



Ministry
of Defence



Welcoming Our New Neighbours

A Message to Service Families
May 2025

I wanted to take this opportunity to extend my thanks to each of you for the support and warm welcome you have provided for the Afghan Families who supported us during the Afghanistan Campaign. This booklet is designed to provide you with information about the Afghan Resettlement Programme and how we are fulfilling our obligation to the families resettling in the UK. Given our future requirement to be able to work with international partners – the manner in which we treat our partners from previous campaigns is an important part of our future license to operate. Your support and accommodation of our Afghan colleagues within your communities has not gone unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.



**- Maj Gen Dan Blanchford,
Commander Op LAZURITE**

Understanding our Afghan Allies and the Afghan Resettlement Programme

Afghan nationals have been relocated to our community under the UK's Afghanistan Resettlement Programme (ARP).

The ARP is a safe and legal migration pathway into the UK for Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government and British Armed Forces in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles. As a result of their commitment, they and their families are now at risk of reprisal from the Taliban, and some are no longer safe in their home country of Afghanistan.

ARP eligibility is based on evidence submitted during the application process and is intended for a select group of Afghans, including those who we worked with, or served alongside, during our military operations in Afghanistan, rather than for all who may wish to relocate to the UK.

Afghan citizens who are eligible for relocation to the UK under ARP may relocate with a partner, dependent children and additional family members who are deemed eligible by the Ministry of Defence, and suitable for relocation by the Home Office following security vetting.

Those who are eligible under ARP are not asylum seekers or illegal immigrants. They have been given 'indefinite leave to remain' meaning they have the right to live, work and study in the UK indefinitely. See <https://www.gov.uk/indefinite-leave-to-remain> for more information.

See www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-resettlement-programme for more information on ARP



Eligible Afghans and Defence's Commitment to them

Eligibility for the ARP isn't necessarily based on an individual's job role but on the strength of the evidence in their application. This means while there are many interpreters in the ARP cohort, there are many other roles that those being resettled in the UK have performed in support of UK Armed Forces.



Afghan nationals undergo strict cross-government eligibility checks before entry into the UK. Individuals must provide full employment details in relation to working with the UK Armed Forces before they are subject to background and record checks by the Home Office. If evidence of termination of past employment due to criminal behaviour is found, then they will be refused eligibility. If other evidence of criminal behaviour which is non-conducive to the UK public good is found, this results in a Visa refusal.

Only those that meet the eligibility criteria will be relocated, and the UK Government is committed to ensuring the accuracy of each eligibility decision.

This Government is fully committed to delivering on the pledge made by Parliament to those in Afghanistan who are eligible to relocate and resettle and will continue to welcome eligible Afghans and their families to the UK through our Afghan resettlement schemes.

It is right that those arriving have somewhere suitable to stay once they are in the UK. To enable this, the Secretary of State for Defence made Service Family Accommodation (SFA) properties available for ARP families.



The ARP Process



STEP 1. ELIGIBILITY

There are robust eligibility criteria to be fulfilled before an individual will be accepted onto the ARP. Each case is reviewed on the strength of the evidence provided.

STEP 2. SECURITY CHECKS

Afghan nationals undergo **strict** security checks before entry into the UK. Individuals must provide full employment details in relation to working with UK Armed Forces before they are subject to background and record checks.



STEP 3. ARRIVAL INTO THE UK

Once approved, an ARP family will move to a third country and then fly to the UK. Upon landing, they are transported to transitional accommodation sites. Prior to 1 Mar 25, this was Reception, Staging and Onward Movement (RSOM) sites and temporary accommodation on the Defence Estate. Now, new arrivals will be temporarily housed in hotels and serviced apartments, alongside the reduced use of the Defence estate, so it can return to its intended use for Armed Forces and families.



STEP 4. MOVE INTO TRANSITIONAL ACCOMMODATION

Those already on the Defence Estate before 1 Mar 25 usually moved to a Transitional SFA (TSFA) site from an RSOM. At both RSOM and TSFA sites, there are military Sub-Units supporting the families. From 1 Mar 25, transitional accommodation will be hotels and serviced apartments managed by the Home Office.



STEP 5. MOVE INTO A SETTLED HOME

Regardless of which type of transitional accommodation a family is in, they will be supported to find their own accommodation in the private rented sector (PRS). For those families where the PRS is less appropriate, they may be offered one allocation to move into government supported housing, such as SFA, on a 3-year lease.

Providing Accommodation and Support

Operation LAZURITE is the military component of ARP. It is our duty to provide safe and suitable housing and support for those Afghans who arrive into the UK under ARP.

Appropriate accommodation and wraparound care will help families lay the foundation for a successful transition to UK life and give them the help they need to build a new life.



Prior to 1 Mar 25, those Afghan citizens who worked with the UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan were all temporarily housed on military bases in Reception, Staging, Onward Movement (RSOM) or in Transitional SFA (TSFA) before being moved into Settled SFA on a 3-year lease. Both Transitional and Settled SFA are small clusters of individual houses on patches outside the wire. Although Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) manages the tenancies for settled SFA, the Local Civil Authority is responsible for the integration of the Afghan families into UK life.

From 1 Mar 25, transitional accommodation for all new Afghan arrivals will be in hotels and serviced apartments and are managed by the Home Office however, those still on the Defence state in RSOM or TSFA, will remain for up to 9 months until they have found or being allocated private permanent accommodation. The use of ARP transitional accommodation the Defence Estate is being drawdown in stages throughout 2025. If a family is still within their 9-month period when a site closes, they will be moved to another Defence site or hotel/serviced apartment until they find a settled home.

During their time in transitional accommodation, families are encouraged and supported to find their own settled accommodation within the Private Rental Sector. However, this is not appropriate for all families and based on needs, the UK Government may make one offer of government supported accommodation which may be in SFA on one of the patches. Those living in Settled SFA will remain there for their 3-year lease, regardless if a transitional site close by is on the ARP drawdown.

Of the c. 40,000 SFA properties across the Defence Estate, under 650 Settled SFA houses are being utilised for ARP families as of May 25; that's just 1.625%. This is on a license to occupy for 3 years only, affording Local Authorities time to find them a permanent home.

Recognising that Unity Strengthens our Community

- **They are here legally:** Afghan families have been invited to the UK through the UK Government's Resettlement Scheme.
- **The operation is separately funded:** Funding has been allocated to support both these families and local services.
- **They bring value:** Afghan nationals contribute skills, diversity, and cultural richness to our community.
- **They are not safe in their home country:** We have a moral obligation to ARP-eligible Afghans forced to flee Afghanistan and relocate to the UK, including those who served alongside HM Armed Forces and bravely supported us during the Afghanistan campaign.

PROMOTING UNDERSTANDING AND INCLUSION

It's important to remember that adjusting to a new country can be overwhelming and many are still adapting to cultural norms. Cultural differences may influence behaviour, which could be misinterpreted or misunderstood. You can learn more about Afghan culture on sites like www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan

Showing patience, empathy, and respect can support their integration and help build a more inclusive community. Encourage Afghans to engage in local events or even in for a cup of tea to help them to feel part of the community.

Language barriers can cause misunderstandings for Afghan individuals who may not yet speak English fluently.

Hello سلام (Salam)

Welcome خوش آمدید (Khush Amadid)

Thank you تشکر (Tashakur)

How are you? چطور هستيد؟ (Chetor hastid? - Dari) / څنگه یې؟ (Tsenga ye? - Pashto)

Goodbye خدا حافظ (Khuda Hafiz)

You can take free online language lessons at www.bbc.co.uk/languages



Volunteer: Offer skills, mentoring, or English language support. Many organisations need volunteers who can offer various forms of support such as teaching English or providing companionship such as Migrant Help or the British Red Cross.

Keeping our Community Safe

Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure in their community and it's important that if you experience any type of concerning, unreasonable or anti-social behaviour from anyone within your neighbourhood that report it via Pinnacle.

In the event that anyone experiences antisocial behaviour by anyone accommodated in SFA, they are advised to follow the same procedure for reporting as you would any other complaint:



www.pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk/contact-us



CustomerSolutions@pinnacleservicefamilies.co.uk



0800 031 8628

If the incident is of a criminal nature, this must be reported to the Police in the first instance. If the behaviour is not criminal, then it should be reported to Pinnacle using the Pinnacle Help Desk. When reporting an incident it is important to provide a clear description, timings and dates of when the incident or incidents occurred. It is also critical to identify the address of the individual or group that is subject to the complaint.

Pinnacle will provide the complainant with a reference number of the complaint and will assign a Liaison Officer to engage with the individual to make them aware of the complaint and to assist where they can to amend behaviours where appropriate. Pinnacle may assess that Local Authorities are to be informed if any statutory antisocial behaviour is reported. They will provide feedback to the complainant and log all reported incidents.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is SFA being used to accommodate ARP families? The Secretary of State has committed to making available SFA properties for ARP families. These properties have been identified from SFA stock which is not currently being used by service personnel. As such, SFA for ARP is not available at all MOD sites. A range of Government departments have been collaborating to ensure we find accommodation solutions for eligible Afghans, and SFA plays a key part in this.

How might this impact SFA provision and maintenance for Service Families?

We're working hard to ensure there is minimal impact on Service Families at every location. This means no change to availability for families who apply for SFA and no change in contractual maintenance provision for those in SFA already. DIO maintains a management margin to ensure entitled service personnel can be offered appropriate properties. The MOD remains committed to enabling Service personnel and their families to meet their needs of mobility, safety, security, and all statutory requirements. Furthermore, we are utilising commercial partners to provide additional private housing to further reduce the amount of SFA required.

How is accommodation on arrival allocated? On arrival into the UK, families are housed in hotels or serviced accommodation for up to 9 months where they are supported to find their own settled home. Where this is not appropriate, they will be given one offer of government supported housing which may be Settled SFA which they can occupy for up to 3 years.

Prior to 1 Mar 25, how was TSFA and Settled SFA allocated? SFA allocated for Afghan families was split into two pools, Transitional (TSFA) and Settled SFA. TSFA is a staging accommodation for families whilst they find their own property. During this time, some may be offered Settled SFA. Settled SFA is offered via a 3-year lease during which time families are supported in finding private accommodation. Their integration to the UK is then the responsibility of the Local Civil Authority. The MOD is responsible for TSFA while responsibility for matching families to Settled SFA rests with the Home Office.

There are 'x' empty SFA at location 'y'- why can't they be used? Not all empty SFA can be made available. The MOD manages up to 16,000 moves every year and maintains a margin of vacant properties to facilitate this, others are kept vacant for essential repairs and modernisation, marked for disposal or in locations that are unsuitable for sub-letting. All houses used for ARP families are also outside the wire.

Why is funding for Service Personnel being used for Afghan families? It is not; separate funding is provided by the UK Government for ARP housing. This includes on renovations which have been done on houses marked as unsuitable for SP occupancy.

Which SFA locations have been selected and why? The requirement and use of SFA will be kept under review. Responsibility for matching Afghan families to SFA that the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) has made available for leasing rests with the Home Office. Final decisions will be based on a number of factors, such as the right size and type of house required by Afghan families.

How long will ARP families be living on the patch for? The time ARP families will be in TSFA depends on the size of the family and the availability of compatible settled housing, so it is difficult to apply a timeframe. The maximum allowable time is 9 months however vacation is usually a lot sooner than this. Our aim is to make the stay in transitional accommodation as short as possible so that a family can begin to integrate. Settled SFA will then be offered on a 3-year lease during which time families are supported in finding private accommodation.

Is SFA suitable for housing large Afghan families arriving under ARP? SFA that has been made available to accommodate ARP families are a combination of two, three and four bed properties. Families are matched to a property that is suitable for them based on the family size and individual family requirements. The families do not have a choice on where they are temporarily accommodated.

What support is provided to ARP families in TSFA? At each TSFA cluster there is a Sub-Unit responsible for the welfare of ARP families. They also facilitate the work of contractual partners who are delivering the necessary initial integration work on behalf of Defence. There are male and female interpreters on-site 24/7 and all personnel deployed to the Sites have undertaken safeguarding training.

What if I need SFA accommodation in the future? Will I still be able to access vacant accommodation? DIO maintains a management margin to ensure entitled Service Personnel can be offered appropriate properties. The MOD remains committed to enabling Service personnel and their families to meet their needs of mobility, safety, security, and all statutory requirements.

Why is SFA being used and not council/social housing? The resettlement of so many Afghan families is a huge cross-Government effort. By offering leased SFA, we can provide capacity to house the Afghan families, thereby supporting this important resettlement programme and humanitarian effort.

If hotels are now being used for ARP transitional accommodation, will the new Afghan families leave their SFA soon? The ARP families living in Settled SFA are housed under a three-year lease and will continue to live there until the lease expires or until they found their own accommodation, whichever is soonest. Some families may still be offered a settled SFA allocation following their time in a transitional hotel. Those in an RSOM or TSFA will continue to be temporarily based there until they find their settled accommodation, or the use of the Site for ARP ceases. If they have not found accommodation if the site closes, they will be moved to another transitional site.

Where can I find more Information?

Scan the below QR code or visit www.gov.uk/guidance/afghan-resettlement-programme for more information on ARP:



Further information can be obtained from your Unit Welfare Officer, HIVE or your Head of Establishment (HoE).

Concerns about your local area and services is understandable. We work closely with the Local Authorities to assist them in meeting their statutory requirements around security, health, and education for areas of Afghan relocation and resettlement within the MOD remit. If you have wider concerns about your local area and services, you will need to contact your Local Civil Authority or relevant local service who will be able to answer your questions specific to them.

