

# Select Committee on the Armed Forces Bill

Oral evidence: Armed Forces Bill, Session 5, HC 1281

Thursday 18 March 2021

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Members present: James Sunderland (Chair); Stuart Anderson; Tonia Antoniazzi; Dan Carden; Miss Sarah Dines; Leo Docherty; Martin Docherty-Hughes; Mrs Sharon Hodgson; Mr Richard Holden; Mr Kevan Jones; Jack Lopresti; Carol Monaghan; Stephen Morgan.

Questions 216-288

## Witnesses

**I:** Ray Lock CBE, Chief Executive, Forces in Mind Trust, Professor Catherine Kinane, Medical Director, Combat Stress, and Dr Felix Davies, Operations Director, Combat Stress.

**II:** David Brewer, Chief Operating Officer, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, and Tim Redfern, Managing Director, Amey Defence Service.

**III:** Hannah Blythyn MS, Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government, Welsh Government, and Graeme Dey MSP, Minister for Parliamentary Business and Veterans, Scottish Government.



## Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: David Brewer and Tim Redfern.

**Chair:** We are going to jump straight into panel two now. We still have 45 minutes for the session. We welcome two guests: Mr David Brewer, chief operating officer at the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, and Mr Tim Redfern, managing director of Amey Defence Services. You are both very welcome. Moving straight into questions, I will ask Stuart Anderson to start us off.

Q235 **Stuart Anderson:** Hello, David, and hello, Tim. How would you characterise the state of service accommodation?

**David Brewer:** As you probably know, I am responsible for the Defence Infrastructure Organisation, which directly looks after the service family accommodation and also provides the support and maintenance to single living accommodation. To answer your question, Stuart, there are some common characteristics across both those groups of accommodation, the principal one being variability. There is some very good accommodation; there is quite a lot of adequate accommodation, and there is a small amount that is poor.

Looking across the single living accommodation first, approximately half of that is in good condition, close to half is in a fair condition, and we rate about 7% as poor. That poor accommodation is not always fully occupied. It is often not used, or it is used for very short durations. The picture is probably a little better in family accommodation, which has really shown improvement over the last three or four years, with investment increasing, but it still has quite a long way to go. A lot of the houses were built in the '50s, '60s and '70s, which is hardly the golden age of home building, so even where they are well maintained, many of them are functional, basic homes.

Q236 **Stuart Anderson:** You said that not all of the 7% rated as poor is used. What percentage of that 7% is used?

**David Brewer:** We have fairly poor records and data on the way in which the single living accommodation is actually used. Our central record keeping on that is not great, so we cannot really give a categorical answer to your question. We know that last year, something like 2,300 people were not charged for their single living accommodation. That is a mixture of it being in poor condition, and a number of allowances. Somewhere south of that number are routinely in the poorest-condition stuff. If I take the Army estate, for instance, of its 60,000-70,000 rooms, the Army still has about 8,000 that are in really poor condition or in multiple occupancy, or that kind of thing.

**Stuart Anderson:** Thank you. Tim?



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**Tim Redfern:** Thanks for the question. If I may, I will take a second to put myself and my role into context. Amey looks after all the UK SFA. We also look after all the other UK MoD infrastructure—standfast elements that were put up with PFI. I am ex-forces, so I absolutely understand what SFA and SLA are like, and certainly I understand personally the impact of not having the right level of maintenance or support. It impacts on people when their partners or spouses are deployed. I took over this job just over three years ago with the demise of Carillion, and I think we are still seeing some of the legacy and the hangover from that. In the last three years we have certainly seen a level of improvement and a real focus on customer and client.

I run a big team. We have about 1,500 people in a supply chain of about 4,500. We spend about £55 million a month in supply chains, so it is a big business that operates at scale and at pace. I certainly pay tribute to those people.

In terms of what the estate looks like, I agree with David. It is mixed. I see it from a slightly different perspective in that we run a series of service delivery contracts that are responsible for the maintenance of the infrastructure. The contract is generally a “fix on fail” contract, so if something breaks, we fix it. We also run a level of project delivery and project investment. By the very nature of what we are doing, it is in part a reactive contract. That said, the levels of investment in the estate over the last three years have gone up and up year on year, and I think the estate is getting better.

There is a variation between that which is old and that which is brand-new. Both get maintained to the same standard, but clearly there is a difference in habitability that people do or do not enjoy.

**Stuart Anderson:** Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you very much indeed. Stephen Morgan next, please.

Q237 **Stephen Morgan:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to both our witnesses for coming before the Committee today. This Committee was due to virtually visit and speak to service personnel living in service family and single living accommodation this morning, but the Secretary of State mysteriously vetoed the trip last night. Can you help the Committee understand why that might have been? Do you think the MoD is ashamed of the accommodation it provides for service personnel? David first, please. *[Interruption.]*

**Chair:** David, did you catch that?

**David Brewer:** I’m afraid I lost the connection. I have had to come back in on my phone, so I did not hear the previous question. I apologise.

**Stephen Morgan:** Tim, did you hear the question?

**Tim Redfern:** Yes, I did, Mr Morgan.



**Stephen Morgan:** Would you like to answer?

**Tim Redfern:** I will be quite honest with you. I think it is probably not for me to comment on a decision by the Secretary of State. We are absolutely not ashamed of the accommodation that we maintain on behalf of DIO. I have lived in it in the past. I know what it is like. I am very proud of the work that my team does. Apart from that, I cannot comment on why the Secretary of State chose to veto your virtual visit.

Q238 **Stephen Morgan:** Thank you for that. My second question is: do you think it is acceptable that more than one third of those living in single living accommodation are in the poorest grades of accommodation? Do you agree that problems with basic facilities such as heating and hot water are widespread? David first and then Tim, please.

**David Brewer:** If I take it in two parts, the grading system is complicated, whether it be single living or family accommodation. The grading is a mixture of the size and facilities offered in a particular property, the location of the property and the condition of the property. Just because a significant proportion is in that lowest grade—that is true only for the single living accommodation, not for the families' accommodation—it does not mean that it is necessarily in poor condition. It is a function of all those three things. As I said in my opening statement, there is some poor accommodation out there, but it is not at the scale of a third of people using it. The majority of people living full time in that accommodation are in better quality accommodation than those numbers would suggest.

However, I would not seek to deny the fact that there are some areas where that accommodation is not at the right standard, which is why we are investing so much in trying to improve it. In particular, heating and hot water failures are the single thing that we are absolutely focused on improving and sorting out. You know for yourself, in your own home, that loss of heating or hot water is traumatic for the family and a difficult issue to deal with.

In the single living accommodation, we have made some good progress, not necessarily reducing the numbers of failures but rapidly improving the time we take to repair them. Where people lose their heating or hot water, it is generally for a much shorter duration than might have been the case a year or two ago. In the year just gone, we completely replaced something like 875 boilers and heating systems in the service family accommodation. We are getting stuck in to try and improve things, but it is still not where we would like it to be.

Q239 **Stephen Morgan:** With regard to hot water and heating, how many families do you think have been affected in the past year?

**David Brewer:** Too many. Tim might be able to come in on the actual numbers of failures per month that we are seeing come through over the winter months, but it is too many. It is a reflection of the old state of the heating systems and the stock, which we are trying to get after and improve. Tim, do you have some statistics on numbers of failures?



Q240 **Stephen Morgan:** Tim, can you give me the numbers?

**Tim Redfern:** I will address the two points in your question. In terms of the allocation of personnel into grades of accommodation, that is a matter for MoD. We clearly apply the policies that we are directed to apply.

I agree that heating and hot water are key issues around habitability. If I split that in two, in terms of service family accommodation, people can interact with us and report an issue around heating or hot water in a number of ways: through a telephone call to a customer service centre, through instant messaging, through Facebook or Twitter, or through a web form.

Over the last two years, from March '19 to February '21, we replaced just under 1,800 boilers immediately through boiler failure, on top of a further 2,200 boilers that we replaced as part of a preventive maintenance programme. We take real care to understand and triage the impact of heating and hot water, so while there are prescribed levels of response—they are prescribed by DIO and the MoD in our contract—we have the ability to triage calls.

In the winter season, when there is clearly potential for heating and hot water to fail more often, we will triage calls. We will prioritise, for instance, spouses or partners who are by themselves, where their other half is potentially deployed, those who have children and those who are potentially in vulnerable categories. If there is a lack of heating or hot water, we will respond within three hours. We meet that KPI just less than 100% of the time.

Where there is an inability to immediately fix or restore heating and/or hot water, we can do a number of things. If we cannot do it immediately and it is the winter months and it is cold, we will absolutely and immediately, without recourse to DIO or anybody else, offer to put them in alternate hotel accommodation. In the winter months we do that about 50 times a month.

If there are alternative sources—either an immersion tank or some heating—we will offer temporary heating, but we have to try to tailor the service that we offer to meet the immediate requirements of the individuals, recognising that housing a single parent with young children in SFA, which is older, colder and less thermally insulated, is a problem. We are very focused on heating and hot water in the SFA space.

As David said, in terms of SLA—barrack single living accommodation—we have Project Hydra, which we kicked off with DIO. That is about the ability to immediately restore hot water and heating in essentially barrack blocks. As David correctly said, we put a large number in place, with more to come in for next year. For the RAF, this has meant that almost 1,600 people have not been moved out of their accommodation, because we have been able to restore heating and hot water quite quickly. My team, David's team and DIO are very, very focused on heating and hot water.



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Finally, going back to SFA, we look at the data very carefully and we track it. Currently, across the entire SFA, we are tracking one property that has had a lack of heating and/or hot water for less than seven days. Typically, at the moment, it is around seven in any week.

**Stephen Morgan:** Thank you to the witnesses and back to you, Chair.

**Chair:** We have two interventions, first from Sarah Dines and then from Carol Monaghan.

Q241 **Miss Dines:** Can I just follow up on what Tim said? I was very pleasantly surprised to hear that you get back to complaints about difficulties with hot water within three hours. Compared with other parts of the sector, that is pretty impressive. Can you explain to me what investment you have had to be able to do that, and over what period of time it has proceeded to get to this happy state?

**Tim Redfern:** Thank you for the question. We run a supply chain model, so we have a simple management function. We have a customer service organisation with about 200 staff, all of whom are trained in various areas of the contracts and services that we deliver. We run a national, regional and local supply chain model whereby we will, using technology and quite hi-tech handhelds, have the ability to prioritise and send an emergency or a critical job to one of our supply chain partners immediately. We have a 24/7, 365 coverage. We are very, very clear around our ability to meet coverage over things such as the Christmas period, when clearly more people are at home and it is often colder. It is a combination of a real focus on processes, a real understanding and an ability to triage calls within our customer services centre, use of technology to push the job down to our supply chain, and a real focus on the fact that heating and hot water is important. We don't get it right all the time, but we get most of it right most of the time.

**Chair:** Thank you. The answers are quite long, and we still have a lot to get through in 25 minutes, so can I very politely please ask for all answers and questions to be as short as possible?

Q242 **Carol Monaghan:** Tim, you have said that the majority of issues are in single living accommodation. The figure we have from the National Audit Office is that over a third of those living in SLA are living in substandard accommodation. Could you tell us what the figures are for those in married accommodation?

**Tim Redfern:** If you are talking about the Decent Homes standard and the Decent Homes Plus standard, perhaps you might refer that to David, because clearly the standards are technical standards, and I think David has the detail on that.

Q243 **Carol Monaghan:** Is the Decent Homes standard and the Decent Homes Plus standard your grading, or is that National Audit Office grading?

**David Brewer:** Shall I respond to that? The Decent Homes standard is a standard that is used by social housing organisations, and it is set by MCHLG. We have put in an extra level that we call Decent Homes Plus,



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which goes slightly beyond the Decent Homes standard. Around about 85% of our families accommodation is above a Decent Homes Plus standard and just about all of the families accommodation is above the Decent Homes standard. So, we have in total 460 houses that are occupied that are below the Decent Homes standard.

As policy, we would never allocate a family a house that is below that standard, so it is always brought above that standard before anybody takes occupation, but sometimes, if there is something that happens during the period that people are in occupation and it drops below that standard, we give them the choice to either stay in the house or move into a different one. That is why we have a very small number of families who are in accommodation that is below the Decent Homes standard. Of the 49,000 homes, all but 460 are above that minimum standard.

Q244 **Carol Monaghan:** Are there people currently in those 460 homes? That is really the question.

**David Brewer:** Yes. There are 460 that are occupied. Those are people whose house has dropped below that standard while they have been living in it and they have chosen to stay in that house rather than to move to alternative accommodation. Then, when a new family moves in—before somebody moves in—it would be brought up to standard. There are a further 560 houses that are below that standard that are not in use.

Q245 **Carol Monaghan:** Those people who are in those houses— occupying them—why have they chosen not to move? Is there nothing suitable in the area? Are they too far from schools? What are the reasons?

**David Brewer:** It would be generally because they don't want the upheaval. They might have only a few months left in their tour before they move on somewhere else.

**Carol Monaghan:** Okay. Thank you. And thank you, Chair.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. Can I call Sharon Hodgson, please?

Q246 **Mrs Hodgson:** Thank you very much, Chair. Some 26% of tri-service personnel say that the quality of their accommodation provision increases the likelihood of their deciding to leave the service. What are you doing to address the levels of satisfaction with accommodation? That is to both of you, so whoever wants to go first, David or Tim.

**Tim Redfern:** I think the reasons why people choose to leave the services, and I can count myself in that category, are mixed. People leave for a variety of reasons.

As for what we are doing to raise customer satisfaction, nobody wants to see poor or substandard accommodation. We are working very hard with DIO. The contract that we deliver at the moment meets—exceeds—the service delivery levels, as demanded by Government.

So, as I said at the start, there are “fix on fail” contractors and it isn't always the answer, and there is a lack of investment in the estate. So, we



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deliver a contract that meets the mandate that has been placed on us. It doesn't always meet the expectation of service personnel. We are working very hard to do two things.

One is looking at the levels of project work that we have done. So, perhaps we might talk about Project Speed, which is a fiscal stimulus programme, additional funding, that has been put in place, which will enable an additional number of up to about 3,500 SFA to be completely refurbished, and that is work in this calendar year. That is real immediate betterment of the estate, directly as a consequence of additional funding that the Chancellor was able to give the MoD and DIO. That is a real example of where we have been able, through investment from DIO, to offer immediate—over the next eight or nine months—much-improved accommodation for potentially up to 3,500 families.

**David Brewer:** We are spending a lot of money improving the estate. We have tripled the amount of money that we are spending on upgrading the estate since 2016. On the family accommodation, we are now spending £171 million a year in improvements. We have changed what we spend that money on. So, we are diverting more of that money to things like kitchens, bathrooms and play areas—things that the families tell us they really value.

We are improving the maintenance services. Tim's organisation are doing a much better job of hitting the contracted standards than was the case a few years ago. As Tim mentioned, we are in the process of letting some new maintenance contracts, which will take that level of service on to another level—the FDIS contracts—so changing our maintenance standards. That same survey that you referenced—I think it was 34% of people said that actually the accommodation offer was one of the factors that tended to keep them in the armed service. I think it is the same survey that also said, when people had left the service, when they were asked "What was the reason that caused you to?" less than 1% said accommodation was a material reason in their decision to leave the service. We know it is a really, really important factor in making sure that serving personnel have good quality experiences, but we are working hard to improve that customer satisfaction.

Q247 **Mrs Hodgson:** Thank you. A follow-up question to Tim, with regard to the particular service that you offer, what are the levels of satisfaction for personnel using your services, and what specifically are you doing to improve satisfaction with the response to maintenance requests—I know you covered this a bit before—especially with the quality of the work undertaken, and are you meeting your contractual waiting times?

**Tim Redfern:** Thank you for your question. In terms of the assessment around customer satisfaction, we measure customer satisfaction ourselves. We poll 5% of the personnel, the people that use our service, and ask them a series of questions which are set. While our NPS target is 60, we are a little below that; but from an NPS perspective we are very close to that.



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In terms of meeting the DIO targets, DIO also measure simply through third-party customer satisfaction. The chief exec has set a rolling target of, I think, 69 through a rolling 12-month period, and last month I think we were at 67 or 68, so very close to that. Perhaps the opposite is complaint rates. We have met or bettered those complaint rates over the last 12 months, consistently—and consistently over the last three years.

So what are we doing to increase the levels of satisfaction? Again, we have put a series of improvement activities in place around focusing on things like the right trade, around punctuality, around technology, around better communications. I stress again, we are meeting or exceeding the service measures that DIO measures us against.

**Mrs Hodgson:** Thank you so much, Tim. That's me, Chair. Thank you.

**Chair:** Thank you, Sharon. Sarah Dines.

Q248 **Miss Dines:** Could I ask the witnesses please just to better clarify, for newer members of the Committee or newer MPs such as myself, the relationship between individual accommodation and family accommodation? Are you updating family in preference to single people's accommodation? If you could give me some information I would be very grateful.

**David Brewer:** That is quite a big question. I am not sure it is quite going to get to the heart of what you are after, Sarah, but I shall do my best. We have something like 49,000 properties which are for service families, and then we have got something like 100,000 bed spaces, which is single living accommodation. The single living accommodation will sometimes be used for single individuals who are living permanently in that accommodation and will sometimes be used for individuals who may have their own home elsewhere, but they are working away from their normal location, and they need somewhere for the period of that activity; so it is a real mixture of different people using the single living accommodation in particular for different reasons. All serving personnel are entitled to the accommodation, and married families are entitled to the family accommodation.

Q249 **Miss Dines:** What I was getting at, really, was are you prioritising upgrading the family more than the single people's accommodation?

**David Brewer:** We currently are probably spending a little bit more of the money available to us on family accommodation per property than we are on single living accommodation. We have had a real push on family accommodation across the past three years. We had a real push on the single accommodation in the early part of the 2000s. It has probably been through a period of suffering further underinvestment and we are now ramping up the level of work on the single living accommodation, so it is probably lagging a few years behind the investment in families.

Q250 **Miss Dines:** When you say "ramping up", what do you mean? Are you putting more money into family conversions or upgrades?



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**David Brewer:** On the family stuff, there has been really consistent year-on-year growth from about £67 million in 2016 to about £170 million this year. If I look at single living accommodation, the money that is spent on improvement was probably around £40 million last year. We are looking to spend approximately £2 billion over the next 10 years improving the single living accommodation. We are just starting off some big programmes of refurbishment and replacement in that single living accommodation.

**Miss Dines:** Thank you very much.

**Chair:** Thank you. Jack Lopresti next, please.

Q251 **Jack Lopresti:** Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the panel. For the purposes of balance and my own reflections, I served as a mobilised reservist back in 2008, 2009 and the standard of accommodation then was pretty awful, I have to say. There were four or five of us jammed in a room and some of it was pretty ropey. It has improved massively since then. One of my sons is serving in the Gunners and has moved into some recently refurbished accommodation in Salisbury plain. From what I can see, his accommodation is excellent. My question is, do you think the MoD is giving accommodation the priority and attention it deserves? From my own experience, I think it probably is.

**David Brewer:** One of the really important changes that have been made in the last few years is that the funding for investment and infrastructure, which used to be held centrally by DIO, has now been delegated to the frontline commands. What we have seen since the funding was delegated is that they are choosing to prioritise investment in infrastructure, so the level of spend has been increased. That has been supported by increased investment from central Government also, so there is more to play with. Within the frontline commands, when they have been choosing where to prioritise their infrastructure spend, there has definitely been a shift toward those areas that have an impact on the lived experience of serving personnel. They really recognise that people are the heart of their capability and that it is an important place to spend your money.

**Jack Lopresti:** Great. I appreciate your answer and what you are doing.

**Chair:** Thank you. We are going to throw the floor open now, can I quickly ask Richard Holden if he wishes to come in?

Q252 **Mr Holden:** Thank you very much. I am quite interested in the satisfaction levels locally for your services. To Mr Redfern, what are the current satisfaction levels for your service for the single service personnel?

**Tim Redfern:** There are many measures, Mr Holden. We have spoken about the AFCAS study. We currently track in our regional prime contracts around only 14 or 15 complaints across the entire service delivery area per month. We pick up levels of satisfaction in SLA through high levels of estate compliance and through KPI and service level compliance. We track customer satisfaction more closely in the SFA space, where we go back and seek people's confirmation of their satisfaction on the task. As I said



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earlier, we are at, or very close to, the measures we are obliged to meet. I think the point of it is, though, that a “fix on fail” contract is never going to meet the expectations of various families, or indeed those in single living accommodation, and that has been one of the focuses of the DIO over the next procurement process.

**David Brewer:** Would it be okay, Chair, if I added a little to that answer?

**Chair:** Please do.

**Mr Holden:** Yes, I think that would be helpful.

**David Brewer:** I think what Tim is talking about there is that it is really difficult to get that feedback directly from the end customer when we are in single living accommodation. In a family home, a member of the family phones up, they register the call, and you know who you are dealing with when that repair has been completed, so you can go back to the end user and ask them how satisfied with the service they were, and you can capture that information.

On single living accommodation, if we have a fault or a problem, it will often be phoned in by the quartermaster or the head of that particular establishment. We will not necessarily have direct contact with the end users who are occupying the premises where the work is being carried out, so we cannot really capture in the same way that in-the-moment information about, “How satisfied were you with the piece of work that has just been completed?” That is one of the challenges, in terms of really getting the customer feedback from that part of the service.

Q253 **Mr Holden:** I do not know whether you have bothered to read the NAO report into single living accommodation, but I also happen to be on the Public Accounts Committee. We have just done a report on this, and it showed that, overall, tri-service satisfaction with single living accommodation has declined substantially over the past five years. Those actual tri-service numbers now show that under half of people say they’re satisfied. How can you be satisfied, Mr Redfern? You have just said you’ve got 15 complaints, yet over half the military come back and tell us they are not satisfied?

**Tim Redfern:** The answer is, as I said at the start, that I and my team really care about the standard of accommodation that the military provides. We track a level of customer satisfaction across the entire business, but clearly—

Q254 **Mr Holden:** There is a decline, Mr Redfern.

**Tim Redfern:** Clearly, the “fix on fail” nature of this contract does not meet the expectations of the personnel, and we and the DIO have acknowledged that, but there is insufficient money in this contract to meet people’s expectations. In terms of response times, in terms of the service we deliver, we are delivering the service that the DIO has asked us to deliver. I absolutely recognise, Mr Holden, that, on occasion, that does not meet the expectations of service families.



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Q255 **Mr Holden:** It is not just on occasion; it is over half of them. Let's try to be realistic about this. The point you are driving at about "fix on fail", though, is clearly a much more valid one. Mr Brewer, do you want to comment about "fix on fail"?

**David Brewer:** If we track back to around about 2010 or 2011, there was not enough money to fund the maintenance services. A decision was made to move to a very minimalistic set of contract specifications, which effectively had a minimum level of service, and as Mr Redfern said, that is not the way that we would choose to maintain the estate. We do have a new contract for all of the maintenance work in accommodation and the built estates, which will be going live very shortly, and we are definitely introducing a much stronger element of planned preventative maintenance into that. We have still, though, got a backlog of an old and tired estate that needs to be brought up to a standard before we can really keep it at the levels we would like to.

Q256 **Mr Holden:** I understand that "old and tired" is definitely the case for some of our service personnel, but can you just highlight what level of backlog you are actually looking at?

**David Brewer:** There is a publication called the "State of the Estate" report, which talks about eye-watering numbers of billions of pounds of backlog across the families accommodation. I think we did a condition piece that said it was something like £900 million across that estate.

Q257 **Mr Holden:** Okay. That seems pretty significant to me. What hopes do you have for being able to improve the situation? Is that all in this new contract that you are looking at now? That is basically what I am asking.

**David Brewer:** I think it is a mixture of three things that are driving improvement: better maintenance service delivery, which is about the contracted standards and the suppliers delivering those standards; investment in infrastructure—as we have talked about, we have really increased the level of investment and continue to increase the level of investment; and the culture in the team of people who provide the services. We have a really dedicated team of people who are committed to trying to make things better, many of them service families themselves, service partners, ex-serving personnel and some people in uniform.

Q258 **Mr Holden:** I will finish after this, Chair. Overall, there seems to be a real issue with the complexity of the military accommodation system. People do not really know where to turn, given the number of contractors and commands—it is not a one-stop shop. The service personnel I have talked to say that they end up becoming experts in the military accommodation system. Is this something that you are going to look to simplify for our personnel, whether they are in single living accommodation or family accommodation, so that they can easily go to somebody who is not necessarily in the chain of command, because so many of them have to fall back on the chain of command in order to try to get anything sorted out?



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**David Brewer:** Yes. One big area of improvement in the new FDIS contract is the easier, simpler ways for the end users to get in touch with us in the maintenance delivery space. That includes things like the ability to make more online appointments and to get that direct contact and that direct feedback. So, yes, we are doing that. On this issue around the delegation to the individual commands of decision making around investment, on paper that looks like it has made it more complicated, but actually I think it really has driven improvement.

**Mr Holden:** Okay. That sounds good. Thank you very much indeed.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. We are going to draw to a close there. I will just share a personal anecdote, if I may. I grew up very close to Aldershot. In the '70s and '80s, Aldershot was a complete nightmare. The MoD has completely rebuilt Aldershot in recent years. I was a commanding officer in Aldershot. The quality of the accommodation there is absolutely first class. I commend the DIO and Amey for all you are doing to improve the quality of the estate right across the MoD. Thank you very much indeed. Clearly, we have some issues with the legacy estate, such as Abingdon; the older airfield-type sites do need a bit of work. However, clearly, from my experience, the MoD is investing heavily in new accommodation. We are seeing, thankfully, regiments moving into new sites all the time. I thank you for what you are doing. I thank our two expert witnesses. We will draw stumps there. Thank you so much.