

ARMED FORCES (FLEXIBLE WORKING) BILL [HL]

Bill to make provision for members of the regular forces to serve part-time or subject to geographic restrictions.

The purpose of the Bill is to:

- Support recruitment and retention in the Armed Forces by enabling flexible working arrangements for regular Service personnel.
- To amend the Armed Forces Act 2006, to enable forms of part-time service and limited geographic employment within the Regular Armed Forces.

The main benefits of the Bill would be:

- To attract and retain the best men and women for our Armed Forces, including by engaging them on a flexible basis.
- To ensure that the Services are more representative of the people that they serve and have more choice in the way they live and work, which will be crucial in retaining and attracting key skills and in diversifying the makeup of the Armed Forces.
- To provide our Service personnel with modern, flexible opportunities to serve their country in way that better suits their lifestyle aspirations and circumstances.

The main elements of the Bill are:

- To enable regulations to be made for regular service personnel to serve on a part-time basis and/or with geographical limits to their service. The proposed measures which will be necessary to implement the amendments made in this Bill will cover:
 - the right of an enlisted Regular to apply in writing to their Service for a period of part-time working and/or limited separation.
 - the consideration of such an application by a ‘competent Service authority’, the effect of an approval, the term of the authorisation and the ability of Defence to vary, suspend or terminate the arrangement in prescribed circumstances, e.g. national emergency or some form of manning crisis.
 - the ability of the Service to refuse applications on the grounds of some necessary restrictions to ensure that operational capability is maintained.
 - a right of appeal against a refused application to a ‘higher authority’ within Defence.