

Welcome to Wales

Supporting and investing in our
Armed Forces Community in Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Foreword by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

The Welsh Government would like to extend a very warm welcome to Wales to you and your families.

We recognise the value of the Armed Forces and your contribution to our communities in Wales. We also have a proud history of Welsh men and women who make up a large contingent of the Armed Forces.

We recognise the impact deployment can have on your lives, and that accessing services and support in a new place can sometimes be a challenge. Working with our Armed Forces stakeholders, we have produced this booklet to support you and your families as you settle into your new communities.

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting both serving personnel and those who leave the Armed Forces and return to civilian life. This booklet outlines the support and services available when you are serving, such as specialist health care and access to free swimming at local leisure centres. For those with families, it also includes information about the range of support and services available to you – such as early education and free childcare.

We hope that this information will help you enjoy your time serving in Wales.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Sargeant".

Carl Sargeant AM
Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children

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1. Introduction

The Welsh Government welcomes you to Wales.

The Welsh Government is the overarching Governmental body in Wales and has devolved powers from the UK Government in areas of public services, such as health, social care, education and Local Government. The UK Government retains responsibility for defence, foreign policy and benefits.

Wales is a vibrant nation with its own language, heritage and cultural identity. It has a proud military tradition. We recognise the valuable contribution the Armed Forces make to the communities in which they live.

As a Government we are working with partners in the public and third sectors to ensure services meet your needs as members of the Armed Forces community in Wales.

This booklet gives you information on some of the services provided, which was correct at the time of publication, but may be subject to change. Using the contact details provided in the booklet will enable you to access more detailed information if you wish.



2. About Wales



In Wales we have had our own devolved Government since 1997, but we are still proud to be part of the United Kingdom. We have a population of just over 3 million people and two official languages: English and Welsh, which is spoken by approximately 20% of the population.

Wales is a diverse country and many parts are predominantly rural. It is well known for its varied and beautiful landscape, which attracts a great deal of tourism. There are three National Parks, the Brecon Beacons, Snowdonia and the Pembrokeshire Coast National Parks. Wales also has a Coastal Path which was opened in 2012 and is the world's first uninterrupted route along a national coast. However, we also have vibrant and dynamic cities including Cardiff (our capital), Swansea and Newport.

Wales' history and culture also attracts tourists. We have more castles than any other country in Europe and we have many historical sites that go back to Roman times. National Museums are free to visit in Wales such as St Fagans, the Natural History Museum in Cardiff.

Wales' National Day, called St David's Day is celebrated on 1st March every year. Many people in Wales will wear the national emblem of a daffodil or leek on St David's Day.

For more information on places of interest: www.visitwales.com

Wales is governed by the Welsh Government which is based in the capital city of Cardiff. The First Minister is the leader of the Welsh Government. The official office of the First Minister is based in Tŷ Hywel in Cardiff Bay.

The National Assembly for Wales was established by the Government of Wales Act 1998, with elections taking place every five years. The Senedd in Cardiff Bay is the main building of the National Assembly. As it is a public building you can visit seven days a week and access the public galleries to listen to debates when the Assembly is sitting. For more information: www.assembly.wales

Wales has 22 Councils. These cover all local government responsibilities including education, housing, waste/recycling, open spaces and parks.

3. Education and Skills

As in the rest of the UK, education is free in state schools in Wales. The local Council is responsible for providing education in the area where you live.

Like the rest of the UK the school year is broken up into 3 terms:

- Autumn Term usually runs from the beginning of September until Christmas time.
- Spring Term starts at the beginning of January and lasts until Easter (usually the end of March).
- Summer Term starts from the end of the Easter holidays (usually early April) until the middle of July.

Each term also has a half term break: schools are usually closed for a week.

Your child could attend different schools according to their age. In Wales we are clear that a good start in life is crucial. All 3-4 year olds in Wales are entitled to a minimum of 10 hours of free Foundation Phase early education beginning the term your child turns three. This is normally provided in infant or primary schools, but sometimes in nurseries. Your local Council will be able to provide more information on local providers and schools. When your child is 4 they will start statutory education. From 4-11 they will normally attend a primary school and then move to secondary school from the age of 11.

In some areas in Wales we are now moving to campuses that provide education from 3-18. Again your local Council will be able to provide information.

The School Admission Code makes provision for your child/children to be admitted to an infant class mid-term even if it means the class will breach the infant class size limit. It will be retained during your child's stay in the Foundation Phase in school.

Welsh language and bilingual education is available in schools across Wales. Your child does not have to speak Welsh to attend a Welsh language or bilingual school – they will soon learn the language and be fluent in both Welsh and English. Schools will provide support for children learning Welsh or English as an additional language.

To find a place for your child in a school local to you and information on the provision of Welsh language and bilingual education, please contact your local Council for information. A list of local Councils can be found in Annex A, at the back of the booklet.



Term Time Absence. It is recognised the operational needs of the Armed Forces can prevent a Service family taking leave during term time. You can apply for permission in writing to your child's school for permission to allow your child leave of absence during term time.

Service Children in Education Guidance is a toolkit and guidance to help schools in Wales support Service children and overcome any challenges they may face. If you would like information on the guidance please contact: www.sseccymru.co.uk



At the age of 16, school is no longer compulsory in Wales. If your child wishes to continue his or her education you may be able to access financial help through the Welsh Government's **Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) or the Welsh Government's Learning Grant (Further Education) (WGLG (FE))**. Loans can also be taken out if your child wishes to access Higher Education (HE) such as University. Information about these grants/loans can be found at: www.studentfinancewales.co.uk

You can find **careers advice** (for those aged 16 years and over) and advice on **Apprenticeships** and **Traineeships** to gain skills whilst working, or skills to gain employment or further your education at: www.careerswales.com

The Military Preparation College for Training offers opportunities for young people through training and education, equipping them for post 16 and Higher Education. www.mpct.co.uk

Other sources of information which may help you in making an informed choice regarding your child's education is **The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS)**. It provides guidance and information to Service families on education and schools. When children move frequently from one school to another or between different educational systems obtaining appropriate provision can be complex, CEAS provides a dedicated service providing professional advice about all aspects of children's education both in the UK and Overseas.

Email: enquiries@ceas.uk.com

Web: www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service

4. Childcare

Recognising childcare is one of the biggest challenges facing working parents in Wales, Welsh Government is looking to supplement the Foundation Phase early years education available to three and four year olds with additional hours of free childcare.

In addition to this, there are also numerous other facilities available in Wales for young children under 5 years old:

Playgroups: Can be state run or private, and some are free to attend but others will charge.

Creche/Nurseries: Children can attend for a full 5 days a week or a few hours per day. They are state or privately run. Some are free and some charge.

Parent and Toddler Groups: These are where you can take your child to play with other children. Some playgroups are run through the medium of Welsh or bilingually. For more information contact your local Council.

Child-minders: Care for your child in their own homes. They must be registered with the Care and Social Services Inspectorate for Wales to ensure a safe and suitable environment for your child. All staff must have received health and police clearance to look after children. Local Councils will also have a list of all registered child-minders in your area and note if they're Welsh Speakers. For more information: www.cssiw.org.uk

The Family Information Service provides free, impartial help, support and advice on a range of family issues including childcare. Each local Council in Wales delivers the service. If you require further information contact your local Council.

If you live in a **Flying Start** area all 2-3 year olds are eligible for 12½ hours of free childcare per week and 15 hours of holiday childcare provision. To find out if you live in a Flying Start area, contact your local Council.



5. Health and Wellbeing

The National Health Service (Wales) (NHS Wales) is responsible for providing health care which includes medical, dental and optical treatment.

In Wales you can find information about registering with a GP, NHS Dentist or Optician through visiting www.wales.nhs.uk. This site provides links to each Local Health Board (LHB) which will provide full details of the primary care services in your area.

GPs will look after your general health needs. To register with a GP you should contact your chosen practice and ask to be included on their patient list. You will be asked to fill a form in to ask for your medical records to be transferred there.



You will be able to arrange for your child to receive **immunisations** from your GP Practice.

Your GP will also be able to advise on **Family Planning and Contraceptive advice**.

The Family Planning Association also provides information on all aspects of sexual health, including contraception and pregnancy. To find a Family Planning clinic located in your area please access: www.fpa.org.uk

Service women and their dependants can access **Cervical Screening** services through NHS Wales. To find out more information contact your local GP Practice.

If you or a member of your immediate family is on a **NHS waiting list** and you are posted to another part of the country, any waiting time accrued will be carried forward with you. All LHBs in Wales are aware of this commitment. If you have any concerns about your wait, these can be raised with the Chief Executive of the relevant Health Board.

If as Serving personnel you are in need of particular specialist care you will be able to access the **Fast Track Referral Pathway**. This is a joint initiative between the Defence Medical Service and NHS Wales which prioritises access to secondary care to get you back on your feet and earlier return to work. Your doctor will be able to tell you if you are eligible for the service.

C.A.L.L is a free 24 hour helpline which offers emotional support to people suffering mental distress as well as their friends, carers and relatives. Anyone concerned about their own mental health or that of a relative or friend can access the service on 0800132737 or by texting 'help' and your question to 81066 www.callhelpline.org.uk



You can also access confidential **emotional support and advice** by contacting the Samaritans. They provide a 24 hour helpline, 365 day a year and can be contacted on 116 123

You can contact **DAN 24/7**, a 24 hour drug and alcohol helpline, for information and advice relating to **substance misuse**. Freephone 0808 808 2234, Text DAN to 81066 or: www.dan247.org.uk

You and your family are entitled to **free prescription charges** on the presentation of an Exemption Certificate which can be obtained from the Local Health Board area in which you live. Please visit www.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales is a telephone line providing health advice and information 24 hours a day. You can call the service on 0845 46 47 if you are feeling unwell, or need information on health services. You can also access the website: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

For immediate life threatening emergencies call 999.

6. Benefits and Tax

Serving personnel may be entitled to Department for Work and Pensions (**DWP**) **benefits** the same as other UK citizens. Examples of benefits can include Low income, Tax Credits and Jobseekers Allowance. For more information contact: www.gov.uk/browse/benefits

If you live in Ministry of Defence provided accommodation you are entitled to a **50% council tax discount on second homes that you own**. The property must be a second home, which is defined in legislation as an unoccupied and furnished dwelling. You can apply to your local Council's council tax department to check eligibility and claim the discount.

If you own your own home or are living in rented accommodation you may be eligible for a reduction in your **Council Tax**, to find out if you qualify contact your local Council.

The Citizen's Advice Bureau is an independent organisation which will provide you with information and advice on issues relating to benefits such as Housing Benefit and Income Support, for further information contact: www.citizenadvice.org.uk/wales

The Defence Privilege Card enables Service men and women to access discounts both online and on the high street if you produce your card. The Membership Card is a physical card that you can take into stores, restaurants, leisure facilities and other venues in order to obtain a discount. To obtain your card contact the Defence Discount Service at: www.defencediscountservice.co.uk



Service personnel can access **free swimming** at local Council swimming pools across Wales, using your Defence Privilege Card as proof of eligibility. For all queries relating to the Free Swimming Scheme please contact AFFSenquiries@WLGA.gov.uk



7. Housing



Service Families Accommodation (SFA) is available for accompanied married Service personnel or civil partnerships when serving with the Armed Forces.

If you would like to leave service accommodation and get on to the first rung of the property ladder the **Forces Help to Buy Scheme** may help you to do that. The Forces Help to Buy Scheme is a new, home loan scheme which has been set up to help serving UK Military personnel to buy their first home – or in moving house. For more information contact: www.forces-helptobuy.co.uk

Help to Buy – Wales is an initiative that provides shared equity loan assistance to home buyers from Help to Buy (Wales) Limited (HtBW) with funding provided by the Welsh Government. For more information contact: www.helptobuywales.co.uk

Rent First is a Welsh Government scheme which provides rented housing at intermediate rents and gives tenants an opportunity to buy their property outright. Local Councils can allocate funding for the scheme through their Social Housing Grant allocation. To find out more about the scheme contact your local Council in your area.

You may wish to **rent accommodation**, and there are many companies and individuals who offer accommodation for rent. You may wish to rent privately or register with a letting agency. All landlords have a legal duty to provide you with details of your rights and responsibilities whilst you are living in their accommodation. Your local Council should be able to provide you with a list of agencies who rent houses in your area.

Local Councils use allocation schemes when dealing with applications for housing. If you are interesting in applying for local Council accommodation you can contact your local Council Housing Department for more information.

The Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) provides Service personnel and their families with housing information and advice on housing options.

SSAFA Forces Help Housing Advisory Service provides advice and guidance about a range of housing options. They will also be able to give you details of estate agents and housing organisations in the area in which you live. For further information contact www.ssafa.org.uk

8. Employment and Managing Finances

It is recognised the difficulties spouses and partners of Serving personnel have in finding employment.

Help to find employment for spouses and partners of Serving personnel can be found at:

Recruit for Spouses is run by military spouses and will help you find employment, contact: www.recruitforspouses.co.uk or tel: 0333 2020 996.

X-Forces offers a similar service if you are considering self-employment: www.x-forces.com or tel: 0207 022 0600.



Jobs Growth Wales, funded by the Welsh Government with support from the European Social Fund can help you find paid work experience for a 6 month period. To find out more contact: www.business.wales.gov.uk/skillsgateway/jobsgrowthwales.

Help is also available from Jobcentre Plus www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

You can get support to enhance your skills and qualifications, help with CVs or interview advice and training through the **Skills Gateway** or **0800 028 4844**

You may be eligible to have support from a joint initiative from the Welsh Government and Jobcentre Plus called the **PaCE programme**. The aim of the programme is to help and support out of work parents into training or employment. It aims to overcome barriers to employment such as childcare issues. To find out more contact: 07342 082 463 / 07342 082 136

Some personnel have difficulties getting credit, as they have moved regularly and not been able to build up a good credit rating. The UK Government has provided funding to establish an **Armed Forces Credit Union** which is 'a payroll deduction' system to allow Service personnel and veterans in receipt of a military pension, to save with and pay off loans from a credit union. The payment will come directly from your salary or pension at source. www.gov.uk

If you would like to access an independent Credit Union, information on Credit Unions in Wales, and one local to yourself can be found at: www.creditunionsofwales.co.uk/en/find-my-credit-union.html You can also access help from the following organisations:

Money Force www.moneyforce.org.uk, **Money Made Clear Wales** www.moneymadeclearwales.org, the **Money Advice Service** www.moneyadvice.org.uk the **Department for Work and Pensions** www.dwp.gov.uk and the **HM Revenue and Customs**, www.hmrc.gov.uk

Citizen Advice Cymru can provide advice and assistance with debt difficulties, 03454 04 05 06 www.adviceguide.org.uk. Support concerning loan sharks can be obtained from the Wales Illegal Money Lending Unit by email mlu@cardiff.gov.uk or via a confidential, 24 hour helpline 0300 123 3311. If you have financial problems due to **gambling** or if it is creating family stress you can get advice and help from: www.gamblersanonymous.org.uk

9. Community and Participation

Serving personnel, along with their spouses or civil partners can take part in elections and referendums. You can register at a fixed address in the UK for a 5-year period and those who are posted overseas can register at their previous UK address. If you live in the mess during the week you can register at the address where you spend weekends or leave. Once registered, there are three ways to vote – in person, by post or by proxy. www.electoralcommission.org.uk/faq/voting-and-registration/what-registration-provisions-exist-for-crown-servants-and-service-personnel

It is against the law to smoke in any public place in Wales; this includes bus stops, shops, restaurants, pubs, nightclubs, buses, trains, train platforms, offices, factories and cars (if there is a passenger present under the age of 18 years). Smoking causes many diseases and health problems. For such reasons there are laws relating to smoking and you can be fined up to £200 for smoking in a smoke free place.



In some areas in Wales, **Welsh is more widely spoken**. If you would like to learn Welsh, information about Welsh adult learner classes can be found through the Welsh language learning centre on **01267 676614** or cwestynau@maescumraegioedolion.cymru, here you will be able to find information about local providers and fees. You can also access information at: www.cymraeg.gov.wales/learning/Adults/Welsh-for-Adults/?lang=en

10. Commemoration

Wales has a proud history of military tradition. Remembrance events such as the Wales Festival of Remembrance and Remembrance Sunday take place across Wales.

Military museums and heritage sites provide important insights into Welsh history. The Welsh Government will continue to work with accredited museums to encourage visitors to broaden their understanding of Welsh military participation. www.cadw.gov.wales/about/?lang=en

Cymru'n Cofio/Wales Remembers 1914-18 is the Welsh Government programme for the centenary commemoration of the First World War in Wales. Through its programme of national events and exhibitions schools and interested individuals can gain a better understanding of the causes and implications of the war and its effect on Wales. www.gov.wales/topics/cultureandsport/wales-remembers/?lang=en

As Custodian of Remembrance, the Royal British Legion works to ensure the memories of those who have fought and sacrificed in our Armed Forces live on through the generations.

Armed Forces Day gives us as a nation, the opportunity to honour and thank you, our Armed Forces, both past and present for the sacrifices you have made to ensure the freedom we enjoy today. Armed Forces Day also provides an opportunity for the younger generation to learn and appreciate the sacrifices you, our Service men and women went through in defending our freedom.

Armed Forces Day is a fitting tribute to you all, who have given so much for us to enjoy the just and safe society we have today, and also an opportunity for us all to offer our heartfelt thanks for your courage, dedication and sacrifice.





11. Support Available

There are times in most peoples' lives when they feel they need help and support, whether it is for personal or family reasons. Below you can find contact details for organisations which support and help Serving personnel and their families.

The Royal British Legion (RBL)

The RBL provide practical care, advice and support to serving members of the Armed Forces, veterans of all ages and their families.

www.britishlegion.org.uk 0808 802 8080 wales@britishlegion.org.uk

The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA)

SSAFA provide practical support and assistance to Servicemen and women, veterans and their families.

www.ssafa.org.uk 0800 731 4880

Army Families Federation (AFF)

The AFF is the independent voice of Army Families and works hard to improve the quality of life for Army families.

www.aff.org.uk wales@aff.org.uk

Navy Families Federation (NFF)

The NFF gives Royal Naval and Royal Marines' families an independent voice.

www.nff.org.uk admin@nff.org.uk 023 9265 4374

Royal Air Force (RAF) Families Federation

The RAF Families Federation represents the views and concerns of RAF personnel and their family.

www.raf-ff.org.uk 01780 781650

Army HIVE

HIVE provides up to date and relevant information to all members of the Service Community.

www.army.mod.uk/HIVES

12. Local Authorities in Wales:

Anglesey	01248 752109	www.anglesey.gov.uk
Blaenau Gwent	01495 311556	www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Bridgend	01656 643643	www.bridgend.gov.uk
Caerphilly	01443 815588	www.caerphilly.gov.uk
Cardiff City Council	029 2087 2087	www.cardiff.gov.uk
Carmarthenshire	01267 234567	www.carmarthenshire.gov.uk
Ceredigion	01545 570881	www.ceredigion.gov.uk
Conwy	01492 574000	www.conwy.gov.uk
Denbighshire	01824 706101	www.denbighshire.gov.uk
Flintshire	01352 752121	www.flintshire.gov.uk
Gwynedd	01766 771000	www.gwynedd.gov.uk
Merthyr Tydfil	01685 725000	www.merthyr.gov.uk
Monmouthshire	01633 644644	www.monmouthshire.gov.uk
Neath Port Talbot	01639 686868	www.npt.gov.uk contactus@npt.gov.uk
Newport City Council	01633 656656	www.newport.gov.uk info@newport.gov.uk
Pembrokeshire	01437 764551	www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk enquiries@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
Powys	01597 826000	www.powys.gov.uk
Rhondda Cynon Taff	01443 424005	www.rctcbc.gov.uk covenant@rctcbc.gov.uk
Swansea City Council	01792 636003	www.swansea.gov.uk
Torfaen	01495 762200	www.torfaen.gov.uk
Vale of Glamorgan	01446 700111	www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk
Wrexham	01978 829 2273	www.wrexham.gov.uk AFCC@wrexham.gov.uk

13. Wales: Armed Forces Bases

