

introduction

AFF Families' Concerns is produced quarterly to illustrate the issues and concerns that Army families bring to the Army Families Federation. Enquiries are gathered from Army families worldwide, and thus provide an accurate reflection of matters affecting the community. Some families contact AFF to find resolution to problems, some to talk to an organisation who understands their issues and can raise them up the chain of command on their behalf; to log them and try and find resolution for the next generation of Army families. All issues included in this report have been raised with the appropriate agency or member of the chain of command for resolution.

AFF work at a local level to resolve individual problems and at a strategic level to highlight issues which need further attention and policy revision.

This report is distributed to all those who have an interest in developing and delivering policy and assistance to families - who can help AFF secure a fair deal for all Army families.

methodology

This is a qualitative report. Families contact AFF staff around the world with their issues which are anonymously logged. This information is then entered onto a central database and used to provide the evidence for this report.

AFF worldwide activity chart

Between October and December 2010 there was an **increase of 11% in enquiries (up 1726 from 1557)** to AFF staff compared to the previous quarter and also in relation to the same quarter in the previous year (**up 4% from 1656**).

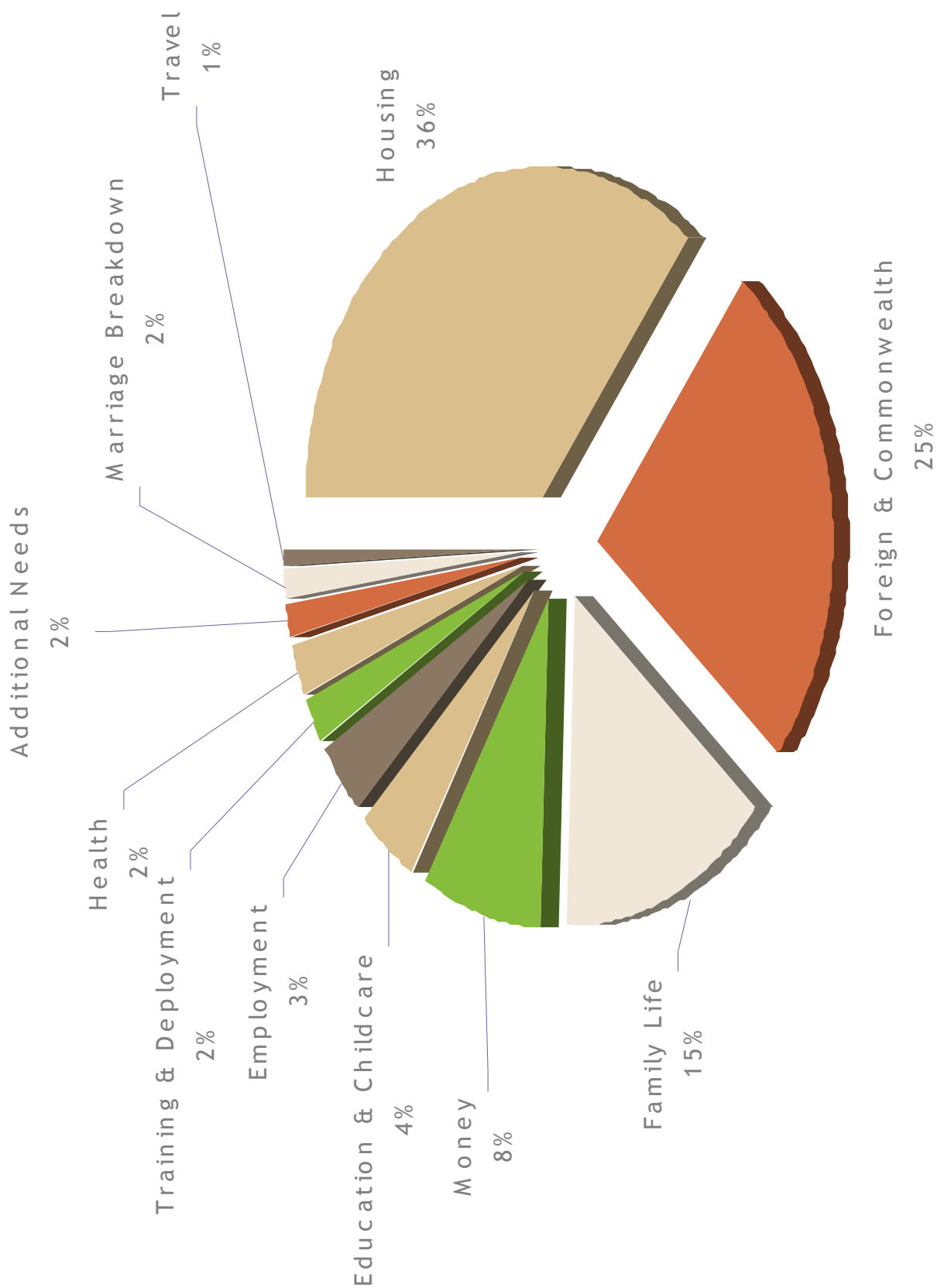
trends

Trends since January 2007 illustrate the fluctuations in the number of contacts to AFF for the types of issue being raised.



army families federation
families' concerns - October - December 2010

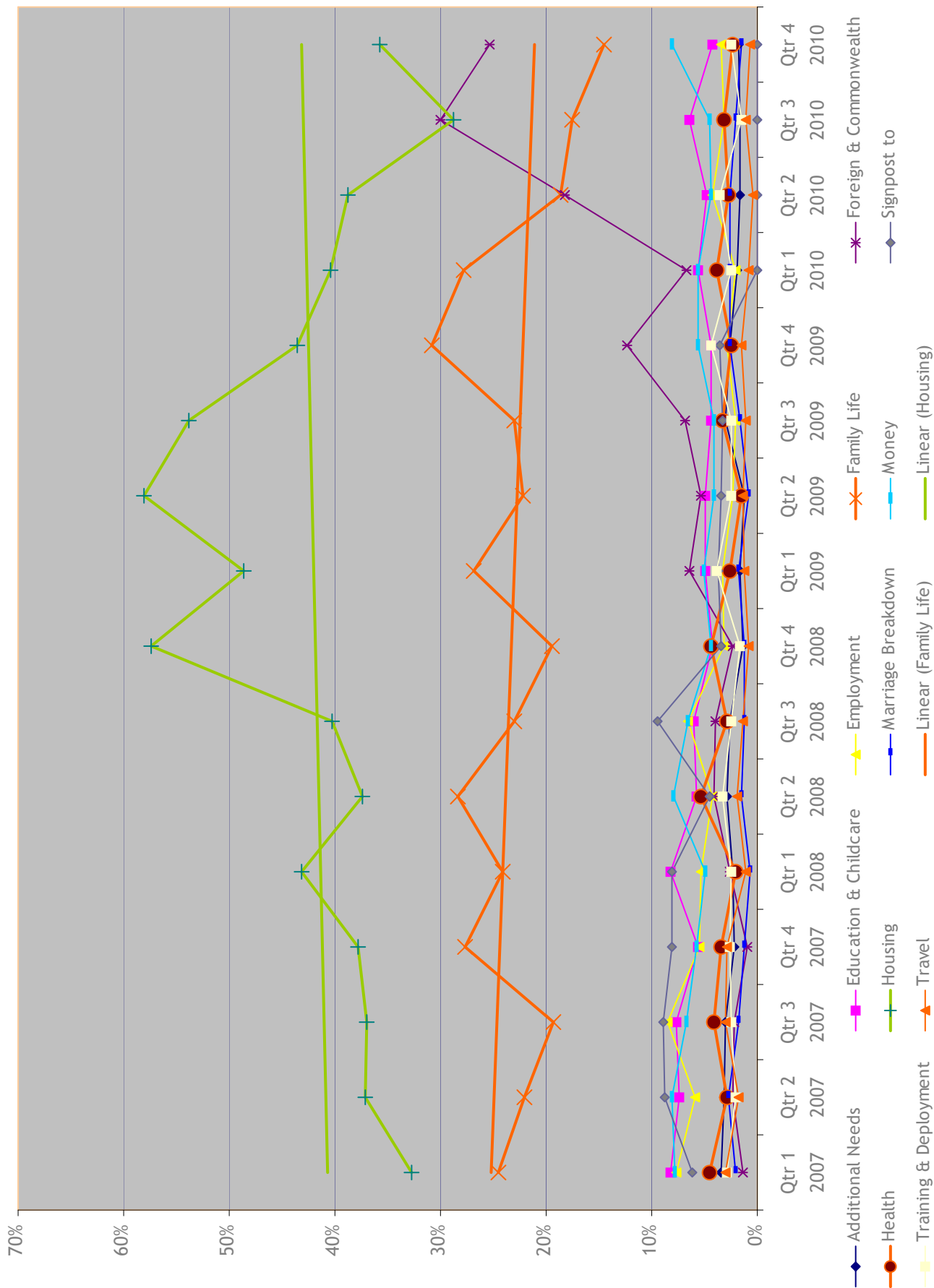
worldwide activity chart



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families' concerns - October - December 2010

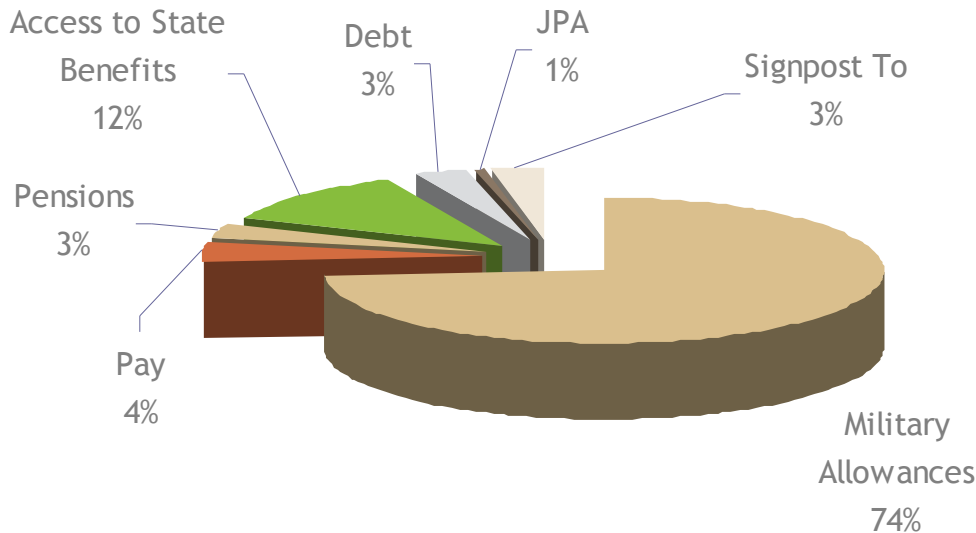
trends chart



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families' concerns - October - December 2010

money (8% of all enquiries)



The number of issues raised to AFF regarding **Money** has increased this month both in comparison to the previous quarter (**up 97% to 140 from 71**) and to the same quarter in the previous year (**up 51% from 93**) reflecting the current concerns regarding cuts to military allowances.

The effects of the **Local Overseas Allowance (LOA)** reductions in December had already been felt by the time the announcement of yet more cuts came in January 2011. AFF Germany received 52 calls in one day from families concerned with the impact of the cut in LOA. Families in Cyprus have particularly struggled with the reduction:

“I am concerned about LOA; it feels like we will have no option but to move the family back to the UK (if we receive any more cuts). We would like to know if there is a publication [about] how LOA is worked out as we feel strongly it has not been looked at correctly. There are lots of other families struggling to make ends meet after moving to Cyprus from”

AFF believes that LOA makes it more affordable for families to serve overseas. Spouses often give up good jobs to accompany their soldier and those claiming Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) have no choice but to accompany their spouse overseas. The December reduction alone has put a lot of pressure on many Army families.

Families in Northern Ireland continued to raise concerns about Northern Ireland Residency Supplement (NIRS).

“Client feels the amount of NIRS [their] spouse is receiving is not enough to compensate for the restrictions that are in place regarding security”

aff

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families' concerns - October - December 2010

money continued

AFF does not consider that £6.41 a day adequately reflects the restrictions placed upon freedom of movement and access to local amenities imposed by the security situation. In December 2010, AFF's Chief Executive raised the importance of this supplement with the Armed Forces Pay Review Body (AFPRB) who will be making recommendations to MOD as to its future.

AFF continued to receive enquiries about CEA. The announcement on changes to CEA regulations in December did very little to allay the fears of those currently within the system, and those looking at entering it. **Information flow regarding this emotive allowance has been poor.** Before the announcement was made in November, AFF received calls from concerned families being told by Regimental Administrative Officer (RAO) and Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) that for the time being no more families were being accepted for September 2011. CEAS staff when contacted on the day were unaware of the announcement.

“We have heard that CEA might be scrapped and are concerned for our son's education as my husband and I are both due to be posted to different locations. We want peace of mind that our son's education will not be disrupted”

“CEAS is not handing out CEA forms for next September as everything is changing. If I wanted my son to start in April 2011 then I could have the forms. This is too early for us however it may have a knock on effect for others and there may be a mad rush. They did say that there was still likely to be CEA in September but this has left me very uncertain of my child's future however, I am not sending him early just to suit the Army”

“We are considering putting our child into boarding school; however rumour control says that CEA will go by 2015 so we do not know what to do”

AFF is aware that there is an independent review concerning CEA which it has not been asked to take part in. AFF has highlighted concerns over what amounts to a biased and leading survey. AFF urges a timely resolution as the uncertainty is damaging to morale and the goodwill of Army families.

At the AFF Families Conference in September 2010 a question was raised about the Armed Forces Pension Scheme 75. Under that scheme if a soldier died holding an acting rank for less than a year, his family would not receive the pension of that rank. The Minister of State for Armed Forces took this question away and it was announced on the 16th December that, **“in future, death benefits will be paid on the basis of the acting rank if the individual's death has occurred due to service, regardless of how long the individual has been in acting rank”**. AFF is proud to have been involved in this very important amendment.

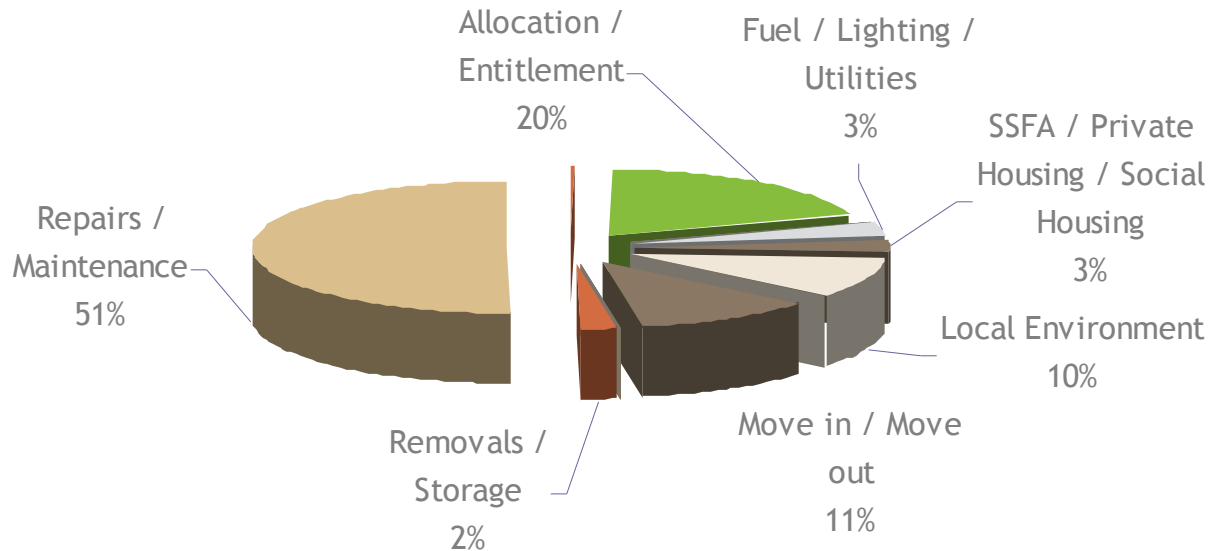
The logo for the Army Families Federation (AFF) consists of the lowercase letters 'aff' in a bold, green, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly slanted to the right. The logo is positioned in the bottom right corner of the page, above a decorative horizontal bar with multiple colored stripes.

army families federation

families' concerns - October - December 2010

housing

(36% of all enquiries)



The largest number of issues brought to AFF between October and December 2010 concerned housing. Enquiries about allocation and entitlement represented 20% of housing enquiries. Concerns over cuts to allowances, particularly in Germany and Cyprus, mean that families are looking at every part of their budget and therefore concerns over the cost of Army housing is increasing.

“Family moved into a grade 1 quarter in June 2010. Client is a private soldier with a wife, one child and one on the way. Wife doesn’t drive; quarter is six miles away from camp, one bus a day to camp. Signposted to Homestart however, he said that he is struggling to survive as the house is draining his funds and, with a baby on the way, he is worried. He said that come December when the LOA dips he will face severe financial difficulty. He has been refused a move and was told he should be grateful as so many people want a house like he has. One of his bosses, a SSgt, would be happy to straight swap from his flat to the house at no cost to the Army, but this was again refused”

“Royal Anglians are moving into the newly renovated Canadian estate in Bulford in August 2011. Our rents will go up three grades in some cases. This is causing worry to our families who will find it difficult to pay”

AFF believes that any increase to charges for quarters this year will hit families very hard. AFF urged the AFPRB in December not to increase accommodation charges at a time when pay was frozen and allowances being cut.

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families' concerns - October - December 2010

housing continued

At the beginning of 2010, there was a reduction in the number of issues concerning repairs and maintenance but AFF is concerned to see a rise in this number from the last quarter (**up 72% from 179 to 308**). As predicted by AFF in the second quarter with a reduction in budgets, and particular pressure on the Incidental New Works (INW), this improvement was short-lived, through no fault of Defence Estates (DE) or Modern Housing Solutions (MHS).

London District contributed largely to the rise in statistics with families complaining about missed appointments and unfinished jobs.

“Contractor did not have right parts after being told twice”

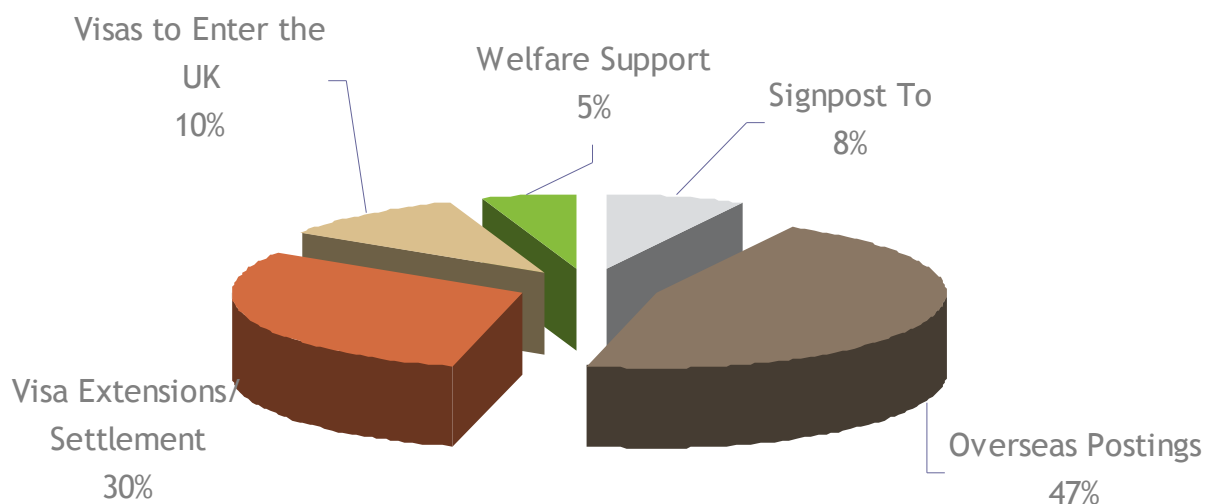
“Safety engineer left occupant without hot water or heating for three days”

“Wrong contractor turned up for job”

The dip in service from MHS in the London District is unacceptable. So far the measures put in place to improve service have simply not worked.

foreign & commonwealth

(25% of all enquiries)



army families federation

families' concerns - October - December 2010

foreign & commonwealth continued

In November, the AFF F&C Specialist travelled to Cyprus to give presentations and to run 'clinics' for both families and units in Dhekelia and Episkopi. The presentations gave a brief overview and update of visa options for families wishing to travel to the UK for a visit, and those requiring visas for a posting. Other subjects such as Citizenship for both adults and children were also raised, but the majority of families were mainly concerned about how they could get a UK visa and how their posting in Cyprus was affecting their ability to apply for Indefinite Leave to Remain (Settlement) in the UK.

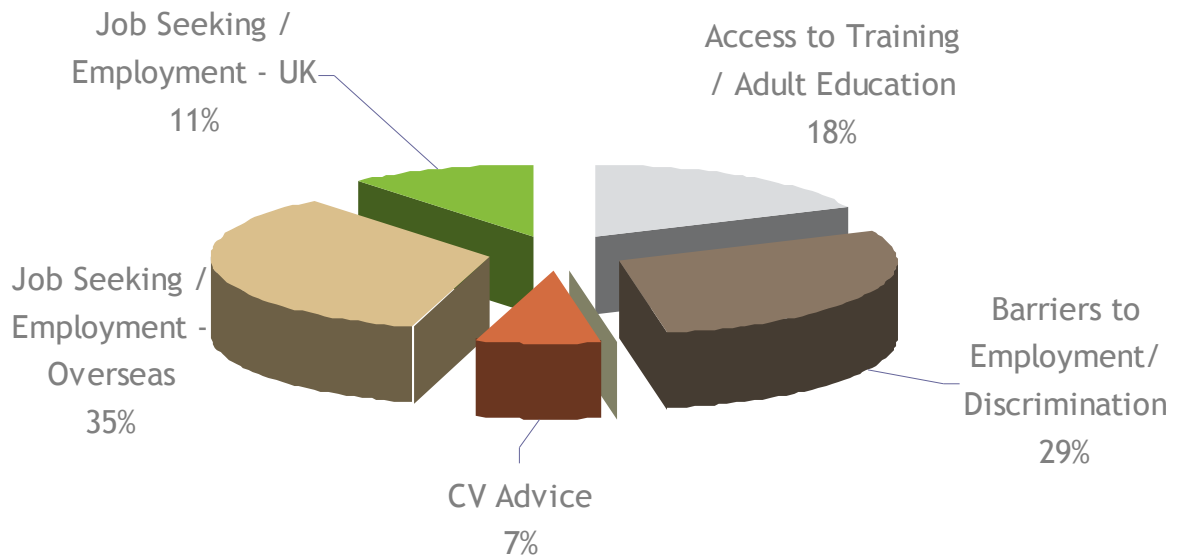
The **subject of compassionate travel was also a hot topic**, particularly in the unit briefings. Unit Welfare Officers (UWOs) were very concerned about how a spouse without a visa can get to the UK at short notice if a soldier is injured whilst on operations and is returned to the UK on a MEDIVAC flight. J1 had thought that a letter from the unit explaining the situation would suffice however, a spouse who had to return to the UK at short notice with her child for a medical appointment, was stopped at Brize Norton by the Immigration Office who put a warning on her passport because she had been in the UK without a visa. J1 is now looking into other options and is to write a brief on this situation. They believe all spouses should have a visa whilst overseas or, at the very least, to cover the time during which the soldier is on operations. The big question is, who is going to pay for these visas?

J1 is also creating a Cyprus specific F&C guide which will detail unit responsibilities and support for F&C families as well as giving general information about visas and other issues. This will be a welcome addition to the current F&C guidance which is UK centric. They also proposed a plan to have an F&C information board in each Unit Welfare Office, to be maintained by an F&C point of contact who would update it with information received by J1 or the AFF F&C Specialist. AFF's F&C Specialist believes that such boards would be very useful in Germany and the UK, and is looking into how best to go about this with multi-agency cooperation.

The issue of compassionate travel at short notice also came up during a visit to the AFF Germany Branch Training. One of the AFF Co-ordinators said that a UWO in a unit which is due to deploy, is very concerned about this - particularly because the Düsseldorf Consulate is due to close next year. This will mean that it will be impossible to issue emergency travel documents. The Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) is currently conducting a survey in his unit to ascertain how many spouses don't have visas. The AFF F&C Specialist will be contacting him shortly to discuss the situation and will use this information to write a brief on AFF's position with regards to this issue.

The logo for the Army Families Federation (AFF) is located in the bottom right corner. It consists of the lowercase letters 'aff' in a bold, green, sans-serif font. Below the logo, there are several horizontal decorative lines in shades of orange and brown.

employment (4% of all enquiries)



The issues raised in this quarter are similar to those raised over the years (**up 23% 58 from 47 same quarter previous year**) however, the impact of recruitment freezes and a tighter job market may be beginning to impact on spouses' opportunities for work around the world. In particular, **Cyprus is continuing to be a difficult place for employment opportunities** for those who wish to work, and many hurdles are faced by spouses wishing to run their own businesses in Germany. Even in Scotland and Northern Ireland, spouses are being penalised by these areas refusing to acknowledge national qualifications.

“Spouses who gained their teaching qualification in England are finding it difficult getting teaching jobs in Scotland”

AFF believes explanations and information provided to spouses before they move overseas is imperative in making appropriate plans and decisions and to avoid the devastating impact that being out of work or underemployed can have on both finances, careers and mental health.

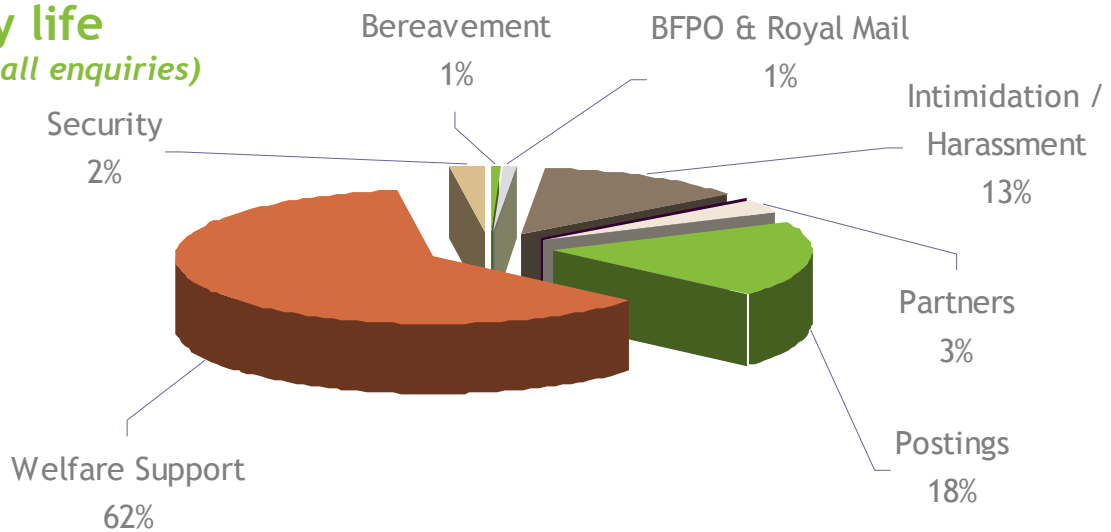
The **impact of moving around and having a disparate CV continues to be raised**, and will be tackled in more detail in an AFF Employment Survey in the coming months. This will be a detailed look at how much moving around affects spouses' employment and training opportunities.

“I am having difficulty gaining employment due to my husband being away on training and deployment. We are, as such, single parents”

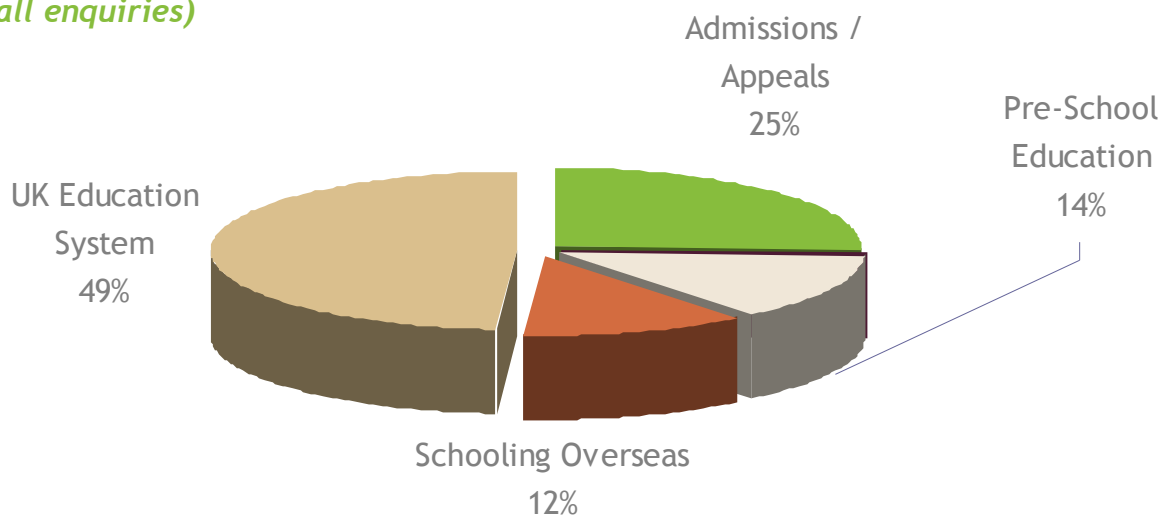
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families' concerns - October - December 2010

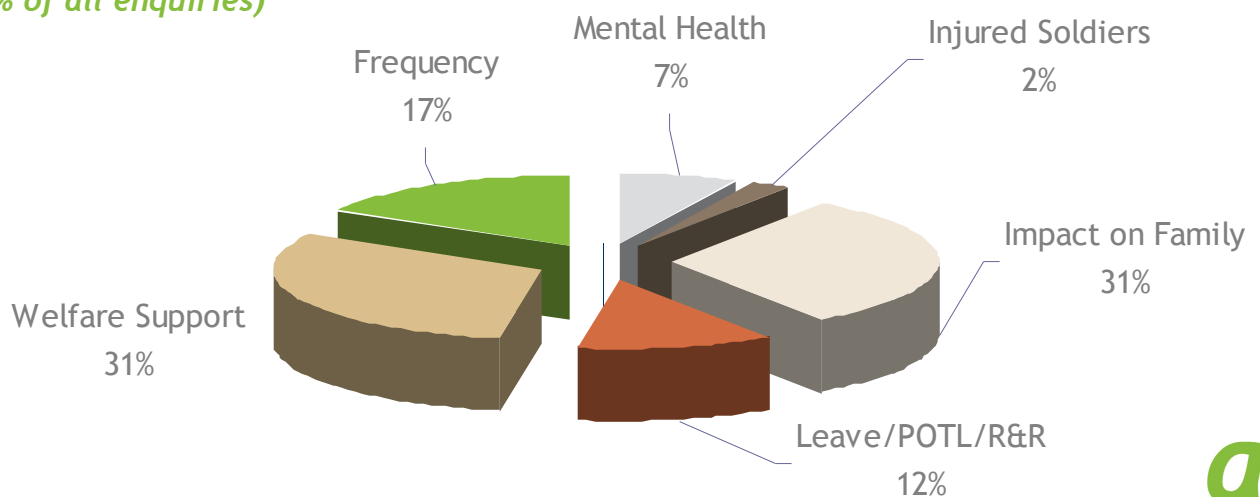
family life (19% of all enquiries)



education (5% of all enquiries)



training & deployment (4% of all enquiries)

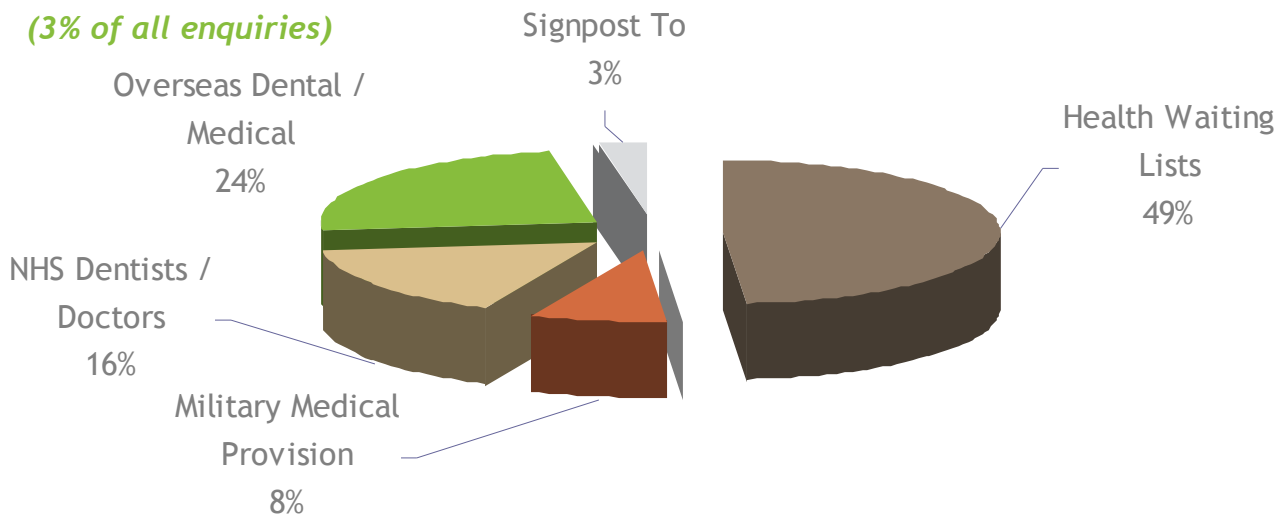


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families' concerns - October - December 2010

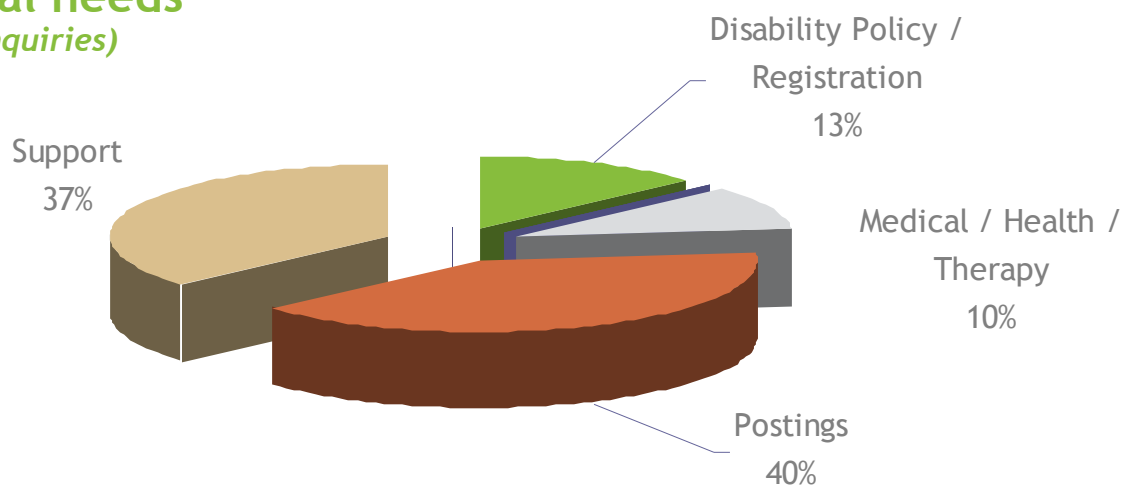
health

(3% of all enquiries)



additional needs

(2% of all enquiries)



AFF Easy Poll Results

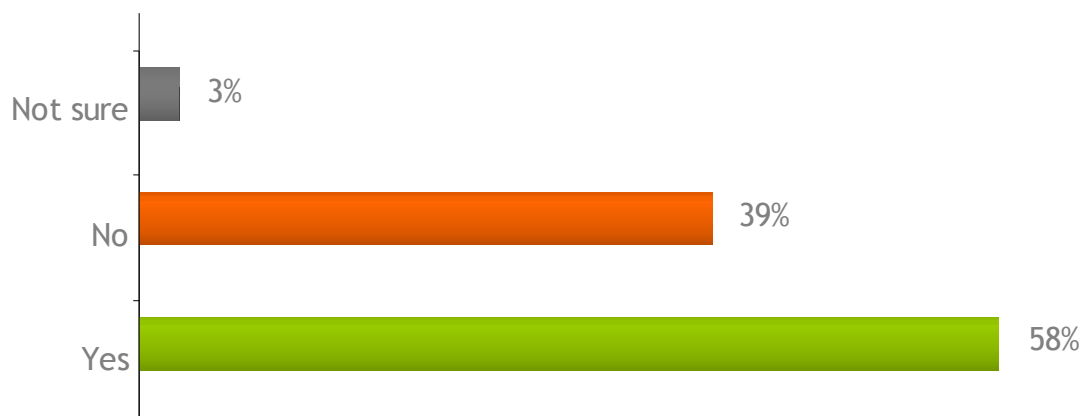
I will leave the Army if CEA is cut



I feel very uncertain of my future in the Army



I am interested in what UK Forces do to improve the lives of the Afghan population



AFF Easy Poll Results

I am concerned that changes to the Armed Forces Pension Scheme will seriously affect my financial stability



Of the following which are you most concerned about changes occurring to?

