

# Families First



## Meet Paul Carney OBE, Chief of Staff for Pinnacle Service Families

It's been just over two months since I joined Pinnacle Service Families. After 28 years in the Army, it was time for a new challenge. I won't lie, it was a bit scary at first. But I'm really glad I made the move.

In the Army, I was the Army Sergeant Major. That means I was the most senior soldier, working closely with the top officers. My job was to make sure the voices of the troops were heard. I helped explain big decisions, so they made sense to the people doing the job. And I wasn't afraid to speak up when something didn't feel right.

That's something I still do now. I know what it's like to be in the military, and to have a family living that life too. My wife served as well, and we raised our children while moving around, dealing with the pressures and changes that come with Army life. So, I understand the challenges families face, because I've lived them.

Now, I work with DIO, VIVO, Amey, and our team at Pinnacle. It's a big setup. DIO has overall responsibility for Service Family Accommodation (SFA). VIVO and Amey carry out the repairs and maintenance. Pinnacle looks after housing allocations, helps families move in and out, runs the contact centre, and handles complaints and compensation when needed.



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With so many people involved and lots of moving parts, it's vital we stay focused on what really matters: the families. That's why I'm here. I want to make sure your voice is heard, and that we keep improving how we do things. With that in mind, the summer months are particularly busy. Many families are moving throughout the holidays and there are a number of large unit moves taking place. Our advice at this time is to book your move appointments as soon as possible to get an appointment that works for you.

Over the last few weeks we've been rolling out our summer safety campaign, with top tips for SFA residents. These range from checking window restrictors are working correctly to avoid accidents to keeping your home safe when you're away. [You can see the full guide here.](#)

We're always listening to feedback from families and we know you wanted more ways to speak to us. That's why we now have over 30 [open office events](#), which complement our existing [housing clinics](#). We've also introduced virtual outreach days, giving you the chance to speak to us virtually at a time that suits you. The next event is on 9 July – if you're interested, [you can sign up here.](#)

I'm proud to be part of this team. I'm here to listen, to speak up for you, and to help make sure your experience of SFA is the best it can be.

# SFA Notices and News

## Guidance for booking move-ins and move-outs

Summer is the busiest time of the year for housing allocations and removal activity. Our suppliers will always strive to meet your preferred dates, however because of the volume of requests, on occasions this is not always possible.

To help manage this busy time and ensure you have a smooth experience, we recommend families only request services during the summer period if you are unable to move at any other time. If circumstances allow, we are grateful if Service Personnel without children could avoid planning a move within the school summer holidays.

- ✓ You can start planning your removal as soon as Assignment Orders are received via the [Agility Portal](#).
- ✓ To start the process, you only need the location and not a confirmed delivery address.
- ✓ Once you have been allocated SFA, it is advised to confirm availability for removals before booking a move-in/move-out appointment. You can book your pre move-out appointment with your Housing Officer up to 30 working days ahead of your scheduled move-out date.

Any questions or concerns? Please [contact Agility directly](#) (remember to include your service number).

## Revised move-in and move-out specification

We are pleased to update you that the specification to which homes are prepared for move-in has now been revised. This follows changes to the specification that were made last year.

One of the commitments of the [Consumer Charter to improve SFA](#) (announced in April 2025), is to provide a more robust move-in standard so that you can have confidence that the home you're moving into will be ready on time and will be clean and functional. These commitments support the new Defence Housing Strategy, due to be published later this year.

The revised specification, effective immediately, returns to the previous standard with additional specifications including:

- Hard flooring being used in downstairs areas instead of carpet when replacement is required.
- The use of white paint to decorate inside homes.
- Vinyl flooring being used in all bathrooms, WC, kitchens and utility rooms (if floor tiles, or hard flooring are not already installed) when replacement is required.
- Allowing up to four picture hooks per room to be left at move out without charges being incurred.

This revision to the specification has been made possible following funding secured for financial year 2025/26 and [£1.5 bn of additional funding](#) announced in May by the Defence Secretary, Rt Hon John Healey MP to deliver longer term and enduring improvements to UK SFA housing as part of the Government's [Strategic Defence Review](#).

The revised move-in and move-out specification can be [read in full on the Pinnacle website](#).

## An update on communal areas

We have heard from many of you at our SFA roadshows and we know families wish to be able to enjoy communal spaces and gardens to the front of their properties. In many cases, these areas provide a valuable space for garden furniture and play equipment.

We have a duty to ensure that communal areas are safe, but we also want to see a common-sense approach that balances safety and convenience for families.

The [SFA Consumer Charter](#) announced in April sets out our commitment to empower families and to enable you to take decisions about your home.

### For the safety and enjoyment of all, please note the following advice regarding the use of outdoor communal spaces:

- Families are encouraged to use and to enjoy gardens and communal areas.
- Communal areas can be used for families to gather and socialise, provided this does not disturb other neighbours.
- Families have the choice to use items (such as garden furniture) in external communal areas. If families wish for our teams to carry out ground maintenance, we kindly request items are removed when not in use (as they will need access to a clear area to carry out the work). However, if families find enjoyment and pride in maintaining the area themselves, they are welcome to keep their items out.
- Please talk to your Housing Officer regarding larger items that are fixed and cannot be easily removed such as trampolines, swing sets, bike stores etc that you wish to place in communal areas.
- Items that pose an immediate health and safety risk to others such as rope swings, and tree houses may be removed without notice to ensure the safety of all.

**Safety in flats or apartments:** Indoor communal areas that are thoroughfares and lead to fire escapes (e.g. stairwells and hallways) should be kept clear of personal items such as bikes, as they could pose a hazard in the event of fire. Items stored in fire escapes may be removed without notice.

For any queries related to the use of communal space or to find your local housing officer, please contact the [Pinnacle helpdesk](#).

## Summer safety tips

With the temperature increasing across the UK, we wanted to share with you some summer safety tips to keep you and your family safe during warmer weather.

### Check your window restrictors

- These stop a window opening too far so accidents can be avoided.
- If they're missing or broken, please contact Pinnacle to arrange for them to be fitted or fixed.

### Watch out for bees and wasps

- If you notice an active wasp or bees nest inside your property or garden, please call Pinnacle. Nests found inside the property will be dealt with within 48 hours.

### Practice BBQ safety

- If you are using a BBQ, please make it is on a flat surface and away from any sheds, trees, bushes or other flammable objects.

For more helpful tips to keep safe this summer, visit the [Pinnacle Summer Tips](#) page.

### How to contact Pinnacle

- Call 0800 031 8628
- [Visit their website](#)

# Q&A with Tina Denmark

This month, we spoke to Tina Denmark, a DIO Housing Estate Manager for Colchester (Essex), Wattisham and Woodbridge (Suffolk), to shine a spotlight on the Housing Estate Manager role and how their day-to-day work focuses on improving the overall housing estate and experience for our families.

## Can you tell us about your role as a Housing Estate Manager?

Of course! I work in the DIO Accommodation team, and really closely with our suppliers Pinnacle (who run our National Service Centre), Amey (who manage repairs and maintenance for my region) and local contacts such as the Garrison commander and local council to ensure families are happy, well looked after and protected on the estate. You might not see us, but we are in the background working together to advocate for families and make sure the estate is the best it can be. This means checking things like the grounds, lamp posts, street signs and parks are good, safe and well maintained. I also check whether families are happy with their repairs, that houses have been prepared for move-in and move-out, and ensure families receive the support they need within the right time frame and to a good standard.

## What's the most rewarding aspect of your job?

I've been here for 26 years and worked in housing the whole time – it's a challenging and busy job but it's worth it knowing my involvement really helps families. I've been part of putting in new play parks, cleaning graffiti, removing fly tipping, carrying out assurance checks and installing electric power showers. It's all those little things we do, knowing you've done a nice thing for our families, and it's made such a difference.

## If a family needs help, what would your advice be?

I think it's always nice to have a face-to-face conversation with somebody. There is always someone to go and talk to. My advice would be to go to your Housing Officer as the first point of contact. There are about 120 Housing Officers out and about on the UK estate – you can usually spot them in their bright purple uniforms. Or you can always find them at their local offices during their weekly drop-in sessions. You can also attend our monthly housing clinics where you can speak directly to representatives from DIO and all of our suppliers. Or even speak to your Unit Welfare Officer. We are all here to listen and lean in, and will always guide families to speak to the right people who can help.



## Upcoming SFA Roadshows

- Culdrose - 16 July - 1:00pm
- St Mawgan - 16 July - 6:00pm
- Plymouth - 17 July - 1:00pm
- Plymouth - 17 July - 5:30pm
- Clyde - 5 September - 13:00pm
- Clyde - 5 September - 17:30pm

**Sign up here or on the Defence Homes website.**



## Useful Links

- [Contact Pinnacle](#)
- [Visit Defence Homes](#)
- [Join the SFA Defence Connect page](#)



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