



OUTCAN Info Sheet 2020

Benson, UK

LOCATION

Country: UK (England)

Town: Benson, South Oxfordshire

- **Entry/Exit requirements:** Blue; Green Passport, NATO Travel orders (NTO). SOFA stamp. Visa.

Other info to Consider:

- Family (non-dependants) can come to visit for up to 6 months on a regular Blue passport, as part of the agreement with the UK (Commonwealth).
- As of April 2019, Canadian passports are accepted to be used to exit the UK airports, through E-gates. E-gates are not accessible if traveling with minors. Stamps are no longer required.
- RAF Benson, full ID checks, family has access.

POPULATION

Size: 5000

Ethnicity: Mostly British

Religion: Mainly Christians, and churches of all denominations can be found throughout the UK, such as Catholic, Protestant, Baptist and Methodist. The main other religions are Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Judaism and Buddhism.

LANGUAGE(S)

Official language: English

Prevalence of French or English speaking: French as a second language sometimes.

- Very limited restaurants and shops will have some staff that speaks French.

COST OF LIVING

Exchange rate to consider: Great British Pound (GBP)

QUALITY OF LIFE

Climate and potential for severe weather, natural disasters:

- Humid, temperate climate. Great deal of rain, wind and dampness.

Laws and Culture:

- Drinking age is 18, minors aged 16 or 17 may consume beer, wine or cider with a meal, accompanied by a parent
- People smoke and drink more here than in Canada, including teenagers & adults
- Although you should carry an international driving permit, you can drive with a valid Canadian licence.
- Traffic drives on the left.
- UK has strong gun laws – most firearms may have to be left in long-term storage.
- Speeding and drunk driving is dealt severely.
- Speeding is monitored via cameras (which are everywhere) and the slightest speeding (over 3 miles an hour) will ensure that you receive a £100 fine

Safety and Security:

- There is a threat of terrorism in Europe. Terrorists have carried out attacks in several European cities.
- In the United Kingdom, previous incidents have resulted in casualties. They include random violent incidents in public areas, such as knife and vehicle attacks as well as explosions.
- These incidents have occurred mainly in the London area but have also happened elsewhere.
- Further attacks in Europe are also likely.

Level of isolation:

- This is considered a remote posting to the UK.
- There is one Canadian family in this location.

HOUSING

- If moving on the economy with children, placement of good rating school is essential when finding a house as school enrolment are based on catchment areas.
- Houses have a lot of carpet
- Housing is more difficult to find if you have pets.
- Base housing is available.
- Base housing offers older houses which often have older plumbing and electrical. Members have mentioned issues with both and base maintenance services are irregular and poor.
- Housing on the economy is hard to find. Houses are average size to Canadian housing but rooms are much smaller, which may not always fit North American furniture, such as king size beds.
- Big gardens require a lot of maintenance as things grow 12 months a year

EMPLOYMENT**Are there employment opportunities for spouses? Yes.**

- Spouses may work on the economy and on the military bases as civilians (NIN required)
- There are very limited employment opportunities available through CFMWS so families should plan to be single income for the duration of the posting.

Op Tempo: The op tempo will vary greatly depending on position. TD is possible.

HEALTH CARE

Access: UK healthcare system is similar to Canadian standards (public waiting times, private fast).

- All posted to the UK are entitled to the National Health System (NHS) as nationals.
- 24-hour Accident and Emergency (A&E), 20 min drive in Oxford or Reading.
- Special consults take a very long time to get through the NHS.
- Private clinics are available and quicker in the area.
- The Canadian Medical Clinic in Geilenkirchen is responsible for the healthcare of all Canadian military members in Europe, and can be accessed.
- All bills associated with the care of dependents are the member's personal responsibility and are to be claimed through PSHCP.

Special needs:

- Resources and services are through school in association with family doctor recommendation.
- If a family member has special medical needs it is highly advised that they consult with MFS(E), and/or the Canadian Element to ensure that the required services are readily available in either English or French before accepting a posting.
- Diagnostic through schools can be a long process. Private clinics are available.

Consideration for pregnancy / birth:

- High quality health care in English. Limited to non-existent in French.
- Midwife service at home once the baby has arrived.
- Very proactive for postpartum mental welfare and support when breastfeeding.

Dental:

- Difficult to find an NHS dentist in the area.
- Private clinics are more accessible and offer the same quality of services as in Canada. You are required to pay up front, and you can then claim your expenses
- It is easy to access however; providers do not speak French.

SCHOOLING

- As per WG B decisions Sept 2018, the British curriculum is deemed non-compatible at the secondary level from grades 9 to 12 (Years 10 to 13). Students who are continuing from a British curriculum school into the secondary level, or who are able to graduate at post, may find an educational pathway within the British system. For a student to attend a British curriculum

school at the secondary level, a request must be submitted to WG B for approval on an individual basis. Contact your FSD Coordinator / CEM Guidance Counsellor (CAF members only) for clarification, where applicable.

- British elementary school on base.

Curriculum vs. Canadian curriculum:

- Curriculum varies depending on choice of school.
- None of them offers Canadian history or geography.
- The curriculum is more advanced in the United Kingdom.

Resources for special need children:

- Educators in school.
- Should it be determined that a child requires special needs due to developmental or mental health concerns while posted OUTCAN, this could pose a serious risk to the posting and the family may be considered for repatriation.

CHILDCARE

Things to Consider:

- There are many preschools and nurseries in the area.
- When children turn three years. old, they have access to 15 free hours (but this does not include snacks, lunches, etc.)

TRANSPORTATION

Things to Consider:

- Train service is available
- Car is recommended, two to prevent isolation if moving with a spouse.

RESOURCES AND AMENITIES

Is there a Military Family Services centre available in that location?

- No, under MFS(E) UK, located in CFSU(E) Det London in Ruislip.

Psychosocial / Mental Health Resources:

- Not at post, MFS(E) SW for dependants only, CAF SW/Mental Health Team for member and family are located in Geilenkirchen, Germany. Padre is located in the UK.

Communications (e.g. Quality of Internet connection):

- If getting internet, you have to pay for a single phone line whether you use the phone line or not.
- In the area, the cell phone service inside the homes can be very spotty; you will need to keep your cell phone on the window ledge.
- Cellphone connection and Internet are very poor on the base.
- Difficult to predict, slower and more dead spots around this location, better in bigger towns around.

ACTIVITIES

Access to sports or other leisure activities:

- On the economy only, very limited in French

Availability of playgrounds: Yes.

RESTRICTIONS TO CONSIDER

Are common law relationships recognized? Yes.

Are same sex couples recognized? Yes.

Medications that are illegal in the country:

- Cannabis is illegal.

Other Considerations:

- Banned dog breeds - American Pitbull Terrier, Dogo Argentino, Fila Brasileiro (Brazilian Mastiff), Tosa Inu
- Importation of pets is subject to rigorous controls although quarantine may no longer be necessary.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- **European Commission Country Reports (2019)**
https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2019-european-semester-country-reports_en

- **Canadian Travel Advisories**
<https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/advisories>
- **CIA World Factbooks (One Pagers from US)**
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pl.html>
- **Living Abroad (from Gov.UK)**
<https://www.gov.uk/topic/help-british-nationals-overseas/europe>
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**
<https://data.imf.org/?sk=4FFB52B2-3653-409A-B471-D47B46D904B55>

For more comprehensive information, please feel free to reach out to the resources below:

- **MFS(E) Social Worker :** chebat.myriam@cfmws.com or Myriam.Chebat@Forces.gc.ca
- **CAF Social Worker:** martin.laferrieresimard@forces.gc.ca
- **MFS(E) UK: + 44 (0) 1895 613 040, MFSE.UK@cfmws.com**
- **MFS(E) Regional Office: +49 (0) 2451 717 173, MFS.Europe@cfmws.com**