

Welcome to the AFF volunteer newsletter!

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An update from AFF's Chief Executive

There are a few areas of the Strategic Defence Security Review (SDSR), announced at the end of 2015, that will be essential to Army families and our unique position.

The SDSR proposes to draft and deliver a new 'comprehensive families strategy' which will look at spousal employment, healthcare and children's education; another focus will be around future accommodation.

I look forward to understanding better, what this really means to Army families. Will it provide real accommodation choice for families? Will it provide the support needed? Will it truly reflect our aspirations?

There may be an assumption that families don't need as much patch/welfare/other military family support when the soldier is not away on a tour. However, I think this is to misunderstand the everyday pressures of Army family life in general.

Living away from immediate family and close friends who would provide a support network, long working hours, being unable to rely on the soldier for childcare support and impact on spousal career, all provide pressure on Army families.

It is my hope that all these things are taken into consideration when the details of the SDSR headlines are being produced and AFF is looking forward to working with the MOD to influence some of these details.

Sara Baade, AFF Chief Executive

The future of Service Families Accommodation (SFA)

FAM - the Families Accommodation Model - is the new buzzword amongst the corridors in Whitehall.

But what does this mean for families? At this point, we aren't sure, but what we do know is that a proposal is being put together for a tri-Service approach to future housing.

It is looking at creating a balance between providing SFA and options in the private rental market or home ownership.

Messaging that is beginning to come out is around 'stability' and 'mobility'. What we don't yet know is how ambitious this model will be.

We do have some concerns, and these are around a clear understanding of Army life and how it differs from the other two Services, particularly regarding mobility. We also understand that stability is about keeping the family together as much as settling in a specific area.

AFF is now formally part of the consultation process and we will let you know when we have more to share.

Families share their overseas experience

In autumn 2015, AFF ran a comprehensive overseas survey that looked at the complete overseas experience. 438 people from 40 countries took the survey:

- Majority felt that additional financial expenditure was the most challenging aspect of an overseas posting, with the opportunity for travel and new experiences being the most positive aspect
- 1 in 4 families would not undertake another overseas assignment
- Only 20% of spouses seeking training were able to access their course of choice
- 57% of respondents were dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with both Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) and Disturbance Expense (DE)
- More than half who needed it couldn't access the amount or type of childcare required.

See full survey findings and AFF's comment at www.aff.org.uk

the overseas
experience
survey



Are you



AFF is now one of 2.8 million companies with its own LinkedIn page and we would love you to link with us and get involved in spreading word of our work across social media. Visit www.linkedin.com and search 'Army Families Federation'.

Not yet on LinkedIn? Setting up is fairly simple and can help you to:

1. Build your professional network and link with others in the same line of work, or with the same interests as you; building your network now could be beneficial when you most need it.
2. Easily follow the companies, groups and people most relevant and beneficial to you. Hear about new ideas, share your thoughts and find out what those who inspire you are thinking.
3. Give your online profile a valuable boost. LinkedIn is not just for job searchers, although it can be valuable career insurance. Your profile is a living, breathing CV and those you link with can endorse your skills helping to create a professional portfolio.

For help getting started, [click here](#).

Roadshow round up: a boost for businesses

AFF held three roadshows during 2015, raising our profile through local engagement and building the links between command and families.

We had some great successes, with our online promotions reaching over 12,000 Facebook users, and in total, 18 families signed up for the University of Wolverhampton's business start-up programme. We also had great feedback from our entrepreneurial spouses who felt that their new businesses received a helpful boost.

Both staff and volunteers got involved with these events, whether through promotion or by attending on the day, which were a great opportunity to meet our families and the unit welfare teams who support them.

Promotion is a huge part of the success of any event we run and as a volunteer; we welcome and value your support in making AFF events family-focussed and informative. As well as our social media campaigns, we rely on our co-ordinators to spread the word in their area. Hayley Jones, West Midlands Co-ordinator said: *"Paula [Paula Roderick, Local Publicity Volunteer] is such an amazing help to me in Stafford, always willing to get involved. I couldn't have done the promotion for the recent roadshow here without her assistance!"*



Future plans and key messages

We hold our hands up: we promised a short film on AFF's mission at the end of 2015; however, with the arrival of our new Chief Executive, this has gone on hold for now.

Sara looks forward to providing an update on AFF's 2016 plans in a future edition of this newsletter.

In the meantime, rest assured that, as volunteers, you play an important role in helping us to reach more families. Your contacts, your locations and your knowledge and understanding of different communities, all help us to make a real difference.

Volunteer handbook update

The volunteer handbook has now been reviewed and updated. There are two new additions: a section on complaints and a section on intellectual property.

The handbook has been added to the secure site of the volunteer website; please take a look when you have time.

Thank you!