



Audience

RAF families and single personnel who are moving to Scotland.

Background

Scotland has much to offer our Service Personnel (SP) and their families. Towering mountains, world renowned golf courses, miles of un-spoilt sandy beaches, hundreds of castles and culinary delights of haggis and scallops as well as internationally acclaimed arts and music festivals. There are many reasons why so many of our personnel and families come to love living here.

RAF Lossiemouth in Moray, home to the Typhoon and currently preparing for the arrival of the P-8A Poseidon in 2020 is one of two Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) stations which protects UK airspace. Currently, the Serving Personnel strength is over 1500 plus associated family members - this is set to increase due to the return of the P-8A force from the US where they have been training. The RAF family is dispersed throughout Scotland with many personnel choosing to settle across the country.

Introduction

RAF Lossiemouth is the main RAF military operating base in Scotland with numerous smaller parented units scattered across Scotland. It is geographically remote - the next nearest RAF units are at RAF Boulmer which is over 5 hours by road and RAF Leeming which is over 6 hours however the local area around Lossiemouth is well equipped to meet the needs of all posted there. Both Inverness and Aberdeen Airports offer a range of budget airline flights to various UK airports throughout the year and holiday package flights in the summer months.

The RAF Families Federation has been made aware of a few challenges faced by families and SP moving to Scotland from England or Wales, but has also been encouraged to learn about the huge amount of support from Moray Council and the Scottish Government for our Armed Forces (AF) Community. One of our recent visits revealed a range of benefits experienced by SP and families on moving to Scotland.

The key focus of our SP and families when they relocate is on accommodation, and, if there are children involved, schooling and registering with the local doctor, dentist and other required secondary healthcare practitioners.

Accommodation options at Lossiemouth vary. The main patches are Lossiemouth itself, immediately outside the main gate; Bishopmill which is approximately 5 miles from station and Reynolds Crescent which is approximately 7 miles away in nearby Elgin. There are also families quarters at Kinloss Barracks

For 'singlies', there is ongoing work to provide more Single Living Accommodation (SLA) options at Lossiemouth to cater for the impending uplift in personnel – for example 40 families' quarters have recently been converted into SLA which are dual occupied by single or married unaccompanied personnel as a short term measure.

For families, there is a comprehensive programme of activities for children and young people at RAF Lossiemouth including sporting, uniformed and social groups – the best way to find out about these is contacting the team in the HiVE at St Aidan's Community Support Centre on station.

Policy in Place

The 2016 'Renewing our Commitments' document outlines what the Scottish government have focused on with regards to supporting the AF community in Scotland and demonstrates its firm commitment. It contains a lot of veteran focused activity but there is also information on some important 'wins' for our SP and families e.g. Open Market Shared Equity Scheme.

It can be viewed in its entirety here: gov.scot/Resource/0049/00494468.pdf

Local Overseas Allowance: Many of our personnel are returning from overseas training assignments back to Lossiemouth. These P8-A training courses are not classed as qualifying operations for council tax rebates, concessionary warrants or Family Welfare Grants even though SP are away from home for over 7 months. We have also been told that although the courses are back to back, they are treated as separate which attracts the lower rate of Local Overseas Allowance. JSP752 details overseas allowances and we are aware that this ongoing issue is being looked into by the Chain of Command. RAFA are also working with the Welfare Team at Lossiemouth to provide some additional funding to ensure parity of provision across families. It is worth noting that these issues are not wholly focussed on Scotland and SP and families elsewhere in the RAF have encountered the same if training abroad for similar amounts of time.

Health: The allocation of Community Health Index (CHI) numbers (Scotland's version of the NHS number in England and Wales) has been another very positive development. Synchronisation between the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA) system and the allocation of CHI took place in

September 2015 and should ensure that all SP based in Scotland have access to NHS services in Scotland including bowel, breast, cervical and other screening programmes. This is of course wholly dependent on an up to date JPA record.

Under the Armed Forces Covenant, members of the AF community should have any previous waiting time for treatment taken into account when transferring into Scotland. If you are moving to Scotland whilst still waiting for treatment in England, Wales or NI, you should retain your place on the waiting list and not go to the back of the queue. If you experience any issues with this, please let us know straight away, so we can continue to work with the RAF welfare teams in Scotland, and the local NHS bodies.

There is a well equipped Medical Centre on station at Lossiemouth for the use of SP and also a Medical Practice just outside the main gate for family members, there is no shortage of GP and dental practices in the area and more good news is that prescriptions and dental health checks are free in Scotland nhsinform.scot

Private accommodation: For those wishing to buy property in Scotland, the Scottish Government allocated £80 million to the Open Market Shared Equity Scheme in 2015 to help families with lower incomes to get on the housing ladder and settle in Scotland. This scheme can be accessed in addition to the Forces Help to Buy Scheme. More information can be found here: mygov.scot/help-buying-home

You should be aware that buying a home in Scotland is a very different process to buying elsewhere in the UK – it is actually a lot more simple and works to the advantage of both buyer and seller as there are processes in place to prevent ‘gazumping’ and buyers pulling out late in the sale. Do check out how it all works before you get involved. There is some great information here: gocompare.com/mortgages/how-to-buy-a-house-in-scotland/

Childcare: GIRFEC – ‘Getting It Right For Every Child’ is Scotland’s policy on wellbeing for children and young people. GIRFEC is central to all Scottish government policies which support children, young people and their families.

The Scottish Government are committed to bringing in 30 hrs of Funded Childcare to all eligible families from 2020. It is advisable to check eligibility at mygov.scot/childcare-costs-help/funded-early-learning-and-childcare. Moray Council has been rolling this out locally on a phased basis so some school catchment areas are already in receipt of it whilst others aren’t – it is recommended that prior to accepting an SFA, you check where your new address sits on the roll out programme. The Scottish Government are working hard to further reduce barriers preventing parents from working and we have been informed that there is considerable support locally for any Service spouse wishing to set up as a childminder – the extended 30 hours childcare scheme may encourage more interested parties to consider this as a viable employment option.

The 30 hours funded childcare entitlement can be used flexibly and childminders can be paid by this method too. There is a superb resource on the Moray Council website detailing all early learning and childcare options along with training and support available. moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_42682.html

Education: The Scottish curriculum for children aged 4 ½ -18 is called Curriculum for Excellence.

Inevitably there are differences compared to the education systems in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and it can seem quite confusing at first but if you are in Scotland for a lengthy period, there is no disadvantage, it is just different. Children start school later in Scotland (from around 4 ½ yrs old) which may mean a child appearing to go down a year when they transfer. Scotland has different entry and enrolment dates to other parts of the UK. It also has different term dates. Please visit the links below for further information on this. There is plenty of support for families to help navigate the differences and there is a well utilized system enabling parents to request an assessment if they are concerned about the impact of their child being in the Scottish Education system for a couple of years before being posted elsewhere. All newly qualified teachers in Moray are trained in supporting the forces child and there is a well-established working relationship between RAF Lossiemouth and the Education Authority. Speak to RAF Lossiemouth HIVE for more information on this.

There is also a National Transitions Officer for Children and Young People of Armed Forces families in Scottish Schools. (ades.scot/ServiceChildren/) and there is a Parent Support Officer (Scotland) who is part of the Children's Education Advisory Service. There is a very comprehensive resource covering a wide range of topics for parents with school aged children, here: enquire.org.uk/

If you have children accessing higher education in Scotland, it may be worth investigating if you are eligible for funding. SAAS (Students Award Agency for Scotland) can help with this: saas.gov.uk/forms/armed_forces.pdf

Education spending in Scotland is entirely devolved to the Scottish Government who are committed to supporting every child. There is no Service Pupil Premium in Scotland however the education system is very highly regarded and has a long tradition of high standards of attainment and inclusion for all and each child in Scotland receives more funding than they do in England. It would be helpful if all parents ensure the school is aware that their child is a service child for better reporting purposes.

More info:

education.gov.scot/parentzone

theschoolrun.com/overview-scottish-education-system

forceschildrenseducation.org.uk

gov.uk/government/publications/education-in-the-uk-for-service-children

What's on our radar?

Children with Additional Needs: EHCPs (Education, Health and Care Plans) are not recognised in Scotland and families must arrange for their child to be issued with a Coordinated Support Plan from their Local Authority instead. Please note that this is often the case when moving between counties in England and is not a Scotland-specific problem. We would recommend families engage with the receiving Local Authority and education establishment as soon as possible to get the process started, and also to see if records about your child can be directly transferred. Transferring care for children with additional needs to any new school can be problematic, the sooner the process is started, the better.

Transference of medical records: We have been made aware that some Service dependents have experienced issues with accessing healthcare at RAF Lossiemouth. The main themes relate

to the length of time it takes for medicals to be arranged in advance of an overseas posting, the reticence of GP practices holding on to records whilst the family are overseas and the difficulties in amalgamation of records upon return. Service dependents who need medicals in advance of an overseas posting are encouraged to plan and book these well in advance. The difficulties around the migration of medical records upon arriving in Scotland is being reviewed on a national level. Family members have also reported that they have struggled to retain their place in the queue for treatment. Sadly, none of these issues are purely specific to Scotland, and there is a huge amount of energy and focus in improving the situation via the Armed Forces Covenant. If you experience any issues similar to this, please let us know straight away, so we can continue to work with the RAF welfare teams and NHS in Scotland. There has also been concern about the reduced healthcare facilities on offer at Dr Grays Hospital in Elgin necessitating pregnant mothers requiring specialist care having to travel 2 hours to Aberdeen. We understand that services at Dr Grays are now building back up thanks to focused action from the welfare team at Lossiemouth and Moray County Council which is another example of collaborative working to the benefit of our RAF personnel and families.

Tax: Be aware that the income tax system is slightly different in Scotland and did cause some issues for our families. Happily in 2018, the MOD announced a change in how the Scottish Rate of Income Tax is applied to SP serving in Scotland. SP will be compensated with an annual payment and this will be reviewed annually. For further information, [gov.uk/government/news/military-personnel-in-scotland-protected-from-tax-hikes](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/military-personnel-in-scotland-protected-from-tax-hikes)

Employment: Gaining meaningful and fulfilling employment is very important for many of our military spouses which can be negatively impacted by the commitments of mobility and deployments. Our recent survey at RAF Lossiemouth revealed that 68% of spouses who responded agreed or strongly agreed that their SP's career has had a negative impact on their career.

Moving to Scotland can present challenges when it comes to accessibility of suitable roles and also recognition of qualifications gained elsewhere. We are aware that this has been the case in the education and childcare sectors. Some excellent work has been carried out by Moray Council in partnership with RAF Lossiemouth to allow military family members who are teachers to take up local positions without having to retrain – those that do require conversion training can apply for jobs immediately and be both employed and funded by the council whilst undertaking the training.

Skills Development Scotland offer a wealth of training and further education options via distance learning for spouses and dependents in Scotland. Visit here: [skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk](https://www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk)

The launch of the Forces Families Jobs portal is hugely positive for our spouses in Scotland – we recommend all Covenant Signatories in Scotland sign up to FFJ at the earliest opportunity to demonstrate their ongoing support of our Armed Forces, many have done so already.

Moray has a well-recognized skills shortage in key public and private sector areas with vacancies across all levels – HIE Moray and RAF Lossiemouth are looking to harness the skills and experience of Service families to fill these gaps. NHS Grampian, for example, are proactively recruiting Service families into clinical and administrative roles and have a military representative sitting on their recruitment committee.

Summary

Life is good at Lossiemouth, the community is vibrant and active with lots of opportunity for adventurous training and sporting activities ranging from archery, karting, shooting and diving to name just a few. The active lifestyle with associated benefits to personal development shows that if you are willing to get involved, your time at Lossiemouth could be very rewarding indeed.

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RAF Lossiemouth wasn't my first choice of base due to the distance from my parents who live in Norfolk and were a huge help with childcare. I think this is what puts most people off when they think of this camp, and it's a natural assumption that it will be isolating being so far away from loved ones. However, because we are all so far from extended family it has resulted in a great community and people are really welcoming and keen to make new friends. The downside is the travel South to visit or go anywhere but this has been recognised and if we use five days of leave and go to England then we get given one day back to compensate for the travel.

I recently increased the amount of time I am posted here for, mainly because of my married quarter; they are probably the best houses I have seen as they all have large gardens and are left in a good condition. There is a school and childcare centre right next to the quarters so the children all know and look out for each other which adds to how safe this area feels. The facilities in the area are limited if you don't drive, but there are buses to most places. In Lossiemouth itself there are two beautiful beaches, parks all across town and plenty of places to buy ice cream! The nearest town, Elgin, has limited shops so most people go to Inverness if they want to go shopping. There are trains from Elgin to Inverness but driving doesn't take too long. There are three large supermarkets in Elgin too, as well as an Aldi and a Lidl, so plenty of choice!

*The local doctor's surgery is fairly new and the staff are brilliant. One of the things I appreciate is that the dentist in Lossiemouth understands that people work so they are open in the evenings. Seems small, but makes a difference! The main thing I have noticed since moving here is just how keen people are to help each other out. It really makes a difference knowing that so many people want to support others and that if an individual is struggling they can rely on other families or the support services on base. **SAC Anderson-Lang***

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