



25 March 2021

ARMED FORCES (REMUNERATION) ALLOWANCES – PROVIDING ENHANCED SUPPORT TO SERVICE PERSONNEL DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC **SPRING 2021 UPDATE**

In November 2020 we updated Service personnel (SP) and their families on work that the Armed Forces (Remuneration) Allowances (REM Allces) team had been doing following the outbreak of COVID-19 to mitigate the impacts of the pandemic on our people. We continue to work with the single Services, UK STRATCOM and MOD COVID-19 Recovery and Response team to ensure that SP receive the right level of support to allow them to carry out their duties, whether abroad or in the UK.

The team continues to be innovative and responsive when adapting policy to ensure that there is enough flexibility to support SP during these evolving circumstances, informing personnel of these changes through Directed Letters (DLs). These DLs have ranged from clarifying entitlement to extending exceptional eligibility, which has ensured that allowances remain targeted and relevant to the needs of the SP and their immediate families, but within Government guidelines. Of note, the team has provided enhanced flexibility in allowances policy in order to:

- **Support SP and their families, particularly those serving abroad, by enhancing allowances that allow families to be reunited and by supporting children's education;**
- **Reimburse costs that are directly related to testing and quarantine incurred when travelling on duty (including School Children's Visits and SP travelling on Personnel Resilience Exemptions) during the pandemic;**
- **Provide flexibility and enhancements in allowances that allow SP that are required to relocate to use methods and timeframes that are more flexible in an uncertain time;**
- **Enhance allowances attached to operational tours to ensure that SP that are required to deploy to specified operational locations continue to receive the appropriate allowances during periods of quarantine.**

A year has passed since the initial restrictions were announced and we remain in a period of uncertainty. The existing DLs have been reviewed ahead of the Easter period, with a number of provisions amended, to ensure that they remain as targeted as possible. Links to these DLs can be found in the [GOV.UK website](#) and [REM Allces DEFNET site](#), which are constantly kept up to date with the latest versions. Existing DLs are described below:

- **Allowance and Expense Arrangements in Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) updated 24 March 2021**. This DL recognises that a number of allowances and expenses had been affected by the unique circumstances that SP faced throughout the pandemic. 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 REM Allces team have clarified elements of policy as well as issuing exceptional authority in order to allow eligible SP to receive the appropriate allowances. For example, Special Messing Allowance, Duty Travel and Disturbance Expense, where qualifying criteria would not otherwise have been met. Entitlement to allowances during periods in mandatory quarantine can also be found in this letter.

- **COVID-19 Testing updated 1 March 2021**. In most cases COVID-19 testing arrangements for duty reasons should be coordinated by the Unit HR on behalf of the SP, in consultation with the MOD COVID-19 testing team (COVID-MOD-QT-OpsCen@mod.gov.uk). However, there have been occasions whereby SP and immediate families have been required to pay the costs of COVID-19 test. This DL clarifies entitlement to reimbursement and should be read in conjunction with [Defence Advice Note 18](#). Current provision is in place for those travelling under Personnel Resilience Exemptions. Work is in progress to ensure Defence provides an appropriate contribution to travel costs as and when international travel restrictions are reduced.
- **Operational Allowance (OA), Campaign Continuity Allowance (CCA) and Concessionary Travel for Families (CTF) Interim Arrangements in Response to COVID-19 updated 17 March 2021**. This DL, which was drafted in consultation with operational commanders, gives exceptional authority for SP to receive operational allowances when they are required to spend a period of time away from the specified operational location due to COVID-19. The latest version clarifies the contribution of qualifying days for CTF to ensure that families receive the appropriate support when the amount of time a SP is away is extended due to quarantine requirements.
- **Child Education Allowance (CEA) – Regulatory Flexibility in Response to COVID-19 updated 23 February 2021**. This DL introduces flexibility into existing CEA policy to reassure claimants that any deviation from policy caused directly by COVID-19 (including guidance on Accompanied Status) would not adversely affect eligibility.
- **School Children's Visits (SCV) – Enhanced Interim Arrangements in Response to COVID-19 for SP Assigned Overseas updated 22 February 2021**. This DL recognises that it was going to be difficult for SP that are serving overseas to arrange to see their children during school holidays due to issues such as quarantine or COVID-19 testing requirements. This DL offers 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.
- **Involuntarily Separated Status for Service Personnel Being Assigned Overseas updated 15 February 2021**. This DL 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 SP the choice to serve Involuntary Separated (INVOLSEP) and claim the appropriate allowances that this attracts.
- **Extension of the Evacuation Package to “Non-Evacuated” Families dated 3 November 2020**. This DL recognises the unique and challenging circumstances SP 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 a number of areas.
- **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 REM Allces team has put a significant amount of work into ensuring that many allowances can be enhanced to support the challenges faced by SP. However, the team also has the responsibility to make clear when SP were no longer eligible to receive certain allowances (eg, if a SP was no longer commuting to work then eligibility to commuting allowances would cease). This DL gives further detail, as well as giving advice on what should happen when SP are required to return to their place of duty.

The situation remains fluid and the Rem Allces team will continue to work closely with key MOD stakeholders to ensure that allowances remain targeted to SP needs, yet within Government

guidelines, during an ever-evolving situation. It is recognised that not all scenarios can be addressed, and SP should engage with their HR teams, who can subsequently seek advice from their single Service Pay and Allowances cells, should they have any questions. Another full review of these DLs will be conducted in the Summer and will be in line with the latest Government advice.

SP are strongly encouraged to keep up-to-date with these announcements by reading local orders and routinely checking the [GOV.UK](#) website and [REM Alces DEFNET site](#).

Hd AF REM