

A QUICK GUIDE TO OCCUPYING SFA

Introduction

This guide is intended only as a brief summary of points that you should be aware of before and during the occupation of SFA. It is NOT intended to be comprehensive; should you require more detailed information you should refer to the 'Occupants' Handbook' published by DE, or JSP 464 which contains Tri Service Accommodation Regulations. Should any disparities be found, JSP 464 takes precedence in all cases.

Receipt of Assignment Order

- If you are already in SFA, as soon as you or your spouse receives an assignment order you should notify your local Housing Information Centre (HIC) (Freephone 0800 169 6322) of your likely move out date (or intention to apply for retention if applicable). This will help them to plan allocations to those coming to the area.

Applying for SFA

- You should apply for SFA to the HIC covering your new location using form 1132, which can be obtained from your local HIC, UWO or JSP 464. The form must be countersigned by your CO or his representative (normally UWO) and should be sent to the HIC which covers the area in which you need SFA.
- On the 1132, you must provide a 'required by' date for your SFA; this can be up to 4 weeks before or after your reporting for duty date.
- You may apply as early as you like and if the 1132 is submitted:
 - More than 4 months before the required by date, the HIC do not have to provide an address until the 4 month point.
 - Less than 4 months before the required by date, the HIC MUST, within 15 working days of receiving it, either provide the address of an SFA to your entitlement, or give you two choices:
 1. The offer of a Non Availability Certificate (NAC) which means that a Substitute SFA (SSFA) will be rented privately for you, or
 2. To decline SSFA and remain on the Waiting List until suitable SFA becomes available.

Accepting an Offer

- You must accept or reject an offer of SFA in writing and within 14 days of receipt.
- The HIC must confirm the address of the offered and accepted SFA 28 days prior to the required by date.

Important Points to Note

- If you reject a valid offer of SFA, the HIC must make you a second offer, but it does not have to do so within any set period. It may therefore be some considerable time before you receive another offer, and in the intervening period you have no right to retain your existing SFA if you have started work at your new duty station. There is also no entitlement to SSFA for a second offer. You should therefore be VERY careful before rejecting an offer of SFA, and only do so if you fully understand the implications and potential penalties of doing so.
- Any SFA or SSFA offered must be within 10 miles of your duty station, unless this limit has been extended to 20 miles with the permission of the local garrison commander.
- DE can change the address of SFA allocated up to 28 days before the required by date. However, if they do so and the family has children of school age, the new address MUST be within the same school catchment area of the initial address. If none is available, DE must provide a NAC for SSFA within the same catchment area.
- If an NAC is necessary, it must be issued no later than 51 calendar days before the required by date for moves within UK, and 65 for moves from abroad. An NAC cannot be withdrawn within these periods without the agreement of the applicant.
- If you are allocated SSFA it is automatically deemed to be Grade 1 for Charge. If it does not meet the requirements of Grade 1 for Charge, the grading can only be challenged within the first 3 months of occupation; after that it is too late and Grade 1 charges must be paid throughout the period of occupation.

Moving In

- All SFA should be completely ready by the time the new occupants arrive, but occasionally some are not up to the required standard. If it is not, do not accept it. When the removal van is waiting outside this is easier said than done, but in such cases DE are required to ensure that alternative accommodation is made available to you.

Complaints

- If you are unhappy with any aspect of the way you have been treated, the standard of your SFA or any other aspect, make a formal complaint and **INSIST ON A REFERENCE NUMBER**. Without a reference number your complaint does not register and cannot be used as evidence of the overall standard of service and quality.
- You are not alone. Use the chain of command; tell your UWO if you are having problems with your application or any other aspect of SFA.