



Ministry of Defence  
Main Building  
Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2HB

18 June 2020

Dear Service spouses and partners,

In these challenging times, we are writing to you to provide some reassurance that we understand the concerns you may have regarding your employment and wider family dynamics. We are engaging regularly with charitable organisations, the Families Federations and academia to improve employment opportunities for Service partners and spouses. We are keenly aware of the impact that Service life may have on your careers and employment opportunities, and in turn that the current crisis we as a nation find ourselves in, may have further compounded some of these difficulties.

We'd like to thank you for the continued support you give to our Service Personnel which ensures we can maintain operational readiness and also that we can play our part in helping the Nation's fight against COVID-19. We know that this sometimes comes at a cost to family life and your own career particularly at a time of additional home-schooling responsibilities, without the presence of trusted family members and indeed extra caring responsibilities for elderly relatives to consider. For families with additional needs the changes to routines and difficulty accessing support you have previously relied upon will make this even tougher. The transition of easing the lockdown may also present difficulties in the form of new routines depending on your employer's policies and interpretation of government advice. We would like to inform you however that under new regulations as part of a 'support bubble' for those Service families, with a partner deployed, you are allowed to visit and stay with one other family with your children. This 'support bubble' would only apply to one other household.

The MOD's Partner Employment Steering Group which includes representatives from the single Services, Families Federations and academic experts in the field of partner employment, continues to meet virtually to discuss what support we can provide to you and to ensure that it is coherent and meets your needs. The group understands that the current crisis will for many of you exacerbate some of the difficulties you already face. Acknowledging this they asked that we as Minister for Defence People and Veterans and Director of Armed Forces Personnel Policy, write to you to emphasise this and to signpost you to existing resources and organisations that may be helpful. The annex included with this letter provides details of the employment support that is available to partners and spouses. For example, information about Families Forces Jobs: a job platform specifically for Service families.

Finally, we urge you to keep looking after yourselves and keep on supporting each other as you are so good at doing, whilst adhering to the Government's latest guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JM', with a stylized, cursive flourish.

**JOHNNY MERCER MP**

***Helen Helliwell***  
Director Armed Forces People Policy

**Annexes:**

- A. Partner Employment useful resources for living with Covid 19.

## **Annex A - Partner Employment - Useful resources for living with Covid 19**

### **Employment support by your Families Federations**



Your single Service Employment and Training Specialists can help advise with any issues or concerns:

Naval Families Federation: [lucy.heaver@nff.org.uk](mailto:lucy.heaver@nff.org.uk) <https://nff.org.uk/employment/>

Army Families Federation: [employmenttraining@aff.org.uk](mailto:employmenttraining@aff.org.uk)

<https://aff.org.uk/advice/employment/>

RAF Families Federation: [enquiries@raf-ff.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@raf-ff.org.uk) <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/employment/>

### **Single Service HIVEs**

Army HIVE Information Service - employment information and signposting - [www.army.mod.uk/hives](http://www.army.mod.uk/hives)

NS FPS Information Support: <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/community-and-support/advice-and-support/local-support>

RAF HIVE Information Service - Employment & Training Information <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/hive-finder/>

### **X-Forces Enterprise**



[X-Forces Enterprise](#) has launched a fully funded programme that is exclusively designed to help businesses, sole-traders, free-lancers etc from the armed forces community in the quest to support them during COVID 19.

With over 800 businesses supported from grassroots that are spouses or partner led and many more that are part of the XFE community (2000+) we felt we needed to help and provide a further handrail at this time.

The trigger to design this programme was through demand from beneficiaries wanting to understand better (in-addition to sign-posting) the support available to them from government initiatives such as Small Business Grants to Bounce Bank Loans; from Furloughing to Self-Employment Income Support schemes. But what does this all mean if lockdown is 3-6-12months? What does this mean to individual business sectors post the initial funding support? and more importantly to well-being and not feeling alone when isolation is part of the strategy. Of course, business owners often say it is lonely at the best of times and so at this time of crisis that feeling can perhaps be even more heightened with the added weight of financial insecurity.

For this reason, the Directors at XFE have put together a programme to help the community with bespoke support at this time of uncertainty and provide a network for business continuity strategies for the coming months, or at least that's the aspiration so no one is feeling alone and get a sense of reassurance and belonging through XFE facilitating but more importantly with each other on the programme post event.

\*NB It is important to note this is for business owners who are already up and running and not a business start-up programme.

## X-Forces Enterprise COVID-19 Support for Businesses



Covid-19 Support  
XFE.pdf



Business Continuity  
Masterclass Information

## Forces Families Jobs(FFJ)



[Forces Families Jobs](#) is the go-to place for training and employment for family members of currently serving UK military personnel.

Apply for jobs and access employment and training opportunities with companies and organisations who are forces family friendly. You can use this website with confidence in knowing that employers have signed the

Armed Forces Covenant or are able to demonstrate their commitment to the Armed Forces.

This is your gateway to accessing information about acquiring new skills, upgrading your existing skills or applying directly to employers who are understanding of the unique challenges that come with being a family member of a serving person.

Over 35 different training courses and programmes, virtual events and job opportunities are available on FFJ. Training courses are delivered by organisations such as RBLI Lifeworks, the Unsung Hero, X-Forces and many more.

## The Milspo Business Network



[The Milspo Business Network](#) is a global friendly network that supports all UK military spouses, partners and other halves building their own business whilst living the 'magnolia walled life'. With weekly online meet-ups, to help with the isolation of lockdown, and online international networking opportunities, the community provides peer support to those creating posting-proof

businesses that complement their modern military life. Hear inspirational podcasts, access business support from our partner Small Business Britain, and make new contacts and friends not limited by location.

## **Covid 19 Employment and Benefits support from DWP**

This webpage provides information about coronavirus and claiming benefits  
<https://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/tps://www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/employment-and-benefits-support/>

## **Overseas postings**

### **Claiming your National Insurance Credits on your return from overseas postings**

How spouses and civil partners of armed forces personnel posted overseas can fill gaps in their National Insurance record: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-insurance-credits-for-partners-of-armed-forces-personnel-overseas> and RAF FF's Envoy magazine shares an article on how they can help: <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/news/national-insurance-credits-and-dwp-how-the-raf-ff-can-help/> with equal support available through all three families federations.



## **Education funding available**



The women's section of the Royal British Legion offers two separate bursaries for eligible beneficiaries: Educational Scholarships and Educational Grants.

### **Other useful links:**

The Warrior Programme: <https://warriorprogramme.org.uk/families-of-serving-personnel/>  
RFEA: <https://www.rfea.org.uk/our-programmes-partnerships/rfea-families-programme/>  
NHS Employers: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/retention-and-staff-experience/supporting-the-armed-forces-in-the-nhs>

## **Recruit for Spouses**

[Recruit for Spouses](#) (RfS) is a specialised recruitment agency bridging a gap between employers and military spouses. RFS create work with companies that offer home based flexible roles for military spouses

During the pandemic, the RFS Career Academy have teamed up with a top Global employer to create the first military spouse focused Mentoring Programme. The programme is developed specifically for spouses who have been impacted by COVID19 and who find themselves furloughed, out of work or unsure of how to pick up their job hunt.

The bespoke mentoring programme offers one-to-one support and guidance as well as providing an insight into a large corporate organisation. It will provide spouses with an opportunity to ask for and be shown well-trodden career paths. Email: [coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk](mailto:coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk) for more information.



Recruit for Spouses  
COVID19 Mentoring

### **RBLI Lifeworks Families**

RBLI's LifeWorks team remain here to support the military community during these difficult times and it's important for everyone to know – LifeWorks Still Works! Our understanding career coaches and vocational assessors are on call to support remotely and via our online portal. All you need to do is register, call 0800 319 6844 or send us a quick email to [lifeworks@rbli.co.uk](mailto:lifeworks@rbli.co.uk) and we will do the rest. Military families are positive, adaptable and hugely resilient and as a result, will continue to play a vital part in supporting those around them during and after this trouble has passed.

RBLI LifeWorks Families: <https://www.wearelifeworks.org.uk/families/>



LifeWorks Families  
PDF for RAF FF leaflet

### **The Military Coworking Network**



#### **What is the Military Coworking Network?**

The MCN is a community of military spouses working together to create a network of **coworking office spaces** on military bases, supported by an **online community** for spouses everywhere.

Whether you are employed, furloughed, run your own business or are studying from home, our online coworking community allows us all to network, share contacts and ask each other for help and ideas about different ways of maintaining careers and businesses that work around our transient military lifestyles.

Having a dedicated space where we can go to work and study together not only reduces social isolation; our off and online communities offer help and support to enable us to maintain flexible jobs which work around our military lifestyle.

With the current lockdown restrictions all of our hubs are closed at the moment, but our online community is thriving.

Join our [Facebook Military Coworking Community](#) group to share insights into professional training, business skills and job opportunities, all focused on remote, flexible working and provided by our members, for our members.

#### **What are Military Coworking Hubs?**

The coworking hubs are fully equipped office spaces on bases throughout the UK and Europe.

They provide the facilities that you would expect in any office (a quiet workspace that isn't the kitchen table, fast Wi-Fi, printing & good coffee!) but more importantly they can give you

access to local professional networking opportunities for your career or business, information about employers in the local area, higher education opportunities and the chance to meet new people and make friends.

**Join our community:**



[/militarycoworkingcommunity](#)



[@militarycoworkingnetwork](#)



[@militarycowork](#)



[Military Coworking Network](#)

Contact point: Laura Moore

Marketing & Communications Manager  
UK Mob: +44 (0) 7720 062 540



**Joint Education and Training Services (JETS)**

JETS Gibraltar is part of the MOD military learning and development network. The centre is a friendly and welcoming environment providing a range of education opportunities to support your personal development and life-long learning.

For further information please see below:  
Joint Education and Training Services (JETS)  
Devil's Tower camp  
Gibraltar  
BFPO 52

Phone: Mil: 94110 3359 Civ: +350 2005 3359 T homas, Fiona D (NAVY TRG HQ-Thomas, Fiona D (NAVY TRG HQ-LDO SLO) h LDO SLO)

**55 AEC Group Cyprus**

The 55 AEC Group Cyprus offer British Forces Cyprus community learning services for Spouses, partners and families of Service Personnel in Cyprus.

55 AEC Group also offer Employment support to spouses.

Contacts:

Facebook: 55 AEC  
Twitter: @OC55AEC  
YouTube 55 AEC

Telephone #3800 (000357 2596 3800)

## **Jobcentre Plus – Job Help**

Find out about the sectors that are still recruiting and get hints and tips on applying for jobs on the

job help site: <https://jobhelp.campaign.gov.uk/>

Search thousands of vacancies; create an account and apply for jobs:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-a-job>

## **University of Wolverhampton**

**[suh@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:suh@wlv.ac.uk)**

Business guidance from partners at the chamber of commerce.



COVID-19 What  
funding is available fo

# Supporting the Unsung Hero During COVID-19 Pandemic



To all our Supporting the Unsung Hero delegates and the wider Armed Forces Community we hope you are all keeping safe and well. During this difficult time we are offering the following business support:

### **For our existing members of the SUH community we have the following support available:**

- Weekly Cuppa and Chat, and informal networking group every Friday morning
- Fortnightly Group mentoring – business networking, question and answer session and working through problems.
- Extra mentoring available to all SUH delegates to help through this difficult time via telephone or online video call.
- Supportive and informative posts in our closed group to help navigate through the latest government announcements and updates.

### **For delegates new to our programme we offer:**

- Free Introduction to Business Start-Up Webinars
- Free business advice to all those looking to start-up their business prior to our cohorts re-starting in August.

#### **Introduction to Self-Employment**

This session is designed to answer all of the questions you may have about becoming self-employed and starting a business.



### **Contact us today for more information:**

- ☎ 01902 322760
- ✉ [suh@wlv.ac.uk](mailto:suh@wlv.ac.uk)
- 🌐 [wlv.ac.uk/supportingtheunsunghero](http://wlv.ac.uk/supportingtheunsunghero)
- 📌 [supportingtheunsunghero](https://www.facebook.com/supportingtheunsunghero)

