



Ministry
of Defence

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Armed Forces Families

11 Nov 20

Dear Families,

It is approaching eight months since I wrote to you at the beginning of the first lockdown period. Back then I am sure that, like me, none of you anticipated that we would be in this situation again. However, over the course of the past few months it has become clearer that we are going to be living with the virus in some capacity for the foreseeable future, despite encouraging news on vaccines. Consequently, my team and I have been working hard with the single Services and our partners the Families Federations to think through the implications of this and to ensure that we are all as well prepared as possible. We have approached this in the knowledge that the measures we put in place need to be robust enough to support you for the medium to longer term. Thank you for the questions and suggestions that you have fed in over time.

Thank you and your loved ones also for the role you continue to play in supporting the delivery of Defence outputs, as well as the government's response to the pandemic. Defence's contribution to the effort, which included assisting the creation of the Nightingale Hospitals, mobile testing units and much more, has been crucial; this would not have been possible without your goodwill, patience and understanding, often no doubt to the detriment of your personal and domestic circumstances.

As you swiftly and ably adapt to the ever-changing situation it is important that we continue to be cognisant of the challenges you're facing and that where possible, we mitigate these. This is why my team maintain regular discussion with the three Families Federations to monitor issues as they arise, so I encourage you to keep communicating your concerns and suggestions to the Families Federations and other channels such as the single Service HiVES. I hope that we can ease your concerns by bringing clarity on issues like overseas assignments and enhancing allowances to minimise the disruption to family life and children's education.

We have published and promulgated 15 Directed Letters. There is a summary of the letters below, so you know what they cover. They address entitlement and provision for extending exceptional eligibility, to ensure that allowances remain targeted to the needs of the Service Person and you, their family. There is also a hyperlink so you can access them all if you need the detail, which is I hope one way we can help.

We are however aware that the biggest concern currently is over quarantine and the impact that it has on all those serving overseas and their families. We are working with the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to see what can be done for personnel and their families in certain circumstances as their overseas network faces similar challenges. In the meantime, where we can apply the rules judiciously, such as the Sovereign Base Areas in Cyprus, we will.

I hope this update is helpful and provides reassurance that we understand some of the specific demands on Service families that COVID poses. I will continue to work with my team to manage pressures as they arise and communicate any subsequent changes in a timely manner.

In the meantime, as we approach what will be a very different festive season, I wish you and your loved ones all the very best. Now more than ever it is more important that we look out for each other to offer moral support and a helping hand when needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JHt'.

Distribution:

Chief Executives, Forces Families Federations
HIVES

Summary of Directed Letters

The summaries below provide the most recent updates to Directed Letters issued by the Armed Forces Remuneration Team. The full letters, and future updates are also at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tri-service-regulations-for-expenses-and-allowances-jsp-752#history>

Allowance and Expense Arrangements in Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) dated 2 November 2020. Recognises that several allowances and expenses had been affected by the unique circumstances that Service Personnel face. This may be particularly noticeable when they are sick, facing a period of self-isolation, are required to move between accommodation or have travel restrictions placed on them. The Allowances team has clarified elements of policy as well as issuing exceptional authority in order to allow eligible Service Personnel to receive allowances. For example, Special Messing Allowance, Duty Travel and Disturbance Expense, where qualifying criteria would not otherwise have been met.

Operational Allowance (OA) and Campaign Continuity Allowance (CCA) Interim Arrangements in Response to COVID-19 dated 2 November 2020. Gives exceptional authority for Service Personnel to receive operational allowances when they are required to spend a period of time away from the specified operational location due to COVID-19.

Child Education Allowance (CEA) – Regulatory Flexibility in Response to COVID-19 dated 27 October 2020. Introduces further flexibility into existing CEA policy to reassure claimants that any deviation from policy caused directly by COVID-19 would not adversely affect eligibility.

School Children's Visits (SCV) – Enhanced Interim Arrangements in Response to COVID-19 for SP Assigned Overseas dated 2 November 2020. Recognises that it was going to be incredibly difficult for Service Personnel that are serving overseas to arrange to see their children during school holidays due to issues such as quarantine or COVID testing requirements. The Allowances team offered significantly enhanced flexibility in policy to allow parents to be reunited with their children. This includes T&S and accommodation costs for those that need it.

Allowance and Expense Arrangements Whilst Working from Home (WFH) in Response to COVID-19 dated 2 November 2020. Allowances are designed for a specific purpose or aim and where eligibility exists, it does so within carefully defined circumstances. The Allowances team has put a significant amount of work into ensuring that many allowances can be enhanced to support the challenges faced by Service Personnel and their families. However, the team also has the responsibility to make clear when personnel were no longer eligible to receive certain allowances (e.g. if no longer commuting to work then eligibility to commuting allowances would cease). The letter gives further detail, as well as giving advice on what should happen when personnel are required to return to their place of duty.

Involuntarily Separated Status for Service Personnel Being Assigned Overseas dated 23 October 2020. Recognises the impact of COVID-19 on travel restrictions between the UK and overseas locations and potential imposition of mandatory periods of quarantine or self-isolation. It gives eligible personnel the choice to serve Involuntarily Separated (INVOLSEP) and claim the appropriate allowances that this attracts.

Extension of the Evacuation Package to “Non-Evacuated” Families dated 3 November 2020. Recognises the unique and challenging circumstances Service Personnel and their families may find themselves in if, having been serving overseas, they were required to temporarily return to the UK due to the pandemic. It explains eligibility to expenses and allowances such as subsistence, accommodation costs and LOA, providing exceptional enhancements in several areas.