

News story: Defence Secretary commissions new report to step up support for service families

A new study that will assess the support available to military families has been commissioned by Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson.

The report will be authored by Andrew Selous MP, who has previously served in the Honourable Artillery Company and the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. It will analyse the different experiences of service family members, focussing on;

- Spouses and civil partners
- Long term partners
- Children and dependents

The report's findings, which will be completed by summer 2019, will consider the diverse needs of service families and assess whether the current support on offer is meeting these needs. The study will also allow the MOD to further enhance the delivery of vital support for military families.

The MOD supports service families in many aspects of their lives, including housing, education, and spousal employment.

As part of the study, Mr Selous will engage with key stakeholders, including the three single service families federations, service charities, and the Covenant Fund Trust, which makes grants to support the armed forces community.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The success of our armed forces would not be possible without the constant support of the service families, who are often the unsung heroes of the military community.

I'm always inspired by their unfaltering fortitude, and the pride they take in in their loved ones' service. I'm delighted that Andrew will be considering how we can best support them, as they support those who are keeping this country safe.

Andrew Selous MP said:

I have been a long-term champion of the importance of healthy and respectful couple and family relationships across society. As a nation, we rely on the strength of our Armed Forces to keep us safe. The nation in turn, has a duty to support and strengthen service families to help them perform a challenging role to the

best of their ability.

I look forward to leading this critically important study, at the request of the Secretary of State, to assess the current needs of military families and to advise on the support they need.

The MOD has continued to bolster its funding for service families, allocating £5 million to the Education Support Fund, which supports the children of military personnel, and investing £68 million into the improvement of family accommodation.

Last year saw the launch of the Armed Forces Flexible Working Act, which enhances serving personnel's ability to serve part-time, should their circumstances change, and the announcement of a new scheme to support spouses' employment, providing vocational training.