

Spring 2021

Newsletter

The Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum



FANDF

Giving a voice to Forces families with additional needs and disabilities

Facilitated by

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charity

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Hello and welcome to the FANDF Spring 2021 newsletter



In the last newsletter I talked about how lockdown has affected all of us. While things haven't yet returned to normal, I am pleased, as I am sure everyone else must be, to see a way out from the strange year that was 2020.

The FANDF Committee have continued to hold virtual meetings, but it is great to be able to plan face-to-face meetings not just for the committee, but for the whole FANDF membership.

Most exciting of all is the news that June 2020's delayed biannual conference will now go ahead this autumn. MoD Main Building is booked for Tuesday 5 October and the Union Jack Club is booked for the night of Monday 4 October. Some speakers have already confirmed their attendance. An outline programme will be available soon, but, broadly speaking, will see us discussing the recent reviews 'In Our Shoes' and 'Families Fighting On' in the morning, looking at mental wellbeing in the afternoon and finishing with a panel discussion involving the Subject Matter Experts from across various Defence agencies.

The Committee had considered running the conference as a virtual event, and we had a trial run of how this might work at the end of January. While that digital event ran pretty well, numbers of attendees were limited (I think we are all getting "Zoom fatigue") and limitations of technology meant that a lot of the meeting was pre-scripted, without much opportunity for live interaction or questions. Linking in digitally is OK, but isn't really an alternative to a face-to-face conference and definitely doesn't take the place of the networking and peer support that comes from the pre-conference evening meeting at the UJC.

Some of the committee attended the NHS Commitment to Carers Armed Forces Event on 11 March. The event was supposed to take place at the Oval Cricket Ground, but ended up online. Highlights on the day included an update on the Military/NHS engagement discussions that many FANDF members contributed to in late 2020 and an excellent presentation on how families cope when the normal caring dynamic is reversed and a child finds themselves having to care for a physically or mentally ill parent. For me, the standout presentation came from Sue Liburd MBE, an Army veteran and a lead for the Armed Forces Patients and Public Voice Advisory Group. Sue talked about the need for a care "ecosystem" of interconnected and mutually supportive groups and about how every action by a group or an individual can act as the catalyst for a positive chain of events.

Lastly, I am sad to announce the departure of Helen Merrick from the FANDF committee. After providing excellent support for a number of years Helen has found that her new work commitments and university degree course do not leave her with the time that she would normally commit to FANDF and she has stood down from the committee. We will look to fill Helen's place after the conference and I encourage anyone who might be interested in joining the committee to seek out the team at the UJC or at MoD Main Building on the fourth and fifth of October to find out more.

Alan Bowie
FANDF Chair

FANDF 2020 Winter Event- Your Questions answered!

Some questions raised around housing at our Winter event have been answered by FANDF, DIO and ANDA, with some useful advice and links for you to use.

Q: We have just had housing adaptations for the first time, including an extra bannister on the stairs and grab rails in the bathroom. How do we have these installed in future quarters?

Do we need a fresh referral for a new OT or do Amey keep the report on record?

A: Response from FANDF and DIO- Amey Occupancy Services/ DIO only keep medical information for a limited period to comply with General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). Families do not have to worry about GDPR when keeping their own data, so it is advised that families keep their supporting medical information on file. If the medical report or OT report is still current and there haven't been any changes to requirements, you can resubmit it.

When you are due to move and are completing the e1132, you should tick the Additional Needs box and send the Medical/OT report to email:
OS.Confidential@AmeyDefenceServices.co.uk

Q: Who can our families go to for support to ensure we can have the required adaptations made to the property and area we live in, and what is the process once my application for adaptations has been made?

A: Response from FANDF- Enquiries should initially all go through the housing helpdesk (0800 707 6000), however there are two useful guides on the Amey SFA website:

[Requesting adaptations when moving](#)

[Requesting Adaptations when already living in a quarter](#)

Q: If damage to SFA is caused as a result of child's disability, are we still liable?

A: Response from DIO, ANDA and FANDF- Unfortunately, yes. JSP 464 Vol 1, Chapter 2, Annex A, includes the licence agreement. Under "Your obligations" the document directs that tenant must either "make good or instead pay any cost incurred by Us in making good any damage to the Property or its fixtures or fittings caused by either Your negligence or wilful or accidental damage or that of any member of Your household including family pets or any invited visitor or their pets".

Note that "Damage caused by fair wear and tear is excepted", but whether damage arising as a result of disability is considered "fair wear and tear" is not clear.

Advice from the DIO ANDA Rep is that damage, even if it occurs directly as a result of a child's disability, would still fall under this classification and the tenant would be liable to make good or pay for the damage.

While noting that DLA covers the added costs that come with having a disability, the DLA website specifically identifies the funds as being for care and mobility rather than additional costs such as repair costs.

Now that FANDF are aware of this specific question and the published direction, this is something that we want to take forward with DIO to try to get a change in policy.

Access all areas – a win for wheelchair users!

I don't think it's easy for anyone to marry someone in the military, move away from all they know and start a new life in an unfamiliar place. Add a disability into the equation and it very quickly gets even harder.

Our little boy and I moved onto Kendrew Barracks in Rutland in January 2020, after I married my husband. We were lucky enough to be allocated a beautiful house, which was largely wheelchair accessible with the further adaptations completed over this last year. However, after exploring the camp, I quickly realised that it was not the most accessible of places. Currently being the only wheelchair user on camp, meant I was the only one to notice the inaccessibility and bring the points forward.

I have a strong belief that I should speak up where I can, to advocate for not only myself but others with disabilities who may not have the voice that I do. It took many face-to-face meetings, telephone calls and emails, but eventually with help from Karen Ross, the Army Families Federation's Health and Additional Needs specialist, I got through to the right person and it was agreed in principle to put five drop kerbs into the camp. I was delighted to be asked to meet with representatives from DIO and Amey, so they could walk the camp with me and I could show them crucial points for the drop kerbs.

To my pleasant surprise, after the quote was approved, the funding was given for seven drop kerbs and one pavement repair to be completed. A fantastic job has been done and I am regularly making the most of being able to use the pavements now. These kerbs have given me more than just the ability to use the pavement. I can now safely navigate my way around camp, without fear of being in the way of cars and other vehicles and I can access areas of the camp like everyone else.

I cannot be more grateful for the help I have been given to ensure my voice was heard along the way. I will strive to continue to 'change the world' for other disabled people like myself, one drop kerb at a time if necessary!

Moving here, gaining my independence and living as a family has been the best choice I could have made. I really am appreciative of living in a nice community, in a beautiful area and with becoming a FANDF committee member, I will now have even more opportunities to do my bit to help the world of disability and additional needs.

Steph Quintrell



SSAFA Short Breaks – a family's perspective

In March 2020 I submitted an application form to attend the SSAFA short breaks, unaware that just three weeks later the whole country would be facing an extended period of lockdown, with children being forced to home-school and many of us having to combine it with working from home.

In the madness that followed, I forgot about the application. Like many, my husband (an Army nurse) and I (self-employed Business manager) were both working 60+ hour weeks whilst trying to ensure that our three children, Jacob (6), Adam (11) and Grace (13) received some sort of education and meeting the additional needs of Adam who has Autism. So the call from Fran, SSAFA's Additional Needs and Disabilities Advisor, in late July advising that we had got a place the break in October, could not have come at a better time.

After several weeks of will it/won't it go ahead - with the Covid-19 figures rising again - we were delighted to finally arrive at The Calvert Trust in Exmoor on 26 October, even the wind and rain didn't dampen our spirits! We knew that things would be a bit different to normal due to the social distancing rules that were in place at the time but Fran, her colleague Jason, and all the Calvert Trust staff made every effort to ensure that we all had the best time.

We were placed in groups of no more than 6 as per the government regulations, which meant our family were a group on our own with the same instructor for the whole week. James was absolutely brilliant with the children, taking no nonsense but encouraging us all to push outside of our comfort zones. During the week he led us through numerous activities including:

- Command tasks
- Team building
- Fire building (with a blindfolded walk through the woods to get to where we were building the fire)
- Rock climbing
- Abseiling
- Archery
- Cycling (on adapted bikes)
- Indoor Orienteering
- Giant swing
- Bocce (similar to Boules)
- Swimming

All the activities were inclusive for the whole family, even our 6-year-old son got to have a go at everything (and was probably the most fearless of us all!) and my functional weakness was not a barrier. The centre is focussed on being inclusive irrespective of an individual's needs and makes things as accessible as possible.



Mealtimes are often difficult when we go out as our youngest child has a very limited diet but it was no issue to the chefs at the centre. Each morning, they asked Jacob what he would like to eat that day and made him what he wanted (normally a choice between sausage, nuggets or ham and chips!), nothing was too much trouble. The rest of us enjoyed tasty home-cooked meals every day without having to slave over a hot stove... it was heaven!

The best thing about the week was having quality time together as a family, laughing, and making memories. Phones and iPads were banned apart from the last hour before bedtime, but no one complained or missed them because we were far too busy having fun! Having only taken two days leave between February and October 2020 meant that my husband and I were really feeling the strain, but the break helped us to recharge our batteries ready for the next onslaught. The only downside to having been on the break during the Covid Pandemic was not being able to mix and get to know the other families the way we would normally.

We are very grateful to SSAFA and all who made the break possible, it was the highlight of the year for us and something we won't forget in a hurry.

Hannah Illingworth



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**THE FORCES ADDITIONAL NEEDS AND
DISABILITY FORUM
FANDF 2021 Biennial Conference**

SAVE THE DATE

**Tuesday 5 October 2021
MOD Building, Whitehall,
London, SW1A 2HB
09:00 - 16:00**

**Giving a Voice to Forces Families with
Additional Needs and Disabilities**



Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view

Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view is a nine-point plan to support the Armed Forces which was published on 4 March 2021. This document is a companion document to the NHS Long Term Plan (LTP), and it outlines the commitments that NHS

England and NHS Improvement is making to improve the health and wellbeing of the Armed Forces community, both for serving personnel (regulars and reservists), veterans and their families.

To access a copy of the Healthcare for the Armed Forces community: a forward view please visit:

www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Healthcare-for-the-Armed-Forces-community-forward-view-March-2021.pdf

The NHS Long Term Plan can be accessed at:

www.longtermplan.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/nhs-long-term-plan-version-1.2.pdf

The Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service **launch new name**

Op COURAGE was launched on 4 March 2021 and is the new name for the following services:

- Veterans' Mental Health Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS)
- Veterans' Mental Health Complex Treatment Service (CTS)
- Veterans' Mental Health High Intensity Service (HIS)

The new name has been developed by the NHS England and NHS Improvement Armed Forces Patient and Public Voice following feedback from the Armed Forces community, to make it easier for those leaving the military and veterans to get specific help.



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