



Ministry
of Defence

UK Armed Forces Families Strategy

2022-32





UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-32

Presented to Parliament
by the Secretary of State for Defence
by Command of Her Majesty

January 2022



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Contents

Foreword by Leo Docherty MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans	2
Introduction by Lieutenant General James Swift, Chief of Defence People	3
A Strategy for the UK	4
Why do we need a UK Armed Forces Families Strategy?	5
Diverse Family Situations	6
What do we know about Armed Forces Families?	6
Changing Context	8
Strategic Framework	12
Delivering the Defence Purpose	12
Vision and Principles	13
Governance and Accountability	16
Measuring Success	17
Collaborating across Boundaries	17
Communicating Progress	17
Working in Partnership	17
Stakeholder Landscape	18
Reviewing the Strategy	18
Annex A: Stakeholder Landscape	19
Annex B: Workstream Descriptions	20

Foreword by Leo Docherty MP, Minister for Defence People and Veterans



Armed forces families are at the heart of the Defence community and play a key role in the protection of the United Kingdom at home and abroad. As a former

member of the Armed Forces, I have seen at first-hand the importance of families and the tremendous support they give to serving personnel. The publication of this ambitious new strategy is acknowledgement of this and a public pledge to make the recognition and care of our families a national priority.

The strategy seeks to offer choice and flexibility to allow personnel to serve their nation and raise a family at the same time. It will bring practical benefits for armed forces families. In developing the strategy, we have listened to families and been guided by the evidence of their lived experience to focus our attention on the key areas where families want additional support. These are reflected in the core workstreams and include healthcare, housing, education, and the ability for a partner to manage their career alongside the serviceperson. Balancing home life with the demand of service is critical to the success of the strategy.

Military life has much to offer for families, but we need to prepare them to cope with mobility, deployment and separation and equip them with the tools to nurture their relationships and thrive as members of the armed forces community and wider society.

I am thankful that we have the full support of our partners across government, in the devolved administrations and the charitable sector, as demonstrated by the collaborative approach in producing the strategy and responding to the Living in Our Shoes report.

We are all proud of our families and thankful for everything they do, but words are easy; the real test is in delivering on our promises. Over the lifespan of the strategy, my colleagues and I will celebrate and promote armed forces families. We will continue to listen to what families are telling us and look forward to being held to account for how we go about supporting them. The strategy and the action plan that underpins it, provide a platform to deliver real and lasting change, and we must make the most of it.

Leo Docherty MP

Minister for Defence People and Veterans

Introduction by Lieutenant General James Swift, Chief of Defence People



In an era of increasing international competition, our armed forces continue to play a central role in protecting the interests of the United Kingdom at home and abroad.

It is more vital than ever, therefore, that we recruit and retain the best people across the three services. I know from personal experience how crucial service families are in this equation. Life in the Armed Forces can be highly rewarding, but it can also make high demands of serving personnel, not least in terms of time commitment and physical risk.

These demands can place great strains on service families, but at the same time the support of a strong family unit can be the counterweight that every service person needs if they are to achieve balance in their professional and personal lives. It is critical therefore that we, in conjunction with our partners in the charitable sector and across government, develop increasingly family friendly policies. We need to ensure that our Armed Forces is an environment that is welcoming and attractive for families.

We want to attract new and diverse entrants to the three services and will underpin this with the wider support we offer to their loved ones. We want our people to stay with us because they have a family, rather than leave because they want to start one.

I am delighted therefore to be introducing this new strategy for UK armed forces families. I am confident that it sets the right tone and level of ambition for this important agenda. I am confident, too, that it establishes the right framework for driving forward collective effort as we seek to raise the bar for armed forces families and create the right environment for service personnel to flourish at work and at home.

Lieutenant General James Swift
Chief of Defence People

A Strategy for the UK



“The Scottish Government is firmly committed to supporting our armed forces community. Service families are a true asset and it is right that we as a nation – government,

charities, business and the wider public – support and empower them.

We fully support the development of the families strategy and its aims to improve outcomes for service families to enable them to live satisfied, safe and fulfilling lives.”

Keith Brown MSP

Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Veterans,
Scottish Government



“As a government we recognise the integral role families play in supporting the operational efficiency of our serving personnel. Knowing that families are properly

supported provides reassurance during times of deployment.

The Welsh Government will continue to work in collaboration with our key partners to ensure families have access to the support they require.”

Hannah Blythyn MS

Deputy Minister for Social Partnership,
Welsh Government



“This Government recognises the vital role that family members play in supporting the armed forces community. The UK Government will continue to work with the Northern Ireland

Executive to ensure that this important strategy is implemented in Northern Ireland and that the families of the armed forces are provided with the support they need.”

Conor Burns MP

Minister of State Northern Ireland Office

Why do we need a UK Armed Forces Families Strategy?

Our Armed Forces are renowned across the world; they are part of our national identity and culture. Today, the UK Armed Forces are engaged across the globe in conventional operations, countering non-state threats, on peace-keeping missions, working with allies, building partner capacity, providing aid and responding to domestic crises. In delivering these commitments they are required to be at operational readiness 24 hours a day, seven days a week. None of this can be done without the unwavering support of their families, who are the backbone of the armed forces community.

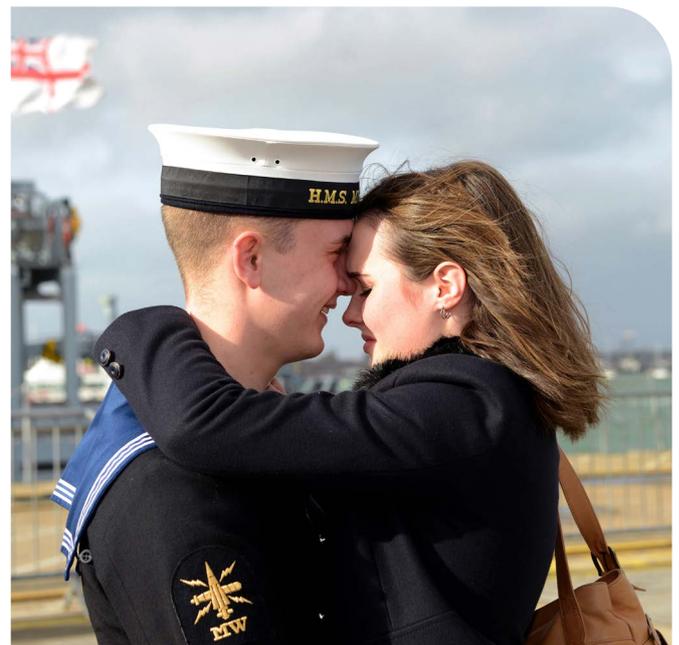
This UK Armed Forces Families Strategy 2022-32 has a dual focus: to inspire partnership working across the UK, honouring the enduring pledge of the Armed Forces Covenant; and to provide direction to policy makers, the single Services and public service providers to empower armed forces families to live rich and fulfilling lives alongside their loved ones. As such, the strategy provides both the context and the framework for the delivery of a range of practical interventions designed to strengthen and improve policies and service provision across the armed forces families agenda, leading to improved retention and enhanced operational effectiveness. Measuring success will be critical and will be achieved through the monitoring of progress under the supporting action plan.

The Armed Forces Covenant Pledge

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated fairly and should suffer no disadvantage as a result of that service.

The three principles of the Armed Forces Covenant are:

1. Acknowledging the unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the UK Armed Forces;
2. Working together to mitigate disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services;
3. Understanding that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.



Diverse Family Situations

The strategy recognises the diverse range of family relationships and situations that exist in the armed forces community, across both the regular and reserve forces. These include those in couple relationships with and without children (including same-sex couples), marriage, civil partnerships, long-term relationships, and single-parent families. Aside from couples, relationships with other family members are also a consideration, for example those with parents or siblings of service personnel; with kinship carers; and with extended families members who have a role in raising children or caring for older family members, or those with a disability. The strategy also notes the importance of understanding living arrangements, for example families living apart; step families, including relationships between parent and child with a non-resident parent. It is also clear that the career, training and educational situations of family members are an important factor in determining family dynamics and pressures, especially the circumstances of dual-working and dual-serving couples and those from different services.

The strategy emphasises that the needs and experiences of the families of all serving personnel should be considered in the development and application of policies which affect them. It promotes collaboration in the development of UK-wide policy which is culturally inclusive and easily accessible to all armed forces families, including non-UK¹ families. When developing new policy and thinking about the impact to families, the government's Family Test² is a useful tool to guide policy makers.

What do we know about Armed Forces Families?

The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey³ (AFCAS) provides data on service personnel⁴ reporting on their family situation, including demographic information on their partners and children.

The Families Continuous Attitude Survey⁵ (FamCAS) provides valuable attitudinal data from the perspective of those married to or in a civil partnership with service personnel.⁶ We recognise there is currently no data from partners in long-term relationships. However, collecting this information in the future is a high priority for the MOD.

The Reserves Continuous Attitude Survey⁷ (ResCAS) provides data on Volunteer Reserves⁸ reporting on the support provided for their families, including some demographic information.

- 1 Service personnel without UK citizenship, or those who have naturalised and have dual citizenship with their country of birth.
- 2 [The Family Test \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)
- 3 [AFCAS 2021](#) was distributed to a sample of 27,862, with a response rate of 37% (10,318).
- 4 AFCAS is only open to Regular, trained Service personnel including Gurkhas.
- 5 [FamCAS 2021](#) was distributed to a sample of 24,245, with a response rate of 25% (5,987).
- 6 FamCAS is only open to those that are married or in a civil partnership with Regular, trained Service personnel including Gurkhas.
- 7 [ResCAS 2020](#) was distributed to a sample of 16,572, with a response rate of 33% (5,432).
- 8 Excludes Non-regular permanent staff (NRPS).

Marital status AFCAS⁹

Long-Term Relationships	24%
Married or Civil Partnership	49%
Separated	3%

Spouse/Partner's Employment AFCAS

Dual serving	13%
Full-Time Employment	49%
Part-Time Employment	19%
Unemployed	16%
Full-Time/Part-Time Education	4%

Service personnel who financially support children AFCAS

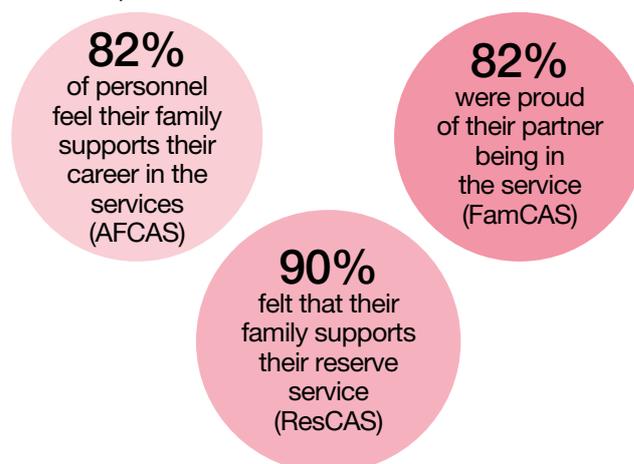
The following AFCAS estimate is based on responses to the questions: If you have children you financially support, how many children do you have in each age group?¹⁰

AFCAS estimates there are around 121,600 children^{11,12} from armed forces families (aged 0-17) in total

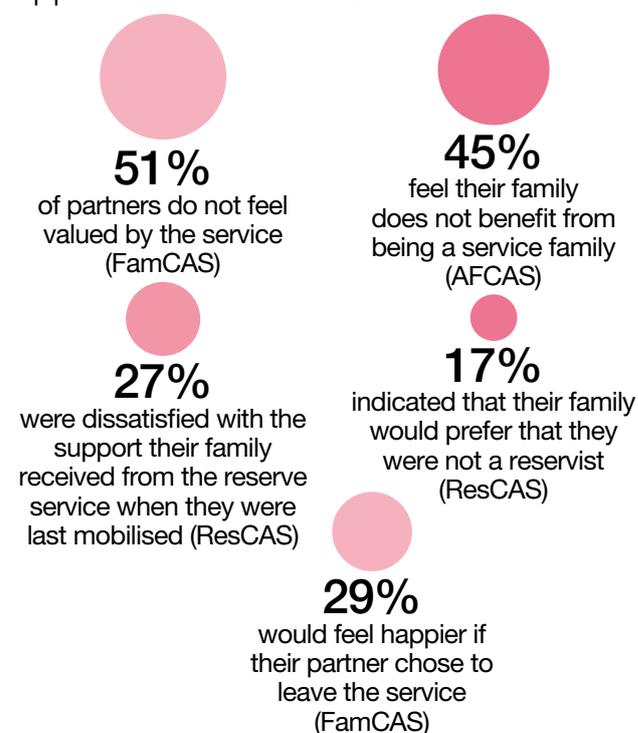
Service personnel with dependent children	51%
Service personnel with no children ¹³	49%
Single-parent families ¹⁴	3%
Service personnel with...	
1 or more child under 5	24%
1 or more child between 5 and 17	35%
1 or more child over 18	7%

Armed Forces Attitudes¹⁵

Evidence shows the high level of support families provide the Armed Forces...



However, the MOD recognises that more support is needed for families...



9 ResCAS figures are similar with 46% being married/in a civil partnership and a further 23% in a long-term/established relationship.

10 The estimate has been calculated using Full-time Trained Strength figures as at July 2021, published in the UK Armed Forces Service Personnel Statistics report.

11 Estimates are likely to be an over-estimation due to the possible inclusion of duplicate families within the AFCAS results. AFCAS is only open to regular, trained Service personnel and so the estimates will not take account of numbers of children amongst other assignment types and untrained personnel. The survey cannot pick up missing responses i.e. those that did not indicate whether or not they have children (and subsequently how many) have not been included.

12 Estimate; 117,900 to 124,500 children from armed forces families (aged 0-17) in total.

13 In ResCAS, 57% of volunteer reserves do not have any financially dependent children.

14 This figure is based on those who consider themselves a lone/single parent with children they financially support that either live with them or they have shared access of.

15 Sources: AFCAS 2021, ResCas 2020 and FamCAS 2021.

Geographical Location

The armed forces community is an international one, with an extensive overseas footprint. Joint Personnel Administration system (JPA)¹⁶ data indicates that there are approximately 3,800 registered armed forces families with around 4,800 registered children based outside of the UK.

In England, data from the Department for Education (DfE) shows that in 2021 there were **79,986¹⁷ pupils eligible for the Service Pupil Premium in 2021-22 financial year.** Of these children roughly:

58% were in primary school

42% were in secondary school

Data from 2019¹⁸ indicates that children from armed forces families were in just over half, 52%, of state schools in England but, around half of schools with children from armed forces families had only one or two registered.



Changing Context

The Family Unit

Wider society's understanding of the family unit is evolving. The 'Living in our Shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families' report articulates this as:

“the changing nature of couple relationships; increases in family separation, divorce and step-family formation; changing gender roles; and changing technologies”¹⁹

The increasing trend for cohabitation (25.8% rise between 2008 and 2018), family separation (6.4% decrease in families living together between 2011 and 2021)²⁰ and single-parent family formation (in 2019 14.9% of families were single-parent families, representing an increase of 3.3% since 2008) in wider society has implications for the development of policy in support of armed forces families. Recognising this is vital, if the MOD and its partners are to introduce progressive policies that support different family situations and give service personnel a greater say in where and with whom they live.

16 The quality of the data used to compile these numbers has not been assessed and therefore the figures have been rounded to the nearest 100.

17 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1019256/2021-22_PP_NationalLAPC_Tables_-Sept_21_-v1_-_suppressed.xlsx

18 <https://www.scipalliance.org/assets/files/SCP-Alliance-data-Briefing-FINAL-ONLINE.pdf>

19 MOD (2020) Walker, J., Selous, A., and Misca, G., Living in Our Shoes: Understanding the Needs of UK Armed Forces Families. (online) Available at [Living in our shoes full report \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

20 [https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2018.](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/bulletins/familiesandhouseholds/2018)

Today, dual-earning couples are the norm rather than the exception. Coping with the upheaval of military life is far more difficult when balancing two careers; especially when the career of the serviceperson's partner or spouse may take precedence. For the 13% of dual-serving couples in the armed forces, balancing the needs of two careers presents its own unique challenges. For those couples or single-parent families with children, access to good quality out of hours childcare is essential.

Changing Perceptions

Educating providers at local level to broaden understanding of the service context, particularly the impact of mobility and separation on armed forces families' daily lives, is the most effective way to improve provision and ensure fair access to public services. The way society perceives the role of the Armed Forces is not constant. During the first decade and a half of this century, through the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, the personal sacrifices made by members of the Armed Forces were prominent in the Nation's consciousness. However, lower profile deployments involving less apparent physical danger can have an equally disruptive effect on family life. Indeed, research²¹ suggests that non-operational separation, or weekly commuting, can subject family relationships to significant strain.



Spreading awareness of military life and seeking to better integrate the Armed Forces with local communities requires an effective partnership between the local council and the military. Two-way engagement helps build understanding and encourage the development of community-led support networks. This better equips local policy makers and service providers so that they are aware of potential shifts in understanding and can build mitigation strategies into their delivery plans.

Partnership working at the community level will be a critical enabler of the strategic framework, including the importance of developing virtual networks to include geographically dispersed families. For local service providers, the Armed Forces Covenant Duty – part of the Armed Forces Bill 2021 – and its accompanying statutory guidance will further improve understanding of practical ways to apply the Armed Forces Covenant and help to remove disadvantage for armed forces families in the areas of housing, healthcare and education.

21 Gribble R and Fear N (2019). The effect of non-operational family separations on family functioning and well-being among Royal Navy/Royal Marines families.

Mobility, Deployment and Separation

The changing nature of Defence brings new challenges for armed forces families. For some, the option of dispersed living is an important step forward, allowing families to opt for greater geographical stability according to their individual circumstances. Dispersed families can develop local support networks, nurture relationships with family and friends and may also be better prepared for the transition back to civilian life. However, dispersed living is not right for all families and can present its own difficulties, particularly with increased separation from the serviceperson, a lack of understanding from civilian family and friends, and the absence of the support bubble of the military community.²²

Technological advancement is already mitigating the impact of separation on family dynamics, making dispersed living a more attractive option for some. Policy makers should increasingly be looking to take advantage of the opportunities that new technologies offer, for example in developing virtual communities and support networks and effectively using social media platforms to engage armed forces families on the issues that matter to them.

Mobility remains an important requirement of service. The opportunities that this can bring mean that, for many, it continues to be an attractive option. Overseas assignments present families with diverse and unique experiences, but the support available can vary substantially, depending on the host nation and the specific assignment. This has been complicated further by the withdrawal of the UK from the European Union and the Covid19 pandemic, with families in need of guidance to navigate new rules and procedures.

Within the UK, for the most part, the support in place for the serviceperson remains consistent, whereas partners and children experience variation in the quality and continuity of public service provision²³. Children can experience particular difficulties when relocating at critical points in their education, and for those with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND²⁴), loss of or changes to provision can have a profound effect.

While many armed forces families enjoy healthy lives, the pressures of deployment, periods of separation and social isolation from family and friends can have a negative impact to the health and wellbeing of the family. Should a serviceperson be injured on duty, this can lead to additional caring responsibilities, including accepting and coping with changes to someone's physical and/or mental health. For those who make the ultimate sacrifice for their country, it is our duty to ensure their families are supported through the bereavement process.

22 Royal Air Force Families Federation (2020). 'RAF Dispersed Families Summary Briefing Paper' (online). Available at: [RAF-Dispersed-Families-summary-briefing-paper-Jan-20.pdf](https://raf-ff.org.uk/RAF-Dispersed-Families-summary-briefing-paper-Jan-20.pdf) (raf-ff.org.uk)

23 MOD (2020) Walker, J., Selous, A., and Misca, G., Living in Our Shoes: Understanding the Needs of UK Armed Forces Families. (online) Available at [Living in our shoes full report](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/874447/living-in-our-shoes-full-report.pdf) (publishing.service.gov.uk)

24 In Wales this is referred to as 'Additional Learning Needs' and in Scotland 'Additional Support Needs'.

For the growing non-UK service population, separation from those left at home can be more enduring. For this cohort, this strategy prioritises understanding how their nationality shapes their experience of life in the UK Armed Forces, so that supportive welfare policies can be introduced that are sensitive to cultural background. A further priority is to educate, inform and empower non-UK service personnel and their families, so that they make the right choices with a full understanding of their options and can engage confidently with the immigration system.

The implications of mobility, deployment and separation are unique to each family. The combined effect can place significant strain on relationships, which makes it important that, with the consent of the serviceperson, their families' individual circumstances are accurately captured, so that they can be supported in understanding and coping with the stress points. A more inclusive approach can help promote family wellbeing, enhance operational effectiveness and the longevity of the serviceperson's career.



Strategic Framework

Delivering the Defence Purpose

The March 2021 Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy²⁵ emphasised an increased commitment to security and resilience both at home and internationally. The subsequent Defence Command Paper: Defence in a Competitive Age²⁶ explained in more detail what this meant for the Armed Forces, describing the need for persistent engagement in a new era of 'global systemic competition'. It also emphasised the importance of attracting and retaining a 'diverse, inclusive, motivated and professional workforce... as part of a renewed offer that reflects the way they want to live and work'.

This is captured in Defence Tasks 12 and 20 of the Defence Plan and articulated in the Defence People Strategy through its four objectives to:

1. Deliver an adaptable and sustainable workforce;
2. Maximise use of talent;
3. Provide attractive offers that access and retain talent;
4. Build a stronger, more effective, collaborative People Function across the Whole Force.

Improving support for all armed forces families will help to deliver these four objectives. The UK Armed Forces Families Strategy is therefore a key enabler of the Defence People Strategy.

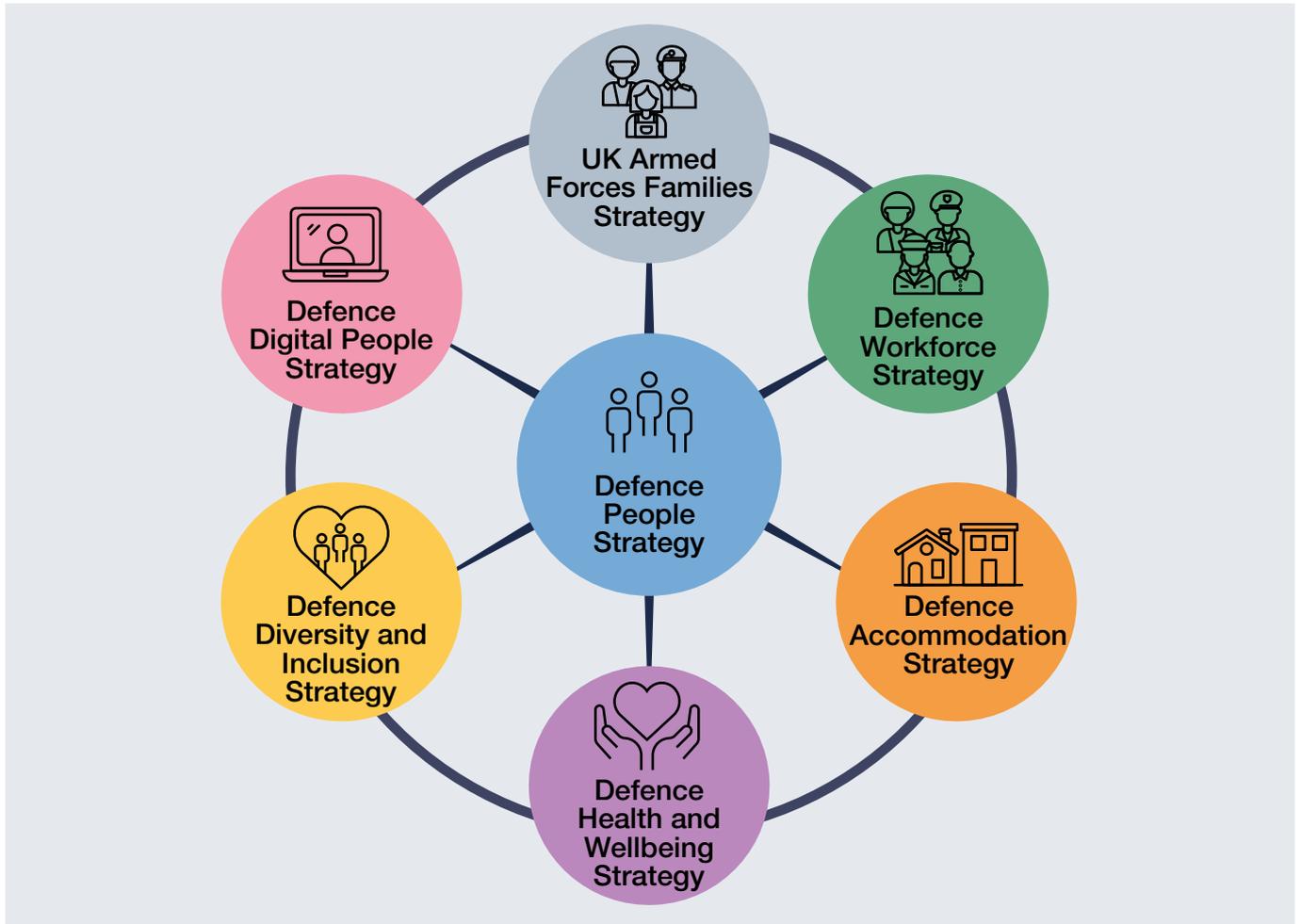
Figure 1 illustrates where the strategy fits into the wider strategic landscape. The sister strategies, some of which are still in development, will deliver shared aims in support of the four objectives of the Defence People Strategy.



25 HM Government (2021). 'Global Britain in a competitive age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy' (online). Available at: [Global Britain in a competitive age \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94222/20210302-ir-001.pdf)

26 [Defence in a Competitive Age - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/94222/20210302-ir-001.pdf)

Figure 1: Wider Defence People Strategic Context



Vision and Principles

The armed forces community is an environment that is welcoming and attractive to families. It supports and nurtures family life and its diversity is reflective of wider society.

The Vision has been divided into eight strategic themes, each with its own statement of ambition. These themes will provide the focus for delivering the Vision in accordance with the principles that armed forces families deserve to be:

Recognised and Respected

Recognised and Respected for the critical role they play in supporting the serviceperson;

Informed and Empowered

Informed with timely information about their situation and provided with opportunities that Empower them to adapt and thrive;

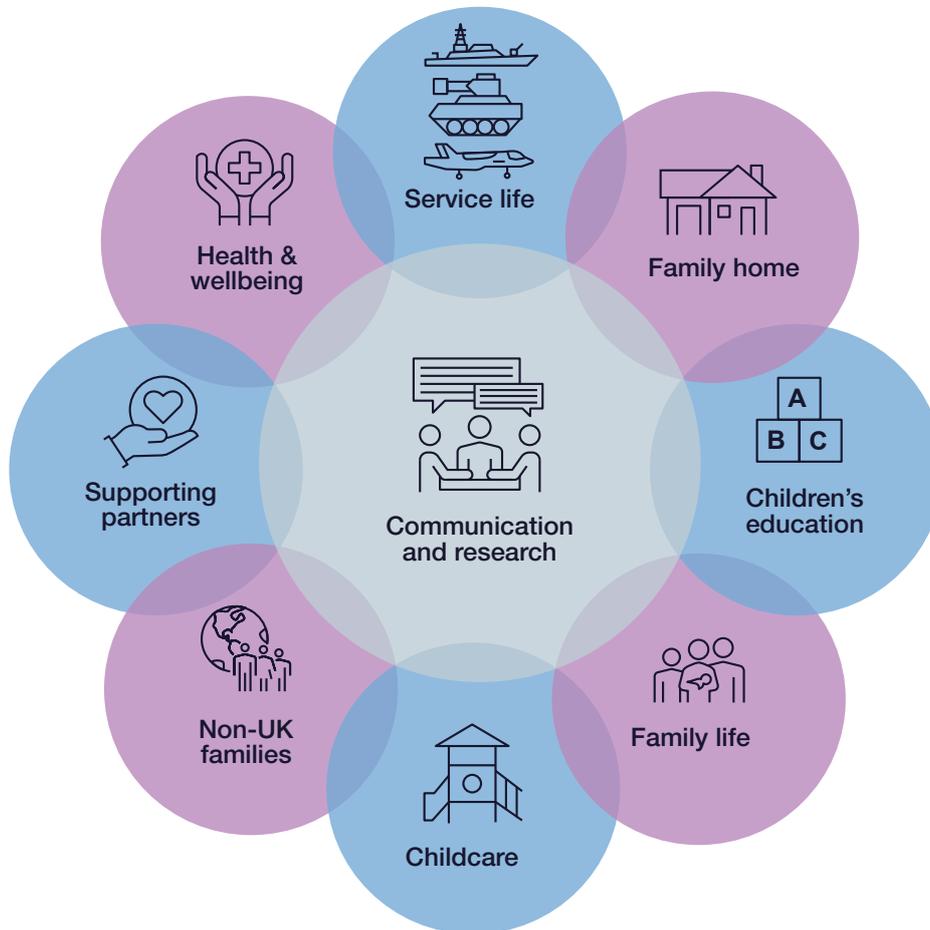
Listened to and Understood

Listened to and Understood, so that their individual experiences are reflected in the support provided to them.

Core Workstreams

The families strategy core workstreams are illustrated in Figure 2 and described briefly below (Annex B provides more detail).

Figure 2: Core Workstreams and Shared Communication and Research Function



1. **Family Life:** Family units that are supported to understand and cope with deployment, mobility and separation and the unique stresses of the military lifestyle. Wherever they live, they are aware of the support that is available, and how to access it. When children and adults are at risk of harm, they are protected through a multi-agency approach facilitating a swift response.
2. **Service Life:** Coordinated career management and welfare processes that focus on nurturing the servicemember with their family alongside them and preparing them for a successful transition to civilian life.
3. **Family Home:** A flexible accommodation policy that reflects modern family constructs, allowing families the choice and freedom needed to nurture a family home.
4. **Children's Education:** The opportunities available to children from armed forces families are maximised through robust research, effective collaboration and dissemination of best practice. This informs the wider policies and practice that underpins how the governments of the UK and external partners support these children.

5. **Childcare:** Families have access to good quality, enriching and safe childcare that meets their needs. This allows service personnel to fully engage with their duties, and the greater flexibility gives the family more opportunities, improving general wellbeing.
6. **Non-UK Families:** Non-UK families are valued and accommodated in supportive UK government and Defence policies cognisant of their experiences. This helps to mitigate potential disadvantage conferred by their immigration status wherever possible and provide wider support that is sensitive to cultural backgrounds.
7. **Supporting Partners:** The skills and experiences of partners and spouses are widely understood, valued and sought after. They can navigate extensive cross-sector provision to access timely support that meets their needs and helps them to develop and pursue their own career path.
8. **Health and Wellbeing:** Families are able to access timely integrated, mental and physical health and wellbeing services. Continuity of support is provided by professionals cognisant of the military context, sharing information, to ease relocation between nations and regions, especially for the most vulnerable.



Governance and Accountability

The MOD armed forces families steering group owns the strategy and action plan. The Head of MOD’s Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding Team chairs the steering group and is accountable to the Chief of Defence People for the successful delivery of the strategy. Membership of the steering group includes eight MOD workstream leaders, appointed by the Head Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding. A fuller description of the ground covered by each workstream is at Annex B. The workstream leaders will drive change through sustained engagement across central and local government, with the devolved administrations, and the charitable and private sectors.

The steering group will be provided with quarterly updates via workstream reports. Biannual updates will be provided to the Defence Secretary, via the military people leadership team.

The Armed Forces Covenant provides external scrutiny and a mechanism for monitoring and reporting on progress and holding other government departments to account through the covenant reference group and the inter-ministerial covenant and veterans board. From 2022, to ensure public accountability, progress against the families strategy action plan will be published in the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report that is laid before Parliament each year. The Annual Report is scrutinised by the external members of the covenant reference group (the Families Federations and Service Charities) who provide observations that are published unadulterated within the report, and scrutinised by the House of Commons Defence Select Committee.



Measuring Success

The success of the strategy in meeting its statements of ambition, will be measured against the key performance indicators (KPIs) in the rolling action plan. The KPIs are data led and have been informed by a wide evidence base. The action plan will be a working document owned and maintained by the armed forces families and safeguarding team. It will be subject to quarterly MOD performance reporting and biannual progress updates to the Defence Secretary. Aligned with the biannual updates, reports will be made publicly available to provide transparency, with the winter update included in the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Annual Report from 2022 onwards.

Collaborating across Boundaries

Delivery against the action plan will be organised around the eight core workstreams. In many cases, responsibility for delivery of the commitments in the strategy and action plan lies outside MOD. This will require co-ordination at the workstream level.

To coordinate effectively, workstream leaders will need to form new working relationships, as well as building on and strengthening existing ones. The armed forces families and safeguarding team will provide enabling support to workstream leaders, including helping to communicate successes and commissioning research to extend the evidence base for their work.

Communicating Progress

Where new initiatives have been implemented and improved support is available, it is vital that this is communicated effectively to families, so that they are aware of how to access it. It is also important that where service personnel and their families benefit from improved support delivered through the strategy, they can identify this as an MOD or wider government initiative.

Workstream leaders will take a proactive approach to communicating with families, sharing information across workstreams, and using a variety of networks including social media, the single Service HiVE and Royal Navy Family and People Support information services, British Forces Broadcasting Services, the Families Federations and Defence Directorate of Communications to inform and empower families with accessible and timely information. Embracing virtual environments and modern technologies will allow dispersed families, regular and reservist, to continue to feel fully supported and part of the armed forces community.

Working in Partnership

Successful delivery of the strategy will require close working with the MOD's various partners in central government and the devolved administrations. This collaboration will be driven principally through the individual workstreams, but it will also be reflected in progress updates provided to the covenant reference group and the inter-ministerial covenant and veterans board.

UK-Wide: Armed forces families live across the United Kingdom and overseas and the devolved administrations play a critical role in coordinating provision across various sectors, including health, education and accommodation.

Cross-Government: In England, key government departments including the Department for Education, the Department for Health and Social Care, the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, have critical roles to play. The Government's Family Test brings a family perspective to policy making across government departments. It helps to ensure the impact on families, both positive and negative, is recognised in the process of policy development and helps inform the policy decisions made by Ministers.

Similarly, the devolved administrations work across their respective departments to coordinate support for the armed forces community.

Local Level: Working in partnership with local authorities and public service providers across the fields of education, health, accommodation and social care, to communicate plans and help inform development of local provision.

Charitable Sector: To make best use of available resources and coordinate coherent provision it is essential to understand the support offered by the charitable sector. The Families Federations and key service charities are represented at working level under each of the eight workstreams.

Private Sector: The private sector has a key role to play in supporting partners and spouses to develop successful careers alongside the serviceperson, as well as in understanding the skills service personnel and their families offer, to aid the family's successful transition to civilian life. For reservist families, support and understanding from the private sector is essential throughout the serviceperson's time in the military.

Stakeholder Landscape

The stakeholders involved in delivering the strategy are listed at Annex A. Workstream leaders should use this as a guide to conducting their own stakeholder analyses of their specific areas of family policy, to ensure where appropriate, they capture the views of stakeholders across the public, charitable and private sectors.

Reviewing the Strategy

The strategy will be subject to a biennial validation exercise conducted by the MOD armed forces families and safeguarding team. The exercise will include assessment of the workstreams and the effectiveness of the governance arrangements, to ensure they continue to support successful implementation of the overarching vision statement.



Annex A:

Stakeholder Landscape

Defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Armed Forces and their families • Defence People Team • The single Services • Defence Infrastructure Organisation • Defence Relationship Management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defence Secretary • Minister for Defence People and Veterans • Chief of Defence People • The Armed Forces Families Steering Group • UK STRATCOM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief of the Defence Staff • First Sea Lord • Chief of the General Staff • Chief of the Air Staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HiVE information services • British Forces Broadcasting Service • Defence Statistics • Directorate of Defence Communications
UK-Wide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Prime Minister • Inter-Ministerial Covenant and Veterans Board • Covenant Reference Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department for Education • Department for Work and Pensions • Home Office • Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities • Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welsh Government • Scottish Government • Northern Ireland Executive • Department for Health and Social Care • National Health Services of the UK 	
Public, charitable and private sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Armed Forces Families • The Families Federations • Local Councils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charities supporting armed forces families • Partner organisations employing armed forces families and reservist personnel and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust 	

Annex B:

Workstream Descriptions

Family Life

Family units that are supported to understand and cope with deployment, mobility and separation. Wherever they live, they are aware of the support that is available, and how to access it. When children and adults are at risk of harm, they are protected through a multi-agency approach facilitating a swift response.

Embracing different family constructs and understanding individual families' needs in the context of evolving policy. This is achieved through recognition of parenting challenges, the circumstances of dual-serving families, families without children, single-parent families and dispersed families, as well as those with additional needs and caring responsibilities. All these factors and more should be considered when assessing the impact to daily life and relationships.

Relationship strain and sometimes breakdown is part of family life and a time when family members are especially vulnerable to the upheaval that military life can bring. Families need support through such difficult times, and the needs of divorced and separated spouses should be a key part of this.

This workstream will also include specialist support for bereaved families and those in abusive relationships. The key to improving support will be in generating richer data on a diverse range of families and applying this knowledge to mitigate the disruption caused by service life.²⁷

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Armed Forces People Support, Families Federations, the single Services, MOD youth and community professionals, the devolved administrations and the Forces Additional Needs and Disabilities Forum (FANDF).

Service Life

Coordinated career management and welfare processes that focus on nurturing the serviceperson with their family alongside them and preparing them for successful transition to civilian life.

Taking a through-life approach to career management, welfare and transition, which supports decision making that is right for the serviceperson and their family and engages the family by adopting inclusive terminology. By acknowledging the challenges of both dispersed living and a more traditional mobile lifestyle, the focus will be on offering coordinated welfare support, which meets individual regular and reservist families' needs, wherever they may live and fully prepares them for a return to civilian life.

27 Skomorovsky, A. (2019). Impact of Military Life on Children from Military Families, Final Report NATO RTG HFM-258. ISBN 978-92-837-183-3.

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces People Support Team, the single Services, Defence Business Services, Defence Transition Services, Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Strategic Command, Families Federations

Family Home

A flexible accommodation policy that reflects modern family constructs, allowing families the choice and freedom needed to nurture a family home.

Families need a place to call home; a place of comfort and security in which they can take pride. To provide this, the MOD will continue to modernise its accommodation policies, based on increased choice, flexibility, and agency for the family. There will be renewed efforts to raise the standard and quality of the housing that the MOD provides and to offer more choice for those who wish to live in their own homes.

Delivery of the commitments within this workstream will better equip families for the challenges and unique experiences of life in the armed forces community.

Primary stakeholders: MOD

Accommodation Policy Team, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, single Service Housing Colonels, Joint Services Housing Advisory Office, Defence Business Services, Defence Transition Services, Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Armed Forces People Support, the single Services, the Families Federations.



Children's Education

The opportunities available to children from armed forces families are maximised through robust research, effective collaboration and dissemination of best practice. This informs the wider policies and practice that underpins how the governments of the UK and external partners support these children.

Children from armed forces families can and do thrive educationally, with many accessing unique opportunities other children rarely get to experience. However, this workstream recognises that upheaval caused by mobility, separation from serving parents and the serviceperson's transition to civilian life, can impact on educational progress and emotional health and wellbeing.

The focus will be on supporting children from armed forces families in achieving positive outcomes throughout their educational journey (from early years through to further and higher education). The aim will be to develop a deeper understanding of the diverse range of experiences and needs of these children, especially those with the greatest of needs. Engagement with partner organisations both in the UK and overseas will also provide opportunities to collaborate with and challenge those stakeholders who provide direct support to children from armed forces families.

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Armed Forces People Support, the single Services, MOD youth and community professionals, the Department for Education, the devolved administrations, the Families Federations, and the Forces Additional Needs and Disabilities Forum (FANDF).



Childcare

Families have access to good quality, enriching and safe childcare that meets their needs. This allows service personnel to fully engage with their duties, and the greater flexibility gives the family more opportunities, improving general wellbeing.

The mobile and unpredictable nature of service life alongside unsociable hours and lengthy deployment causes difficulty for families in accessing good quality, enriching childcare. The MOD will work in partnership with the Department for Education, the devolved administrations and local authorities to seek mitigation of these issues.

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Armed Forces People Support, the single Services, the Department for Education, the devolved administrations, the Families Federations, Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs.

Non-UK Families

Non-UK families are valued and accommodated in supportive UK government and Defence policies cognisant of their experiences. This helps to mitigate potential disadvantage conferred by their immigration status wherever possible and provide wider support that is sensitive to cultural backgrounds.

The MOD and its partners across government and in the charitable sector are committed to further understanding of the needs of non-UK personnel and their families (including the non-UK partners of serving personnel). This will help provide individual families with clarity on the implications for them regarding visa and immigration status, so that they are informed and prepared to make decisions that are right for them.²⁸

This workstream will develop policy which is inclusive and sensitive to cultural differences, and which honours the commitment made by non-UK nationals to our country.

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces People Support, Army Secretariat, Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, the single Services, the Home Office, the devolved administrations, the Families Federations.

Support to Partners

The skills and experiences of partners and spouses are widely understood, valued and sought after. This enables them to navigate extensive cross-sector provision to access timely support that meets their needs and helps them to develop and pursue their own career path.

Improving support for partners and spouses under the Armed Forces Covenant, enabling effective promotion of the skills and experiences they bring to the workplace, as well as understanding and mitigating the challenges for them as the whole family transitions to civilian life. Working across sectors to clearly articulate what support is available, evaluating current provision and targeting resources effectively. While not the

28 FiMT (2018) 'Meeting the Needs of Commonwealth Personnel and Families: A Map of Service Provision' (online). Available at: [meeting-needs-commonwealth-personnel-and-families.pdf](https://www.fim-trust.org/meeting-needs-commonwealth-personnel-and-families.pdf) (fim-trust.org)

case for all, there are non-serving partners and spouses who do experience difficulties maintaining a career commensurate with their skills and level of experience.²⁹

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, Armed Forces People Support, the single Services, MOD youth and community professionals, Defence Relationship Management, academic institutions and partner organisations on the partner employment steering group, devolved administrations, the Families Federations.

Health and Wellbeing

Families are able to access timely integrated, mental and physical health and wellbeing services. Continuity of support is provided by professionals cognisant of the military context, sharing information, to ease relocation between nations and regions, especially for the most vulnerable.

This workstream will seek to identify and address the problems families sometimes experience in accessing health and social care services.³⁰ Where appropriate, organisations will work in partnership across boundaries, sharing best practice, information and data on families to integrate and coordinate care and, where possible, develop common pathways between all nations of the UK and overseas.³¹

The NHS across the UK is responsible for all family members, serving, reservist and veteran. Critical to continuity of care will be alignment with the NHS England Armed Forces Forward View³² and associated commitment 'Supporting families, carers, children and young people in the armed forces community'.

It will continue to be a priority for this workstream to spread awareness of the experiences of families within the healthcare sector, so that they feel listened to and understood. Engaging through informed dialogue will help to increase transparency and reduce the stigma associated with help-seeking.

Primary stakeholders: Armed Forces People Support, Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding, the single Services, the Department for Health and Social Care, the devolved administrations, the National Health Services of the UK, Defence Medical Services, the Forces Additional Needs and Disabilities Forum (FANDF), and the Families Federations.



29 FiMT (2018) 'Lifting the Lid on Transition: The families' experience and the support they need' (online). Available at: [lifting-lid-transition-families-experience-support-they-need.pdf](https://www.fim-trust.org/lifting-lid-transition-families-experience-support-they-need.pdf) (fim-trust.org)

30 DeVoe, E.R., Ross, A. (2012) 'The parenting cycle of deployment.' *Military Medicine*, 177(2), 184-190.

31 MOD (2020) 'Living in Our Shoes: Understanding the needs of the UK Armed Forces Families' (online). Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895236/Living_in_our_shoes_Full_Report__1__embargoed_30_June.pdf

32 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthcare-for-the-Armed-Forces-community-forward-view-March-2021.pdf>

