

Families First



Foreword from Helen McGinley, Accommodation Regional Manager for the North at DIO

Hello everyone! I'm Helen McGinley, the DIO Accommodation Regional Manager for the North Region. I lead a dedicated team based across the largest UK region, spanning all four nations of the UK, including Scotland, Northern Ireland, the North of England and Anglesey in North Wales. We are one of five regional teams responsible for delivering and maintaining SFA for Service families across the UK.



Helen McGinley, Accommodation Regional Manager for the North

At the heart of everything we do is a simple goal: making sure your home is safe, warm, compliant and somewhere you and your family can truly feel at home. We work closely with our suppliers to ensure repairs and maintenance are carried out to a good standard and within agreed timescales. We also oversee the preparation of homes before families move in, helping to make the transition as smooth as possible.

Looking ahead, we are equally focused on ensuring our homes are fit for the future. We manage the upgrade and improvement programmes that will transform housing across the estate to create modern homes for modern military life.

What makes our team particularly passionate about this work is that many of us have personal experience of Service life. Many of my colleagues have served themselves, while others have close family connections to the armed forces and have lived in SFA. That experience helps us understand that our work is more than bricks and mortar, it's about supporting our people and communities.

We are committed to listening and learning, and we want Service families to be part of this journey. Your voice is vital and helps shape the decisions we make alongside the single Services, the Families Federations and welfare teams. As we continue to improve the service we provide, your feedback remains incredibly important. Whether things are working well or there are areas where we can do better, we want to hear from you. Your experiences and opinions help us understand what matters most and enable us to focus our efforts where they can make the biggest difference.

Thank you for being part of our community, and I hope you enjoy this edition of Families First.

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Can you help shape the future of SFA?

Do you live in Service Family Accommodation and want to help improve housing services for Service families? We are looking for volunteers to become Service Family Customer Representatives as part of new Regional Experience Committees (RECs) launching across the UK.

As a representative, you'll work with other Service family volunteers and DIO colleagues to share feedback, highlight local issues and help influence positive changes to housing services. Your experiences and insights will play an important role in ensuring the voices of Service families are taken into account.

The role is voluntary and runs for 12 months, with quarterly meetings. No previous experience or formal qualifications are required. We're simply looking for people who care about improving housing services, are willing to share their views and can represent the experiences of families in their region.

This is a unique opportunity to make a real difference, gain a better understanding of how Defence housing operates and help shape improvements for Service families across the UK.

Applications are open now and close on Friday 18 September 2026.



Hi everybody, I'm Emma Brett,

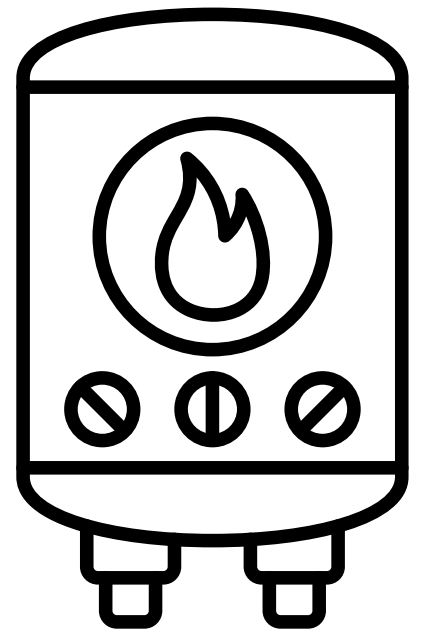
Find out more about the role and how to apply on [Defence Homes](#).

Check your boilers!

While the warmer weather is still with us, now is a great time to make sure your boiler is ready for when temperatures eventually start to fall. Heating issues often only become apparent when the system is switched on after a long period of inactivity, so a quick check now could help you avoid problems later in the colder months.

Try turning your heating on and checking that your radiators warm up properly. It is also worth taking a look at your boiler pressure gauge. Most systems work best with a pressure reading between 1 and 1.5 bar. If the pressure is too low, your heating may not perform as effectively when you need it.

If you do need to top up your boiler pressure, [step-by-step guidance videos](#) are available on the Pinnacle website to help you through the process.



Fire safety advice

Fire safety starts with everyday habits. Taking a few simple precautions can help protect your family, home and belongings.

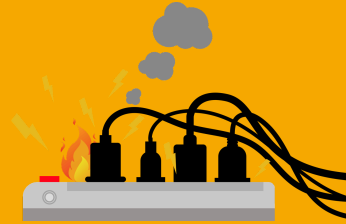
1. Check your smoke alarm

Smoke alarms provide vital early warning in the event of a fire. Test them regularly and never disconnect, cover or tamper with them. If a smoke or heat alarm is damaged or not working correctly, report it to Pinnacle immediately so it can be repaired or replaced.



2. Don't overload sockets

Plugging too many appliances into a single socket or extension lead can cause overheating and increase the risk of fire. Avoid using multiple extension leads together, and always check that extension cables are suitable for the appliances being used.



3. Keep batteries and chargers out of the heat

Hot weather can cause rechargeable batteries in items such as power banks, vapes, e-scooters and electronic devices to overheat or swell. Avoid leaving them in direct sunlight, conservatories, windowsills or hot vehicles, and always follow the manufacturer's charging guidance.



4. Know what to do if a pan catches fire

If a pan containing oil or grease catches fire, never throw water on it as this can cause the fire to spread rapidly. Turn off the heat if it is safe to do so and leave the pan where it is. Get everyone out of the property and call 999.



5. Give air fryers space

Air fryers need ventilation to operate safely. Keep them away from walls, cupboards and other combustible materials. You should also clean them regularly to prevent grease build-up, which can increase the risk of fire.



Remember, if a fire occurs, leave your home immediately and call 999.

Housing Matters Podcast

Last month, we launched our new podcast for military families, Housing Matters. The podcast lifts the lid on military housing and the issues that matter most to Service personnel and their families.

Co-presenters Defence Families Champion, Trish Jakeman, and DIO Operations Manager South, Sebastian O'Hara, are joined fortnightly by special guests who share their unique perspectives, experiences and expertise on all things military housing.

Episodes 3 and 4 are available now, alongside the first two episodes in the series. Whether you are interested in housing maintenance, community support or the future of military housing, Housing Matters offers insight into the issues that affect Service families every day.



Episode 3 focuses on damp and mould, one of the most significant challenges facing military housing. Our co-presenters are joined by Nikki Simmons from VIVO and Matt Smith from Amey. They discuss what causes damp and mould, the work of the Damp and Mould Taskforce, and the steps being taken to improve how these issues are identified, managed and resolved.



Episode 4 looks beyond the home itself to explore the wider community and support networks that help make life on a patch work. The discussion covers the role of NHS services, welfare charities, and the social value initiatives delivered by DIO and its suppliers, showcasing how organisations work together to support Service personnel and their families.



Useful Links

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



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