

A report in The Sunday Times highlights continuing concerns about the condition of some Service Family Accommodation (SFA), linking the experiences of military families to the Government's decision to defer part of its planned investment in defence housing.

The report by Dominic Hauschild, Defence Correspondent, and Lottie Hayton, centres its investigation on the experience of Army wife Leah Emmett, whose young daughter became seriously ill after the family moved into accommodation affected by damp and black mould.

Emmett believes the condition of the property contributed to her daughter's respiratory illness and told the newspaper that simply painting over the affected walls failed to solve the problem.

Her family's experience is presented alongside those of other military families reporting problems including mould, damp, heating failures and delays in repairs.

The timing of the article is significant. As BAFF noted following publication of the Defence Investment Plan, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to invest £9 billion in renewing defence housing. However, ministers have since confirmed that part of that programme will be deferred until at least the next Parliament in order to prioritise current military capability.

According to The Sunday Times, defence sources suggest this could delay refurbishment work on thousands of homes.

Defence Minister Luke Pollard defended the decision, saying that "a small amount of the money in the defence housing budget has been moved into the next parliament" in order to prioritise military readiness.

The wider significance goes well beyond individual maintenance complaints.

Mark Atkinson, Director General of the Royal British Legion, told the newspaper that good quality accommodation is not a "nice to have" but is essential to recruitment, retention, morale and the future effectiveness of the Armed Forces.

That echoes many of the conclusions reached by Lord Kerslake's independent review of military accommodation, published in 2024. The review found widespread problems across both family accommodation and single living accommodation, criticised the long-standing "fix on fail" approach to maintenance, and warned that poor housing was damaging morale, operational effectiveness and retention.

Those findings led directly to the Government's Defence Housing Strategy, promising a programme of repairs, refurbishment and the creation of a new Defence Housing Service.

The Ministry of Defence told The Sunday Times that more than 1,200 homes have already been upgraded during the past year, with another 2,000 planned this year. It also said that measured satisfaction with service housing has increased and that thousands of homes will still be upgraded during this Parliament.

Sunday Times highlights continuing concerns over Service housing

Housing has long been one of those issues which is easy to dismiss as a welfare matter. In reality, it affects operational capability as much as quality of life. Service personnel can often tolerate a great deal themselves, but partners and children should not be expected to live in accommodation that is unhealthy or poorly maintained.

At the same time, governments inevitably face difficult choices when balancing immediate defence capability against long-term investment. The challenge will be to ensure that short-term savings do not simply store up bigger problems for recruitment, retention and morale in the years ahead.

*Source: "Army housing mould put my baby in hospital. No 10 can't forget us",
www.thetimes.com, published online 11 July 2026.*