



## **WELCOME TO SHAPE UKJSU SERVICE COMMUNITY OFFICIAL GUIDE EDITION UPDATED JULY 2011**

This Guide, provided by the United Kingdom Joint Support Unit SHAPE, is a source of information to service personnel, families and dependants arriving at their new home or duty station. It is hoped the information contained within the guide will be of use at the time of your arrival, and throughout your stay. For easy reference this guide is divided up as outlined below:

Foreword by Commanding Officer	Page 2
Emergency and Useful Telephone Numbers	Page 4
Useful Websites	Page 5
Relocation Guide and Family Guide	Page 8
Housing and Accommodation Services	Page 9
Other Aspects of leaving UK	Page 13
Settling in	Page 17
Baggage	Page 18
Schools/Youth Activities	Page 18
Adult Education	Page 21
Employment	Page 23
Medical and Health Services	Page 24
Station Facilities incl Hive and Church	Page 27
British Forces Post Office	Page 29
Living in Belgium and SHAPE UKJSU	Page 32
Money Matters	Page 36
Publications	Page 37
Welfare Support	Page 37
Security and Crime Prevention	Page 39
Motoring	Page 38
Telephones and Internet	Page 38
Clubs and Associations	Page 39
Sports	Page 41
Radio and Television	Page 42

## **FOREWORD BY COMMANDING OFFICER LT COL M J C EBLING REME**

Welcome to the SHAPE United Kingdom Joint Support Unit dependency. I hope that you find your stay in Belgium, Denmark, France or Spain a rewarding and enjoyable one and this booklet useful. You are now a member of a UK community of about 1050 service personnel, civil servants and their families who live and work in the SHAPE European Community and it is my job to support you throughout your time here.

**The Challenge** – My mission statement is below but in essence we are here to provide you and your family with the full package of national support within resources and current regulations. That is: to look after the family, to support the professional and to enable a British community identity.

**The Family** – It's our job to provide you with secure and maintained housing and accommodation, to facilitate dependant jobs and education (including French classes) and to work closely with the Medical, Dental and Schooling services to ensure they are supporting you appropriately. To help me, I have a Community Support Officer (CSO) and Unit Personnel Officer (UPO) who work hand in hand with the Hive, Homestart, SSAFA and other welfare agencies based outside of SHAPE.

**The Professional** – It's our job to facilitate JPA, to oversee your pay, entitlements and allowances, to manage your appraisals and provide education opportunities. We also clothe you, feed you if you live in and provide you with national transport when authorised within current regulations. Finally, we enable your annual and pre-operational training.

**The Community** – It's our job to provide up to date information through routine orders, the British Community News and a website at [www.esg.bfgnet.de](http://www.esg.bfgnet.de). We liaise with the local host nation; manage community facilities such as the "Welcombeek" community centre in Brussels and the Britannia bar at SHAPE. We sponsor regular community and social events including "meet and greets" and community forums. Finally, we run annual high profile events such as the Great British Summer Fete, Bonfire Night and Remembrance Day. I do hope you will be an active member of our community. For those of you outside Belgium we will support from a distance your community needs.

**New Arrivals** – Arriving at any new job can be a daunting experience. Inevitably, there are a few bureaucratic hoops to jump through in your first week or so and your nominated sponsor will help you through these. If you don't know who your sponsor is, please let us know. Even once your arrivals procedure is over, living in an unfamiliar international environment can also be a little scary, so come and speak to us, visit the website or our other publications to help you settle in.

**Summary** – We are here for you and your family. We work from building 306 at SHAPE, so if you have any questions, concerns or ideas for improving our service, then please ring or drop by and let us know. In the meantime, I hope you find this book useful and I wish you and your family a happy and successful tour.

### **UKJSU MISSION**

**Deliver appropriate and effective Firm Base Support to our customers, in order to enable and sustain military capability and meet the wider Defence needs.**

## **UKJSU USEFUL NUMBERS**

Civilian: 0032 65 44 xxxx

CO	3906
2IC	4145
Adjutant	5115
RSM	3907
SSO	4026
UPO	4713
QM	2697
HdIBT	4192
CSO	5346
RAOWO	4683
SSA	5367
SNCO HR	4796
SNCO HR	4347
JNCO HR	4844
JNCO HR	3378
Registry	3792
Travel Cell	4646
Vehicle Registration Office	5147
UK School	5283
HIVE	3984
Housing assistant	3801
Property management	4620

## **EMERGENCIES**

### **UK Duty Staff**

SHAPE Mil Ext 4960 or Civilian 065 444960 Mobile: 0478223116

### **Numbers for the Civil Emergency Services**

Fire - 100  
Ambulance - 100  
Police - 101

### **For Emergencies on SHAPE the following numbers are to be used**

#### **Fire**

SHAPE Mil Ext 4017 or Civilian 065 444017

#### **Ambulance/Hospital**

SHAPE Mil Ext 3333 or Civilian 065 443333

#### **Police**

SHAPE Mil Ext 5379 or Civilian 065 445379

#### **Security**

SHAPE Mil Ext 5379 or Civilian 065 445379

## Telephone Exchange

SHAPE Mil Ext 7111 or Civilian 065 447111

## Joint Casualty & Compassionate Centre (JCCC) – 24/7

Mil 95471 7325 or Civilian 0044 1452 519951

**OUT OF HOURS MEDICAL COVER** – Contact the British Forces Germany Health Service (BFGHS) at JHQ Rheindahlen on 0049 2161 472 2969 or go direct to your nearest A & E Dept of your Local Hospital.

## USEFUL CONTACTS/SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Army Welfare Service	01722 436569
Army & Navy Confidential Support Line: From anywhere in the world call back:	0044(01) 198063085
Cyprus	080 91065
Agility Logistics (Removals)	00441189502826
Central Hotel Booking Service	08457 585376
Childcare	0800 096 0296
Child Benefit Office (England, Wales & Scotland)	0845 302 14444
Child Benefit Office Northern Ireland	0845 603 2000
College of Health Waiting List Helpline	0208 983 1133
Cotswold Centre	01225 810358
Defence Passenger Reservation Centre	0207 218 1460
Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Importing Pets)	0870 241 1710
Department of Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Importing Plants)	01904 45 5174
Family Associations:	
AFF	01980 615525
NFF	023 9265 4374
RAF FF	01780 781650
HIVE GB	01722 436499
HIVE SHAPE	0032 65 443984
HM Customs & Excise (Importing Vehicles from Overseas)	0208 929 0152
Joint Service Housing Advice	01722 436575
National Passport Helpline	0870 521 0410
Naval Personnel & Family Service:	
Portsmouth	023 92 72 2712
Plymouth	01752 555041
Faslane	01436 672798
NHS Direct (England Wales & Northern Ireland)	0845 4647
NHS 24 (Scotland)	0845 4 242424
Northern Ireland Education & Library Boards:	
Belfast	02890 564000
North Eastern	028 2566 2303
South Eastern	028 9056 6200
Southern	028 3751 2200
Western	028 8241 1263
Pensions & Overseas Benefits Directorate	0191 218 7777
SCE (UK)	01980 618244
SSAFA Force Help Special Needs & Disability Advisor	0207 463 9234
Tri Service Early Years Development Officer	01722 436563

Service Community Official Guides - can be obtained through the Service Welfare organisations or through your local HIVE.

### **UK, LOCAL & BFG WEBSITES**

There are many web pages that can provide information and most of the agencies listed above have their own web site. Most of the information in this aide memoir including links to these agencies can be found by visiting [www.sfff.mod.uk](http://www.sfff.mod.uk)

Adventure Sports Online	<a href="http://www.adventuresports.com">www.adventuresports.com</a>
Army Benevolent Fund	<a href="http://www.armybenfund.org">www.armybenfund.org</a>
Army Families Federation	<a href="http://www.aff.org.uk">www.aff.org.uk</a>
Army Net	<a href="http://www.armynet.mod.uk">www.armynet.mod.uk</a>
Army Welfare Service - Home Page	<a href="http://www.army.mod.uk/aws">www.army.mod.uk/aws</a>
British Army - Home Page	<a href="http://www.army.mod.uk">www.army.mod.uk</a>
Directory of Essential Services	<a href="http://www.scoot.co.uk">www.scoot.co.uk</a>
Ex-Service Housing	<a href="http://www.haighomes.org.uk">www.haighomes.org.uk</a>
Help With Moving Home	<a href="http://www.ihavemoved.com">www.ihavemoved.com</a>
Information on UK Neighbourhoods	<a href="http://www.streetmap.com">www.streetmap.com</a>
Information on your Local Area	<a href="http://www.upmystreet.com">www.upmystreet.com</a>
Joint Service Housing Advice Office	<a href="http://www.army.mod.uk/jshao">www.army.mod.uk/jshao</a>
Local B&B Information	<a href="http://www.opt.be">www.opt.be</a>
Naval Families Federation	<a href="http://www.nff.org.uk">www.nff.org.uk</a>
Postal Services	<a href="http://www.bfpo.org.uk">www.bfpo.org.uk</a>
Royal Air Force Community Support	<a href="http://www.rafcom.co.uk">www.rafcom.co.uk</a>
Royal Air Force Families Federation	<a href="http://www.raf-families-federation.org.uk">www.raf-families-federation.org.uk</a>
Royal Air Force - Home Page	<a href="http://www.raf.mod.uk">www.raf.mod.uk</a>
Royal British Legion	<a href="http://www.britishlegion.org.uk">www.britishlegion.org.uk</a>
Royal Marines - Home Page	<a href="http://www.royal-marines.mod.uk">www.royal-marines.mod.uk</a>
Royal Navy - Home Page	<a href="http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk">www.royal-navy.mod.uk</a>
Royal Navy & Royal Marines Reference Site	<a href="http://www.rnreference.mod.uk">www.rnreference.mod.uk</a>
SSAFA/Forces Help	<a href="http://www.ssafa.org.uk">www.ssafa.org.uk</a>
Wide Range of Financial Services	<a href="http://www.naafi-financial.com">www.naafi-financial.com</a>
Yellow Pages	<a href="http://www.yell.co.uk">www.yell.co.uk</a>
Support Group for Families of Submariners	<a href="http://groups.msn.com/sumbarinefamiliesuk">http://groups.msn.com/sumbarinefamiliesuk</a>

### **IN PROCESSING**

Your NATO/EU sponsor and the UKJSU Admin Office will provide all the help you need for in-processing at SHAPE.

You and your family will be required to report to the SHAPE International Personnel Processing Section (SHIPPS), ideally on your first day, in order to arrange vehicle registration and SHAPE ID Cards. The ID card gives access to SHAPE facilities.

You will need to have some Euros with you as you will incur costs (some of which are refundable through UKJSU), during in-processing.

UKJSU Cashier Opening Hours:

Mon -CLOSED

Tue –Fri 0915-1230 hrs

Service personnel are to ensure that they are in possession of the appropriate NATO vetting certificate prior to arrival at SHAPE. A copy of the certificate is to be forwarded to the PVRO in the Registry of the UKJSU.

## **FAMILY GUIDE TO THE ASSIGNMENT PROCESS - RELOCATION COUNTDOWN**

### **After Receiving Assignment Notification**

- Children's Schooling?
- Moving Overseas? – Passports for all the family.
- Health Issues? – Discuss with GP.
- Special requirements? – Notify your new unit.
- Pets to move? – Pet Passport, vaccinations etc (Passport not required for entry into Belgium but the process of obtaining a Pet Passport takes a minimum of 7 months)

### **Within 14 Days**

- SFA Application Form (MOD F 1132) to SSO, UKJSU, SHAPE BFPO 26 or Fax 0032 65 444745.

### **The Next Steps**

- Spouse Employment – Handing in notice.
- Looking /applying for a new job?
- Adult Education.
- Benefits

### **On Receipt Of New Address**

- School Admissions.
- Apply for Disturbance Allowance (no earlier than 45 days before joining date).
- Apply for Removals
- Pet arrangements.
- Local Information - Contact Estate Manager (EM) concerned (as stated in your letter of allocation).

### **6-8 Weeks Before Move**

- Inform current unit of the need for either a DV/SC NATO Security Certificate (available through Career Manager).
- Mandatory DHE Pre Move 'Advisory Visit' (applies to those in SFA in GB and NI only).
- Mandatory DHE SFA Pre Move 'Advisory Visit' (applies to those in SFA in GB & NI only).
- Packers survey.
- Apply for Cleaning Scheme? (N.B. There is no SFA Cleaning Scheme available in Belgium or France).
- Pet Passport – Check that it is up to date and all necessary vaccinations have been administered.

### **28 Days Before Move**

- Address confirmation.
- Change of Address.
- Transit Accommodation.
- Movements (ferries flights/tickets etc).
- Check entitlement to allowances and travel.
- Advance of Pay.
- Privately Arranged Passage (no air trooping facilities to Belgium).

## **Final countdown**

### **1 Week Prior To Move**

#### **Children's Education**

- Have you got the record of your child's education to take to the new school? (see Education advice on page 18).

#### **Double Check**

- Double-check all arrangements with the many agencies that you have dealt with up to this point. This offers an opportunity to clarify details and rectify potential problems, such as will the removal company remove pianos or garden sheds?

#### **Pack**

- Your removal company will offer guidance in this area.

#### **Pets**

- What are the travel arrangements? Your veterinary surgeon can give help and advice. If taking a pet, make sure you have enough pet food and water for the journey. If you are taking a ferry the pet must stay in the car.

#### **Telephone/TV**

- You will need to arrange disconnection of your telephone and reconnection in your new location. You will also need to arrange for cable television to be disconnected /reconnected and an address change for your TV license. You may not be allowed to use a satellite dish on some SFA Hirings. Check with the SSO EM.

### **3 Days Prior To Move**

#### **Pack Essentials**

- Pack a bag with a change of clothes and essential toiletries. Include a survival kit for the other end: light bulbs, toilet rolls, screwdriver and pliers, matches, paper towels, cash and a note of important telephone numbers. Do not forget any medication you might need. Passports/insurance/driving licence/Euros? Remember the boredom threshold of children on moves, especially those involving long journeys. A bag of 'goodies' to produce at critical and stressful times is a good idea!

### **2 Days Prior To Move**

#### **Fridge/Freezer**

- Empty, defrost and dry out your fridge /freezer.

#### **Moving Day Refreshments**

- Arrange for refreshments for the next day, bearing in mind that your cooker may be disconnected. Pack a carton of tea and coffee, UHT milk, juice cartons, biscuits etc. Plan the evening meal for the move day – it may be easier to eat out. Keep a kettle and tea handy for the packers! You are under no obligation to provide refreshments to the packers but a little bit of hospitality may assist in your smooth move!

## **Toddlers**

- Keep small children occupied and out the way for their safety.

## **Pets**

- Also give thought to what is to happen to pets when the packers arrive. They will need to leave doors open and will be moving around, keep them out of harms way.

## **Move Day**

### **Emergency Contact**

- Give your removers an emergency contact number so they can get in touch in case of delays.

### **Check House**

- Walk around the house to ensure all items to be moved, have been placed in the removal vehicle. Do not forget to check the sheds, garages and behind doors! Make sure items belonging to the house are kept separately and not removed.

### **Handover The House**

- Make sure that the house is ready for handover – it is always best to discuss any major problems with the housing staff prior to handover. You do not want to be delayed due to disagreements on damage for example. Any necessary repairs need to be planned by the housing staff – remember someone else like you will be moving into the house. Make sure you take a note of utility meter readings so you can check the final bill when it comes.

### **Settling In**

- Take-over house.
- Unpack.
- Doctor/Dentist.
- Welcome pack.
- Read SFA Information Pack.

Note: Unfortunately late notice assignments are sometimes received, or the official posting order can arrive late. Although a posting authority is required for housing applications and other aspects of your move start planning early. It may be possible for your unit to obtain the posting authority ahead of receiving the assignment order.

## **STN STAFF OFFICE (SSO) HOUSING, ACCOMMODATION & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

### **A Guide For Service Families On Moving To SHAPE**

This section offers general guidance, and acts as a reminder for Service families (both serving and non serving members of the family) who are about to move to SHAPE. Its aim is to cover the essentials for your move from the UK and overseas and for all levels of experience. It cannot cover all specialist requirements. It is therefore important that you consult your current unit personnel, admin staff or SHAPE Sponsor if you are uncertain as to what action is needed. On arrival you will find in your SFA an information pack and a Housing Community Support Guide which includes articles concerning day to day living in Belgium, guidance on the SFA 4 Tier Grading System (4TGS), maps of the local and SHAPE area and other useful documentation. Please inform the SSO if you feel that more information or improved/additional service from the

Housing Staff is required. There are many agencies within the UKJSU that are available for help and advice. These are mentioned within this guide.

Start to plan your move as soon as possible and inform us of any particular or specialist needs you may have prior to arrival. Do not wait until you arrive – it may be too late to help. There are certain actions/forms that the serving spouse is required to complete. If your spouse is away on duty, please seek help and advice from your unit personnel administrative or families office or contact a member of the SSO housing staff. Unfortunately this document is unable to be quoted as an authority for claims or provision of services therefore you need to confirm entitlements to allowances etc via the UKJSU UPO. More information on most of the subjects raised in this initial section are covered in more detail in other sections of this booklet or are included in the SFA Information Pack in your SFA.

There are also individual Service sites that can help:

Royal Navy [www.royal-navy.mod.uk/rn/families.html](http://www.royal-navy.mod.uk/rn/families.html)

Army [www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/index.htm](http://www.army.mod.uk/soldierwelfare/index.htm)

Royal Air Force [www.rafcom.co.uk/](http://www.rafcom.co.uk/)

UKJSU SHAPE <http://www.esg.bfgnet.de/UKJSU%20SHAPE/index.html>

The UKJSU is a Tri-Service organisation and as such there are no Single Service Desks. If you have any queries about your move, your SHAPE contact numbers are:

RAWO Unit Admin Office 0032 65 44 4683

Unit Admin Office SNCO 0032 65 44 4347

Unit Admin Office SNCO 0032 65 44 4796

Unit Admin Office JNCO 0032 65 44 4844/3378

Housing 0032 65 44 3801

GFA/Furniture Removal Service 0032 65 445274

Alternatively, your Sponsor will be your focal point once nominated.

Housing (SFA/OSH Information can be obtained from the UKJSU SHAPE Station Staff Office (SSO) Housing Help Desks (0032 65 44 3801 or 0032 65 44 4620) or your Estate Manager (EM) as stated in your letter of allocation.

### **Housing (Service Family Accommodation (SFA))**

When serving within the Armed Forces the principle is that you will be provided with family accommodation (if you are married accompanied, or have legal care & custody of dependent children) at the duty station of the serving person. There are of course exceptions: some assignments are unaccompanied and in some stations there can be delays in providing suitable accommodation. In GB housing is provided through the Defence Housing Executive (DHE), whereas in SHAPE/France it is managed via the SSO UKJSU. However, the policy for the provision of family accommodation is the same in all areas as detailed in JSP 464 Part 2, although there are some slight differences in procedures. The application form for housing in SHAPE is the **MOD Form 1132**. This form needs to be signed by the current unit administrative/records officer and by the serving spouse. If the serving spouse is absent, you should consult your unit for Families/Welfare Office for assistance. The main procedures are outlined below. If you need adaptations to your house due to special requirements, then you must supply an Occupational Therapist's report to enable the housing authority to carry out the works required. However, it should be noted that in Belgium all SFA are Hirings and Landlord permission is required to carry out modifications and are unable to be compelled to undertake them. If you are uncertain as to the housing entitlement relating to your appointment, rank or family size, please consult your unit admin staff. Details are also contained in JSP 464. If you are intending to use a proxy to perform your move in/out please be aware that you are bound by any decisions they may make on your behalf. Proxy move in/out are therefore discouraged.

## **Service Family Accommodation (SFA)**

All SFA for British personnel at SHAPE are Hirings. All are within a reasonable travelling distance and are furnished and equipped by the SSO as near as is possible to current scales. Normal SFA charges are raised appropriate to the type of hiring occupied and the designated grading in accordance with the MOD 4-Tier Grading System (4TGS). SFA occupants should note that Gradings are under constant review and may change up or down following on from a change in circumstances affecting the number of Deficiency/ Positive Points. Occupants will be notified in advance of the details of any Grading Review Board that may affect the Grading for charge purposes of their SFA.

Families are not normally to arrive in SHAPE until the agreed "Occupation/March In date". Only in very exceptional circumstances will the arrival of the family prior to "March In" date be authorised. SSO may grant early arrival up to one month prior to the official posting in/ assignment date. Retention rights are to be requested in the current duty station or private arrangements made if necessary. Advice on the number of nights allowed in hotel accommodation should be sought from the Unit Admin Office concerned. Application for early arrival or retention of SFA in SHAPE should be made to the SSO UKJSU SHAPE as far in advance as possible.

It should be noted that if you decide to take Premature Voluntary Release whilst occupying an SFA in Belgium that you must move out of and handover your SFA/OSH prior to your discharge being allowed to proceed.

## **Applications For SFA**

Applications for Officers and WO & below SFA are to be made on MOD Form 1132 which is included with your arrival pack. This should be completed and returned to the SSO UKJSU ASP after receipt of notification of assignment to SHAPE. The SSO Housing Section maintains and publishes monthly waiting and fixed lists based on the chronological order of official arrival dates (TOS date). When you are placed on the Fixed List you will be allocated a SFA and forwarded a letter of allocation with the address, Type, Grade and contact details of you EM. Allocations are normally made between the 2 – 3 months prior to arrival date.

## **Allocation**

SFA Hirings of varying types and sizes are available within a radius of 15 kilometres from SHAPE. Hirings are allocated strictly in accordance with JSP 464 Tri-Service Accommodation Regulations (TSAR) and Queen's Regulations. SSO allocates SFA from the Fixed List. Unfortunately, refusal of the initial offer of an SFA may entail the individual concerned being removed from the top of the Fixed List to the bottom of the next list to be issued. In accordance with current regulations a second refusal will result in the individual being removed from the Fixed List for at least 3 months.

## **Applying For Removals**

On receipt of your assignment or movement authority, or within 8 weeks of your planned move date, you should obtain the relevant removals application form (F MOV 713 Overseas/AF P9727 UK) from your unit. Check with your unit what you are required to do. If your future Service house/delivery address is not known, the form should be annotated as such with 'Address to be confirmed' and then forward the application as directed to prevent a delay in it being processed on time. You should also contact your current and future DHE Customer Care Offices to discuss your move in/out appointment before making arrangements for removals as difficulties can occur if dates are not co-ordinated.

Within the UK and NW Europe, (SHAPE is within NW Europe), married and single homeowners and householders may normally move up to 67.92 square metres. Ask your unit for the full details of your entitlement (exceptional authority can be sought for excess baggage or weekend moves in special circumstances). Your unit will contract a removal firm to undertake the move.

Once you have been informed which removal firm will be used, you will be required to liaise with them directly to organise the move itself. The contractor will carry out a pre-move survey to estimate the amount to be moved: they will require access to all areas of your house/garage/shed/cellar. You should tell them if you require boxes to allow you to pre-pack prior to this survey, so that the surveyor can deliver them at the time of the survey.

Insure your belongings in transit; do not assume you are already covered.

Be aware that there are restrictions on first and last moves - check with your unit personnel staff.

## **Transport**

Families should be aware that transport is not provided from SFA onto SHAPE base. It is therefore an advantage if both the Service person and their spouse drive. There is a bus service between most villages/towns stopping off outside the SHAPE main entrance. Timetables are available from the UKJSU SHAPE HIVE.

## **Pets**

Not all landlords allow pets in SFA Hirings. For this reason it must be indicated on your SFA application form if you intend to bring a pet (dog/cat) with you. The SSO may then be able to allocate a SFA according to your needs. You should be aware that any animal, particularly dogs, regarded by the Belgian Authorities to be potentially dangerous will not be allowed on any of the Purpose Built Housing (PBH) patches, however, they may be allowed in some Individual Hirings, (rarely available). A list of these dogs is issued via the SSO when acknowledging the receipt of the SFA request. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (Tel: 0870 241 1710 (Monday to Friday - 8.30am to 5pm UK time)) can advise you on the Pets Passport Scheme. If you are moving pets, make sure you have the appropriate cage/means of transport. See also the advice for moving to/returning from overseas below. You will also need to check the requirements for pets travelling abroad. Check the website [www.defra.gov.uk](http://www.defra.gov.uk) for full details.

## **Furnishings**

All hiring's are furnished (if requested), as near as possible to current scales. A limited wharfing scheme is available in SHAPE but it is not always possible to provide this service as and when required by occupants, especially during the summer months (Jun - Sep). However, providing the Furnishing List (attached to the MOD 1132 – SFA Application form) is submitted direct to the SSO, UKJSU, SHAPE, BFPO 26, at least 4 weeks prior to arrival in SHAPE the hiring will be prepared to the level required. Additional requests are to be submitted to the EM responsible for the property after occupation.

A Get-You-In-Pack can be provided on request from the EM for a 28 day loan or longer if necessary. This will be placed in the SFA Hiring on initial occupation. It consists of crockery, glassware, cutlery, pans, kettle, blankets, sheets and pillows. If you should require this pack please notify the SSO/EM at least 10 working days prior to your arrival. These packs remain in Officer's OSH as part of the standard inventory.

## **Privately Owned Furniture**

Due to the type of construction of many SFA Hirings, a hoist is often required for items of furniture to be moved onto the upper floors or flats and some properties. It is an individual's responsibility to confirm with the SSO/EM on allocation of SFA if a hoist is necessary and then advise the removal company/assessor accordingly. It is the removals company's responsibility to provide a hoist. Hoists are not available via the UKJSU and the hire of a hoist locally can cost between £200- £400

so ensure that you complete the relevant section of the FMS form correctly and also, if appropriate, inform the assessor of this requirement.

### **Single/Unaccompanied WO & Below**

Single and married unaccompanied JNCO or equivalent personnel are accommodated in a Barrack Block (309) and dine in the British Mess. All male/female JNCOs are accommodated in single rooms situated on separate corridors. Each floor has a communal sitting room and kitchen, with washing and drying facilities. Single and married unaccompanied (MU) WOs and SNCOs or equivalent are accommodated in Building 309 and eat in the British Mess. After their arrival they may elect to move into a misappropriated SFA apartment in SHAPE village, if available. These are two bedroom flats. All SLAs in Block 309 are fitted with Direct to Home (DTH). DTH is a BFBS provision which allows access to limited Sky channels via a set top box available from the QM. Subject to availability SNCOs may share a flat. This type of accommodation does not attract any form of living out allowances. There is a recreation room and a bar (the Britannia Bar) in Block 309 for use by all British members of SHAPE. Single accommodation is very limited and you should contact the Accommodation JNCO on Ext 5240 before arrival to ascertain availability. You should confirm your requirements in writing to the RQMS, Bldg 309, Ext 5548 UKJSU SHAPE.

All WO and below including UKBCs posted to Brussels will be allocated an Official Single Hiring (OSH) via the SSO UKJSU SHAPE. Initial POC for Brussels based personnel requiring OSH is the UKJSU NSE Housing Assistant (HA) Brussels (0032 2707 7552)

### **Single/Married Unaccompanied Officers/UKBCs**

Single/Married unaccompanied officers/UKBCs are accommodated in Official Single Hirings (OSH). One or 2 bedroom flats are normally available for single or married unaccompanied officers/UKBCs. Initial applications for OSH are to be made via the SSO UKJSU SHAPE (Ext 3801) for SHAPE/Lille based personnel or HA Brussels (0032 2707 7552) for Brussels based personnel prior to arrival. SSO will then allocate dependent upon availability as appropriate. All OSH are fully furnished and equipped to a basic standard to enable occupants to live comfortably without some creature comforts. Pets are not permitted in OSH accommodation. UKBC are accommodated in accordance with their Equivalent Military Rank (EMR). As all SFA are Hirings as opposed to MOD owned there are no surplus SFA available for use by Single/MU personnel. In accordance with current MOD regulations co-habitation is strictly forbidden in OSH accommodation.

Any change from planned arrival dates are to be notified as soon as possible otherwise accommodation may not be available on arrival.

There is no Officers' Mess as such. However there is an International SHAPE Club with limited facilities. The building consists of a 2 restaurants, 2 bars and function rooms. The restaurants are normally only open for lunch-time meals throughout the week with the exception of Steak Night on Thursday nights (subject to change). The SHAPE Club is normally closed at the weekend however there are occasional Sunday family lunches laid on.

### **Private Accommodation**

If you live in your own accommodation, you may wish to let or sell the property, or you may be considering buying a house on assignment. The Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) can advise you (Tel: 01722 436575). You may be entitled to assistance with legal expenses or other relocation expenses. Unit admin staff will be able to advise you. If you wish to move into service housing at your new location you must submit an application form (MOD Form 1132). There are many other issues related to buying or selling a property. Your estate agent should be able to provide you with a checklist of the actions you need to take.

## **Other Accommodation Aspects**

If you are assigned from GB to an overseas location, you should do the following:

- Notify your existing DHE Office that you are posted within 14 days of receipt of the Assignment Order (unless you are deployed on operations or at sea when this may not be possible, in which case you are to notify DHE within 14 days of your return). This enables DHE to assist you in making arrangements to vacate your house and also enables DHE to pre-allocate your house to an incoming family.
- If appropriate, submit a request for retention of your existing service house to your current DHE Office if there are educational, welfare, medical or other service related reasons which would entitle you to retain your existing SFA.
- Contact the DHE to arrange a mandatory Pre-Move Out Advisory Visit at least 2 months before your intended date of vacation. This is to assist you in preparing your house for vacation, enables DHE to explain how the occupant funded opt in cleaning scheme operates and helps DHE establish the extent of any works needed on the SFA before it can be re-occupied.
- Notify DHE of your vacation date.

If you wish to opt into the Pre-Payment Cleaning Scheme operated by DHE in GB and have not yet applied to do so, you must contact your local DHE Customer Care Centre before the 28-day point.

## **Transit Accommodation**

You may be entitled to transit accommodation to help your move to your new locality (up to five nights). Consult your unit personnel staff regarding eligibility. If there is no Service-provided transit accommodation, the Central Hotel Booking Service should be used to book accommodation Tel: 08457 585376. Please note that if you make private arrangements you may not be entitled to a full refund. The Services Cotswold Centre can also supply 3 or 4 bedroom chalets. Contact through your Service welfare staff or direct on 01225 810358.

## **Provision Of Rubbish Bags And Water Purification Salt**

Each household has an allowance of rubbish bags free of charge. These can be collected from the Station Stores in Building 202. Certain houses are equipped with water purification equipment. Householders in these SFAs are entitled to the salt that is added to the equipment. The salt can also be collected from the Station Stores in Building 202.

## **Further Information**

If you require further information, you should contact your local housing staff on Ext 3801.

## **OTHER ASPECTS OF LEAVING UK:**

Start Planning Early! There are extra arrangements and considerations for overseas moves which will depend upon which country you are posted to; but you should note the following:

- Ensure your unit has completed F/Mov/564 and if travelling as a family a F/Mov/546. This is sent to the Defence Passenger Reservations Centre (DPRC). You should then receive an information pack from them. If you do not, contact your movements clerk. DPRC Tel no is 0207 218 1460.
- If you intend to make your own travel arrangements, authority must be obtained from your current unit before travel commences. The rules for this type of travel are complex so

check to ensure that this is the best option for you. A route card can be sent to you by your sponsor on request.

- Complete and return the 'Certificate of Willingness to travel' to DPRC which they will have sent you.

### **Apply For or Renew Passports**

These are supplied free to family members, or costs can be reimbursed when your spouse is posted overseas spouses and children (even infants) need separate passports, although passports which currently include children on a spouse's passport will remain valid until renewal. Non-EEC spouses will need to have their passports endorsed with a status stamp. DPRC can advise. If you intend to travel through other countries there may be other entry requirements. You can also seek advice through the National Passport Helpline Tel: 0870 521 0410.

### **Finance**

Make sure your financial matters are in order – you will need to open a bank account overseas. You are advised to maintain your UK bank account to enable you to pay out outstanding debts or receive payments from the Department of Work and Pensions and Inland Revenue such as Child Benefit and child tax credits, if entitled. Maintenance of an UK bank account will also help you to keep your credit rating in the UK. You can make arrangements as to how much of your pay is paid into each account. There are also a number of other financial issues you need to be aware of when on an overseas posting, such as rates of local overseas allowance, cost of living, and local banking arrangements. You will need to speak to your unit admin staff or sponsor to find out the details.

### **Voting**

You are advised to register as a postal voter or vote by proxy when going overseas. Your unit can advise you on the actions you need to take. See also [www.aboutmyvote.co.uk](http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk).

### **Travel/Health Insurance**

The MOD will supply medical care at your assignment location. However, if you are travelling to, or through, other areas whilst abroad you will need medical insurance. If travelling within the EU you should have a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) which allows for free emergency treatment whilst travelling between EU countries and it is advisable to also have your own medical insurance whilst travelling, please see <http://www.nhs-ehic.org/> for more details. You can obtain an EHIC form from a post office or your local HIVE. You may need vaccinations depending upon where you are going or which countries you intend to visit – check with your GP or unit medical officer.

### **Baggage Insurance**

Insure your belongings in transit - do not assume you are already covered. You will receive a copy of the baggage guide F/Mov/713 from your unit which will tell you how to move your belongings. It will be your responsibility to complete and submit the relevant form as instructed in the baggage guide. You should note that you may not be able to move all your possessions with you overseas and some may have to go into storage. Your entitlements include storage in the UK at public expense.

### **Medical**

Check that you have all the appropriate medical documents.

NHS – we apply for your documents when you register.

Military – come with all other G1 documents.

If you are pregnant or have recently had a baby, there will be restrictions on travel:

Cannot fly > 24 weeks.

Travel by ferry > 36 weeks.

If any of your family have special needs or medical requirements you must inform the medical staff as there can be limited facilities/medical care available overseas and not all specialist care is available, however, the sooner you inform the medical staff, the more likely it is that arrangements can be made to provide the care. Patients with ongoing health needs should ensure an adequate supply of medication before posting, as some drugs need procuring from the UK which can cause a delay. You should take your NHS card with you - if you don't already have one, you can get one from your GP. If you have a complex medical history, please request a copy of your computer record to take with you. This will help your new GP whilst records are being forwarded.

### **Security Clearance Requirement for SHAPE.**

A **NATO** Security Clearance Certificate (either DV/SC) is required to access your place of work while here at SHAPE. This NATO clearance needs to be with the UKJSU Vetting Officer before your arrival. Please advise your unit of this requirement at least four weeks before joining SHAPE.

### **Education**

There is an International School at SHAPE with a British Section that caters for Primary Education. Secondary Education is either as a Weekly Boarder at Windsor School in Germany, Boarding School in UK and there is a possibility of enrolling at the US, Belgian or German schools on SHAPE. You must inform the Unit Welfare Officer, UKJSU and the relevant School if you have any children with special educational needs. It is not possible to provide the full range of specialist educational help overseas, due to the limited numbers of children being educated compared to a UK local authority. There are also not the resources to provide the full range of specialist staff. You should take your children's educational documents with you and not put them in storage. If you have children in boarding school, you are advised to contact your unit admin staff to advise you on school children's visits. You are eligible to claim for 3 return visits or 6 single trips per school year. You are responsible for any escort arrangements for your children. For further information on Schools go to the Section on Children's Education/Youth Services.

**You should note that the school in JHQ (Windsor) will be closing at the end of the academic year 2012/2013.**

### **School Children's Visits (SCV)**

There are a number of travel options for public funded School Children's Visits. To qualify, each visit must be for at least 7 consecutive days. You will be sent full details and an application form if you have children at Boarding School, University or State School and claiming Guardians allowance. Additional LOA is paid for each day your child is in Belgium on an authorised SCV.

### **Employment**

You should take original copies of any qualifications you have in case they are needed in applying for a job. Personnel interested in applying for a job should contact the Head of Civil Administration who is located in the UKJSU main building and is contactable on Ext: 5236.

### **Social Care**

If you or your family are receiving any ongoing Social Services advice you should discuss with your advisor how this is to continue overseas - they may need to contact the Headquarters of the

Sailors, Soldiers, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) who provide the statutory social services for the Armed Forces overseas. Job Seekers Allowance should be available. You should contact your local DWP office early to establish the criteria.

## **Uniform**

There can be long lead times to order specific clothing in Belgium, so you are advised to ensure you have your full kit prior to arrival.

## **Orders of Dress**

In view of the international nature of SHAPE it is essential that the highest standard of turn-out is maintained by all ranks.

During the summer month's individuals have the opportunity to wear the 'warm weather dress' this period is generally from May to Oct and changes are published in Unit Routine Orders (UROs). The order of dress is laid down in Unit Standing Orders but, in general, is the same as normal Service conventions in North West Europe.

Individuals may continue to wear combats under single service rules and Army personnel are given the opportunity to wear the dress shown below.

## **Army Officer Warm Weather Uniform**

No 4 Dress - stone coloured lightweight Service Dress pattern.

No 6 Dress - stone coloured lightweight Parade Dress - bush jacket pattern.

No 7 Dress - stone coloured lightweight short sleeve shirt and trousers.

Entitled officers will receive a free issue of No 4 and No 6 Dress pattern uniforms (your Unit QM will advise you). Officers who have received an allowance for No 4 and No 6 Dress within the last 12 years will only get replacement uniforms on repayment. After 12 years replacement is free.

No 4 & No 6 Dress can be ordered through UKJSU QM's Dept. The supply time is approximately 8 weeks.

Foot Guards Officers should apply to Supply Branch, London District to arrange local manufacture.

It is the responsibility of the individual officer to apply to his Unit QM for issue of No 4 and No 6 Dress. See Mat Regs Vol 3, Pam 3, Annex B, Sect 3 para 6(a). Officers who think they may have received an allowance or have been issued No 4 and/or No 6 Dress in the dim and distant past (12 year rule) should contact their Army Pay Office, who will validate eligibility for issue.

## **Army Officers & Soldiers**

No 7 Dress or combats are worn as working dress during the summer. Two sets of No 7 dress must be demanded by your Quartermaster's Department prior to assignment using your posting order number and date as authority.

## **RAF & RN Officers, Airmen & Ratings**

Normal UK Summer dress is worn at SHAPE. Warm weather uniform is not required unless you are posted to an appointment which requires regular detachment to warm weather areas.

## **Compassionate Leave Travel**

There are specific rules and arrangements in place for compassionate leave travel. A guide on the action close relatives should take in the event of an emergency are available from your unit.

Please make sure you obtain and pass a copy of the card JPA P001 to them. **Only the JCCC can authorise Compassionate Travel.** Although you may wish to contact your parent unit for advice or support, you should contact the JCCC directly so that your case can be dealt with without delay. **Retrospective authority to travel will not be granted, you must get authority prior to travel from the JCCC – Tel Mil 95471 7325 or Civil 0044 1452 519951.**

### **Welfare Support**

If you are experiencing problems at home and the assignment notification is causing distress, contact your unit welfare staff for help.

### **Allowances**

You may be entitled to Disturbance Allowance to help cover the essential expenses when moving. This is payable one month in advance of assignment change. Rates vary depending on your circumstances. Contact unit admin staff to apply for Disturbance Allowance and to find out what other allowances you may be entitled to, such as Motor Mileage Allowance, and Nightly Rate of Subsistence Allowance.

### **Change of Address**

You will want to inform various agencies as well as family/friends/ firms etc of your new address. You can arrange with Royal Mail in the UK for your mail to be forwarded for a small fee.

### **House Insurance**

You will need to move your house insurance to your new house. However, make sure the house you are handing back (if you are in possession of SFA) is still covered in case there is damage that you may be able to claim for on your insurance (depending upon the type of insurance you have taken out).

## **SETTLING IN**

### **Takeover your House**

Ensure you are at the SFA or if pre-arranged at the SSO EM Office at the pre-arranged time as agreed by you and the SSO Housing Section. Make sure you check the condition of your SFA on March In with the EM. Note any damage not noticed by the EM and report facts to him ASAP after occupation if not noted on the March In. If you are dissatisfied with the condition of the house make sure you raise it at the time with the EM. You may refuse to take the house if it does not fulfil the MOD laid down standards. In the event of dispute the SSO will act as an arbitrator. After occupation please complete the March In questionnaire and 14 day defect report.

### **Unpack**

Your removal company may undertake this task. Check if they are required to do so under the contract. If you intend to unpack your own belongings you will be asked to sign the release form - ensure you state on the form that there was insufficient time to unpack belongings. Make sure you report any dissatisfaction with the service – your removers have been contracted and are paid to provide a certain level of service. Do not sign any forms without checking.

### **Doctors**

Register with the SHAPE Medical & Dental Centres as soon as possible. Contact the Medical Centre reception via Ext: 5824.

## **Dentists**

Dental Health Care will be provided by Service Dentists based in the SHAPE Dental Centre (reception Ext: 5878). Payment is on NHS rates. Entitlement can be confirmed with the Dental Centre. The Dental Centre is closed at SHAPE on Wednesdays when they run a clinic at Sterebeek, Brussels. If however, you have a NHS Dentist in your permanent UK home, you may wish to retain the use of this dentist. This will entail you undertaking your regular check-ups and treatment at this dentist. No financial or travel assistance is available should you decide on this.

## **Pets**

If the animal has been micro chipped, inform the relevant agencies of the change of address. Remember that some Landlords do not permit the keeping of pets in their properties and that the SHAPE BOQ and in OSH pets are not normally allowed. If in doubt, speak to the EM or SSO Housing Section in the case of Hirings, and to the UAO in the case of the BOQ. Details of local vets are published locally in the British Community News and are included in the Housing Booklet in your SFA.

## **BAGGAGE**

Your personal effects and household belongings will be transported to SHAPE or Brussels by one of the following methods:

### **Accompanied**

The individual makes all private arrangements, without the assistance of a removal company. If you choose this method of removal then you will have to complete SHAPE Form 368 (in your joining pack) and comply with current customs regulations. You should discuss this with your Admin Office before departure and allow plenty of time for processing of forms.

### **Unaccompanied**

This is the most common method of baggage removal using a contracted removal company (FMS(NWE)) for married accompanied personnel or Unaccompanied Baggage Allowance (UBA) Normal Scheme (sometimes called MFO) for single and married unaccompanied personnel.

### **Address For UBA**

Baggage moved under the UBA (NORMAL) Scheme for SHAPE and BRUSSELS (excluding houses/flats in Brussels):

Rank and Name  
c/o Quartermaster  
UK Joint Support Unit  
SHAPE  
BFPO 26

The QM's department will contact you once your boxes have been received at SHAPE.

## **CHILDREN'S EDUCATION / YOUTH ACTIVITIES**

CEAS is a joint Service organisation which exists specifically to give advice and help on all Service children's educational matters including special educational needs. It is advisable to start early to give more time to resolve problems.

If your child is at a critical stage of their education e.g. in their GCSE, AS or 'A' level year, you may be able to retain your house in your current posting/drafting to avoid having to disrupt their

education. Seek advice from CEAS, and as necessary apply to your local housing office for retention of your Service house.

## **Belgium**

In the SHAPE site there is an SCE school which follows the English National Curriculum of education. For further details see [www.britishschool-shape.sceschools.com](http://www.britishschool-shape.sceschools.com)

In other areas your children may have to go to the local school. Contact CEAS who will advise you what the education provision is for the area that you are assigned to. The SCE (UK) Helpline is available for any Service children's education questions: Tel: 01980 618244.

## **Pre-School Education**

The provision of pre-school education is catered for with the foundation stage which is for 3 to 5 year olds. This is provided by the British Section of the SHAPE International School. It is geared to prepare children to enter Foundation Stage 2. Childcare/childminding is the responsibility of the individual, however there are a number of options available to those at SHAPE; for example St Denis offers a Nursery and a Kindergarten. The Nursery takes children from 18 months to 2 years 6 months and a charge to parents is made. The Kindergarten takes children from 2 Years 6 months to 5 years old.

## **Special Education Needs (SEN)**

If you are assigned overseas (Belgium) and have a child with SEN you must inform CEAS. Although SCE schools will try to meet the needs of your child they cannot cover all SEN requirements. Local authorities in UK are dealing with a far higher number of children, and consequently have the resources to offer a range of specialists. Other assistance for children who have special needs can be obtained from: SSAFA Forces Help Special Needs and Disability Advisor Tel 0207 463 9234. For advice on playgroups that welcome and cater for children with special needs you should speak to the Tri-Service Early Years Development Officer Tel: 01722 436563 (See also advice under special equipment needs below). If you have any concerns about SEN please ring CEAS: 01980 618244.

## **Boarding School**

Some parents may wish to consider boarding school for their child to ensure continuity of education. Childrens Education Allowance (CEA) is available which can help towards the school fees (there is a minimum parental contribution of 10% of the fees; however, the amount that you have to pay can be greater, depending upon the school fees and other extras). There are special rules which apply to this allowance – ask your pay/administration office for details. CEAS can also advise you.

## **SCHOOLS**

### **SHAPE International School**

There are 3 secondary sections (Belgian, German and US) at the SHAPE International School. All will accept British children, and at present there are some in each section. In most cases these sections will not be suitable for children approaching GCSE, but they may be an option for children aged 11-13 who prefer not to board, can cope with a foreign language and a non-British environment. In all cases parents considering one of these sections should take advice from the Headmaster on Ext: 5283.

### **Kindergarten**

One of the strengths of the Belgian educational system is the provision which it makes for pre-school education. Free playschool places are available for all children from the age of 2 years and

British personnel serving at SHAPE are fully entitled to take advantage of these facilities. The kindergartens used are:

### **St Denis**

The St Denis kindergarten is located 2 kms from Domaine de la Brisee. Children from the age of 2 until entry to primary school may attend either morning sessions or all day sessions (0830-1500 hrs). A cooked lunch is provided for a small charge (optional). On payment of a small daily charge younger children (18 mths – 2 years) are accepted for the morning session or all day (0830-1530 hrs) in the nursery section.

### **International Kindergarten**

The SHAPE International School provides full kindergarten facilities for children aged 2+ years of all SHAPE personnel. The language of instruction is French, but many of the teachers also speak English. No charge is made, other than for meals. Children from all SHAPE nations attend and the environment is stimulating.

### **Primary Education**

The UK Section of SHAPE International School (SIS) is for primary (elementary) age children only, taking children from the academic year in which they are aged five to eleven years of age. As a general principle, the UK Section is organised to take British children through the UK National Curriculum but, where space is available, children from other SHAPE Nations are accepted. Parents who wish to apply for a place for their child must complete one of our application forms obtainable from the school office Room 105 in Building 702 (N).

The administration and staffing of the UK Section is done through Headquarters, Service Children's Education, (SCE), which is located near to Rheindahlen, Germany. All staff are engaged directly from the United Kingdom or are dependents of British personnel serving at SHAPE.

There are 7 other elementary sections in the SHAPE International School, most of which will accept children from other nations. For various reasons, a small number of British parents choose to send their children to one or other of these sections.

### **The US Elementary Section**

The U.S. Elementary Section has an enrolment of approximately 600 students (Preschool-Children disabilities – Grade 6). The resource educators include: Reading Recovery teachers, speech therapist, Special Education Teachers, Host Nation Teacher, Guidance Counsellor, Media Centre Specialist, Physical Education Teacher, Art Teacher, Music Teacher, Teacher for the gifted, Compensatory Education Teacher, English as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Language Teacher, Health Educator and Psychologist. A traditional American curriculum is offered; reading/language arts, math, social studies, science, health, etc. In addition, students study Belgian culture and have an introduction to French. Other activities which enrich the students' educational program on a regular or seasonal basis include: Student Council, Art Enrichment, International Sports Day, Chorus, Environmental assemblies, and field trips to coal markets, towns, festivals, museums and areas as far as the Ardennes.

### **Secondary Education**

Unfortunately there is no SCE (NWE) UK Secondary School on SHAPE. Parents of children aged 11-18 have 2 choices:

## **Boarding School in UK**

Parents considering this option should take advice from the educational and pay staff at their current unit. Boarding School Allowance will normally be admissible, and the “continuity principle” will apply. Advice on the financial aspects of boarding education is available from your current Admin Office.

### **Windsor School, Rheindahlen.**

Windsor School in Germany is the nearest SCE (NWE) secondary school to SHAPE and it has boarding facilities for children from a number of isolated locations in NW Europe. It provides a normal UK education for the 11-18 age group. Exceptionally, there is no charge for this school other than for the food. This charge is payable each term in advance. LOA is still payable for children at Windsor, but a Home Savings Element is charged for each day spent at the school. Application for entry to Windsor School should be made on SCE Form 3001, which should be completed and returned to HQ SCE (NWE), BFPO 140. Weekly transport is provided by the UKJSU to ensure that these children are returned to Belgium safely each weekend. Should a child wish to take a friend home for the weekend then permission must be obtained in advance from both parents. Further details are available from the School House. In addition the Bus Coordinator/Escort is to be advised. **You should note that the school in JHQ will be closing at the end of the academic year 2012/2013.** The future school used will be the British School Brussels.

## **ADULT EDUCATION**

### **Individual Education**

The Education Centre, UKJSU, is established to provide for the educational needs of Service personnel during their tour in SHAPE or HQ NATO. Certain educational services are also available to dependants. The Education Centre is located in Building 309 and staff can be contacted on Ext: 5234. Individual advice on educational matters is available at any time, and both service personnel and dependants are invited to drop into the centre when ever they are visiting the UKJSU. SHAPE does not have a full time education officer but receives support from 34 AEC, BFPO 40.

### **UKJSU Learning Centre**

The Learning Centre staff provide initial advice, guidance and support to learners throughout their courses (popular ones are the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) and the City and Guilds Adult Literacy and Numeracy certificates). The Learning Centre can also provide access to specialist course tutors whenever necessary. Advisors' may be contacted either by telephone on Ext: 7808 or 0032 65 447808 or by e-mail to [shape@alc.detsa.co.uk](mailto:shape@alc.detsa.co.uk)

### **IT Suite**

The IT Suite is an Instructor Led training facility that assists individuals with learning IT Skills such as Touch Typing where a unit certificate is awarded on completion of the course to Word Processing, Presentations, Spreadsheets, Graphs and Charts at Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced levels; successful students of these courses have the opportunity to gain an eDCC (electronic Digital Competence Certificate) which is accredited by the OCR (Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examination Board). All of the courses on offer are advertised in either the SHAPE Community Life, British Community News (BCN) or flyers to dependents.

### **Standard Learning Credits Scheme (SLC).**

Service personnel can receive financial help through the SLC. Personnel should complete mod Form 1950 (prior to the course commencing) which is then signed by the Adjt and sent to ETS

Branch, along with an application and payment for the course of their choice. When the course is completed the student should complete MOD Form 1950 to claim a refund (80% of course fees up to a maximum of £175 in the financial year). Tutorial support for OU foundation courses is provided at JHQ Rheindahlen on several weekends during the year.

### **Open Learning.**

A range of courses is available through the Scottish Polytechnic Colleges Group. For further details, contact 34 AEC JHQ Mil 94872 3303 or civil 0049 2161 472 3303.

### **Short University Courses**

A number of universities offer short courses which are available to both Service personnel and civilians. There is no charge for the courses. Civilians may be allocated places on a fill-up basis only, and may claim travel expenses at the discretion of the budget manager.

### **Civilian Examinations**

The Education Centre is an Examinations Centre for civilian examinations including OU exams, IGCSEs and A-Levels. The Defence Examinations Centre (DEC) offers GCSEs and A-Levels through a variety of resources. When details of civilian examination dates are received from DEC they are published on Unit Routine Orders. It is then the responsibility of potential candidates to enrol via the Education Centre and to pay the appropriate fee. GCSEs and A-Level examinations can be taken in either June or November.

### **Language Training**

French: UKJSU Education Centre. The Education Centre offers French classes at 6 basic levels. The courses are held to coincide with normal school terms and involve 3 – 4 hours of instruction per week at each level. Anyone arriving mid-term will be put on the waiting list for the next term. A brief interview should be booked before the start of the new term for new students, to assess which class would be most suitable. There is a fee for these courses.

### **SHAPE Language Centre**

The Language Centre is situated in Building 253 and holds courses in the following languages; French, English, German, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Dutch, Turkish, Greek and Polish. There is a fee for these courses. For more information contact the Language Centre on Ext: 4971.

### **OTHER INFORMATION CENTRES**

#### **Learning about Belgium (L.A.B.)**

L.A.B. is a free 3-half day programme, open to all SHAPIANS, interested in exploring, discovering, and experiencing their new life in Belgium. During the 3-half days of the course your instructor discusses a wide variety of topics, such as: Belgian history, geography, the monarchy, the economy, social customs, the official languages, tipping, shopping, household produce and food, telephones, parking machines, public transportation and local medical facilities. For more information ring Ext: 3339/3240.

#### **SHAPE Community Library**

The SHAPE Community Library is situated near the UKJSU and holds a wide selection of fiction/non-fiction books, music CDs and videos. Children of all ages are very well catered for. In addition, there are workstations for Internet access or word processing and printing/ photocopying

facilities for a small fee. The library is free to all SHAPE members and their dependants in possession of a SHAPE ID card.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

There are a number of schemes in operation to help spouses find new employment. Within SHAPE there are numerous opportunities to find employment. These range from admin type jobs within the support unit and medical/dental centre and support staff at the school to cleaning and waiting jobs at the Shape Officer's Club and UK Mess. Alternatively, jobs are available on the local economy but there are tax implications with this. Personnel interested in applying for a job should contact the Head of Civil Administration who is located in the UKJSU main building and is contactable on Ext: 5236.

### **SHAPE Community Services Fund (SCSF) Personnel Section**

Employment is available for SHAPIANS within the International community in Recreation, Clubs, Messes, Community Services and Youth Services. For enquiries and application forms contact SCSF Personnel Section Ext: 4075.

### **NATO Civilian Employment**

Temporary Contract Secretarial and Administrative jobs are available at SHAPE for dependants, who apply immediately upon arrival through the Civilian Personnel Office in the Main Headquarters, Building 102 (Room 224) Ext: 4357.

### **Warning**

You should be aware however, that accepting temporary employment at SHAPE or on the Belgian economy may affect your status. Seek advice from the UKNMR or the UKJSU Legal Employer (QM) prior to changing or accepting one of these positions.

Dependants from countries which are not members of NATO may also have difficulties finding employment at SHAPE. Advice should be sought from the UKNMR or UKJSU Legal Employer. (QM).

### **Job Seeker's Allowance**

To claim Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) in another EU country you must have been in full-time employment and paying full National Insurance (Class 1) contributions for at least two relevant income tax years prior to the claim. You must not have voluntarily left your job without 'just cause' (accompanying a spouse on posting is now recognised as 'just cause'). JSA is only paid for a maximum of three months at UK rates (approx £55 per week). If you are already unemployed and claiming benefit you may be able to continue to claim benefit upon your arrival in Belgium.

Service dependants wishing to claim JSA must visit their local DWP office and explain to them that the usual four weeks registration does not apply to spouses accompanying service personnel overseas and if they are in doubt ask them to call the Overseas Benefits Directorate on 0191 203 7010.

When you leave your UK job to accompany your spouse overseas you should ensure that your employer is clear about the reason why you are leaving and enters the reason on Form ES585 and remember to collect your P45 before you leave. You must register as a Jobseeker at your local UK Job Centre with four complete working days remaining before your departure overseas (Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays do not count).

Before you leave UK make sure you get an introductory bilingual letter from your Job Centre and leave your forwarding address (preferably your spouse's new unit address) for Forms E303 and

E301 to be posted to you if they are not available before you depart. Please make sure that they send them to you and not to an office in Brussels as it makes the next step here in Belgium easier if you can take them to your local office. You need to register in Belgium within 7 days and you can find out all the information when you arrive from the HIVE or the Welfare Office.

## **Benefits**

Special provision is already made for Service families when overseas and they will normally be regarded as 'Resident in the UK' for benefit purposes. The following benefits should be payable to Service families overseas if all other qualifying criteria are met. However, each case is considered on its merits:

Incapacity Benefit  
Disability Allowance  
Attendance Allowance  
Invalid Care Allowance

Maternity Allowance is payable in EU countries provided that the claimant has recently been employed and paying UK National Insurance, as required in the rules. Please see the following websites for more information on benefits:

Tax credits whilst working abroad:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/TaxCredits/Gettingstarted/whoqualifies/YoureoutsideoftheUK/DG\\_172733](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/TaxCredits/Gettingstarted/whoqualifies/YoureoutsideoftheUK/DG_172733)

Child benefit whilst working abroad:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/ChildBenefitandChildTrustFund/Childbenefits/Gettingstarted/ChildBenefitandwhoqualifies/DG\\_173532](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/ChildBenefitandChildTrustFund/Childbenefits/Gettingstarted/ChildBenefitandwhoqualifies/DG_173532)

Job Seekers Allowance and other benefits:

[http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/BritonsLivingAbroad/Moneyabroad/DG\\_4000102](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/BritonsLivingAbroad/Moneyabroad/DG_4000102)

## **MEDICAL AND HEALTH SERVICES**

### **Waiting Lists**

If you are on a waiting list for a consultation or an appointment, take action now. You will need to seek advice from the SHAPE Medical Centre. Some treatments may be quicker to start the process again in Belgium whilst, in other cases, it may be better to retain your position on the UK waiting list. However, no guarantee can be made on reimbursement of travel costs. Irrespective of where you are moving from you are advised to take the following action (if moving overseas you must inform your unit personnel staff of any family medical problems). You may have the option to:

Remain on the waiting list of the original hospital for inpatient/outpatient treatment/appointment – BFGHS will provide authority for travel to UK for patients.

Arrange to transfer your care to a hospital in the area to which you are moving. You should discuss these options with your GP before coming to a decision. GPs should be aware of waiting times at the hospitals they may refer patients to. In addition, to help make an informed choice, patients can telephone the College of Health's Waiting List Helpline or NHS Direct to obtain information on waiting times locally. These telephone numbers are given below.

The College of Health Waiting List Helpline 0208 9831133  
NHS Direct (England, Wales & Northern Ireland\*) 0845 4647  
NHS 24 (Scotland although does not yet cover whole area) 0845 4242424

\* NB: advice on hospital waiting lists in Northern Ireland will be limited. Alternatively visit or telephone your local HIVE who will be able to give you contact numbers.

**If you choose to remain on the waiting list of the original hospital you should:**

- Inform your GP, or equivalent, that you are about to move but have chosen to still have your inpatient/outpatient treatment at the original hospital.
- Inform the hospital you are about to move but have chosen to remain on the waiting list of the original hospital. Give new contact details so that the hospital can arrange a suitable date for treatment.
- Register with the SHAPE Medical Centre upon arrival and inform the Doctor that you are waiting for inpatient/outpatient treatment at the original hospital.
- Tell the original hospital the name and address of the new Doctor so that postoperative continuity of care is assured.

**If you have asked for your care to be transferred you should:**

- Inform your GP, or equivalent, that you are about to move and have asked that your inpatient treatment be transferred to a hospital in the area to which you are moving.
- Keep in touch with the original hospital to get details of the hospital, (including name of consultant) to which you have been transferred.
- Register with the SHAPE Medical Centre upon arrival, inform the Doctor of the need to arrange treatment.
- The SHAPE Doctor will arrange for an appointment with a local consultant and then liaise with the appropriate Hospital.

It is important to follow these steps so that health professionals are aware of your situation and can assist you in this transition. You should always ensure that you notify your GP and the hospital about a change of address so that they can contact you swiftly. If you are experiencing problems then please notify your unit personnel staff.

**Special Equipment Needs**

Where it is practical to do so, UKJSU SHAPE endeavours to provide a standard of support and facilities for disabled and SN dependants commensurate with those available and accessible in the UK. This standard, reflecting current UK legislation, tri-Service policy and the MOD 'duty of care' as an employer, is necessarily constrained by resource availability and therefore more acute or unusual cases may be beyond the support capability of the Command. In order to determine whether specific support can be provided for each individual case it is essential that the UKJSU Staff Assistant receive notice of disabled or SN dependants so that consideration is given prior to the family moving to Belgium. All medical, educational, social special needs must be declared. ISODETS may not be able to provide suitable services for such cases and advice is sought from BFGHS/BFSWS/SCEA before assignment. If you need special adaptations to your house, please inform the SSO Housing Office, but bear in mind that all SFA in Belgium and in most cases will require the Landlord's permission to carry out all but minor modifications. You will need a report from an occupational therapist so that suitable adaptations can be made to your new house. Community equipment (with the exception of wheelchairs), should be transferable between Local Authority areas. Do not accept any difficulties placed upon you by the local authority. Speak to your personnel staff in good time to allow them to assist you prior to your move. There is not the same provision for the transfer of wheelchairs. However, NHS Executive Guidance HSG(96)34 states 'if a person who has been provided with a powered indoor/outdoor wheelchair moves into an

area, where under local eligibility criteria they would not be eligible, the wheelchair should not be withdrawn unless there is a good clinical reason for doing so'. Again, seek assistance from the unit personnel office and do not take no for an answer.

### **Orthodontic Treatment**

Obtaining orthodontic treatment can be difficult and it is not always possible to transfer treatment between orthodontic specialists. The nearest Military Specialist is at JHQ Rheindahlen, approximately 3 hours from SHAPE. This can cause difficulties due to the length of some treatments. You are advised to consult the dental Officer early on if any of your family is undergoing treatment to see how it can best be continued. If you have children at boarding school any treatment must be carried out at the school location so it can continue irrespective of moves. It is extremely difficult to find treatment on the NHS, and long waiting times should be expected pending approval from DPDS (Senior Dental Officer Germany).

### **Medical and Dental**

Medical and dental treatment is available to service personnel and their registered dependants under British Tri-Service and International arrangements at SHAPE. For all other temporary visitors, (i.e. your house guests), non-routine medical assistance will be provided as long as you have recorded your visitors with UKJSU Admin Office prior to their arrival in SHAPE.

### **Vaccinations**

You should consult your private doctor or medical officer before you leave the UK to discuss vaccinations. Your spouse and children may wish to be vaccinated against Tetanus and Diphtheria. There is a legal requirement in Belgium for everyone to be immunised against Poliomyelitis.

### **Location**

The UK Medical Centre is located in the SHAPE Health Care Facility (Level 1) and provides all necessary information on registering. A separate Health Care Guide can be collected from the centre on arrival. The UK Dental Centre is located in the SHAPE Health Care Facility (Level 2).

### **Registration of Dependants**

In order to ensure speedy transfer of NHS Documents to the UK Medical Centre, heads of families should register their dependants at the first opportunity. You will need NHS Numbers and the address of your last GP.

If any family member is receiving ongoing treatment for a special medical condition it is advisable that you bring with you a note from your Medical Officer or GP giving details of the medical requirement and of repeat prescriptions.

### **Charges**

There are no charges for medical treatment or prescriptions authorised by the Medical Officer, however, NHS dental charges will be levied against spouses and dependants with the following exemptions:

- Expectant mothers.
  - Mothers who have had a baby within the last 12 months.
  - Dependants under 18 years of age.
  - Dependants in full-time education – up to age 23.
  - Dependants in possession of NHS charge certificate AG2.
  - Those in receipt of family credit.
- \* Written proof is needed in all cases, i.e., passport/college letters/birth certificate.

## **Water**

Boil all water for babies and very young children. Bottled water is available in the GB at SHAPE. Kettles and irons need de-scaling regularly because the water is hard; Kleenoff is a good brand which you can use on both kettle and iron. A cheap alternative for your kettle is to use ready made vinegar and water solution from the GB (clear bottle) and boil in kettle 2-3 times or until the lime scale is fully detached. A simple alternative to regular de-scaling is to invest in a water filter jug (Brita is a good brand) available at the GB along with the replacement filters.

## **STATION FACILITIES**

### **Welfare**

The UKJSU Community Support Officer is located in building 306 and is the first point of contact for welfare matters, help and counselling. Other agencies eg RELATE, BFSWS, Chapel Centre, etc offer support on many matters such as bereavement, divorce, marital problems, etc. The Community Support Officer is contactable on Ext: 5346. During silent hours, welfare matters will be dealt with by the UKJSU Duty Officer via the UK Duty NCO on 047 8223116.

### **Child Minding**

Childminders are to be registered and approved by the Army Welfare Childminding Service (AWS) at Rheindahlen. AWS visit SHAPE regularly and appointments can be made through the Welfare Officer, Ext: 5346. Alternatively, personnel may contact AWS childminding supervisors directly on 0049 2161 472517.

### **HIVE**

The HIVE is located in Bld 309 of the UKJSU. The HIVE provides advice and information on a wide variety of subjects and is particularly useful for new arrivals to SHAPE. Additional services include: internet facilities, tourist information, travel guides and much more.

The main aim of the HIVE is to provide a friendly and helpful environment to assist you with any problems or queries that may arise whilst living at SHAPE. If the staff are unable to answer your questions they will refer you to someone who can. The HIVE is open 0900 to 1500 Monday to Friday.

### **HIVE Information Centres**

HIVE Information Centres support the Chain of Command and Tri-Service Communities through the provision of up to date and relevant information.

### **What can your HIVE offer you?**

New Arrival Guides for all families and single personnel.

A "Get You Back Pack" when assigned back to UK.

HIVE can assist with providing information on 'Relocation' worldwide.

A comprehensive and up to date range of Department of Work and Pensions (DWP)/HM Revenue and Customs Information.

Details of travel facilities, including air, rail and road, both locally and further afield.

Children's Tax Credit, Child Benefit and Sure Start Maternity Grant forms.

Details on Passports for pets.

American PX details.

Referral service to all outside agencies.

Visit your Information Centre, at the HIVE, to receive a first class, customer friendly information and referral service or alternatively see <http://www.hive-bfq.co.uk/shape.htm> for more information.

## **Home-Start**

Home-Start has a drop-in centre, SHAPE House, at 351 Domaine de la Brisee, where families can meet for coffee and a chat in an informal environment. There are regular activities planned for both children and adults. SHAPE House is open Mon-Fri in the mornings.

The Home-Start Office is situated in Building 309 and can be contacted on Ext: 3990.

## **Churches**

The UK Chaplain is happy to meet members of the British community, especially new arrivals, either in their homes or in his office. He is prepared to offer advice about most subjects if requested to do so!

The UK Chaplaincy office is in room 61 at the SHAPE International Chapel Centre, Building 601. This is situated near the Shopping Centre. Everyone is welcome to visit or contact the office and speak to the Chaplain or the Chaplain's Assistant. The office telephone number is Ext: 5693.

The UK Chaplain is happy to provide advice on baptism, confirmation and marriage, and can easily put those of other denominations in touch with their own clergy. He can also provide details of services in the surrounding area, including Anglican services in Brussels, Leuven, Ypres and Lille.

Any service person wishing to marry a non UK citizen needs to apply in writing to the CO UKJSU beforehand.

## **Church of England**

There is an Anglican service at 1015 hrs on Sundays in the East Chapel. It is normally a service of Holy Communion. The worshipping community includes American Episcopalians and Canadian Anglicans. After the service there are refreshments in the Hall. The third Sunday in the month is normally a Family Service. A Sunday School is arranged when required. There are also special services for Mothering Sunday, St George's Day, Harvest Festival, Battle of Britain Sunday and Remembrance Sunday.

## **Roman Catholic**

Mass is celebrated in English at 0900 hrs on Sundays in the East Chapel by the American or Canadian Chaplain. After Mass there are refreshments in the Hall. On Wednesdays Mass is celebrated in English at 1215 hrs in the Blessed Sacrament Chapel by the German Chaplain.

## **Protestant**

There is a Protestant service in English at 1130 hrs on Sundays in the East Chapel conducted by an American Chaplain. Holy Communion is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. After the service there are refreshments in the Hall.

## **Ecumenical**

There are ecumenical and international services on Women's World Day of Prayer, Good Friday, and Harvest Thanksgiving.

## **Fellowship Groups**

There are several Women's Fellowship groups that meet in the Chapel Centre. The UK Chaplain is happy to provide further information on these. There is also normally a Lent Course.

## **Faith Communities other than Christian**

The UK Chaplain is happy to provide advice and appropriate contact details to those of other faiths. There are occasional Jewish services in the Chapel Centre and there is a representative of the Jewish community based in SHAPE.

## **BRITISH FORCES POST OFFICE**

There will be no change to Official Mail and no change to the receipt of incoming parcels and letters. Of particular note is that, while there is provision to receive parcels, there is no provision to send parcels back to the UK.

Letters with the correct UK postage will be accepted for despatch from entitled persons. Parcels with commercially approved pre-paid BFPO contract parcel labels (ie for returns to Next and Amazon) will be accepted<sup>1</sup>.

Outside of the basic mail provision that will be available, personnel will be required to use the indigenous postal services.

The Operational Free Mail Service which allows family and friends to send packages up to 2kg to theatre free of charge will not be affected.

Books of First Class stamps will be available for purchase from the UKJSU Cashier and NMR Registry.

## **Entitled Users of the BFPO**

The following is a list of entitled users of the BFPO:

- All British Military serving personnel and their dependents.
- UKBC (United Kingdom Based Civilians) and their dependents.
- MOD employed civilians and their dependents, (employed from the UK).
- German Forces personnel are entitled to send letters and cards up to 50 grams to family and friends living in Germany under the 5p agreement. German Forces must adhere to the correct mail addressing policy.

NATO civilians and their dependents are not entitled to any BFPO mail facilities, with the exception of the operational free mail service.

## **Postal Address**

It is important that you use the correct form of BFPO address during your stay at SHAPE as this will prevent your mail being unnecessarily delayed. The following is the recognised format which will avoid delays:

Number, Rank, Name  
Branch and Division  
SHAPE  
BFPO 26

Note: The inclusion of 'Belgium' or 'Mons' in the BFPO address is unnecessary and will cause mail to circulate via the Belgian civil Post Office, thus causing a delay.

---

<sup>1</sup> Personnel are advised NOT to buy pre-paid postal labels on the internet. Royal Mail only accept them for internal UK mail.

## Post Boxes

There are post boxes situated around SHAPE which are emptied on a daily basis, these are located in the following locations:

UKJSU (Main foyer) - Emptied Mon – Fri  
Brit Block - Emptied Mon – Fri  
BFPO (Top SHAPE) - Emptied Mon – Fri

## Mail Distribution Point Opening Times

Monday	1000-1400
Tuesday	1000-1400
Wednesday	1000-1400
Thursday	1000-1400
Friday	1000-1200
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

## Mail for Northern Ireland and Eire

Mail for civilian addresses in Northern Ireland and Eire is **NOT** to be posted in the post box. These must be handed over to the BFPO staff to deal with it accordingly to ensure safe transmission to the recipient.

## Mail Transmission

Currently, mail is received from the UK 5 days per week, Mon-Fri at SHAPE and three times per week at HQ NATO. Mail received at BFPO Northolt is sorted daily ready for despatch on the next available outlet.

## Commercial Receipts – Consignments to BFPO Addresses via Commercial Receipts

To avoid disappointment and frustration please read the following information:

<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceFor/ServiceCommunity/BFPO/SendAParcel.htm>

## Carrier companies under contract with BFPO

Various carrier companies have a contract with BFPO. This means that any items delivered by them on behalf of a mail order company not under either a direct contract or the ParcelForce One-Stop-Shop scheme will be accepted. The following carrier companies have a contract with BFPO:

Business Express (Includes Reality & Home Delivery Network)  
Business Post  
Citylink  
Fedex (Formally ANC)  
Parceline  
Parcelnet

## Items refused onward carriage by commercial receipts

All items that are refused onward carriage by Commercial Receipts are recorded on a database. The item refused is also endorsed with the reason why and a postcard is sent to the addressee explaining why the item was refused.

More information can be found by logging onto:

## **Use of BFPOs to operate a business**

All personnel are reminded that the use of BFPO by customers, who are operating a business overseas for personal gain, are not authorised to use the BFPO facilities to forward or receive mail items connected with that business. The MOD pays for the transportation of mail to and from overseas by air or surface means. To allow customers to use the BFPO to operate a business for personal gain would constitute an abuse of public money.

Individuals, who are authorised to operate businesses overseas, are advised that they should use local civilian Post Offices to receive or send goods connected with their business, whereby full international rates of postage would be charged.

## **INTERNET SHOPPING AND BFPO NUMBERS**

Service personnel serving abroad are often frustrated when attempting to purchase products online as a result of online traders not recognising the BFPO number as a valid address. These sites are often configured to accept only UK post codes as the online traders use computer software that compares the supplied delivery address against the Royal Mail Postal Address File to ensure that the address is valid. BFPO numbers do not exist within the Postal Address File as they do not indicate a specific address, merely a service person within a dynamic environment.

Royal Mail operates another system called the Address Interpretation System that recognises all post codes in the Postal Address File. Though BFPO numbers are not registered in the Postal Address File, this system is able to recognise the BFPO phrase at the bottom of the address line allowing the system to create a virtual address so all mail can be sorted to BFPO London. As a result the software used by the online trader is unable to verify the address and therefore the purchase is unable to go ahead. This situation can often be resolved by contacting the supplier directly.

A growing number of online traders are making use of software that recognises BFPO numbers as a valid address. Unfortunately the problem is still an all too common occurrence also experienced by our NATO allies when they serve abroad. BFPO and Royal Mail are however currently in the process of looking at ways in which to improve the service to entitled personnel serving abroad.

### **Useful Phone Numbers:**

**BFPO enquiries:**

**0845769 79 78**

QM or RQMS UKJSU SHAPE.

SHAPE Ext: 2697/5548



## **LIVING IN BELGIUM AND SHAPE UKJSU**

### **General**

Belgium is divided in 3 regions and has 3 linguistic communities, the Flemish (Dutch), the French and the German. Its capital is Brussels.

The north of the country is called Flanders, it has about 6 million inhabitants and the language is Dutch/Flemish. Main cities are Antwerp, Brugge and Gent.

The south of the country is Wallonia with some 3 million inhabitants. The language here is French. Mons is located in the south-west of the country, near the French border; other important cities are Liège, Namur and Charleroi. In the east of Wallonia we have the German-speaking area with about 70,000 inhabitants; it was German territory but became part of Belgium after the First World War.

In the centre of the country there is Brussels and the surrounding area of 19 communes which form the Brussels Capital Region. It has just over 1 million inhabitants. The region is officially bilingual but it is mainly French-speaking.

### **History and traditions**

The city of Mons today exhibits relics of its past but it is interesting to note that the site was originally nothing more than a wooded hill. In the 7th Century, a lady from the local region by the name of Waudru decided to devote the remainder of her life to prayer and established a monastery on the hill. The reputation of Saint Waudru and the attractiveness of the local area encouraged many local people to settle nearby – thus giving birth to the settlement that became Mons.

In the 10th Century, the Count of Hainaut constructed a castle and walls that enclosed the monastery and several other local buildings. A section of this wall can still be found in Rue Terre du Prince, close to the Collégiale Saint Waudru. The protection provided by this enclosure drew merchants and craftsmen to the hill. The settlement grew quickly, resulting in a new wall being constructed in the late 13th Century. This wall remained standing until the 19th Century and influenced the layout of many of the streets found in the city today. In 1861 the city was able to expand beyond its established boundaries following the passing of a law which enabled the fortifications to be dismantled.

A significant event in the history of the city is the outbreak of a plague epidemic in 1349. In an appeal for clemency from God, the residents of Mons and Soignies brought together the bodies of the Patron Saints of Hainaut, Saint Vincent and Saint Waudru. The epidemic passed and to show their gratitude, the citizens of Mons decided to organise a procession in her honour each year. This procession, known as the 'Car d'Or' or golden carriage, takes place on Trinity Sunday and also recalls the religious history of Mons.

The Grand Place of Mons was created in 1348 and began life as a small market place. It is now one of the largest in Belgium and is surrounded by restaurants, bars and cafes. The 15th Century Hotel de Ville (Town Hall) dominates this part of the city, with the Campanile above it housing the city's oldest bell. This is traditionally sounded once per year on Trinity Sunday as the Car d'Or passes through the Grand Place. The Tourist Information Office is also housed here and lots of information is available in English on the local areas of interest.

Adjacent to the Hotel de Ville is the famous 'Monkey of Mons' which, it is said, will bring you luck if you touch its head with your left hand. There are many museums to visit in Mons including the War Museum, the Porcelain Museum, Prehistory and Natural History Museums and the Collegiale Treasury, which contains exhibits of gold and silver religious artwork from the city.

## **Traditions**

On the same day as the Car d'Or procession, the famous 'Lumeçon' battle takes place in the city. The re-enactment follows the story of St George slaying the dragon. In 1380 the fellowship of Dieu et Monseigneur Georges was founded with the aim of preserving the veneration of St George. Members of the fellowship accompany his relic shrine during the Car d'Or.

St George's battle against evil is replayed as part of the Trinity events with St George, sporting a yellow helmet and white leggings, being accompanied by his helpers – les Chinchins. The green dragon is made of willow branches, with its tail being a young tree, and is 9.5 mtrs long with a weight of approximately 180 kgs. If you manage to pull a hair out of the dragon's tail this will bring you luck for the whole year.

The dragon moves around knocking down les Chinchins, before finally being defeated by St George. Once the play is complete, the crowds disperse for food and drinks. The legend is extremely popular and huge crowds cram into the city to be part of the celebration. These festivities are commonly known as the "Doudou" or the "Ducasse".

## **The Battle of Mons – 1914**

An interesting tour of the First World War sites of the Battle of Mons can be undertaken. A guide and map is available from the Tourist Information Office, with several of the sites being close to SHAPE.

The military cemetery at St Symphorien, maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is also worthy of a visit.

## **Language**

Mons is a French speaking area of Belgium.

## **Sundays**

Sundays in Belgium are regarded as a day of rest, as such mowing lawns, washing cars and similar 'noisy' activities are not permitted on Sundays depending on the local Commune laws. Similar laws may apply on religious festival holidays.

## **ID Cards**

Spouses and dependants will be issued with a Belgian ID Card. This card must be carried at all times. Failure to do so may result in a minimum fine of €90.

## **Organ Donors**

In the UK individuals carry a card to volunteer to be an organ donor, however, in Belgium you are automatically considered for organ donation unless you register otherwise with the Registration Office upon arrival.

## **Dog Walking**

You are not permitted to walk your dog in open fields or forestry unless there is a clear sign stating you may do so. All dogs must be kept on a lead at all times unless you are on private ground.

## **LOCAL SHOPPING**

### **Supermarkets/Malls**

There are numerous large supermarkets/malls in the local surrounding areas. An extensive guide is available at the HIVE complete with a size conversion table, dictionary of foods and a street map of Mons.

### **Concessionaire Facilities**

The SHAPE Shopping Centre complex is centrally located on the SHAPE site. The area is open Monday to Saturday. Tax-free shopping is available at the GB SHAPE, near the TOTAL Station.

### **Bank**

Branches of the Banca Monta Paschi Belgio are located in the Main Building and in the Shopping Centre (ATM Only).

### **Barber and Beauty Shops**

For appointments at the Beauty Shop (Shopping Centre) tel Ext: 5983. For the Barber Shop (male and female) (SHAPE Main Building) call 065 311720.

### **Newsagents**

Newsagents are located in the Shopping Centre and in the main building (102). They provide a large selection of newspapers, magazines and books in many languages. A film processing service is also available. The shop is open Monday to Friday 1000-1700 hrs and Sundays & bank holidays 1000-1300 hrs. Tel: 065 311774.

### **Rationed Items Store (RIS)**

The RIS provides the outlet for duty free rationed items. Purchases of spirit, wine, liqueurs, tobacco, perfumes and Petrol Cards can be made here. Your ration card must be presented to make use of this facility. Opening Times Tue-Fri 1100-1800, Sat 1000-1600. Ext: 5628.

### **GB Supermarket**

The GB supermarket sells fresh meat, fish, produce, various canned and dry goods. There is also a bakery, delicatessen, cheese shop and the Inno Shop within the GB which sells cosmetics, jewellery, clothing and household items.

## **GB Drink Centre**

Belgium is not only known for its lace, crystal, diamonds and chocolates but also for its excellent beers. The Drink Centre sells Belgian beers, waters and sodas by cartons and cases. The Drink Centre is the only place where bottles can be returned at the GB SHAPE.

## **GB Home Centre**

Plumbing supplies, light fixtures, light bulbs, rugs, home repair items, transformers, electrical appliances and some furniture items are available at this outlet. There is also a catalogue section where furniture, building supplies and hardware can be ordered. Tel: 065 328560.

## **Opticians**

The Opticians have a selection of frames for glasses. A contact lens service is also available for hard, soft and semi-soft lenses. Ext: 5621.

## **Dry Cleaning**

The Moderna Laundry and Dry Cleaning Service is located opposite the RIS. Tel: 065 354729. It provides a routine service (3 to 4 days), express service (next day), same day service (in before 1200 hrs, out by 1730 hrs) and a carpet cleaning service. Laundry is measured by the kilo.

## **Flower Shop**

Flowers are selected by the Flower Shop Manager from the flower market in Brussels every 2 days and plants every Monday from a greenhouse in Gent. Tel 065 44 5623.

## **Travel Agency**

The American Express Travel Agency is located within the main building (102) and offers a complete range of travel services. Tel: 065 338995.

## **Tax Free Shopping**

As a member of NATO forces you are permitted to purchase certain goods tax free within the EU. Details of the procedures to be followed, and the items which may be purchased within this concession are available from the unit admin office.

## **NAAFI**

There is a NAAFI at JHQ Rheindahlen, unfortunately there is no automatic right to shop at this facility for those serving in Belgium. However, it may be used by those who are detached to JHQ on temporary Duty. A temporary pass may be issued from the unit admin office.

## **TOTAL Station**

Repair Shop provides general repair and maintenance services (i.e tune ups, wheel balancing, grease jobs, etc.), sells car accessories and can order you tax free auto parts. There is also a carwash (purchase your tokens at the shop) Tel: 065 328300. There are six self-service islands for your convenience, available seven days a week. Fuel may only be purchased by use of a TOTAL Fuel Card. For more information on other services Tel Ext: 3355.

## **Thrift Shop**

The Thrift Shop is a handy place to look for those items you may need but do not wish to buy new. You can also sell unwanted items through the Thrift Shop. The Thrift Shop is located in the SHAPE Events Centre. Tel Ext: 5586. Hours of business are as follows:

Taking in	Mon & Wed	0900-1130 hrs
Selling	Mon & Wed	1300-1500 hrs

## **MONEY MATTERS**

### **General**

The UKJSU provides accounting services for personnel posted to SHAPE, NATO HQ and RRC(FR).

### **Currency**

The Currency in much of mainland Europe is the Euro.

Personnel are reminded that payment into an overseas account may take up to 6 weeks and they should therefore plan finances accordingly.

Cheques may be cashed through the cashier for the first 3 months after arrival. This is restricted to 4 cheques per month and up to the value of your net monthly salary.

### **Banca Monta Paschi Belgio**

Normal Banking facilities are provided by Banca Monta Paschi Belgio at SHAPE. You cannot open an account until you arrive at SHAPE and it is a lengthy process so be prepared for a long wait. They are able to offer you banking in English language. More details regarding the types of account can be obtained from Tel: 022 207451.

### **Issue of Pay**

You may choose to have one of the following methods of receiving your monthly salary:

All pay may be credited to a nominated local Belgian bank.

All pay may be credited to a nominated UK bank.

A fixed allotment/deduction may be made to the UK bank and the remaining pay credited to a local Belgian bank.

A fixed allotment may be made to a local Belgian bank and the remaining pay credited to the UK bank.

If your spouse remains in the UK, you are to make arrangements for him/her to be provided with funds. The simplest method is to arrange a fixed sum from your pay to be credited to their bank account in UK. You should consult your present unit admin staff for further details.

## **Advance of Pay**

An advance of up to one month's pay may be granted on posting (subject to single service regulations). You are strongly advised to discuss this with your current admin office early.

You will find that your first 3-4 weeks at SHAPE can be expensive taking into account the additional taxes and charges that can be levied. All personnel are strongly advised to ensure that they have access to sufficient cash funds during this initial period.

## **Local Overseas Allowance**

Local Overseas Allowance (LOA) is paid whilst you serve in Belgium. It is paid to cover the difference between the cost of living/lifestyle in Belgium and that of living in UK. It will vary subject to an annual pricing review, a 3 yearly lifestyle review and whenever the Forces Fixed Rate of Exchange changes.

LOA does increase or decrease from time to time and you should not commit yourself to expenditure which depends upon your LOA never being reduced.

## **Disturbance Allowance**

If you are eligible for and/or allocated a SFA then you may be entitled to claim disturbance allowance up to 45 days prior to your arrival here. This should be confirmed with your current Admin Office.

## **Longer Separation Allowance (LSA)**

This allowance may be paid if you are serving unaccompanied in a different theatre to your spouse, e.g. if your spouse is living in UK.

## **The Army Over 37 Provision**

If you are 37 or over you may serve unaccompanied subject to certain conditions and pay abated food charges, no accommodation and receive LSA. You may also be able to claim Disturbance Allowance and use the Service Contract System for removals.

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **British Community News**

This is your magazine and is distributed monthly. If you have something you wish to be included in the BCN please send it (ideally on disc) to the Editor, British Community News, UKJSU.

### **SHAPE Community Life**

Fortnightly International magazine with details of 'What's On'. It may be picked up in the Main Building, Shopping Centre or UKJSU.

## **WELFARE SUPPORT**

Within our dependency, welfare support for all three services is provided by the Army Welfare Service. Please see The Army Welfare Information Service (AWIS) advice at: <http://www.esg.bfgnet.de/UKJSU%20SHAPE/welfare.html> for more information.

## **SECURITY**

You are reminded that the threat posed by terrorist action still exists in Belgium and vigilance must be maintained. Anyone who sees any activity which they consider to be suspicious is to report the details, without delay, to any of the following:

International Police Ext: 065 445379  
Unit Security Officer Ext: 4145 (2IC UKJSU)  
UKJSU Duty Room Ext: 4960 (Silent Hours Only)  
UKJSU Duty NCO: 0478 223116

## **Crime**

The SHAPE military police have suggestions for securing your valuables and reducing the chance of your home and vehicle becoming a target for thieves. If you are concerned about such occurrences then please contact the SHAPE Police who will provide you with useful anti-theft advice. You should contact the SHAPE International Police on Ext: 3725.

## **Alarms**

The majority of quarters are fitted with burglar alarms but unfortunately some families fail to activate the alarm prior to leaving the house or going to bed at night. It is highly recommended that you make full use of the alarm system if fitted in your property.

## **MOTORING**

Please see <http://www.esg.bfgnet.de/UKJSU%20SHAPE/motoring.html> for details.

## **TELEPHONES AND INTERNET**

Many hirings have a telephone line installed and only require a reconnection. Occupants who wish to have a telephone connected/installed must enter into a private contract with the local telephone company.

Belgacom have a representative in SHAPE and they can advise you of their deals which includes free calls to UK during evenings and weekends (up to a generous limit). They also have a very useful website at [www.belgacom.be](http://www.belgacom.be) where you can find details of their phone and internet packages.

The Country code is 0032 for Belgium and the area access is 65, access to SHAPE is 44 followed by the last four digits for the required extension number (i.e. 0032 65 44XXXX). Local Belgacom Internet start-up CDs are available from any Belgacom outlet.

## **Personal Telephone Calls on Military Phones**

A system of prepayment cards has been set up in SHAPE which enables personal telephone calls to be made on SHAPE telephones. These cards are available through the Fuel Ration Card Purchase Office in 'Top SHAPE'. These cards may also be used on other telephones throughout Belgium including your home phone.

## **BT Friends and Family**

BT run a discount scheme for their residential customers in the UK called Friends and Family which can give 5% off all phone calls to a registered international number. For further details the UK subscriber should dial 150.

## **BT Chargecards**

The use of BT Chargecards to call from the UK can be expensive and, in many cases, the use of mobile phones can work out cheaper. You will need to consider the best options available.

## **CLUBS & ASSOCIATIONS**

### **SHAPE International Club Section**

The SHAPE International Club Section (ICS) operates a number of facilities including the SHAPE Club, the HQ Cafeteria and Continental Mess. Each location provides excellent fast food or restaurant facilities and is available for private functions at competitive rates.

### **SHAPE International Women's Club**

The purpose of the club is to sponsor activities of interest to members and to promote friendship and exchange ideas among its members. For more information see the ads in the SHAPE Community Life or listen to AFN Radio.

### **British Senior Ranks Association**

There is a WO and SNCO Mess at SHAPE which holds regular functions. Some of these are formal, so Mess Kit is to be brought, along with appropriate attire for spouses. Membership is compulsory for all senior ranks serving at SHAPE. Further information is available from the RSM, UKJSU on Ext: 3907.

### **British Junior Ranks Association (BJRA)**

There is a British Junior Ranks Association which meets and arranges many functions for the Junior Ranks.

### **Pizza Bowl**

The Pizza Bowl is an ABC/WIBC sanctioned 12 lane centre consisting of Brunswick synthetic lanes, AMF pinsetters and the Mendes automatic scoring system. The Pizza Bowl boasts a large youth programme, the Young American Bowling Association (YABA) is open to all children under 16, men's, women's and mixed bowling leagues along with RENT-A-LINE bowling (bowling for a one to two hour period at a reduced price). Also offered at a reduced price is NOON TIME BOWLING IN UNIFORM. Bowling birthday parties, complete with party favours, shoes and bumper bowling are perfect for the little ones in the family. Teen and adult birthday parties are also available.

The Pizza Bowl also has a bar, located near the lanes, which carries a large variety of beer and soft drinks and a snack bar which offers fried chicken dinners, taco salad, assorted fast food items, ice-cream, soft drinks and pizza.

### **SHAPE Travel Group**

The SHAPE Travel Group organises trips for all SHAPE and NATO I.D. card-holders, their families and house guests. Our Headquarters at SHAPE is an ideal place from which to travel to other European countries and find out more about their people, their history and their heritage. The Group's aim is that trips will also enhance solidarity, friendship and mutual understanding among members of the whole SHAPE and NATO communities. The Travel Group is a non-profit activity run entirely by volunteers.

## **SHAPE Trips and Tours**

Please see <http://www.hive-bfg.co.uk/shape-whatson.htm> for the latest round of trips and tours.

## **Outdoor Recreation**

The Outdoor Recreation Rental Centre offers a complete line of camping equipment for rent. Party canopies, canoes, bicycles, camping cookers, tents, sleeping bags, air mattresses and heaters are just some of the items offered. Equipment for volleyball, badminton and croquet as well as tables, chairs, ski equipment, roof boxes, may also be rented for a nominal fee. Contact the Outdoor Recreation staff on Ext: 5380 or call into the Community Activity Centre Bldg 307 (side entrance of the library).

## **The SHAPE Entertainment Centre**

Provides year-round opportunities for members of the SHAPE community of all ages to display or develop their talents behind the scenes or on stage, and to make new friends while having fun in the performing arts. Programmes include talent shows, musicals, comedies, revues, workshops, dinner theatre shows, theatre field trips and more. Volunteers are sought in every aspect of the performing arts, and no previous experience is needed to join the fun. For more information, drop by or call the Entertainment Centre to be placed on the SHAPE Entertainment mailing list. The Entertainment Centre includes a 170-seat auditorium, lobby with refreshment counter, backstage areas, theatre offices, and a rehearsal annex. Costumes and props are available for rent. The facility can be booked for meetings, classes, and other events, call Ext: 4257 for more information.

## **Cinema**

The SHAPE Cinema shows a variety of current and old films, including new releases often before Kinopolis (large movie theatre in Brussels). The cinema seats 697 and refreshments are available. Films are usually shown Thursday through Sunday with extra afternoon showings at the weekend. Film schedules are published in the SHAPE Community Life, SHAPE Wide Web and International Orders. The Cinema is located next to the Pizza Bowl, call Ext: 5600 for the current showings.

## **Arts & Crafts Centre**

Provides a wide range of courses such as ceramics, picture framing, upholstery, porcelain doll making, stained glass, flower arranging and water/oil painting. Prices for courses vary depending on the course and instructor. Found in Bldg 209 and 307 or contactable on Ext: 4680.

## **Auto Crafts Shop**

Provides a self-help outlet for privately owned vehicle maintenance and repair. The Auto Crafts Shop has 13 bays and there is a small charge for the use of a bay. Other services and equipment the Auto Crafts Shop has to offer include: engine tune up, welding equipment, pipe bending/flaring, pre-control technique testing, wheel balancer, tyre changer, charging system tester, battery charger, headlight aligner, brake tester, CO tester lather (petrol & air gas adjuster), valve/seat grinder, steam and vacuum cleaner, and even car disposal. There is always a certified mechanic on duty to help you with your needs, contactable on Ext: 4693.

## **Scouts**

SHAPE has a thriving Scout pack with children aged from 5 to 11 in all 3 groups of Beavers, Cubs And Scouts. All leaders are CRB Cleared and are all fully warranted leaders. They meet during school term in the evenings and are also on the look out for adult volunteers to help run the pack or even became leaders themselves, contactable on Ext: 4820.

## **Brownies and Guides**

Rainbows, Brownies and Guides are very active in the SHAPE community. As they enter into their Centenary year in 2010 there are increased opportunities for girls in the organisation. Some of the highlights that are planned are a Centenary Camp, a large scale party, planting of a centenary garden, termly district parties, international events and lots more activities and adventures for members. Here at SHAPE there are 3 very popular units:

Rainbows (girls aged between 5 and 7 years) meet on a Tuesday at the British School from 15:30 – 17:00.

Brownies (girls aged between 7 and 10 years) meet on a Wednesday at the British School from 15:30 – 17:00.

Guides (girls aged between 10 and 14 years) meet on a Tuesday at the Brit Bar from 18:30-20:00.

They have also had a number of requests for a Senior Section (girls aged between 14 and 25 years) so they are hoping to initiate a Senior Section starting in September.

They also have a great team of adult volunteers who have energy, ideas and contribute to make the District a great success. If you are interested in enrolling your daughter or joining the team as an adult leader please contact the District Commissioner on 065 339799.

## **SPORTS**

### **Physical Fitness and a Healthy Lifestyle**

There are a number of programmes specifically aimed at promoting the general well being of all Service personnel and their dependants at SHAPE. They range from healthy diet provisioning in the UK Mess to circuit training, aerobic classes, a computerised fitness evaluation system, a Nautilus equipment suite, a range of indoor and outdoor recreational facilities including a 25 metre heated swimming pool plus year round international sports competitions.

### **Sports & Recreational Facilities**

SHAPE offers a wide range of sports facilities. The Main Gymnasium (Building 313) contains 3 squash courts, 2 racquetball/handball courts, a Nautilus equipment suite, male and female saunas, a 25 metre swimming pool and a main floor area marked for badminton, basket ball and volleyball plus associated changing facilities. Outdoor sports catered for are American Football, soccer, rugby, cricket, cross-country, softball, baseball and tennis with a 400 metre tartan athletics track. With all these facilities it is not surprising that there is a sporting event taking place almost every day. The Bookings are co-ordinated through the Main Office Ext: 4405/5345.

### **Intra Mural and SACEUR Sports**

The intra mural programme is intended for sections/divisions to compete against each other at softball, soccer, basketball, volleyball and flag football. The programme is not intended for national team representation. The SACEUR programme is an annual competition in which national teams (some of the teams are made up of groups of nations) compete in 10 different sports throughout the year with the cumulative results counting towards the much coveted SACEUR Trophy. This is presented annually at the SACEUR Sports Banquet. The programme consists of volleyball, badminton, cross-country, soccer, tennis, track and field, table tennis, swimming, squash, racquetball, shooting, and basketball. If you intend to compete in either programme you should contact the UKJSU Sports representative for further details.

## **Fitness Programmes**

There are various fitness programmes offered through the gymnasium:

Aerobic dancing by Body Shape Up.

Water aerobics for conditioning and flexibility without the stresses of aerobic dancing.

Swimming lessons for adults and children.

Circuit training for all.

Personalised fitness evaluation assessments using state of the art technology.

Details may be obtained from the Main Office Ext: 4405/5345.

## **Clubs and Activities**

In addition, there are numerous clubs and associations known as Group 2 Activities to suit everyone in SHAPE. Should you wish to obtain further details call the listed club point of contact or the Group 2 Co-ordinator at the Main Gymnasium, Ext: 4405/5345. Details of the points of contact for Group 2 activities are listed in the BCN.

## **RADIO & TV**

### **Radio & TV**

The American Forces Network (AFN) transmits TV locally but you will require an NTSC compatible or Universal TV to receive its programmes. AFN has a local radio station which broadcasts non-stop on 101.5 MHZ. A multi-system TV and/or video will be required in order to receive the cable TV signal. BBC1 and 2 are available with cable TV in certain married quarter locations. The British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) is relayed from Germany on FM 107.6. BBC Radio 4 is on Long Wave - 198 khz, and Radio 5 is available on 606 MW. There is a BFBS Radio 1 Show dedicated to and transmitted from SHAPE on Mondays and Wednesdays from 1600-1800 hrs.

### **Satellite TV**

SKY Satellite TV can be ordered and installed by a local English speaking supplier. Details of Satellite installation engineers can be found in the British Community News.

**We hope this document has been of use to you. Should you find a mistake or would like to make a suggestion to improve on the document, please don't hesitate to contact the RAWO on Ext: 4683.**