

Snapshot

military families bullets

The attached is a summary of the Military Families Snapshot, accessible on the Veterans & Families Research Hub (<https://www.vfrhub.com/>). Information correct as at 08.10.21.

Based on UK Ministry of Defence (MOD) [personnel statistics](#), there were 198,880 Regular and Reserve serving members of the UK Armed Forces (AF) as at 1 April 2021, with 16,850 leaving over the course of the preceding year. The MOD estimated the number of [former Regular and Reserve service personnel residing in Great Britain in 2019](#) at around 2.5 million. This figure is expected to decrease to around 1.6 million by 2028. [Regular and Reserve veterans are estimated](#) to make up 5% of household residents ages 16+ in England and Scotland, and 6% of household residents aged 16+ in Wales. A [separate report](#) estimates the UK AF Regular and Reserve population living in Northern Ireland to be between 40,000 to 60,000.

The [UK Armed Forces Family Strategy](#) 2016-2020 set out an approach to supporting military families, along with providing guidance for MOD policy officials. The intention of the Strategy was to encourage families to feel informed and engaged as an integral element of the AF community, with the objective of producing an action plan, looking at the following areas of support for AF families: partner employment; accommodation; children's education and childcare; community support; specialist support; health and well-being and transition.

A 2018 '[command brief](#)' from the [Army Families Federation \(AFF\)](#) suggested that Army families believed they were 'being asked to do more for less' and reported a belief that the pay and pensions package had worsened. It also noted Army families were concerned about educational stability for children and employment opportunities for the partners of serving personnel.

An independent [review](#) commissioned by the MOD and published in 2020 considered the diverse needs of AF families to assess whether current support provision met those needs, resulting in 110 recommendations to national and local government departments and agencies, the third (charity) and private sectors. In response to its recommendations, the [MOD undertook](#) to 'publish an ambitious new strategy' for AF families in late 2021, aimed at providing a framework for measuring progress against the above recommendations, many of which it claims are already being actioned.

Each of the three AF has a 'Families Federation' to support relevant families' needs, including the commissioning of much of the research referred to in these bullets. More detail can be found via the [Naval Families Federation](#), the [Army Families Federation \(AFF\)](#), and the [RAF Families Federation](#).

According to a [2021 report](#), there are 268 armed forces charities supporting AF families, comprising around 14.8% of the AF charity sector, spending approximately £68.5 million during the year up to August 2020. The three most common areas of support are focused on social groups (examples provided are breakfast clubs, mutual support, and drama groups), along with mental health and education, while other areas less commonly supported include domestic violence, childcare and criminal justice.

The [MOD provides and maintains accommodation](#) for full time serving Regular and Reserve military personnel and their families that require or wish to live in them, including in some overseas locations (all

of which can be fully furnished if required). It also arranges for occupants and their belongings to move from one property to another upon relocation between assignments.

🌈 In late 1996, the MOD sold most Service Family Accommodation (SFA) it then held to a [private company](#), with an arrangement to lease back those it required; an agreement that has since attracted [criticism](#). As of 31 March 2021, [the MOD reported](#) that there were 49,000 SFA properties in the UK. Almost 10,000 of those properties were vacant (20% of the total), with the [MOD advising](#) that the number of empty properties is partly explained by the success of the [Forces Help to Buy Scheme \(FHTB\)](#), the retention of SFA to support the [Army Basing Programme](#) and the development of the [Defence Estates Optimisation Programme](#). The MOD reportedly aims to further reduce the number of empty properties by broadening an entitlement to occupy them to include '[cohabiting families and veterans, and subletting](#)', along with disposal of property that is no longer required. The recent [independent review](#) highlighted numerous concerns relating to SFA, offering a number of recommendations to address these.

🌈 While pilot schemes for the [Future Accommodation Model](#) began in 2018 (aimed at providing more accommodation choice, flexibility and stability for serving personnel and their families), a [2020 study](#) considered the pattern and effects of 'dispersal of British military families in England', defining this as 'families living at considerable distances' from their serving relation's main workplace. It concluded that military families appeared to increasingly opt for dispersed living during that period. This was reportedly motivated by housing, employment and educational stability choices, which it balanced against the risk of 'vulnerability' when families were isolated from sources of support otherwise provided in or close to military bases, particularly when the serving member is working away from that parent location. Many of these issues were also highlighted in a [2019 study](#), and both reports offered numerous recommendations, urging greater consideration of family dynamics and communication, support and information efforts by those managing and planning military careers and family support.

🌈 A 2021 [report](#) highlighted that frequent and lengthy absences of military parents on duty can affect children of those parents. This is seemingly especially problematic for families in which both parents are serving, or for single (serving) parent families, as emphasised in the [2020 independent review](#). A 2018 report by the UK's [Children's Commissioner](#) recommended that the MOD avoid 'dual parental deployment' at the same time, and stressed the negative impact of military parental separation on family dynamics and well-being. While the [advent of social media](#) can help families communicate during periods of separation, several studies also indicated that this could cause complications, as could the [broadcast of images and news](#) concerning military operations involving one or more parents.

🌈 A [report](#) to consider if current available support is meeting the needs of Foreign and Commonwealth personnel, veterans and their families identified that information gathering and recording is limited, thus preventing planning for service provision. Issues of immigration, settlement and visas have a considerable impact on them, especially due to recent increases in the costs of the application process. The financial pressures this process creates can in turn lead to additional burdens in terms of debt, employment, housing and marital issues, which make transition to civilian life for this community exceptionally difficult.

🌈 The 2020 [independent](#) study highlighted research regarding an apparent increase in concerns over domestic abuse in the AF family arena, perhaps motivated by recent broader public awareness campaigns that have encouraged greater willingness to disclose such issues. Despite a lack of data, the report alludes to risk factors associated with military work and life, particularly those associated with operational deployments. In response, the same report outlines MOD initiatives to tackle these issues, including the [Domestic Abuse Strategy 2018-2023](#), but further recommendations are made.