

USA Element
Headquarters, Allied Maritime Command

Welcome Guide



Muneris Trans Mare

“Service Across the Sea”

Updated 20 AUG 2016

Welcome Aboard!

Congratulations on your orders to the United Kingdom! Without question, an assignment overseas can be one of the most memorable chapters in your military career. Regardless of your specific assignment at the Northwood Headquarters, I am certain that you and your family will find your time here rewarding.

As you may know, Northwood is a multi-national base comprised of military representatives from the 28 member nations of NATO as well as all 27 member states of the European Union. From the moment you first set foot on the base you will notice an incredible variety of uniforms and languages. Although English is the language of business here, the many accents speaking this one common language will surprise you.

I challenge you to take advantage of the unique opportunity you will have to interact and work with an international assembly of military and civilian professionals. You will experience a level of personal growth and cultural awareness your stateside peers may never know. As a result, when you return to a U.S. operational unit, you will be better prepared to lead, fight, and win in an environment where the force structure is increasingly more multinational.



During your career, you probably have been attached to a deployable unit with a high operational tempo that placed tremendous demands on your family life. While you are here at Northwood, I encourage you to take time to explore the UK and points beyond with your family. Whether you stay locally and take part in the multitude of activities the London area has to offer, or you jump on the train for destinations in Europe, I am certain you will find something that enriches you and your family.

My staff has organized this welcome guide with you and your family in mind as you prepare to execute your move overseas. Though I am confident the guide will answer most of your questions, your command sponsor is available and standing by to assist you and your spouse. If there is anything I or my staff can do to help with your transition, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Again, congratulations on your orders, and my best to you and your family for an outstanding tour of duty here in the UK.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew A. Zirkle". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Matthew A. Zirkle
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Commander, Submarines NATO
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SECTION 1 – KEYS TO SUCCESS

1. Getting Started. Your PCS will be busy. Talk to anyone who has gone before you and they will say it is stressful! The good news is you can manage the stress you and your family experience by keeping three keys to success in mind:

- **Stay on Timeline.** Front load as much as you can. Get an early start on the checklists found in this guide so when the movers arrive you won't find yourself scrambling to get things done. The more you get done early the sooner you and your family can start enjoying the journey to the UK.
- **Prepare Financially.** The move to London is very expensive. On average, most families need at least **\$10,000** to cover up front costs. However, almost every expense is reimbursable (certainly the big ones) and there are ways to alleviate the burden. The guide will point out expenses as they apply in each section.

-Annex B will provide you a summary of expenses to anticipate so you can plan accordingly.

- **Sponsorship.** Your sponsor will be with you every step of the way. It doesn't matter what the issue, large or small, your sponsor is there for you **and** your family. Even if your spouse just needs someone to assure them it'll all work out, there's a support network here ready to help in any way they can.

2. How to Use this Guide. The first thing you'll undoubtedly notice about this guide is the sheer length of it. Don't let it intimidate you. Read through the guide once taking notes on things you have questions about or want to discuss in more detail with your sponsor. After that, use the checklist provided on page 2 as your guide.

3. The Command Supports You. Moving to the UK is no small feat and there is an impressive amount of work required. The Northwood US Element chain of command understands and appreciates this. You can expect once you've completed immediate check in procedures (items that must be done within two working days of your arrival) you will be given adequate time to get you and your family settled before you start working in earnest. Your end of the deal is to keep the chain of command informed, get help when you need it, and do your best to get settled. Your sponsor will no doubt explain this to you early on in your discussions. Rest assured, the chain of command is here to support you in any way they can and will ensure you have the time you need to get settled.

4. Feedback. Regulations and processes, both in the US and the UK, often change. As you plan and execute your PCS, please take notes on things that need to be updated in the *Welcome Guide*. Your inputs are welcomed and valuable in ensuring we provide our newcomers with the very best information to assist them in their PCS.

5. Relocation Information. The Office of the Secretary of Defense provides relocation information and relocation tools through the websites listed below. Register for relocation classes through your local command to help make moving easier.

www.militaryonesource.com
www.MilitaryHOMEFRONT.dod.mil/moving

| PCS CHECKLIST General Timelines and Important Items Prior to and immediately following PCS This is a guideline, and is not an all-encompassing list of PCS requirements. | |
|---|--|
| | Receive your Northwood US Element Sponsor |
| | Overseas Screening / Medical Screening (pg. 3) |

| GREATER THAN 3 MONTHS FROM PCS | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| | Passport applications and Department of State information (pg. 2) |
| | Household goods shipment (pg. 13) |
| | POV shipment (pg. 27) |
| | Local schools / DoDEA school program (pg. 23) |
| | Pet transfer arrangements (pg. 5) |
| | Establish Military Star Card account to facilitate overseas fuel purchases (pg. 8) |
| | Foreign Clearance Guide (FCG) access and APACS account (pg. 3) |

| 3 MONTHS FROM PCS | |
|--------------------------|---|
| | Registering dependent children for DoDEA (pg. 24) |
| | Northwood APO box details for forwarding mail (pg. 5) |
| | On-line home research and realty companies (pg. 17) |
| | Banking options for a GBP acct. (pg. 6) |

| 6 TO 8 WEEKS FROM PCS | |
|------------------------------|--|
| | Coordinate to cancel your US registration for any vehicles getting shipped |
| | International insurance for your vehicle(s) (pg. 28) |
| | How to drive in the UK and to prepare for USAFE driving test (pg. 30) |
| | Coordinate to have mail forwarded to Northwood |
| | Inform your bank and credit card companies you will be permanently abroad |
| | Contact your medical records department to coordinate copies of records (pg. 9) |
| | Check with airline to determine what your checked baggage allowance will be for flight to UK |

| WITHIN 72 HOURS OF ARRIVAL IN THE UK | |
|---|--|
| | Check-in with USAE Admin to receive check-in checklists / provide local recall |
| | Go to Blenheim Crescent Housing Office for in brief (pg. 13) |
| | Update DEERS (pg. 9) |
| | Enroll in TRICARE Global Remote Overseas Program (pg. 9) |
| | Enroll in TRICARE Metlife Dental Program (pg. 9) |
| | Get an Oyster Card for public transportation |
| | Make appointments with realtors to see properties (pg. 17) |

| AFTER INITIAL CHECK-IN COMPLETE IN THE UK | |
|--|---|
| | Enroll dependent children in school (pg. 24) |
| | Go to Blenheim Crescent VRO to take USAFE driving test (pg. 30) |
| | Submit request for Military STAR card Texaco gas purchase card (pg. 31) |
| | Purchase television license (pg. 14) |

SECTION 2 - GETTING READY

1. General. This section has a variety of information to get your started. Housing, education, health care, and vehicle matters are covered in separate sections as they require more in depth discussion.

2. Command Sponsor. Your sponsor is your number one resource. Their job is to provide end to end support to you and your family until you are settled in the UK. If you haven't been assigned a sponsor, send an email to sponsorcoordinator@mc.nato.int right away.

3. Overseas Screening. Required for you and your immediate family within two weeks of receiving orders. Policy, procedures, and requirements vary between services. Schedule screening appointments through your current unit admin department. If you need help, contact your sponsor who will put you in touch with someone from your service stationed in the UK. Stay proactive in ensuring timely completion. Detailed guidance for the Navy is found in NAVMEDCOMINST 1300.1.

- a. **Medical Screening.** Don't withhold information from the doctor about you or family members. Even though healthcare in the UK is comparable to the US, not all medications or treatments are available in the UK. Some examples are asthma medications and birth control. Your doctor may or may not know definitively what is and what is not available. Set up a phone appointment with a family care physician at RAF Croughton at +44 (0)128-070-8737 to discuss. Call immediately upon receipt of orders – don't delay!
- b. **Problems During Screening?** Immediately notify your service specific personnel command if you find out you or family members are not eligible for overseas assignment.

4. Passports/Visas. Get a red Official and blue Tourist Passports for you and your dependents. Again, prompt execution is encouraged upon receipt of orders. Tourist Passports can take several months to process. If you require a command endorsement for your Official No-Fee Passport, contact your sponsor or request one by emailing sponsorcoordinator@mc.nato.int.

As of 28 November 2015, dependent spouses (any age), and dependent children UNDER 21 of active duty military members assigned to the UK, DO NOT need visas (Exempt Dependents). Exempt Dependents who travel in/out of the UK MUST carry their passport, military sponsor's PCS orders and, if NOT named on the order, other official documentation issued by the US government showing they are a dependent of the military member assigned to duty in the UK. Exempt Dependents MAY obtain an exempt vignette from the UK Home Office after arrival in the UK. This contains a photo and is placed inside the passport. This is optional but encouraged. Please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil who will process the exempt vignette for you when you are in the UK.

Dependent children age 21 OR OVER on first arrival in the UK, as well as secondary dependents such as a dependent parent, WILL need pre-arrival visas (Non-exempt Dependents). Please e-mail Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil for instructions on how to apply for Entry Clearance for your Non-Exempt Dependents.

Civilian component members and their dependents MUST still obtain pre-arrival visas. Please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil for instructions on how to apply for Entry Clearance visas.

5. Additional Entry and Travel Requirements. Check the Foreign Clearance Guide (FGC) for latest UK entry requirements. For FGCs go to <https://www.fcg.pentagon.mil/fcg.cfm> to register for access. Keep your logon information handy as you will need it when submitting Automated Personnel and Aircraft

Clearance System (APACS) requests for travel if your new job here requires it. Go to <https://apacs.dtic.mil> to register for a non-CAC card APACS login as there can be access issues once you are here using NATO computers.

6. Non-active duty DoD-affiliated personnel. If assigned to the UK for more than six months, prior to entry member and all family members MUST apply for an entry clearance through the visa section of the British Consulate serving their geographic area PRIOR to travel. Please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail .mil for further information.

7. Other Travel Documents. During your PCS, anytime you are on official travel, or even on vacation, you must travel with a copy of the following: PCS orders, NATO travel orders, US military ID card, NATO ID card, and passport (red or blue).

8. Maintaining financial stability during the 60-120 days. US Navy personnel are remotely supported by PSD Rota, Spain. Due to our location and the inability to directly deal with them face-to-face, most travel claims items can take up between 3-6 weeks to pay-out. Carefully consider all of the following expenses for the first 60-120 days. (Note all expenditures are listed in Sterling Pounds not Dollars):

The following items are expected during the first 30-60 days

- a. Initial transportation costs upon arrival at Heathrow: £60-£90.
- b. Initial pocket money/Slush fund for misc. expenses upon the first week:
- c. TLA lodging costs for the 1st 30 days: _____ TLA rate X 30days
- d. Daily Sustenance and entertainment for the first 60 days: £20 + £10 per additional person /day.
- e. Daily Travel fees for the first 60 days: £320 = £8/day x 5 days x 8 weeks
- f. Cellphone top-ups for first 60 days: £140 (£20 SIM card + £2 a day for 20 minutes talk time)
- g. Emergency fund: _____ (your desired comfort amount)

The following items can be paid for by requesting Advanced OHA request & MIHA claim form)

- a. Move-in expense 1: Tenancy agreement fees: £ 200-£500 (reimbursed with deposit)
- b. Move-in expense 2: 1st Month's rent due prior to move-in (Up to your OHA Cap)
- c. (10) Move-in expense 3: 4-8 weeks Security Deposit (@ your monthly rate for rent)

9. Legal Matters. It is recommended you get any powers of attorney, will updates, or any other legal work done prior to your PCS so you have one less thing to worry about once you arrive in the UK. Once in the UK, legal assistance for personnel from all services may be obtained through the Regional Legal Service Office Europe, Africa, and Southwest Asia (RLSO EURAFSWA) London satellite office at RAF Blenheim Crescent. Contact the RLSO EURAFSWA representative at +44 (0)1895-616-193 or DSN (314) 235-6193. Emergency legal assistance is available 24-hours a day at +44 (0)7976 243-220. You can also e-mail Mr. **Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail .mil. Alternatively, if your legal matter would be better** addressed by a service specific legal office, each armed forces branch has services available to their personnel stationed in Europe.

- a. **US Army.** The Soldier and Family Assistance Center with legal advice and contacts for US Army personnel stationed in Europe <http://www.imcom-europe.army.mil/sfac/benefits/legal.htm>
- b. **US Navy and Marine Corps.** Use RLSO EURAFSWA London at the number provided above. Regular non-holiday hours are Monday through Friday 0730 to 1600.

- c. **US Air Force.** Nearest USAF legal unit located at RAF Croughton. Call +44 (0)1280-708-585.

10. Legal - Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB). UK consumer advocate service that helps resolve legal, financial, and other problems by providing a free information and advice hotline. For instance, if you order an item from a UK business and never get it, you can call the CAB for help. More information can be found at www.citizenSAdvice.org.uk.

11. Pet Entrance and Registration. If you want to bring your pet, the first thing you'll need to do is go to <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/65/contents> to determine if your pet is allowed in the UK. Next, contact the 48th Force Support Squadron (FSS) stationed at RAF Feltwell (8 miles north of RAF Lakenheath). Contact information is posted on-line at <http://48forcesupport.com/?TabId=110>. You will find all the information, forms, and instructions you need to transfer your pet. Call the 48th FSS before you start planning your pet's transfer to go over the process as it is long, detailed, and if you don't have everything completed correctly your pet may end up quarantined, deported, or even destroyed.

- a. **Lead Time.** Minimum 3 months.
- b. **Cost.** There are no reimbursements or military arrangements made on your behalf when moving your pet. You must make these arrangements and pay for them yourself.
- c. **Arranging Transport.** **After receiving your itinerary confirm the airline can facilitate transportation of your pet.** Ask what your pet's airfare will be as some airlines charge up to \$3,000 to ship an 80 pound dog. Research companies who specialize in international shipping of personal pets. Many of these companies offer military discounts. Have your sponsor connect you with someone who has gone through this process.

12. Mail and APO Boxes. Your sponsor will arrange an APO postal box at Northwood. You can ship boxes up to about 18 x 18"; a medium size package. Letters and packages take an average of 10 days to receive from the US.

- a. **Shipping to APO vs. Home Address.** You'll need to decide which items you'll have delivered to your APO and which ones will go to your permanent residence. This really depends on whether a company ships to APO addresses or not and cost. It's a good idea to start a list to keep track of what is getting sent where.
- b. **Sending Mail.** Blenheim Crescent has a US Post Office that provides the same postal services you would expect to get in any US Post Office. You can also use the UK postal systems.
- c. **Military Postal System (MPS).** A free correspondence service *between* military post offices (APO/FPO). Simply write "MPS" in place of a postage stamp. Must be delivered from a US Military Postal Facility. May be used to mail parcels up to 70 lbs. MPS service is not intended for a PCS household goods movement. MPS packages must have City (APO) and state (NY) written on them.
- d. **Royal Mail Service.** You can apply for TV licenses, renew your car's road tax, conduct wire transfers, and currency exchange at most post offices. Complete listing of services and locations can be found on the www.postoffice.co.uk website.

13. Military ID Cards. You can get replacement ID cards for you and your dependents at RAF Blenheim Crescent. See admin for help.

15. Banking and Money Considerations. Discuss this section with your sponsor as you really want to be sure you understand how this works in the UK.

- a. **Travel Considerations.** Contact your bank and give them the date you will PCS to the UK to avoid your debit and credit cards getting frozen when using them abroad. Get details from your bank on which ATM machines you can use in the UK and what the associated card fees are. You can get cash from an ATM at the airport to pay your driver.
- b. **Establishing a Local Bank Account.** You'll need to set up a GBP bank account right away after you get to the UK. Nearly all bills require payment via "direct debit" from a GBP checking account (commonly referred to as "Sterling" account) including the rental deposit for your home. You'll also need to have a GBP account set up before you can get a cell phone which you'll want as soon as possible. There are two main options for banking:

- 1) **DoD Community Bank.** Subsidiary of Bank of America (BoA) with branches at RAF Croughton and RAF Lakenheath. You must go to RAFs Croughton, Lakenheath or Alconbury to set up the account. Call the BoA Community Bank branch ahead of time to make sure you have all the documents they will need to set your account up. There are no wire fees for transferring money from your current bank account to your DoD Community Bank account and you are guaranteed the best exchange rate. This is the most efficient option. The drawback is there are no local branches in the London area.

RAF Croughton - Building 38
Phone: +44 (0)1869-810-777/211
DSN: 71-88-236-8397
T,W,F: 0900-1530
Th: 1000-1700
Sat: 0900-1300

- 2) **British Bank Accounts.** These can be difficult to set up, as you must prove residency with a rental agreement or a utility bill and most charge wire transfer fees to get money from your current US account to a Sterling checking account. This process also takes time for the transfer to go through. However, the benefit of having a British bank account is access to local branches. [The Airforce at Blenheim Crescent has established a good working relationship with Barclays Bank in Ruislip High Street. The housing office can provide a letter of introduction and contact details for you to make an appointment. This can all be done during your housing in-brief.](#)

- 3) **Turning Dollars into Pounds.** There are two main methods for converting money to pounds for deposit into your GBP account:
 - a) Having your US bank wire money into your UK account. If you use Community Bank, you can avoid wire transfer and conversion fees. If you are wiring money to a British bank account, you can expect to pay around \$50 in fees each time you make a transfer. Make sure you understand all the rules, fees, exchange rates, and time required to fund your GBP account (it can take at least a week for the funds to be available). You'll have to do this every pay period to make sure your UK bills get paid.
 - b) Setting up an international allotment. This is the most cost effective way to deposit money into a British bank account, because it lets you avoid international wire transfer fees. This takes approximately two months to activate, but once it is complete, you can set and adjust allotments from DFAS to your UK account directly through the MyPay website. The US Element Admin personnel can assist with the paperwork.

IMPORTANT: In the UK there are no limits to the interest rate a consumer can be charged. DO NOT accept or enroll in any UK credit card offers! Interest rates are as high as 4000%! To be clear, that is four-thousand percent interest. Read the fine print if you finance anything while in the UK.

- c. **ATM Machines in the UK.** The London area is a big city like any other. Take the same common sense precautions you would take in any big city. Avoid smaller, less known bank's ATM machines. Stick to the larger, well known banks. The list of UK banks below is a good reference. Avoid street side ATM machines if you can as they are usually crowded and it would be very easy for a thief to yank your cash from you and run. Make sure you read your bank statements as the standard of banking in the UK is not the same as the US.

| | |
|------------------|--|
| HSBC | www.hsbc.co.uk |
| Barclays | www.barclays.co.uk |
| NatWest | www.natwestoffshore.com |
| Lloyds TBS | www.lloydstsb.com/ |
| Abbey(Santander) | www.santander.co.uk |

- d. **Using Your Chip and Pin Card.** With a UK bank chip and pin you insert your card, enter your pin, and that's it. With a DoD Community Bank chip and pin, you insert your card (not swipe) and it runs like a credit card. You don't enter a pin. Two receipts get printed and you'll sign one for the vendor to keep. This causes real confusion with vendors. Just tell them you are using an "American chip and pin" which you need to sign for. That almost always clears it right up.
- e. **Checks.** UK checks use a different format. Ask your bank how to fill them out properly when setting up your account. You may be required to present a check guarantee card issued by your bank. These cards have a limit on how much you can write a check for.
- f. **Building a Budget.** There are two budgets you will need to build. **Annex B** lists the expenses you can expect from the time you get orders to the UK until you've moved into your permanent home. **Annex C** covers common expenses to expect after you've moved into your permanent home. In both annexes, amplification of expenses is provided where necessary.
- g. **Planning Your Regular Budget.** Go to <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil> to determine your overseas allowances. For locality code use "GB380" for United Kingdom, Hillingdon. While in the UK, you are entitled to Overseas COLA, a monthly Utility/Recurring Maintenance Allowance, and a one time Move-In Housing Allowance (MIHA). It will seem like a lot of money, but remember you are moving to one of the most expensive places in the world to live. Section 6 – Housing and Annex C will give you a good breakdown of entitlements and costs of living in the UK.

16. Public Transportation. Unless you intend to purchase a car in the UK when you arrive, you will likely be without a vehicle for some time as you wait for your vehicle to ship from the US. Fortunately, the UK has an extensive and reliable public transportation system consisting of trains, buses, and taxis. For more information go to www.tfl.co.uk.

- a. **The Tube or Underground.** The most common method of public transportation is the subway system, commonly referred to as the "tube" or "underground." You can buy individual tickets for travel between two points, but this is very expensive compared to just buying what's called an "Oyster Card." This card can be obtained at either the information desks in tube stations or news outlets located on high streets throughout the London area, and can be recharged at the same locations. The card cost is a £5 deposit refunded when you turn it in. Average cost of a trip is around £3 to £4 so recommend putting around £60 on your card initially. **Travelling on the tube is cheaper after 9.30am and before 3:30 pm.** Note that children under 11 travel free of charge (up to four per adult). **You can also get a UK forces rail card from Northwood HQ, under which you and**

your dependents can register your oyster cards. This card allows discounted travel on the tube during off-peak hours and also travel discounts on other rail networks throughout the UK. See US Element admin personnel for the details on obtaining a rail card.

- b. **Taxi.** Black taxis are driven by specially trained and licensed drivers who are tested on knowing the city of London. Always make sure there is a meter in the taxi and that it is being used. Outside of London, most taxis are private hire. This means the driver is using his own personal car as a taxi. If there is no meter, ask what the cost will be before getting in. Meter starting cost should not be more than £3.20. It is highly recommended that you NEVER use an unlicensed cab that you might find outside of a bar or a club in central London. These drivers quite often have no appropriate insurance and have not been vetted at all.
- c. **Ride Sharing.** UBER and Lyft both operate in the London area and are essentially the same as the services in the U.S. As with any rideshare, however, it is recommended that you use caution when using and private vehicle and always use the buddy system when able.
- d. **Bus.** As an added benefit of having an Oyster Card for the tube, you can use the same card to pay for most bus rides if you need it to connect someplace. You'll see bus stops everywhere. Go to the www.tfl.co.uk website to find more information on routes and times.
- e. **Travel Planning.** Resources for planning travel: <https://tfl.gov.uk>
www.totaltravel.co.uk/travel/gb/transport.

17. Cell Phones. You will need to get a GBP Sterling account before you can enter into a cell phone contract in the UK. However, assuming your US phone is “unlocked” and able to use a GSM sim card, you can buy a “pay as you go” SIM card which will allow you to use your phone on UK networks. There are several options for carriers. The easiest way to compare them all is to go to <http://www.moneysupermarket.com/mobile-phones/> where you can get all the latest deals. Alternatively, if you want to go in person to look at various phones you can go to a *Car Phone Warehouse* store which has about every cell phone on the market and ability to get you the best deals on nearly all of them. You can go to www.carphonewarehouse.com to do some research before you arrive. The Exchange at RAF Lakenheath also has a Vodafone store that you can easily set up an account with in the absence of a UK credit history.

18. Military STAR Card. If you don't already have one, you will need to apply for a Military STAR card prior to your PCS to the UK. This is required to get the fuel card that will allow you to get UK gas at US per gallon rates at any UK Fast Fuels participating station in the UK. As of Gas in the UK is about \$8.00 per gallon. With the Military STAR card fuel card you pay the average U.S. rate (a lot less!). For more information and a search tool to find participating stations go to <http://www.fastfuel.co.uk/>. The two most convenient stations to Northwood are: Tesco Extra Watford WD17 2BD, Texaco Uxbridge UB10 0NZ.

19. Help and Information Volunteer Exchange (HIVE) Information Services. There is a UK MOD (Ministry of Defense) HIVE information service centre located on Northwood Base available for members from all nations. The HIVE is managed by an information officer who will seek to provide the right information in the areas of childcare, healthcare, education, outings, among others. The HIVE has computers you can use as well. Contact the HIVE centre at +44 (0)1923-957-855. Opening times are Mon-Fri 09.00 – 15.00 hrs. Email: northwood@hivegb.co.uk

SECTION 3 – MEDICAL AND DENTAL

1. General. Procedures for getting medical and dental care are probably very different than what you are used to. There are no U.S. Medical Treatment Facilities (MTF) in the local area. This is another section you need to discuss with your sponsor to make sure you fully understand how to get care for you and your dependents. Highly recommend going to the link provided below in *paragraph 4b* and calling the *Customer Service Regional Direct* number to get an explanation of how your medical benefits work in the UK prior to departing on your PCS.

2. Transferring Medical Records. You will need to get copies of all your dependent medical and dental records as well as your own original files. Depending on how your current medical facility operates and how busy they are, it could take up to six weeks to get copies of medical records for you and your dependents. Call the medical records office and ask how much time they need to make copies of medical and dental records. Don't get them too early because you want the records to be complete and up to date. If you or a dependent get any medical work done after you've checked out records be sure to get copies to add to your or dependent files.

3. DEERS. Update your DEERS data with the US admin element at Blenheim Crescent on the day you check in. This is required prior to enrollment in any TRICARE medical program overseas. You can update DEERS for you and your dependents online at <https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/milconnect/>

4. TRICARE Medical. Since all three Military Treatment Facilities in the UK are greater than 40 miles away, you and your dependents will enroll in TRICARE Overseas Prime-Remote (TOP-R), managed by International SOS (ISOS). If you or your dependents need medical care while en route to the UK, you will fall under your old TRICARE region. As such, talk with your local TRICARE representative prior to executing your PCS for contact numbers and procedures to follow while traveling.

- a. **Enrollment Procedures.** You can enroll in TOP-R after you have reported to your duty station in the UK. There are four ways to do this: phone (easiest), email mail, or in person with the TRICARE rep at Blenheim Crescent. Go to http://www.tricare-overseas.com/top_prime_enrollment.html for contact details, enrollment forms, and benefit guides.

NOTE: While you can enroll in TOP-R/ISOS yourself, you will need to contact the Blenheim Crescent TRICARE rep to gain visibility in the UK MTF databases.

- b. **TRICARE United Kingdom Contact Directory.** Find the latest directory of important TRICARE contact information at <http://www.tricare-overseas.com/ContactUs/ContactEUR.html>

IMPORTANT: You can get charged the full cost of medical care for you or your dependents if you don't follow the procedures in the TOP-R benefits guides. To avoid this situation and to fully understand how your benefits work overseas, you **MUST** read the TOP-R benefits guides.

- c. **Using US Medical Treatment Facilities.** You can go to one of the three bases within driving distance as you are accustomed to in the US. However, while all active duty servicemembers are Priority I patients at MTFs, for scheduling purposes, the UK MTFs are not necessarily staffed to handle patients outside of their catchment area. But your dependents will be treated as Space A patients. Getting your dependents in for appointments can be tough for this reason, but many times sponsors are able to get their dependents in with not too much difficulty. RAF Lakenheath has a fully equipped medical facility including dermatologists, mental health specialists, and even neurologists. Medical care and facilities at RAF Croughton and RAF Lakenheath are generally outstanding. From Northwood Base, RAF Croughton is approximately one hour by car while RAF Lakenheath is nearly two hours away. UK medical care on the other hand is very good as well so long as you find a good facility and good doctor. Talk to your sponsor to go over the benefits and disadvantages of both.

- d. **Finding a Family Doctor.** When you fill out the enrollment forms for TOP-R, you will need to list a primary and secondary choice as a family doctor. Talk to your sponsor about recommendations prior to arriving so you can get the enrollment forms filled in as soon as you get to the UK. You can use your APO address on the enrollment form. There are as you might suspect hundreds of doctors to choose from. However, finding one that accepts TRICARE narrows down the search since most doctors are not accustomed to seeing US personnel and their families. A TRICARE representative should be able to narrow the search down for you in finding a suitable hospital that is near where you intend to live. Keep your sponsor in the loop so they can do some checking locally on family practitioners you're looking at. Just because a doctor takes TRICARE doesn't mean they are a good doctor. The maximum allowed coverage under TOP-R allows you to go to just about any hospital you want so look for a quality physician that is within an acceptable distance. Again, consult the TRICARE Benefits Guide and speak with a TRICARE representative to make sure the doctor you choose will not exceed TRICARE cost limits.
- e. **How TOP-R Works (Routine Medical Appointments).** Even though you will have a family doctor, ISOS will function as your Primary Care Manager (PCM) in the TOP-R program (. Think of ISOS as the administrators of the TRICARE program overseas. You call ISOS to let them know what medical care you or dependent need and they pass you to an ISOS doctor who is familiar with UK medicine to help you determine the best course of action. Once you've finished consulting with an ISOS doctor, you get passed to a counselor who then authorizes an appointment or treatment. An authorization for treatment is generated and e-mailed to you and the doctor you are seeking care from. At that point you can call the doctor's office to schedule an appointment. After your visit, the doctor's office submits their invoice to ISOS who then send you a final statement. It sounds like a lot, but the process usually only takes a few minutes.
- f. **International SOS (ISOS).** Go to <http://www.tricare-overseas.com/ContactUs/default.htm> for country specific ISOS contact information. It is HIGHLY recommended you program ISOS contact information in your mobile phone and post somewhere accessible in your home. Prior to traveling abroad, go to the link provided so you have the local ISOS number in the country you are traveling to. This will dramatically decrease the time required to secure authorizations for medical care if required when abroad away from the UK.
- g. **Emergency Care Procedures.** If you have a medical emergency the first thing to do is call **999**. That is the UK equivalent to 911 in the US. You may also dial 112 which is the EU-wide standard number for emergencies. Depending on where you live or where you are at, it can take time to get an ambulance (if required). Emergency rooms are called Accident and Emergency centers (referred to as the A&E) and not all hospitals have them. Once you are settled into your permanent home, it is a good idea to get familiar with the nearest A&E equipped medical facility. The priority is to take care of the person needing emergency medical care. However, as soon as possible when the situation allows, you must call ISOS at 02087-628-133 to let them know what is going on so they can start the insurance process. When traveling abroad to other European nations, particularly eastern European nations, make sure you reference the Foreign Area Clearance Guide for the latest information on how to get emergency medical care.
- h. **Urgent Care Procedures.** UK Minor Injuries Services (MIS) cover non-life threatening medical issues and are open 24 hours. Like A&E centers, not all hospitals have MIS. Again, when settled in your permanent home find the nearest hospital with an MIS that takes TRICARE. Ideally, you will be able to find a hospital that has both A&E and MIS services. However, this is not always the case. If you can't find a hospital nearby that has these services and takes TRICARE, you can enroll in the UK National Health Systems (NHS) and get the same treatment as a UK national. Information on NHS is discussed shortly in this guide.
- i. **Disaster / Emergency Planning Resources.** On check in, the US admin department will take your TLA contact information for disaster preparedness. It is important you update the admin department

after moving into your permanent home and that you are familiar with local procedures. Go to <http://www.tricare-overseas.com/Beneficiaries.htm> for the latest disaster/emergency bulletins.

- j. **Grievances/Complaints.** Submit to TOPGlobalQualityAssu@internationalsos.com. If you don't get an acceptable solution to issues you have with TRICARE get the chain of command involved.

5. Dental Care. Since you are greater than 40 miles from an MTF, you and your dependents are entitled to get dental care at a civilian provider. There is no need to get a non-availability statement. There are many dentists in the Northwood/London area. Active duty servicemembers in the London area are covered by TOP-R/ISOS, while family members are covered by the TRICARE Dental Program OCONUS/MetLife

- a. **Active Duty Servicemember care via Civilian Provider.** Dental care for servicemembers is obtained via ISOS in the same fashion as medical care. *Moor Park Dental* is the ISOS-designated care facility for active duty servicemembers, and routinely serves family members as well. **Contact Number:** 01923823504 **Email:** info@moorparkdental.com
- b. **Active Duty Family Member care via Civilian Provider.** It is highly recommended you call MetLife TRICARE Dental Program (OCONUS) at 1-855-638-8372 to get a consultation prior to scheduling any civilian dental care. This is to be sure the treatment is covered and to make sure you are counselled on how to file the claim afterwards. Determining what dental procedures are covered and which ones are not can be tricky so this is for your protection and benefit. To enroll in the program and to get find all the forms and publications you will need, go to <https://mybenefits.metlife.com/tricare>. Once you are in the UK, go to <http://www.tricare.mil/Dental/TDP.aspx> and follow the links to register.

Once registered, family members may obtain civilian dental care where they like; however, reimbursement for treatment is obtained via claim. Besides Moor Park Dental, others used with good reviews are *Swiss Smiles* (downtown London) and *Toothbeary* (Richmond).

- c. **Military Treatment Facility (MTF) Dental Care.** While it is recommended that servicemembers and their families use local civilian dental care options, many personnel make their dental appointments at RAF Croughton or RAF Lakenheath (contact numbers provided in Annex C). To save time and money, try to get you and your dependents in all at once on the same day with consecutive appointments. This often requires calling on the first working day of a new month. Just remember, although you are given the same priority as someone stationed at one of these bases, your dependents are on a Space A status so depending on how busy the dental office is, this may be hard to do.

6. Using the UK National Health Service (NHS). Residents of the United Kingdom are entitled to healthcare under the *National Health Service* (NHS). All public hospitals accept NHS, but not all private hospitals do. To enroll, you must identify a general practitioner (GP who will be your family physician) and enroll at their office. There are no enrollment fees, treatment is free, and there is no impact to your TRICARE entitlements. Prior to your PCS, go to www.nhs.uk and learn more about the benefits available to you and your dependents as an NHS member. An added benefit of enrollment is access to the 24-hour NHS medical advice hotline reached by calling 111.

7. Medical Centre Northwood. You and your dependents can use the medical services available on Northwood Base. The centre essentially functions as an NHS primary care facility. If you desire to use them, it is recommended that you register with them first, which will necessitate assignment of an NHS number. It is a small clinic, but they can handle most routine health care issues. Contact them at +44 (0)1923-957-180.

8. Researching Hospitals. You can go to <http://www.nhs.uk/service-search> to find your nearest hospital along with a list of hospital ratings.

9. Having a baby. Whether you are expecting when you arrive, or get pregnant while stationed here, see your general practitioner (GP) first for a referral to an OB. Then you have the option of using Tricare, seeing a private OB, and delivering in a private hospital, or using the UK's National Health Service (NHS) and delivering at an NHS hospital or even delivering at home.

- a. Miss Julie Price is a private OB many Americans have used for their pregnancy and delivery. She practices out of The Portland Hospital, www.theportlandhospital.com, downtown near Great Portland Street. Tricare is also familiar with her practice so after the initial consultation, her office usually handles the paperwork with Tricare. Her telephone number is 020 7390 8272.
- b. If you have a boy and elect to have a circumcision done, make sure you tell your OB and the hospital once you go into deliver. Circumcisions are not common here, but private hospitals like The Portland will arrange it after delivery and before you are discharged. You can also call the Air Force hospital up at RAF Lakenheath to see about a circumcision.
- c. Once the baby is born, one of the parents needs to apply first for a British birth certificate within the first 42 days of life. The U.S. considers this birth certificate to be the "official/legal" one. Only one parent needs to register the birth, and the baby does not need to go. Call the register's office in the city where the baby is born and set up an appointment. It will usually take a few weeks for an appointment. For The Portland Hospital, this is the Westminster Birth Office. You will get the birth certificate that day, and can buy as many copies as you like. Once you have the UK birth certificate, make an appointment with the London Embassy for the U.S. birth certificate, passport and social security number. It is best to make this appointment online, and it usually doesn't take long for an appointment. For this appointment, both parents need to go and you do need to bring the baby. You will also need a passport picture and check to make sure they are accepting credit cards. They will need proof of the parents' citizenship, so bring birth certificates and a marriage certificate. The passport and U.S. birth abroad certificate will come together in a few weeks via a delivery service to your door. The social security number will come approximately 5 weeks later via your APO box. The service member then should register the baby through DEERS at Blenheim Crescent with the British birth certificate. Please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil for further information relating to registration of a birth abroad, obtaining a SSN and a passport.
- d. For a no-fee passport, you have to set up an additional appointment at the London Embassy. You will need passport pictures, but no payment is needed. You will need to call or email the Embassy to arrange this appointment. It cannot be set up online. Once the no-fee passport arrives, the Embassy will notify you and you will need to go downtown to pick it up.

SECTION 4 – SHIPPING AND HOUSING

1. General. Information contained in the housing section is a mix of the content found in the official guide provided by the 422nd Air Base Group and information from other sources personnel have found useful in facilitating their move.

2. Housing Office. The role of the Housing Office is to assist you with all aspects of temporary lodging and seeking a permanent residence. They are located at RAF Blenheim Crescent which is approximately 15 minutes by car or public bus south of Northwood. They may be reached at +44 (0)1895-616-136/198 or DSN 235-6136/6198. Normal working hours are Monday through Friday 0800-1600.

- a. **Check-In.** You are required to check-in at the Housing Office no later than two working days after your PCS arrival. Make an appointment before you PCS. Your sponsor should go with you to this appointment. You will get a full briefing on everything from temporary lodging to your check out procedures from the Housing Officer during this initial appointment. You will also receive a sample tenancy agreement which has **the military break clause that should be stated verbatim in any tenancy agreement you accept. Conversely, pay attention to the circumstances in which your landlord can break the lease with you.**
- b. **Services.** The Housing Office will assign a counselor to you when you check-in that will be able to answer any questions you may have and assist you to all housing matters. They are also the ones that review and approve your TLA, Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA), and Move-In Housing Allowance (MIHA). Additionally, they can help secure loaner furniture and appliances.
- c. **Legal services.** If during the term of your tenancy you experience any issues with the property maintenance or at the end of the tenancy you have problems in being refunded your deposit, you should contact either the Housing Office or the Legal Office (Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil).

IMPORTANT: Failure to check-in with the Housing Office at RAF Blenheim Crescent within two working days of your PCS arrival may result in loss of entitlement to Temporary Lodging Allowance (TLA).

2. Planning the Shipment of Your Household Goods. Shipping overseas is different than a stateside PCS. Make an appointment with your local Transportation Office to go over all the details of planning your move. If possible, ask for a counselor to be assigned to you that can work with you every step of the way. The sooner you make this appointment the more likely you are to get the move dates you want. Waiting until the last minute may result in difficulties in aligning the dates your movers are expected and when you are due to PCS.

3. DPS Registration. You are required to register on the Defense Personal Property System. Your Transportation Office should go over this with you, but just in case, go to <http://www.move.mil> to get this done yourself. After registering, go to the *Moving Resources* tab under *Useful Tools* to select your service specific PCS link. All the other information you need including PCS pamphlets can be found on move.mil.

4. Packing Considerations. By most American standards, houses in the UK are much smaller. Even if you find a larger home it may have a stair case that is so narrow you won't be able to get any of your bedroom furniture upstairs. If you have any large furniture (including queen size beds or larger) it is probably best to leave them in storage and replace them once you are here. The larger the furniture is, the more risk you run of limiting the homes you can move into and storage of such furniture will be tremendously expensive. Storage can be obtained at RAF Croughton if necessary. Be advised that an extension of TLA payments will not be authorized because of not being able to fit your furniture into an otherwise acceptable home. Your sponsor can give you an idea of what is too large and what you can bring with you. Some other considerations to take into account:

- a. **Garages.** Not all homes have garages and the ones that do typically only fit one small car – don't count on them to use for storage. Similarly, if you intend to live near or in downtown London, you probably will not have a garage.
- b. **Living in central London.** If you think you might want to live in central London, take a look at some properties in your budget and get an idea on how much you should bring.
- c. **Clothes.** Almost all UK homes don't have closets. Instead they have standalone wardrobes which are much smaller than typical American closets. UK homes often come equipped with washer and dryer machines though they will have significantly smaller capacities than a typical American washer and dryer. Carefully consider how many clothes you bring with you as it can take up to four hours to get one load of laundry through the washer and dryer.
- d. **Electrical Items.** Current in the UK is 220~240 volt and 50 hertz (US standard is 110 V / 60 Hz). Unless the appliance is dual voltage, you will need to plug it into a transformer to use in the UK. Keep in mind transformers only convert voltage, not hertz, and because of this it is generally not recommended to bring items with a motor or heating element (i.e. a kitchen mixer or hair dryer) as repeated use of 50 Hz electricity sources will cause significant wear and tear. You're better off leaving such items in your storage so you have them when you return to the US. Also, anything with an electric clock will not keep accurate time (i.e wall plug alarm clocks).
- e. **Computers.** If your computer is dual voltage (most are) it will work just fine in the UK.
- f. **Televisions.** The UK uses a PAL broadcast format where the US uses NTSC so your television will not work in the UK on its own. If you have a nice television you want to bring with you, you can purchase a signal adaptor from www.amazon.com or similar site which will allow you to use your television. Cost of the adaptor is much higher in the UK so recommend purchasing the adaptor and bringing it with you. Alternatively, you can purchase UK televisions, but realize they are much more expensive, especially since you'll be paying in GBP.
 - 1. **TV License.** Annual requirement for anyone with a TV in their home. As soon as you move into your permanent home in the UK, go to <http://www.tvlicensing.co.uk/> to purchase a TV license. This is mandatory and the UK authorities do have a way to find out which homes have it and which ones do not. Hefty fines apply if you get caught watching TV without one.
- g. **Lamps.** All modern lamps have a cord that should state a 300 V rating. If this is the case, you can bring your lamp as it can safely handle the 240 V source found in the UK. If it does not say 300 V clearly on the cord do not bring the lamp as a cord not rated to the voltage applied can result in fire or electrocution. You will need to purchase a wall adapter for the plug and purchase UK light bulbs. The safest thing is to leave all your lamps in storage.
- h. **Transformers.** As stated earlier, you will need transformers to operate US electrical equipment. You will get two from the Housing Office to keep for the duration of your tour. Each one will usually have two plugs. Recommend doing an inventory of how many US electrical plugs you will need then purchasing transformers while in the US to ship in your household goods move as transformers are much more expensive in the UK than in the US. Again, www.amazon.com is a good source for purchasing additional transformers if you're willing to wait on shipping.
- i. **Uniforms.** You are expected to bring all your uniforms so you will be prepared for any uniform requirement. Ordering replacements must be done online and can take some time. Replace, update and indeed prepare for advancements while you can. Daily uniform is your service specific

authorized daily working uniform. Personnel are NOT allowed to travel to and from base in uniform. Changing rooms are provided on base.

- j. **Other Military Items.** The London area is still considered a higher risk duty assignment due to the potential for terrorist activity. As such, you should consider leaving all your military t-shirts and other items that make you easily identifiable as a member of the US armed forces. You are advised not to wear these items while in the UK.

5. Temporary Lodging Accommodations. There are no military Temporary Lodging Facilities (TLF). As soon as you have completed medical screening and have orders in hand, start negotiating a hard transfer and arrival date so you can reserve temporary living arrangements. Personnel coming to Northwood have taken as little as one week and as long as three months to find a permanent home so make sure the place you pick will be comfortable and meet all your family needs for a potentially extended stay. You will need to work closely with your sponsor in finding a place that is suitable in cost, location, and size. The majority of personnel stay at one of the following locations:

- a. **Downtown London Apartments via McGlashans.** Located near the Baker Street Tube Station. Easy access to the Tube needed to get to Northwood Base, but from door step to door step it can take over an hour to get back and forth from work. One of the advantages is you will be downtown so you'll have an opportunity to take breaks to do some sightseeing when you have time and to experience downtown. The biggest advantage of booking through McGlashans is the real estate office manager. Duncan McGlashan has been working with US personnel for 30 years. He is very flexible and understanding when it comes to meeting your needs. For instance, he requires a very small hold deposit, takes payment as you are reimbursed with TLA, does not charge you outside your TLA entitlement, and if you have trouble finding a house in the allotted time, he will work out a short term lease at your OHA rate so you won't be out of pocket. Further, his apartments come with free long distance to the US and many European nations, free cable, a maid service, and internet all included in the cost. Duncan provides end to end customer care including arrangement of pick up at the airport when you arrive to go directly to the apartment you've booked. You can go to www.mcglashans.co.uk to take a look at some of the properties that are available. If you choose this option call +44 (0)2074-863-147 and ask to speak with Duncan McGlashan directly.
- b. **Novotel, Holiday Inn and Wembley area.** Located near the Wembley Tube Station. Easy access to the Tube needed to get to Northwood Base, but from door step to door step it can take about an hour to get back and forth from work. One of the advantages is you will be closer to central London so you'll have an opportunity to take breaks to do some sightseeing when you have time. Go to <http://www.accorhotels.com/gb/hotel-9389-novotel-london-wembley/index.shtml> or call +44(0) 20 8069 1200
- c. **The Barn in Ruislip.** Considered the preferred location for US Army and US Air Force personnel because all in processing is done at nearby RAF Blenheim Crescent. However, there are some limitations to be aware of. Most notably, the only rooms that fall within the maximum allowable TLA rate is a single bedroom suite with two double beds and there aren't many of them. No kitchen facilities are provided and laundry is provided by an offsite contractor. A restaurant is on site where you can have lunch and dinner and the tube station is less than 5 minutes' walk. Go to <http://www.thebarnhotel.co.uk/> or call +44 (0)1895- 636-057 for more information.
- d. **Other TLA Accommodations.** The above locations are recommended because they are accustomed to dealing with US personnel and are located on the Metropolitan line. That said, there are many other places you can stay based on your own personal preferences. However, if you elect to stay at another lodging location, be sure to discuss it with your sponsor and consider the following:

- 1) **Location.** How far is it to the nearest tube station? Does the tube station have access to the line you need? How long is the tube ride to the base?
- 2) **Cost and Payment.** Are the rooms within the TLA allowance? How much advance notice do you need to check out?
- 3) **Food.** How far from restaurants and/or grocery stores if you intend to cook meals?
- 4) **Laundry.** Facilities and cost of doing laundry.
- 5) **Stores.** Accessibility to stores where you can get things like toiletries, diapers, etc.?
- 6) **Other Services.** Cable television, internet, etc.

6. Allowances and Entitlements. While you are in temporary lodging, you are entitled to the following:

- a. **Temporary Living Allowance (TLA).** When you check into the admin department and again at your Housing Office appointment, you will be given an in depth brief on how to collect your TLA. TLA is a reimbursed cost which means you have to pay it up front. Getting reimbursed can take up to 15 days the first time then up to 10 days after that. Each time you submit a claim, you will need to submit the following items based on how long you have been in TLA to the admin department at Northwood:

0-30 Days in TLA

- 1) *USAFE TLA Addendum Letter.* Form you fill out listing five properties you have either seen or inquired about in your search for a permanent residence.
- 2) *AF FORM 1357 Request for TLA.* This is really just a routing form where all approval signatures for your reimbursement are tracked.
- 3) *Lodging Receipt.* You will need proof of payment by a lodging receipt.

30-60 Days in TLA

- 1) *It is difficult to justify going beyond 30 days in TLA and this will require a waiver signed by at the US Air Forces Europe (USAFE) command level.* The three items you need for the 0-30 day claims plus a TLA extension request for each 10 day period of extension. See admin department for a template of the request. If you think you will need to make this request to get more time for house hunting, start immediately after your first 20 days are up so you have it ready to submit on time.

60-90 Days in TLA

- 1) Going beyond 60 days in TLA will require a waiver signed by at the US Air Forces Europe (USAFE) command level. This is not to say it is impossible, but there would have to be major extenuating circumstances completely out of your control.
- 2) If you find yourself in this situation, one option is to attempt to negotiate a short term lease where you are staying at your OHA rate. However, this is very difficult to do.

- b. **Per Diem.** Each day you are living in a temporary living accommodation you are entitled to per diem. The rate is based on whether you have dependents and if your accommodations have cooking facilities.
- c. **Overseas Housing Allowance (OHA).** After you finalize your tenancy agreement for your permanent residence, you will go to the Housing Office to fill out and submit a DD FORM 2367 to start your OHA. OHA is not like BAH where you receive a fixed amount each month and get to keep the difference if your rent is less than your BAH rate. OHA has a maximum amount based on rank

and only pays for what's in your lease. Any funds under your maximum allowance that are not used will be forfeit.

- d. **Move-In Housing Allowance (MIHA).** MIHA is a one-time payment made after you submit a DD FORM 2556 MIHA Claim Form. the housing office will provide the necessary paperwork for these funds for purchases like coffee maker, toaster and parking permits that may be required to accept delivery of your HHG's and loaner items. You do not require a receipt for this payment and will paid in your first OHA payment.
- e. **Utility/Recurring Maintenance Stipend.** Since utilities are so expensive in the London area, you will receive a monthly utility stipend.
- f. **Cost of Living Allowances (COLA).** The London area is one of the most expensive areas in the world to live. As such, you will receive a monthly COLA supplement to help offset the costs.
- g. **Advance Pay.** To help defray the initial costs of moving to the UK (primarily cost of rental deposits which average about \$7,000) you can take a 12 month pay advance with no interest. Generally the way it works is you fill out the paperwork to take a specified advance which you will then pay back in equal payments over the course of a year. If you are interested in exercising this option get the details from the Northwood US Element Admin (contact information found in **Annex C**).
- h. **Current Rates Allowances and Entitlements.** Go to <http://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/oha.cfm> to get the latest rates for per diem, OHA, MIHA, utility stipends, and COLA.

7. House Hunting. House hunting will take time. Pay close attention to the Housing Office brief to what is expected of you when searching for a home. Don't let anyone pressure you into taking a home you are not happy with. The UK standard of home is not the same as in the US so manage your expectations and keep an open mind. Work closely with your sponsor on this as it is one of the most important decisions you make during your PCS.

- a. **Agents.** Each house can be represented exclusively by a single agent so you will likely interact with several agents while house hunting. As you search for houses give the agent all the details of the type of home you are looking so they can show you all the listings that meet your requirements all at once. All agents are very willing to meet you somewhere to give you a ride to view homes. Most cars will only carry four passengers.
- b. **On-line Research.** Go to [any of the web sites listed below](#) to start your home search prior to your PCS. Nearly every home on the UK market is listed here as it is the most popular real estate website in the UK. Talk with your sponsor about homes you are interested in so they can give you information about the area. Prior to arriving, you must have at least a list of areas you want to concentrate your search for a home based on considerations provided in part d below.

www.primelocation.com

www.rightmove.co.uk

www.zoopla.co.uk

Local Agents to Blenheim Crescent who are aware of US Military requirements

Shirley.wells@robsonsworld.com - Manager at Robsons - Shirley Wells

tom@robertcooperandco.com - Senior Lettings Consultant - Tom Davies

- c. **Expectations.** UK homes are different from US homes. They tend to be smaller and many are designed to have an old English feel to them. Many are quite old as well so you really need to pay attention to things like water stains on the ceiling which might indicate a leaking radiator or thin

windows and a lack of insulation that will drive up your energy costs. This is not to say you won't find a nice place to live, you just have to keep an open mind. After seeing a few homes, make a list of priorities and requirements you want in a home and provide them to your agents. This will help them find the right home for you.

- d. **Things to Consider.** It's up to you to decide what the right home is for you. Some are looking for an English cottage, some a flat in a swanky part of downtown London, and others are looking for a home that is as close to what they are accustomed to in the US as possible. The following is a list of things you might consider in finding the right home for you:
- 1) **Crime Rate.** Go to <http://www.police.uk/> and type in the post code of a home you are interested in. What will come up is a comprehensive view of crime statistics as well as contact information for the actual patrolmen who work the area. You can call them if you like to get more information, but be careful as they tend to take pride in their areas and you may or may not get an accurate account of crime.
 - 2) **Distance to Work and Schools.** Talk to your sponsor about travel times to work and schools. If you decide you will take public transportation to work, you will want to pick a home that is near a tube station. As you are looking for a home you will also be trying to get your children into school. As you get closer to getting a final plan for school, you will want to start taking transportation to school into account when picking a home. This is particularly true if you have kids who will be going to different schools.
 - 3) **Energy Ratings.** Make sure you tell each real estate agent you want to see the energy rating of each home you see. UK law requires this information be provided to you. Remember most homes are older and may have poor energy ratings. However, there are homes that have been upgraded with double or even triple pane windows and re-insulated to improve the energy rating to make the home more attractive to renters. Along with energy, keep in mind UK homes are heated with radiators vice central air. So while big rooms with high vaulted ceilings may look nice, they are harder to keep warm.
 - 4) **Property Management.** Typically it is better to have a home where the real estate office acts as property manager vice the landlord. Generally repairs or other things you need get done faster and you get more professional service.
 - 5) **General Condition.** Like any home, you want to pay close attention to the condition of the home overall. Avoid a home that needs repairs with the promise of the landlord to get it done. In your offer for any home, you can include demands such as curtains, flooring repairs, garden repairs, even a backyard fence if there isn't one. Nothing is off the table and the worst that can happen is the landlord will say no. It is not uncommon for such demands to be made though so don't be afraid to make them.
 - 6) **House Hunting in Advance.** Unless you really want to, there is no need to travel to Northwood in advance of your PCS to start looking at houses. Remember, the command fully understands and supports you in giving you the time you need to find a suitable home for you and your family. You'll have the time you need once you get here. You just need to show up with an idea of where you want to look.
 - 7) **Notes.** Bring something to take notes as you will likely view a lot of houses and interact with several agents. Make sure you get the full address of every property you see and inquire on the phone about as you will need this information to fill out your TLA forms.

8. Negotiating a House You Like. Once you find a house you like start negotiating. Do not make offers on more than one property at a time as this is unethical and not well received by agents and landlords.

- a. **Price.** Homes are seldom advertised at the minimum price the landlord would be willing to accept – there is usually some degree of negotiation expected.
- b. **Negotiation Tips.** Even though we share a common language with the British, the UK is still a foreign culture and they do things differently. Keep the following in mind when negotiating a property you are interested in:
 - 1) Be courteous and polite
 - 2) Never get hostile or aggressive
 - 3) Don't be tempted to hurry the deal by shortcutting vital steps
 - 4) Know what you can afford and your criteria before starting the negotiation process
 - 5) Pitch your opening bid below what you want to actually pay
 - 6) Always ask for more than you want
 - 7) Other people may be interested in the same property.
 - 8) If a property has been on the market for a while, the landlord may accept a reduced offer
 - 9) Plan your negotiation before you go to the estate agent's office
 - 10) If in doubt or you need help, ask your sponsor or the Housing Office

9. The Inventory. Prior to taking residency in a rental property, an independent home inspector is scheduled to conduct a thorough walkthrough of the property to document the condition of the home. This walkthrough is called an "inventory" and it is mandatory. Every nick, ding, or scratch in the home should go in the report generated by the inspector to which you and the landlord get a copy. This is to protect you from having to pay repair costs to damages you did not cause and safe guards your deposit. Upon receipt you must check this report and any amendments must be noted on the relevant page [would also suggest you take photographs] forward back to the agent/landlord who should update the report. A similar inspection is always conducted during check-out. Make certain you negotiate to cover the check-in inventory as this is reimbursable in your MIHA claim where move out inventory is not. The landlord should cover the check-out inventory. Typically the real estate agent arranges this inspection.

9. Tenancy Agreement. Same as a rental agreement in the US and you must have one before agreeing to rent a property. Once you've verbally negotiated terms for a rental property, ask the agent for a draft of the full tenancy agreement. Review it once yourself then email it to your Housing Office Counselor for review along with any questions you might have. Normally it will take no more than four days to get the proposed tenancy agreement back to you with a list of remarks or questions you will need to address with the real estate agent. This is just a review and you don't need any authorization to proceed with a contract to rent. However, you should heed the advice of the Housing Office Counselor as it is their job to act in your best interest.

- a. **A Word on the Role of Your Real Estate Agent.** For the most part, real estate agents in the area are all very professional and fair to both tenants and landlords. However, you must always bear in mind even though the agent is helping you, they work for the landlord whose property they are paid to show and/or maintain. As such, you should always be vigilant, aware, and get everything in writing. If it isn't on paper and in terms you understand, don't agree to it!
- b. **Some Items of Focus.** The following is a list of areas the Housing Officer will focus on in their review of any proposed tenancy agreement so you know what they are looking for:
 - 1) Appropriate 30 day advance notice military break clause that allows you to break the tenancy agreement when you get orders.
 - 2) Provisions for your security deposit are fair.
 - 3) Obligations for you and your landlord are precisely spelled out.
 - 4) No hidden charges.

- 5) You have landlord contact information in the event there is a dispute. This is required by UK law.
- 6) Provisions for extending the lease are well spelled out, as well as the nature of any rent increases. It is standard practice to allow the landlord to increase rent after two years and then again after three years based on the Index CPI. The maximum you should see is 5% and it should be clearly stated.

c. **Finalizing Your Agreement.** Once you and the landlord have come to an agreement on a final tenancy agreement, you and the landlord will sign the agreement. The Check-in report is normally carried out on the day of you moving in. **It is highly advisable you complete the inventory first and ensure there are no discrepancies or disputes there before signing the tenancy agreement.** Make sure the landlord's current address and good contact information is located somewhere in the agreement.

10. Deposits and Rent Payment. The standard deposit is six weeks rent. On average this amounts to around \$7,000. If you prefer, you can make arrangements with the admin department to get a pay advance which you can pay back interest free over a 12 month period. Deposits must be paid out of a GBP bank account. Rent payments are made by setting up a "standing payment order" with your GBP account bank where rent is automatically paid on the same calendar day of each month.

11. Rental Insurance. You will need to have renter's insurance. You can go through a local broker with the assistance of the Housing Officer. Most personnel go through their armed forces service oriented banks like USAA who provide much better rates. Of note, USAA has a London office.

12. Your Responsibilities as a Tenant. The cost of repairs on a home in the UK are steep. Make certain any damages to the property are reported immediately to the property manager (i.e. agent or landlord). Keep all documentation for any repairs made during your tenancy. It is not recommended to attempt repairs yourself unless you have explicit permission from the property manager to do so and you know what you are doing.

13. Security. Look for and negotiate (if possible) the following security features in your home:

- a. **Locks.** Deadbolt locks to all exterior doors and ground floor window locks.
- b. **Exterior Doors.** Have a peep hole in the front door?
- c. **Motion sensor lights.** Most would be home robbers say they are less likely to attempt to break into a home when they are under a light. If your landlord is not willing to provide motion sensor lights, you can go to a local hardware store and purchase effective battery operated motion lights that are easy to install. Be sure to get your landlord's permission to do so.
- d. **Alarm system.** You will likely be responsible for paying for monthly monitoring fees. Alternatively, you could elect to have the hardware system without the monitoring system. You get a discount on your home insurance either way.
- e. **Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Detectors.** Make sure on your walk through prior to signing tenancy agreement the house is equipped with smoke and CO detectors and that they test good. **Current regulations require a smoke alarm on each story of the property and a carbon monoxide detector in any room with a solid fuel appliance; to have the smoke alarms and the carbon monoxide detector checked and tested; to ensure they are fully operational at the start of the Tenancy; and to hold written records that the tests have been carried out.**
- f. **Fire Extinguishers.** Have one in the kitchen in case of fire.

- g. **Gas Powered Appliances.** Check all gas appliances have a CORGI (Council of Registered Gas Installers) safety certificate. This is annual certificate, under UK law, is the responsibility of the landlord to obtain and ensures your appliances were safely installed and safe to operate.

14. Loaner Furniture and Appliances. The Housing Office can provide you loaner furniture and appliances for up to 90 days if you have found a home but waiting for delivery of your household goods. They will arrange drop off and pick up at no charge to you. Certain appliances, such as refrigerators, may be kept for the duration of your tour if your rental property doesn't have them. You will also receive two transformers to keep for the duration of your tour. Families of five or more can receive an additional freezer and wardrobe closets for the duration of tour.

15. Your Council. Think of councils as counties or states in the US. Once you have identified a permanent residence, go to the council homepage to get information on how things like trash pickup and other public services work in your council. Each council runs differently and it is important to know what your responsibilities are when living in the council. The council homepage is also the place you go to make applications for your child dependents if they are attending public school. **School places will not be offered until you have a permanent address.**

16. Utilities. Your landlord or agent will help you get set up with your utilities (gas, electricity, and water). However, if there are any issues or you need help the Housing Office can assist. Most utility companies collect payments either quarterly or monthly and can be done via direct debit. You **MUST** pay all your utility bills with a GBP (i.e Sterling) bank account. This is why it is so important to make setting up a GBP account a priority when you arrive.

- a. **Meters.** All properties have meters for measuring utilities, you are required to furnish the utility company with a reading on a monthly – quarterly basis to avoid an estimated bill.
- b. **Gas and Electricity.** It is generally cheaper to combine your gas and electricity getting them from the same provider.

17. Trash Management. How your trash is managed depends on which council you live in. Hertfordshire Council has a robust recycle program so you will get five different trash bins which you must sort or face a fine. Hillingdon Council on the other hand has a trash program more like what you are probably accustomed to in the US. You must call the council to arrange delivery of your trash bins by going to your respective council webpage.

- c. **Recycling.** Highly encouraged in the UK and in some councils mandatory. **Hillingdon council recycle bags can be replenished via the local library or go to the webpage and request**

18. Cable, Phone, and Internet. Service providers are notorious for taking a long time to get new customers connected. Research the services available in your area and chose the provider that is right for you. All the providers work well, but remember there is a lot of rain in the UK so a dish system might not be the best way to go unless you are willing to accept the chance of storm outages.

19. Council Tax. US service personnel **DO NOT** pay this tax nor does the landlord when you occupy their property. **Within 4 – 8 weeks of moving in you should receive the council tax bill, please scan over to the housing office and they will provide you with a letter to confirm you are exempt.** You will be registered under the category of visiting forces exemption. If you experience any issues, please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil.

20. Property Maintenance and Repairs. If there is any damage to your property or anything that needs to be repaired let your property manager know about it in writing immediately. Do not attempt to fix things yourself unless you have the written consent of the landlord to do so and you know what you are doing. In

fact, do not make any changes to the rental property at all without the written consent of the landlord. It is important that you follow up all telephone calls with an email to document any maintenance/repairs as this can be used if required in any deposit disputes. Make sure to keep documentation of all repairs. The landlord is responsible for timely repairs. There should be a statement in the tenancy agreement defining an acceptable amount of time to complete repairs. Remember, documentation protects your deposit.

21. Landlord Disputes. If you have any issues with your property manager, landlord, or property do not hesitate to contact the Housing Office and/or legal office.

22. Preparing for Departure. Once you receive orders to PCS out of Northwood, make an appointment with the Housing Office to go over the necessary steps you'll have to follow with regard to your rented property and utilities, and any loaner items required or due to be collected.

- a. **Written Notice.** Ensure your landlord receives this no later than 30 days prior to your departure in accordance with the standard military break clause. Deliver by a method you can confirm that date your landlord received your notice. The Housing Office has a template you can use.
- b. **Check Out Inventory.** Use your copy of the check in inventory to make any notes about what is different about the house. Fair wear and tear is acceptable and should not result in any withholdings from your deposit. Your property manager or landlord should schedule and pay for an agent to conduct the check out inventory. Make sure you get a copy of the report. The housing office can assist with any deposit disputes on your behalf, normally an email to the agent/landlord advising they can deal with the housing office is usually sufficient.
- c. **Pre Check-out Inspection.** The housing office offers a pre check-out inspection in conjunction with the Legal office, this is dependent on availability holidays etc.,
- d. **Utilities.** Your responsibility to terminate utility responsibilities.
- e. **Loaner Items.** If you have any items on loan from the Housing Office, schedule pickup of the items to be returned. A minimum of 4 days advance notice is required to coordinate pickup.
- f. **Disputes.** If there are any disputes between you and the landlord, contact the Housing Office for assistance.
- g. **Outbound PCS TLA.** You are entitled to 10 days TLA and per diem.

SECTION 5 – EDUCATION AND SCHOOLS

1. General. If you are coming to the UK with children, you will find the process of getting your children placed in a school can be difficult. There are no DoD schools in the area so you will either place your child in a British public school, British private school, or one of the American international schools. You will absolutely want to have a discussion with your sponsor regarding this topic early in the PCS process as it will be the only way for you to fully understand the process.

2. Resources. The DoD recognizes the value and importance of ensuring dependent children have access to a school which will ensure their continued academic development while abroad. As such, there is a robust support network available to assist you.

- a. **Northwood School Liaison Officer (SLO).** The SLO is your local unit level representative responsible for assisting members with placing their dependent children in schools. Contact the SLO at Northwood.SLO@mc.nato.int.
- b. **Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) Europe.** Agency that regulates all DoD education programs and related issues for dependents in Europe. They have a great website with a lot of great information at <http://www.dodea.edu/> and <http://www.dodea.edu/nonDoD/Index.cfm>. Spend some time at the resources available.

3. Getting Started - Registration. The first thing you must do as soon as you get orders is register all your dependent children on the DoDEA Europe website. Once on the link, hover your cursor over *EUROPE* at the top of the screen and select *Eligibility and Enrollment*. Click *Online Pre-Registration* and fill out the forms.

- a. **School Records.** Prior to leaving, make sure you get full school records for all your dependent children as they will be required to enroll in most schools in the UK.
- b. **School Ages.** Any student below 6th grade will be required to seek a spot at a British public primary school. Students 6th grade and senior are automatically accepted for enrollment in either the American School in London or ACS Hillingdon. Minimum age to start school in the term they turn 5 so in theory a child that turns 5 in March can start school the preceding January. Note many primary schools offer introductory nursery age classes (equivalent to pre-school in the US).

4. Types of School. Consult the SLO and your sponsor in devising a plan to get your children enrolled in the school that is right for them (British Public Schools, Private day schools/International schools, or in some cases, a boarding school).

5. British Public Schools (also called *state schools*). The majority of children in the UK go to public schools. All public schools follow a standardized *National Curriculum*. For an overview of how public schools are run and the *National Curriculum* go to <http://www.education.gov.uk/>.

- a. **Quality of Education.** Generally, the quality of education is good and in some cases the curriculum is more advanced than what is taught at the same age in the US. Public schools are rated by what is called the Ofsted report. This report evaluates every public school in the UK for things like student achievement, leadership, teacher effectiveness, and overall effectiveness. When looking for a public school, you are only required to consider those with an Ofsted rating of 1, 2, or 3 for overall effectiveness. Ofsted reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

- 1) Non-DoDDS School Listing. Go to the Non-DoDDS website to get a full listing of schools in the area which meet enrollment requirements. Link <http://www.dodea.edu/nonDoD/eligibility.cfm>.

- 2) **A Word of Caution on Ofsted Scores.** Not everyone in the UK education system is a fan of the Ofsted reporting system. Parents who have been on tours of schools rated Ofsted 2 have been shocked by dirty classrooms where teachers have no control over their students. Even British educators will tell you there is a tremendous amount of variability between inspectors so the only scores with high confidence are those rated Ofsted 1. You need to tour schools you think you are interested in to see for yourself.
- b. **Extracurricular Activities.** British schools typically have outstanding extracurricular activities available to their students. Things like French language classes for children as young as 6 to advanced violin for 9 year olds. Sports are usually available as well. However, you need to evaluate each school on its own as programs vary from campus to campus.
- c. **Enrollment Procedures.** Registering your child for public school in the UK is very different from the US. All schools fall under a council which is like a county in the US. You will register your top three choices for schools with the council vice directly to the schools themselves. The council will then check for availability then offer you a placement offer usually within 10 days. Depending on availability, your offer may not include any of the schools you listed as your top three. Waiting lists, especially for good schools, are long. There are parents who have been on waiting lists for years to get a spot for their child.
- 1) **Enrollment and Residency.** Rules for when you can register your child for a public school spot vary slightly between councils. Generally speaking, a council will not accept a registration form until you are physically in the UK. Your child's stamped passport will be required for proof, so you will need to be prepared to register your children as soon as you arrive in the UK. However, even after you've registered your child, you won't get an offer until you have a tenancy agreement proving you live in the council. The exception to this rule is schools in Middlesex. If there are schools with open places in Middlesex you can use the command address as your resident address. However, councils are not keen to do this so even this may or may not work. The other problem with doing this is if you do get an offer from a school in Middlesex, you are now committed to searching for homes in that area alone and as you will find homes are limited as well.
- 2) **Siblings.** Siblings are not guaranteed enrollment in the same school. It is not uncommon for siblings to go to different schools. That said, councils are sensitive to the issues that arise from such an arrangement and will make every effort to get siblings in the same school although it can take time.
- d. **Transport.** Generally none available.
- e. **More Information.** Go to the council homepage where the school is located to get more information on enrollment and school policies. If the homepage doesn't have a listing of school availability you can call the council admissions office and they can give the list over the phone. They will not categorize the schools by Ofsted score or even give you a rundown of school reputation as they are supposed to remain unbiased. You will have to take the list of available schools, plot them on a map, and compare Ofsted scores. The admissions officers are quite nice and there to help.

6. British Private Schools. There are many British private schools (also called independent schools) in the area and all around the London area. These schools are top notch and provide the highest standards of education and facilities. There is no rating system like Ofsted reports for these schools. The SLO can help you find information about these schools.

- a. **Quality of Education.** Outstanding to the point your child will struggle at first. Most schools require testing as part of admission not just as a consideration for acceptance but as a way to baseline the student so the school can tailor to the student's individual needs.

- b. **Extracurricular Activities.** Typically of the same high quality as academics. Extensive after school clubs even for younger children.
- c. **Enrollment Procedures.** There is no Non-DoDDS funding policy waiver for private schools. The sponsor may select a private or public school--as long as their DSSR funding cap will support that choice.
- d. **Transport.** Depends on school. If available the expense is reimbursable.
- e. **More Information.** Go to <http://ukindependentschoolsdirectory.co.uk/listing/rgs-worcester/> to get a listing of private schools by area. This list is not comprehensive so get help from the SLO and your sponsor to find a school.

7. Private International Schools. The three private international type schools are American School London (ASL), The American School in London (TASIS), and ACS Hillingdon. All three schools offer American style curriculums and purposefully prepare their students for American college and universities. ASL is in downtown London and is where many of London's elite send their children to school. It has a very demanding curriculum and an enormous range of extracurricular activities. ACS Hillingdon and TASIS are very similar although they don't have the same high profile "clientele". Most, if not all, families with children 6th grade and older or children unable to find public school spots go to ACS Hillingdon.

- a. **Quality of Education.** Outstanding.
- b. **Extracurricular Activities.** Superb. Call both schools to get more insight to specific programs and team/club spots.
- c. **Enrollment Procedures.** Enrollment into the NDSP is not automatic. The NDSP serves students in the US equivalent grade level of kindergarten through grade 12. The British system identifies those grade levels as grade 1 through grade 13. Every sponsor must apply for the NDSP. Northern Hemisphere (School starts Aug/Sep) Age requirements: Students entering kindergarten must be at least five years old by 31 December of the enrolling year. If a student turns five years old AFTER 1 September but BEFORE 31 December, the family must provide a memorandum from the school that documents that a child has been offered a place in a US equivalent kindergarten grade level. Southern Hemisphere (School starts Jan/Feb/Mar) a student must be at least FOUR YEARS, EIGHT MONTHS old by the start of the school year. The NDSP does not provide exceptions to the policy waiving the age restrictions. The best resource for information about the NDSP, and how to register, go to <http://www.dodea.edu/ndsp>.
- d. **Transport.** Bus transportation is available over a broad area.
- e. **More Information.** Go to the following websites to get more information:
 - 1) American School in London – www.asl.org
 - 2) The American School in London – www.england.tasis.com
 - 3) ACS Hillingdon – www.acs-schools.com/acs-hillingdon.aspx

IMPORTANT: Drivers here are not required to stop behind a school bus, but are required to proceed with caution. It is essential children are aware of the dangers of crossing the road when getting off a school bus.

8. How the Process Works. Upon receipt of assignment orders to an overseas location where there is no DoDEA school, contact the [NDSP Liaison](#) at your gaining command/new location. The NDSP Liaison will provide information on available schooling options at that location. The NDSP Liaison will provide you with a list of Non-DoD Schools listing and a step-by-step registration checklist. You are allowed reimbursement

for one application fee at a private school in case you are unable to find a place for your child at a public school. Deposits, however, are NOT reimbursable.

9. School Year. All schools generally run the same three term concept with holidays in between. The school year starts at the beginning of September and is divided into three “terms” with holidays (vacations) of two weeks at Christmas and Easter and a six-week holiday in the summer. Each term is sub-divided into two “half-terms” by a week’s vacation.

10. Military/Dependent Secondary Education. There are many opportunities to get advanced distance learning degrees from US university program. If you are interested in getting more information for you or a dependent, contact education counselors at:

RAF Croughton Education Service Center
POC: DSN 314-236-8620 / UK COMM 01280-708-620
RAF Lakenheath or RAF Mildenhall Education Service Center
POC: DSN 314-238-2109/4173 / UK COMM 01638-54-4173/2109

11. UK Universities. Additionally, you can enroll in any of the UK university programs. Members have succeeded in earning MBA degrees from the London School of Business which was ranked the top business school in the world in 2012.

SECTION 6 - VEHICLES

1. General. One of the first things you will need to decide right away is whether you intend to ship your vehicles, store them, or sell them. Some considerations which may help you decide (talk it over with your sponsor before deciding):

- a. **Covered Costs.** If you are accompanied with dependents, you are allowed to import or purchase two vehicles without having to pay customs fees (one if you are unaccompanied). This includes cars, motorcycles, and mopeds. However, only one vehicle may be shipped at government expense. If you bring more than your concession you will be required to pay up to 25% of the vehicles value at customs.
 - 1) **Shipping Motorcycles and Mopeds.** If shipped in household goods, motorcycles and mopeds must be clearly identified on the DD FORM 1434 and packed in separate containers so they are easy to locate by UK customs when they arrive.
 - 2) **Helmets.** Helmets are required in the UK. However, DOT, ANSI, and Snell helmets are not authorized. You will have to purchase an Economic Commission of Europe (ECE) 22.05 or British Standards (BS) 6658 (categorized as Type A, blue label or type B, green label) type helmet before you can ride your motorcycle or moped.

IMPORTANT: As a DoD member you are required to complete the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) course to ride. Renewals in the UK are done at RAF Feltwell (approximately 2 hours north). If your certificate is expired you won't be able to ride on the base to take the course. MSF certifications are good for three years. Consider renewing just prior to your PCS.

- b. **Size of Your Vehicle.** Roads in the UK are generally very narrow and shoulders are non-existent. Parking lots are very small. If you bring anything larger than a Toyota Highlander you will have difficulty parking and you can expect to receive cosmetic damage in the form of dents, scrapes, and scratches.
- c. **Right Hand Steering in a Left Hand Environment.** They drive on the left side of the road and the driver's side is located on the right of the car (opposite the US). Some people find bringing their vehicle makes it easier to learn to drive on the left side of the road because it keeps one variable consistent. Others think buying right hand steering cars here makes it easier because it is more intuitive to have the driver sitting nearest the side opposing traffic is approaching. It can be very difficult to pass in a left hand driver vehicle since you can't lean and look around the vehicle in front of you for oncoming traffic. That said, there are very few opportunities to pass someone unless it is on the "motorway" (UK for highway) which has plenty of room.
- d. **Buying a Car in the UK.** Used cars in the UK are reasonable. You won't want to make an investment in a nice car while here because you'll have to sell it before leaving (it is very difficult to clear US Customs with a UK car). Automatic transmission vehicles are not common in the UK so if you have to get one it'll be harder to find a car. Not impossible, just harder. Go on-line to www.autotrader.co.uk to get an idea of prices for a car that will be suitable for you and your family. Use "HA6 1NZ" when the site asks for a post code which is in the vicinity of the base. When negotiating the price of a used car, be sure to take note of when the MOT is due. You don't want to buy a car with an MOT about to expire. See if the seller will cover or at least share the cost of the MOT renewal.
- e. **Maintenance on Your US Car.** If you decide to ship a car that is still under warranty, call the manufacturer to find out how the warranty will work overseas. For at least Ford and Toyota, the warranty is still good through the term of the warranty. However, since European offices and North American offices run their own programs, you can't get the warranty benefits at the time of service.

You pay it up front then submit paperwork to the manufacturer for reimbursement. Other manufacturers may void your warranty just by shipping it. Get all the details.

f. **Condition of Your Car.** You will have to pass the UK motor vehicle safety inspection to get your car registered. Before shipping your vehicle, make sure the following are in good order:

- 1) Rear license plate light is operable.
- 2) Cracks greater than 10mm in any window. Cost of repairing such items in the UK will be considerably higher than in the US and the shipper may not ship a vehicle with any window cracks. Recommend repairing any cracked windows prior to shipping.
- 3) No visible rust or significant body damage.
- 4) Suspension and steering components in good condition.
- 5) Tires tread must be no less than 2mm with no bubbles or cuts.
- 6) Brakes must be in good working order with no excess wear on brake pads.
- 7) All rear view and side view mirrors in good condition.

2. Insurance. You will need to contact your insurance company and get an international UK specific insurance card PRIOR to PCS. If your insurance company doesn't do international insurance, you can call USAA and they will get you set up in a day. An international insurance card is required to ship your vehicle, so make sure you get this done in plenty of time before your vehicle is scheduled to ship.

- a. **Transferring to UK Insurance.** Once you get your vehicle fully registered in the UK, you will need to contact your insurance company again and let them know your UK vehicle registration number. They will in turn report your covered vehicle to the DVLA. In the UK, insurance companies have to make this update – you can't do it.
- b. **Accidents.** UK law and requirements for accidents are the same as in the US. You are required to provide your name, contact details, and insurance information.
- c. **Breakdown Insurance.** If your insurance doesn't cover it in the UK, there are several companies that provide insurance in case of a breakdown while you are driving. Consider one of the following if you think you'll need it:
 - 1) Automobile Association (AA) www.theaa.com 0870 600 0371
 - 2) Royal Automobile Club (RAC) www.rac.co.uk 020-7930 2345

3. Initial Check-In. After your Housing Office check-in, plan to stop by the Vehicle Registration Office (VRO) at Blenheim Crescent to schedule your driving tests and file your *Request for Delivery of a Motor Vehicle Without Payment of Duty, Value Added Tax and Car Tax Form* (3AF Form 136/C&E 941).

Vehicle Registration Office (VRO) RAF Blenheim Crescent
+44 (0)1895-616-173/475 (DSN 314-235-6173/6475)

4. Transportation While You Wait for Your Vehicle. Section 2 has information on how to utilize the local public transportation system. Public transportation in the London area (including Northwood) is very convenient and easy to use. While you are waiting for your vehicle to arrive, be certain to keep all your transportation receipts. If your vehicle arrives late, you will be entitled to reimbursement for transportation costs. However, you must have receipts.

5. Delivery. You will get an email when your vehicle is ready for pickup. You can pick up your car at Brandon, Suffolk (a couple of miles from RAF Lakenheath) or request your vehicle to get delivered to RAF Croughton. Croughton is only an hour away where Lakenheath is just under two hours away. If you can call to schedule your Ministry of Transportation (MOT) inspection on the same day you intend to pick up

your vehicle, you can save some time and get through your entire vehicle processing in one day. When you pick up your vehicle, bring **originals**, not copies, of the following:

- a. Stateside or International Drivers License.
- b. Title or Registration Documents
- c. Military ID Card
- d. DD FORM 788 (Shipping Documents)
- e. Current UK Insurance Certificate - ORIGINAL

6. MOT Inspection. This is an annual requirement and necessary before you can drive your vehicle. The exception is the day you pick up your vehicle you are authorized to drive it from the pick-up point to a garage. Unless you bought your car in the UK, your car WILL need modifications so it conforms to UK auto standards. The best place to get these things done is at Ickenham Motor Company only 5 minutes from the VRO at Blenheim Crescent. They have a great deal of experience modifying American cars to conform to UK standards, can with an appointment get your car finished in 2-4 hours, and charge a reasonable fee. You can expect to pay about £80 for the inspection and another £100 to £200 for the required modifications to your vehicle.

Ickenham Motor Company
17-19 Long Lane
Ickenham, Middlesex UB10 8QU
+44 (0)1895-677-777

- a. **Required Modifications.** The only modifications your US vehicle will need involve the lights. Specifically:
 - 1) *Headlamps.* Adjust to dip left vice right like in US.
 - 2) *Front Parking Lights.* Must be white lights and separate from turn signals.
 - 3) *Front Turn Signals.* Must be amber in color.
 - 4) *Rear Turn Signals.* Must be amber in color and separate from the rear parking lights.
 - 5) *Rear Fog Lamps.* The MOT mechanic will rewire your rear lights to meet the fog lamp requirement which will be operated by a switch installed usually near the bottom of the steering wheel. Turning the light on will force the right rear tail light to illuminate when driving in foggy conditions during the day. There will be no exposed wiring so it is really transparent.
- b. **What if Your Vehicle Fails Inspection?** By taking your vehicle to Ickenham Motor Company you will get more help than you would normally receive with any issues your car may have. That said, the best way to avoid this situation is to make sure your vehicle is in good working order prior to shipping. If your vehicle fails MOT, contact the VRO at Blenheim Crescent who will guide you through the process of receiving a Statutory Off Road Notice (SORN) from the UK Department of Vehicle Licensing (DVLA). Failure of MOT means you can't drive your car legally until it is fixed.

7. VRO. After you get your vehicle back from the MOT, you have **72 hours** to bring the vehicle and following to VRO in order to submit registration forms for your vehicle (all forms must be **originals**):

- a. Pink Customs Clearance Form (C&E 941)
- b. Stateside Registration
- c. Ministry of Transport (MOT) Safety Test Certificate
- d. Current UK Insurance Certificate (cover notes issued by a local insurance company must be valid for a minimum of three (3) weeks from date of turning in to Vehicle Registration)

8. Registering a Vehicle Purchased in the UK. To register, bring the following documents to the VRO to register your vehicle:

- a. Valid British Insurance Certificate or Cover Note.
- b. Valid MOT Certificate (if the vehicle is more than three years old).
- c. Form V5 (British Registration Document). The seller should give this to you when you purchase the vehicle.

IMPORTANT: If the vehicle you are buying is a Customs Concession/Tax Free vehicle, both you and the seller will need to come into the Vehicle Registration Office to complete a Transfer Request Form (3AF Form 301).

9. While You Wait. It will take a few weeks to get your vehicle registration papers and nil tax disc back. While you are waiting, you are allowed to drive your vehicle(s) on US plates with your US driver's license. If you are stopped by the police for any reason, tell them you are a US service member and your registration paperwork is in Peterborough.

- a. **Legal to Drive.** Once you have your MOT certificate, all you need is your US driver's license, military ID card, international insurance card, copy of your orders, and your shipping papers to be legal to drive in the UK temporarily while you are waiting for your vehicle registration papers. However, you will want to get to the VRO as soon as you can to get that paperwork started as it can take up to 6 weeks to receive.
- b. **Learning to Drive.** Driving in the UK presents a significant challenge to some. The culmination of driving on the left side of the road, the introduction of "roundabouts", vastly different traffic signs, zebra crossings where the pedestrian has right of way, etc. can make learning to drive here a daunting task. You can go online and find any number of resources to help you learn UK traffic rules/laws. However, a couple of private lessons with a professional instructor is not a bad idea. You can go online and find a certified instructor if you are interested in doing this. The time while you are waiting for shipment of your vehicle is a great time to do a few lessons.
- c. **Driving on Air Force Bases.** You will need to set up an appointment at the VRO in Blenheim Crescent to take your mandatory USAFE UK driving test. Call: 0189-561-6469. Do this as soon as you can because you will need to pass the test to receive your USAFE driver's license. This license is required to start processing your reduced tariff UK Fast Fuel gas card and to get fuel on Air Force bases. You can take the test as many times as you need to pass. If you invest time in learning how to drive in the UK by using online resources prior to arriving to the UK you will do fine on this exam.

10. Parking. Rules for parking vary significantly. Take notice of what type of parking zone you are in.

- a. **Congestion Zone.** There are "congestion" areas and parking signs posted in certain places that state you must have a special parking pass to park. Don't park here unless you have one.
- b. **Metered Parking.** You must always pay for parking before you leave your vehicle. Find a local machine and place the required payment in for your parking pass. Ensure the pass is clearly displayed on the dash. The law in the UK is you must pay and properly display the pass or you get a ticket.
- c. **Malls and Parking Garages.** Malls work differently. At malls and most parking garages you take a ticket when you enter the parking garage then pay at a machine **inside the mall** before you depart. However, not all parking garages are like this. The one in Rickmansworth near the Waitrose grocery store and the tube station is a pay and display.

11. Annual Road Tax. Costs about £250 annually and is based on your engine size. Your first year is free and documented with a "nil" tax disc (called discs because they come in round papers). After the first year, you will receive a notice in the mail when it is time to renew your road tax. You pay the second year

at the VRO and subsequent years in accordance with the instructions that come with the renewal notice. You have the option of paying in lump sum, six, or twelve month increments. This tax is not reimbursable.

- a. **Changes to Address.** If you change addresses after your vehicle is registered, be sure to provide the VRO and the DVLA your new address so they can update their information. If you don't receive a renewal notice within two weeks of your tax disc expiring, contact the VRO at Blenheim Crescent for assistance.

12. Gas. Gas in the UK is about three times the average cost of gas in the US. To help with these costs, a reduced tariff fuel program has been implemented for US service personnel serving in the UK. After you pass your USAFE driving test, the VRO representative will issue you a USAFE "white license." Take the license, your military ID, driver's license, and Military STAR Credit Card to the shopette across the hall from the VRO and apply for the card. It takes about six weeks to get the card so be prepared to bear the cost of UK fuel during that time.

- a. **Getting Gas.** You can get gas at a reduced rate at any Air Force base. With the reduced tariff fuel card, you can get a reduced rate at any UK Fast Fuels station in the UK (typically Texaco and TESCO gas stations). This card does NOT work at any other gas station. It is highly recommended you go in with your card and inquire if they accept the Fast Fuels program. It is advised you do this every time, even if you've frequented the station before, as program participants have been known to change without notice. You can only register one vehicle in the program and only one name can go on the card. Whoever drives the vehicle most should keep the card. To find the nearest program participant near you go to <http://www.fastfuel.co.uk/>. The participating stations nearest Northwood are: Tesco Extra Watford WD17 2BD, Texaco Uxbridge UB10 0NZ.

13. After You Get Your Registration Forms. You will receive your UK vehicle registration along with your first year "nil" tax disc in the mail. Once you have these documents, do the following (in order):

- a. **License Plate.** Take your registration papers, proof of insurance, and driver's license to the nearest gas station to get license plates made. Plates are made on the spot and generally only take 20-30 minutes. Be sure to ask for the plates that have the blue "GB" on the left side of the plate. Having this type of plate allows you to travel through the European Union (EU).
- b. **Display Road Tax Disc.** Place your tax disc in the lower left hand corner of your windshield. Have the person making your plates help you with this.
- c. **After You're Home.** DO NOT keep your registration or insurance card papers in the car. If your vehicle is stolen, it would be easy for the thieves to change the ownership of the vehicle by completing the reverse side and forwarding to the DVLA. Keep your vehicle registration papers in a safe place in your home.

14. Oil Changes. You can make oil change appointments with the hobby shop, purchase oil, oil filters, and other maintenance items for your US vehicle at RAF Croughton and Lakenheath. Purchasing these items, particularly oil, can save you nearly \$50 each time you do an oil change. DO NOT take your car to a dealer for an oil change as they charge twice as much as an independent mechanic. Ask around for a recommended mechanic that lets you bring in your own oil and filter. There is also a mechanic at RAF Lakenheath you can use.

15. PCS Time Again. If you brought your US cars with you, you have three general options:

- a. **Take Vehicles With You.** VRO and transportation office will help you with this.

- b. **Sell the vehicle to U.S. personnel that are authorized to possess a concession vehicle.** You and the buyer report to VRO and complete a 3AF Form 301. This form transfers the ownership from you to the new buyer. Complete the section on the V5 to inform DVLA of a new owner.
- c. **Sell the vehicle to a local national.** To accomplish this you must report to VRO for completion of a 3AF Form 5, "Request for Payment of UK Customs and Excise Revenue on Privately Owned Vehicles". You must pay tax on the vehicle before selling to a local national. Talk to the VRO for guidance on selling to a local national.

16. Shipping UK specification vehicles. Imported motor vehicles are subject to U.S. safety standards, bumper standards, and air pollution control (emission) standards. Most vehicles manufactured abroad that conform with U.S. safety, bumper, and emission standards are exported expressly for sale in the United States; therefore, it is unlikely that a vehicle obtained abroad meets all relevant standards. Be skeptical of claims by a foreign dealer or other seller that a vehicle meets these standards or can readily be brought into compliance. Nonconforming vehicles entering the United States must be brought into compliance, exported, or destroyed. For more information on buying or shipping vehicles please use the following website:
http://www.foreignborn.com/visas_imm/entering_us/7importingyourcar.htm

17. Transfer of Residence (TOR) Scheme. There is a way to change the status of your US vehicle from imported tax free vehicle to a tax paid vehicle. To be eligible to put your vehicle on the scheme (scheme is just what they call a plan here, it isn't illegal to do this), you must have owned the vehicle for six months before the vehicle came into the UK and to be able to provide some documentation to prove this (Bill of Sale, Old Registration, Title, etc.) When you enter the scheme Road Tax will be payable. After one year on the scheme, the tax free vehicle is reclassified as a tax paid (VAT paid) vehicle. The scheme can save you a lot of money if you plan to sell your vehicle while you are in the UK, and if you have a vehicle that a British National would be interested in purchasing. Vehicles that British Nationals tend to be most interest in are: Vans, Sports Cars, Motorcycles and Trucks.

18. Note on Civilians. Civilians are required to have the "Civilian Component Stamp" (formerly referred to as the "Dual Component Stamp") in their passports if they wish to import a vehicle into the UK without paying the British Taxes. The Civilian Component Stamp is also required if they wish to purchase a customs concession/tax free vehicle, whether it is a used vehicle or brand new. Please contact Mr. Jason Lawrance at Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail .mil for further information.

**ANNEX A
USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION**

INSTRUCTIONS FOR DIALING

- Calling Within UK to UK Number: Dial “0” then full number (Example: 0774 876 9934)
- Long Distance – US to UK
 - Dial 011 44 then phone number
 - DO NOT dial “0” as you would when calling from within UK
- Long Distance – UK DSN
 - Dial 314 then DSN phone number
- Long Distance – UK to US
 - Dial 001 then phone number

IMPORTANT UK MEDICAL CONTACTS

| OFFICE / AGENCY | PHONE (+44) | OFFICE / AGENCY | PHONE (+44) |
|---|----------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|
| UK GENERAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL, FIRE, POLICE | 999 | TRICARE LONDON OFFICE | (0)1895-616328 (0)1895-616324 |
| EU GENERAL EMERGENCY MEDICAL, FIRE, POLICE | 112 | RAF LAKENHEATH MAIN MEDICAL LINE | (0)1638-528010 |
| NON-URGENT POLICE ASSISTANCE | 101 | RAF CROUGHTON MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS | (0)1280-708737 |
| NHS 24-HR MEDICAL ADVICE LINE | 111 | RAF CROUGHTON DENTAL APPOINTMENTS | (0)1280-708819 |
| American Red Cross (London Representative) | (0)1895-616173 (0)1895-616475 | TRICARE Metlife Dental Customer Support | 1-855-638-8372 |
| Navy-Marine Corps Relief Society | (0)1923-843790 | Northwood and Pinner Hospital | (0)1923-824782 |
| ISOS APPOINTMENTS LINE | (0)2087-628384 | Bishops Wood Hospital | (0)1895-826111 |
| ISOS 24-Hour HELP LINE | (0)2087-628133 | Watford General Hospital (A&E equipped) | (0)1923-244366 |

NORTHWOOD HEADQUARTERS CONTACTS

| NAME | POSITION | EMAIL | PHONE (+44) |
|---------------|---------------|--|-----------------|
| (AS ASSIGNED) | CMD SPONSOR | sponsorcoordinator@mc.nato.int | (0)1923-956-932 |
| (AS ASSIGNED) | US ELEMENT XO | mc.usaxo@mc.nato.int | |
| COUNSELLOR | HIVE REP | | (0)1923-957855 |

BLENHEIM CRESCENT CONTACTS

| NAME | POSITION | EMAIL | PHONE (+44) |
|----------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------|
| (AS ASSIGNED) | US SUPPORT ELEMENT REP | | (0)1895-616469 |
| CHISTINE FOUNTAIN | HOUSING OFFICE | Christine.fountain.1.gb@us.af.mil | (0)1895-616136 / 263 |
| JASON LAWRENCE | LEGAL REP | Jason.Lawrance2.LN@mail.mil | |
| (AS ASSIGNED) | POST OFFICE STAFF | BlenheimCrescentAPO@us.af.mil | (0)1895-616222 |
| JIM KELLY | AAFES SHOPETTE | kellyijia@aafes.com | (0)1895-616123 |

VEHICLE SHIPMENT CONTACTS

| NAME | POSITION | EMAIL | PHONE (+44) |
|--------------|------------------------------|--|----------------|
| LEE FAULKNER | CROUGHTON PASS AND ID | leza.faulkner.gb@us.af.mil | (0)1280-708611 |
| KAY GREEN | MILDENHALL POV PROCESSING | kayleigh.green@ialpov.us | (0)1638-562752 |

ANNEX B EXPENSES SUMMARY

NOTE: All costs are approximate and based on costs as of August 2013. Incidentals such as food while traveling are listed. Go to www.xe.com to get USD conversion when GBP (£) cost is listed.

IMMEDIATE COSTS UPON ARRIVAL

- Cell phone = £90 to £100 for two service plans (cost of phone extra)
- Transportation = Cost per day based on activity
 - £8 / day when commuting from downtown
 - £5 for 2 mile journey outside of London
 - £10 for 2 mile journey downtown London (could be even higher in heavy traffic)

AUTOMOTIVE COSTS

- MOT = £80 plus another £200 to £300 for required light modifications
- Road Tax = £250 annually on average (first year free)
- Gas = Avg. U.S. cost when purchased on a USAF base or at a UK Fast Fuels station
- Oil Change – Less than £100 if you bring your own oil to an independent mechanic. £200 plus if you do it at a dealership.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH MOVING TO PERMANENT RESIDENCE

- Home Utilities (depends on your consumption rate and energy efficiency of your home)
 - Water = £25 to £50 per month (depending on family size)
 - Gas = £120 to £150 per month
 - Electric = £120 to £150 per month
- Deposit = £4500 on average (6 weeks of rent upfront and first month's rent)

EDUCATION RELATED COSTS

- School uniforms = £80 on average per semester to as high as £250 at certain private schools
- Private school application fees = £100 to £200 (varies with school)

FACEBOOK

- The Northwood Wives Club are on Facebook! Contact your sponsor to get the details and join the group as you as you get orders.
- If you have any questions on vacations, where to buy something, or anything at all, the Northwood Wives Club Facebook page is a great place to get great insight.

SHOPPING

- Each village and town has an area that is referred to as “The High Street”. This is the area where most of the shops can be found, although shopping malls are becoming more numerous. Most shops close early (i.e. before 6:00 pm) and some still close in the afternoon on one day of the week. On Sunday the law allows stores to stay open for six hours. Most DIY (Do It Yourself) stores, garden centers, large computer stores and Supermarkets are open on Sunday until 4:00 pm. Prior to Christmas other shops also open on Sunday and extend some evening hours.
- Use www.yell.com and www.upmystreet.com to find what you need in your particular neighborhood.

USEFUL FACILITIES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS AT THE BASE

- Café 450: they serve coffees, hot snacks and meals, pastries; eat-in or take away
- Cash machine: opposite the Main Gate; locally in Northwood banks have cash machines as well.
- Gym: a weekly sports program is issued by the Physical Training office
- Nursery: 01923-957028
- Hairdresser: 01923-957027
- Hall porter Northwood Officers Mess (NOM): 01923-957000

FOOD SHOPPING

- There are several large grocery chains. They carry different product lines from one another and you will find things that you like at each of them. They are usually open until 8:00 pm a few nights a week and some chains have been extending their hours until 10:00 pm. Check your local supermarket hours as they vary from location to location. Smaller village supermarkets are great for picking up things like milk and bread on a daily basis, and prices on other items are also quite reasonable. Some large chains offer 24-hour shopping (except for Sundays).

SUPERMARKETS & GROCERY STORES

- Be sure to talk with you sponsor about where to shop. Depending on what you need, there are a variety of stores you can go to. Be sure to check store hours before going though. Stores close VERY early in the UK and many are not open on Sunday at all. This includes major department stores.
- Some of the more common places to shop include:

Tesco www.tesco.com (Pinner, Rickmansworth, Watford)

Sainsbury www.sainsbury.co.uk (Watford, Pinner)

Waitrose www.waitrose.com (Northwood, Rickmansworth)

Marks and Spencer Food www.marksandspencer.com (Pinner, Rickmansworth)

Morrison www.morrisons.co.uk (Eastcote)

ASDA www.asda.co.uk (Watford)

Costco www.costco.co.uk

ORGANIC FOOD/FARMERS MARKETS/FRUITS & VEGETABLES

- A great resource for finding all things organic is www.whyorganic.org , the Soil Association website.
- Look for farmers markets in villages around your area, and support their efforts by purchasing their delicious fresh offerings. Check the why organic website listed above, or www.yell.com to find them listed under 'farm shops' or 'farmers markets'. Your library is another source for finding locations.
- Another great option is to subscribe to a Veggie Box Scheme, which delivers fresh organic products and grocery items to your door. Two popular choices are www.riverford.co.uk and www.fieldfareorganics.com
- Most High Streets have a health store that stocks organic and health foods. Holland & Barrett and Revital are a few health food stores in the greater London area. Also, most big supermarkets now have extensive ranges of organic products. Waitrose and Sainsbury are especially good.

MAJOR DEPARTMENT STORES

- Most of the large shopping centers or malls have at least one anchor store that has several departments within it that may include clothing, accessories, furniture, house-wares, gifts, linens, etc. Popular department stores in England include Harrods, Fortnum and Mason, John Lewis, Marks and Spencer, House of Fraser, BHS, Selfridges and Debenhams.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

- Many of these are located in the shopping malls listed earlier, or in large shopping areas.
W.H. Smith www.whsmith.co.uk
Staples www.staples.co.uk
Costco www.costco.co.uk
Hobby craft www.hobbycraft.co.uk

TOY STORES

- The Entertainer www.theentertainer.com , Uxbridge Pavilions Shopping Centre 01895-271200
- Toys-R-Us www.toysrus.co.uk , Brent Cross Shopping Centre 020-8561 4681
- Early Learning Centre www.earlylearningcentre.co.uk , Chiltern Shopping Centre, High Wycombe 01494-462400 or Pavilions Shopping Centre in Uxbridge 01895-272762
- In London are Hamleys (Regent Street) and Harrods (Old Brompton Road).

BOOKSHOPS

- Local bookshops offer great service and advice, and will order any title available. Find them on your High Street and perhaps support them with your business.
- W.H. Smith has a more general range of books. Other large London bookstores include Waterstone's, Dillons, Border Books, Hatchards and Books etc. Also check www.yell.com
- Also www.amazon.co.uk is a wonderful website to order to your books online.

NEWSPAPERS/NEWSAGENTS

- Your local newsagent generally provides home delivery of a wide range of local, national and international periodicals. Local newspapers (e.g. The Northwood Gazette) are a great way to learn what the local issues are and what is happening in your own area. They are generally published weekly. At your local newsagent you will also find an info board with ads from babysitters, part-time cleaners, etc.
- A great provider of local news is the Optima magazine, when you live in the free delivery area, it will come to your post box.

INEXPENSIVE HOUSEHOLD GOODS / DIY (=DO IT YOURSELF)

- Many of the small appliances, household goods and hardware items needed as you make your home here can be found at DIY stores, town markets and other stores listed here.

Argos Catalogue Stores www.argos.co.uk
Home Base DIY Center www.homebase.co.uk
B&Q DIY Center www.diy.com
IKEA www.ikea.co.uk

FABRICS, CRAFTS AND SEWING NOTIONS

Trewins (John Lewis), Harlequin Centre, Watford 01923-244266
Hobby Craft, Watford 15

CHURCHES AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

- Go to www.findachurch.co.uk to research local churches.

LIBRARIES

- The local libraries carry a wealth of information about leisure activities in the area, general interest courses, local services, clubs, organizations, etc. Opening hours vary from one library to another. To apply for a library card, go to your local library with two items that have your name and address on them. You can also apply for cards in the nearby counties. Some libraries offer story times for young children.
- To find your local library, check out these sites: London area www.londonlibraries.org

AAFES SHOPPING

- RAF Lakenheath has a large commissary where you can get all the American food you might be missing. There is also an exchange although the one at RAF Mildenhall is larger and has a furniture store. RAF Croughton has a decent commissary that is not as large as RAF Lakenheath, but no exchange. RAF Blenheim Crescent has a small shopette as well as a liquor store.
- When you go the Blenheim Crescent for your Housing Office appointment, stop by the shopette to get your ration card for tobacco and spirit liquor.

SHOPPING CENTRES

- Go to the following websites to get more information on shopping centres and malls:
 - The Chimes, Uxbridge www.thechimes.uk.com
 - The Harlequin Centre, Watford www.the-harlequin-watford.co.uk
 - Westfield Shopping Centre, London www.westfield.com
 - Brent Cross Shopping Centre, Hendon www.brentcross.co.uk
 - Bluewater Mall, Greenhithe, Kent www.bluewater.co.uk (largest mall in Europe)
 - Lakeside Mall, North of the Dartford Tunnel www.lakeside.uk.com
 - Bicester Outlet Village, Bicester www.bicestervillage.com
 - Galleria Outlet Center, Hatfield www.factory-outlets.co.uk

RAF CROUGHTON AUTO HOBBY SHOP

- Do-it-yourself car engine repair with qualified mechanics who can help. Vehicle lift bays and tools available for rental. Book by calling +44 (0)1280-708-458. Hours are Tuesday-Wednesday 0930-1700, Thursday 1200-2000, Friday 0930-1630 and Saturday 0930-1600. Closed Sunday and Monday and all federal Holidays.

NAVY-MARINE CORPS RELIEF SOCIETY (NMCRS)

- Provides the following support:
 - Layettees for Newborns Emergency
 - Loans for Unexpected expenses:
 - Rent, Dental, Utilities, Funerals, Medical Bills, Car insurance

- Household set up, Travel emergencies, Basic living expenses,
 - Personal Needs when pay is delayed, essential vehicle repair
 - Education Assistance
 - Bridge Loans and Spouse Tuition Aid Program
- Contact local NMCRS Coordinator onboard Northwood Headquarters at +44 (0)1923-843-790.

NAVY FLEET AND FAMILY SUPPORT CENTER

- The Fleet and Family Support Center (FFSC) provides customer-focused programs and services to support Navy readiness. Provides services to strengthen personal and family competencies to meet the unique challenges of the military lifestyle. For more information on locations and services visit <https://www.nffsp.org/skins/nffsp/home.aspx>

WIC

- Women, Infants and Children (WIC), provides dietary advice and nutritious food to pregnant women, new mothers, infants and toddlers. Service members stationed overseas receive WIC-approved foods at military commissaries. POC Susan Williams at RAF Croughton. Contact by phone at +44 (0)1280-708-248 or DSN 314-236-8248.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER REFERRALS PROGRAM

- Children of US personnel assigned to Northwood Headquarters are now permitted in the Royal Air Force Digby Subsidy program as well as the approved local child care center. Please contact Captain Darin Gregg for enrollment procedures at +44 (0)1423-77-7730.

RESTAURANTS/PUBS

- The Northwood area contains many good choices for eating out. Particularly Hatch End has a wide selection of restaurants in a small village atmosphere. The Misty Moon pub in Northwood is a friendly place to have a pint and serves Thai food 6 days a week. Children are welcome prior to 9pm. Across from the Misty Moon is an excellent independent Italian restaurant – Northwood Piazza. Northwood Hills boasts an excellent Indian and Chinese restaurant as well as one of the best Kabob fast food restaurants in the area, Lezo Kabob. There are Subway's in both Pinner and Northwood Hills. Watford contains the widest selection of places though they tend to be scattered around town a bit and the traffic is much more congested than the Northwood area. A 45 minutes tube ride and you can be in the center of London where the choices are nearly limitless. The SOHO area contains some of the best pubs and nightclubs London has to offer and is just north of Piccadilly Circus.
- For restaurant reviews, see www.timeout.com/london/restaurants
- Pubs usually serve food, though don't take reservations. Pubs generally allow children, but not in the bar area. There are some that don't allow children at all. Many country pubs offer play structures for children in their gardens during summer months, with picnic tables for outdoor dining.

VALUE ADDED TAX (VAT) Relief Program

- VAT is like sales tax in the U.S. VAT is currently 20 percent and is included in the price of most consumer items and services. U.S. forces in the U.K. now have the opportunity to make VAT-free purchases, according to an agreement reached between Her Majesty's Customs and Excise office and the visiting forces. The program applies to purchases of £100 or more, but does not include cars, motorcycles, real estate, houses or utilities. For more information contact the RAF Croughton VAT Relief Office at DSN 314-236-8860 or 01280-708860. It is extremely cumbersome to use this service from Northwood and it is generally not used unless making a major purchase.

LOCAL OUTINGS & ENTERTAINMENT

- If you want to know what's on in terms of cinemas, musicals, theatre performances, exhibitions, etc. buy your local weekly newspaper, which have comprehensive listings of what's on in your area. If you want to find out what's happening in London there are a huge number of websites to check out. Use a search engine (for example: Google) that you like and type in what's On London and go from there. In addition, all book shops as well as libraries have good selections of local and national guidebooks. Good reference for outings with children include Children's London, Take the Kids London, Take the Kids England, and Let's Go with the Children - Beds. /Bucks. /Herts. Your county Yellow Pages has a section recommending days out in your region as well.
- For what's on in the West End visit www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk
- National Trust, English Heritage, and Historic Houses Association are charitable organizations, which own and maintain historic houses, gardens, and areas of natural beauty and significance. To obtain a directory of their properties and to become a member (members have free admission to properties) call or go on-line:
 - National Trust www.nationaltrust.org.uk
 - English Heritage www.english-heritage.org.uk
 - Historic Houses Association www.hha.org.uk
- Guidebooks are available through these organizations that give details of the properties, opening times and admission charges. Before you venture out too far, be sure to verify that the place you will be visiting will be open. Many attractions close from approximately November to March and have variable hours. Below we have attempted to list some information that may be of help and interest to you. Hiking or rambling is fabulous in the UK. Public footpaths criss-cross the entire country. It is a great way to spend a day. Check out www.ramblers.org.uk or www.countrywalking.co.uk for helpful information and suggested routes.

LOCAL THEATRES

- Palace Theatre, Clarendon Road, Watford 01923-225671
- Watersmeet Theatre, High Street, Rickmansworth 01923-771542
- Additional information on www.londontheater.co.uk

CINEMAS

- Movie tickets can be booked ahead, and you can reserve your seats with a credit or debit card at most of these cinemas. That way you can avoid having to queue up for popular films.
 - Odeon www.odeon.co.uk (Gerrards Cross, Uxbridge)
 - Vue Cinema www.myvue.com (Watford, Harrow)

TRIP PLANNING

- Following are a selection of websites which offer free maps and directions/routes to assist in planning trips:
 - www.multimap.co.uk
 - www.streetfinder.co.uk
 - www.theaa.com
 - www.viamichelin.com
 - www.rac.co.uk17

LEISURE CENTRES

- A leisure center is a Sports/Fitness centre. A variety of activities are offered at the leisure centers including such things as swimming (recreational and lessons), diving, gymnastics, toddler movement, exercise classes, racquet courts, children's free time activities, and facilities for birthday parties. Contact one of them for a schedule of activities as well as a list of facilities available at each one.

RAF BLENHEIM CRESCENT FITNESS CENTER

- Open 24-hours a day. Weights, cardio, sports leagues, etc

SPORTS, SWIMMING AND RECREATION

- High grove Swimming Pool, Eastcote Road, Ruislip 01895-632544
- Hayes Pool 020-85732785
- Sir James Altham Pool, Little Oxhey Lane, South Oxhey 020-84210211
- William Penn Leisure Centre, Shepherds Lane, Mill End, Rickmansworth 01923-771050

FITNESS CENTERS

- Northwood HQ just built a new fitness facility. It can be used 24/7 free of charge. A induction course is necessary for using it and they are given on a regular schedule. It contains treadmills, weights, a gym, fitness classes and cardio equipment.
- A few well know chains are listed here. To find others, see www.thefitmap.co.uk

Cannons Health Club www.cannons.co.uk

Esporta Health & Fitness www.esporta.com (Northwood former Riverside Club)

Dragons Health Clubs www.dragons.co.uk

LA Fitness

William Penn Leisure Center

David Lloyds

WATER SPORTS

- The Aquadrome, Frogmore Lane, Rickmansworth 01923-776611 The Ruislip Lido, Ruislip

RACQUET SPORTS/TENNIS

- David Lloyd Leisure, Bushey (Watford area) 01923-213760
- 2 courts at the base (booking at the sports centre)
- 4 courts at Batchworth Lane (you pay £ 20 a year for the key)
- Rickmansworth Lawn Tennis Club, 10 Meadow Way, Rickmansworth, 01923-774033

GOLF

- Members only: Moor Park Golf Club, Moor Park, Rickmansworth, 01923-773146
- These are public facilities - call ahead to book tee-off times.

Haste Hill Golf Course, The Drive (off Rickmansworth Road), Northwood, 01923-825224
Rickmansworth Public Golf Course, Moor Lane, Rickmansworth, clubhouse: 01923-773163
Ruislip Golf Course, Ickenham Road, Ruislip, 01895-638835
Northwood Golf Club, Rickmansworth Road, Northwood, 01923-821384
Pinner Hill Golf Club, South View Road, Pinner, 020-88660963

BOWLING

- To find your nearest Mega Bowl bowling centre go to www.tenpin.co.uk

OUTDOOR BIKING

- Paved paths are available within the following recreation area: Ruislip Lido, Reservoir Road, Ruislip
Beware: cycling is quite difficult and can be dangerous because of the hilly and small roads. You need to wear reflecting clothes and protection.

FOOTBALL (SOCCER)

- Watford Football Club, Vicarage Road, Watford, 01923-496000

- Rickmansworth Youth Football Club (u7s to u10s), Maple Cross JMI School, Denham Way, Maple Cross, tel: 07776 257886

FIELD HOCKEY

- Eastcote Hockey Club, Kings College Playing Fields, Kings College Road, Ruislip, 01895-634268
- Rickmansworth (Men) and Chess Valley (Ladies) Hockey Club, Park Road, Rickmansworth, 01923-44504018

TRAINS

- You can travel just about anywhere you want in Great Britain via the railways. Trains meet the Underground at some stations in London, e.g. Marylebone, Paddington or Waterloo station.
- Parking is available at rail/underground stations for a small cost per day. You may need coins for Pay & Display lots.

National Rail www.nationalrail.co.uk

Train line www.thetrainline.com

Chiltern Railways www.chilternrailways.co.uk

First Great Western Link www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk/link

EUROSTAR

A great way to see Europe is taking the EuroStar train. Easy and very quiet. www.eurostar.com

SOCIAL COURTESIES

Even though we share a common language, the UK is a foreign country with its own traditions and customs.

- Tippling.** It is not always customary to leave tips. Taxi drivers don't expect tips and some are offended if you offer them. At restaurants, they are not expected, but if you leave one you don't need to follow the 10 or 20% rule we follow in the US. If your service was exceptionally good leaving a 5% tip is appreciated. If you stay in a hotel and Valet Park or someone helps you with your bags, you should tip.
- Fanny.** Everyone has heard of the "fanny pack." DO NOT use the word *fanny* in the UK! Here it is reference to private elements of the female anatomy.
- Two Finger Gestures.** Holding up two fingers as in a reverse peace sign is the equivalent to giving someone "the bird" in the US.
- Cheers.** Saying "cheers" is the equivalent to saying "thank you" in the US. You'll hear it often.
- Pants.** Refers to undergarments. "Trousers" is the proper term to use when referring to what Americans normally call "pants"
- Toilet and Loo.** Both these terms are perfectly acceptable when asking for directions to the restroom. In fact, if you ask for a restroom you will often not be understood.
- Chips and Crisps.** Chips are French Fries and Crisps are potato chips. If you say fries you'll typically be understood, but if you say chips when you want potato chips don't be surprised when you receive fries.