



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

# Quality of Housing Services to Service Families Overseas

The National Audit Office scrutinises public spending on behalf of Parliament. The Comptroller and Auditor General, Sir John Bourn, is an Officer of the House of Commons. He is the head of the National Audit Office, which employs some 800 staff. He, and the National Audit Office, are totally independent of Government. He certifies the accounts of all Government departments and a wide range of other public sector bodies; and he has statutory authority to report to Parliament on the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which departments and other bodies have used their resources. Our work saves the taxpayer millions of pounds every year. At least £8 for every £1 spent running the Office.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

# Quality of Housing Services to Service Families Overseas

LONDON: The Stationery Office  
£9.25

Ordered by the  
House of Commons  
to be printed on 7 March 2005

This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act.

**John Bourn**  
**Comptroller and Auditor General**  
**National Audit Office**

**1 March 2005**

The National Audit Office study team consisted of:

Steve Merrifield, Roger LeVoiir and Howard Revall, under the direction of David Clarke

This report can be found on the National Audit Office web site at [www.nao.org.uk](http://www.nao.org.uk)

**For further information about the National Audit Office please contact:**

National Audit Office  
Press Office  
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road  
Victoria  
London  
SW1W 9SP

Tel: 020 7798 7400

Email: [enquiries@nao.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@nao.gsi.gov.uk)

© National Audit Office 2005

## CONTENTS

---

<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART 1</b>	
Delivering housing services overseas is a challenge, but the Department is meeting its objective of having housing available for families and there are examples of good practice	8
Delivering housing services is a challenge	9
Delivering housing services overseas adds to the difficulties faced	10
The Department is meeting some of its objectives in delivering housing services overseas	14
There are examples of good practice in the delivery of housing services overseas	16
<b>PART 2</b>	
The Department needs to adopt a greater customer focus in its delivery of housing services overseas	18
Although we found some examples of good practice, there is limited consultation with, and involvement of, occupants	19
Despite the existence of a Customer Charter in many locations, the Department's use of service standards for occupants is patchy	20
The response repair service is not customer friendly in all locations	20



There is little scope for occupants to exercise choice	21
Complaints from occupants are not always handled well	22
There are instances where spouses have been treated poorly	23
<b>PART 3</b>	
The Department needs to introduce greater consistency and professionalism into its delivery of housing services overseas	24
There is a lack of consistency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas	25
There is a lack of transparency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas	27
There is limited professional development of housing staff	28
While good use is made of IT in the management of works, little use is made in other aspects of the housing service	28

<b>PART 4</b>	
The Department needs to introduce a performance management and improvement culture	30
The Department's performance reporting overseas focuses on estate management, with no monitoring of its performance in other aspects of the housing service	31
The Department's collection and use of feedback from customers is limited mainly to its management of works, with little gathered on other aspects of housing delivery	32
There is little systematic sharing of good practice amongst housing officials overseas either within or between countries	33
There is little comparison of performance with other housing providers	33
We have identified a range of possible quality of service performance indicators	34
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
1. Study scope and methodology	36
2. Key findings of survey of occupants	39

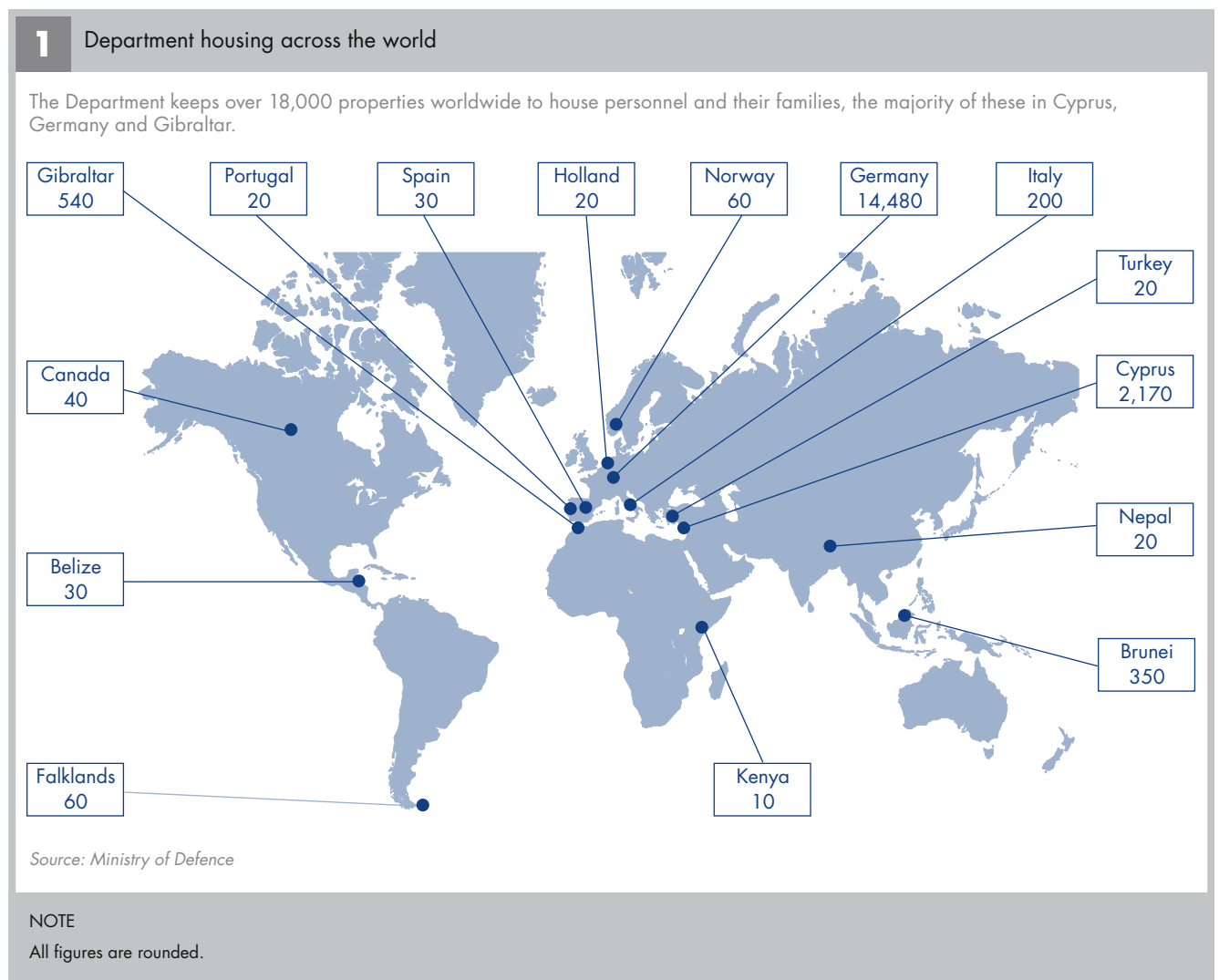
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**1** The Ministry of Defence (the Department) keeps almost 18,000 properties overseas to accommodate military personnel and their families, at a cost of approximately £100 million a year (Figure 1). This is about the same number of properties as an inner city local authority, such as Hackney or Lambeth, provides as social housing. These properties are required since, when posted overseas, military personnel and their families have to be accommodated near where they are stationed for the duration of their posting. Families' satisfaction with their

accommodation impinges on the military's operational effectiveness as morale can be affected if families are unhappy with their accommodation.

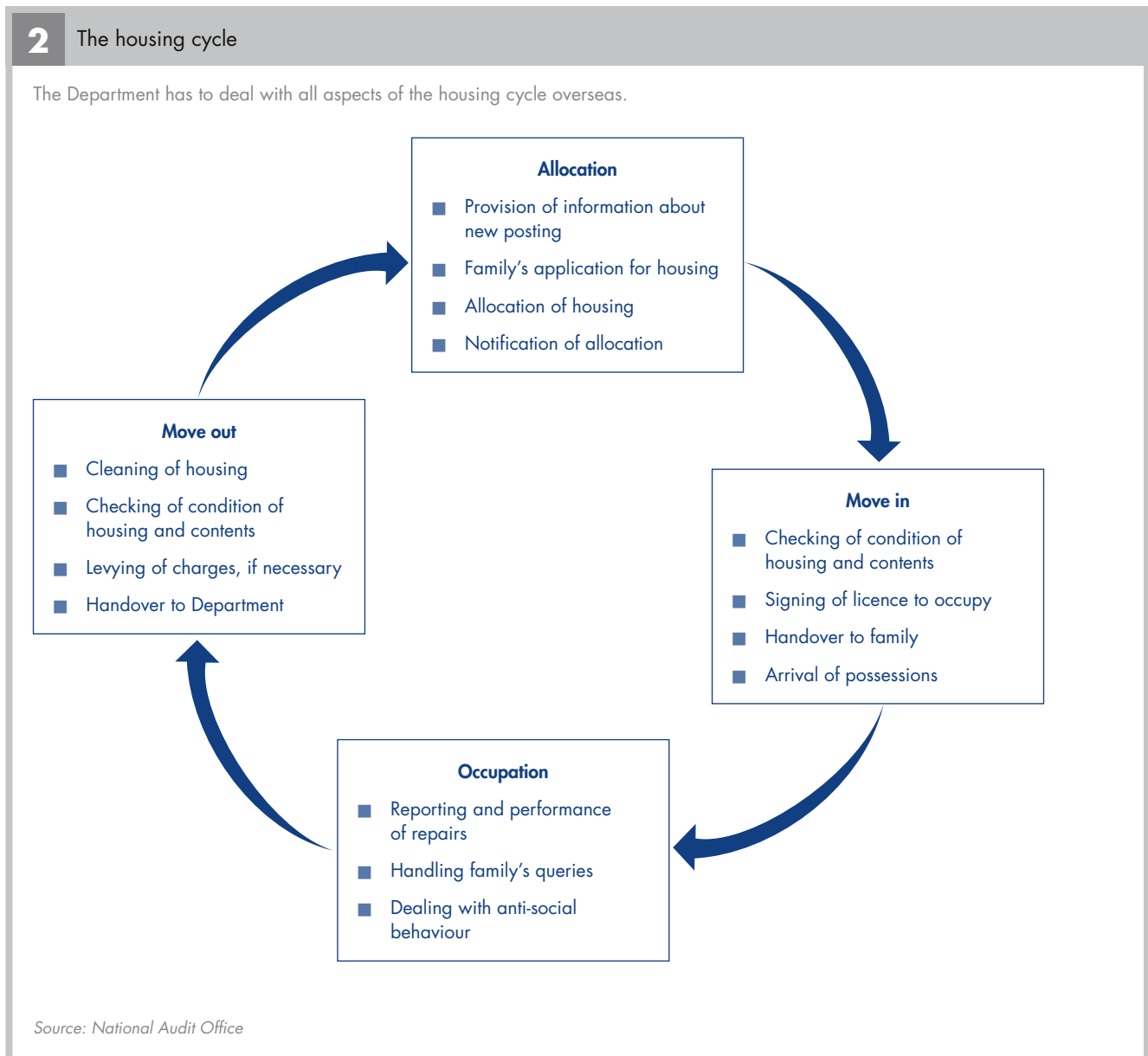
**2** Much of the housing overseas is in a poor condition and many properties lack modern facilities. The Department recognises the impact that poor housing can have on families' morale and plans to invest about £100 million in upgrading houses overseas up to 2009, with further investment predicted beyond that date.



**3** Given the Department’s implementation of its plans for improving the condition of its overseas housing is at a relatively early stage, we are not looking at its management of the upgrade programmes. This Report, instead, focuses on the Department’s delivery of day-to-day housing services throughout the whole housing cycle of allocation, move-in, occupation, and move-out (Figure 2) as experienced by Service personnel and their families. It examines whether, given the existing housing stock, the Department delivers housing services to Service families overseas in a way that meets the requirements of the Services and the military personnel and their families. The Report covers the quality of the housing service in the three locations where the Department has the majority of its overseas housing - Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar.

The Report does not cover the quality of housing services to single individuals or to families living in the United Kingdom. Appendix 1 sets out, in detail, the scope of the Report and the methodologies we used.

**4** Overall, we found that delivering housing services overseas is a challenge, but that the Department is meeting its objective of having housing available for families and there are examples of good practice. However, the Department needs to adopt a greater customer focus in its delivery of housing services overseas. It also needs to introduce greater consistency and professionalism into its delivery of housing services overseas, as well as putting in place a performance management and improvement culture.





## Delivering housing services overseas is a challenge, but the Department is meeting its objective of having housing available for families and there are examples of good practice

**5** There are a number of factors which makes the delivery of housing services a challenge for the Department. Families' housing requirements are increasing in line with developments in society in general. Service personnel and their families are moved on a regular basis, creating problems for the Department. The Department faces financial constraints and competing demands for funds. Finally, the delivery of housing services is governed by Service regulations. Although these Regulations entitle officers to a higher standard of accommodation, both officers and other ranks are supposed to receive the same quality of service.

**6** The requirement to deliver housing overseas poses additional difficulties for the Department. It has to provide housing in many countries across the globe, much of it of a varying nature. Responsibility for delivering housing services overseas is split within the Department, and often there are national and local agreements and practices. Both these factors add complexity and make complete consistency between locations difficult. Poor housing services in overseas postings can have a much greater adverse impact on morale than in Great Britain. 48 per cent of occupants overseas considered housing to be the most important contributor to their quality of life.

**7** Despite these constraints, the Department is meeting some of its objectives in delivering housing services overseas. It is moving people into their homes as required by the Armed Services, and around two-thirds of occupants are satisfied with the overall housing service and their accommodation. Other ranks tended to be slightly less satisfied than officers, while Service personnel from ethnic minority communities tended to be slightly more satisfied than personnel who were not.

**8** The satisfaction rate for overall housing services is on a par with the rates achieved by Inner London boroughs but below the average rates achieved by social housing providers and local authorities in England. The provision of accommodation to Service families overseas differs, however, in many respects from the provision of social housing in the United Kingdom. For example, the profile of the occupants of the Department's housing is different and, overseas, the housing service is only one of a broad range of welfare and support services delivered by local staff to Service personnel and their families.

**9** There are examples of good practice in the delivery of housing services overseas. The delivery of these services is closely linked to the delivery of other welfare services to families, and, in some instances, practices overseas were ahead of those of Defence Estates in Great Britain. For example, before families arrive in Episkopi housing officials provide them with an "estate agent's description" of the property they have been allocated, complete with a picture of a house of that type and room layout plans.

## The Department should adopt a greater customer focus in its delivery of housing services overseas

**10** Although we found some examples of good practice, there is limited consultation with, and involvement of, occupants in the delivery of housing, despite the families' wish for greater participation. Only 24 per cent of occupants were satisfied with the opportunities for their participation in management and decision-making, while 41 per cent were dissatisfied. In comparison, satisfaction with opportunities to participate among local authority tenants in England and Wales in 2003-04 was 63 per cent.

**11** 67 per cent of occupants said that they were satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service provided. Despite this, the response repair service is not customer friendly in all locations. In some places, it is not easy for families to report faults. For example, at Akrotiri in Cyprus a family member has to visit housing staff in person to report a fault needing repair. These staff then telephone the works staff on the family's behalf. According to the families, there are also problems with the making and keeping of appointments. It can also take some time for work to start on a job and, in some places, it is not possible for families to check on the progress of jobs they have reported. There were also complaints about the quality of the work carried out. However, in Germany the introduction of a standardised system for reporting repair work to a help desk has improved occupants' satisfaction with the repair service.

**12** There is little scope for occupants to exercise choice. Unlike in Great Britain where families are free to buy their own homes, families stationed overseas have little choice other than to use Departmental housing. Due to the limited availability of properties, the Department is only able to offer families one property for occupation, and not a choice of accommodation. When applying for accommodation, families can express a preference as to the estate at their duty station where they want to be housed. However, the Department does not measure the extent to which it is able to meet these preferences and families are given little information to enable them to take an informed view when expressing their preferences. 36 per cent of occupants rated the information provided about accommodation in advance of moving as poor.

**13** Complaints from occupants are not always handled well. Almost half of occupants did not know how to make complaints and those who had made complaints were unhappy with many aspects of the Department's handling of them. Only 34 per cent of these complainants rated the Department's overall handling of their complaint as good. There are also variations in complaints procedures between locations and a lack of independence in the process, as complaints are often handled by the station or garrison involved, or involve the complainant's military chain of command. Local staff do not routinely monitor and report complaints about the occupancy management aspects of the housing service.

## The Department should introduce greater consistency and professionalism into its delivery of housing services overseas

**14** Although it is inevitable that, in some circumstances, there will be a need for local solutions to local circumstances, it is reasonable that families should know what to expect from their housing service, no matter where they have been posted. However, there is a lack of consistency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas. Detailed implementation of housing policy is left to local housing staff, with little central guidance or review. As a result, we found many examples of variations in local practices and standards both between and within countries in all stages of the housing cycle. In Germany, the Housing Working Group, formed in March 2004, has been established to help identify inconsistencies in the delivery of housing services.

**15** The management structure for delivering housing services overseas is complex and unclear, while the allocation of properties to families lacks transparency. Only 39 per cent of occupants described the overall allocation process as good, with particular dissatisfaction expressed over the appeals process – only 24 per cent described this process as good.

**16** Almost all housing officials overseas are ex-military personnel with little previous experience in housing management. Although their knowledge of military procedures is of value, they are used to a military culture. They receive little specialist training in housing management, with most training being conducted on the job. While good use is made of information technology in the management of works, little use is made of it in other aspects of the housing service.

## The Department should introduce a performance management and improvement culture

**17** The Department's performance reporting overseas focuses on estate management, with no monitoring of its performance in other aspects of the housing service. There is limited awareness among housing staff of the importance of setting targets, measuring performance and using the data to drive a process of continuous improvement. Similarly, the Department's collection and use of feedback from customers is limited mainly to its management of works, with little gathered on other aspects of housing delivery. There is also little systematic sharing of good practice amongst Departmental housing officials overseas either within or between countries.

**18** Although there are particular issues in providing families' accommodation in Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar, there are general management principles which can be applied in all housing providers. There is also a wealth of information available on performance which social housing providers in England and Wales have to provide as part of their performance management regime. Despite this, the Department has carried out little comparison of the performance of its overseas housing service with that of other housing providers elsewhere since, in the past, it did not view its performance as comparable with social housing providers in the United Kingdom.

**19** As part of their performance management regime, social housing providers are subject to external inspection. In preparation for these inspections, it is common for providers to commission consultants to undertake "mock inspections". Most overseas locations, however, had not invited external assessments of their performance. In the opinion of our housing management consultants, Housing Quality Network Services, under a "mock inspection" the housing service provided to Service families overseas would have rated as poor. According to Housing Quality Network Services, the absence of consistent performance data in itself justified this assessment.

**20** The Department has already acknowledged the need to examine the management of housing services overseas. In September 2004 it commissioned a business process review of the area, with a focus primarily on customer care issues. Due to report in the first quarter of 2005, the review will take account of the data collected by the National Audit Office and our conclusions. In addition to organisational and procedural changes, it will recommend the introduction of a consistent performance management regime, incorporating specific performance targets applicable across the overseas area. In our opinion, the introduction of this regime is likely to promote an improvement in the quality of housing services overseas.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

**21** We recommend that the Department take the following action to improve the way that the housing service overseas is planned, managed and delivered.

### Customer information and involvement

- The Department should design and implement a customer information and involvement strategy. This should include: standards for the provision of information prior to move-in; move-out standards; a publicised complaints procedure; and a portfolio of methods for identifying families' satisfaction, including regular surveys.

### Staff training

- All personnel involved in the delivery of housing management services should have specialist training within a professional development structure built around core modules and competencies, with the concept of customer service at its heart. This would move the service towards greater professionalism and aid customer focus.

### Performance management

- As part of its proposed new performance management regime, the Department should consider adopting a wider range of performance indicators to measure the quality of its service to Service families – for example: the percentage of families who had to be accommodated in a temporary quarter on arrival; the percentage of families satisfied with each aspect of the housing cycle (allocation, move in, occupation, and

move out); and the number of repair jobs where shortcomings were subsequently identified. A full list of possible performance indicators is given at Figure 16. The Department should also consider inviting external assessors to undertake periodic “mock inspections” to identify ways in which it could improve this service.

### Procedures

- The Department should revise and standardise operational procedures across all overseas Commands. All staff should be working to a common procedure manual with any local variations clearly authorised and publicised.

**22** In our opinion, the implementation of our recommendations should help bring about an improvement in the quality of housing services overseas. Underpinning all these, however, is the need for a change in the culture of housing services overseas. The management culture of the housing service overseas needs to reflect more closely the customer-focused approach to Service housing adopted in Great Britain. Service personnel and their families must be seen as customers, whose requirements need to be identified and met, where possible, and there must be a real commitment to continuous improvement of the service delivered.



## PART ONE

Delivering housing services overseas is a challenge, but the Department is meeting its objective of having housing available for families and there are examples of good practice



**1.1** This Part of the Report looks at the background to the Department's provision of housing services overseas. We found that delivering housing services is a challenge, especially overseas, but that the Department is meeting its objective of having housing available for families, and there are examples of good practice.

## Delivering housing services is a challenge

**1.2** The Armed Services' operational requirements dictate that, when posted overseas, military personnel and their families are housed at, or within an appropriate distance of, where they are stationed for the duration of their posting. There are a number of factors which makes the delivery of housing services a challenge for the Department: the Department is providing the housing for the benefit of two different customers with potentially conflicting needs – the military personnel and their families, and the Armed Services; families' housing requirements are increasing in line with developments in society in general; Service personnel and their families are expected to be mobile, creating problems for the Department; the Department faces financial constraints and competing demands for funds; and the delivery of housing services is governed by Service regulations.

### The Department provides accommodation for the benefit of two different customers

**1.3** In providing accommodation, the Department effectively has two different customers with potentially conflicting needs: the military personnel and their families; and the Armed Services. The Services are primarily concerned with operational effectiveness. They simply require the right personnel to arrive in the right place at the right time, as dictated by operational needs, and that these personnel be housed when they arrive. Families, on the other hand, require, in addition to the above, their housing and its neighbouring amenities to be of an acceptable quality and the associated housing services to be provided to a satisfactory standard.

### Families' housing requirements are increasing in line with developments in society in general

**1.4** Meeting the families' requirements is difficult. Families' aspirations with respect to the standard of housing they expect are increasing, in line with trends in society. For example, families now expect their houses to be fitted with modern features, such as fitted kitchens and central heating. Society in general is also seeing an increasing trend in long-term relationships outside marriage and second families. The Department currently does not provide families' accommodation to couples who are cohabiting, although it does provide such accommodation to single parents.

**1.5** Families' satisfaction with the accommodation is important as it impinges on the military's operational effectiveness. Service personnel's morale can be affected if their families are unhappy with their accommodation. Dissatisfaction with their family's accommodation may, in some circumstances, contribute to a decision by a Service person to leave the Services, although the Department has no direct evidence to verify the extent to which such dissatisfaction is contributing to decisions to leave.

### Service personnel and their families are expected to be mobile, creating problems for the Department

**1.6** Service personnel and their families are required to move often in their career, sometimes as frequently as every two years. As a result, the Department handles around 20,000 family moves each year in the United Kingdom and overseas. These moves are not evenly spread throughout the year but there are particular periods where there are a very high number of moves, such as the summer where many new postings are made during the school holidays, or when a unit moves en bloc. Handling such a high level of moves is both time-consuming and resource-intensive at a time when funding is constrained.

**1.7** Although the Department aims to provide houses of a similar type and condition, because of the nature of the available housing stock families can, in fact, be housed in accommodation of varying type and condition as they move. This can make the management of families' expectations difficult if they move into accommodation they perceive to be worse than at their previous station.

**1.8** Unlike housing providers in the civil sector, the Department has to "queue houses for people" and not "queue people for houses". The Department cannot maintain "housing lists" of personnel waiting to be housed. In principle, to ensure operational effectiveness is maintained, the Department cannot afford personnel to arrive in postings without the required family housing being available for them. If there is insufficient housing to cater for personnel at their new post, alternative accommodation is sometimes found, or the Service person may be required to serve unaccompanied by his or her family until a suitable quarter becomes available.

### The Department faces financial constraints and competing demands for funds

**1.9** The Department faces a number of competing demands for the funds it has available to it. For accommodation, for example, the Department not only has to house married Service personnel and their families, but it also has to provide accommodation for unmarried and unaccompanied married personnel.

### The delivery of housing services is governed by Service regulations

**1.10** Tri-Service regulations lay down the general procedures and standards to be expected in the delivery of housing services both in the United Kingdom and overseas. These regulations cover all aspects of the housing service cycle (Figure 2 page 2). Under the regulations, officers are entitled to a higher standard of accommodation than other ranks and, consequently, pay higher accommodation charges. In all other respects, officers and other ranks are supposed to receive the same quality of service.

**1.11** The regulations determine the size and type of property a family is allocated. For officers, properties are allocated on the basis of rank, whilst family size dictates the property other ranks receive. Thus, for example, other ranks are entitled to a property equivalent to a three bedroom semi-detached if they have two to three children, whereas officers are entitled to such a property in accordance with their rank status even if they have no children.

**1.12** The regulations also dictate the accommodation charges that families pay. The charges vary depending on the property size, condition and access to local amenities. For example, the charges are reduced if the property is in a poor condition or lacks facilities such as central heating.

## Delivering housing services overseas adds to the difficulties faced

**1.13** The requirement to deliver housing overseas poses additional difficulties for the Department. The Department has to provide housing in many countries across the globe. Responsibility for doing this is split within the Department. The legal framework governing the provision of housing varies from country to country. Poor housing services in overseas postings can have a much greater adverse impact on morale than in Great Britain. Much of the housing overseas is in a poor condition, although the Department plans to invest about £100 million in upgrading houses overseas up to 2009, with further investment predicted beyond that date, to secure an improvement.

### The Department has to provide housing in many countries across the globe

**1.14** The Department keeps over 18,000 properties worldwide to house personnel and their families when posted overseas, and spends almost £100 million a year on these (Figure 1, page 1).

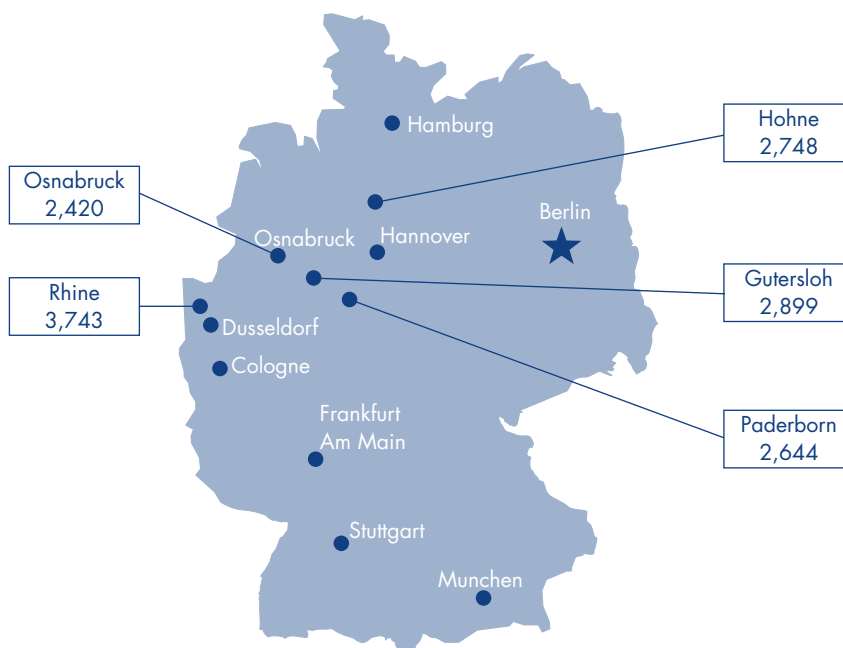
**1.15** The bulk of these, almost 17,000, are in three countries - Cyprus, Germany, and Gibraltar, at an annual cost of almost £90 million. These three countries formed the focus of our study. Housing in Cyprus and Germany is spread over a number of locations in each country (Figure 3), while housing in Gibraltar, although not nearly as widely dispersed, is still spread over a number of different sites.

**1.16** The housing stock also varies in its nature, including houses, flats and, in Cyprus, bungalows dating from the 1950s. The levels of each type available can vary greatly from location to location, even within the same country. For example, 41 per cent of all families' accommodation in Germany is flats. However, the majority of these, 85 per cent, are found at just five stations – Fallingbommel, Gutersloh, Hohne, Osnabruck and Paderborn.



### 3 Department housing in Cyprus and Germany

Housing in Cyprus and Germany is spread over a number of locations within each country.



Source: Ministry of Defence

**NOTE**

The figures above are for the number of properties as at April 2004.

### Responsibility for delivering housing services overseas is split within the Department

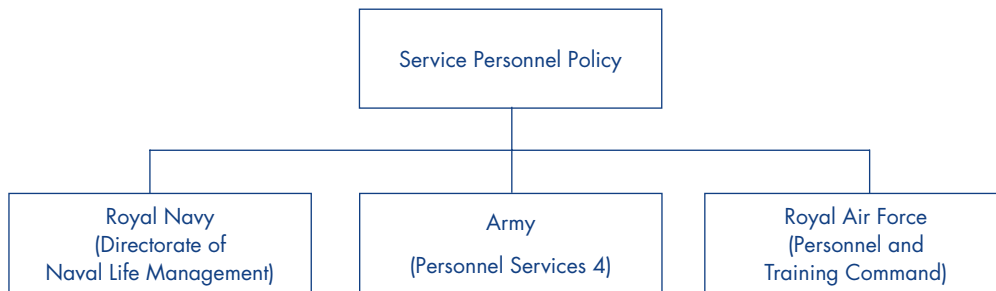
**1.17** A number of Departmental bodies have a role in housing services in the United Kingdom and overseas (Figure 4). Responsibility for delivering housing services overseas does not rest with a single, specialist housing body, as in Great Britain, but with two operational commands - Land Command and the Permanent Joint Headquarters. Land Command at Wilton is responsible for housing provision in Germany, while the Permanent Joint Headquarters at Northwood is responsible for housing at the Permanent Joint Operating Bases in Cyprus and Gibraltar. Day-to-day service delivery of housing overseas rests with the individual military bases, whilst the headquarters in each country takes a more strategic role (for example, the promulgation of local housing policy) (Figure 5).

**1.18** For overseas housing, at all organisational levels from the United Kingdom Command down to the headquarters in each country, and on to the individual military station, responsibility for estate management (works and maintenance) and occupancy management (allocation and move-in and out) aspects of the housing service rests with separate sections. Under Project Alexander, responsibility for the delivery of property management, building works and response maintenance is being transferred from the Commands to Defence Estates, with the Commands acting as their customer. The Commands will therefore retain responsibility for determining their estate requirements and the funding available, and for monitoring Defence Estates' performance. This change in responsibilities has already been implemented in Cyprus and Gibraltar, and will be going ahead in Germany from April 2005.

#### 4 Organisation chart – High level

There are a number of bodies who have a role in housing services in the United Kingdom and overseas.

##### Policy development



##### Policy implementation and management



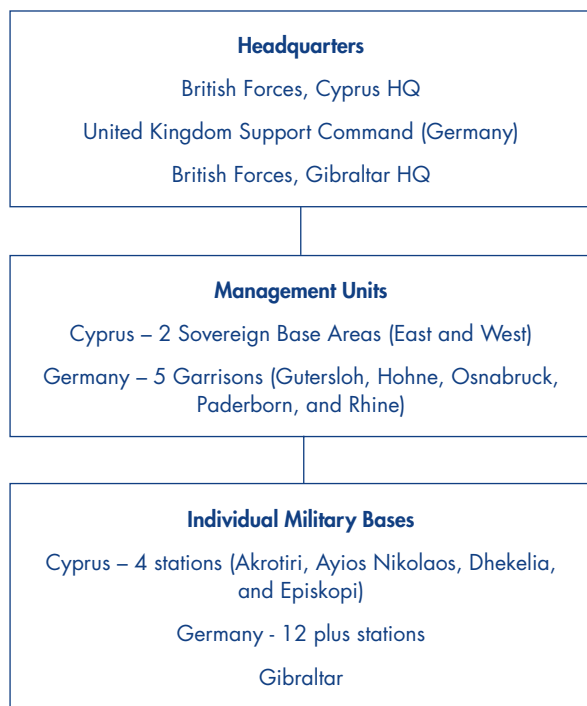
Source: National Audit Office

##### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Until April 2004, responsibility for Service families' accommodation in Great Britain rested with a specialist agency of the Department, the Defence Housing Executive. In April 2004 the Executive became part of Defence Estates.

## 5 Organisation Chart – Overseas

There are various levels of organisation involved in the delivery of housing overseas.



Source: National Audit Office

### The legal framework governing the provision of housing varies from country to country

**1.19** The legal framework governing the Department's operations in a country, including the provision of housing, varies from country to country. The Department's activities are governed in Cyprus by the Treaty of Establishment, which established the two Sovereign Base Areas. This requires, for example, that the Department employs a set proportion of local Greek and Turkish Cypriots. Similarly, in Germany the Department has to comply with the NATO Status of Forces Agreement and Supplementary Agreement, while in Gibraltar the Department is bound by the Gibraltar Lands Memorandum which governs the use of its land there.

**1.20** In providing housing in each of these three countries, the Department aims to comply with local housing regulations and standards. These differ in each country. Contracting practices also vary and can be complex. For example, in Germany over 8,500 properties are federal ones, owned by the German Government but leased to the Department free of charge. Although the Department is responsible for their upkeep, it requires the German Government's permission to carry out any upgrade work on these. This work has to be procured via the statutory construction body, the German Construction Administration. The Administration is not a single, coherent body, but a collective term to describe a number of discrete German federal, state and regional organisations that deliver construction projects in the public sector. These organisations are complex in their arrangement.

### Poor housing services in overseas postings can have a much greater adverse impact on morale than in Great Britain

**1.21** Moving overseas is a major upheaval for families. Poor housing services in the overseas postings can have a much greater adverse impact on families' morale than in Great Britain as this may already be low due to feelings of isolation in a foreign country. According to a survey on our behalf by Market Research UK, 48 per cent of occupants overseas considered housing to be the most important contributor to their quality of life.

**1.22** The Armed Services' operational requirements can require personnel to be deployed on operations outside the countries where they are based. Part of the Department's housing role overseas, therefore, involves looking after the families who have been left behind.

**1.23** When overseas, families come under military jurisdiction. Thus, for example, any anti-social behaviour by family members is dealt with, in most instances, by the military authorities or a standing civilian court, consisting of suitably qualified staff from the Department, where the local authorities choose not to take up jurisdiction.

Much of the housing overseas is in a poor condition, although the Department plans to invest substantial sums to secure an improvement

**1.24** Much of the housing stock overseas is old, dating from the 1950s, and therefore requires a high level of maintenance. There is also a history of under-investment in this area. Recent financial constraints have resulted in further reductions in the funding available for on-going planned maintenance in all three countries. As a result, housing overseas is in a poor condition (Figure 6) and many properties lack modern facilities, such as fitted kitchens and, in Cyprus, central heating. The Department recognises the impact that poor housing can have on families' morale and has a number of programmes to upgrade the condition of these properties, at different stages of implementation, worth about £100 million up to 2009, with further investment predicted beyond that date (Figure 7).

### The Department is meeting some of its objectives in delivering housing services overseas

**1.25** The Department is meeting some of its objectives in delivering housing services overseas. It is moving people into their homes overseas as required and occupants are mostly satisfied with the housing service and their accommodation.

### The Department is moving people into their homes overseas at the right location at the right time

**1.26** As customers of the housing service (paragraph 1.3) the Services are concerned that, when Service personnel are posted overseas, there is accommodation of the appropriate type ready for them and their families when they arrive. The achievement of these requirements is in their own hands as the operational Commands are responsible for the delivery of housing services overseas (paragraph 1.17).

**1.27** By and large, families are being housed when they arrive at an overseas posting. There have been no complaints from operational units about this not occurring. The Commands' Estate Development Plans show no serious shortfall in the numbers of properties and focus, instead, on rationalising and/or refurbishing existing properties. The Commanders of British Forces overseas told us that their main concern with regard to families' housing was to improve its condition.

## 6 Condition of housing overseas

Much of the accommodation for service families overseas is in a poor condition.

Grade for Condition	Percentage of properties	
	Cyprus %	Gibraltar %
Grade 1 (Best)	12	14
Grade 2	16	5
Grade 3	2	51
Grade 4 (Worst)	70	30

The above figures are as at March 2004.

Condition category	Federal properties only
	Percentage of properties
	Germany %
Category A	24
Category B	76
Category BX	0
Category C	0
Category CX	0
Category D	0
Category DX	0

Source: Ministry of Defence

#### NOTES ON GERMANY FIGURES

The above grading was completed in October 2003. It includes only the 8,500 federal properties and excludes the 5,600 hired properties.

The Department uses different definitions in Germany to classify property condition:

Grade A – The element is sound, operationally safe and effective and exhibits only minor deterioration.

Grade B – The element is operationally adequate but major repair or replacement will be needed soon.

Grade BX – The element is operationally adequate but replacement will be needed soon.

Grade C – The element is in imminent risk of breakdown and will have critical impact operationally.

Grade CX – The element is in imminent risk of breakdown and will have critical impact operationally, but it is impossible to improve without replacement.

Grade D – The element is beyond use and operationally unusable.

Grade DX – The element is beyond use and operationally unusable, but it is impossible to improve without replacement.

## 7 The Department's refurbishment plans

The Department has plans for a number of programmes to upgrade the condition of its accommodation for Service families overseas.

### Cyprus

After the collapse of Project Aphrodite in late 2003, the proposed Private Finance Initiative project to upgrade Service families' accommodation, the Department is currently considering proposals to spend £20 million up to March 2009 to upgrade family quarters. The first stage would tackle building integrity and health and safety problems, renewing wiring and water systems, and removing asbestos. Further investment is predicted beyond 2009 to improve quarters and would involve the installation of new kitchens, bathrooms, double-glazing and central heating. The proposals currently exclude upgrading properties at Dhekelia in the Eastern Sovereign Base Area, while the Department awaits the results of its review of manning in Cyprus.

### Germany

*Programme to Upgrade and Modernise Accommodation (PUMA)*

Work has already begun on this programme. The Department is proposing to spend about £80 million up to March 2009 to upgrade family quarters and single living accommodation. The family quarters upgrade programme involves the renewal of wiring and water systems, if necessary, and the installation of new kitchens and bathrooms in 4,700 federal properties.

*Hired Accommodation Refurbishment Programme (HARP)*

The Department has an on-going programme to upgrade the 5,500 properties it leases from commercial sources for families. Upgrades have already been completed in parts of the Paderborn Garrison.

### Gibraltar

Work began in 1999-2000 on a programme of refurbishment and new build. The Department is proposing to spend £5 million up to March 2009 to improve existing properties. Work will include external refurbishment, internal redecoration and the installation of new kitchens and bathrooms.

*Source: National Audit Office*

**1.28** In some locations there are shortages of properties of certain types. The combination of these shortages with the surges in the number of families requiring housing at certain times of the year (paragraph 1.6) has meant that, in these locations, permanent quarters have not been available for families when they first arrive. Instead, the families have been housed in temporary accommodation until their permanent homes become available. For example, in Episkopi in Cyprus the Department has had to hire 70 properties where families can stay temporarily for up to three to four months. There have also been instances at, for example, the Rhine Garrison in Germany where personnel have delayed bringing out their families until their permanent homes have become available.

## On some key satisfaction ratings, around two-thirds of occupants are content

**1.29** Market Research UK conducted a survey of occupants overseas on our behalf. The key results from this are summarised in Appendix 2. The survey found that, on some key satisfaction ratings, around two-thirds of families were content (**Figure 8**). There was some variation in satisfaction rates between the three countries, with Gibraltar occupants being consistently less satisfied than occupants elsewhere. Other ranks tended to be slightly less satisfied than officers, while Service personnel from ethnic minority communities tended to be slightly more satisfied than those who were not.

**1.30** There are a number of other reasons, in addition to the housing service itself, why occupants' satisfaction rates might be at the levels above. For example, 15 per cent of respondents were civilians and therefore received their housing free of charge as part of their employment package. In many cases, the overseas posting is only for two years and families might be more accepting of the housing service as they know they will be moving elsewhere relatively quickly. There are also other aspects of the lifestyle in Cyprus and Gibraltar which might increase families' morale, such as the climate.

## 8 Families' satisfaction ratings

On some key satisfaction ratings, around two-thirds of occupants are content.

Percentage of occupants rating as "good"

	Total %	Country			Status			Ethnic community	
		Cyprus %	Germany %	Gibraltar %	Officers %	Other ranks %	Civilians %	White %	Other %
Value for money	69	70	70	59	71	68	74	70	63
Repairs and maintenance	67	66	68	34	68	66	71	67	72
Current accommodation	66	63	68	58	70	63	76	66	65
Housing service	66	73	63	46	69	64	69	66	71
Accommodation condition	55	47	59	47	53	56	58	55	65

"Total": Sample size = 4,120 – All respondents

"Analysis by country": Sample size = 3,928 – All respondents stating the country they were stationed in

"Analysis by status": Sample size = 4,049 – All respondents stating their status

"Analysis by ethnic community": Sample size = 3,895 – All respondents stating their ethnic community

Source: Market Research UK survey on behalf of National Audit Office

**1.31** On the other hand, there are other factors which might be expected to result in lower satisfaction rates, such as a family's feeling of isolation in a foreign country, especially when the Service person is away on operational deployment (paragraphs 1.21 and 1.22).

**1.32** The 66 per cent satisfaction rate for overall housing services is below the average rates achieved by social housing providers and local authorities in England (high 70s), and on a par with the rates achieved by Inner London boroughs. The provision of accommodation to Service families differs, however, in many respects from the provision of social housing in the United Kingdom. Alongside the overseas location, Service families move more frequently (paragraph 1.6) and, for reasons of operational effectiveness, the Department cannot maintain housing lists of personnel waiting to be housed (paragraph 1.8). Overseas, the housing service is only one of a broad range of welfare and support services delivered by local staff to Service personnel and their families. Finally, the profile of the occupants of the Department's housing is different. According to the Market Research UK survey, the majority of occupants overseas, 79 per cent, are between 25 and 44 years of age. Also, families with children headed by two parents make up the majority of households (65 per cent), with adult-only households accounting for the remainder.

### There are examples of good practice in the delivery of housing services overseas

**1.33** There are examples of good practice in the delivery of housing services overseas. The delivery of housing overseas is closely linked to the delivery of other welfare services and, in some instances, practices overseas were ahead of those of Defence Estates in Great Britain.

### Overseas, housing services are part of a holistic package of welfare services

**1.34** Overseas, the delivery of housing services is closely integrated with the delivery of other welfare services. For example, those in charge of housing at a station level are also responsible for the delivery of other welfare services, such as education and medical services, to families and therefore work closely with Unit Welfare Officers. Housing officials also care for families while the Service person is away on an operational deployment. For example, housing officials in Cyprus and Germany will arrange for a family's garden to be mown while the husband is away. Estate Managers also look out for possible social problems within families while carrying out their housing duties.

## There are examples where delivery of housing services overseas is ahead of that in Great Britain

**1.35** Housing Quality Network Services examined the Department's delivery of housing services overseas on our behalf. Together, we found a number of examples where housing practices overseas were in advance of those of Defence Estates in Great Britain:

- Before families arrive in Episkopi housing officials provide them with an "estate agent's description" of the property they have been allocated, complete with a picture of a house of that type and room layout plans;
- In Cyprus there is widespread operation of a "meet and greet service" whereby the Unit which the new arrival is to join accepts the property in advance on the family's behalf, hires a car for them for their first two weeks there, makes the beds, and stocks the pantry with groceries. The Unit then meets the family off the plane and settles them in; and
- Across Germany the Department has introduced a standardised system for reporting repair work needed under which families telephone a works help desk directly to report a fault and are subsequently contacted with an appointment date for its rectification. Although Defence Estates is planning to introduce a similar arrangement across the whole of Great Britain, at the moment in many areas families are required, in the first instance, to report any fault to housing staff who will then contact the works staff on their behalf.

## PART TWO

The Department needs to adopt a greater customer focus in its delivery of housing services overseas





**2.1** This Part of the Report examines how the Department takes into account the needs and views of Service families when delivering housing services overseas. Although there are some examples of good practice, there is limited consultation with, and involvement of, occupants. Despite the existence of a Customer Charter in many locations, the Department's use of service standards for occupants is patchy. The response repair service is not customer friendly in all locations and there is little scope for occupants to exercise choice. Complaints from occupants are not handled well, and there are instances where spouses have been treated poorly. The Department therefore needs to adopt a greater customer focus in its delivery of housing services overseas.

## Although we found some examples of good practice, there is limited consultation with, and involvement of, occupants

**2.2** Although we found some examples of good practice, there is limited consultation with, and involvement of, occupants in the delivery of housing, despite the families' wish for their greater participation. Links with families' organisations are better, but still variable.

## Despite some examples of good practices, in most places there is little consultation with, and involvement of, occupants directly

**2.3** It is left to individual Command Headquarters and Stations in Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar as to how they involve families in the delivery of housing. We found some good examples of such involvement. For instance, some estates in Osnabruck, Germany, and in Gibraltar have residents' committees. In many other locations, however, little consultation occurs. In Cyprus and Germany housing staff operate an open-door policy as their usual method of consulting families. In Cyprus there are also periodic "town hall" meetings, at which families can raise their concerns over a whole range of issues, including housing, with the Commanders of the Sovereign Base Areas. In comparison, in Great Britain Defence Estates has encouraged the establishment of a network of groups for consulting families locally, although families' attendance at these has started to fall off.

**2.4** According to the Department, in Germany a number of stations had attempted to hold forums similar to those in operation at Osnabruck, but families had failed to attend.

## Links with families' organisations are better but still variable

**2.5** In Great Britain Defence Estates has established good links with families' organisations, such as the Army Families Federation, at local, regional and national levels. Overseas, we also found examples of good links between the Department and families' organisations. At the headquarters level in both Germany and Gibraltar there are Housing Working Groups, comprising housing staff and representatives of families' organisations, which consider accommodation issues in those countries.<sup>1</sup> There are also good links at garrison and station level in Germany. However, we found little involvement by the Department of families' organisations in housing in Cyprus.

## Families are unhappy with the lack of consultation and involvement

**2.6** Attendees at focus groups told us that they were in favour of consultation by the Department where this was meaningful. According to the Market Research UK survey, although 64 per cent of occupants rated how well they were kept informed as good, only 24 per cent were satisfied with the opportunities to participate in management and decision-making, while 41 per cent were dissatisfied, and only 24 per cent felt that their views had been taken into account. In comparison, 61 per cent of local authority tenants in England in 2001-02 were satisfied with opportunities to participate.

1 The Housing Working Group in Germany met for the first time in March 2004.

## Despite the existence of a Customer Charter in many locations, the Department’s use of service standards for occupants is patchy

**2.7** In many locations, there is a housing Customer Charter which is given to occupants and which contains the standards of service they can expect. For example, the Charter contains deadlines for the handling of such matters as housing applications, requests for meetings and complaints. It is a standard document, which was developed in Germany and then adopted, with minor variations, at Dhekelia and Episkopi in Cyprus. However, there are some locations – Akrotiri in Cyprus, Osnabuck in Germany, and Gibraltar – which have not adopted it, and, even where it has been introduced, staff do not monitor the Department’s compliance with its standards.

## The response repair service is not customer friendly in all locations

**2.8** The response repair service is not customer friendly in all locations. In some places, it is not easy for families to report faults. According to the families, there are problems with the making and keeping of appointments; it can take some time for work to start on a job; in some places it is not possible for families to check on the progress of jobs they have reported; and the quality of the work carried out can be poor. Despite this, occupants were broadly satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service.

In some places, reporting faults is not easy

**2.9** We found that the arrangements for reporting faults with accommodation varied from location to location. In Germany, it is relatively simple for families to report faults by telephoning a help desk (paragraph 1.35). In comparison, at Episkopi in Cyprus families have to telephone housing staff who then contact the works staff on their behalf, and at Akrotiri a family member has to visit housing staff in person to report a fault. Gibraltar also operates a help desk for families to contact. However, those attending our focus groups complained that this desk was often not staffed and that, when it was, staff performed poorly in, for example, noting fault details.

## Families are not completely satisfied with some aspects of the repair service

**2.10** There are some aspects of the repair service where families’ satisfaction rates are relatively low (**Figure 9**). Participants at our focus groups confirmed that, in various locations: appointments to rectify reported faults were not always made or kept; it could take some time for work to start on a job; checking on progress of repair jobs was not easy; and it could take more than one visit for a job to be completed.

### 9 Families’ satisfaction with aspects of the day-to-day repair service

There are aspects of the repair service where families’ satisfaction rates are relatively low.

	Percentage of occupants rating as “good”			
	Total %	Cyprus %	Germany %	Gibraltar %
Overall quality of repair work	68	53	75	45
Time taken before work started	59	60	60	20
Being told when workers would call	52	41	58	23
Being kept informed about progress	45	39	49	25

Sample size = 3,601 – All respondents with a repair completed in the last year

Source: Market Research UK survey

**2.11** There have been particular problems with the repair service in Gibraltar. In recent years, important contractors have gone into administration or had their contracts terminated. Many routine jobs have not been carried out within the required timescales, but have been left, and, as a result, there is now a significant backlog of such repairs. The computer system used is also unable to report on the progress of individual jobs.

### Despite the above, occupants were broadly satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service

**2.12** According to the Market Research UK survey 67 per cent of occupants said that they were satisfied with the overall repairs and maintenance service (Figure 8, page 16). However, there was significant dissatisfaction with the service in Gibraltar where only 34 per cent of occupants were satisfied and 57 per cent were dissatisfied. The higher rates consistently achieved by Germany, compared to Cyprus and Gibraltar, are, at least in part, due to the introduction of a standardised system for reporting repair work to a help desk (paragraph 1.35).

### There is little scope for occupants to exercise choice

**2.13** Unlike in Great Britain where families are free to buy their own homes, families stationed overseas have little choice other than to use Departmental housing. It is very difficult for Service personnel to buy or rent their own accommodation before arrival in the overseas posting while still based in another country, while the option of leaving their family behind and serving unaccompanied is unattractive.

**2.14** Due to the limited availability of properties, the Department is only able to offer families one property for occupation, and not a choice of accommodation. Families can turn down the property they are initially offered and wait for the offer of another one. However, if they do this, they are placed at the bottom of the list of applicants. If they reject the second property offered, their application is removed from the list. 14 per cent of respondents to the Market Research UK survey said that they had not accepted the first offer of accommodation.

**2.15** Although families are not offered a choice of accommodation, when applying for accommodation they can express a preference as to the estate at their duty station where they want to be housed. Local housing staff told us that they do attempt to meet these preferences when allocating properties. However, the Department does not measure the extent to which families' preferences are met.

**2.16** Families are given little information to enable them to take an informed view when expressing their preferences. Although families do receive information on their new posting before they travel out, it often arrives after they have submitted their housing application. Also, the information they receive contains insufficient detail on the housing available to enable them to express an informed preference. According to the Market Research UK survey, only 36 per cent of occupants rated the information provided about accommodation in advance of moving as good. Our focus group participants in all countries also had complaints in this area.

## Complaints from occupants are not always handled well

**2.17** According to the Market Research UK survey, almost half of all occupants did not know how to make complaints and those that had made complaints were unhappy with many aspects of the handling of their complaints (**Figure 10**). Only 34 per cent of these complainants rated the Department's overall handling of their complaint as good. Those in Gibraltar were particularly dissatisfied.

**2.18** In Great Britain Defence Estates operates standard complaints procedures which are set down in the handbook given to each occupant. In comparison, overseas, we found that, although the written complaints procedures in the different locations had much in common, there were some differences (**Figure 11**). In addition, in Germany complaints are handled in the first instance by Unit Welfare Officers before being referred to housing staff, if necessary. According to the Department, this practice enforces the importance of the military chain of command as both the housing customer and provider, and involves all levels in identifying a solution to a complaint. However, such a delay in referring housing complaints to housing staff only lengthens the complaints

process unnecessarily if the Welfare Officer is unable to deal with the complaint satisfactorily. If the Welfare Officer is able to resolve the complaint without referring it to housing staff, there is a risk that housing staff will not get to know of housing problems as they occur.

**2.19** The complaints process also lacks independence as complaints, including those about a garrison – or station – specific practice, are often handled by the station or garrison involved, with the complaints only being referred as far up as the Garrison or Station Deputy Commander. If a family wants to take the matter further, it then has to use the formal, military Redress of Complaint procedures. Under this system, Service personnel have the right to seek, through their Commanding Officer, redress of their complaints about any aspect of their service, including housing. Service personnel can, therefore, also choose to bypass the housing complaints system completely and complain directly to their Commanding Officer. The chain of command may also choose to intervene on the handling of an individual complaint under the duty of care it has to its personnel. However, this involvement of the military chain of command in handling complaints which could not be resolved satisfactorily at the local level could inhibit occupants in complaining or in taking their complaint as far as they would otherwise do. Occupants can only complain outside the chain of command to

### 10 Families' satisfaction with aspects of the complaints process

Complainants were unhappy with many aspects of the complaints process

	Percentage of occupants rating as "good"			
	Total %	Cyprus %	Germany %	Gibraltar %
Politeness and helpfulness of staff dealing with complaint	57	64	55	48
Information about making a complaint	46	49	46	23
Ease of contacting right person to deal with complaint	45	52	44	19
Time taken to get a response to a complaint	35	44	33	23
Satisfaction with outcome of complaint	33	38	32	10
Time taken to resolve complaint	28	33	27	10
Updates on progress in resolving complaint	26	29	26	13
<b>Overall response to how complaint handled</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>7</b>

Sample size = 677 – All respondents who had made a complaint

Source: Market Research UK survey

## 11 Complaints procedures

There were some differences in the procedures for making and handling complaints.

### Maintenance and repair

Occupants submit complaints directly to works staff in Germany, Gibraltar and at Dhekelia in Cyprus, but indirectly, via housing staff, at Akrotiri and Episkopi in Cyprus.

### Occupancy management (allocation, move in and out)

Complaints received by local housing staff are referred, if necessary, up their line management to the Deputy Station Commander (Cyprus) or Deputy Garrison Commander (Germany). If families are still not satisfied, they can make a formal complaint, through their chain of command, under the military Redress of Complaint procedures.

Source: National Audit Office

Service families' organisations, such as the Army Families Federation. In contrast, in Great Britain families can take their complaints beyond the local level, to as high as the Chief Executive of Defence Estates, if necessary, for resolution without recourse to the military chain of command.

**2.20** In Great Britain Defence Estates monitors complaints about all aspects of service delivery closely to identify trends in performance and areas for improvement. In comparison, while works staff overseas also do the same in order to identify emerging problems with maintenance performance, housing officials do not routinely monitor and report complaints about the management of occupancy.

## There are instances where spouses have been treated poorly

**2.21** Spouses in Cyprus are not allowed to attend the formal meetings at which a Service person formally accepts a property on arrival or hands it over on departure. Both the participants at the Rhine focus group and the Army Families Federation in Germany told us that there, too, there had been instances where spouses had not been allowed to contribute to these meetings and had even been kept outside the property while they took place. This contrasts with Great Britain where, for example, Defence Estates will conduct the whole move-in with the spouse, apart from the signing of the occupancy licence which has to be carried out by the Service person.

**2.22** According to the Department, the above instances of poor treatment of spouses in Germany had arisen due to the individual housing officials involved and the problem had since been rectified. Housing staff in Germany told us that they did encourage spouses to attend move-ins, for example, although their own relationship, technically, was with the Service person. Housing staff at Hohne noted that there had been examples of spouses who were thought to have been over-assertive and had had to be dealt with.

## PART THREE

The Department needs to introduce greater consistency and professionalism into its delivery of housing services overseas



**3.1** This Part of the Report examines the consistency and professionalism with which the Department delivers housing services overseas. We found that there is a lack of consistency and transparency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas. There is also limited professional development of housing staff. Finally, while good use is made of information technology in the management of works, little use is made of it in other aspects of the housing service. The Department therefore needs to introduce greater consistency and professionalism into its delivery of housing services overseas.

## There is a lack of consistency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas

**3.2** There is a lack of consistency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas. Detailed implementation of housing policy is left to local housing staff. As a result, we found many examples of variations in local practices and standards both between and within countries in all stages of the housing cycle.

### Detailed implementation is left to local housing staff

**3.3** Tri-Service regulations lay down the general procedures and standards for the delivery of housing services in the United Kingdom and overseas (paragraph 1.10). Inevitably, there is scope for interpretation of how these regulations are to be applied and, in some cases, local circumstances will require local solutions. It is reasonable, however, that families should know what to expect from their housing service, no matter where they have been posted.

**3.4** In order to ensure consistency in the service families receive, in Great Britain Defence Estates has issued a Housing Management Manual to its staff which gives more detailed guidance on the interpretation of these regulations. Internal auditors also review housing operations at a regional and station level. In contrast, there is no such standard detailed guidance, or review function, for overseas housing. As a result, we found many examples of variations in local practices and standards.

**3.5** The Command headquarters in Germany is planning to use the Housing Working Group (paragraph 2.5) established in March 2004 to help ensure greater consistency in housing delivery across the country. It also plans to issue a standing order giving more guidance to housing staff on the implementation of the Tri-Service regulations.

### There are variations in how properties are allocated

**3.6** In Cyprus and Germany housing staff allocate housing to families. In Germany, in instances where the housing need is considered to be a special case, their decisions are subject to ratification by local Housing Committees which include representatives from the Units. In Gibraltar housing is allocated by an Allocations Committee which includes housing staff and representatives from each of the three Services plus the Royal Gibraltar Regiment.

**3.7** In Cyprus appeals from families about the properties allocated to them are heard by the Station Staff Officer, and in Germany and Gibraltar by committees. In Gibraltar the appeal is heard by a different committee to that which made the allocation, whereas, in Germany, appeals are heard by the local Housing Committees which ratified the original allocation.

**3.8** The Tri-Service accommodation regulations call for the use of a standard form by families when applying for housing overseas. However, in some overseas stations with a high Army presence, such as Dhekelia in Cyprus, families are required to use an Army-specific form. Indeed, in some locations such as Gutersloh and Osnabruck in Germany, both forms are used. The Command Headquarters in Germany now intends to enforce the use of the Department's standard application form, modified to reflect local circumstances, such as German state regulatory requirements.

### There are variations in how move-ins are handled

**3.9** At Episkopi in Cyprus housing officials provide families with an "estate agent's description" of the property they have been allocated before they arrive, complete with a picture of a house of that type and room layouts (paragraph 1.35). In contrast, at Dhekelia families are not even given the address of their new home, but are simply told the property type (for example, 4-bedroom semi-detached) and the accommodation charge.

**3.10** There is widespread operation of a “meet and greet service” in Cyprus (paragraph 1.35), while this service is rarely available in Germany and Gibraltar.

**3.11** All Service personnel are required to sign a licence to occupy their new home. Housing staff in some locations require this to be done immediately on move in (Episkopi in Cyprus), others soon after (Akrotiri and Dhekelia). In Gibraltar occupants have up to 28 days in which to sign the licence. In some locations in Germany the issue and signing of licences is arranged by the Units and not the housing staff.

**There are variations in the delivery of the repair service**

**3.12** Arrangements for families to report faults varied, in Cyprus even between stations (paragraph 2.9). Although the same standards of service apply in all three countries in respect of the timescales for dealing with faults reported, in Cyprus and Germany the works contractors are required to meet differing and more onerous performance targets (**Figure 12**).

**There are variations in how move-outs are handled**

**3.13** 18 per cent of occupants overseas who responded to the Market Research UK survey said that they had moved out of an overseas property in the last six months. The detailed guidance given to families overseas on what is required of them on move-out in terms of, for example, the level of the property’s cleanliness varies from location to location. Although the guidance in Cyprus and Germany has much in common, there are variations in the level of detail given and the individual items included. There was no such specific move-out guidance given to families in Gibraltar.

**3.14** There were complaints in all our focus groups that move-out standards and procedures were not uniformly enforced and that, because of the lack of clearly defined standards, the successful handover of a property back to the Department often depended on the individual housing official concerned. However, according to the Market Research survey, 61-63 per cent of respondents described the application on move-out of standards for repair, decoration and cleaning as good, while only about 15 per cent described these as poor. 70 per cent of respondents described housing staff helpfulness on move-out as good.

**12** Repair response times

Works contractors in Cyprus and Germany are required to meet differing and more onerous performance targets.

	Performance standards <sup>1</sup>	Contractual performance targets	
		Cyprus	Germany
Emergency repairs	Make safe within 24 hours	Make safe within 3 hours and good within 1 day	Make safe within 1 hour
Urgent repairs	Make good within 1 week	Make safe within 6 hours and good within 1 week	Make safe within 2 hours and good within 1 week, if possible, but, if not, 2 weeks
Routine repairs	Make good within 2 months	Make good within 1 month	Make good within 6 weeks, if possible, but, if not, 8 weeks

Source: Ministry of Defence

**NOTE**

<sup>1</sup> These standards apply both in Great Britain and overseas.



## There is a lack of transparency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas

**3.15** There is a lack of transparency in the Department's delivery of housing services overseas. The management structure for delivery is complex and unclear, while the allocation of properties to families lacks transparency.

### The management structure for delivery is complex and unclear

**3.16** The management structure is complex and unclear. There are many organisations involved in the delivery of housing overseas and responsibility for estate and occupancy management aspects of housing is split (paragraphs 1.17 and 1.18). It is, therefore, difficult to see how accountability for the service is achieved through the current management structure. For example, there is no one identifiable person in each country who is answerable for housing delivery. Also, at the individual military base level (Figure 5), the title of the officers responsible for dealing with families over housing varies – Families Housing Manager (Gibraltar), Families Officer (Akrotiri in Cyprus), Station Staff Officer (Dhekelia and Episkopi in Cyprus, and most of Germany), Assistant Garrison Staff Officer (Paderborn Garrison, Germany).

### The allocation of properties lacks transparency

**3.17** There is a lack of transparency over the determination of local housing policies which govern how properties are allocated. In Germany, it is sometimes necessary for certain locations to have their own local housing policies because of the varying nature of the housing stock, in terms of the numbers of flats and houses, available to them (paragraph 1.16), and of the personnel to be housed.<sup>2</sup> Station staff determine these policies themselves, with little reference to housing policy staff in the headquarters in Germany. In doing this, the stations aim to ensure that the policies are consistent with the tri-Service accommodation regulations. However, the solutions adopted by the stations in these policies result in differences in the way families are treated (Figure 13). The Army Families Federation told us that there is limited involvement of families and their organisations in the compilation of these policies, and little knowledge among families of their existence.

## 13 Local housing policies in Germany

Local housing policies contain variations in the way families are treated.

### Fallingbosten Station, Hohne Garrison

Due to the lack of certain types of accommodation, personnel cannot be guaranteed housing close to the station but may have to be accommodated elsewhere in the Hohne region. When allocating properties to other ranks, the Station takes account not only of the number of children, in line with the tri-Service accommodation regulations, but also a person's rank and the number of years of service. Both officers and other ranks can apply to change their quarters after six months if they so wish.

### Gutersloh Garrison

Because of the PUMA programme (Figure 7), there is a lack of available accommodation at Gutersloh station. Families of personnel stationed at Gutersloh who cannot be housed there are given priority for housing at Bielefeld station, about 10 miles away, and new families to Bielefeld may have to be housed a further 10 miles away at Herford Station. At Gutersloh station itself, although other ranks still receive the size of accommodation they are entitled to under the tri-Service accommodation regulations, priority for allocating houses, as opposed to flats, is given, in descending order, to warrant officers, staff sergeants and sergeants. Personnel can apply to change their quarters after six months.

### Osnabruck Garrison

Although other ranks still receive the size of accommodation they are entitled to under the tri-Service accommodation regulations, priority for allocating houses, as opposed to flats, is given to warrant officers, staff sergeants and sergeants.

### Paderborn Garrison

Priority is given to operational staff when allocating accommodation close to the garrison. Although other ranks still receive the size of accommodation they are entitled to under the tri-Service accommodation regulations, priority for allocating houses, as opposed to flats, is given to warrant officers and staff sergeants. Sergeants and more junior ranks can apply to change their quarters but only after four years.

### Rhine Garrison

Regimental sergeant majors are to be accommodated away from their subordinates.

Source: National Audit Office

<sup>2</sup> For example, the Rhine Garrison houses a higher number of civilian families than other garrisons due to the nature of the functions carried out there.

**3.18** There is also a lack of transparency in the administration of the allocation process. Families' organisations are not involved in the allocation of properties in Cyprus or Gibraltar (paragraph 3.6), in contrast to Germany where, in most places, the Army Families Federation is represented on the local Housing Committee which ratifies the allocations made by housing staff. However, these Committees approve most allocations with little review, focusing their attention on those allocations which are thought to be controversial. No reviews are undertaken of the allocation process, unlike in Great Britain (paragraph 3.4).

**3.19** According to the Market Research UK survey, only 39 per cent of occupants described the overall allocation process as good, with particular dissatisfaction expressed over the appeals process – only 24 per cent describing this process as good.

## There is limited professional development of housing staff

**3.20** Almost all housing officials overseas are ex-military personnel, with little previous experience in housing other than as occupants or, in some cases, through their earlier involvement in Unit welfare before taking up a housing post. Although their knowledge of military procedures is of value, they are used to a military culture, with a rigid hierarchy. Once appointed, they receive little specialist training in housing management, including customer care. Most training is conducted on the job. In Germany, there is also a training course for all new Estate Managers on the conduct of move-ins and move-outs.

**3.21** In comparison, in Great Britain Defence Estates increasingly uses directly recruited civilian staff. Its staff receive a comprehensive housing training package and are encouraged to study for the Chartered Institute of Housing qualification.

**3.22** Command headquarters in Germany is planning to equip its housing staff with greater expertise in this area. After our visit to Germany, in October 2004 it held a training day for housing staff, which it plans to repeat every six months. It is also reviewing the training needs of its housing staff and has started to redraft job specifications to include requirements for specific experience and qualifications in housing.

## While good use is made of IT in the management of works, little use is made in other aspects of the housing service

**3.23** The use of new technology to deliver services can yield a range of benefits for both the user of a service and its provider. Such benefits include faster service delivery, as processes, such as applications, are carried out electronically, and improved quality of service through the generation of better and more accurate management information.

**3.24** The Department does use information technology in the estate management aspects of the housing service overseas. Works staff in Cyprus and Gibraltar use the standard Defence Estates property management system, PROM 2, whilst those in Germany use a more sophisticated, bespoke system, Germany On-Line Database (GOLD). The bespoke system currently enables works staff and their contractors to share information within their garrison area and with the headquarters in Germany. There are plans to enable garrisons to share works information with each other in 2005.

**3.25** Housing staff overseas make little use of information technology to manage the occupancy aspects of the housing service (allocation, move-in and move-out). This compares with Defence Estates in Great Britain which, since 2003, has been using an adapted version of an information technology package common among United Kingdom social housing providers. This package covers both occupancy and property management, and is able to generate information down to station level, showing, for example, a station's allocation performance. It can also generate information on an individual property, for example showing its occupancy or repairs history.



## PART FOUR

The Department needs to introduce a performance management and improvement culture



**4.1** This Part of the Report looks at how the Department measures its performance in delivering housing services overseas. We found that the Department's performance reporting overseas focuses on estate management, with no monitoring of its performance in other aspects of the housing service. Similarly, its collection and use of feedback from customers is limited mainly to its management of works, with little feedback gathered on other aspects of housing delivery. There is little systematic sharing of good practice amongst housing officials overseas either within or between countries, and little comparison of performance with that of other housing providers. The Department therefore needs to introduce a performance management and improvement culture. To assist in this, we have identified a range of possible quality of service performance indicators that the Department could adopt.

## The Department's performance reporting overseas focuses on estate management, with no monitoring of its performance in other aspects of the housing service

**4.2** In the civilian sector in England and Wales housing providers are required to have in place a comprehensive performance management regime, under which targets are set and performance is regularly measured across a range of aspects, such as management efficiency, economy, and quality of service (**Figure 14**).

### 14 Quality of service performance indicators in civilian housing

Social landlords in England and Wales are required to report regularly on their performance in a number of quality of service areas.

#### Aspect of performance

Emergency repairs completed in target time

Urgent repairs completed in target time

Routine repairs completed in target time

Appointments made and kept

Tenant satisfaction overall

Tenant satisfaction with participation

Source: Audit Commission

**4.3** In Great Britain Defence Estates has six key targets across all aspects of the housing cycle against which it regularly measures its performance. Four of these targets cover the quality of its service to families (**Figure 15 overleaf**).

**4.4** In contrast, performance reporting overseas focuses on estate management, with little measurement of the quality of service to families. For example, overseas commanders are required to report regularly on operational performance to Land Command and the Permanent Joint Headquarters, as appropriate. As part of this process, commanders also report on their performance in managing the estate. The focus of this reporting, however, is the efficiency of their asset management (for example, the number of empty properties) and progress in improving the condition of properties, not the quality of service to occupants.

**4.5** Below command level overseas, staff monitor maintenance performance, including quality of service. Thus, in Cyprus and Germany the Department monitors the response times achieved for emergency, urgent and routine repairs. However, in Germany the performance data used is not specific to Service families accommodation, but covers the maintenance of all infrastructure assets, including office accommodation, operational assets and accommodation for single Service personnel. In Cyprus, whilst the data generated is specific to Service families accommodation, it only covers the performance of external works contractors, and not that of Defence Estates' own workforce who carry out many minor repairs. Until recently, because of the contractual difficulties there (paragraph 2.11), Gibraltar has been unable to generate the information it needs to measure repair response times.

**4.6** In contrast, there is little monitoring of performance in the occupancy management aspects of housing overseas (allocation, move in and out, and general customer support) and limited awareness among housing staff of the importance of setting targets, measuring performance and using the data to drive a process of continuous improvement.

## 15 Quality of service performance indicators in military housing in Great Britain

Defence Estates is required to report regularly on its performance against targets in a number of quality of service areas.

Target	2003-04	
	Target %	Outturn %
To give applicants notice of address within 10 working days of receipt of an application for accommodation <sup>1</sup>	75	73.9
Occupants should not experience significant defects that are outstanding within 14 days of moving in	Below 3.3	4.1
Response repairs:		
■ Emergency repairs completed in target time	95	83
■ Urgent repairs completed in target time	90	82
■ Routine repairs completed in target time	95	98
Tenant satisfaction:		
■ Numbers of occupants dissatisfied with the quality of the property provided	17	18
■ Numbers of occupants dissatisfied with the service received	19	22

Source: Defence Estates

### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Defence Estates has amended the performance measure for 2004-05 to giving applicants notice of address within 15 working days of receipt of an application for accommodation.

**4.7** Only the housing staff in Gibraltar regularly report on their occupancy management performance. Reporting is restricted to four performance measures, however, only two of which are concerned with the quality of their service to families: the percentage of families' properties allocated and accepted by personnel on their arrival, and the percentage of reports to the housing helpline which were actioned satisfactorily. In the absence of routine performance information, housing staff at Akrotiri in Cyprus specifically generated data for us for five performance measures, chosen by them, and only one of which dealt with quality of service to families: the percentage of families able to travel together and have a quarter on arrival.

**4.8** The general failure to measure occupancy management performance is despite the fact that the Tri-Service accommodation regulations include a performance standard in this area. The regulations state that families moving overseas are to be given a minimum 28 days' notice of their new address. Data on the Department's performance in meeting this service standard is not gathered, however, at any of the overseas locations. According to the Market Research UK survey, only 57 per cent of occupants described the time taken to receive an offer of housing overseas as good.

The Department's collection and use of feedback from customers is limited mainly to its management of works, with little gathered on other aspects of housing delivery

**4.9** Housing staff attempt to obtain feedback from occupants about repair work carried out, but they gather little feedback about occupants' satisfaction with the occupancy management aspects of the housing service.

Attempts are made to obtain occupants' feedback on repair work carried out

**4.10** The Department seeks feedback on its repairs performance from occupants. In all three countries, on completion of a repair job, occupants are left a feedback form to complete and return. The design of this form, and the aspects of performance it seeks feedback on, varies from country to country, although all ask for occupants' views about the quality of the work done and the cleaning up carried out by the trades people. Apart from Cyprus, however, this feedback is for all repair jobs, including those on office accommodation, operational assets and accommodation for single Service personnel, and not only for those on Service families' accommodation.

**4.11** Response rates for the return of these forms also tend to be low. For example, in Germany only approximately three per cent of forms issued are returned. Consequently, the Department is testing alternative methods for obtaining customer feedback there. It has begun to carry out telephone surveys of a sample of those who have just had a job completed. At Osnabruck it carried out a mail-shot to occupants on all jobs completed in July and August 2004. In this, occupants were asked to provide their views on the jobs done using pre-paid postcards. This mail-shot is in line with Defence Estates' practice in Great Britain. Response rates, however, in the Osnabruck pilot have also been low, at below two per cent.

### Little feedback is gathered on occupants' satisfaction with the occupancy management aspects of the housing service

**4.12** In Great Britain Defence Estates surveys its occupants annually to determine their satisfaction with the housing service they receive. It also leaves families separate customer feedback forms on move-in and move-out to identify their satisfaction with these processes.

**4.13** In contrast, housing providers overseas do not regularly conduct surveys to identify occupants' satisfaction with the housing service received. Housing staff at Rhine Garrison in Germany told us, however, that they had been planning on sending such a questionnaire to families on their housing.

**4.14** As for customer feedback forms, housing staff in Gibraltar and at Bielefeld and Munster Stations in Germany do leave such forms with occupants when they first move in to obtain their feedback on the allocation and move-in process and on their new home. However, any complaints raised on these forms are dealt with on an individual basis. Staff do not aggregate the feedback they receive to gain an overall view of customer satisfaction, to measure how customer satisfaction changes over time, or to identify ways in which the service can be improved.

## There is little systematic sharing of good practice amongst housing officials overseas either within or between countries

**4.15** There is little systematic sharing of good practice amongst housing officials overseas either within or between countries. Such sharing of good practice that does occur between housing officials within an overseas Command is on an informal basis, via telephone or e-mail. In Germany, the Station Staff Officer at Rheindalen arranged for housing staff to visit their counterparts at Munster and Paderborn to discuss good practice. A regular housing training day has also recently been introduced (paragraph 3.22).

**4.16** There is also little systematic sharing of good practice between overseas Commands. One example we did find, however, was the adoption by Cyprus of Germany's Housing Customer charter (paragraph 2.7). Similarly, there is little systematic sharing in the experience gained by Defence Estates in providing housing services in Great Britain.

## There is little comparison of performance with other housing providers

**4.17** Although there are particular issues in providing families' accommodation in Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar, there are general management principles which can be applied in all housing providers. There is also a wealth of information available on performance which social housing providers, such as local authorities and housing associations, have to provide as part of their performance management regime.

**4.18** We found, however, that the Department had carried out little benchmarking of its housing services overseas against other housing providers elsewhere as, in the past, it did not view its performance as comparable with social housing providers in the United Kingdom. The only such comparison that we found had been carried out in Germany in 2002. In this exercise, staff had compared performance for Germany over a small number of measures, including the time taken to complete repairs, against that of three local authorities in Great Britain, where large numbers of Service people lived. Staff found that their performance was below that of these comparators.

**4.19** One element of the performance management regime specific to social housing providers is external inspection by the Housing Inspectorate, part of the Audit Commission. Under this system, the Inspectorate assesses and grades performance using a star system. In preparation for these inspections, it is common for housing providers to commission consultants to undertake a “mock inspection”, using the same methodology as the Inspectorate.

**4.20** Most overseas locations, however, did not invite external assessments of their performance. The one exception was in Germany where the in-house organisation responsible for carrying out repairs, the Garrison Works Alliance, subjects itself to periodic quality audits by the British Standards Institute.

**4.21** Given the lack of external assessments, we asked our housing management consultants, Housing Quality Network Services, who are experienced in conducting “mock inspections”, to rate the quality of the housing service provided to Service families overseas, based on their discussions with key members of housing staff overseas, their review of procedures and practices adopted by Commands and on the documents provided by Commands. In their opinion, if their review had been a mock inspection, they would have rated the housing service provided to Service families overseas as poor. According to Housing Quality Network Services, the absence of consistent performance data for overseas housing services would in itself result in a poor rating. Their assessment does not, however, allow for the separate work subsequently put in hand by the Department to improve the provision of housing overseas.

## We have identified a range of possible quality of service performance indicators

**4.22** The Department has already acknowledged the need to examine the management of housing services overseas. In September 2004 it commissioned a business process review of the area, with a focus primarily on customer care issues. The Department’s review team liaised closely with the National Audit Office and made use of the evidence we had already collected on the quality of the housing service. The review is due to report in the first quarter of 2005. In addition to organisational and procedural changes, it will recommend the introduction of a consistent performance management regime. Under this regime, the Department, centrally, will set the Commands targets and then hold them accountable for their performance against these.

**4.23** In our opinion, the introduction of this regime is likely to promote an improvement in the quality of housing services overseas. The review proposes that the targets set under the new regime should measure those same aspects of performance as are currently measured by Defence Estates in Great Britain (paragraph 4.3). However, together with Housing Quality Network Services, we have identified a range of other possible quality of service performance indicators that the Department could adopt for assessing its delivery of housing services overseas and promoting service improvement (**Figure 16**).



## 16 Quality of service performance indicators

There is a range of quality of service performance indicators which the Department could adopt for its housing services overseas.

### Allocation

#### Timeliness

- Percentage of families given notification of their new address within the required timescales
- Percentage of families allocated a property by the due date

#### Entitlement

- Percentage of families who were accommodated in a temporary quarter on arrival
- Percentage of families receiving a property above/on/under entitlement

#### Choice

- Percentage of families receiving their first choice
- Percentage of families rejecting the first property offered
- Number of appeals by families against the property allocated made/upheld

#### Customer satisfaction

- Percentage of families expressing satisfaction with the allocation process

### Move-in

#### General

- Percentage of families receiving a settling-in visit within required period after move-in
- Percentage of families experiencing significant defects within a set period of their moving in

#### Timeliness

- Housing officials turn up for move-in on time

#### Customer satisfaction

- Number of complaints made by families about the move-in process
- Percentage of families expressing satisfaction with the move-in process

### Maintenance

#### Timeliness

- Percentage of repairs where an appointment was made and kept
- Percentage of emergency, routine and urgent repairs carried out within required response times

#### Quality of work carried out

- Number of repeat jobs carried out
- Where jobs have been subject to a post-completion quality check by the Department, the number of jobs where shortcomings were identified

#### Customer satisfaction

- Number of complaints made by families about the maintenance and repair service
- Percentage of families expressing satisfaction with the maintenance and repair service

### Move-out

#### Timeliness

- Housing officials turn up for move-out on time

#### Customer satisfaction

- Number of appeals by families against charges levied made/upheld
- Number of complaints made by families about the move-out process
- Percentage of families expressing satisfaction with the move-out process

#### General

- Level of overall families' satisfaction with the housing service provided
- Level of families' satisfaction with opportunities to participate in decision-making
- Number of complaints made/upheld

Source: National Audit Office

# APPENDIX 1

## Study scope and methodology

**1** This Appendix sets out the scope of our examination of the Department's housing service overseas and the methodologies we used in the course of our study.

### Scope of the study

**2** We examined whether, given the existing housing stock, the Department delivered housing services to Service families overseas in a way that met the requirements of the Services and the military personnel and their families. We used an issue analysis approach to identify the scope of our examination and the nature of the evidence required to complete our study. As a result, we identified three main issues:

- Whether the Department was planning the delivery of housing services overseas properly;
- Whether the Department was executing the delivery of these services properly; and
- Whether the Department was controlling the delivery of the services properly.

For each of these main issues we devised a set of sub-issues in order to direct our detailed work and analysis, and to allow us to answer the main issues set.

**3** These three main issues reflect the three stages in the service delivery process identified in the joint National Audit Office and HM Treasury guidance "Improving service delivery: how auditors can help" (November 2003):

- Designing the service;
- Delivering the service; and
- Evaluating the service.

**4** Our study covered the quality of the housing service provided throughout the whole housing cycle of allocation, move-in, occupation, and move-out, in the three locations where the Department had the great majority of its overseas housing - Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar.

### Methodologies

**5** To gather the evidence we needed to answer the issues identified above, we undertook the following:

- A review of housing practices and performance; and
- A survey of occupants of families' housing overseas.

We also invited an Expert Panel to discuss our emerging findings.

### Review of housing practices and performance

**6** We commissioned housing management consultants, Housing Quality Network Services, to compare the Department's arrangements overseas with best practice in the United Kingdom civilian and defence housing sectors, and to make recommendations for their improvement. We also required them to identify key performance indicators and standards for each aspect of housing service and customer satisfaction.

**7** In undertaking their commission, Housing Quality Network Services, with our assistance, interviewed the main stakeholders within the Department responsible for developing housing policy and delivering the housing service overseas. This work involved face-to-face interviews not only with staff based in Great Britain, but also with the local housing officials in Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar (**Figure 17**).

**8** To obtain an understanding of the Service families' views on service delivery, we, together with Housing Quality Network Services, met with the families' organisations for each of the three Armed Services (the Army Families Federation, the Naval Families Federation, and Airwave) both in the United Kingdom and overseas.

## 17 Consultation with Departmental stakeholders

Together with Housing Quality Network Services, we interviewed a number of stakeholders within the Department involved in housing services overseas.

### Great Britain

- Service Personnel (Policy)
- Army (Personnel Services 4)
- Royal Navy (Directorate of Naval Life Management)
- Land Command
- Permanent Joint Headquarters

### Overseas

- Commander British Forces, Cyprus
- Housing staff at Akrotiri, Dhekelia and Episkopi stations in Cyprus
- UK Support Command (Germany)
- Housing staff at Gutersloh, Hohne, Osnabruck, Paderborn and Rhine garrisons in Germany
- Commander British Forces, Gibraltar
- Housing staff in Gibraltar
- Defence Estates in Cyprus and Gibraltar
- Garrison Works Alliance in Germany

Source: National Audit Office

9 Housing Quality Network Services also held a series of focus groups with families in August 2004 (Figure 18). Each group comprised approximately 10 people living in Service Families Accommodation and discussed in more depth what it meant to live in this accommodation and how the housing service was delivered locally.

10 Finally, we and Housing Quality Network Services visited the headquarters of Defence Estates' South Region to gain an understanding of the Department's housing practices in Great Britain. We also met with the Housing Corporation to discuss housing practice in the civilian sector in England and Wales.

### Survey of occupants of families' housing overseas

11 We commissioned Market Research UK to devise and conduct a survey of Service families overseas to obtain their feedback on the Department's performance in delivering housing services, and to compare the results against those from similar surveys of housing tenants in the United Kingdom civilian and defence housing sectors.

12 The survey involved sending a postal questionnaire to Service families in Cyprus, Gibraltar and Germany. Market Research UK sent the questionnaire to all Service families in Cyprus and Gibraltar, and 50 per cent of families in Germany. In total, Market Research UK sent the survey to 9,500 families across all Commands.

## 18 Focus Groups with occupants

Housing Quality Network Services held a number of focus groups with occupants of families accommodation overseas.

Command	Focus group sessions	Total number of participants	Services represented
Cyprus	2 – Dhekelia and Ayios Nikolaos 2 – Akrotiri and Episkopi	43	Army, RAF, Civilians
Germany	1 – Rheindalen	11	Army, RAF, Civilians
Gibraltar Civilians	1 – North Rock  1 – South Rock	17	Royal Navy, Army, RAF,

Source: Housing Quality Network Services

### 19 Survey of Service families overseas

Market Research UK surveyed a number of Service families occupying Department housing overseas.

Country	Total properties	Total surveys sent	Responses received	Response rate	Sampling error
Germany	13,719	6,860	2,724	40%	± 1.7%
Cyprus	2,233	2,233	1,095	49%	± 2.1%
Gibraltar	422	422	109	26%	± 8.0%
Not stated			192		
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,374</b>	<b>9,515</b>	<b>4,120</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>± 1.4%</b>

Source: Market Research UK

13 Local Department housing staff distributed the questionnaires to families on our behalf, in Germany to addresses selected at random by Market Research UK. To ensure a good response rate, our consultants sent up to three mailings of the survey questionnaire to Service families, as necessary.

14 The response rates to our survey are given in Figure 19 and are higher than that achieved by Defence Estates in its annual survey of occupants in Great Britain in 2003. Our response rates are sufficiently high to allow us to extrapolate the survey results over the whole population.

#### Expert panel

15 We also held an Expert Panel meeting in August 2004 to discuss our interim findings with a group of key stakeholders and to gain their advice and comments. This helped us to focus our information gathering and analysis in the next phase of our study. Representatives from a number of organisations attended (Figure 20).

### 20 Composition of Expert Panel

We invited a number of organisations involved in the delivery of housing to discuss our emerging findings in August 2004.

- Housing Quality Network Services (Greg Birdseye)
- Market Research UK (Euan Ramsay)
- Service Personnel (Policy) (Group Captain Steve Knight)
- Army (Personnel Services 4) (Mary Trundle)
- Land Command (Major Jayne Errington)
- UK Support Command (Germany) (Major Steve Burton)
- Permanent Joint Headquarters (Lieutenant Colonel Paul Chambers and Squadron Leader Paul Bell)
- Army Families Federation (Nikki Peterson)
- Defence Estates (Julie Harrison)
- Housing Corporation (Deborah Iltott)

Source: National Audit Office

## APPENDIX 2

### Key findings of survey of occupants

**1** This Appendix sets out the key findings of the Market Research UK survey of occupants of families' accommodation in Cyprus, Germany and Gibraltar. The analyses below compare the satisfaction rates for various

sub-groups against the rates for all respondents. The total of the replies received for these sub-groups is less than the total of the replies from all respondents as some respondents did not state which sub-group they belonged to.

#### Analysis by country

	Germany	Cyprus	Gibraltar	All
<b>Total replies received</b>	<b>2,724</b>	<b>1,095</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>4,120</b>
Satisfaction with current accommodation	68%	63%	58%	<b>66%</b>
Number of rooms – about right	72%	82%	72%	<b>75%</b>
Size of rooms – about right	65%	81%	69%	<b>70%</b>
Satisfaction with accommodation's general condition	59%	47%	47%	<b>55%</b>
Satisfaction with decorative condition inside	44%	39%	40%	<b>42%</b>
Satisfaction with area as a place to live	78%	82%	73%	<b>79%</b>
Neighbourhood problems – lack of activities for young as serious problem	42%	32%	33%	<b>39%</b>
Rate accommodation as value for money	70%	70%	59%	<b>69%</b>
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	68%	66%	34%	<b>67%</b>
Satisfaction with overall quality of repair	75%	53%	45%	<b>68%</b>
Satisfaction with quality of repair workmanship	63%	41%	41%	<b>56%</b>
Satisfaction with the overall housing service	63%	73%	46%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response by staff to occupant's query	64%	71%	42%	<b>66%</b>
Whether made a formal complaint	17%	15%	29%	<b>17%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response to complaint	33%	42%	7%	<b>34%</b>
Satisfaction with how well kept informed about things that affect occupants	64%	69%	38%	<b>64%</b>
Satisfaction with opportunities to participate	24%	23%	24%	<b>24%</b>
Whether views taken into account a lot or a little	74%	79%	62%	<b>75%</b>
Satisfaction with overall allocations process	36%	47%	34%	<b>39%</b>
Satisfaction with overall condition of the accommodation on move in	53%	45%	37%	<b>50%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of cleanliness on move in	57%	56%	44%	<b>57%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of decoration on move in	50%	43%	43%	<b>49%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of repair on move in	52%	43%	36%	<b>49%</b>
Extent to which accommodation below expectations	21%	28%	37%	<b>23%</b>
Comparison with housing provided in GB – same or better	68%	64%	34%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with helpfulness of staff on move out	70%	73%	59%	<b>70%</b>

## Analysis by status

	Officers	Other Ranks	Civilians	All
<b>Total replies received</b>	<b>728</b>	<b>2,701</b>	<b>620</b>	<b>4,120</b>
Satisfaction with current accommodation	70%	63%	76%	<b>66%</b>
Number of rooms – about right	87%	69%	85%	<b>75%</b>
Size of rooms – about right	81%	64%	83%	<b>70%</b>
Satisfaction with accommodation’s general condition	53%	56%	58%	<b>55%</b>
Satisfaction with decorative condition inside	46%	41%	45%	<b>42%</b>
Satisfaction with area as a place to live	89%	75%	85%	<b>79%</b>
Neighbourhood problems – lack of activities for young as serious problem	24%	45%	28%	<b>39%</b>
Rate accommodation as value for money	71%	68%	74%	<b>69%</b>
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	68%	66%	71%	<b>67%</b>
Satisfaction with overall quality of repair	65%	69%	69%	<b>68%</b>
Satisfaction with quality of repair workmanship	56%	56%	54%	<b>56%</b>
Satisfaction with the overall housing service	69%	64%	69%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response by staff to occupant’s query	67%	64%	70%	<b>66%</b>
Whether made a formal complaint	15%	18%	11%	<b>17%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response to complaint	29%	35%	38%	<b>34%</b>
Satisfaction with how well kept informed about things that affect occupants	67%	63%	67%	<b>64%</b>
Satisfaction with opportunities to participate	24%	25%	21%	<b>24%</b>
Whether views taken into account a lot or a little	72%	76%	71%	<b>75%</b>
Satisfaction with overall allocations process	44%	39%	38%	<b>39%</b>
Satisfaction with overall condition of the accommodation on move in	50%	49%	59%	<b>50%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of cleanliness on move in	59%	53%	68%	<b>57%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of decoration on move in	50%	46%	56%	<b>49%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of repair on move in	49%	48%	54%	<b>49%</b>
Extent to which accommodation below expectations	23%	25%	18%	<b>23%</b>
Comparison with housing provided in GB – same or better	56%	57%	77%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with helpfulness of staff on move out	75%	69%	65%	<b>70%</b>

## Analysis by ethnic community

	<b>White</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>All</b>
<b>Total replies received</b>	<b>3,798</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>4,120</b>
Satisfaction with current accommodation	66%	65%	<b>66%</b>
Number of rooms – about right	75%	83%	<b>75%</b>
Size of rooms – about right	69%	77%	<b>70%</b>
Satisfaction with accommodation’s general condition	55%	65%	<b>55%</b>
Satisfaction with decorative condition inside	42%	47%	<b>42%</b>
Satisfaction with area as a place to live	79%	86%	<b>79%</b>
Neighbourhood problems – lack of activities for young as serious problem	39%	28%	<b>39%</b>
Rate accommodation as value for money	70%	63%	<b>69%</b>
Satisfaction with repairs and maintenance service	67%	72%	<b>67%</b>
Satisfaction with overall quality of repair	68%	73%	<b>68%</b>
Satisfaction with quality of repair workmanship	56%	59%	<b>56%</b>
Satisfaction with the overall housing service	66%	71%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response by staff to occupant’s query	66%	74%	<b>66%</b>
Whether made a formal complaint	17%	18%	<b>17%</b>
Satisfaction with overall response to complaint	34%	56%	<b>34%</b>
Satisfaction with how well kept informed about things that affect occupants	65%	68%	<b>64%</b>
Satisfaction with opportunities to participate	24%	31%	<b>24%</b>
Whether views taken into account a lot or a little	75%	74%	<b>75%</b>
Satisfaction with overall allocations process	39%	51%	<b>39%</b>
Satisfaction with overall condition of the accommodation on move in	50%	55%	<b>50%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of cleanliness on move in	56%	72%	<b>57%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of decoration on move in	48%	58%	<b>49%</b>
Satisfaction with standard of repair on move in	49%	50%	<b>49%</b>
Extent to which accommodation below expectations	23%	17%	<b>23%</b>
Comparison with housing provided in GB – same or better	66%	67%	<b>66%</b>
Satisfaction with helpfulness of staff on move out	70%	93%	<b>70%</b>