

## Title: Location Factor Review FAQs

Date: 24 June 2020

### General information

#### What is the change being brought in for the Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS)?

The policy change being implemented will bring CAAS charging in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales in line with England by introducing a location assessment based on access to local services.

Calculation using this method has been used in England since 2016, but data on access to key amenities was not available at the time in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales, so was only applied across Service Family Accommodation (SFA) in England. This change will mean that CAAS is measured in the same way for all SFA across the UK.

#### Who does it affect?

The change is being brought in for SFA located in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales as accessibility to key services is already included for England. Any Service personnel residing in SFA in these locations will have this added to their overall assessment but not all will see a change in their charging.

#### How many Service Personnel does it affect?

1,005 properties will change their existing bands. 397 will go up in location and 608 will go down in location.

#### When is the new policy being brought in?

The change will be implemented from the 1 October 2020.

#### Why is the change being brought in now?

When CAAS was initially rolled out in 2016 the relevant location data was only available in England. The People Current Accommodation Policy Team has been working with a team from DIO's Data, Analytics & Insight (DA&I) to address this inconsistency which means that the data is now available for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The location factor element of CAAS is normally reassessed every 4 years, but a full refresh of all factors included in the location classification has been undertaken at the same time as the accessibility step has been introduced. The standard CAAS reassessment would usually be implemented on the 1 April 2020 however, a decision was made to bring the change in later in the year acknowledging other annual changes to CAAS charging (i.e. transition pathway and CAAS charge uplift). It was also recognised that there is a summer surge on Service Person moves and re assignments. Delivering the implementation in October enables Families to settle before the change.

#### Why has it taken so long to bring Scotland, Wales and N Ireland in line with England?

Data was only available for England when CAAS was implemented in 2016. A decision was therefore taken at the time not to include the accessibility step and this was written into policy.

The complexity of the task has meant that designing and building a tool that acquires the relevant and accurate data to produce the location classification has taken time.

## What impact will the change have on the payments Service personnel have to make for their Service Family Accommodation (SFA)?

Service personnel living in affected SFA will be written to 93 days prior to 1 October 2020, with letters planned to arrive on 1 July 2020. The letters will provide specific details of the impact on that SFA and whether there will be a decrease or increase in charge. The majority of affected Service Personnel will see no change to their charges or a decrease, a minority will see a Band increase.

## How does CAAS charging methodology work?

Accommodation charges are determined by three factors: condition, scale and location. This change refers only to the Location factor of the charging. Location Assessment is based on accessibility to services using individual property postcodes. Each property's CAAS charging band is decided using four location factors:

- The property is classified as either:
  - o urban (less than 20 minutes travel to key services);
  - o intermediate (between 20 and 40 minutes);
  - o remote (more than 40 minutes).
- Accessibility to eight Key Services<sup>1</sup>
- Broadband accessibility
- Deprivation

This change will mean that CAAS is measured in the same way for all Service Family Accommodation across the UK. At the same time a refresh of all other factors was completed in line with the 4-year frequency stated in policy.

## Do Service personnel have the opportunity to challenge the CAAS band of their accommodation? If so, how?

Yes. Every Service person who has had a change to their charge has the opportunity to challenge their new CAAS Band within 28 days of the policy being introduced on 1 October 2020. The letter sent to every affected SFA gives details and a template for challenges. Defence People Accommodation are also developing a landing page which enables Service personnel to interrogate the data relating to their postcode. This will be live from the 1 October 2020.

## Which organisations have been involved in the development of this policy?

The lead organisation has been Defence People Accommodation Policy in terms of data production and analysis alongside Defence Analytics and Insight and Defence Infrastructure organisation. Key stakeholders from TLBs and Families Federations have been critical to the success of this change, and Amey have provided assurance and accountability of change and data produced.

## Where can affected Service personnel go for more information?

Affected Service personnel should refer to the individual letters being sent to their SFA. Further information will also be shared through DEFNET announcements; updates to the Gov.uk page, and through Single Service accommodation policy leads and Families Federations.

## For affected Service personnel

---

<sup>1</sup> These are: (1) Food store (2) General Practitioners (3) Employment Centre (4) Primary School (5) Secondary School (6) Further Education Institution (7) Hospital (8) Town centre

### How will I know if this change affects me?

If your SFA is affected by this change then you will be written to 93 days before the change and should have your letter by 1 July 2020. This letter will include all the details relevant for your SFA.

### What does this policy mean for the charges I pay?

The majority of occupants will see no change to their charges or a decrease. A minority will see a Band increase. The letters we are sending to affected SFA will have more information on the specific changes to the charges for your property.

### When will I need to pay the charges?

The payment change is being introduced on the 1 October 2020 so the charge will be taken out of that month's pay on the last working day of the month. Please refer to your pay statements for monies taken. This change will not be backdated so no historical payments will be due.

### How have you worked out the new charges?

Location Assessment is based on accessibility to services using individual property postcodes. Each property's CAAS charging band is decided using four location factors:

- The property is classified as either:
  - o urban (less than 20 minutes travel to key services);
  - o intermediate (between 20 and 40 minutes);
  - o remote (more than 40 minutes).
  
- Accessibility to eight Key Services<sup>2</sup>
- Broadband accessibility
- Deprivation

This change will mean that CAAS is measured in the same way for all Service Family Accommodation across the UK. At the same time a refresh of all other factors was completed in line with the 4-year frequency stated in policy.

### What can I do if I disagree with my new band?

You have the opportunity to challenge your SFA's CAAS Banding within 28 working days from the 1 October 2020<sup>3</sup>. The policy and details specific to your SFA will be available at this point for you to check. Details on how to challenge, and a template, are included in the letter sent to all affected SFA.

### Has this just been brought in to make more money from SFA?

No. The addition of the CAAS Location accessibility factor means that SFA in every country in the UK will have all steps included when measuring the overall Location Factor classification which results in a more accurate and fair charge.

---

<sup>2</sup> These are: (1) Food store (2) General Practitioners (3) Employment Centre (4) Primary School (5) Secondary School (6) Further Education Institution (7) Hospital (8) Town centre

<sup>3</sup> New policy implementation date.

### Why does this only affect people living in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

This step has been included in policy for England since 2016 and this means that all SFA in the UK will be charged using the same measure. This will deliver a fairer application of the UK Location Factor to all SFA across the UK.

### When will the next location factor refresh happen?

The England refresh of location factor will take place 1 April 2021. A decision has been taken that means the 4-year frequency for reassessment will not take place until 2025 for the whole UK.

### What if I can't afford the new charges?

You should speak to your chain of command and welfare for support.

### Will I have to pay backdated charges?

No, this change will commence at the point of implementation which is 1 October 2020.

### If I am deployed or posted abroad will this have any impact on the charges I have to pay?

The charges you pay relate to the type of accommodation you or your family reside in. Should you be deployed your SFA charges remain the same, but you will be in receipt of operational allowances in line with JSP 752 and 464.

Should you be assigned / posted overseas or to another location in the UK, your SFA charge will be amended to reflect the new accommodation type you move into.

### Where can I find out more information?

For more information please refer to the individual letters being sent to affected SFA, your chain of command, updates to the Gov.uk page, and your Single Service accommodation policy leads and Families Federations.