

The Ministry of Defence has announced a further package of reforms intended to give Service families a greater say in the management of their homes.

The changes form part of the Government's wider Defence Housing Strategy and include a new "Red Tape Challenge", new national and regional committees representing residents, a code of conduct for those providing housing services, and a pilot scheme giving families a greater role in signing off repairs.

Challenging the rules

Under the Red Tape Challenge, Service families are being invited to identify housing rules which they believe are outdated or unnecessary.

The MOD says this builds on changes already made, including relaxing restrictions on keeping pets and giving families greater freedom to decorate their Service Family Accommodation.

Families can submit suggestions directly through the MOD's Red Tape Challenge.

A say when repairs are completed

Potentially one of the more important changes concerns repairs and maintenance.

The MOD is to pilot arrangements giving families a greater role in signing off work carried out in their homes. The intention is to ensure that problems have actually been resolved and that work has been completed to the expected standard before a repair is recorded as closed.

That may sound like a relatively modest administrative change, but complaints about the handling of repairs – including whether reported problems have genuinely been resolved – have been a recurring feature of dissatisfaction with Service accommodation.

Giving the resident a meaningful voice before a job is signed off therefore seems a sensible development. Much will depend on how the pilot works in practice and what happens where the resident and contractor disagree.

National and regional representation

A new Customer Committee is also intended to give families a direct voice in housing decisions at national level.

Alongside it, Regional Experience Committees will bring together residents to identify local problems and feed their experience into the Defence housing system.

A new Code of Conduct is meanwhile intended to provide families with a more consistent and respectful service from everyone representing Defence housing, including contractors and their supply chains.

Defence Families Champion Tricia Jakeman said that giving families a stronger voice was essential to delivering the quality of housing and services they deserve.

Part of a much bigger housing programme

These measures sit within a much larger programme of change.

The Defence Housing Strategy, announced last year, is backed by £9.2 billion of planned investment over the next decade. A new Defence Housing Service is due to be formally established in April 2027.

The latest announcement therefore needs to be seen alongside the much bigger challenge of improving the physical condition of the housing estate itself.

Recent evidence to the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee included a striking acknowledgement from senior MOD officials of decades of underinvestment in Service housing. Better mechanisms for listening to families will be welcome, but ultimately they will have to be accompanied by homes, repairs and housing services which meet the standards Service personnel and their families are entitled to expect.

For BAFF, the interesting question will be whether these new arrangements give residents genuine influence rather than simply providing additional channels through which to report familiar problems.

The repair sign-off pilot in particular is worth watching. If families can prevent defective or incomplete work simply being recorded as finished, that would represent a practical improvement rather than just another consultation exercise.

Further information: [MOD – Housing reforms give military families greater say over their homes](#) – includes a link to the Red Tape Challenge.