

Families First



Air Cdre Leah Griffin, Head of Accommodation

After the UK's warmest summer on record, our attention has now turned to winter. We held our annual winter preparedness drill this month, during which we stress tested a number of challenging scenarios to determine our response in the event of a business continuity crisis. The event built upon the success of last winter, and the active engagement and lessons shared amongst suppliers demonstrated the importance of these sessions in building confidence that we are ready to support Service families over winter.

We often find that we are always looking to what is ahead, but it's worth reflecting on the progress that has been made this year; over the summer we have been focused on delivering the Consumer Charter commitments that were announced in April.



Air Cdre Leah Griffin.

Hopefully you will be starting to see and feel some of these changes. Housing Officers are now more visible across the estate, and you should have received a business card with details of how to contact them; whilst the first port of call for repairs is the Pinnacle National Service Centre helpdesk, Housing Officers are an invaluable source of support for housing advice. The revised move-in specification has moved away from magnolia walls to preparing homes with white walls and hard flooring when replacement is required and we're already hearing great feedback from families on these changes. A new complaints process will go live on 1 Oct which streamlines the process from three to two stages to achieve quicker resolution. We know that many of you are also benefiting from investment to raise the minimum standard of your home with works underway to modernise and improve the thermal insulation of 1,000 homes. There is still much more to be done as we strive to continue making improvements to the lived experience for families.

On the next page, you can learn more about Patch Hacks, a new campaign we are running to share how families are decorating their homes using temporary enhancements. I would encourage you to take a look and share your own Patch Hacks with the rest of our community; it's fascinating to see how small changes can make a house a home. Finally, I would urge you to keep sharing your feedback with us, especially if we are at one of the accommodation roadshows in your local area and keep an eye out for even more improvements in the SFA space.

Patch Hacks

We know that being able to personalise your home is important and as part of our [Consumer Charter](#), DIO is committed to modernising our policies to give you more freedom to enhance your homes. As part of this, we're highlighting how temporary enhancements can help you make your home feel more comfortable and reflective of your personal style.

Temporary enhancements are non-permanent changes you can make to the interior of your SFA. You do not need to submit forms or seek approval to carry out temporary enhancements as they aren't permanent and can be easily removed ahead of moving out.

Zoe, a military spouse living in North Devon, transformed her SFA interior to reflect her family's personal style. She wrapped her kitchen cabinets in vinyl, installed a temporary wall divider, added removable picture rails and using shelving in her bathroom that sticks to the tiles.

"There are so many ways you can make an SFA your own. It can be something as simple as putting up picture frames or laying down a rug. Even adding a few brighter accessories can really uplift a room. Planning is key – planning the enhancement but also how you're going to remove it. Command strips have been my best friend. I also try to focus on one wall per room as I know I will need to paint the whole wall back to its original colour prior to marching out." - Zoe (@that.military.wife)



Zoe's living room and kitchen, with temporary enhancements

Currently, you can paint your homes but are required to return them to the original colour on move out. Under the planned changes more flexibility will be given to you to decorate your homes, further details will follow very soon.

Share your Patch Hacks!

If you've personalised your SFA home with light touch enhancements, we'd love to hear from you. Like Zoe, your creativity could inspire other military families and feature on the Defence Homes website or our DIO social channels. Tag or message us on our [Instagram](#) or [X](#) account or [fill out this form](#) and we'll get in touch.

Read more about light touch enhancements in your SFA on our new [Patch Hacks](#) page, or contact your dedicated [Housing Officer](#).

Policy updates

Giving greater freedoms to families

DIO is committed to transforming your accommodation experience. By modernising our policies, we're empowering families with greater freedom to personalise and enhance your homes. Last month, Defence Secretary Rt Hon John Healey MP announced the latest improvements, which include an update to policies making it easier for you to own pets and run businesses from home.

Update to Business from Home

Following a review of the Business from Home policy, applications to run a business from an SFA home were reinstated in May.

We have now revised the approvals process, with DIO as the decision making authority to ensure a consistent approach is applied across the UK estate.



We recently caught up with a group of Housing Officers to hear more about their role in supporting you and your families. To find out who your local Housing Officer is, visit the Pinnacle website.

SFA pet policy update

We know that pets are a big part of family life. Previously, families with pets were required to seek written permission through the National Service Centre (NSC) before acquiring or bringing existing pets into SFA. Under the revised policy, pet owners no longer need approval. Instead, you simply need to notify the NSC that you have a pet via an e-form.

Permission will only be required if the number or type of pets exceeds the permissible criteria outlined in the Pet Notification Form on the Pinnacle website.



A dog owned by a Serving person.

SFA Noticeboard

Complaints process change

Important changes will be made on the 1 October 2025 to the complaints process currently outlined in Joint Service Publication (JSP) 464.

The current three-stage complaints process will be streamlined into a new two-stage process. These changes are designed to make the process quicker, simpler, and more robust, providing you with greater confidence and assurance.

For more information on how the complaints process will change, visit [Defence Homes](#).



Upcoming SFA Roadshows

- Northolt - 7 October - 18:30
- Northolt - 8 October - 10:00
- Northwood - 8 October - 18:00
- Northwood - 9 October - 10:00
- Chepstow - 23 October - 12:30
- Imjin - 23 October - 17:30

[Sign up here](#) or on the [Defence Homes website](#).

Flanders Field bike ride

On 22 September, DIO and industry partners, including Pinnacle, Amey and VIVO, began a four-day cycle through the historic Flanders Fields, honouring those who fell in WWI and raising funds for the Veterans' Foundation as part of the charity initiative #DIOGivingBack.

Every mile cycled, every pound raised, contributes to [the Veterans' Foundation's](#) mission of changing lives. From mental health support to housing assistance, from rehabilitation programmes to family aid – all money raised helps create real, lasting change for our veterans.

The Veterans' Foundation is one of Britain's fastest-growing military charities, supporting our armed forces family. Through their vital grant programme, they provide essential funding to hundreds of smaller charities, like Scotty's Little Soldiers ensuring that help reaches those who served our nation and their families when they need it most.

If you'd like to donate, please visit [the "DIO Cycling through History" JustGiving page](#).



Useful Links

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



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