



ARMY

A Regular Army Interim Guide for Commonwealth Citizens and their Families

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Distributed by the Overseas Cell Recruiting Group to successful applicants called forward for Regular Army recruit selection and by units to serving Commonwealth citizens and their families. Also available on the AGweb and the Army Internet Welfare and Families page

Sponsor: SO2b PS4(A) DPS(A)

Tel Mil: 94344 Ext 5958 Civil +44 (0)1980 61 5958

Useful Telephone Numbers

Your nominated Unit Welfare Officer - your first point of contact for routine enquiries	
Your nearest HIVE - help, information and signposting to support agencies.	Online at www.hive.mod.uk or phone 01722 436498
Army Welfare Information Service - confidential information and access to the Army's Welfare Service	01722 436569
Confidential Support Line - personal support from a confidential telephone support worker. Interpreting facilities exist for callers whose language is other than English	0800 7314880 (UK) +44 (0) 1890 630854
Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre - Emergency casualty and compassionate support (in the case of death, injury or illness of the soldier or their immediate family)	+44 (0)1452 519951

**Write down your soldier's contact details here,
(You may need them later)**

Full name _____

Rank _____ **Regimental number** _____

Unit name _____

Unit contact telephone number _____

Unit address _____

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The contents of this guide are designed to provide general advice and ensure you have the most up to date information. In most cases for Army information this should be sought from your unit or in the case of UK immigration or visa matters, the UK Home Office.

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Section 1

Introduction

This guide has been prepared to help Commonwealth citizens and their families during the time that they are with the British Army¹. If you are reading this guide you may be thinking about joining the British Army from overseas, be a family member planning on joining your soldier in the UK or already be together in the British Army. The British Army family is currently made up of citizens from some 50 different nationalities and will do all that it can to assist you and your family with integrating into the British Army way of life. This guide is part of that assistance. It focuses on spouses and civil partners², however parents of single soldiers and single soldier's partners may also find it useful as a guide of who to turn to for help. Not all of the information here will be relevant to everybody – but keep it handy in case you need it later.

If you are a family member start by writing your soldier's details on the inside front cover as you will need them nearly every time you make a phone call about them to someone in the Army.

Your friends and family will probably be your strongest support network, however, if you have any issues you feel unable to handle, or you just need to talk, please remember that there is always someone in the Army you can turn to for advice and support. Your first point of contact, as a soldier or family member for most welfare matters will normally be a Unit Welfare Officer. They are there to support members of the Army and their families. They are trained to provide welfare support and offer a confidential service. Put their phone number in the front of the book as well. If you do not know who they are your serving soldier should provide you with the contact details. You can also use the other numbers inside the front cover if you need to.

The Home Office regularly updates their information about UK entry clearance and visa matters. Those using this guide are advised to confirm they have the most up to date information by checking either with an Army Recruiting Office, their Army unit or with the appropriate UK Government Department website on the Internet. If you need advice or information or wish to complain or appeal about UK visa matters you should do this if overseas from the nearest British High Commission, UKvisas, the Borders and Immigration Agency or a qualified immigration advisor. Contact details for all of these sources of support can be found at the end of this guide.

¹ Throughout the booklet the term serving soldier is used. This is a generic term used to cover officers and soldiers, male or female of any Regiment or Corps.

² UK law recognises same-sex couples who have registered a legally recognised partnership with each other in a civil ceremony in accordance with the Civil Partnership Act 2004. Such couples receive the same eligibility to Service allowances as those who are married.

Section 2

Gathering Information

Prior to making any decision to travel to the United Kingdom (UK) you should gather together as much information as possible about the British Army and moving to and living in the UK or in some cases other parts of Europe. There is a wealth of information available from the Internet for instance via British High Commission websites, the British Council and it's libraries or websites such as i-uk.

You will also find it useful to visit the websites of UKvisas, the UK Home Office, Borders and Immigration Agency (BIA) and the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD). In addition the websites of the British Army, the Army Families Federation, HIVE and the Army Welfare Service contain information and topics of interest helpful to anyone joining the British Army along with their families. A list of the most useful websites can be found at the end of this guide.

Section 3

Recruitment into the British Army from Overseas

Generally, Commonwealth citizens living outside the UK make a request to Recruiting Group (RG) to join the British Army by fax, letter, telephone call or e-mail. Subsequently, they are sent an application pack. Once returned, RG Overseas Cell staff assesses and screens the application. Successful applicants are sent a call forward letter to the UK (copied to the appropriate British High Commission Visa Section). Applicants then have 4 months to travel to the UK at their own expense, which includes both travel and accommodation in the UK and any visa costs. Applicants should be aware that if they fail the recruitment process they will still need to comply with the terms of their visas. Similarly, should they fail initial training and be discharged from the Army, immigration controls are re-imposed by the BIA and it is an individual's own personal responsibility to either submit an application for further leave to remain in the UK (including the appropriate application fee), or leave the UK (at their own expense). Gurkhas are recruited through specific arrangements and are selected and enlisted in Nepal. If they fail to pass initial training and are discharged from the Army they will be returned to Nepal at public expense.

Commonwealth applicants from overseas may require a sponsor in the UK in order to apply for a UK visitor's visa (normally valid for 6 months). This is a Home Office requirement and RG checks with sponsors to ensure that they understand their

responsibilities. This may include providing, support and accommodation during the selection process in the UK and can take from 6 to 12 weeks.

Applicants on arrival in the UK are required to report to a nominated Armed Forces Careers Office within 3 days of arrival in the UK. They are then processed in the same way as British applicants taking various literacy and numeracy, medical and selection tests at Army Development and Selection Centres (ADSC).

Applicants who have been pre-selected by an Overseas Pre-Selection Team (OPT) in their country of origin (for instance Fiji) are called forward to the UK at their own expense in groups directly to ADSC Pirbright. If successful they will be recruited immediately and sent to start their training. Soldiers are paid from the date they enlist at a training establishment.

After enlistment into the regular Army, under unit arrangements, non-British passports are sent with a covering letter from the unit, (no application form or fee is required) to the Home Office department which deals with the endorsement of passports for Exempt Armed Forces Personnel. This provides a free 'Exempt UK Immigration Control' passport endorsement, normally inserted into the Service person's passport.

Section 4

Your Immigration Status whilst with the British Army

At the point that a non-British citizen enlists into the British Army they automatically become exempt from UK immigration control under Section 8(4)(a) of the Immigration Act 1971. Whilst serving as non-British citizens, the BIA provides a free 'Exempt UK Immigration Control' passport endorsement. This exemption suspends any existing UK visa restrictions, whilst the individual is serving in the Army.

Eligible family members planning to travel to the UK as dependants of a non-British Service person may consider applying for an 'Exempt Armed Forces Dependents Visa'. These UK visas currently cost £200 per person and are normally paid by the sponsor (the serving soldier) or the applicant. They may be granted for up to four years depending on the length of service of the Serviceperson sponsor or the time they will be serving in the UK. Citizens of some Commonwealth countries are not required to apply for UK visas if visiting the UK for six-months or less, but will still need to demonstrate to UK Immigration Officers that they satisfy the immigration rules on arrival. Those meeting the criteria may subsequently apply for Exempt Armed Forces Dependents visas (currently £395) once in the UK. You are advised to confirm your specific requirements with the British High Commission in your country of origin or with UKvisas or the Borders and Immigration Agency. More

information is in Section 8 of this guide and contact details of which are at the end of this guide.

Section 5

About the British Army

When a soldier or their spouse or civil partner joins the Army or a person marries or enters into a civil partnership with a soldier, they become part of an Army Family. The immediate group you belong to is often called a Regiment, Corps or Unit and is like a smaller family within the Army family. Most people develop very strong ties of loyalty to this group. The Army believes that stability of family life is of great importance for its personnel and encourages accompanied service wherever practicable. This means that a family can normally go wherever the serving spouse is assigned, including overseas, although in some cases, for instance on training or military operations, this is not possible.

The Army carries out tasks given to it by the democratically elected Government of the United Kingdom (UK). Its main job is to help defend the interests of the UK, which consists of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. This may involve service overseas as part of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) Force or any other multi-national deployment. Soldiers may also be deployed on United Nations (UN) operations and used to help in other emergencies. The list below shows how a regiment fits into the Army and how Government controls the Army.

- The Queen
- The Government
- Parliament
- Ministry of Defence (MoD)
 - Secretary of State for Defence
 - Ministers
- Army Board
- Chief of the General Staff
- Commands
- Divisions (about 20,000 soldiers).
- Brigades (about 5000 soldiers).
- Regiments/Battalions (about 700 soldiers).
- Companies/Squadrons/Batteries (about 120 soldiers).

- Platoons/Troops (about 30 soldiers).

Since 1949 the UK has belonged to the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). NATO aims to provide a common defence for all Western Europe, including the UK. British Army personnel serve in garrisons in Germany, Brunei, Cyprus, Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands. In addition they are deployed on operations worldwide, for instance to the Middle East and Afghanistan.

So a soldier:

- is on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - and that is how their pay is calculated.
- can be away from home at weekends, on public holidays, religious festivals, birthdays, and for longer periods.
- can be in danger - from an enemy or because of the type of work they do.

But has...

- regular pay, and pay rates which are reviewed every year by an independent Armed Forces Pay Review Body.
- longer holidays than most civilians - the Army word for holidays is "leave".
- a place to live.
- people to ask for help and advice.

Army Pay, Allowances and Compensation

Army Pay Army pay is determined by rank, profession/branch or trade, qualifications held and satisfactory performance. Soldiers will be able to find out their details from their unit administrative office and their monthly pay slip or via ArmyNET.

Army Allowances Allowances exist to ensure that soldiers receives financial recompense for the additional costs incurred through the additional challenges of Service life. Rates are available on ArmyNET or through unit administrative staff.

Annual Leave Annually soldiers are eligible for 30 working days leave.

Forces Railcard Although not an allowance, soldiers are entitled to purchase a Forces Railcard for themselves and their spouse/civil partner which provides discounted rail travel. Railcards are available from unit administrative staff. There is

a small fee, a requirement for a passport sized photograph and once issued may provide for discounted rail travel in the UK.

Compensation Serving personnel or Veterans can apply for compensation if they have an illness or injury and service is the only or main cause. The scheme under which you can claim depends on whether the period of service was before or after 6 April 2005. The schemes are administered by the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA). For more information about either pension options and compensation schemes, visit (www.veterans-uk.info) or ring the SPVA helpline on UK 0800 169 2277 or overseas +44 1253 866043.

Enquiries All enquiries about Army pay, allowances and pensions matters should be made by the soldier to their unit administrative or welfare staff in the first instance. Where this is not practicable, it is possible to contact the Joint Personnel Administration Centre -Enquiry Centre by email JPAC@afpaa.mod.uk phone 0800 0853600 or fax on 0141224 3586 though data protection issues will affect the amount of personal information that can be provided to third parties.

Single Service Parents and Couples where both Parents are Serving Personnel

The Army has a vested interest in helping soldiers balance the needs of their employment with their family life. However as soldiers, serving parents must be available for deployment at anytime and so have personal responsibility for ensuring that they have robust arrangements in place to care for their children, should they need to be away from home. Key to this is making arrangements well in advance and ensuring that advice and support is sought from either the Unit Welfare staff or the Army Welfare Service.

If during a deployment any children are to be left in the care of someone who is not a close relative for a period of over 28 days this is called private fostering. There are legal requirements in the UK to notify the local authorities to ensure the child receives the best possible care. The Army Welfare Service, the British Forces Work Service overseas or your UK Local Authority Children Services department will be able to provide you with more advice.

Section 6 About the United Kingdom (UK)

Law and Culture The UK has a diverse culture, including a number of ethnic minorities and citizens of Commonwealth, European Union and many other countries from around the world. The social culture and laws in the United Kingdom may be different to those in your own country and whilst we respect your right to follow your

own cultural practices you must comply with UK law where it is different to the law in your own country. UK laws are designed to preserve and protect quality of life whilst bringing to justice those who commit offences.

Equality and Diversity and Domestic Abuse UK laws include for instance legislation promoting equality of opportunity and making racial discrimination illegal and are designed to ensure equal treatment of all irrespective of gender, race, religion, belief or sexual orientation and tolerance towards minority cultures and the protection of children. As an example the UK has laws to prevent 'Domestic abuse, so anyone that who is violent towards their partner whether man or woman, married or living together can be prosecuted for a serious offence such as assault or grievous bodily harm. Abuse includes emotional abuse such as constantly belittling your partner or denying them money as a form of control. Domestic abuse may also include behaviour that impacts on children.

UK Immigration law UK Immigration laws are designed to enable those with legitimate reasons for entering the UK access, whilst ensuring that those who are here illegally or in breach of the conditions of their visa are brought to justice.

Parenting In the UK parents have a responsibility to protect their children and this includes not leaving them at risk of any significant harm. This needs to be considered especially in terms of leaving children unattended. If a child comes to any harm, or is perceived to be at risk of harm, while left unattended then the parent, or agreed adult carer, will face consequences and this may include prosecution. In UK society parents/carers are not allowed to physically harm their children regardless of any individual cultural or religious justification. In UK law whilst reasonable force is permitted to discipline a child, if the punishment is too severe, individuals can be prosecuted for assault or the child may be taken into care by the local authority.

Men and Women In addition, men and women have equal rights, status and mix easily. Many women are very independent and will socialise freely with men. However this does not mean they are willing to enter into sexual relations.

Weather The UK has a temperate climate with marked changes between the Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn seasons. The temperatures in Britain are usually calculated in degrees Celsius (C), rather than Fahrenheit and the average daytime winter temperature is 4°C with some nights dropping to -5°C or lower. July and August are usually the warmest months with maximum temperatures of 30-32°C. October is usually quite wet.

Further Information Her Majesty's Stationery Office produces a publication entitled 'Life in the UK'. It is available through Army Libraries and provides background material for those preparing for UK Naturalisation. In addition the i-uk website jointly funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British

Council and UK Trade and Investment, provides a wealth of information on UK, business, cultural and educational resources.

Section 7

Assignments outside the UK

After a soldier has completed initial training, they and any immediate accompanying family may be assigned outside the UK for instance to either Germany or Cyprus. Official travel will normally be organised for you by your unit through the Defence Passenger Reservations Centre and may include air travel on a specially chartered civilian flight. Your family will also have to adhere to the immigration rules of the country you are entering and have the necessary visa or Status Of Forces Agreement (SOFA) stamp in Germany or Treaty of Establishment stamp in Cyprus. The costs of visas for travelling on official journeys will normally be covered by public funds. You can also obtain information on the area you are going to from a HIVE information centre or the Army Welfare Information Service.

Partly for your protection, your spouse and children will also become subject to some parts of military law so that the Army may deal with cases rather than the local civilian court and both service and Ministry of Defence police jurisdiction.

If soldiers or their immediate family require special medical treatment or have a Special Educational, Additional Need or Disability you should register this with the unit as soon as possible as the required support cannot always be provided outside the UK.

If you wish to travel privately outside the area you are assigned to, you will have to ensure that you have the required visas. Within Europe some countries can be accessed through a single visa known as a 'Schengen' visa (apart from the UK). Information on visas for private travel can be found on the appropriate Country's immigration department or embassy website. For those F&C personnel and dependants already resident in Germany HQ UKSC(G) have an agreement with the Bezirksregierungen (District Government) in Lower Saxony, through the British Forces Liaison office, (this covers the 7 Armd Bde area; Bergen-Hohne, Celle, Fallingbostel, Hameln & Hannover) to issue 'time-limited' residence permits (Aufenthaltsbewilligungen) to non-EU dependents of members of the British Forces in Germany. SOFA Status Certificate entitles them to reside in Germany a resident permit allow them 'free' movement to, and through other Schengen countries - thereby negating requirement for a Schengen visa. Work is in hand to extend this to other parts of Germany.

Spouses or civil partners planning on working in a country outside the UK must comply with the local employment legislation and are advised to check the impact of non-UK nationality, either through the Service or civilian employment agencies in

the countries concerned including requirements for Criminal Record Bureau Checks.

Section 8

The UK Visa Entry Clearance Process

In applying to come to the UK from another country, soldiers and their families follow exactly the same procedures as anyone else applying for entry clearance from that country. Potential members of the British Army and their immediate family members receive the same priority as all other applicants. You are also responsible for the cost of any travel to the UK associated with joining the British Army (and return if unsuccessful) or at the end of your service career. Individuals should contact their nearest British Mission, Embassy or High Commission or visit the UKvisas website www.ukvisas.gov.uk for more detail on the visa application process and application forms. The British Army is normally unable to intervene on behalf of individual applications. For those who wish to seek further immigration advice, the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner provides lists of authorised immigration advisors. Details of their website are at the end of the guide.

UK Visa Applications

Family members from overseas should consider joining their serving spouse after they have completed initial training and become eligible for Service Families Accommodation (SFA) (more detail in the Housing paragraph in Section 11). This may reduce the costs incurred when compared to paying for private accommodation. Whilst the visa you enter on is a matter of personal choice, potentially the most cost effective way, if already legally married or in a civil partnership, is to apply for an Exempt Armed Forces Dependents visa. You will need to check your specific requirements carefully with the British High Commission concerned, as the general guidance given here is subject to change and differs between Commonwealth countries.

Family members have to pay for their entry clearance visas and subsequently for any extension required in order to remain in the UK. Application forms, fees and additional details are available from the UKvisas or local British High Commission websites. UKvisas also provide information and fact sheets on how to make an entry clearance application.

Soldiers may sponsor applications from their dependants or visitors from overseas. They will need to ensure that their dependants' application(s) is/are accompanied by sufficient supporting evidence. Advice for sponsors and applicants on the process and evidence to include with applications is contained in the UKvisas

sponsors and visitors guides available from the UKvisas website. Examples of supporting documents which sponsors and their dependants could provide are:

- A letter from the sponsor (the soldier) confirming his or her occupation and salary and how they will be providing support and accommodation for the applicant and any accompanying children.
- Evidence that the sponsor is in the UK, such as a copy of the bio data page (photo) of their passport and their Exempt from Immigration Control Stamp.
- Sponsor's recent (for example six months worth of) pay slips and bank statements or savings books to show what financial support is available and how travel to the UK etc will be paid for.
- Evidence of accommodation, such as a rental agreement, and evidence that applicant's dependants can stay in this accommodation if it is rented or provided by the local authority.
- Evidence that sponsor and applicant are related supported by, original birth/marriage/civil partnership certificates plus emails, photographs, letters, phone bills, birthday cards, money transfer invoices if appropriate.
- A unit letter (in the case of dependants).

Soldiers' dependants will need to decide what type of UK entry visa best suits their needs. For those non-British dependants planning to travel to the UK as dependants of a non-British Service person they may wish to consider using UK Visas Form VAF 2 (Employment Form) and applying for an 'Exempt Armed Forces Dependants Visa'. This can be done at Part I of the form, 'What type of visa are you applying for' by putting a cross in the 'other (please specify)' box and writing 'Exempt Armed Forces Dependants Visa', in full, in the space provided. These UK visas currently cost £200 per person, normally paid by the sponsor or the applicant, and may be granted for up to four years depending on the length of service of the Serviceperson sponsor or the time they will be serving in the UK. Citizens of some Commonwealth countries are not required to apply for UK visas if visiting the UK for six-months or less, though they still need to demonstrate to UK Immigration Officers that they satisfy the immigration rules on arrival. Those meeting the criteria may subsequently apply for Exempt Armed Forces Dependants visas (£395) once in the UK. This route may however be more expensive than applying for an Exempt Armed Forces Dependants visa from their country of origin (£200). Both visas may be valid for up to 4 years depending on the serving soldier's length of service. Details of the UKvisas website for application forms, a list of countries requiring visas for UK visits or transiting the UK and the UKvisas helpline are listed at the end of the guide. Those overseas can also seek advice from the nearest British High Commission.

In some countries applicants will need to provide 'biometric' information as part of the visa application process. This biometric information consists of scans of all 10 fingers, like a digital fingerprint, and a full-face digital photograph. Applicants will have to go to the nearest visa application centre in person to provide this biometric information. In those countries where there is no visa application centre, they will need to go to the nearest British Diplomatic post. Visa applications will not be processed until applicants have provided the necessary biometric information. The finger scans are electronic, so staff do not need to use any ink, liquid or chemicals. A digital photograph will be taken at the same time and the whole procedure should take no more than five minutes to complete. Applicants will need to make sure that they do not have any decoration (such as henna), or any cuts or other markings on fingertips before having finger scans. They should also be advised that any cuts and bruises on faces must have healed or disappeared before photographs are taken. Digital photographs must be of the full face and should not include a hat or any other head covering (unless worn for cultural or religious reasons).

Procedures at UK Customs and Immigration Control

UK Immigration Officers (IO) administer border control, security and entry clearance at UK ports and part of their duty is to establish that all in-coming passengers are who they say they are. This is particularly important given the current emphasis on both immigration and security and the potential for the use of either forged documentation or impersonation as a route to illegal entry to the UK. Non-British citizens serving in the Army and their families (and all those with non-EU passports) are therefore subject to checks on arrival at UK seaports and airports. These checks may involve an element of delay, to allow an IO to confirm the facts with an Army unit duty officer, and should not be considered unreasonable.

Non-British citizens serving in the British Army and their families are advised to ensure they have the right travel documentation (valid passports and visas and in the case of families in Germany a Status of Forces Agreement stamp and Cyprus a Treaty of Establishment Stamp). When travelling within and through NATO countries, soldiers may also present a MoD identity card and a NATO Travel Order to assist IOs with their responsibilities. In addition, if requested to provide additional identification by UK immigration officers, individuals should be prepared to provide a unit 24-hr telephone POC (unit Guard Room or Duty Officer) to enable IOs to verify identity without undue delay.

In addition www.iris.gov.uk provides information about registering for an iris scan with the UK immigration authorities (this includes those Exempt from Immigration Control and accompanying dependants over 8 years with the appropriate visas). This facilitates access to the UK via Heathrow, Gatwick, Birmingham and

Manchester airports through an eye scanner system without having to go through the normal passport control (as long as the scanner is working). More detail is available on the IRIS website.

UK Visa Refusal

If a UK visa is refused individuals are encouraged to deal directly with the UKvisas or Borders and Immigration Agency appeal process or complaints process where appropriate. Should a UKvisa application be refused, the applicant will be provided with a letter of explanation, which will include details of the appeals procedure if appropriate. Sponsors of families considering appealing should consider seeking qualified legal advice. The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) is an independent public body set up under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, and is led by the Immigration Services Commissioner. The OISC is responsible for ensuring that all immigration advisers fulfil the requirements of good practice and is committed to the elimination of unscrupulous advisers and the fair and thorough investigation of complaints. Soldiers seeking immigration advice are recommended to ensure the advisor they use is qualified and regulated by OISC, sources of which are at the end of this guide. In the UK a local Citizen's Advice Bureau can also provide signposting to qualified immigration advisors. The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal (AIT) hear immigration appeals. The website for the AIT is at www.ait.gov.uk. An independent immigration judge in the UK, will review the appeal evidence, listen to arguments from both sides and make a decision. Appeals procedures will normally be explained in any written notice of refusal. UKvisas websites also provide information and fact sheets on how to appeal.

Section 9 Passport and Visa Renewal in the UK, Settlement and UK Naturalisation

Passport renewal Individuals are responsible for replacing passports due to expire in accordance with their own country passport renewal/replacement instructions. Details can normally be found on Embassy or consulate websites and will include requirements for reporting missing or damaged passports to the police. The cost of replacement passports normally falls to the individual, however where passports are required for official travel the cost (inclusive of any visas) may be provided by the MoD, details should be checked with unit pay staff. The importance of maintaining a valid passport particularly for newborn children cannot be overstated. Where non-British passports are lost or damaged and can only be replaced overseas, it is normally possible for individuals to seek emergency travel documentation which enables one way travel from the UK to country of origin. Details should be sought

from the Embassy or consulate concerned. The UK Borders and Immigration Agency also provide similar one-way travel documentation. Details can be found on their website.

UK Visas renewal Up to 28 days prior to initial 'Exempt Armed Forces Dependents visas' expiring, those wishing to remain in the UK may apply for 'Further Leave to Remain' in the UK. Applications are submitted on BIA form (FLR(O)). Currently, applications cost £395, paid for by the sponsor or applicant. The spouse/civil partner and accompanying children under 18 can all apply on the same form. Applicants will need to provide evidence that their sponsor is a Service person (original passport including exempt immigration control stamp). Accompanying dependants over 18 need to apply on a separate form and pay the appropriate fee. If through operational deployment this should not be possible, units should seek advice from the Armed Forces Team at the BIA to see if a certified copy will suffice. The use of recorded delivery mail is recommended and photocopies should be kept of all documents submitted. Details of the BIA website for application forms and the BIA helpline are listed at the end of this guide.

Routes to 'Settlement' and UK Naturalisation. Since 22 Nov 06 eligible Commonwealth citizens serving in the Regular element of the UK Armed Forces have been able to count their service, at home and overseas, towards the 5 year residency criteria for applications for British citizenship whilst still serving providing they meet the other Home Office criteria³. Applications including passing the 'Life in the UK Test' and the payment of the fee, are a personal matter between the individual and the Home Office. Once the serving soldier has successfully gained UK citizenship, dependants may initially apply for 2 years' leave as the spouse/civil partner of a British citizen and then settlement also known as Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). ILR normally gives recourse to public funds and generally precludes the need to purchase further UK visas. Once dependants have obtained ILR, they too may apply for naturalisation providing they have by that stage been resident in the UK for at least 3 years. Time spent accompanying their spouse on service overseas may also count towards the three-year UK residency requirement. Additional detail is available on the Army's Commonwealth citizens and their families and BIA websites, details of which are at the end of this guide.

Dependent spouses/civil partners may also apply for ILR in line with an application for settlement lodged by their discharged spouse/civil partner or in their own right if they have been continuously resident in the UK for 10 years or more. Once granted settlement and provided that they meet the criteria for UK naturalisation, spouses/civil partners may then apply for UK Naturalisation. The Army has raised the subject of simultaneous applications where one of the applicants is a serving soldier. The Home Office response has confirmed the current situation explaining

³ Which include also good character and actually being in the UK on the date five years prior to the application being submitted.

that because soldiers and their accompanying dependants are treated under different provisions within UK immigration legislation, simultaneous applications for UK naturalisation are not possible. Application forms, fees and guides may be obtained from the Home Office website.

Gurkha personnel are not included in the above policy as they remain Nepalese citizens whilst serving with the Brigade. Gurkhas seeking British citizenship may do so either by transferring to the wider Army after 5 years service (when they can take advantage of the UK naturalisation policy), or after discharge, by initially applying for settlement and then naturalisation as a British Citizen. Again their service period counts towards the relevant residency requirement.

Section 10

Visitors, Children from Overseas, Marriage and Civil Partnership

Visitors. If soldiers decide to sponsor visitors from overseas this is their own personal responsibility in accordance with UK Home Office immigration instructions. The Army normally takes no responsibility for supporting the UK visa process for relatives or friends who visit non-British soldiers and their families from overseas. Soldiers are advised to seek information from the UKvisas visitors information website. In addition, visitors should be advised to obtain adequate medical and travel insurance whilst they are visiting the UK or Germany/Cyprus. In particular, visitors may be charged for any medical treatment received from the National Health Service (NHS). More information is available from the Department of Health website, or by telephoning 44(0)20 7210 4850. It is normally a condition of a visitor's visa that they do not carry out paid or unpaid work. Applicants and their sponsors are advised to check such matters (for instance in respect of visitors carrying out childcare) during the UK visa application process in order to ensure that if they wish to work that they apply for and are granted the appropriate visa. Individuals risk either fines or imprisonment if found guilty of employing an illegal worker. Where the visitor's sponsor is a serving soldier and living in SFA, the soldier should seek prior permission from DE - Ops (Housing) in the UK in accordance with the terms of their licence to occupy. This requirement applies to all SFA licence holders' regardless of nationality. Permission should be sought for stays of longer than 28 days. Visitors to Germany must be officially sponsored prior to arrival. Soldiers should seek advice from their UWO if unclear how this should be done. Soldiers in Germany should apply to Housing and Community Support Offices (HCSO) for permission for visitors to stay in SFA for periods of longer than 28 days.

Children from Overseas. The Home Office regulates the entry of non-British children into the UK. Instructions cover children of birth parents, adoptive parents

and those travelling with an accompanying adult. This normally means that a child who has remained behind in his or her country of origin may not be able to live in the UK, if one parent is still living overseas. Exceptions include situations where the parent in the UK has sole responsibility for the child, or if there are special reasons why the child should be allowed to join the parent in the UK. Detailed advice and guidance is available on the UKvisas website. Soldiers serving in Germany considering adopting a child or extended family member from their country of origin, should seek advice through their units from G1 Branch HQ UKSC(G) prior to beginning an adoption application. This ensures that all relevant special educational or health needs relating to the child can be supported by the command in Germany.

Marriage and Civil Partnership. Fiancé(e)s or proposed civil partners subject to UK immigration controls must get entry clearance before they travel to the UK by applying for a UK Marriage or Civil Partnership visa and demonstrate that they:

- Plan to marry or register a civil partnership within a reasonable time (usually six months);
- Plan to live together permanently after marriage or a registered civil partnership;
- Have met each other;
- Have somewhere for themselves and any dependants to live until married or have registered a civil partnership without help from public funds; and
- Any dependants can be supported without them working or having to get help from public funds.

Successful applicants will normally be granted a six months visa with prohibition of employment. After they have married or registered a civil partnership, they may apply to extend their stay in the UK. If BIA approves the application, they will be given permission to stay and work. If additional time is required to complete the marriage or civil partnership arrangements, individuals may apply for further leave to remain 28 days before the end of the current visa. For individuals marrying or entering into a civil partnership with a serving British citizen, different visa conditions apply. Details should be checked on the BIA website.

If a soldier is planning to get married or register a civil partnership to a fiancé(e) or proposed civil partner who is subject to UK immigration controls already in the UK, the other party may need to apply for a Certificate Of Approval (COA) from the Home Office. COA details are available from the BIA website. If approved by BIA, individuals will normally need to give notice to marry or register their civil partnership to a registrar at a designated register office.

Section 11

Living – the basics

Housing During initial training soldiers and their immediate family are not normally entitled to Army housing, normally known as Service Families Accommodation (SFA). Individuals are responsible during this time for making their own private arrangements to house their family, so they may choose not to bring them to the UK until initial training is complete.

Prior to completing training soldiers may apply for SFA at their next unit. SFA is provided to enable a soldier to house their accompanying immediate family (spouse/civil partner and dependent children) wherever they are assigned. The soldier signs the Licence to Occupy SFA and agrees to the conditions of that Licence, one of which is that the Licensee agrees not to assign, re-assign or share the property. If you have visitors staying longer than 28 days you will need to seek Defence Estates' (your landlord's) permission. Failure to adhere to the conditions of the Licence may lead to the licence being revoked.

Most families from your unit will live together on an Army housing estate close to the work place. There is a monthly accommodation charge, which will depend on the type and grade of the SFA, its condition and access to local facilities such as shops. The charge is automatically deducted from the serving soldier's pay. The average monthly charge for a married Private soldier with two children is about £200 and there is a further monthly charge of approximately £20 if you also have a garage. The charge for an Army house of the same type and grade will be the same irrespective of where in the world it is located. All occupants of Army housing have to pay a UK local government tax called Council Tax (the Army calls it Contribution in Lieu of Council Tax (CILOCT)). Council Tax pays for the local government community services such as refuse collection. This charge is about £80 per month and is the same wherever you live. It is deducted from a soldier's pay along with any other accommodation charges. Occupants of SFA overseas are also required to pay CILOCT.

If you have household possessions that you wish to bring with you to the UK, you must be able to pay for this yourself. The Army will not pay. Once you have set up home for the first time in an Army house, on assignment to another location the Army will provide removals service and/or storage, whichever is necessary at public expense.

Depending on where you are living, your house will be heated by gas, electricity or oil. Cooking will be by gas or electricity. You must pay the charges yourselves direct to the relevant gas/electricity suppliers, and purchase oil from local distributors. Some of these suppliers offer cheap rates and bill payment schemes

so remember to ask the Unit Welfare Office for advice. If you elect to receive gas or electricity from a supplier other than the one appointed by Defence Estates you must ensure that the contract has a clause allowing you to terminate the agreement with 28 days notice. In Germany some people pay shared utility bills particularly where occupying communal blocks of flats. In some Army garrison areas the Army has made arrangements to provide electricity centrally so you will receive a bill from the Army. The average monthly cost is about £50.

Furniture such as beds, tables and chairs will be provided should you wish, at additional cost, although you will need to provide your own household items such as kitchen equipment, sheets etc. Cookers are fitted in all houses. To assist you with the task of initially equipping a house you can ask for a pack of essential bedding, cutlery and saucepans called a "Get You In Pack". This pack will tide you over until you have acquired your own items. You should note that there is no issue of any large electrical items such as a fridge, freezer or washing machines. The pack will only be issued on loan, and is to be returned complete within 6 weeks of issue. You must be able to provide your own household equipment beyond this date.

You will have to rent or buy your own television and if you are in the UK you will require a licence to be able to watch it which currently costs £135 per year. You can arrange to pay this by monthly or quarterly instalments by Direct Debit. You are breaking the law if you are caught watching a television without a valid licence and you can be fined (up to £1000) or sent to prison. In the UK television licence application forms are available from the TV licensing authority website www.tvlicensing.co.uk In some areas you may also be able to rent/buy satellite or cable television but check with your unit to see if there are any restrictions.

You are responsible for your own telephone charges and the cost of any calls. If you move into an empty house you will need to contact local telephone companies and agree connection and payment details.

When you leave your SFA you are responsible for ensuring it is returned to Defence Estates (your landlord) in the same condition that you received it. Any damage you or your family has caused may be subject to bills being raised against you. Some areas operating cleaning schemes ask you unit welfare office or HIVE for more detail.

Education The education of all children in UK is the responsibility of the Local Education Authority (LEA) with whom parents must make their own arrangements to place their children in school. In the UK, children normally have to attend school between the ages of 5 –16 years. For information on local schools in the UK contact Children Education Advisory Service (CEAS), who also provide assistance with applications for children to enrol at a given school, or your nearest HIVE, contact details of which are at the end of the guide. Overseas the MoD funds an agency called Service Children's Education (SCE) which is responsible for the

administration of Forces schools. SCE appoints qualified UK trained teachers to primary, middle and secondary schools. SCE schools follow the same pattern of education as those in England and Wales.

Childcare for the under 3's is not free whether provided by daycare or by a childminder. All four-year-olds and the majority of three-year-olds are entitled to a free nursery education place for up to six terms before they reach statutory school age. This entitlement is for five sessions of two and half-hours per week and normally spread over three eleven-week terms. Overseas, the MoD through the SCE provides free nursery education for all three and four-year olds. In addition, in Germany all garrisons have a number of Army Welfare Service daycare settings for children aged from a few months to the age of 4. There are also civilian pre-school groups near many Army housing areas that can be used and there are Army non-serving spouses or local civilians who are qualified child minders.

Families, where appropriate, may find that improving their English can help them get more out of life in the UK. It will also help those who want to work, study, improve their CVs, or apply to become British citizens. Details on English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) providers are available from the www.direct.gov.uk website, local education colleges, or for Service personnel or their families on accompanied service overseas, through Army Education Centres.

If you have a dependant with a Special Educational, Additional Need, Disabilities or a Statement of Additional Need you should notify your unit so that the required support can be provided. For those who are assigned overseas, the MoD will try to provide the support and facilities that would normally be available in the UK. However, Overseas commands will need to be consulted before an assignment is confirmed to ensure that additional needs can be met. Unit Welfare Officers can provide further information.

Healthcare The National Health Service (NHS) provides medical and dental care in the UK for your immediate family. Families may also be able to use the Army Primary Care Medical facilities in certain areas. Overseas, the Army provides a service similar to the NHS, or arrangements will be made for you to use a local private health care scheme. It should be noted that in the UK and overseas there are charges for medical prescriptions and dental treatment. As soon as possible after arrival in the UK, dependants should register themselves with a local doctor, commonly known as a General Practitioner (GP). Your local GP surgery will be able to provide a range of information relating to topics such as: Family Planning Ante-Natal Classes, Post Natal Support and Health Visitors. Health Visitors provide services to all families with children.

Although many GP services are provided free of charge through the NHS, your immediate family may have to pay for non-essential services. Prescription charges apply to everyone except serving soldiers and:

- Children under the age of 16
- Young people under the age of 19 and in full time education
- People who suffer from a specific range of conditions (see resources section of NHS Direct website).
- Pregnant women and up to one year after the birth

Current prescription charges start at about £6.85 per treatment.

There may be reasons why you are unable to register with your chosen GP, for example, the practice may be full or you live too far away. If you have difficulty registering with a GP, the local Primary Care Trust (PCT) will be able to help. You can get the number from the phone book under Health Services or call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit www.nhsdirect.co.uk

Dental Care for spouses and children can be provided under the NHS, although due to high demand, NHS dental services are difficult to find. NHS Direct (0845 4647) can provide you with details of local dentists accepting NHS patients.

Some people chose to pay for private dental treatment details of those offering Service discounts can be found in the Defence Discount Directory.

Employment The UK immigration status normally granted to Exempt Armed Forces Dependants allows them to seek employment in the UK. If they do so, they will then be liable to pay UK Income Tax and National Insurance in the same way as British citizens including any requirements for Criminal Record Bureau Checks. In Germany, although the NATO Status Of Forces Agreement limits the employment of non-UK nationals in some areas, there are approximately 200 non-British dependants employed within the British Forces community in Germany. Non-British dependants wishing to seek employment on the local German economy may have to obtain the necessary authorisation from the German authorities and advice on this and other employment matters is available from local Garrison Labour Support Units (GLSU). Eligible family members in the UK can apply for a NI number by telephoning the Jobcentre Plus NI number allocation service UK helpline on 0845 600 0643. Families on accompanied service overseas should seek guidance through Garrison Labour Support Units in Germany or the Civilian Labour and Recruitment Office in Cyprus or by contacting the Department for Work and Pensions for application forms. Contact Details: DWP (Department for Work and Pensions), Glasgow Benefit Centre CCU, Floors 5&6, Portcullis House, 21 India Street, G2 4PH, Telephone Number 0044 191 225 7949, Website www.dwp.gov.uk (DII account required). For those seeking information on the portability of employment qualifications from overseas the UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre provides information on checking how qualifications compare to similar British qualifications. Details are on their website at www.naric.org.uk

Access to UK State Benefits and Allowances (No Recourse to Public Funds)

Where eligible and in the UK, the serving soldier's immigration status normally enables them to claim family benefits such as Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit on behalf of their family⁴. For dependants in work, 'Public funds' does not include work-related benefits, which are based on National Insurance contributions such as incapacity benefit or statutory maternity pay. For other family members there may be UK Home Office constraints on accessing UK State benefits because of their immigration status. This is the same as other non-UK nationals subject to an immigration control, which includes the restriction 'No recourse to public funds'. It is normally a condition of such families' UK entry clearance that their sponsor (the serving soldier) provides this support. This does not normally prevent access to UK emergency health or education support. Those requiring clarification of their eligibility to claim a particular entitlement fund should contact the department or agency that issues it. Some countries have social security agreements with the UK, which may give eligibility to certain benefits. Individuals can check their eligibility through either their local Jobcentre Plus in the UK or the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or Jobcentre Plus websites: www.dwp.gov.uk or www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk. Non-British citizens who are also non-EU citizens assigned to Germany have no eligibility to German Kindergeld a German form of Child Benefit only paid by the German authorities to eligible EU nationals.

UK State Benefits The following guidance is offered to non-British soldiers exempt from immigration control:

- **Child Benefit (CB)** CB is a tax-free regular payment made to anyone bringing up a child or young person. It is not affected by income or savings so most people who bring up a child or young person can get it. Soldiers meeting the criteria may claim the allowance in accordance with the guidance on the HM Revenue & Customs website.
- **Child Tax Credit (CTC)** CTC is a means-tested allowance for parents and carers of children or young people who are still in full-time non-advanced education or approved training. To qualify an individual does not have to be the child's parent but must be the main person responsible for them. Soldiers meeting the criteria may claim the allowance in accordance with the guidance on the HM Revenue & Customs website.
- **Working Tax Credit (WTC)** WTC is a payment to top up the earnings of low paid working people (whether employed or self-employed), including those who do not have children. WTC helps to make work pay for low

⁴ Those serving accompanied overseas are advised to confirm eligibility for benefits with the overseas helpline of the UK Government Department concerned, bringing any issues to the attention of their units.

income workers. Soldiers meeting the criteria may claim the allowance in accordance with the guidance on the HM Revenue & Customs website.

- **Sure Start Maternity Grants** Sure Start Maternity Grants help low income families with the costs associated with a new baby. Application criteria and claim forms are available from local Jobcentre plus or the Jobcentre plus website.

Money matters

Opening UK Bank Accounts and Obtaining Credit/Loans. UK banks are legally required to check identities before individuals can open accounts in order to prevent money laundering. Banks will have guidelines about the type of documents that may be acceptable. Financial institutions generally require a financial history in the UK upon which to make lending decisions. Newly joined soldiers may therefore have difficulty in obtaining credit/loans or entering into hire purchase agreements initially. Proof of evidence of their financial status prior to arrival in the UK, eg bank statements and credit card statements may assist in this respect. Unit Administrative Office staff should also be prepared to provide support⁵ to non-British soldiers experiencing difficulties opening bank accounts.

Pay Normally British Army salaries are paid into personal bank accounts. There will be a need for you and/or your spouse to open a local bank or building society account. Most of the 'high street' banks and building societies will accept you as a new customer providing you have proof of identity, employment and a fixed address. The Army will automatically pay a serving soldier's monthly salary into the account. Once you have your account set up, you will be able to pay many of your utility bills (gas, electricity, telephone) by direct debit, which in most circumstances works out to be a cheaper option.

Borrowing money in the UK has become extremely easy and if not controlled can swiftly lead to financial difficulties. Interest rates and repayment terms will vary considerably so you are strongly advised to seek professional financial advice before entering into any loan agreement.

Insurance You are advised to take out contents insurance to provide cover for your personal possessions and household items. If you live in SFA this should include damage to Service Stores and fittings, commonly known as Tenants Liability Insurance. Cover for a typical family home should cost no more than about £15.00 per month. Policies for single soldiers are also available.

⁵ Eg: a letter confirming a soldier is enlisted into the British Army.

Example Costs:

- Washing Machine £250-£400
- Television depending on the size and type £100-£800
- Fridge (with small freezer section) £175
- Fridge/Freezer £250-£400
- Vacuum cleaner £75-£150
- Second-hand family car £3000-£5000
- UK Exempt Armed Forces Dependents Entry Clearance Visa £200 per person valid for up to four years)
- Return flights to UK/Fiji £1000 per person
- UK Further leave to Remain Visa £395 per family (every four years)
- Weekly groceries bill for 2 people including food, laundry and toiletries £60
- Newspaper 60p
- Loaf of bread £1
- Value Added Tax (VAT) is a Government tax currently of 17.5%, which is added to the purchase price of most household and personal items. Advertised prices will normally include VAT.

Debt If you have difficulties with debt, admitting that you are struggling and seeking help is an important first step towards resolving your debt problems. Don't be embarrassed or ashamed to disclose all your debts and financial difficulties because ignoring the problem and not replying to correspondence will only make things worse. Your problems will not go away without specific remedial action. Use free specialist advice (avoid commercial debt management companies that you see advertised in the media). Local Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) and the CAB website provide advice and support. HIVE offer signposting advice and the Consumer Credit Counselling Service Debt Helpline (0800) 138 1111 also has a useful website www.cccs.co.uk

Section 12

Living – Other things to consider

Adult Education/Training Opportunities If individuals are planning to train or study at higher education level (for instance with a University) they are advised to

check the fees charged to ensure they are affordable. The Department for Innovation Universities and Skills (DIUS) promulgates policy for fees. Until they have been granted UK Naturalisation or accompanying dependants have been granted settlement in their own right, non-British soldiers and accompanying dependants subject to immigration control will normally be liable to pay Overseas Fees (more expensive) rather than Home Fees. Details of the qualifying criteria are available on the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) website details of which are at the end of the guide. The Army is aware of this situation and in conjunction with the DIUS and Home Office is examining options to resolve it. In the meantime, universities are able to waive fees where individuals submit cases for consideration, though each case is treated on its merits by the university concerned. Individuals wishing to make individual cases should consult the universities concerned for more information. Some educational establishments require demonstration of a level of English Language ability, details of which can be found on the British Council International English Language Testing System on their website, details of which are at the end of this guide.

Safeguarding Children Parents have a responsibility to protect their children and this includes not leaving them at risk of any significant harm. Parents may also be responsible in cases where either domestic or alcohol abuse impacts on children. Safeguarding children also needs to be considered especially in terms of leaving children unattended for whatever reason. If a child comes to any harm, or is perceived to be at risk of harm, while left unattended then the parent, or agreed adult carer, will face consequences and this may include prosecution. Parents (including single parents) are responsible for ensuring they have arrangements in place for childcare so that they are able to fulfil all of their Army duties. If any children are to be left in the care of someone who is not a close relative for a period of over 28 days this is called private fostering. The Army Welfare Service, the British Forces Work Service overseas or your UK Local Authority Children Services department will be able to provide you with more advice.

It is more helpful and safer to notice and reward a child's positive behaviour, and to encourage the behaviours wanted. So teaching children from a young age by setting limits and explaining reasons for these limits helps to instil self-discipline. Smacking, which controls a child from the outside has no long lasting positive effect. In UK society parents/carers are not allowed to physically harm their children regardless of any individual cultural or religious justification. In UK law whilst reasonable force is permitted to discipline a child, if the punishment is too severe, individuals can be prosecuted for assault or the child may be taken into care. Within the Army community advice can be sought from unit welfare officers, the Army Welfare Service or the Service police. Individuals requiring any further information can phone the UK national free Child Protection Helpline - 0800 022 3222, or if a matter of immediate concern contact their local Social Work office or the civilian police. In Overseas Commands advice can be sought or concerns reported to unit or Army welfare staff, Service police and/or the British Forces Social

Work Service. For further advice and guidance on this matter visit the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children website at www.nspcc.org.uk.

Childcare Being a parent is a demanding, 24 hour a day job. Parents are under so many pressures, it's not surprising that many find it hard to cope. Most parents have to spend some time away from their children, whether it's to go work or out for the evening. It can be hard to find someone suitable to look after your child, and it can be expensive. But children rely on adults to protect them and parents are responsible for making sure that their children are happy and well looked after in their absence. There is no set age at which it is OK to leave children home alone. It depends on whether the child is mature enough to cope in an emergency and feels happy about being left. Children mature at different ages, and every child is an individual.

The law does not state at what age children can be left alone. But it is against the law to leave children in circumstances that are likely to put them in any kind of danger. Parents can be prosecuted if they leave children in circumstances that could cause them harm. Leaving young children alone is never a good idea. Nor does the law state an age when young people can babysit. If you employ a babysitter younger than 16 years old, they are still a child. If anything goes wrong, you will be responsible for the babysitter as well as your own children.

Choosing a babysitter or childminder.

- Follow your instincts. If you have any doubts about a childminder, babysitter or other carer, don't take them on. Always ask for at least two references and check these carefully.
- If possible choose a babysitter who is over 16. People cannot be held responsible for any harm that happens to a child in their care. But remember that even some 16 year olds may not be mature enough.
- All childminders should be registered with the local authority. For a list of childminders in your area your local social services department (listed in the phone book under the name of your local authority).
- Listen to your children. If they seem unhappy with the person looking after them, try to find someone else.

Childcare in the UK is well regulated. For information about different types of childcare and childminders in the area you will be living in the UK, either contact your local HIVE or the Childcare website www.childcare.gov.uk Those serving overseas, for instance in Germany, are advised to check childcare provision with their HIVE or unit welfare office.

Holiday/Leave Every soldier is eligible to 30 working days of paid holiday (known in the Army as leave) every year. Normally the cost of travel to your country of origin is your own responsibility. In certain circumstances, non-British single or

unaccompanied married/civil partner soldiers who have left their family in their country of origin, may be granted paid leave to visit that country after 5 years service. This is called Domiciled Collective Leave (DOMCOL). A soldier has to register before he or she is eligible for this leave. Certain types of emergency leave can also be authorised. Routinely though, Commonwealth soldiers, like UK soldiers whose relatives live overseas are not eligible for publicly funded travel back to their countries of origin in case of emergencies. However in some cases, soldiers eligible for DOMCOL can anticipate it in an emergency in order to get publicly funded travel back to their country of origin. Details can be obtained from your unit. Because of this it is important that you consider and plan how you will return to your country of origin at short notice should a close relative be taken seriously ill.

Private Travel Travel between your country of origin and the UK on first and last assignment is normally at your own expense for you, your family and your possessions. If you wish to travel outside the UK for holidays, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the required visas and you are advised to check your requirements well in advance. You should also ensure that you have adequate Medical Insurance if you are travelling outside the country in which you or your spouse is serving. For those travelling in Europe, European Health Insurance Cards provide limited medical support where reciprocal arrangements apply. Application forms can be found in most post offices in the UK and BFPOs overseas.

If you decide to travel to an assignment (for instance to Germany or Cyprus) under your own private arrangements, then you will normally be responsible for arranging any visa entry clearance requirements and paying for any costs that you incur. Those travelling direct from their country of origin to Germany may (if flying via the UK) need to seek special UK transit or visitors visa arrangements or if travelling direct contact their local German embassy in their country of origin to arrange for the appropriate entry clearance. Guidance should be sought from UKvisas website or from the entry clearance officer in the relevant country's embassy.

Driving Those with foreign driving licences are advised to check their validity in the UK with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). By law you must have a valid licence which covers you for the type of vehicle you want to drive. In addition, you must have car insurance, which pays for damage you might cause to other cars or injuries to their occupants. If your car is more than three years old it must have an MOT - a certificate that says that it is safe. You get this from an MOT garage or test centre after it has tested the car. You must also pay a vehicle excise duty to use your car on the roads. Once you have paid for it you get a small paper disc, called a tax disc, which you put in the front window of your car. If you do not do this your car may be taken away. To get a tax disc, you need to show you have insurance and an MOT (for a car over three years old). You can buy a tax disc from some post offices, the DVLA, or online through DVLA's [vehicle online licensing](#) website. Similar procedures apply for motor cycles. Special licences and training are required to drive lorries and buses. Additional detail can be found at the The

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency website [Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency \(DVLA\) website](#) or by contacting them on 0044 (0) 870 240 009. If you are posted overseas check the local requirements with your unit. To support family independence it is useful to have more than one driver in each family. Driving lessons are accessible in the UK and most overseas locations.

Family Identity Cards Dependants of soldiers may be able to apply for Visitors Passes/Spouses ID Cards to assist with access to their local unit or military station. Contact your UWO for more information.

Birth Status of Children. Children normally take on the nationality of their parents. Where children are born outside their country of origin, the parents will need to seek advice from their nearest embassy or consulate on how to register them and apply for a passport from their country of origin. In addition, UK law enables children born in the UK to qualify for British citizenship provided one of the parents is 'settled' in the UK. Non-British citizens serving in the British Army are regarded as 'settled'. So, providing a child is born in the UK after one of the parents joined the British Army it will normally be a UK citizen. The definitions of 'parent' including information about illegitimate children can be found on the Home Office website. In addition, a person applying for UK naturalisation may include the names and details of all his or her children (minors) who are not British citizens and whom he or she wants to have registered. (Applications for any children must be submitted on a separate form). This normally requires permission from both parents who should take account of any dual nationality implications. Applications for UK passports for eligible children are submitted to the Identity and Passport Service (IPS). Copies of application forms and guides are available from post offices or from the IPS website www.passport.gov.uk. When applying, non-British parents are advised to provide evidence that one of them is 'settled'. This could be either a letter from their unit confirming they are a serving soldier or a copy of the 'exempt immigration control' stamp from their passport.

The Home Office has confirmed that a child born outside the UK normally only qualifies for British Citizenship if one of the parents is already a British Citizen. Normally therefore a child born to non-British citizens in Germany would not qualify for UK citizenship. Alternative routes to UK Naturalisation include serving soldiers applying for UK naturalisation and making applications for all his or her children (minors) who are not British citizens and who he or she wants to have registered. This normally requires permission from both parents. Alternatively, parents can seek UK nationality for the child after the serving person's discharge, following the granting of an application for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK, and once the family meets the Home Office nationality criteria, when they can also apply for UK nationality. The Home Office view on those assigned to Cyprus is that for the purposes of the British Nationality Act 1981 any children born in the Sovereign Base Areas to serving members of the British Forces Cyprus will be British overseas territories citizens at birth. Such citizens will be eligible for UK passports and

consular assistance but have no automatic right of entry into the UK. Details on routes to UK citizenship plus all the accompanying forms and guides can be found on the BIA website at: www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk For those seeking telephone advice the Immigration and Nationality Inquiries Bureau is 0870 6067766.

Keeping in Touch

ArmyNET ArmyNET is a secure website that every soldier and his family members can register to use. It contains a huge amount of useful information available and Regimental or Unit web pages have up to date information it is also a way of keeping up to date with immediate news during any deployments.

Soldiers will need to register first, before any other member of the family can be given a guest login. Soldiers can then arrange for their family members to be registered.

The serving soldier needs to give his name, National Insurance number and blood group to register and obtain a username and password. They can then 'sponsor' family members to use the site, and guests will be issued with their own username and password. Anyone logging on will also need to answer questions about a pre saved memorable word as additional security.

Soldier's family members will need to register to use the site www.armynet.mod.uk using the guest log-in facility on the home page, making sure that you have your soldier's username to hand. An individual username and password will be given to you to use at each visit to the site.

BFBS, Garrison Radio and TV The Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) provide a radio and TV service in some operational theatres. Requests can be made and messages passed by going on www.ssvc.com Information on Garrison radio and requests can be found at www.army.mod.uk/garrisonradio.

Emergencies

The most important thing to remember is that if something serious happens to your soldier the Army will normally tell you in person and as soon as possible provided you are their nominated Emergency Contacts (EC). If you have a concern get in touch with your nominated UWO. This section covers two types of emergency procedures, for which tried and tested systems are in place. The first section has information on what happens if a soldier is injured during the deployment, including how the EC - the person they wish to be notified in the event of them becoming a listed casualty or of their involvement in an incident of public interest) are kept informed and supported. The second part covers what you need to do if you require your soldier to be sent home because of a serious family emergency or illness.

Casualty Procedures

Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre (JCCC) The JCCC is primarily responsible for monitoring and actioning certain procedures for Army personnel if they become notifiable casualties both in the UK and overseas, and also for their dependants overseas. These roles ensure that the nominated Emergency Contact is notified appropriately and as quickly as possible should an individual become a notifiable casualty. Notification is carried out by a Casualty Notification Officer (CNO). The JCCC is also responsible for authorising Compassionate Leave Travel from overseas for Service personnel, their dependants based overseas, and mobilised reservists and Territorial Army. The JCCC is located at Service Personnel and Veterans Agency, RAF Innsworth, Gloucester, GL3 1HW. It is manned 24 hours a day 365 days per year. JCCC Tel: (0044) 01452 519951.

Dangerously ill - Forwarding of Relatives (DILFOR) The JCCC will authorise and in the case of travel overseas make arrangements for DILFOR travel. This allows two people to be moved at public expense from anywhere in the world to visit a serviceperson at their bedside if they are listed as Very Seriously Ill (VSI), Seriously Ill (SI), Incapacitating Illness/Injury (III) or Unlisted (UL) and the medical authorities have recommended such a visit.

Compassionate Leave & Travel

The MoDs publicly funded Compassionate Leave & Travel scheme is UK-centric. If there is a requirement for a soldier serving overseas to return to the UK for compassionate reasons, for example if a close relative becomes very seriously ill (normally life threatening) or dies, then it is the role of the JCCC to investigate the circumstances and make a recommendation as to whether compassionate travel should be granted. For those whose relatives are overseas it would be prudent to ensure you have a contingency plan (for instance money set aside) in case you are required to return unexpectedly to your country of origin. If you need additional assistance, your unit welfare officer will be able to explain what is available to you from public funds and what other forms of support may be able to assist you. The MoD is aware that this can be difficult situation and is seeking ways of addressing this issue.

When a soldier is on operational duties overseas, any requests for them to be allowed home on compassionate grounds MUST go through the JCCC rather than the Unit Welfare Office.

Should circumstances arise which make it necessary for you to apply for your soldier to be returned to the UK from overseas on compassionate grounds you should telephone the JCCC on 01452 519951. This telephone number is manned 24hs a day every day of the year.

To avoid delays, contact should be made with the JCCC first, contacting your soldier may lead to delay because they or their unit will then have to contact the JCCC in order for the appropriate investigations to be carried out. When you telephone the JCCC you will be asked to provide the following information of the service person:

- Number, Rank and Name.
- Unit and Address of Soldier.
- Name and Telephone Number of Doctor or Hospital (if applicable) who are treating the subject of the compassionate request.
- The details of the person very seriously ill (normally life threatening) or dead.

Compassionate leave may also normally be granted in the following circumstances:

- When the spouse or 'entitled' partner or child of a serving person is very seriously ill or has died. In the case of death, every endeavour will be made to enable the serving person to arrive in time for the funeral.
- When a serving person's presence is the only means of preventing the break up of his or her immediate family. Under these circumstances, a great deal of care should be taken and specialist assistance in assessing the need should be sought. For example, there may well be cases where the break up of the family is inevitable, has been an issue for some considerable time, or where the return of the individual to the family home will not contribute to the resolution of the problem.
- Where the care of young children can only be provided satisfactorily by the serving person's presence.
- When the death of a close relative is imminent. In these cases, every endeavour is to be made to enable the serving person to arrive before the death.
- When a close relative is very seriously ill, provided that the serving person will be of practical help and that there is no other appropriate relative who is available to help.
- The scope of JCCC support is normally limited to close relatives and either the JCCC or your Unit Welfare Officer can explain who these are.

Section 13

Sources of Support

Unit Welfare Office (UWO). Your soldier's UWO or your nominated local Army UWO officer should be your first point of contact. If you don't know who this is ask your soldier or contact the Army Welfare Service for advice.

Welfare Support In GB and Northern Ireland, the Army relies on the UK Local Government Authorities to provide the full range of educational, health, social and

welfare support. The Army compliments this with it's own professional welfare support organisation (The Army Welfare Service (AWS)) and there are many organisations, service and voluntary, offering advice, assistance and financial support to servicemen and women, their spouses and their children.

Armed Forces Sources of Support

ArmyNET The British Army's own internet portal. Website www.armynet.mod.uk

Army Welfare Service (AWS) The AWS provides professional and confidential welfare support for Army personnel and their families wherever they are located. For welfare enquiries contact The Army Welfare Information Service, HQ LAND, Louisburg Block, Erskine Barracks, Wilton, Salisbury SP2 0AG. Tel: 01722 436569 Fax: 01722 436307 or email: awis@hqland.army.mod.uk Website <http://www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/supportagencies/aws/index.htm>

British Forces Post Office (BFPO) Provides a postal and courier service for the Armed Forces Worldwide. Website www.bfpo.org.uk.

Children's Education Advisory Service(CEAS) Guidance to families on schools, special educational needs and MoD educational allowances. Tel 01980 618244. Website www.ceas.mod.uk

Confidential Support Line (CSL) The CSL is a free-phone help-line run for soldiers and their families. It offers totally confidential, non-judgmental, guidance to the Service community, from anywhere in the world. The line operates 7 days a week from 1030 to 2230 hrs (local UK time). Any vulnerable soldier or family member phoning (writing or emailing) the trained civilian support staff of the CSL receives guidance as to what their options are, the soldier/family member must then make their own decision as to how to progress the issues raised. The CSL may be contacted:

- From UK 0800 731 4880
- From Germany 0800 1827 395
- From Cyprus 800 91065
- From the Falkland Islands #6111
- From anywhere in the world+44[0] 1980 630854 and the support staff will phone you back.

Website: via www.ssafa.org.uk

Crime Reduction Unit The Royal Military Police have a crime reduction website. From here you will be able to access a wealth of information regarding crime reduction and personal matters. Website: www.army.mod.uk/rmp/index.htm

Debt Advice Use free specialist advice (avoid commercial debt management companies that you see advertised in the media). HIVE offer signposting advice and

the Consumer Credit Counselling Service Debt Helpline (0800) 138 1111 also has a useful website www.cccs.co.uk

Defence Medical Welfare Services If your soldier is admitted to the Royal College of Defence Medicine at Selly Oak Birmingham or a Military of Defence Hospital Unit, you and your soldier may be supported by the Defence Medical Welfare Services. Contact details should be sought through your UWO or the Army Welfare Service.

Defence Discount Directory 2008 This is a guide produced annually that offers discounted services to Serving personnel and their families more information at their website www.forcesdiscounts-mod.co.uk

HIVE HIVE information centres provide help, information and can signpost you to professional agencies. Their core function is the provision of information – virtually anything from bus times to “confidential welfare signposting”. This means that although they can’t sort out all your problems for you, HIVE information officers can point you towards the best sources of advice and assistance across both military and civilian organisations. HIVE information centres can give you practical assistance in sending e-blueys and messaging through BFBS and in some cases free internet access. HIVE online can be found at www.hive.mod.uk or telephone: 01722 436498 for details of your local HIVE.

Modern Housing Solutions For Service Families Accommodation in the UK routine and emergencies work contact the following:

MODern Housing Solutions for England and Wales Tel 0800 707 6000
Regional Prime Contract for Scotland Tel 0800 328 6337

Pastoral Care The Royal Army Chaplains’ Department provides spiritual leadership, moral guidance and pastoral support to soldiers and their families irrespective of their religion or belief. To contact your local chaplain or padre use the details in your local Service Community guide or ask at the HIVE.

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency (SPVA) This is the single point of contact within the MoD for providing information and advice on personnel administration pay, allowances, pensions and compensation for serving personnel, veterans and their families. The term “veteran” is used to mean all those who have served in the UK Armed Forces and includes their widow(er)s and dependants. There is no minimum length of service required and there is no requirement to have been on active service in order to be considered a veteran. Callers to the Helpline can receive advice on a wide range of subjects such as welfare issues, War Pensions, Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, service records, medals and military graves. Free Helpline 0800 169 2277, Textphone 0800 169 3458, Telephone Number (Overseas) +44 1253 866043, Email veterans.help@spva.gsi.gov.uk website www.veterans-uk.info

Other sources of help

Army Benevolent Fund (ABF). The ABF is the Army's leading charity and helps fund many other charities and organisations that operate either directly or indirectly in support of the family, children, the elderly, the disabled and those seeking employment. It works in partnership or close co-operation with Corps and Regimental Associations and charities to whom it is normally best to direct enquires in the first instance. It has provided support to such organisations as the AFF, RELATE, SSAFA-FH and makes individual grants to both serving and ex-Service personnel. Tel: 0207-591 2000

Army Families Federation (AFF) The AFF exists to make life better for Army families, by raising issues that are causing concerns, with the chain of command. Visit the AFF's website, or contact them on Tel: 01980 615525 or website www.aff.org.uk

Combat Stress The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society specialises in the welfare of ex-Servicemen and women who suffer from psychiatric disabilities arising from military service. It has 3 short stay treatment centres and a residential home. Tel: 01372-841600 or website: www.combatstress.org.uk/

Connexions This organisation supports teenagers 13-19 yrs, and can help your teen to deal with all sorts of problems. Counselling can also be arranged through Connexions if necessary. Tel: 08080013219 Website www.connexions-direct.com

Homestart Homestart is a national voluntary organisation that offers support, friendship and practical help to young families under stress in their own homes. Contact details can be found in your local telephone directory. Tel: 0800 0686368 Website: www.homestart.org.uk

PAX PAX has been the major provider of Personal Accident Insurance to HM Regular Armed Forces since 1989 and almost 58,000 members are currently protected by the Plan - that's around one in four of all regular Service personnel. For further information and details of the monthly premiums, please contact them as follows. PAX customers service contact details Phone: 0800212480 (from the UK) +44 20 8662 8126 (from overseas) Email: paxinsurance@ars.aon.co.uk website: www.paxinsurance.co.uk

Relate Relate offers counselling for relationship problems, either face-to-face or on the phone. Relate also offers Relateen, which is counselling for children aged 10-16. Tel: 0845 1304016 Website www.relate.org.uk

Royal British Legion (RBL) The RBL is the UK's leading charity safeguarding the welfare, interests and memory of those who have served in the Armed Forces and their dependants. It provides financial, social and emotional support to millions and

its benevolence spans all age groups from the oldest to the very young. Tel: 08457 725 725 Website www.britishlegion.org.uk/

Samaritans - The Samaritans provide confidential non-judgemental emotional support 24 hours a day for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair including those which could lead to suicide. Tel: 0845 909090 Website www.samaritans.org

Service Life Insurance Sterling Life, in close association with MoD, has launched a new life insurance scheme aimed exclusively at Service personnel - Service Life Insurance (SLI). SLI guarantees affordable cover, including against risks of war and terrorism, throughout the years of Service and seamlessly beyond, up to age 65. It is available now to all Service personnel (both Regulars and Reserves). Cover is available irrespective of likelihood of operational deployment. There are few specified exclusions and no extra costs for high-risk trades. Premiums are comparable to those offered to civilians. More detail is available at Tel: +44 208324 1557 Website www.servicelifeinsurance.co.uk

Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA-FH) SSAFA-FH is a national charity helping serving and ex-Service men, women and their families in need. It is committed to helping people in need, suffering or in distress, regardless of age or condition. SSAFA FH is committed to helping anyone who has served just one paid day in any of our three Armed Forces, including the Reserves and those who did National Service - and their dependants, including their husbands or wives, civil partners or partners, children, widows and widowers. It provides financial assistance and debt advice but also offers practical as well as financial support. For many it is a friendly face in a new community, a shoulder to cry on when times are hard, a listening service for those in need. Tel 020 740 38783, Email: info@ssafa.org.uk Website www.ssafa.org.uk

Your General Practitioner or Health Visitor Both your local General Practitioner (GP) and your health visitor provides support and advice, particularly concerning younger children's well-being. Contact details through your GP or local telephone directory.

Section 14

Returning to Civilian life

Resettlement Non-British soldiers are entitled to the same resettlement provision to assist with their transition to civilian life as their UK counterparts. Advice and support can include information on housing in the UK (from the Joint Services Housing Advice Office), or for those meeting the criteria, support from the Career Transition Partnership. The gaining of in-Service education and civilian accreditation qualifications plays an important role in preparing for future civilian careers. In

certain circumstances, entitled personnel may take to take Overseas Resettlement Training, Overseas Civilian Work Attachments and Graduated Resettlement Time overseas. Advice should be sought from unit resettlement officers.

Discharge from the Army. Normal Army discharge procedures are followed in all cases. For serving non-British citizens their 'Exempt Immigration Control' status is automatically cancelled by the Home Office on the day they are discharged from the Army and they will again be subject to immigration control. Individuals who have not already sought UK Citizenship and who have completed 4 years' service with HM Forces may apply for settlement (also known as ILR) up to 28 days prior to discharge. If they apply at this point, their transition to civilian life will be eased as BIA will be able to grant them ILR the day after their discharge providing they meet the requirements of the Immigration Rules (immigration law does not permit soldiers to be granted ILR whilst still serving and exempt from control). Applications may be made on form SET(O) which is available from the BIA website. If ILR is granted individuals and their families will normally have recourse to public funds and veterans will be able to legally seek employment. Those who have less than 4 years' service are not normally eligible to apply for ILR, but may apply to the Home Office for Leave to Remain (LTR) citing any special circumstances. Each case is considered by the Home Office on its' merits. Gurkha personnel enlisted in Nepal have the option of being discharged in the UK or Nepal. In the case of the latter, with travel and personal effects at public expense. Following discharge in Nepal they have 2 years in which to apply for Indefinite Leave to Enter (ILE) (or settlement) the UK at the nearest UKvisas office (British Embassy Kathmandu). There are special arrangements for the consideration of ILR applications where an individual with less than 4 years Army service is being medically discharged directly due to injuries sustained on operations.

After discharge an individual will normally be granted 28 days to allow time for an application for further leave to remain to be lodged, or depart from the UK. Once an application is lodged they are normally able to remain in the UK legally whilst the application is processed.

Relationship Breakdown (Estrangement) Army support is provided in the same way as for UK citizens. There remains the issue of the family returning to civilian life. For non-British citizens subject to immigration control the significant difference from a UK citizen, is that 'Leave to Remain' in the UK is normally linked to the serving spouse's immigration status including in some cases eligibility to allowances and benefits. When their current period of Leave to Remain expires, the estranged spouse and family may find themselves without permission to stay in the UK, recourse to public funds or the right to work. That said, as with UK soldiers the serving soldier remains responsible for providing financial support for their estranged family. In cases of estrangement during an accompanied assignment overseas, individuals should seek advice from unit or Army Welfare staff in the first instance. Normally on formal change of Personal Category units notify the BIA in

writing of the change of status and the estranged spouse should have explained to them by their unit:

- That by the end of the 93 days' Notice to Vacate period they should ensure that they have sufficient means of support and accommodation if they are not planning to leave the UK.
- That BIA will be informed about their change in circumstances and if they plan to remain in the UK after their current period of Leave to Remain, they must ensure that they make an application for further leave before their current leave expires or else depart from the UK.
- Of the contact details for the BIA, local Jobcentre plus, local-housing options along with Service and ex-Service welfare support agencies and sources of qualified immigration advice, details of which are at the end of this guide.

Widows, Widowers and Orphans

The Army provides support to accompanying bereaved dependants regardless of nationality. A Visiting Officer will be appointed to address the family's concerns. Widow(er)s may be offered an entitlement to stay in SFA for a period of up to 2 years to enable them to determine their longer term housing requirements. Retention of SFA may be extended beyond the 2 year period at the discretion of the Local Service Commander in consultation with the respective welfare, medical and educational authorities. A deceased soldier's entitlement to resettlement may be transferred to a widow(er)/surviving civil partner. Those on overseas assignments or in NI are entitled to be relocated to the UK at public expense. In addition, the Home Office have confirmed that non-British soldiers' widows will not be removed automatically to their country of origin upon the death of a serving spouse. Immigration Instructions allow widows(ers) or orphans of Gurkha and non-British soldiers to apply for settlement in the UK irrespective of whether the deceased soldier was serving or had retired from the Services. All applications are considered individually by the Home Office, which treats each case sympathetically.

Returning to Country of Origin at end of Service On completion of Army service, if soldiers and their families wish to return to their country of origin, it will be at their own expense. This includes the removal/shipment of any belongings (in the same way as your UK counterparts). This is known as a last move. Special arrangements are in place for widows returning to their country of origin.

Section 15

Army Abbreviations

In common with many organisations the Army has it's own abbreviations. Here are a list of some of them, which you might find useful.

Commissioned Ranks

Gen	General
Lt Gen	Lieutenant General
Maj Gen	Major General
Brig	Brigadier
Col	Colonel
Lt Col	Lieutenant Colonel
Maj	Major
Capt	Captain
Lt	Lieutenant
2 Lt	2 nd Lieutenant

Non-Commissioned Ranks

WO1	Warrant Officer Class 1
WO2	Warrant Officer Class 2
CSgt/SSgt	Colour Sergeant/Staff Sergeant
Sgt	Sergeant
Cpl	Corporal
LCpl	Lance Corporal
Pte	Private

Abbreviations

2IC	2 nd In Command
AOR	Area of Responsibility
AFF	Army Families Federation
AWIS	Army Welfare Information Service
AWS	Army Welfare Service
Bde	Brigade
BFPO	British Forces Post Office
BFBS	British Forces Broadcasting Service
BFSWS	
Bn	Battalion
CNO	Casualty Notification Officer
CO	Commanding Officer
CofC	Chain of Command
Coy	Company
CQMS	Company Quarter Master Sergeant

CSM	Company Sergeant Major (a WO2)
Div	Division
DILFOR	Dangerously Ill Forwarding of Relatives
DWSP	Defence Welfare Support Policy
EFI	Expeditionary Forces Institute (Shop)
EC	Emergency Contact
FFR	Forces Fixed Rate (of exchange)
HIVE	Forces Information Centre
JCCC	Joint Casualty & Compassionate Cell
LSA	Longer Separation Allowance
MND	Multi National Division
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MT	Motor Transport
MTO	Motor Transport Officer
NAAFI	Navy, Army and Air Force Institute
NOK	Next of Kin
OC	Officer Commanding
Ops	Operations
PAX	Forces Life and Personal Injury Insurance
PI	Platoon
POL	Post Operational Leave
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
QM	Quartermaster
R&R	Rest & Recuperation
RAO	Regimental Administration Office(r)
RCMO	Regimental Career Management Officer
Regt	Regiment
RMO	Regimental Medical Officer
RQMS	Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major (a WO1)
SITREP	Situation Report
SLI	Service Life Insurance
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SSVC	Services Sound & Vision Corporation
SSAFA-FH	Soldiers', Sailors & Airmens' Families Association – Forces Help
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
Theatre	An area of operation
UWO	Unit Welfare Office(r)
VO	Visiting Officer

Section 16

Useful Sources of Information (in order of priority)

Serial (a)	Organisation/Subject (b)	What it does (c)
1	<p>UKvisas</p> <p>www.ukvisas.gov.uk</p> <p>Tel: from within the UK: 0845 010 5555 09.30 - 13.30 hrs, Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. (Provides recorded information)</p> <p>Those outside the UK should seek advice from the nearest UK Mission (Embassy or Consulate)</p>	<p>Advice and application forms for visas to enter the UK. Follow the links on their website to the following frequently asked questions:</p> <p>FAQs 1 - Applying for a visa FAQs 2 - Visa and immigration problems FAQs 3 - After I get my visa FAQs 4 - The United Kingdom and Europe FAQs 5 - Terms and abbreviations</p>
2	<p>Borders and Immigration Agency</p> <p>www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk</p> <p>Tel: the Immigration Enquiry Bureau (IEB) 0870 606 7766. Callers who are hard of hearing: Minicom 0800 389 8289. Opening hours are Monday-Thursday 9-4.45 and on Friday from 9-4.30. It is often easier to get through later in the day.</p>	<p>Advice and application forms to apply for leave to remain in the UK under all categories of the immigration rules including marriage, civil partnership and after discharge.</p>
3	<p>Nationality Directorate</p> <p>www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk</p> <p>Tel the Nationality Call Centre on 0845 010 5200. Opening hours are 09.00am and 9.00pm, Monday to Friday.</p>	<p>Callers ringing this number will be able to choose between speaking to someone about the progress of their application, to enquire about general information regarding Nationality matters and Right of Abode or to request application forms.</p>

Serial	Organisation/Subject	What it does
(a)	(b)	(c)
	Advice and application forms for those seeking UK Nationality.	
4	Asylum and Immigration Tribunal www.ait.gov.uk	The Asylum and Immigration Tribunal hears and decides appeals made against the Home Office in matters of asylum, immigration and nationality.
5	Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) www.oisc.gov.uk	The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) regulates the work of immigration advisers, and makes sure that they follow the Commissioner's code of practice and rules. The OISC is also responsible for receiving and investigating complaints against immigration advisers. Individuals can carry out a post code search from this web site to find a local qualified legal advisor.
6	Immigration Advisory Service www.iasuk.org	The Immigration Advisory Service is the UK's largest charity providing advice and representation in asylum, immigration and nationality law. It provides a free service to those who are eligible.
7	Armed Forces Team (AFT), Borders and Immigration Agency Armed Forces Team ICC2 7th floor Lunar House 40 Wellesley Road Croydon CR9 2BY Tel: 0845 4105996 Fax: 0208 1964089	Provides 'Exempt from Immigration Control' visas stamps and processes discharge documentation for serving soldiers. It also processes further leave to remain visas applications for accompanying armed forces dependants already in the UK. Units or individuals can approach the AFT for urgent advice only on Exempt from Immigration Control endorsements for soldiers, further leave to remain visas for families already in the UK or the discharge process for soldiers leaving the Army. Routine enquiries should be

Serial	Organisation/Subject	What it does
(a)	(b)	(c)
		addressed to the IEB telephone number at Serial 2. AFT is unable to answer questions on UK entry visas which should be addressed to UKvisas (Serial 1)
8	Department for Work and Pensions www.dwp.gov.uk	Sources of advice on civilian services and benefits including for those coming from abroad, working in the UK, eligibility to benefits and employment support.
9	i-uk www.i-uk.com	Jointly funded by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the British Council and UK Trade and Investment, provides a wealth of information on UK, business, cultural and educational resources.
10	British Council www.britishcouncil.org	UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities.
11	The Commonwealth www.thecommonwealth.org	An association of 53 independent states consulting and co-operating in the common interests of their peoples and in the promotion of international understanding and world peace.
12	British Army Support Officer in Fiji (BASO) BASO Fiji British High Commission 47 Gladstone Road PO Box 1355 Suva Fiji Islands Email: basosuva@fco.gov.uk Fax: 00 679 322 9132	The British Army maintains a support office based in the British High Commission in Suva to support and assist the JCCC, welfare and personnel staff and the Fijian Service community in Fiji BASO Fiji does not deal with UK passport or UK visa issues, which should be referred to the BHC consular staff.
13	Information about the UK Citizenship Test www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk	Link to web page with information about 'Life in the UK test'.
14	HM Revenue and Customs	Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise have joined together

Serial (a)	Organisation/Subject (b)	What it does (c)
	www.hmrc.gov.uk	and become HM Revenue and Customs. They are responsible for tax, customs and excise duties, frontier protection and National Insurance.
15	UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) www.ukosa.org.uk	UKCISA provides advice and Information to international students studying or planning to study in the UK, and to their family, teachers and other advisors.
16	Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) www.dius.gov.uk	On 28 Jun 07 the Government created the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) replacing DfES which also provides policy for higher education in the UK.
17	Directgov www.direct.gov.uk	Directgov provides a wide range of government information and services, and links to other helpful websites.
18	Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) www.crb.gov.uk	Provides you with information about CRB and its services which help organisations public and private identify individuals who may be unsuitable to work with children and vulnerable adults.
19	The Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency http://www.dvla.gov.uk/ Tel: 0044 (0) 870 240 009	Provides information, application forms, licences and tax discs for most forms of mechanical transport in the UK. If you are posted overseas check the local requirements with your unit.
20	Identity & Passport Service www.passport.gov.uk	The Identity and Passport Service was established as an Executive Agency of the Home Office on 1 April 2006. The Agency builds on the strong foundations of the UK Passport Service (UKPS) to provide passport services and in the future, as part of the National Identity Scheme, ID cards for British and Irish nationals resident

Serial (a)	Organisation/Subject (b)	What it does (c)
21	UK Immigration Rules www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk	in the UK. A non-visa national visiting the UK must satisfy an immigration officer at a UK port of arrival that they qualify for entry. The requirements that a visitor must meet - the Immigration Rules - can be found on the Border and Immigration Agency website
22	Voluntary Return Programmes www.iomlondon.org Tel: 0800 783 23	For certain 'vulnerable' returnees, including unaccompanied minors, victims of trafficking, and those with medical needs, Reintegration Assistance up to £1,000 in kind is available towards the cost of education, vocational training courses or small business set-up. If you are an asylum seeker or failed asylum seeker or if you have no legal basis of stay in the UK and are interested in returning voluntarily to your country of origin, there are a number of assisted voluntary return schemes available.
23	Schengen Visas. Link to German Embassy in London: www.london.diplo.de Link to French Embassy in London: www.consulfrance-londres.org/ Link to the Netherlands Embassy in London: ww.mfa.nl/lon-en/visas_mvvs Link to the Spanish Embassy in	A Schengen visa allows its holder to move freely in all the member states of the European Union who signed the Schengen agreement within the validity of the visa. At the moment there are 15 member countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. These are shortly to be joined by Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia. Foreign citizens with valid residency permits in a Schengen country may travel freely in the

Serial	Organisation/Subject	What it does
(a)	(b)	(c)
	<p>London:</p> <p>http://spain.embassyhomepage.com/</p> <p>Links to other Embassies through internet search (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal and Sweden).</p>	<p>Schengen space for up to 3 months as long as they hold valid recognised passports and valid residency status. The UK has not signed the Schengen Agreement. Therefore, even if you hold a permanent or temporary residency permit to reside in the UK, you may still need a visa in order to enter the Schengen zone. Schengen visas are required for assignments to Gibraltar.</p>
24	<p>UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre</p> <p>www.naric.org.uk</p>	<p>Information on checking how your qualifications compare to similar British qualifications</p>
25	<p>Children's Education Advisory Service</p> <p>www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/</p>	<p>Information on Service Children's Education including Special Educational Needs advice</p>
26	<p>English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL)</p> <p>www.direct.gov.uk</p>	<p>Advice for those wishing to study English in UK</p>
27	<p>British Army's Commonwealth Citizens and their Families internet website</p> <p>www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/</p>	<p>Information and links for the British Army's Commonwealth Citizens and their Families</p>
28	<p>Nationality Checking Service</p> <p>www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/applying/nationality/ncs</p>	<p>This is a service available on payment to those applying for British Nationality. The Nationality Checking Service checks application documentation prior to it being dispatched to the Home Office in order to confirm that applications are correctly completed.</p>
29	<p>Travel Advice Fiji, South Africa and Zimbabwe</p>	<p>Advice for Army personnel and their families planning on travelling to Fiji, South Africa or Zimbabwe</p>

Serial	Organisation/Subject	What it does
(a)	(b)	(c)
	http://www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/	
30	'No recourse to Public Funds' www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk	Home Office Guidance booklet on what public funds are.
31	Army Welfare Information Service Tel: 01722 436569	Confidential advice on any welfare problem from the Army's Welfare Service
32	HIVE www.hive.mod.uk Te: 01722 436498	Help, information and signposting to professional support agencies.
33	Confidential Support Line 0800 7314880 (UK) +44 (0) 1890 630854	Personal support from a confidential telephone support worker
34	The Royal British Legion www.britishlegion.org.uk Tel: 08457 725 725.	The UK's leading charity safeguarding the welfare, interests and memory of those who have served in the Armed Forces and their dependants. It provides financial, social and emotional support to millions and its benevolence spans all age groups from the oldest to the very young.
35	Royal Commonwealth Ex-Services League www.commonwealthveterans.org.uk Tel: 02079737263	A Service charity-providing support to Commonwealth veterans overseas.
36	Veterans-UK www.veterans-uk.info/ Tel: 0800 169 2277.	Support for veterans and their families and access to the Veterans Welfare Service in the UK
37	Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA-Forces	SSAFA-Forces Help is the national charity helping serving and ex-Service men, women and their

Serial	Organisation/Subject	What it does
(a)	(b)	(c)
	Help) www.ssafa.org.uk Tel: 020 740 38783,	families in need. It provides financial assistance and debt advice and also offers practical as well as financial support.
38	Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre Tel: +44 (0)1452 519951	Emergency casualty and compassionate support (in the case of death, injury or illness of the soldier or their immediate family)
39	Gurkha Welfare Trust www.gwt.org.uk Tel: +44(0)207251 5234	Service charity supporting Gurkha ex-Service men and their families.

Finally:

If you have any suggestions for inclusion in or amendments to please send them to:

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Notes: