Service life. With specific

regard to Service families this required that local authorities and admission authorities must:

- a. Ensure that the needs of the children of these families are taken into account.
- b. Invite a Service representative to join the Admission Forum where there are significant concentrations of military personnel in an area.
- c. Accept a military postal address for applications from Service personnel.
- d. *Not* refuse a place to such a child because the family currently does not live in the local authority area.

Family and Welfare

- 3.8 Deployment Welfare Package.** Since the start of operations in Iraq in 2003, the Deployment Welfare Package has changed almost beyond recognition. The package now includes: since October 2007, 30 minutes free telephone calls a week including by satellite phone in forward locations and, since June 2008, a reduction in the cost of additional minutes for all troops serving in Afghanistan, Iraq and Kosovo from 89 to 11 pence per minute; free email and internet access (and a fourfold increase in the number of terminals); a new wi-fi service to enable private internet access within bed-spaces; free parcels and unlimited free letter post since September 2007; entitled rest and recuperation leave during a tour; post-operational tour leave on return; concessionary travel allowances for the families of those deployed to enable them to keep in touch with immediate relatives; and a number of financial rewards as described in paragraph 3.2. Those recovering from injury in UK hospitals receive the casualty welfare package that mirrors these benefits.

- 3.9 Welfare of Casualties and their Families.** MOD has enhanced the welfare arrangements for regular and reservist personnel injured on duty, their families and the bereaved.

- a. The development of the Defence Patient Tracking System has helped improve the medical, welfare and administrative processes through which injured personnel and their families are supported. All seriously injured personnel are now assigned a caseworker so that their recovery is as smooth as possible. Financial support to families visiting patients has been enhanced.
- b. In July 2007 MOD increased funeral grants (by £1,000). Funding to cover additional expenses such as books of condolence, transport and notices in the press has also been increased. MOD has also improved the provision of information at the outset of a board of inquiry to bereaved families. This is achieved by offering a briefing to ensure understanding of the board's purpose, as well as keeping families informed of the board's progress, in person or by letter every four weeks, until a copy of the report is available for the family. We have also enhanced the role of the visiting officer.

3.10 Bereaved Families. Over the last two years, the Government has made significant changes to the support we provide to families which have to go through the painful experience of an inquest. These include making extra resources available to the coroners who are faced with a considerable extra workload, in order to minimise backlogs, and encouraging the transfer of cases to a coroner nearer to where the families live. We have offered more assistance to families wishing to attend repatriation ceremonies or pre-inquest hearings at public expense, as well as providing better information. We have overhauled our own procedures in dealing with coroners and formed the Defence Inquest Unit to improve co-ordination and best practice.

Pay and Pensions

3.11 Pay. Pay rates for UK Service personnel are recommended annually by the independent Armed Forces' Pay Review Body (AFPRB). It gathers evidence from

many sources and meets a wide cross-section of regular and reserve Armed Forces personnel all over the world, often in operational environments. The AFPRB seeks to maintain broad pay comparability with similar civilian occupations while reflecting the unique demands of Service life. This Government has implemented in full and on time every basic pay recommendation made by the AFPRB in the last 10 years. This year Government agreed an increase in basic military salary of 2.6% for all ranks and an increase in the X-Factor by one percentage point (X-Factor is an adjustment to military pay in recognition of the conditions of service experienced by members of the Armed Forces compared to those in the civilian sector). This built on last year's increase of 3.3% in basic pay which was the highest award in the public sector and included a 9.4% increase for the most junior trained Service personnel, worth an additional £1,354 per annum. Basic pay is also part of a wider remuneration package. This includes specialist pay such as parachute, flying and diving pay, compensatory allowances and lump sum payments targeted at Service personnel in key areas where there are shortfalls and the improvements to the operational allowances described in paragraph 3.2 above. The AFPRB will continue its excellent work in providing independent advice to the Prime Minister on Armed Forces remuneration.

3.12 Pensions. In April 2005 MOD introduced a new Armed Forces Pension Scheme to meet the priorities of today's regular Service personnel and their families. At the same time, MOD introduced the Reserve Forces Pension Scheme for those reservists who are mobilised or who take up Full Time Reserve Service. Both schemes are non-contributory, final salary pension schemes.

Foreign & Commonwealth (F&C) Service Personnel

3.13 Immigration and British Citizenship. Since November 2006 F&C Service personnel have been able to seek British citizenship while still serving and can count time overseas on duty towards their residency qualifying period. Normally Service leavers need 4 years

qualifying service before they can settle in the UK. Since October 2007, the Home Office has applied discretion to this criteria for those medically discharged for operational reasons.

- 3.14 Gurkhas.** We have conducted a major review of Gurkha terms and conditions of service. As a result we have given serving Gurkhas and retired Gurkhas, going back to 1 July 1997, the same terms and conditions of pay and pensions as the rest of the British Army. 1997 marked the handover of Hong Kong from the UK to China and is the point at which Gurkhas became UK-based.

Reserves and Cadets

- 3.15 Reserve Forces.** The Reserve Forces Act (RFA) 1996 provided a wider range and more flexible forms of reservist service, which has enabled MOD and employers to provide over 20,000 reservists for operations in the last 10 years. The last decade also saw a much closer integration of reserves and regulars through better training, pay, allowances and welfare provision. A number of new safeguards and the SaBRE information organisation (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers) are designed to assist employers in supporting their reservist employees. In April 2005 new financial assistance legislation streamlined the claims process and improved the levels payable to both reservists and their employers. All this and more provides the basis for the review of reserve forces that will be published in the autumn.

- 3.16 Cadets.** Nationwide there are 132,000 young people in cadet forces organisations supported by over 25,000 adult volunteers. There are 88,000 cadets in the community-based Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps at 3,000 sites across the UK. There are a further 44,000 cadets in the 260 Combined Cadet Forces and the 200 community based Cadet Forces within secondary schools. They are an integral part of the wider youth effort by the Armed Forces and the MOD which includes outreach and work with the Prince's Trust. The independent Cadet Vocational Qualification Organisation gives every

cadet aged 16 or over the opportunity to gain nationally recognised vocational awards. MOD is working with the DCSF to expand cadet forces and give more young people access to the opportunities and benefits they bring - with a combination of extra cadet places in academies and disadvantaged schools, spare places in independent schools' CCFs offered to state pupils (building on the recent success of the London Schools Challenge), and new hybrid community state school cadet units.

- 3.17 Safeguarding Children.** *Working Together To Safeguard Children* provides statutory guidance on how to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children, including young people under the age of 18 who are in the Armed Forces as recruits or trainees, or who may be dependants of a Service family, whether based in the UK or overseas. The Armed Forces are fully committed to co-operating with statutory and other agencies in supporting families and have procedures to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children. In addition, DCSF continue to offer advice on safeguarding young people attached to garrisons abroad.

Veterans

- 3.18 Veterans.** The appointment of a Veterans Minister demonstrates that we treat veterans issues very seriously. The transition to civilian life can be a challenging prospect. MOD's comprehensive resettlement package provides graduated re-training and advice on future careers, financial planning, access to housing and other benefits. 95% of those Service leavers who take up their entitlement to the Career Transition Partnering arrangements are in new paid employment within 6 months. Latest independent research shows that since the late 1990s the proportion of ex-Servicemen and women among rough-sleepers in London has reduced from some 22% to around 6%, with evidence of progress also more widely across the country. This reflects a range of measures taken in close cooperation between the Department for Communities and Local Government, MOD, the Devolved Administrations and

the various ex-Service and wider charitable organisations. The measures have included improved arrangements to assist those at risk of homelessness on leaving the Armed Forces or who later find themselves sleeping on the streets, and steps to address the underlying problems of social exclusion that have led to rough sleeping.

- 3.19** MOD published the Strategy for Veterans in 2003. In 2007 the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency was formed to harmonise personnel administration services to both serving and veteran communities. In order better to recognise veterans, we introduced the HM Armed Forces Veterans Badge and have issued some 600,000 to date. In 2006, we introduced an annual Veterans Day.



Chapter 4: Making All This Last

4.1 This is the first ever cross-Government strategy for supporting our Armed Forces personnel, their families and veterans. It sets out the Government's and the Devolved Administrations' commitment and lays down the strategic direction of travel in a set of enduring principles. It describes new initiatives alongside progress already made to give a complete picture of what is being done in all parts of the UK.

4.2 Many of the initiatives redress the unnecessary frictions and inadvertent disadvantages that our Service people, their families and veterans experience. These frictions and disadvantages have accumulated over decades during which policy has been made and legislation enacted without fully taking into account the impact on the Armed Forces constituency (described in Chapter 1). This must not be allowed to happen again. Nor must this strategy be allowed to fade. What we have set in place here must stick and remain foremost in the minds of the Government, the Devolved Administrations, local authorities and, indeed, the Armed Forces themselves. Only in this way can we deliver the necessary step change in support to the Armed Forces, their families and veterans. Since the policy environment will change continuously we will need to respond accordingly. For this strategy to endure successfully, we must:

- a. Continue to co-operate across central Government, the Devolved Administrations and local government.
- b. Provide assurance that the actions we have committed to are carried out and that neither they nor the enduring principles in Chapter 1 are allowed to wither.

Joining it All Up

4.3 Departmental Cooperation. Government departments and Devolved Administrations should ensure that policy is not made nor legislation enacted without taking account of its impact on

the Service community, whether UK or overseas based. Each Department of State will appoint a senior Director as an 'Armed Forces Advocate'. The purpose of these advocates is to identify and resolve policy or legislative issues that may affect Service personnel, their families and veterans. The Devolved Administrations in Scotland and Wales will do likewise. Advocates will meet the Ministry of Defence (MOD) regularly.

4.4 Local Cooperation. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has issued new statutory guidance to local authorities in England (Creating Strong, Safe and Prosperous Communities) encouraging them to consult their local Armed Forces. This ensures that Service needs are considered as part of local authority planning. In addition, MOD and CLG will establish a pilot and consult the Devolved Administrations to establish how local and MOD authorities can strengthen their cooperation throughout the UK. This will be conducted between local authorities, regional bodies and MOD. It will establish how similar cooperation would extend to permanent military bases overseas. It will identify how an appropriate MOD body can be added by CLG to the list of Statutory Bodies with whom local authorities must consult in the formulation of policy. It will be complete by the end of 2009 with best practice replicated across the UK and overseas bases by 2010.

Making Sure it Delivers

4.5 Progress will be assured by regular external and cross-Government audit. The External Reference Group established for this work will be extended. It will now include representation from MOD, other departments, defence academia, the Service Families Federations and key Service charities. The Cabinet Office will provide the chair and secretariat. Departments will be required to demonstrate progress against agreements. The Devolved Administrations will be invited to participate in order to share their own assessments of progress. The Reference Group will report annually to the

Prime Minister and the Defence Secretary and this report will be published.

- 4.6** Change is inevitable. Whilst future policies, legislation, expectations and conditions will change, we do not want to drift from our principles or lose the strength of the commitments we have made. Every five years all Government departments and the Devolved Administrations will undertake a full review of progress. This will ensure that we stay on track. The outcome of this review will be reported to the External Reference Group, the Prime Minister, the Defence Secretary, the First Ministers of Scotland and Wales and the First and Deputy First Ministers of Northern Ireland as appropriate, and it will be published.
- 4.7** More details where needed on the mechanisms above, along with areas for future work, are at Annex A.

Keeping Everyone Informed

- 4.8** The consultation exercise showed that a number of Service personnel, their families and veterans do not know or understand what is available to them or how to get it. It is also clear that some Government departments and agencies are not communicating with them or each other as well as they should. We have a duty to keep the Service community and those who provide for them fully informed.
- 4.9** We therefore intend to issue widely to Service personnel, families and veterans easily-accessible advice on what the commitments in this cross-Government strategy will mean for them on the ground. We will publicise those organisations from which advice can be sought. And we will provide straightforward guidance on where individuals should turn to for assistance – and how to complain – when local agencies or Departments are not delivering any of the commitments in the strategy.

Conclusion

- 4.10** Our Armed Forces will always do what is asked of them. They do so for the greater good, professionally, willingly and at great personal cost. The nation is rightly

proud of them. It gives up its people to serve in the Armed Forces, supports them through that Service and welcomes them back as veterans. Our role, and that of the Devolved Administrations, in ensuring that this strategy is both delivered and made to stick, is twofold. First we will ensure that our Service people, their families and veterans are treated fairly – in law and in policy. Second, we will recognise when particular sacrifices have been made by reciprocating with special treatment where needed and for as long as it is required. In this way we will fulfil the nation's proper commitment to its Armed Forces.

Annex A: Supplementary Information

Health

A.1 Paragraph 2.9: NHS Waiting List – Retention of Place. When Service families move home, they may often lose their place on a secondary care waiting list, being placed at the bottom of a list at a new hospital. In England, by the end of December 2008, patients can expect to start their consultant-led treatment within a maximum of 18 weeks from referral unless they choose to wait longer or it is clinically appropriate so to do. This commitment includes patients who move home and between hospitals. In Scotland, those who move between areas will retain their relative point on the pathway of care within Scotland's national waiting time target. This is similar in Northern Ireland, and will also become the position in Wales. When Service families move between the 4 UK countries, NHS organisations will take account of past time on waiting lists when making appointments.

Housing

A.2 Paragraphs 2.13, 2.15 and 2.16: Affordable and Adapted Homes. Service personnel in England are entitled to access the Key Worker Living (KWL) scheme. This was launched in 2004 to help certain public sector employees to buy, upgrade or rent a home at an affordable price in high cost areas in London, the South East and the East of England. From 28 Dec 07, eligibility was expanded to those with Key Worker status in the KWL to be included as a priority group across all other regions that operate a version of the scheme. There are now 3 affordable housing schemes and an intermediate rent scheme that Service personnel with a household income up to £60,000 are eligible for. This enables them to have priority access to affordable homes. In Scotland, the New

Supply and Open Market Shared Equity Schemes form part of Scottish Minister's Low-cost Initiative for First Time buyers. Additional support for disabled service personnel is provided where required to ensure that they can access the shared equity schemes.

A.3 Paragraph 2.17: Disabled Facilities Grant Means Test – Disregard of AFCS/WPS Payments. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a statutory means tested local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting a person's home to enable them to continue to live there. Currently, when an individual applies for DFG their Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) or War Pension Scheme (WPS) compensation payment(s) is taken into account in the means test (these payments are generally excluded from the means test in Scotland, and Scotland aims to waive this means test completely in the near future, furthermore, there is no statutory limit of £30,000). This commitment applies to those in receipt of WPS for disablement of 80 per cent or higher and receiving a Constant Attendance Allowance. It will also apply to those who receive an AFCS lump sum payment and guaranteed income payment (Tariffs 1- 6).

A.4 Paragraph 2.19: Social Housing – Local Connection. Through the Housing and Regeneration Bill we are changing the legislation so that Service personnel will be able to establish a local connection with the district in which they are or have been serving for the purposes of applying for social housing. The changes to the local connection provision in the Housing and Regeneration Bill will improve the position of Service personnel by ensuring that their priority is not undermined, and they are treated on the same basis as civilians in the same situation.

Education and Skills

A.5 Paragraph 2.23: School Place Allocation. The role of the Schools Adjudicator is explained at www.schoolsadjudicator.gov.uk/about.cfm. The consultation on the proposed Admissions Code in England (effective from Autumn

2010) seeking views of Service families is at www.dfes.gov.uk/consultations/. As well as encouraging families to respond MOD will make its own formal submission and recommend to the Service Families Federations that they do likewise. In the event that any issues arise in future, with regard to schools admissions in the Devolved Administrations, the Service Children's Education Forum (SCEF) exists as a means of resolution.

A.6 Paragraph 2.24: Educational

Attainment. Service parents express concern that their children's educational attainment is adversely affected by Service life – mobility, long periods with one parent absent and additional stress when children and the remaining parent are concerned for the safety of those deployed on operations. To gather definitive evidence the Schools Census will be used in England to evaluate overall attainment levels (not those of individual pupils) from schools with a high proportion of Service children.

A.7 Paragraph 2.25: Special Educational

Needs (SEN). In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, ensuring children receive the learning support they need and are not disadvantaged is achieved under the Special Educational Needs framework¹ (which Service Children's Education also uses in its overseas schools). Most people have heard of SEN statements, but the continuity of support under the "School Action" and "School Action Plus" elements of the graduated approach to SEN is also very important. When DCSF next reviews the SEN Code of Practice, after the 2009 Ofsted review of SEN, it will include statutory guidance to ensure continuity of support. In Scotland, a different system operates under a broader framework of Additional Support Needs² as provided for by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. This explicitly includes measures to ensure the

best possible continuity of support for children as they move within, in to or out from Scotland but clearly this also relies on the other responsible authority in any move. Improving continuity of support to children with learning difficulties is a key focus for SCEF, supported by the Educational Departments across the UK.

A.8 Paragraph 2.27: Education and Training for Service Leavers.

The funding from MOD for this provision refers to Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) – the commitment therefore only applies to members of the ELC scheme. The supplementary funding will be provided by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills for Service leavers living in England, and by the Devolved Administrations for those domiciled in Wales and Scotland. The tri-Service resettlement regulations allow for resettlement provision to be transferred to a partner in the case of death in Service or medical discharge where the medical condition renders the Service leaver unable to take advantage of resettlement provision. Such cases currently occur approximately 5 times per year for each category. The commitment from MOD and DIUS to fund free further or higher education to Service leavers with more than 6 years service will also be transferable in these circumstances, subject to review if the take-up varies significantly from the historical trend.

A.9 Paragraph 2.28: Basic Skills for

Families. This measure will also apply in overseas locations where Armed Forces education facilities have spare capacity and the training provision is arranged through an English institution able to draw funds from the Learning and Skills Council.

Benefits

A.10 Paragraph 2.35: Access to State

Benefits. The Department for Work and Pensions has accepted that accompanying spouses or civil partners of Service personnel posted overseas may, in some locations, have difficulty obtaining employment and thus maintaining their NI contribution record. Although the details are subject to further work between DWP,

¹ See www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/3755/Parents%20Guide.pdf

² See www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/06/20105158/7 and also www.enquire.org.uk/pcp/

MOD and HM Revenue and Customs, DWP Ministers have agreed to consider awarding Class 1 National Insurance Credits in these circumstances. This will protect the eligibility of Service spouses and civil partners to a basic State Pension and contribution-based working-age benefits, provided other relevant criteria are met.

A.11 MOD will work with all other Departments³ responsible for benefits or allowances to ensure no disadvantage to Service personnel and accompanying family members by virtue of their overseas postings. In most cases this is (and will continue to be) by special provision within the relevant regulations, as is currently the situation with, for example, Carer's Allowance. Where MOD has already established special arrangements, such as the ex gratia payment in lieu of Maternity Allowance outside the European Economic Area, these will remain in place.

A.12 The complexity of the benefits system as it applies to Service personnel and their families, particularly taking into account accompanied service overseas, often creates confusion and can lead to benefits or allowances not being claimed or awarded despite entitlement. Relevant departments, supported by MOD, will ensure good communication with Service personnel and their families regarding benefits and allowances that can be claimed and steps to be taken when re-posted within the UK or to/from overseas. This will include improved communication through www.direct.gov.uk, departmental websites and better linkages from Service community websites.

A.13 Most benefits and allowances covered are not devolved for Scotland or Wales. Northern Ireland does have a distinct system, but traditionally follows any legislative or regulatory change introduced in Britain. First Ministers in Scotland and Wales have indicated that they are content to follow these general principles,

³ Principally the DWP and HMT (including HMRC), but other Departments are responsible for some benefits (such as Educational Maintenance Allowance).

wherever appropriate and practicable, with regard to benefits or allowances that fall under their devolved powers.

Building Careers

A.14 Paragraph 2.40: Support to Employment of Service Families.

Minimising the unemployment of trained public sector workers is in the interests of both the Government and individuals. This commitment seeks to minimise the disruption to the public sector employment of Service families, but does not imply any guarantee of unbroken employment, or of transfer of Terms and Conditions of Service. It will only have effect where a vacancy exists in the new location and does not override Civil Service Commissioners' and other Public Sector rules, such as the principle of fair and open competition where applicable. Finally, some Government departments and Devolved Administrations manage a geographically diverse workforce (e.g. the DWP through the JobCentre Plus agency), whereas others do not (e.g. teachers in England are, in general, employees of local authorities or schools, not the DCSF) - although even in the latter case there is more that can be done to 'signpost' the Service family to vacancy information.

Foreign & Commonwealth Service Personnel

A.15 Paragraph 2.43: Immigration and Naturalisation. In this paragraph "F&C Service personnel" means personnel serving in the regular Armed Forces of the UK on the relevant date. This is the date of application, test or birth, as applicable, except for 2.43c where the relevant date is the first day of the residential qualifying period. The provision for dependents of F&C Service personnel to achieve settlement (para 2.43a) will be subject to meeting the requirements of the amended immigration laws including the need for the spouse/civil partner to have been married/in a civil partnership for 2 years and, where possible, to have accompanied the serving individual on their posting. The provision for unmarried/same-sex partners of F&C personnel to apply for LTE/LTR (para 2.43b) will be similar to current provisions

relating to the entry and settlement of unmarried/same-sex partners of those within Points Based System categories where the relationship must be of 2 years standing. The provision for children born outside the UK to acquire British Citizenship (para 2.43e) is subject to the parent being 'settled in the UK' following amendment to the definition of 'settled' in the impending Simplification Bill and under the Earned Citizenship architecture. These developments will all be subject in the medium term to finalisation of the technical requirements of the Earned Citizenship project, as outlined briefly below.

A.16 Paragraphs 2.45: Earned Citizenship.

We are introducing reforms to: improve how we police our borders; ensure that those who come to Britain do so in our country's interests; simplify our immigration system; strengthen our shared values; and create a clear three stage journey to citizenship where newcomers will 'earn' the right to stay here permanently⁴. Under the new system we have proposed that there will be 3 key routes to naturalisation as a British citizen:

- Those in Tiers 1 and 2 of the Points Based System and their dependants; (the 'economic route').
- Those who are applying to join existing British citizens or permanent residents; (the 'family route').
- Those in need of international protection i.e. refugees (the 'protection route').

A.17 We have also proposed 3 stages in the journey which migrants must complete in order to become a British citizen or permanent resident: Temporary Residence, Probationary Citizenship and British Citizenship/Permanent Residence. The first two stages of these will be subject to certain time-limits. As part of our

⁴ More details about the proposals set out in the Green Paper "The Path to Citizenship: Next Steps in Reforming the Immigration System", published in February 2008 are available via: <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/aboutus/consultations/closedconsultations/pathtocitizenship/>

proposals we will therefore remove the Indefinite Leave to Remain category otherwise known as settlement.

A.18 The Government's response document, following the green paper consultation period, will be published in July 2008 via <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/>.

A.19 We are aware that there is more to do to assess how other categories of migrants, including F&C Service personnel and their dependants, will be affected by the reforms. This means that the commitments made by the UK Border Agency in this Command Paper will be subject to further change as we develop our thinking on the proposals outlined in the Citizenship Green Paper. Further information on the implementation of the proposed changes will be announced following parliamentary approval in 2009. Existing arrangements for naturalisation will continue until these proposals come into effect.

Joining it All Up

A.20 Paragraph 4.3: Departmental

Cooperation. To deliver this cross-departmental strategy we will build upon and strengthen the way in which MOD, the other Departments, the Devolved Administrations and the Third Sector currently cooperate. This includes ensuring the MOD's strategic focus for personnel issues is connected more formally to external partners.

A.21 Paragraph 4.4: Local Cooperation.

Nominated military commanders already sit jointly with the emergency services for contingency operations planning. Defence Estates liaise regularly with relevant planning authorities for MOD estate development matters. The three Services each encourage cultural and civic connections and each engage in joint community development and outreach programmes to varying degrees. Examples of good practice include the joint community work done by RAF Marham with Norfolk County Council, and the joint development plans between Commander 43(Wessex) Brigade, Wiltshire County Council and Tidworth District Council. The Army's Commander Regional

Forces is developing a new civil-military engagement plan.

- A.22** Even so there is scope for a more unified approach and an even tighter integration between local authorities across the UK and MOD regional structures – a necessary foundation to ensure the strategy endures and delivers real effect. Regular contact, mutual understanding and exchange of information will enable councils and local commanders to benefit from each other, to establish joint development agendas and to establish joint civil and military community needs in local investment plans.
- A.23** This will be complex because the Devolved Administrations and England approach local governance, planning and the delivery of services in different ways. Equally the single Service and MOD footprints vary across the country. Consequently there are no templates for local cooperation. That is why a pilot is needed to identify good practice and establish the most appropriate structures and procedures. Recently strengthened English regional government, future MOD basing plans, the Army’s plan to create ‘Super Garrisons’ to achieve betterment for Army communities, the recently announced Defence Estates Development Plan and CLG’s planned White Paper on empowering local communities, all provide opportunities for mutual cooperation.

Making Sure it Delivers

- A.24 Paragraph 4.5:** External, independent and regular audit is essential and this must be exercised with cross-Government authority. The Cabinet Office already works closely with other Government departments and external stakeholders on a broad range of policy issues and provides expert input into cross-cutting work. What is needed, therefore, is a body that understands the issues at hand, is able to assess progress and formulate opinion independently of Government and yet is able to exercise authority across Government. An External Reference Group conducting its business through the Cabinet Office is the answer.

Future Work

- A.25** This paper sets out a strategy in a world that we see now and which we anticipate we will see in future. But conditions, threats, society, expectations and other strategic factors will change in ways we have not foreseen. The strategy, in its enduring principles and systems of governance, enable us to adjust in response, and we will do this through the strategic delivery functions set out previously. This strategic forward thinking and adjustment begins now. Our extensive consultation has already revealed a number of areas where further work will be needed but where there was insufficient detail to include as specific items in Chapter 2.
- A.26 Every Child Matters.** As well as the measures in Chapters 2 and 3, the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) will continue to work together to ensure the basis of England’s *Every Child Matters* agenda is delivered for Service families.
- A.27 The 14-19 Reform Programme.** With DCSF and DIUS, MOD will work to ensure that Service families are not disadvantaged when accessing 14-19 provision for their children wherever appropriate and practicable. MOD will also take advantage of the opportunities presented by the intended 14-19 reforms to develop further the skills and education of its junior Service personnel.
- A.28 Health.** Service personnel (and Service dependants where their care is delivered by MOD) should expect to receive care to at least NHS standards, wherever these standards can be met. When the UK government plans improvements to the provision of healthcare of NHS patients, our aim will be that Service personnel and entitled dependants who are patients of the Defence Medical Services should be able to benefit from the same improvements, including when overseas. The health departments and MOD will continue to share information on proposed improvements in NHS delivery. MOD and health departments

will continue to foster closer working to share good practice between military and civilian medical professionals.

A.29 The Vulnerable. Whilst most people who leave the Services transition successfully to civil life there are some who are vulnerable or who become vulnerable soon after leaving. MOD, working with CLG, health departments, DWP and the Third Sector must improve the way the vulnerable are identified and put in place an informed safety net of specialist support services.

A.30 Fair Deals. The Government will continue to develop its work with the private sector to improve the range of dedicated financial and other discounted products available to Service personnel their families and the veteran community. The Government will seek to remove residual discrimination against them and their families when trying to access financial products, particularly when they are serving overseas or living in single accommodation. It will also continue to work with the Financial Services Authority to improve financial awareness amongst Service personnel.

A.31 Foreign & Commonwealth Service personnel. MOD will work closely with UK Borders Agency on the detailed implementation of the changes announced in Chapter 2. Close co-operation will also be maintained as the Earned Citizenship project proceeds.

Annex B:

Consultation

- B.1** A cross-Government strategy for support to Service personnel, their families and veterans is necessarily directed at many stakeholders including the great variety of people who would benefit by it and the many public and charitable bodies that jointly deliver it. Getting to the roots of what is needed by all of them in order to deliver a balanced and pragmatic strategy required the Command Paper team to consult widely and comprehensively.
- B.2** Throughout this work we consulted an External Reference Group drawn from the Royal British Legion, SSAFA-Forces Help, the Confederation of British Service and ex-Service Organisations (COBSEO), the Naval Families Federation, the Army Families Federation, the RAF Families Federation, the War Widows Association and Professor Hew Strachan of Oxford University. We also sought independent advice from Sir Michael Bett, Sir Anthony Vineall, retired Admiral Sir John Kerr and Ed Miller. These were the team that produced the 1995 report “Managing People in Tomorrow’s Armed Forces”.
- B.3** Between January and May, the team conducted over 100 interviews, conferences and visits. Within the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the three Services, the team met Service personnel of all ranks, a range of front line units and Headquarters across the UK and in Germany, single-Service personnel staffs, MOD medical and support services staff and MOD personnel and welfare policy staffs. Across Government, the team met representatives from other government departments, the Devolved Administrations and local government. More widely, the team consulted the three Service Families Federations, their welfare and community service providers and key Service charities.
- B.4** In particular the team consulted:
- Central policy staff across Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel), Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Health) and Assistant Chief of Defence Staff (Reserves and Cadets) areas;
 - The Armed Forces’ Principal Personnel Officers (2nd Sea Lord, Adjutant General, Air Member for Personnel) and their personnel staffs;
 - Naval personnel of all ranks and branches from HMS RICHMOND, the submarine fleet, Fleet Air Arm and Royal Marines; Army personnel of all ranks from different arms and services serving in 1 Mechanised Brigade in Tidworth Garrison; RAF personnel of all ranks and trades from RAF Marham and RAF Honnington.
 - Representatives of Naval Home Command; various Army HQs in the UK and Germany; the Royal Air Force Community Development Advisor.
 - The Children’s Education Advisory Service; the Service Children’s Education Agency; the Joint Service Housing Advice Office; Defence Estates; Modern Housing Solutions; the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency; the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court; the Army Welfare Service; the HIVE information service; the three Service Families Federations.
 - Service and Veterans’ organisations including: SSAFA-Forces Help, Royal British Legion, COBSEO, War Widows Association, Combat Stress; British Limbless Ex-Service Men’s Association; British Forces Foundation; Help for Heroes; Royal Irish Aftercare Service; Veterans Aid; Homeless Link.
 - The Local Government Association and Wiltshire County Council.
 - The Devolved Administrations and the following Government departments have worked closely with MOD in the preparation of this Paper:

- Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs, Department for Work and Pensions, Department for Children, Schools and Families, Department of Health, Department for Communities and Local Government, Ministry of Justice, Home Office, Department for Transport, Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, Scotland Office, Wales Office, Northern Ireland Office.

B.5 Between February and the end of May the team created other opportunities for interested parties to contribute. In February, the Minister of State for the Armed Forces wrote in the House magazine inviting colleagues to publicise to their constituents the opportunity to contribute to the Paper’s consultation. Concurrently, the team launched a web-based consultation, which closed on 31 May. The website, advertised on www.mod.uk and other official and non-official Service-related web pages and forums, was open for contributions from all members of the Service community and members of the public. This attracted over 500 web submissions and letters. On average each contribution offered information or ideas on three issues.

B.6 The consultation process attracted a wide variety of contributions reflecting personal experiences of life in the Armed Forces, family life within the Service community and life after Service. Views reflected a realistic understanding of the commitments required by Service life and concurrence that it will not always be comfortable. The process also allowed extended family members of Service personnel, reservists and the wider public the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and perceptions of our Service community and to offer their thoughts for improving the lives of our personnel. The breakdown of responses by general subject area was:

	Percentage of responses
Accommodation	33
Healthcare	26
Welfare	33
Education & skills	12
Employment	27

B.7 Most commonly the comments reflected the difficulties that Service families have in accessing NHS dentistry – an issue that affects many people nationwide but which is particularly acute for Service families who have to move home more frequently than most and almost always not at a time or place of their choosing. Approximately 24 per cent of responses raised this as an issue.

B.8 Other common themes of concern included:

- The standard of Service housing and housing entitlement rules;
- People’s desire for stability, wish for choice in buying a home, home location and the supporting allowances;
- Children’s schooling and the problems of disruption caused by mobility;
- A perceived lack of welfare support for families when a serving partner is deployed on operations, compounded by a lack of information about how to access support mechanisms;
- Single personnel’s sense of disadvantage compared to married colleagues;
- Career opportunities and continuity for spouses of serving personnel.

B.9 The Command Paper team was comprised of officers from all three Services as well as MOD civil servants.



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