

Families First



Foreword from James Forrester, Operations Director, VIVO

As the colder months approach, our teams at VIVO are focused on keeping Service Family homes safe, warm, and well-maintained throughout winter.

This is always our busiest time of year. Repair volumes can rise by 30% or more compared to summer, with January often the peak month. To meet this demand, we plan ahead, flexing resources from activities that are quieter in winter, such as void preparation, and we manage holidays and training to maximise our engineer's availability.



James Forrester,
Operations Director, VIVO

We've been working closely with Pinnacle to ensure that when you contact the National Service Centre, the right trade is deployed first time. This collaboration recently included VIVO engineers visiting the National Service Centre to share insights and strengthen understanding between our front-line teams.

Of course, the best outcome for you and your families is not needing to report repairs at all. Using data analysis, we've identified more opportunities for proactive maintenance across the estate. With DIO's support, this has led to projects such as replacing almost 800 boilers, clearing gutters at 4,000 homes, and lagging loft pipes and tanks to prevent burst pipes in freezing weather.

Our winter planning began in August. Stock checks have been completed for heaters, cookers, sandbags and boilers and we have portable heaters and cookers available if needed. Critical communal heating systems have been serviced, and gas safety inspections brought forward.

We've also introduced new technology to improve communication with Families, including the ability to send SMS updates to all homes during severe weather. Our new phone system includes caller display, so you'll know if it is a call from one of the VIVO service centres, and you'll be able to call us back directly.

Together with DIO and Pinnacle, we're ready to respond, whatever the winter brings.

Patch Hacks

Giving magnolia its marching orders

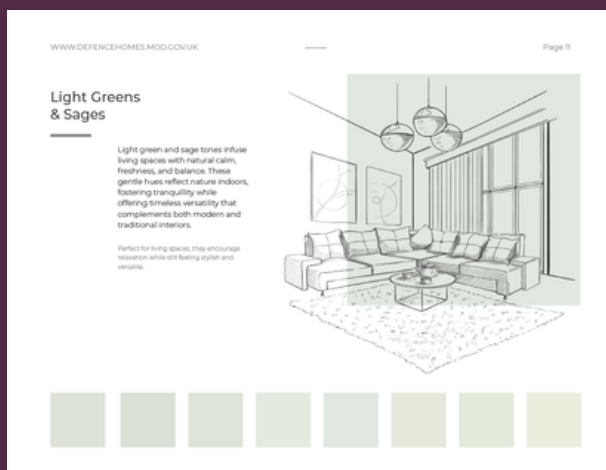
As part of our commitment to modernise outdated policies and give Service Families more freedoms, we're introducing a New Defence Homes Colour Palette. This represents a significant step forward from the days when all walls had to be returned to magnolia or white before moving out.



New colour palette

Our new colour palette offers a broader range of light and neutral colours that won't require reverting to white when you move. This gives families much more freedom to choose what best suits their taste and lifestyle.

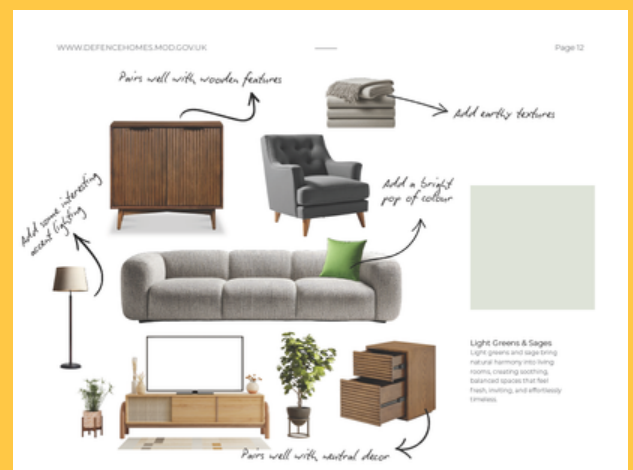
The palette doesn't specify particular paint brands or types, so you can select matt or silk finishes as you prefer. If you're unsure whether your chosen colour complies with the approved range, simply check with your dedicated Housing Officer.



Share your hacks

Of course, families are still welcome to paint walls in colours outside the new palette range, but these will require returning to white upon move out. We've also created helpful top tips for painting your SFA interior, including guidance on choosing the right paint type for each room, wall preparation, and aftercare.

Share your patch hacks with us by tagging us on social media or filling out our online form. Your creativity could inspire other military and feature on our channels.



Winter preparedness

Getting your SFA ready for the colder months

With winter approaching, now's the perfect time to prepare your SFA home for the challenges that colder weather can bring. Taking a few simple steps now can prevent problems later and ensure your family stays warm and comfortable throughout the season.



Check your boiler is working properly. Problems are often discovered when heating is first needed. Test your system by turning the heating on and feeling radiators warm up. Check boiler pressure, which should read between 1 and 1.5 bar. Anything lower means radiators won't heat effectively. You can top up pressure yourself using guidance videos available on the [Pinnacle website](#).



If radiators feel cold at the top when heating is on, they may need bleeding. Using your radiator key, turn the bleed valve anti-clockwise until you hear hissing, then close when water appears. Remember to recheck boiler pressure afterwards and re-pressurise if needed.



Locate your stopcock and test it works. This crucial valve lets you turn off water quickly in emergencies. You'll typically find it under your kitchen sink.



Winter condensation can become problematic when warm, moist air meets cold surfaces like windows and walls. Reduce this by using extractor fans when cooking or bathing, opening windows briefly for ventilation, and maintaining consistent heating. If condensation does lead to damp or mould issues, address it quickly by cleaning affected areas and improving airflow.



If you're going away during winter, leave heating on low or frost setting to prevent pipes freezing, which could cause burst pipes and significant damage.

Useful information

For any heating, boiler, or maintenance issues, contact Pinnacle National Service Centre on 0800 031 8628. Remember, checking everything works before problems arise means repairs can be scheduled at convenient times rather than during emergencies.

Q&A

Q&A with Jayne Smith, Assistant Head of Customer Experience and Insight for DIO

Hi, I'm Jayne and I've worked for MOD for 40 years. I was previously married to a member of the RAF and I've lived in SFA on and off for the last 35 years.

Q. Tell me a little about your role.

A. My role centres on managing accommodation complaints, compensation cases and our customer satisfaction processes. I work closely with families, suppliers and stakeholders on a regular basis. There's a lot of different aspects to my role but what matters most to me is ensuring families feel heard and supported.



Jayne Smith, Assistant Head of Customer Experience and Insight for DIO

Q. How do you support families in your role?

A. Having lived in SFA myself, I have a firsthand experience, and this personal insight shapes how I approach my work. I try to gain the full picture of issues raised by families and regularly review our processes to enhance the experience of families. My aim is to improve customer experience utilising insights and feedback to enable the accommodation team to deliver a more consistent service.

Q. How do you feel about the new complaints process for families?

A. In an ideal world, I'd prefer it if families didn't have to make any complaints at all, but I'm determined to support families as much as I can every step of the way. While the new complaints process is still in its early days, I'm confident it will make a positive difference for families. As part of the new process, if complaints are escalated from Stage 1 to Stage 2, the Customer Support Team will contact families to understand the full picture around their complaint and help to find a swift resolution. We are committed to resolving complaints and we encourage a solution-focussed conversation built on mutual respect to find the best outcome for families.

Q. What's one thing you love about your role?

A. I really love being able to collaborate and make positive improvements for families. I am a people person; I love a challenge, and I'm fortunate to have a brilliant, supportive team. The moment when I can turn around a difficult situation for a family – that's what I love the most about my role. You can read more about the new complaints process for UK SFA [here](#).

SFA Noticeboard



Cycling for Veterans: mission accomplished

The DIO Flanders Fields charity bike ride exceeded expectations, raising an outstanding £85,143 for the Veterans' Foundation, with donations still coming in. This total has surpassed last year's fundraising efforts, demonstrating the incredible generosity of our military community.

From 22nd September, Chief Executive Mike Green led a dedicated team of cyclists from DIO and our industry partners, including Pinnacle, Amey and VIVO, on a four-day journey through the historic battlefields of Flanders. The challenge combined remembrance with active support for today's Veterans. Every mile pedalled and every pound raised contributes directly to the Veterans' Foundation's vital mission.

The success of this challenge reflects the spirit of #DIOGivingBack, our commitment to supporting the wider military community. Working together, we can honour the past whilst building better futures for our Veterans.

Congratulations to everyone who participated, donated, or supported this fundraising effort. If you would like to donate, please visit the '[DIO Cycling Through History](#)' [JustGiving](#) page.



Upcoming SFA Roadshows

- Kendrew - 24 November - 13:00
- Wittering - 24 November - 18:00

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

Useful Links

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



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