

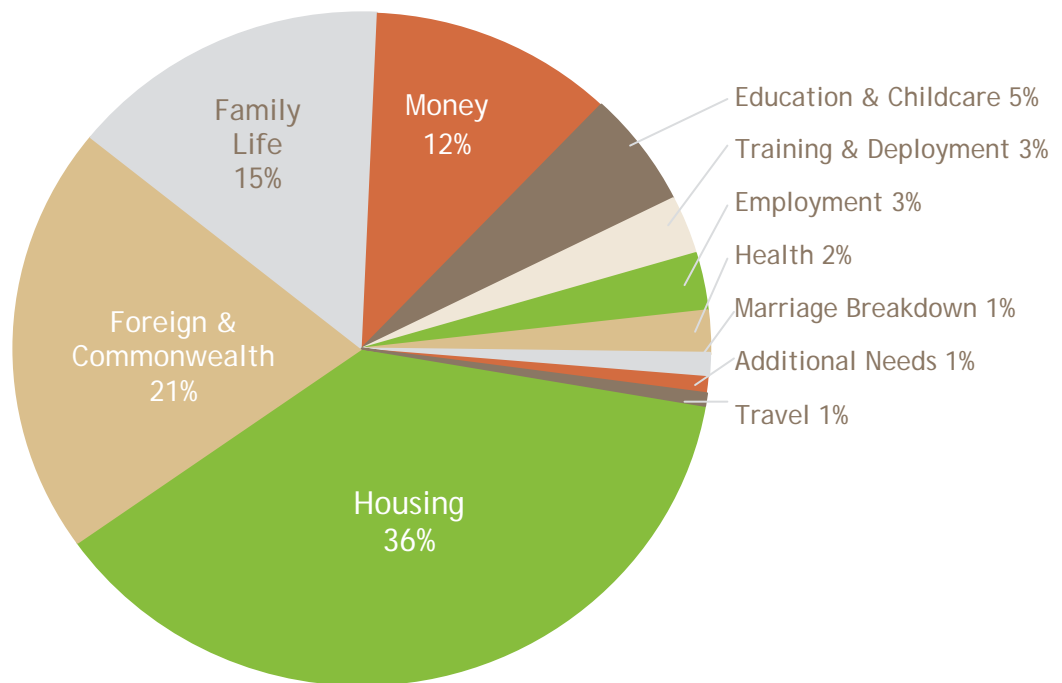
Families' Concerns January-March 2011

AFF Families' Concerns is a quarterly report which highlights the issues that Army families have brought to the attention of AFF either for investigation or information purposes. Enquiries are gathered from Army families worldwide, and thus provide an accurate reflection of matters affecting the global British Army community.

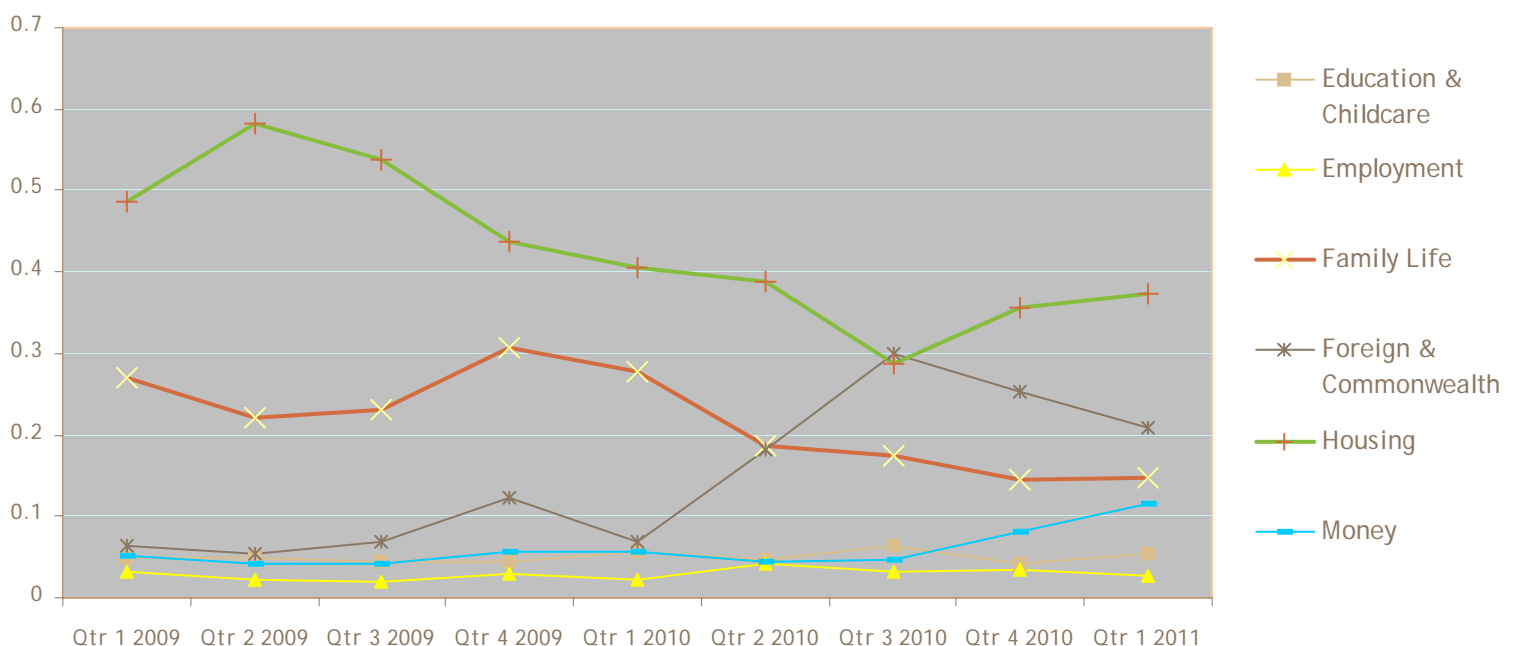
AFF works at a local level with command and families to resolve individual problems and at a strategic level to highlight issues which need further attention and policy revision. All issues included in this report have been raised with the appropriate agency or command for resolution.

Our total enquiries for this quarter was 2,580. Enquiries are up 49% from the last quarter and a 33% increase from the same quarter the previous year. This huge leap reflects the uncertainty created by cuts to allowances and redundancy.

worldwide activity chart of issues recorded



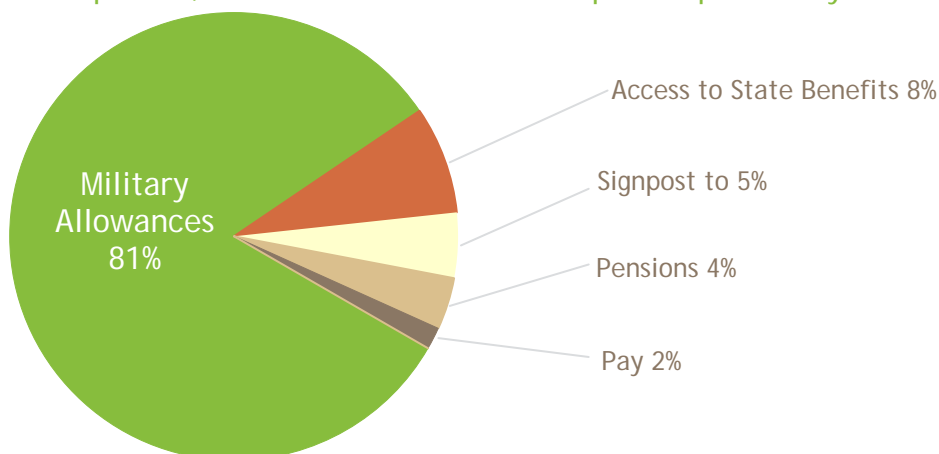
trends chart



Money

(298 enquiries - 12% of all enquiries)

113% increase in enquiries from last quarter, 176% increase from same quarter previous year.



The reduction of the Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) rate in December following the SDSR announcement, influenced changes to the calculation of LOA contributing to a marked increase in enquiries.

I have been unable to find work since arriving in Cyprus due to the lack of UKD jobs. With the further LOA cuts I am extremely concerned about having some money available to fund even a basic standard of living

AFF View: For many families, LOA makes it affordable to serve overseas. Spouses often give up good jobs to accompany their soldier and a reduction in LOA makes that decision more difficult. This will have a negative impact on accompanied service.

The announced changes to the Home to Duty Travel (HDT) allowance over the next three years has angered Army families who feel they should not be financially penalised for where they are housed or for living in their own homes.

With the increase in fuel costs and a decrease in the HDT allowance, how can the Army make some soldiers and their families disadvantaged by the random allocation of quarters?

Families are anxiously waiting for the results of the Independent Ministerial Review into the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA). For many the outcome will influence their decision to stay in the Army.

On the back of my family's commitment to military life, any plans to change CEA would feel like a betrayal

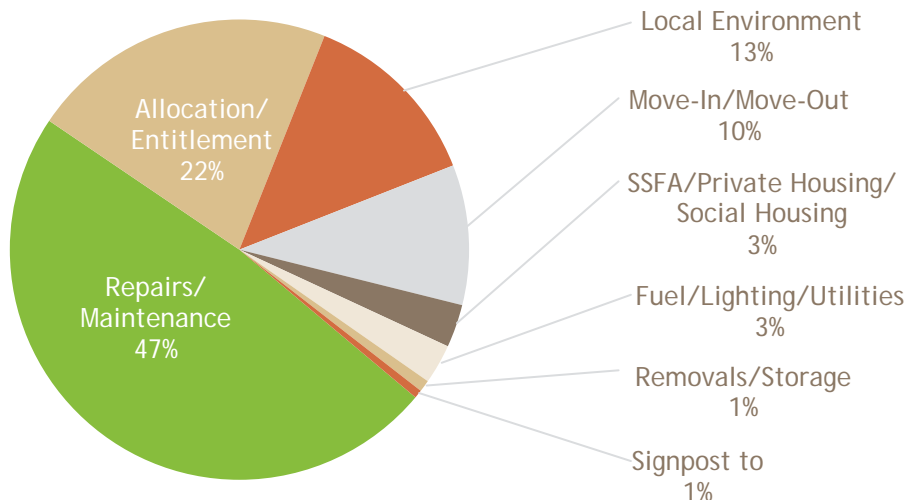
AFF View: AFF conducted a survey of families regarding their views on CEA. 62% of respondents said they would leave the Army if CEA was removed. AFF fully supports the retention of CEA in order to mitigate the effects of mobility on Service children's education.

For a full copy of the CEA report visit <http://www.aff.org.uk/ceasurvey>

Housing

(961 enquiries - 37% of all enquiries)

56% increase in enquiries from last quarter, 23% increase from same quarter previous year.



Allocation/Entitlement represents 21% of AFF's Housing enquiries. The increase in enquiries reflects the diminishing availability of SFA in some key areas, causing families to be housed further away from their place of work. DIO (Ops) Accommodation's reluctance to approve funding for SSFA in order to reduce the overall bill has also had a negative impact on timely allocation of housing.

My family is frustrated that they have been allocated a quarter away from their duty station and will now lose some of the allowances available to help with this

AFF View: AFF believes that families need to live close to their soldier's duty station and that the reduction in the Home to Duty Travel (HDT) has exacerbated the problem further.

Move-In/Move-Out queries are up 32% from the last quarter and 117% from the same quarter the previous year. This increase is largely down to complaints from the London District about the standard of the housing on Move-In. One family found a dead cat in the house.

AFF View: AFF understands that MHS is working hard to improve Move-In procedures and standards but families are yet to see the benefit of these improvements. AFF feels further restraints on resources will aggravate the issue further.

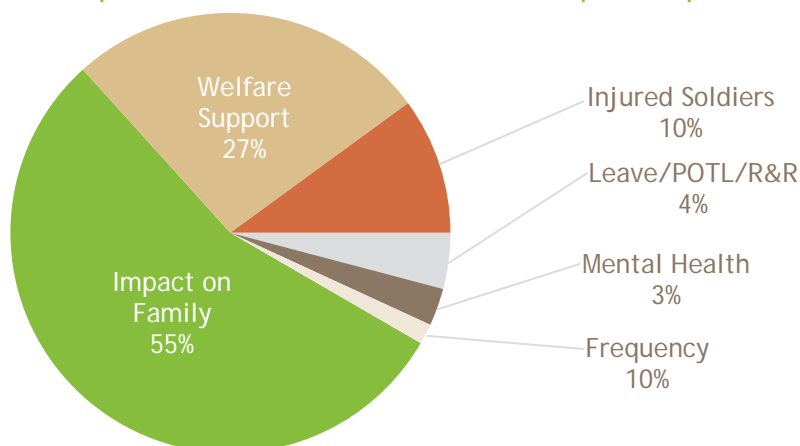
Repairs and Maintenance issues make up 48% of the Housing enquiries. These are up by 50% from the last quarter and 24% from the same quarter the previous year. Families consistently complain about missed appointments and the considerable time they must take off work to wait for the right contractor to turn up to complete a job.

I reported a faulty plug to MHS and they sent an electrician to mend it but he did this by moving it so now I am left with a big hole. The electrician couldn't plaster and because MHS don't order the whole set of contractors for a job, just the first one and so things are going to go on and on

AFF View: It is disappointing to see this rise in complaints from families but AFF staff will continue to raise individual issues and general concerns with DIO or MHS in order to improve the outcome for families.

Training & Deployment (73 enquiries - 3% of all enquiries)

74% increase in enquiries from last quarter, 55% increase from same quarter previous year.

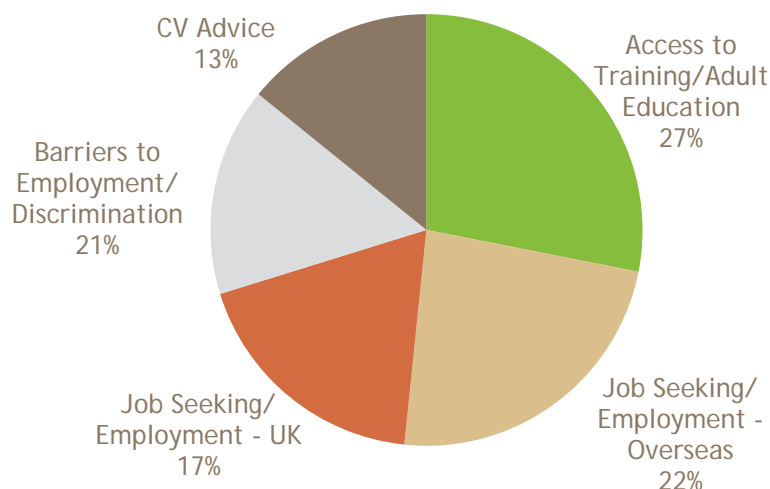


The impact on family category has increased by 53% from the last quarter. AFF is concerned at the rise in enquiries from families worried about the effect of deployment and separation on their children. AFF has received enquiries from families who have had children referred for counselling due to difficulties coping with a family member being deployed.

Welfare Support is up by 26% from the last quarter. Enquiries range from Individual Augmentees unhappy with the support offered to them to families who believe that welfare provision for deployment should be increased earlier.

Employment (70 enquiries - 3% of all enquiries)

21% increase in enquiries from the last quarter, 71% increase from the same quarter previous year.



AFF is seeing a rise in enquiries from spouses anxious to try and retain a quarter whilst they finish a course. AFF's Employment Survey is due to be published this summer and early results suggest spouses are put off from applying for courses that they might be unable to complete due to assignment. One family had received a short notice assignment to Germany and the spouse had only one element left of her course to complete her professional qualification. The situation was eventually resolved.

AFF View: AFF would like to see the retention of SFA for completion of adult education courses that were started with a completion date in the duration of that assignment order.

For further information on the above or other categories not mentioned in this report, please contact Louise Simpson, AFF Researcher at researcher@aff.org.uk