



SUMMARY OF OUR IMPACT IN 2017

Providing an independent
voice for all RAF Service
personnel and their
families.



Image: Competitors in the 2015 Military Inter Service Road Race Championships.
The lead cyclist is a member of the RAF, Army cyclists are in the background.
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Our vision

To provide an independent voice for all RAF personnel and their families, wherever they are in the world.

Our mission

To provide a responsive and timely confidential support service that delivers tangible solutions for our personnel, including collecting accurate and quantifiable evidence in order to provide a snapshot to Commanders and Government of current issues to help support the delivery of future policies.

Why we are here

We capture evidence on specific issues through our regular surveys, from our 'face-to-face' visits to stations and units, and from individuals who approach us themselves.

This important information is treated anonymously and shared with the RAF Senior Leadership Team, senior Ministry of Defence (MOD) staff, other government departments and often with government ministers too.

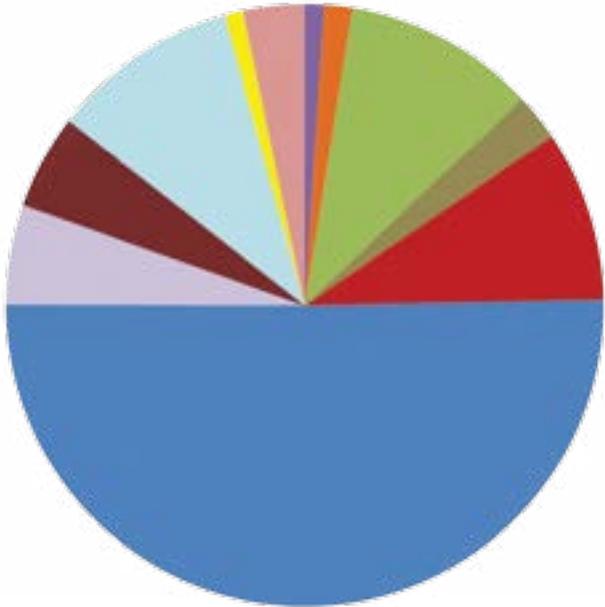
We also provide a confidential signposting service for those who need advice and guidance with a problem or query and we work closely with RAF Community Support Staff, MOD, Royal Air Forces Association, RAF Benevolent Fund, SSAFA, Other Government Departments (OGDs), NHS England and with local authorities.

We work hard with a multitude of other organisations and agencies – from the NHS to the big banks – to ensure that personnel and their families are treated fairly and that they do not face disadvantage because of the unique nature of service life.



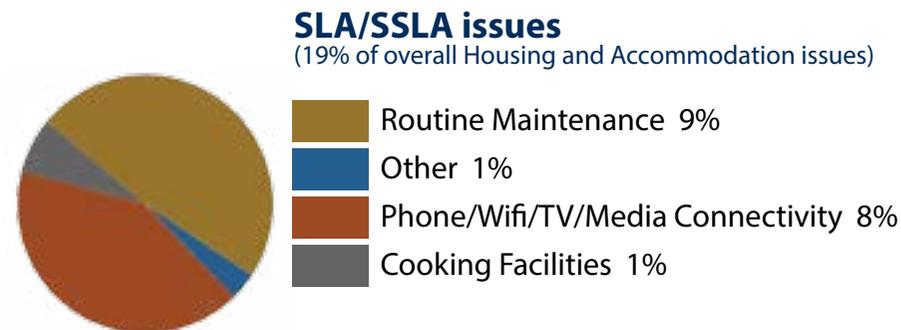
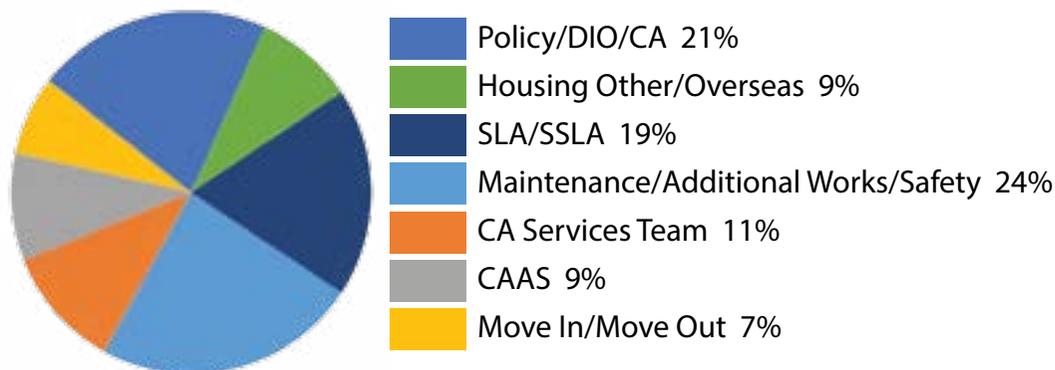


Issues reported in 2017



- Additional or Special Needs/Disability 1%
- Childcare 2%
- Education 10%
- Employment 3%
- Financial 9%
- Housing 51%
- Medical/Dental Issues 5%
- Miscellaneous 5%
- Personnel Issues 10%
- Request for Signposting (which turned into an Issue) 1%
- Single Living Accommodation 3%

Housing and Accommodation issues



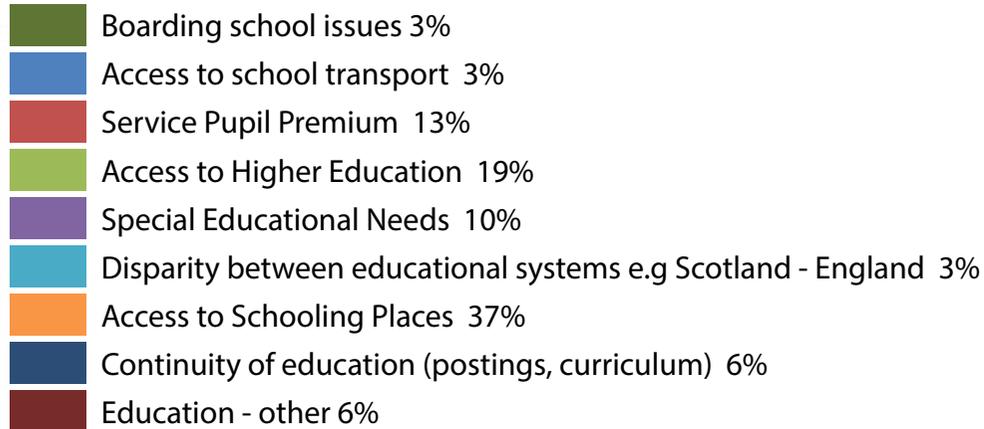
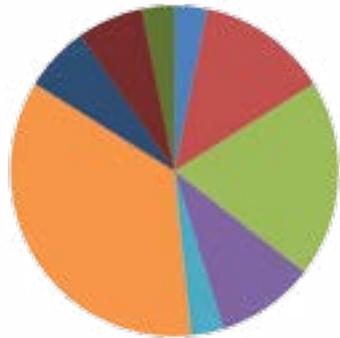
Of the issues we received in 2017, 54% related to accommodation - a decrease of 7% from 2016. These figures include both Service Family Accommodation (SFA) and Single Living Accommodation (SLA) and we have seen an increase of issues reported to us now by SLA occupants. Throughout the report period we met regularly with Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) staff, Operations Director CarillionAmey (CA) and their management to discuss performance and particular issues. Once again, we have liaised extensively with all partners to share those issues, identify solutions and generally assist in attempts to raise the performance bar. We also met with Head of Future Defence Infrastructure System to discuss the expectations of Service personnel and families occupying SFA for the next National Housing Prime contract and provided monthly accommodation reports to DIO Head of Service Delivery Accommodation based on the evidence provided to us by RAF personnel and family members.

As yet, we have not been made aware of any contract performance issues that can be attributed to the collapse of Carillion earlier this year.

Significant issues reported to us in 2017 were:

- Reponses to maintenance issues
- Entitlement and allocation of SFA
- Failed Move-in standards – SFA
- Standard and condition of SLA
- Issues with Move-Outs
- Issues with Combined Accommodation Assessment System (CAAS) banding charges and re-banding
- Poor Communications with occupants
- New Works /Additional Works standards
- The time taken to provide Special Needs Adaptations
- Complaints process
- Support to personnel in Substitute Single Living Accommodation (SSLA)

Education issues



The predominant issues concern personnel with difficulties finding available places at the school(s) of their choice or that are suitable to support their circumstances - this is often exacerbated if returning from overseas. However, utilising our now extensive network of Armed Forces Covenant contacts both within Department for Education(DfE) and Local Authorities(LA), we are able to assist families with information and 'what to do' when encountering difficulties. More and more schools and local authorities now recognise that Service families sometimes face specific challenges and we are finding that recognition of the covenant is proving more and more effective at resolving these types of issues – but not all. Finally, we continue to provide evidence and support to assist in changing this view, working with Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) and DfE. Other issues related to education that people came to us with included:

- Access to Higher Education and disparities in university fees in the Devolved Regions
- Use of Service Pupil Premium by schools
- Boarding School Issues (CEA) for families
- Disparity between UK and overseas education systems

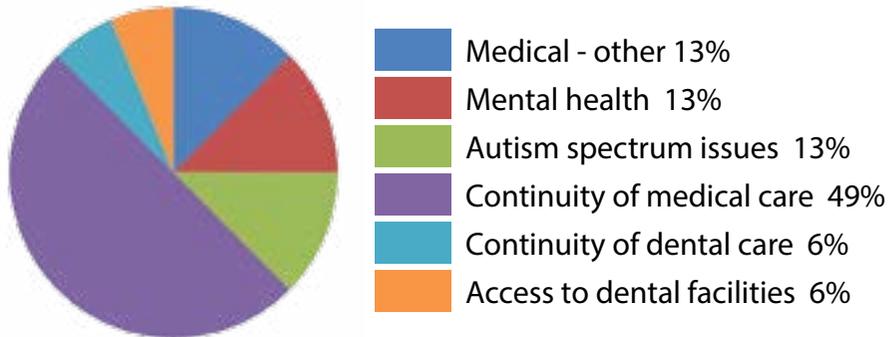
We have taken these issues to DfE to aid understanding amongst DfE staff and to help develop policies that will address them.

Childcare issues

Following our childcare survey (nearly 1500 responses), we have received many queries from audiences during our visits and briefings about what is happening to help support families cope with the many issues around childcare provision. We sense that a level of frustration remains and we await development of a DCYP policy. This issue has not gone away and we continue to hear about:

- Cost of childcare, especially the considerable disparity in costs by region
- Variations in provision – available hours and accessibility
- Variable governance arrangements and costs for childcare providers on bases
- Access to childcare facilities, especially at remote locations and overseas

Medical and dental issues



Our key and important relationship with the Armed Forces Commissioning Managers within the NHS has allowed us to assist families with queries and problems accessing services. Of note, the availability of NHS Dental services remains difficult for many families, especially at remote bases. Issues have included:

- Access to NHS Dentists
- Continuity of medical care
- Concerns regarding mental health service provision

Personnel issues

We continue to receive a multitude of often complex family and personnel issues, for which we provide advice and guidance with integrity, empathy and always honestly but without interfering with the Chain of Command. Issues we received in 2017 included:

- Terms and Conditions of Service enquiries
- Overseas and single personnel allowances Issues
- Divorced personnel with limited child custody rights
- Individual career management queries
- Paternity leave
- Alleged harassment

Financial matters and commercial services

Tied into the work carried out by our Armed Forces Covenant Managers, the Evidence Team has continued to elevate where necessary issues reported by our people to the MOD Covenant and Defence Relationship Management (DRM) teams. We have reported throughout 2017 issues where we believe 'disadvantage' has been faced by personnel and families. These have included:

- Raising awareness of entitlement to state benefits for RAF families
- Variation of rates of income tax within a Devolved Administration
- Issues surrounding access to financial products (Mortgages, Loans etc)
- Mobile phone and media contracts
- BFPO addresses being acknowledged
- Advice on Forces Help to Buy (FHTB) and similar schemes



Visits and surveys

We visited 53 Units to listen to RAF personnel and their families, receiving over 12,500 survey responses, an increase of 30% to those completed in 2016.

Surveys ran:

- Life in the RAF
- Living in
- Licence to Occupy SFA insurance
- Families Transition
- Dispersed Families

All reports are available online: raf-ff.org.uk/reports.asp

Additional briefings (to the unit visits):

RAF FF briefings in numbers		
	RAF Personnel (Regular and Reserve)	Welfare Personnel
Initial Officer Training Freshers Evening	690	
Future Commander Study Period and Senior Execs Partners	120	
Station workshops	120	
Airmens' Command Squadron	2520	
Higher Management Leadership Courses	250	
Community Support Courses	0	75
Recruit Training Squadron	198	
Royal Auxiliary Air Force	146	
Total Numbers	4044	75

Engagement - sharing your voice

Ministerial and MOD:

- Met formally with Chief of Defence People and Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel
- Met with Secretary of State, Minister for Defence Veterans and the First Secretary (Covenant Strategy)
- External Member of the Cabinet office Covenant reference Group
- MOD Covenant Team and MOD Service Personnel Welfare staff - provide supporting evidence and discuss emerging issues
- Employee representative member of the Armed forces Pension Board
- Employee representative member Forces Pension Society Council
- Provided observations on the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report to Parliament
- Provided written and oral evidence to House of Commons Defence Committee Inquiries
- Annual meeting with Armed Forces Pay Review Body
- Met the Head of Future Accommodation Model (FAM) and Head of Accommodation Policy to discuss FAM and provide our evidence from RAF personnel and families

Other Government Departments:

- Met with Ministers and/or senior staff to discuss serving family issues at Department for Communities Local Government (DCLG), Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Department for Education, Department of Health (DoH), NHS England, Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament

RAF:

- Quarterly with Air Member for Personnel & Capability and Chief of Staff Personnel and Air Secretary
- Quarterly with Chief of the Air Staff's Warrant Officer
- Air member for Personnel Briefing Team
- RAF Community Support staff
- Monthly AF Covenant reports for RAF CS Staff
- Presented to all Future Commander's Study Periods and the Senior Execs Partners Course
- Presented to all WOs' and NCOs' during promotion at the Airmens' Command School
- Briefed attendees on RAF Community Support Courses
- Spoke to Initial Officer Training (IOT) students (Freshers evening) and Recruit Training Squadron students (post graduation)
- Ran workshops for WO Higher Management Leadership Course (HMLC) and CAS conferences for SACs', SNCOs' and WOs'



Armed Forces Covenant

The Covenant is core business for the RAF FF and throughout 2017 it became apparent that covenant-related issues are an increasingly significant component of the evidence we capture and that are experienced by RAF personnel and their families. Covenant aligned issues have been a common thread either through our surveys or reactively from those who contact us with their own concerns. Utilising this unique information and our own expertise we have been sharing evidence and information with units, local authorities, and other organisations in our partnership working; and informing policy and debate with the RAF Chain of command, MOD and other government departments.

Our own Covenant Managers objectives are to:

- Support the work of RAF station Covenant Champions
- Establish partnerships with units, government departments, local authorities, devolved administrations
- Support and advise on the implementation of the Covenant and share good practice from across the UK
- Identify and raise awareness of the key issues for RAF personnel and their families
- Advise, support and assist covenant fund projects

Funded projects

Dispersed Families

The RAF Dispersed Families project was initiated in 2017, following a successful bid for Libor funding. The two year project aims to identify issues faced by RAF families living away from the unit and to investigate how these might be addressed.

A Project Manager was recruited and in post from June 2017, and the following key activities took place by the end of 2017:

- **Project planning:** research methodology agreed, definition of target research population
- **Liaison:** with key personnel in the RAF, MOD, relevant military charities, and research institutions
- **Engagement:** generating interest from this hard to reach group through Envoy article and information piece, BFBS interview, and social media stories
- **Project website:** live from July with 1463 visits in 2017
- **Research:** surveys for SP and families live from December, with volunteers recruited for interviews



Funded projects

Families' Transition Project

The RAF FF are collaborating with the NFF and AFF on the Families' Transition project, commissioned by the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT). The project is running for 2 years from October 2016 and seeks to discover and understand families' experiences of transition from military to civilian life. The project includes the following main elements:

- **An evaluation of services** – an assessment of services to assess services that exist to help families
- **Online survey** – live September-October 2017, capturing the views and experiences of service leavers and families of their transitions
- **Longitudinal Case Studies** – each Families Federation has recruited up to eight families to follow through transition, including interviews pre and post transition
- **Influencing and collaboration** – the project has sought to work in close collaboration with policy makers and service delivery organisations in this area, including charities and Single Service organisations and well as the Transition and Veterans Policy leads within Armed Forces Covenant team in the MOD, LAs and Devolved Administrations (DA)

The final report will be submitted to our partners at FiMT in early October 2018.



Communications

We continue to promote not only the work of the Federation but the work of the many organisations and charities that exist to support our personnel and their families.

Key elements of impact include:

- New website due to launch Spring 2018.
- Introduced policy led articles in Envoy by Chief of Staff Personnel allowing families access to policy improvement planning.

eBULLETIN keeping you up-to-date with Federation activity and news stories of interest to RAF serving personnel and their family members.

Social media

Facebook (closed) groups:

- RAF Families (for parents of and relatives of those serving)
- RAF Reserve Personnel and their families

General information for all connected to the RAF:

- RAF Families Federation on Facebook
- @RAF_FF on Twitter



RAF
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RAF FF Strategy 2018

- Ensure we deliver against the contracted requirements as a minimum
- Target and engage with the Reserves - Full-Time Reserve Service (FTRS) and Royal Auxiliary Air Force (RAuxAF) and our dispersed families.
- Increase survey response rates still further
- Proactively play our part in raising awareness of changes to MOD and RAF Policy
- Continue to capture accurate and quantifiable evidence using a blend of engagement opportunities
- Continue our consultation work with HQ Air and MOD on People Programmes, FAM, MOD Families Strategy, DCYP Childcare Policy and more
- Work on the covenant, supporting Covenant Reference Group (CRG), MOD and HQ Air initiatives and provide feedback.
- Continue to monitor and, where appropriate, challenge National Housing Prime (NHP) contract performance

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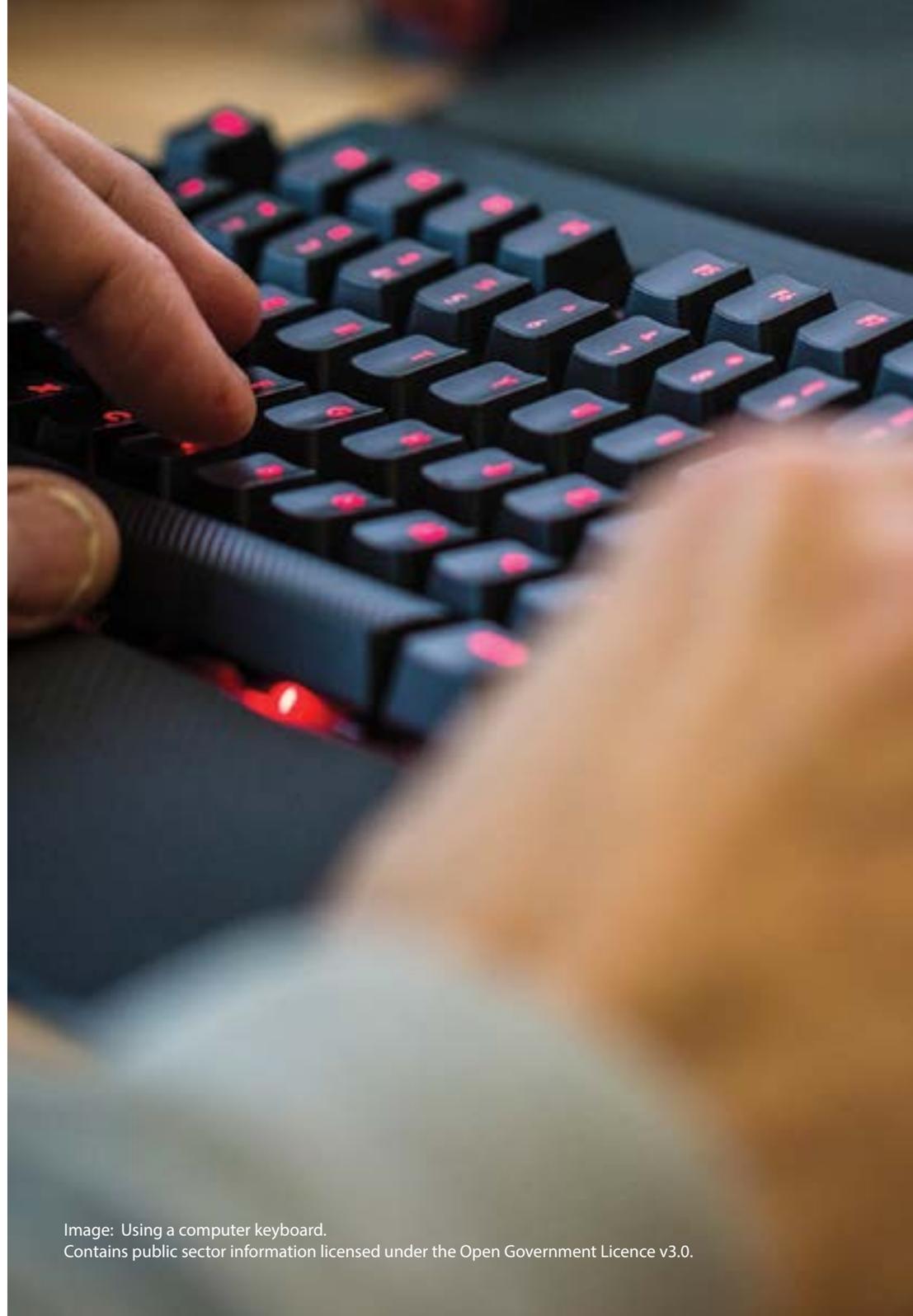


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The charity that supports the RAF family

The RAF Families Federation's contract is held by the RAF Association



The RAF Benevolent Fund is a supporting partner of the Families Federation