

Tri-Service LGBT+
Parenting Handbook



Tri-Service LGBT+ Parenting Handbook

This handbook has been created by the LGBT+ Networks (*RAF Freedom Network, Army LGBT Forum and Royal Navy Compass*) to provide advice, guidance and support to LGBT+ Serving personnel seeking advice or information on starting a family, or advice and information for diverse families.

Each service offers their own unique operational environments and challenges, topics discussed within this handbook will differ between service, where possible the different information and language has been included.

Information found in this handbook is delivered as Tri-Service, this includes links to JSP's and DIN's. If there is a 'service-specific' policy for a particular subject, then this will be highlighted as such within the page you are viewing.

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Useful Links:

<https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/serving-parents/>

<https://www.army.mod.uk/people/support-well/army-parents-network/>

<https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/navy-life/families/information-for-families>

Starting a Family

Whether you are looking to start a family or just browsing, this page contains information that is designed to help you navigate through the various ways of starting a family. Each section is broken down to make the process easier to understand and find the information you need in one place.



Adoption

Adoption is a way of providing the security, permanency and love of a new family when it is not possible for a child to be raised by his/her birth parents or within the birth family.

- Are you looking to adopt a child?
- Want more information on the process, agencies and policies involved?
- See useful links to external agencies and more information



Fostering

Fostering offers children, a safe and caring family, usually geographically close to their home, while they are unable to live with their own Family.

Private Fostering

Private fostering is a personal arrangement for a third party to look after a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) for whom they do not have parental or other legal responsibility, or leaving (or intending to leave) a child or children in someone else's care, for a period of 28 days or more.

- Are you looking to Foster or need a Private Fostering Agreement?
- Want more information on the process, agencies and policies involved?
- See useful links to external agencies and more information



[Donor Insemination](#)

Donor insemination involves using donor sperm. This can be obtained by using an anonymous sperm donor (from a sperm bank or clinic), using a known donor through sperm donor matching websites or by donation from a friend.

- For personnel looking for insemination options include:
 - Intrauterine Insemination (IUI)
 - In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)
 - Private Donation
- Want more information on the process, agencies and policies involved?
- See useful links to external agencies and more information
- [Read lived experiences](#)



[Surrogacy](#)

Surrogacy is the act of a woman carrying a pregnancy and giving birth for the child's parents, as they are unable to carry a child themselves. There are two types of surrogacy; host/gestational surrogacy and straight/traditional surrogacy.

- Are you looking for a Surrogate or want to be a Surrogate?
- Want more information on the process, agencies and policies involved?
- See useful links to external agencies and more information



[Co-Parenting](#)

Co-parenting is when two (or more) people take on the role of parenting a child, but those people are not in a marriage or similar relationship.

- Want to know more about Co-Parenting?
- See useful links to external agencies and more information
- [Read lived experiences](#)

Adoption

What is Adoption?

Adoption is a way of providing the security, permanency and love of a new family when it is not possible for a child to be raised by his/her birth parents or within the birth family.

Adoption is a legal process which transfers parental responsibility from the child's birth parents to their adoptive parents. The Adoption Order is granted by a court when the child(ren) have been living with the prospective adopters and all concerned, including the child, are happy. Once an Adoption Order is made it cannot be revoked.

What are my options?

Below are some of the agencies available, please note this is **not** a definitive list and we are by no means promoting as such. Service Personnel have the option of choosing military friendly adoption agencies or private adoption agencies.

- SSAFA adoption agency - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
 - We are a Friendly and professional Registered Adoption Agency, covering the whole of the UK.
 - We can support you through any potential postings, ensuring that you don't have to start the process again if you move.
 - We are military specialists, who understand your needs.
 - We promote equality and welcome applications from all members of the serving community.
 - We are with you for the life of your adoption journey, with our dedicated Post Adoption Support service.
- First 4 Adoption - <https://www.first4adoption.org.uk/>
 - National information service for people interested in adopting a child in England.
 - We give clear and impartial information about adopting and can put you in touch with adoption agencies in your area.
- New Family Social - <https://newfamilysocial.org.uk/>
 - We're a UK charity, led by LGBT+ adopters and foster carers. New Family Social exists to help you decide if adoption or fostering is right for you and then support you on your journey to becoming parents and carers.
 - We also work with agencies to develop their services to be as LGBT+ inclusive and friendly as possible. We aim to make the pool of available parents as wide as possible for the many children in care.
 - You might have just started to think about the possibility of adopting or fostering. What will it mean for you? Can you offer the support? How will I be treated? What age children can I give a home to?
 - We're here to help and there's probably a supportive adoption or fostering team near you that's a member of New Family Social.

Who do I need to speak to?

- Inform your immediate Chain of Command (CoC) of your intention to adopt.
- Contact your unit HR Office.
- Contact your unit Welfare Support Office.

- Contact Service Welfare Agency (optional):
 - SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
 - Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/> (RAF)
 - Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/> (ARMY)
 - Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/> (NAVY)
- Contact DIO for housing applications or amendments to housing:
 - Call **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.
- Reach out to Defence Adoption Forum (Facebook).

What am I entitled to?

Housing

All Service personnel are entitled to occupy Service Family Accommodation (SFA) from the date of the adoption being approved in recognition of the need to establish a home before any child is placed with the adoptive parent(s).

It is usually a requirement that the adoptive child has their own bedroom in your home unless they are sharing with a sibling, and this should be taken into account when SFA is applied for and will also link to the PStatCat status.

See [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, 0310](#) for more information.

Applications for SFA are completed online using the [e1132 Form](#), which can only be accessed via MODNet. However, if you do not have access to MODNet a paper version of the MOD Form 1132: application to occupy service family accommodation (SFA) is available in [JSP 464: tri-service accommodation regulations \(TSARs\) Part 2, Chapter 4](#). Please note it is recommended to use the eForm as this will enable you to view the properties available and make an instant choice.

To discuss or make amendments to your SFA / Application for SFA contact Amey DIO on **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

Adoption Leave & Pay

The Armed Forces' Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme (AFOALS) is given to recognise the adoption of a child (or children) up to the age of 18 years and is available to Service personnel adopting a child on their own, or one member of a couple adopting a child together. Only one parent of a couple is eligible for Adoption Leave/Adoption Pay. The other parent may be eligible for Paternity Leave and Pay.

The provisions of the AFOALS apply only to adoption placements arranged through legally recognised adoption agencies. They do not, for example, apply in cases where: a private adoption has been arranged; where someone becomes a special guardian; where a step-parent adopts a stepchild; when a child is in foster care.

It should be noted that, unlike the Armed Forces' Occupational Maternity Leave Scheme, which allows Servicewomen to choose to leave the Service prematurely on the grounds of pregnancy, there is no right to leave the Service prematurely on the grounds of adopting a child.

UK Adoptions:

To qualify for adoption leave under the AFOALS for a UK adoption as you must:

- Be newly matched with a child by an adoption agency recognised in the UK.

- Have notified the adoption agency that you agree to the child being placed with you and agree with the date of placement.
- Notify your Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing of when you wish to take Adoption Leave. This should be no more than 7 days after you are notified that you have been matched with a child.

Overseas Adoptions:

To qualify for adoption leave under the AFOALS when a child is adopted from overseas you must:

- Be the child's adopter. This is the person who will adopt or has adopted the child or, in a case where the child will be, or has been adopted by two people jointly, whichever of the joint adopters who has chosen to take adoption leave in respect of the child.
- Have received official notification from the relevant UK authority confirming the central authority has, or is prepared to, issue a certificate confirming that you are eligible to adopt and have been assessed and approved as being a suitable adoptive parent.
- Notify your Commanding Officer/Line Manager in writing of when you wish to take Adoption Leave. This should be no more than 7 days after you are notified that you have been matched with a child.

Personnel adopting a relative from overseas can also qualify for Adoption Leave and Pay if they have been assessed and approved as being a suitable parent. Adoption Leave and Pay will also be available to Service personnel serving in overseas commands who adopt a child through an accredited adoption agency such as the SSAFA Adoptions Agency, subject to meeting the qualifying criteria for Adoption Leave and Pay.

All Service personnel are entitled to take up to 52 weeks' adoption leave after 26 weeks service made up of:

- Ordinary Adoption Leave (OAL) Full Pay for 26 Weeks.
- Additional Adoption Leave (AAL) – 13 weeks of Statutory Adoption Pay.
- Additional Adoption Leave (AAL) – 13 weeks unpaid.

The Primary Adopter (the one taking adoption leave) may apply for paid time off to attend up to five pre-adoption appointments and the other parent can apply for paid time off to attend up to two adoption appointments (using JPA Form [R001](#)) unless this is not possible for Service reasons. There is no entitlement to travel and subsistence when taking this type of leave.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Plan and KIT

The KIT Plan is designed to be a framework for you to sit down with your Line Manager prior to Adoption Leave to discuss how you would like your LM to keep in touch with you, and how you agree to use your KIT days. This is also an ideal opportunity to discuss a graduated return to work and the possibility of flexible working.

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)

Flexible working arrangements allow an individual to have a degree of freedom when attempting to balance their work and personal life. While flexible working is not a right, all Service personnel are entitled to request FWA so they may better balance the demands of personal life and Service commitments. Any request to vary working patterns should be considered where these do not impinge on operational capability; it may not always be possible for non-standard hours to be worked due to the ways in which different arms and branches of the Services operate. Further information is available in [JSP 750](#) and applications are made on JPA.

See [JSP 760, Chapter 26](#) and [Flexible Working and You](#) for more information.

Paternity Leave

Paternity Leave is given to recognise the birth or the adoption of a child (where the Service person applying for Paternity Leave is not taking Adoption Leave) and enable the Service Person to care for the child or support the child's mother or adopter. Entitlement applies only to an adoption placement through a legally recognised adoption agency. It does not apply to Service personnel who arrange a private adoption; become a special guardian; or adopt a stepchild.

Paternity Leave is not available in cases where the Service Person has already taken any shared parental leave (ShPL) in respect of the child (Paternity leave must be taken first).

What is available?

2 weeks paid leave taken consecutively or as 2 separate whole week periods.

When can it be taken?

2 weeks leave to be taken within the first 56 days of the birth of a child (unless OPL has been deferred for operational reasons).

Who is eligible?

Married or in a civil partnership with the child's adopter (or co-adopter where there are 2 adopters).
Or
Service person living with the adopter (or co-adopter where there are 2 adopters) in an enduring family relationship (excl immediate family members).

Conditions

- You must have served continuously for a period of 26 weeks prior to the 15th week before the birth of the child.
- Application to take leave is to be submitted no later than the 15th week before the birth of the child.
- Leave cannot commence before the birth.
- Applies to each pregnancy (e.g. multiple birth does not lead to entitlement to additional leave).

See [JSP 760, Chapter 26](#) for more information.

RAF personnel see [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#) for more information.

Where can I get further information?

Tri-Service Policies:

- [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, Entitlement to SFA](#)
- [JSP 760 - Chapter 25 Armed Forces Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme \(AFOALS\)](#)
- [DIN 2018DIN01-130 – Adoption and Fostering](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 26 Armed Forces Occupational Paternity Leave Scheme \(AFOPLS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 27 Armed Forces Occupational Shared Parental Leave and Pay Scheme](#)
- [defnet - Apply for, Approve and Record Shared Parental Leave](#)

Service Specific Policies:

- [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Paternity Leave Birth & Adoption – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Army Welfare Policy – Fostering and Adoption](#)

Useful links:

- SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
- First 4 Adoption - www.first4adoption.org.uk
- New Family Social - <https://newfamilysocial.org.uk/>
- Armed Forces Healthcare - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare/>
- MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>
- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>
- Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>
- Defence Discount Service - <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>
- Tax Free Childcare - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Armed Forces Wraparound Childcare pilot - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wraparound-childcare-for-the-armed-forces>
- Child Adoption GOV.UK - <https://www.gov.uk/child-adoption>
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents>
- Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

RAF

- RAF Serving Parents - <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/serving-parents/>
- RAF Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/>
- RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) - <https://www.rafbf.org/>
- RAF Association (RAFA) - <https://www.rafa.org.uk/>

ARMY

- ARMY Parent's Network - <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/support-well/army-parents-network/>
- ARMY Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/>
- ABF Soldiers Charity - <https://soldierscharity.org/>

NAVY

- NAVY Information for Families - <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/navy-life/families/information-for-families>
- NAVY Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/>
- NAVY Benevolent Trust - <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/>

Fostering and Private Fostering

What is Fostering?

Fostering offers children, a safe and caring family, usually geographically close to their home, while they are unable to live with their own, and provides an opportunity for other professionals to work with the birth family to help resolve their issues.

What is Private Fostering?

Private fostering is any personal arrangement for a third party to look after a child under the age of 16 (or under 18 if disabled) for whom they do not have parental or other legal responsibility, or leaving (or intending to leave) a child or children in someone else's care, for a period of 28 days or more. This is where the principal carer could be from the extended family such as a cousin or great aunt/uncle, friend of the family and parents of another child or even someone unknown who is willing to privately foster a child. An arrangement with a close relative (as defined by the Children and Families Act 2014) will not be regarded as private fostering and is therefore not subject to these arrangements and care can be arranged without informing a local authority.

Requirements for SP needing Private Fostering for deployments

Service personnel with children are required to have appropriate plans in place for the care of their children should they be deployed on operations or away for prolonged periods for other reasons. Where these care arrangements are not with a close relative this will be a private fostering arrangement and will require registration when it occurs and exceeds, or is expected to exceed, 28 days consecutively.

Service Personnel must contact their Local Authority (LA) Fostering Team or if based overseas, the relevant statutory social work support staff and inform their CoC of the intent to private foster their child(ren). In the UK once initial contact has been made with LA they will arrange for a member from their Fostering Team and depending on the LA a member of their Social Services Team to come and speak to the parent, child(ren) and proposed Private Fosterer. A further assessment of the home the child(ren) will be living in will be conducted to ensure it meets with the conditions for children to live, i.e. child(ren) have their own bedroom and house is child(ren) friendly appropriate to age of child(ren). Once the LA is satisfied, they will issue a letter confirming the Private Fostering Agreement. This letter can be used to provide proof of childcare / parental responsibility to CoC, Medical Centre and other parties requiring confirmation.

What are my options?

Below are some of the agencies available, please note this is **not** a definitive list and we are by no means promoting as such. Service Personnel have the option of choosing Local Authority or private Fostering agencies.

- Local Council - <https://www.gov.uk/apply-foster-child-council>
Contact your local council if you're interested in becoming a foster carer.
- Becoming a Foster Parent - <https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent>
 - Who can foster?
 - Types of foster care
 - Help with the cost of fostering

- Applying to become a foster parent
- Fostering assessment
- After you've applied

- The Fostering Network - <https://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/>
 - As the UK's leading fostering charity, we are the essential network for fostering and we bring together everyone who is involved in the lives of fostered children. We support foster carers to transform children's lives and we work with fostering services and the wider sector to develop and share best practice.

- Fosterline - <https://www.fosterline.info/>
 - Fosterline is delivered by FosterTalk on behalf of the Department for Education.
 - FosterTalk is an independent, not-for-profit organisation, focused on providing high quality, independent professional support to our members.
 - Our objective is to provide comprehensive support packages that make a difference to foster carers, the children and young people they look after to enhance and compliment the support they receive from their fostering services.

Who do I need to speak to?

- Inform your immediate Chain of Command (CoC) of your intention to foster.
- Contact your unit HR Office.
- Contact your unit Welfare Support Office.
- Contact Service Welfare Agency (optional):
 - SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
 - Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/> (RAF)
 - Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/> (ARMY)
 - Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/> (NAVY)
- Contact DIO for housing applications or amendments to housing:
 - Call **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

What am I entitled to?

Housing

All Service personnel (including personnel who are single) who are active foster carers are entitled to Service Family Accommodation (SFA) or SFA above entitlement, where required, akin to personnel with natural or adopted children. Within the UK, approval as a foster carer and active (or forthcoming) fostering should be confirmed by means of a letter from the relevant LA stipulating the geographical area (as this impacts on whether foster carer status carries over after being posted to a new location) and duration of approved foster carer status.

See [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, 0309](#) for more information.

Applications for SFA are completed online using the [e1132 Form](#), which can only be accessed via MODNet. However, if you do not have access to MODNet a paper version of the MOD Form 1132: application to occupy service family accommodation (SFA) is available in [JSP 464: tri-service accommodation regulations \(TSARs\) Part 2, Chapter 4](#). Please note it is recommended to use the eForm as this will enable you to view the properties available and make an instant choice.

To discuss or make amendments to your SFA / Application for SFA contact Amey DIO on **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

Paid Leave

Service Personnel are only eligible for The Armed Forces' Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme (AFOALS) if they are fostering for adoption as detailed in [JSP 760 - Chapter 25 Armed Forces Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme \(AFOALS\)](#):

Dual approved prospective adopters who have a child placed with them under section 22C(9B(c)) of the Children Act 1989 with a view to them adopting that child (sometimes referred to as fostering for adoption).

Unpaid Leave

The aim of Parental Leave is to allow Service personnel unpaid leave to look after their child's welfare by, for example: spending more time with the child; settling a child into new childcare arrangements; looking at new schools; or accompanying a child during a stay in hospital.

Parental Leave allows 18 weeks' leave for each parent of each child and adopted child, up to the child's 18th birthday. The limit on how much parental leave each parent can take in a year is 4 weeks for each child.

To qualify for Parental Leave, Service parents must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- they must have served in the Armed Forces continuously for one year by the time they want to take the leave.
- they must have, or expect to have, legal parental responsibility for a child under 18. **Foster parents are not eligible for Parental Leave unless they have secured parental responsibility through the courts.**

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)

Flexible working arrangements allow an individual to have a degree of freedom when attempting to balance their work and personal life. While flexible working is not a right, all Service personnel are entitled to request FWA so they may better balance the demands of personal life and Service commitments. Any request to vary working patterns should be considered where these do not impinge on operational capability; it may not always be possible for non-standard hours to be worked due to the ways in which different arms and branches of the Services operate. Further information is available in [JSP 750](#) and applications are made on JPA.

See [JSP 760, Chapter 26](#) and [Flexible Working and You](#) for more information.

Where can I get further information?

Tri-Service Policies:

- [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, Entitlement to SFA](#)
- [JSP 760 - Chapter 25 Armed Forces Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme \(AFOALS\)](#)
- [DIN 2018DIN01-130 – Adoption and Fostering](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 26 Armed Forces Occupational Paternity Leave Scheme \(AFOPLS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 27 Armed Forces Occupational Shared Parental Leave and Pay Scheme](#)
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Service Specific Policies:

- [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Paternity Leave Birth & Adoption – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Army Welfare Policy – Fostering and Adoption](#)

Useful links:

- SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
- The Fostering Network - www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/
- Becoming a Foster Parent - <https://www.gov.uk/becoming-foster-parent>
- Local Council - <https://www.gov.uk/apply-foster-child-council>
- Fosterline - <https://www.fosterline.info/>
- Free childcare extended to foster carers - <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/news/free-childcare-to-be-extended-to-foster-carers-for-the-first-time/>
- Armed Forces Healthcare - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare/>
- MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>
- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>
- Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>
- Defence Discount Service - <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>
- Tax Free Childcare - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Armed Forces Wraparound Childcare pilot - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wraparound-childcare-for-the-armed-forces>
- Children Act 1989: fostering services - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-act-1989-fostering-services>
- Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

RAF

- RAF Serving Parents - <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/serving-parents/>
- RAF Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/>
- RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) - <https://www.rafbf.org/>
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- ARMY Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/>
- ABF Soldiers Charity - <https://soldierscharity.org/>

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- NAVY Information for Families - <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/navy-life/families/information-for-families>
- NAVY Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/>
- NAVY Benevolent Trust - <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/>

Donor Insemination

Donor insemination involves using donor sperm. This can be obtained by using an anonymous sperm donor (from a sperm bank or clinic), using a known donor through sperm donor matching websites or by donation from a friend.

What is Intrauterine Insemination (IUI)?

Intrauterine insemination (IUI) is sometimes called donor insemination, alternative insemination, or artificial insemination. IUI is a type of fertility treatment that involves directly inserting sperm into a woman's womb.

What is In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)

In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is a type of fertility treatment which involves removing eggs from the woman's womb which is then fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. The fertilised egg, called an embryo, is then returned to the woman's womb to grow and develop.

What is Private Sperm Donation?

Private Sperm donation is a process where a man provides a sperm donation either as friend or someone you know or have met through a sperm donor matching website. Donations are usually conducted at home using artificial insemination process.

What are my options?

Your options are largely dependent on whether you are covered by NHS funding, paying for treatment through a private clinic or seeking a private sperm donor.

NHS

The criteria for NHS funded treatment are set out in the NICE Pathways and Guidelines on <https://pathways.nice.org.uk/pathways/fertility>. If you meet this criteria you will be offered IVF; the amount of rounds you qualify for will depend on your age.

Private

Private Donor Insemination has many options. If you do not qualify for NHS funding, you can fund treatment through a private clinic. There are multiple treatments available when using a private clinic, some of which are discussed below. Another option is to use a private sperm donor, this can be through a known donor or through an organised donor.

- The Donor Conception Network - <https://www.dcnetwork.org/>
 - Started in 1993 by five families with children conceived with the help of sperm donation. Since those early days they have moved on to welcome many members for whom egg, double or embryo donation has been their means of making or adding to their family. The DCN have always been inclusive of all families using donor conception and as children grow up within the Network, they have begun to develop

resources and services for them as well as continuing to support parents. The DCN welcome families who are exploring whether or not openness with their children and others is right for them as well as those who have already made this decision.

- Pride Angel - <https://www.prideangel.com/>
 - Is one of the leading worldwide connection services for single, lesbian, gay and infertile couples. We are dedicated to matching sperm donors, egg donors and co-parents, along with providing information and advice on health screening, fertility law and your fertility options

What is the process?

IUI

- Blood Tests – Hormone levels / Chlamydia test (completed by your Medical Centre).
- HyCoSy Test – completed to check you have no blockages in the fallopian tubes.
- Initial meeting with your clinic, you will discuss whether you will have a medicated or natural cycle (dependant on previous test results and personal choice). You will also have an internal scan.
- Complete counselling session – this is mandatory to ensure you fully understand the journey you are about to undertake, how you will cope with bad news, negative results.
- Source donor sperm (either through a sperm bank or from a private donor). Organise the shipment of your donor sperm to the clinic you plan to use.
- Visit clinic on day 10 of your cycle to have an internal scan to check that you have a lead follicle, (You may have to visit the clinic over a few days for follicle checks).
- Use testing strips at home to check for Ovulation, as soon as this test is positive contact your clinic to book in for an insemination the following day.
- Insemination completed – wait 14 days to complete a pregnancy test to see if this cycle has been successful.

If you get a positive test you will have a scan at around 8 weeks as a reassurance check before being discharged from the clinics care and your notes transferred to your local midwife.

If you receive a negative test, you will continue with another cycle.

IVF

- Blood Tests – Hormone levels / Chlamydia test.
- HyCoSy Test – completed to check you have no blockages in the fallopian tubes.
- Initial meeting with your clinic, you will discuss the procedures and the different options you have. You will also have an internal scan.
- Complete counselling session – this is mandatory to ensure you understand the full emotional scale of fertility treatment.

- Source donor sperm (either through a sperm bank or from a known donor). Organise the shipment of your donor sperm to the clinic you plan to use.
- Complete medicated cycle – you will be given medication to suppress your natural cycle – this may be given as an injection or a nasal spray.
- You will then go through a strengthening cycle where medication is given to increase follicle stimulation.
- After 10 – 12 days you will be assessed to see if this has been successful. You will then go through a follicle retrieval procedure – this is where matured follicles are removed from the ovaries and placed with the donor sperm.
- After 16 – 20 hours you will find out whether any of your follicles have been successful.

Successful follicles will be implanted back into the uterus. After 14 days a pregnancy test can be taken to see whether this has resulted in a positive pregnancy.

If you get a positive test you will have a scan at around 8 weeks as a reassurance check before being discharged from the clinic's care and your notes transferred to your local midwife.

If you receive a negative test, you will continue with another cycle.

Sourcing Donor Sperm

There are several options when seeking a sperm donor.

Private Donation

This is sourcing donor sperm through either a friend or through an online sperm donation community / database where you can search through profiles of donors and make contact to discuss donation. It is important to do your research when choosing this method (please see below for helpful websites that explain this further).

Purchased Donor Sperm

This is where donor sperm is purchased through a sperm bank. Sperm banks are registered through the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). You can register with banks and access donor profiles to allow you to choose a sperm donor that has certain traits. Donor sperm is expensive and currently in the UK you are unable to buy multiple straws of donor sperm due to limited donor numbers.

Pregnancy

You are strongly advised to notify your unit Medical Officer (MO) as soon as you think you are pregnant, even if the unit medical centre will not be providing your antenatal care.

Medical Category

Once your pregnancy is confirmed with Unit medical staffs, your Joint Medical Employment Standard (JMES) will be re-graded to reflect this. The re-grading is primarily for health and safety reasons to protect both you and your unborn child and is particularly important if you are due to be deployed, because as soon as your pregnancy is confirmed you will be screened from operational duty, weapon firing, and subject to medical advice, certain other duties. Whilst the JMES will be changed, there are 2 options open to you at this point;

- a. One JMES is pregnancy-specific and will inform personnel staff that you are pregnant.
- b. Alternatively, there is an option for a non-pregnancy specific change of JMES which will still protect you prior to formally notifying the Service.

You will be asked to sign the form to confirm that you are aware of your options and agree to which JMES will be used.

See [JSP 760 Chapter 24, 25 and 27](#) for more information.

RAF personnel see [Maternity in the RAF – A Guide for Service Personnel 2020](#).

Who do I need to speak to?

- Inform your immediate Chain of Command (CoC) of your intention.
- Contact your unit Medical Centre
 - They will be able to give you the most up to date criteria for applying for NHS funding. If you meet this criteria the Medical Centre can refer you directly and complete the initial tests. Even if you are having private treatment you will need to inform the Medical Centre to ensure it is recorded in your medical notes.
- Contact a Private Fertility Clinic
 - If you are looking to self-fund your treatment you can approach a Private Fertility Clinic. Many clinics offer a meeting free of charge to discuss options, costs and processes.
- Contact your unit Welfare Support Office.
- Contact the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority
 - This website covers all fertility options and discusses the processes. Here you can also search Fertility Clinics, you will find detailed information on each company, including their success rates and which procedures they offer.
- Contact your regional Career Management / Unit HR
 - Once you are undergoing Fertility Treatment you can input a Stabilisation Request DIN 2021DIN01-020. To request staying at a location due to your on-going treatment or to defer an OOA to complete a treatment. It is worth noting that this is a request and once released to Career Management / Unit HR it is up to them to make a decision on whether this will be granted.
- Contact Service Welfare Agency (optional):
 - SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>
 - Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/> (RAF)
 - Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/> (ARMY)
 - Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/> (NAVY)
- Contact DIO for housing applications or amendments to housing:
 - Call **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

What am I entitled to?

Housing

Single pregnant service personnel are entitled to occupy Service Family Accommodation (SFA) 3 months prior to your expected date of childbirth, (at which point your PStatCat will change from PStatCat 5 to PStatCat 2 provided you meet the PStatCat 2 criteria). You will pay SFA charges and CILOCT (Council Tax decreased for single occupancy) at the appropriate rate for the property

occupied from the date of occupation and be responsible for all utilities (less water and sewerage) for the accommodation.

Married pregnant service personnel who already occupy an SFA do not need to apply unless there is a requirement for an extra bedroom.

Applications for SFA are completed online using the [e1132 Form](#), which can only be accessed via MODNet. However, if you do not have access to MODNet a paper version of the MOD Form 1132: application to occupy service family accommodation (SFA) is available in [JSP 464: tri-service accommodation regulations \(TSARs\) Part 2, Chapter 4](#). Please note it is recommended to use the eForm as this will enable you to view the properties available and make an instant choice.

To discuss or make amendments to your SFA / Application for SFA contact Amey DIO on **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

See [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1](#) for more information.

Time of for insemination appointments

As Assisted Concept Services (ACS) is a non-essential elective procedure personnel should plan to utilise their individual leave allowance accordingly. However, many of the processes can be complicated and involve additional leave requirements. Special paid leave may be considered for personnel accessing ACS and in need of additional time off for treatment or recuperation; in addition, due consideration should be given to the health and wellbeing of both individuals. The authority for granting special paid leave in these circumstances, rests with the Commanding Officer of the Unit on whose strength the SP concerned is borne and should be considered in conjunction with the individual's existing individual leave allowance.

Time off for Antenatal Appointments

As your pregnancy progresses you are entitled to "reasonable" paid time off for antenatal care. This includes time spent travelling to the appointment and waiting to be seen. Antenatal care can include scans and meetings with the midwife, as well as relaxation and parent craft classes. The appointment for care must relate to your pregnancy and have been made on the advice of a GP, nurse or midwife. No proof is required for your first appointment. For subsequent appointments your Line Manager can request proof of the appointment. Your Line Manager cannot unreasonably refuse paid time off for antenatal care or require you to "make-up" the time spent at appointments. The other parent can apply to take up to two days' paid leave to accompany you to antenatal appointments, unless this is not possible for Service reasons. The application is to be submitted on JPA Form [R001](#).

Maternity Leave & Pay

A pregnant service person may take up to 52 weeks maternity leave, regardless of length of service. Ordinary Maternity Leave (OML) lasts for 26 weeks. Additional Maternity Leave (AML) lasts for 26 weeks and must follow straight on from OML. There must be no gap between the two periods of leave. The first two weeks after the birth are compulsory maternity leave and it is a legal requirement that the individual must not work during this time. Every pregnant Serviceperson is entitled to maternity leave but not everyone is entitled to maternity pay. The table below explains what your pay entitlements are in relation to your length of service.

Length of Service Maternity Provision

Length of Service	Leave and Pay Entitlement
Less than 26 weeks continuous service by the Qualifying Week (Note 1) (whether or not you intend to return to service) and still serving in the Qualifying Week.	Up to 52 weeks of maternity leave. This is made up of 26 weeks OML plus 26 weeks AML. You will not be entitled to occupational pay under the AFOMS during OML; nor will you be entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP). However, depending on individual circumstances you may be entitled to other State benefits such as Maternity Allowance.
26 weeks or more but less than a year's continuous service by the Qualifying Week and still serving into the Qualifying Week (whether or not you intend to return to Service following maternity leave).	Up to 52 weeks of maternity leave. This is made up of 26 weeks OML plus 26 weeks AML. During OML you will not be entitled to occupational pay under the AFOMS but may be eligible for SMP, which is payable during the 26 weeks of OML and first 13 weeks of AML.
Service personnel with a year's continuous service by the Qualifying Week, who are still serving into the Qualifying Week and who state their intention to return to duty to complete their Return of Service (RoS) following maternity leave.	Up to 52 weeks of maternity leave. This is made up of 26 weeks OML plus 26 weeks AML. During the 26 weeks OML you will be entitled to occupational pay under AFMOS. During the first 13 weeks of AML you will receive the standard rate of SMP. The remaining 13 weeks will be unpaid.
One year's continuous service by the Qualifying Week, and still serving into the Qualifying Week and have chosen not to return to duty.	Up to 52 weeks of maternity leave. This is made up of 26 weeks OML plus 26 weeks AML. During the 26 weeks OML and the first 13 weeks of AML you will be entitled to receive the standard rate of SMP. The remaining 13 weeks of AML will be unpaid.

Notes:

1. Qualifying Week: 15th week before the week in which the baby is due.
2. SMP: Statutory Maternity Pay, £151.20 as at 1 Apr 20.

Unpaid Antenatal Leave

You may take up to three weeks' unpaid antenatal leave between the 14th and 11th week prior to the Expected week of childbirth (EWC). In order to qualify for the leave, you must elect to start your OML at the 11th week prior to the EWC.

Keeping In Touch (KIT) Plan and KIT

The KIT Plan is designed to be a framework for you to sit down with your Line Manager prior to Adoption Leave to discuss how you would like your LM to keep in touch with you, and how you agree to use your KIT days. This is also an ideal opportunity to discuss a graduated return to work and the possibility of flexible working.

Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA)

Flexible working arrangements allow an individual to have a degree of freedom when attempting to balance their work and personal life. While flexible working is not a right, all Service personnel are entitled to request FWA so they may better balance the demands of personal life and Service commitments. Any request to vary working patterns should be considered where these do not impinge on operational capability; it may not always be possible for non-standard hours to be worked due to the ways in which different arms and branches of the Services operate. Further information is available in [JSP 750](#) and applications are made on JPA.

See [JSP 760, Chapter 26](#) and [Flexible Working and You](#) for more information.

Paternity Leave

Paternity Leave is given to recognise the birth or the adoption of a child (where the Service person applying for Paternity Leave is not taking Adoption Leave) and enable the Service Person to care for the child or support the child's mother or adopter. Entitlement applies only to an adoption placement through a legally recognised adoption agency. It does not apply to Service personnel who arrange a private adoption; become a special guardian; or adopt a stepchild.

Paternity Leave is not available in cases where the Service Person has already taken any shared parental leave (ShPL) in respect of the child (Paternity leave must be taken first).

What is available?

2 weeks paid leave taken consecutively or as 2 separate whole week periods.

When can it be taken?

2 weeks leave to be taken within the first 56 days of the birth of a child (unless OPL has been deferred for operational reasons).

Who is eligible?

Married or in a civil partnership with the child's adopter (or co-adopter where there are 2 adopters).
Or

Service person living with the adopter (or co-adopter where there are 2 adopters) in an enduring family relationship (excl immediate family members).

Conditions

- You must have served continuously for a period of 26 weeks prior to the 15th week before the birth of the child.
- Application to take leave is to be submitted no later than the 15th week before the birth of the child.
- Leave cannot commence before the birth.
- Applies to each pregnancy (e.g. multiple birth does not lead to entitlement to additional leave).

See [JSP 760, Chapter 26](#) for more information.

RAF personnel see [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#) for more information.

Stability in the UK

The investigation and diagnosis of fertility issues and any subsequent treatment takes time and, as Armed Forces personnel are more mobile than the majority of the UK population, this can impact on continuity of care and increase the stress associated with the process. Therefore, where possible and practicable, Defence will provide up to three years of geographic stability, in the UK, for military couples accessing Assisted Conception Services (ACS).

MODCAP Funding

The Ministry of Defence Case Assessment Panel (MODCAP) considers SHC funding for entitled SP when NHS provision is not available or timely. For further information please see [JSP950 Lft 1 3 7 MODCAP v2](#).

Where can I get further information?

Tri-Service Policies:

- [DIN 2021DIN01-020 Assisted Conception Services and Fertility Preservation. \(Supersedes DIN 2016DIN01-052\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 26 Armed Forces Occupational Paternity Leave Scheme \(AFOPLS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 27 Armed Forces Occupational Shared Parental Leave and Pay Scheme](#)
- [defnet - Apply for, Approve and Record Shared Parental Leave](#)
- [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, Entitlement to SFA](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 24 Pregnancy and the Armed Forces Occupational Maternity Scheme \(AFOMS\)](#)

Service Specific Policies:

- [Maternity in the RAF – A Guide for Service Personnel 2020](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Paternity Leave Birth & Adoption – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Army General and Administrative Instructions \(AGAI\) Volume 3 Chapter 81 – Army Welfare Policy, Para 81.195 Assisted Conception Services](#)

Useful Links:

- Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority - <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/i-am/same-sex-couples/>
- NHS Nice Guidelines www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg156/chapter/Recommendations#access-criteria-for-ivf
- SSAFA <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/>
- Co Parents (Artificial Insemination UK Laws) www.coparents.co.uk (Artificial Insemination UK Laws)
- Donor Conception Network <https://www.dcnetwork.org/>
- Pride Angel - <https://www.prideangel.com/>
- Stonewall – Pregnancy Pause – a guide on how to get pregnant - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/resources/pregnant-pause-guide-lesbians-how-get-pregnant>
- Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>
- Armed Forces Healthcare - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare/>
- SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
- MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>
- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>

- Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>
- Defence Discount Service - <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>
- Tax Free Childcare - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Armed Forces Wraparound Childcare pilot - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wraparound-childcare-for-the-armed-forces>

RAF

- RAF Serving Parents - <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/serving-parents/>
- RAF Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/>
- RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) - <https://www.rafbf.org/>
- RAF Association (RAFA) - <https://www.rafa.org.uk/>

ARMY

- ARMY Parent's Network - <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/support-well/army-parents-network/>
- ARMY Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/>
- ABF Soldiers Charity - <https://soldierscharity.org/>

NAVY

- NAVY Information for Families - <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/navy-life/families/information-for-families>
- NAVY Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/>
- NAVY Benevolent Trust - <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/>

Lived Experience

Intrauterine Insemination (IUI) Donor Insemination:

My wife and I discussed starting a family at the end of 2017, I knew I wanted to carry a child and my wife was very supportive of this decision. We did a lot of online research but honestly, we were left even more confused than when we first started. Our first action was to visit our local Medical Centre, we felt well supported following this, but it did become apparent that we would all be learning the process as we went through it. The Medical Centre did some investigations into policy and we were then advised to use the following DIN for guidance 2016DIN01-052.

We were referred to the NHS; however, the NICE guidelines meant we did not qualify for any funded treatment and we would have to self-fund private care. We contacted a local clinic and began the journey with an open evening; this gave us a great opportunity to have a walk around the facility and discuss the treatments they offered. A few weeks later, I completed some tests and examinations and we had a mandatory counselling session as a couple.

We firstly put in a stability request through Manning to ensure we would not be posted or deployed; that was beneficial and gave us peace of mind whilst undergoing treatment cycles. We then had to find a sperm donor before our first cycle of IUI. We used a local bank and spent an evening looking at profiles before making our selection. When looking for a donor we asked our clinic to recommend legitimate sperm banks, they had a list that they had good contact with. This also meant that they had transport connections which made the process a lot easier. We decided on a profile we both liked and had the donor sperm shipped to our clinic and we got ready for our first attempt. This started with a scan at day 10 of my cycle to check to see if there was a lead follicle (egg), this follicle has been matured and is much bigger than the others; it is a good sign that you are almost ready to ovulate. You are then sent home and once a day you use a test strip in your urine to check to see if you have ovulated (this test recognises a surge in the ovulating hormone). Once we had a positive test strip, we phoned the clinic and organised for an insemination the next day.

I remember our first insemination day being scary; so many emotions were running through our heads, but within 20 minutes we were out and having lunch! There is then a 14 day wait before completing a pregnancy test. If negative, the cycle continues, if positive you will receive an 8-week pregnancy scan to ensure the pregnancy is viable. You are then handed over to your local NHS midwife for the remainder of your pregnancy.

My wife and I managed to have a viable pregnancy after our second round of IUI; unfortunately, our pregnancy ended at 12 weeks. We then continued our treatment and got pregnant again on our sixth round; sadly, we had some complications at 20 weeks. We then completed 6 'at home' attempts this was something we had to complete before we would be accepted for NHS funded IVF. This takes us to the present day. We have now taken a long break in our treatment as losses are tough both physically and emotionally. Now that we qualify for NHS funded IVF and this will be the next part of our journey.

So just a little bit about a difficulty that we had both being in the RAF and going through treatment. One trouble we did have was my wife having time off to attend appointments with me; there were occasions where I would have to drive myself to have a procedure. The policy does state that this is an elective procedure and time off for appointments is at the line manager's discretion; all I can say is be honest with your line management, let them know exactly what you need from them. My line management were fantastic, they understood that I would be absent from work at times, they also ensured I wasn't too stressed with my workload.

My biggest piece of advice is to ask, find someone who has been through a similar journey, ask them if they have any hints and tips; especially if you are self-funding as there are lots of ways to save money. We had some good people around us who we were able to talk to and we had some discussions with the Freedom Network for advice. Finally, try to have a bit of humour about it; yes, it's stressful, having medicated cycles can really take a toll on your body, but keep smiling, laugh at the little things and just keep going. Best of luck to anyone reading this.

Cpl Emily James – RAF LGBT+ Freedom Network Diverse Families Deputy Lead

Private Donor Insemination:

My journey to parenthood was mostly decided for me, as long as I can remember I have always wanted children... But due to having a medical condition I was given an ultimatum to have a baby or have a Hysterectomy.

This was a very hard decision for me as I was single and in the height of my civilian career, but the thought of not being able to have children wasn't an option. So, after much soul searching, I decided to go for it (none of us are ready for parenthood, right?). I was told I could use the NHS Sperm bank, but I would know very basic information about the father... not an option for me. I wanted to know and meet the potential father. At the same time, a couple of my friends had just had a baby using a donor through an online Sperm Donation Community, which in essence is a database of donors. There was a minimal subscription cost to the service (which if I remember was around £20), once you are signed up, you then create a profile and search for a donor that matches the criteria you want for a father (all donors are HIV tested and verified by the company). I spent quite a while searching through donor profiles, each time my son's father kept coming up as a match relating to the criteria I had searched for.

Having contacted the donor, we then spoke on the phone and agreed to meet up. I did some research into private donor insemination, you can opt to put a contract in place between you and the donor, which will state things like involvement in the child's life, financial or legal requirements, etc, (legally the donor has no financial commitments or legal entitlement to the child, as they would not be on the birth certificate, but if this is required then it would need to be agreed with the donor and added to a contract as legal binding). The other option is a verbal or gentleman's agreement,

discussing the involvement in the child's life. So... this is the path I took, within a couple of weeks I had met my son's father, discussed his involvement in my child's life and arranged a date (based on the multiple ovulation/fertility calendars I had on go!!) to accept the donation.

Now there is nothing romantic about Artificial Insemination when you are doing it on your own... it literally serves a purpose... to get pregnant... Using this type of sperm donation is much less expensive than using a clinic as the only cost involved is the travel and accommodation for you or the donor. Arranging a date when I was most fertile, I paid to stay in a hotel for two days, five minutes away from where my donor lived. The whole process was really easy, he would drive to the hotel, I would meet him outside and collect the sperm. Over the two days, I received four donations, one in the morning and one in the afternoon each day. The waiting part is the hardest, as soon as I could I did an early pregnancy test and it was positive! I remember being with my mum and saying to her OMG you're going to be a Grandma!!

My pregnancy was not so good! My body did not want this little bundle of joy inside it... I developed Pre-Eclampsia and Symphysis Pubis Dysfunction (pelvic separation disorder to you and me). However, if I got the option to do it again I totally would, one of the most rewarding things I have done. Making an appearance very late (over a week after my due date), a very healthy 7lbs 9 ounces bundle of gorgeousness arrived.

As my son got older, he met his father more frequently and they built amazing bond, they see each other every couple of weeks, but the other great thing about private donation is that he is part of an extended family, he has 10 half brothers and sisters that he spends time with and we all meet up throughout the year, its really great for the kids.

Most of my son's life I was a single parent, when he was old enough to understand I explained to him that daddy helped mummy have a baby and that mummy was gay and liked women. He really took this well, we talked about everything, and when I met my partner, he was excited to meet her and now sees her as his second mum. His friends often comment on how lucky he is to have a dad and two mums'.

Once people hear my 'lived experience' of how I had my son, they are amazed at the extended family he has and I never get tired of talking about it, it honestly has been for me the best experience and we all have such a great relationship.

Would I have done anything differently? No not at all, having my child through private donation really was the best option for me. If you would like to hear more about private donation or would like to start a conversation about starting a family, please contact me through the Freedom Network.

Cpl Shakespear – RAF LGBT+ Freedom Network Diverse Families Lead

Surrogacy

What is Surrogacy?

Surrogacy is the act of a woman carrying a pregnancy and giving birth for the child's parents, as they are unable to carry a child themselves. There are two types of surrogacy; host/gestational surrogacy and straight/traditional surrogacy.

Gestational/Host Surrogacy

Host surrogacy takes embryos made by intended parent(s) and transfers them via IVF into the surrogate. The surrogate is not genetically connected to the child conceived. The embryos are either fully made up of both intended parent(s) genetics or made up of one intended parent(s) genetics plus either donor eggs OR donor sperm. Double gamete donation is not currently allowed under UK law.

The protocol you follow will depend on a number of factors such as clinic preference, embryo availability, fresh or frozen transfer or natural or medicated cycle. These options will be explored during your first appointment with your chosen fertility clinic.

Straight/Traditional Surrogacy

Straight surrogacy uses the surrogate's own eggs to conceive. This can take place at home by artificial insemination using an insemination kit or via a clinic using IUI or IVF procedures with the surrogate acting as a known egg donor.

What are my options?

- Surrogacy UK - <https://surrogacyuk.org/>
 - Not-for-profit surrogacy organisation.
 - Surrogacy UK was formed in 2002, by a group of surrogates who believed that a successful journey for both surrogates and intended parent(s) was one based on trust, mutual respect and, above all, friendship.
 - Our ethos is "surrogacy through friendship". Through our organisation surrogates and intended parents can meet one another and form the friendships that can lead to dreams coming true. We are here to help and support you through all the stages of your surrogacy journey.
- Brilliant Beginnings - <https://www.brilliantbeginnings.co.uk/>
 - We are dedicated to ethical UK and international surrogacy based on strong relationships, honesty and transparency.
 - Our service is free to surrogates and our costs are charged to intended parents on a non-profit basis.
 - Brilliant Beginnings guides our teams through every step, providing exceptional care to keep surrogates and intended parents protected and supported, and to safeguard the welfare of the child at the heart of every surrogacy journey.
- Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) - <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/explore-all-treatments/surrogacy/>

- Surrogacy: legal rights of parents and surrogates - <https://www.gov.uk/legal-rights-when-using-surrogates-and-donors>

Who do I need to speak to?

- Inform your immediate Chain of Command (CoC) of your intention to be a Surrogate mother or your intention to adopt through Surrogacy agreement.
- Contact your unit HR Office.
- Contact your unit Welfare Support Office.
- Contact Service Welfare Agency (optional):
 - SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
 - Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/> (RAF)
 - Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/> (ARMY)
 - Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/> (NAVY)
- Contact DIO for housing applications or amendments to housing:
 - Call **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

What am I entitled to?

Housing

All Service personnel are entitled to occupy Service Family Accommodation (SFA) from the date of the adoption being approved in recognition of the need to establish a home before any child is placed with the adoptive parent(s).

It is usually a requirement that the adoptive child has their own bedroom in your home unless they are sharing with a sibling, and this should be taken into account when SFA is applied for and will also link to the PStatCat status.

See [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, 0310](#) for more information.

Applications for SFA are completed online using the [e1132 Form](#), which can only be accessed via MODNet. However, if you do not have access to MODNet a paper version of the MOD Form 1132: application to occupy service family accommodation (SFA) is available in [JSP 464: tri-service accommodation regulations \(TSARs\) Part 2, Chapter 4](#). Please note it is recommended to use the eForm as this will enable you to view the properties available and make an instant choice.

To discuss or make amendments to your SFA / Application for SFA contact Amey DIO on **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area

Surrogacy leave and pay

A surrogate mother (the woman who has given birth to the child) has the same rights as any other pregnant woman to maternity leave and pay. A Servicewoman who enters into an arrangement to have a surrogate pregnancy is entitled to take up to 52 weeks of maternity leave and, subject to meeting the qualifying criteria, be eligible for Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) and occupational pay.

See [JSP 760 Chapter 24, 25 and 27](#) for more information.

RAF personnel see [Maternity in the RAF – A Guide for Service Personnel 2020](#).

The intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement may be eligible for adoption leave and pay if they intend to apply for (or have already obtained) a Parental Order making them the legal parents

of the child. Only couples can apply for a Parental Order and only one of the couple will be able to take adoption leave in relation to the child, even if both meet the eligibility requirements. The parent who does not take adoption leave may be eligible for paternity leave and pay (see [JSP 760 chapters 25 and 26](#)).

See Adoption Leave & Pay (link to Adoption Leave & Pay), [JSP 760, Chapter 25, 26 and 27](#) for more information.

Time off for Antenatal Appointments for Parental Order Parents (Surrogacy)

Service Personnel who are Parental Order parents (that is the intended parents in a surrogacy arrangement who are eligible for, and intend to apply for a Parental Order) can apply (using JPA Form [R001](#)) to take time off to accompany the surrogate mother in attending up to two of her antenatal appointments. There is no entitlement to travel and subsistence when taking this type of leave. It is expected that Volunteer Reserves, where possible, will arrange appointments in their own time outside when they are expected to attend for duty.

See [JSP 760 Chapter 24 and 25](#) for more information.

Where can I get further information?

Tri-Service Policies:

- [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, Entitlement to SFA](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 24 Pregnancy and the Armed Forces Occupational Maternity Scheme \(AFOMS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 25 Armed Forces Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme \(AFOALS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 26 Armed Forces Occupational Paternity Leave Scheme \(AFOPLS\)](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 27 Armed Forces Occupational Shared Parental Leave and Pay Scheme](#)
- [defnet - Apply for, Approve and Record Shared Parental Leave](#)

Service Specific Policies:

- [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#)
- [Shared Parental Leave – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Paternity Leave Birth & Adoption – A guide for RAF Personnel](#)
- [Army Welfare Policy – Fostering and Adoption](#)

Useful links:

- SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
- Surrogacy UK - <https://surrogacyuk.org/>
- Brilliant Beginnings - <https://www.brilliantbeginnings.co.uk/>
- Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) - <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/explore-all-treatments/surrogacy/>
- Surrogacy: legal rights of parents and surrogates - <https://www.gov.uk/legal-rights-when-using-surrogates-and-donors>
- Armed Forces Healthcare - <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/military-healthcare/>
- MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>
- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>
- Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>

- Defence Discount Service - <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>
- Tax Free Childcare - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Armed Forces Wraparound Childcare pilot - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wraparound-childcare-for-the-armed-forces>
- Surrogacy: legal rights of parents and surrogates - <https://www.gov.uk/legal-rights-when-using-surrogates-and-donors>
- Adoption and Children Act 2002 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/38/contents>
- Stonewall - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/>

RAF

- RAF Serving Parents - <https://www.raf.mod.uk/serving-families/serving-parents/>
- RAF Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/>
- RAF Benevolent Fund (RAFBF) - <https://www.rafbf.org/>
- RAF Association (RAFA) - <https://www.rafa.org.uk/>

ARMY

- ARMY Parent's Network - <https://www.army.mod.uk/people/support-well/army-parents-network/>
- ARMY Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/>
- ABF Soldiers Charity - <https://soldierscharity.org/>

NAVY

- NAVY Information for Families - <https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/careers/navy-life/families/information-for-families>
- NAVY Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/>
- NAVY Benevolent Trust - <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/>

Co-parenting

What is Co-parenting?

Co-parenting is when two (or more) people take on the role of parenting a child, but those people are not in a marriage or similar relationship.

This can also be where two people agree to conceive and raise a child together when they are not in a relationship. Each person may have their own partner, so it's possible that a child has more than two parents or carers. In the UK a child can only have two legal parents, even if more adults are involved in their upbringing. See [Co-parenting](#) on the Stonewall website for more information on this type of Co-parenting.

What are my options?

- GOV.UK - Childcare and Parenting - <https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting>
- GOV.UK Parental rights and responsibilities - <https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities>
- Stonewall - Co-parenting - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/parenting-rights/%E2%80%8Bco-parenting-0>
- Pride Angel - Co-parents - <https://www.prideangel.com/Get-Started/Co-parenting.aspx>
- Coparents - Same Sex Parenting - Co-parenting - <https://www.coparents.co.uk/lesbian-gay-parenting.php>

Who do I need to speak to?

- Inform your immediate Chain of Command (CoC)
- Contact your unit HR Office.
- Contact your unit Welfare Support Office.
- Contact Service Welfare Agency (optional):
 - SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
 - Families Federation - <https://raf-ff.org.uk/> (RAF)
 - Families Federation - <https://aff.org.uk/> (ARMY)
 - Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/> (NAVY)
- Contact DIO for housing applications or amendments to housing:
 - Call **0800 707 6000**, select **option 3** then choose your area.

What am I entitled to?

Housing

Liaise with your unit Welfare Support Office or SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk> who will be able give you more information on the requirements for obtaining an SFA for you and your child(ren).

Co-parenting leave and pay

If you have entered into a Surrogacy agreement whereby you will be the intended parent in a surrogacy arrangement you may be eligible for adoption leave and pay if you intend to apply for (or have already obtained) a Parental Order making them the legal parents of the child. Liaise with your unit HR Office who will be able to provide more information on single parent adoption leave.

See [JSP 760, Chapter 25, 26 and 27](#) for more information.

Where can I get further information?

Tri-Service Policies:

- [JSP 464, Vol 1, Pt 1, Chapter 3, Entitlement to SFA](#)
- [JSP 760 – Chapter 25 Armed Forces Occupational Adoption Leave Scheme \(AFOALS\)](#)

Service Specific Policies:

- [Adoption in the RAF – A guide for Service Personnel](#)

Useful links:

- SSAFA - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk>
- GOV.UK - Childcare and Parenting - <https://www.gov.uk/browse/childcare-parenting>
- GOV.UK Parental rights and responsibilities - <https://www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities>
- Stonewall - Co-parenting - <https://www.stonewall.org.uk/help-advice/parenting-rights/%E2%80%8Bco-parenting-0>
- Pride Angel - Co-parents - <https://www.prideangel.com/Get-Started/Co-parenting.aspx>
- Coparents - Same Sex Parenting - Co-parenting - <https://www.coparents.co.uk/lesbian-gay-parenting.php>
- MOD Joint Services Housing Advice Office - <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/joint-service-housing-advice-office-jshao>
- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>
- Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) - <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>
- Defence Discount Service - <https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>
- Tax Free Childcare - <https://www.childcarechoices.gov.uk/>
- Armed Forces Wraparound Childcare pilot - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/free-wraparound-childcare-for-the-armed-forces>
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- NAVY Families Federation - <https://nff.org.uk/>
- NAVY Benevolent Trust - <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/>

Lived Experience

Co-Parenting:

After my relationship broke down with my children's mother, I wanted to ensure that the job of parenting was shared as proactively and as practically as possible. But when a relationship ends there is usually some unavoidable tension and conflict that arises, and sometimes this conflict is completely unrelated to any reason surrounding the separation. Where do I see the kids? When do I have contact? Will I have 'my own time' with the kids? How do I calculate and agree on Child Maintenance payments? How can I accommodate the children when they are with me?

For the first six months after the separation I was sleeping on the floor of my child's bedroom on weekends to ensure I had sufficient contact on my stand-down days, while in the week I was in Single Living Accommodation alone with daily phone calls to the children. I found this extremely distressing because I had been a constant in their lives since they were born. I helped with their dinner, bedtime, bath time and homework, and all of a sudden, I was away from the responsibility that my ex was now solely responsible for in the week. This had a massive impact on my mental health and caused depression and anxiety to raise its head. The added pressure of owning and paying a mortgage on a house I wasn't residing in also caused financial stress, especially as I was travelling back to the house on weekends but was no longer entitled to 'Home to Duty' because I was outside the 90 days cooling off period, nor was I entitled to 'Get You Home' allowance for the weekends because my residence was my permanent unit, and not the former matrimonial home.

The stress was too much and I sought help from the medical centre who put me on a course of antidepressants and referred me to DCMH who helped tremendously. The worries of how to manage time with the children and how to form child arrangements with my ex-wife also caused a great deal of stress, my solicitor suggested mediation. This seemed like a helpful route to sort out the finances and co-parenting but was at great expense privately. We had a co-parenting plan drawn up which helped us form a solid foundation of how to share the contact with the children. This worked up until I found privately rented new accommodation at great expense. The experience with the mediator was poor and expensive, so I sought advice from SSAFA who signposted me to Relate. Relate offered 3 sessions of mediation at a rate subsidised by the RAFBF and was able to be done remotely via Zoom. The co-parenting plan is still in the stages of consultation, which is stressful as both my ex and I want what's best for the children, but adjustments are currently being made to tailor the agreement based around an ever-changing situation over 3-4 years. It also requires future proofing in case of any future postings and moves.

With regards to accommodating the children, we began with them staying every weekend with me once I had a rented house. I would obviously have them every day if I could, but I felt my duties meant that it was impossible and there was no obvious support for single parents serving, therefore my ex-wife took on the responsibility of primary carer. The weekends took their toll on the children sadly because of the 2-hour round trip between Mum and Dads – they missed their friends too. So, in light of their needs, we made it every other weekend and half the holidays which has worked as a better balance ever since. I had tried to apply for Surplus SFA with my partner on unit to be nearer my place of duty, to take advantage of better rent rates, and to have the RAF support network around the children and I, but at the time in 2018, co-habiting in Surplus SFA was banned so we remained in private accommodation. The rules changed to allow co-habiting for non-married couples in April 2019 and as soon as we could we applied and were accepted. This lifted a massive financial burden and has given the children a familiar RAF setting to call home on weekends.

Currently, the co-parenting plan is appropriate for the child contact. We owe it to the children to keep each other informed. We both have Parental Responsibility and therefore we both have a right to know about medical, school and travel abroad. But personal responsibility pays a lot and each parent has a duty to stay informed and to maintain proactive contact with schools. Thankfully, school

information is all online via various systems which is helpful and makes it easier to stay informed even if I'm posted afar.

Being in the RAF hasn't caused me any practical problems yet, but I envisage that a new posting has the potential to disrupt the co-parenting plan. Detachments can also cause problems both emotionally and practically, but my duties require this flexibility and is often unavoidable – harsh reality is often better than false hope. Thankfully, technology means that indirect contact is often always possible wherever in the world I am.

Today, the children are at an age where their own views can be heard and listened to. The children have their own phone and can contact either parent whenever. They still stay every other weekend and half the holidays; this may change though with a posting imminent. I feel that things definitely get easier as the children get older because they adapt really well to new situations. They have a healthy relationship with my husband as well as my ex's new partner which helps massively.

In the beginning the separation seemed scary and intimidating to them, but now it is just a fact that the routine is the way it is. I have intermittent contact with my ex-wife, but for the purposes of maintaining a useful degree of dialogue it is easier to keep these conversations 'business-like' and 'to the point'. This would be my biggest piece of advice when co-parenting. While it may seem appropriate to be friendly and chatty with an ex, on occasion emotions can lead the conversation – even with the most emotionally intelligent people. Therefore, keeping the other party informed, being business-like and polite, and being clear with information is a good way to avoid conflict. After all, ego means nothing when the children only want love and care from their parents.

Sgt Owain Bridge – RAF LGBT+ Freedom Network Sexual Orientation Lead

Becoming a Single Parent:

I had my children in a heterosexual relationship many years ago and after our separation and divorce, I became a weekend dad and saw my children as much as I could.

When my son was 14, his mother was struggling to cope, and we decided he would come and live with me. Below is an extract I wrote for an article in "Army and You" published in 2020.

When I became a single parent to my son, he was 'semi-domesticated' and was a great pasta chef! We coped as best as we could – I was lucky that we had family nearby to provide support when my son needed it – or when the pasta ran out!

We spent three years in Cyprus, and I found that harder than my son did. Trying to work and run a house in the heat was a challenge. Going shopping with his friends and taking sneaky trips to Napa as a 15-year-old was a lot easier for him! My daughters missed me, and I couldn't visit them as often. The rise in mobile communications and online banking has helped – and I can now become the 'bank of dad' and a tech expert all with a simple text or FaceTime!

I once heard the phrase 'it takes a village to raise a child'. I didn't realise how true that was until I started a high-intensity role within my unit. If my son needed picking up, the offers of help from other families were a great relief.

Becoming a parent is a challenge in itself; becoming a single parent has its differences. There isn't always the "backup" parent or sometimes the support around you, but the challenges build you into a better family unit. Children are robust and will cope well, we as parents may find it harder. Focusing on a career in the Army and raising a child can be draining, however the experiences will make you all more flexible as you grow. The Army is a family, and there are always other families and friends who will be willing to help you when you need it.

Make your chain of command aware of your circumstances and they will help you with proportioning appropriate duties and taskings. Understand your responsibilities and requirements for childcare and you will be able to accept courses and tours in good time. Being a single parent is highly achievable!

If you want more information on being a single parent or even an ear to use, contact myself or the Army LGBT+ Network and the Diverse Families Lead.

Sgt Smith-Weston – Army LGBT+ Network Diverse Families Lead