



## Supporting Children from Armed Forces Families



### Toolkit for Schools: July 2025

#### Context: Armed Forces children in Oxfordshire

Approximately 20% of Royal Air Force personnel are based in Oxfordshire.

Based on the January 2025 census, there were **2682** children and young people from a military background (Service children) on roll in maintained schools and academies within Oxfordshire entitled to the Service Pupil Premium (SPP). These were spread across **190 of our schools**. Since these numbers do not include Service children in pre-Reception classes or in post-16 education, the true number of Service children in the county is higher.

12 of these schools had over 20% of their cohort entitled to the SPP at this census. However, many Oxfordshire schools have very small number of Service pupils entitled to SPP, with 47 schools having just 1 eligible pupil on roll in January 2025.

This Toolkit is intended to support all Oxfordshire schools to access advice and support for their Service children so that they are well supported in overcoming Service-related challenges which might otherwise prevent them from thriving at school. It signposts school leaders to other sources of support

**SPP is paid directly to state schools, free schools and academies across England to support their Service children. SPP should be primarily used to provide pastoral support, and since it is public money, school leaders should have a clear spending strategy and governors / trustees should monitor spending for its impact.**

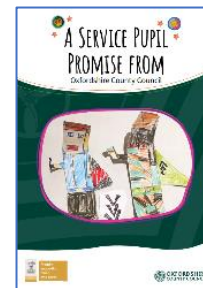
This guidance is targeted at school leaders, school staff, trust leaders, trust boards and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies, and non-maintained special schools in England. It will be reviewed before April 2026, and then annually. It provides non-statutory guidance from the Department for Education and the Ministry of Defence and has been produced to help state-funded schools and local authorities in England to understand and address the needs of Service pupils in schools. Whilst the guidance is non-statutory, it also includes **statutory information** on the **Armed Forces Covenant** and the **School Admissions Code**. The word should is used when something is non-statutory and the words must or required are used to indicate a statutory duty.

## Oxfordshire County Council school guidance

[Service Pupils | Schools \(oxfordshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk)

Information and guidance for schools with Service pupils.

Oxfordshire County Council's **Service Pupils Promise**  
[Service pupils promise.pdf](#)



Each school is encouraged to adapt and adopt this, promote it with staff and parents, and add a link to it on the school's website.

## Important recent research reports

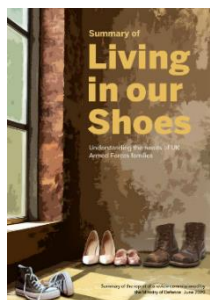


### **'Kin and Country: Growing up as an Armed Forces child'**

(Children's Commissioner, June 2018)

[KIN-AND-COUNTRY-Growing-up-as-an-Armed-Forces-child.pdf](#)

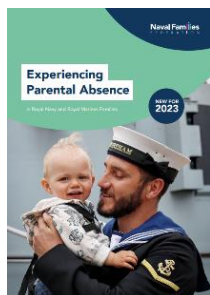
*'The majority of service children we spoke to were happy, resilient and proud that their parents were serving in the Armed Forces. However, it is clear that a number of changes should be made to help children growing up in service families with the unique challenges they face.'*



### **'Summary of Living in our Shoes, Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families.'** (Ministry of Defence, June 2020)

[Living in our shoes: understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families - GOV.UK](#)

In particular, the 31 recommendations in Chapter 4, 'Growing up in the Military'  
*'The impact of Service life on children and young people proved to be one of the most sensitive issues and one which has led to the largest number of recommendations for change. In this Summary, we refer briefly to all of the issues explored in the main report and list our recommendations.'*



### **NFF Parental Absence Resource (revised 2023)**

[6656-NFF-Parental-Absence-Guide-DI.pdf](#)

Being a parent and raising children is exciting and rewarding, but it can be tough at times. In response to feedback from families, the Naval Families Federation has produced a resource about the experience of parental absence. The purpose of the resource is to draw together some useful information about parental absence and separation and provide some strategies to help families thrive.

A range of other useful research can be accessed through the Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance: [SCiP Alliance Research | SCiP Alliance](#)

## General guidance for schools and military families



[Support services for military and defence personnel and their families - GOV.UK](#)

Support services for military and defence personnel and their families including: the Armed Forces Covenant, childcare, employment, finance, housing, pensions and compensation and welfare support.

### **MOD's Defence Children's Services (DCS)**

[Defence Children Services \(DCS\) - GOV.UK](#)

DCS has responsibility for the functions, in support of service families related to education and care, previously undertaken by Defence Children and Young People (DCYP). DCS is a Defence delivery organisation, subordinated under Army Regional Command. Its function is to support Service children and their families with educational needs. It provides a single focus for all issues related to Service children and young people, providing high-quality education at 22 schools and settings in locations around the world. It also directly supports Service families, providing advice on a wide range of educational matters both overseas and in the UK, delivered by specialist education and advisory teams.

### **The Education Advisory Team, EAT (UK) - part of the MOD's Defence Children Services (DCS)**

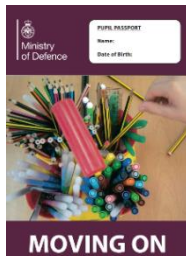
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EAT (UK) is a Tri-Service organisation which supports operational effectiveness through the provision of support to Service and eligible MOD civilian families trying to secure appropriate educational provision for their children in the UK. It is comprised of qualified teachers and experienced case advisors who have a deep understanding of both educational issues and the challenges of Service life.

The EAT(UK) Team can advise, guide and support families to make informed decisions in accessing high-quality educational experience for their children whilst in the UK, despite the challenges that Service life can present. Whilst it does **not** make decisions about a child / young person's education, EAT staff can advise families (and school staff) to allow them to make informed decisions.

See the following leaflet: [https://dcs.school/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EATUK\\_leaflet-Copy.pdf](https://dcs.school/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/EATUK_leaflet-Copy.pdf)  
or email [RC-DCS-HQ-OES@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RC-DCS-HQ-OES@mod.gov.uk)



### **Mod's Moving On pupil passport**

[Pupil Passport \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

and

### **A Guide for Service Families: UK Education Systems (2013)**

[A guide for service families: UK Education system](#)



### **Education Overseas for Service Children**

[Education overseas for service children - GOV.UK](#)

The Overseas Education and Supportability Team (OEST) provides professional information, advice and guidance for Service personal and eligible MOD civilians regarding the education of their children in overseas locations. OEST also provides educational advice and support for overseas commands and DCS schools and settings. This team coordinates the educational supportability assessment process for overseas postings, in respect of children with Special Educational Needs and those for whom parents have selected Elective Home Education.

You can contact the OEST by emailing [RC-DCS-HQ-OES@mod.gov.uk](mailto:RC-DCS-HQ-OES@mod.gov.uk).



## Service Pupil Premium (SPP)



[Service Pupil Premium: what you need to know - GOV.UK](#)

Service personnel with children in state schools in England in reception to year 11 should notify schools of their children's service status to ensure they are recorded prior to the next autumn census (first Thursday in October) to qualify for SPP. The current amount paid to each school is £340 per child in Years R-11 (2024-2025 academic year). Eligible schools receive this funding so that they can offer **mainly pastoral support** during challenging times and to help mitigate the negative impact on Service children of family mobility or parental deployment.

### SPP Guidance materials



Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) – factsheet (2024)  
[sciss-factsheet-4-service-pupil-premium.pdf](#)

MoD (updated May 2025)

[Service Pupil Premium: examples of best practice - GOV.UK](#)

RAF Families Federation's online guidance

[Service Pupil Premium | SPP FAQs for RAF families < RAF Families Federation](#)



Army Families Federation's online guidance

<https://aff.org.uk/advice/education-childcare/service-pupil-premium>

Naval Families Federation's online guidance

[Education Support for Armed Forces Children](#)



Little Troopers' parents' information sheet  
(Only registered users can download this free product.)

[Parent Info Sheet - Service Pupil Premium explained - Little Troopers](#)

Royal British Legion's 'Supporting Service children in England' (2018) (Chapter 3)  
[680f52949de2dde32c2c7b4b\\_supporting\\_service\\_children\\_in\\_england\\_18.pdf](#)



## School Admissions for Service Children

[A Guide to School Admissions for Service Children in England](#)

Produced by Hampshire County Council in 2019 for *Forces Connect South-East*, this useful video provides still relevant background information – for both families and schools – on the school admission and appeals processes in England.

## Educational support from Other Organisations and Charities

### Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance

<https://www.scipalliance.org>



*'We bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and funders to build a stronger evidence-base, better policy, and enhanced support for Service children's education and progression, placing their voices at the heart of all we do.'*

The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children from military families. Hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), its vision is *Thriving lives for Service children*.

In a significant research development, the Alliance published its **Thriving Lives Toolkit**. Underpinned by rigorous research and thoroughly tested in schools, the Toolkit provides schools with a framework of 7 principles through which to reflect on their practice (**self-assessment**) and a 3-tier set of online CPD resources. The resources consist of:



1. An introductory animation.
2. A detailed resource introducing the evidence base, what schools can do to support their Service children and who can help.
3. School case studies.

The Toolkit has been enhanced in 2025 with a suite of 50 UK-wide case studies, exemplification materials to support school self-review, and a parents / pupils survey tool.











The Alliance's website also hosts a wealth of helpful reports / resources, including *A Guide to Teachers' Professional Development (2020)* which contains a comprehensive record of existing provision across the UK at the beginning of 2021. [Service-children-CPD-guide-2020-TF-group-report.pdf \(scipalliance.org\)](https://www.scipalliance.org/service-children-cpd-guide-2020-tf-group-report.pdf)



### Service Children in State Schools (SCISS)

<https://www.sciss.org.uk>

Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) is a voluntary affiliated network of state-maintained schools in England that have any number of Service children on roll. It is led by a National Executive Advisory Committee (NEAC) comprising of headteachers; representatives from the three Armed Forces Families Federations; independent advisers; and representatives from the Service Children Progression Alliance (SCiP), the DfE and the MOD. It aims to be **the voice of schools with Service children on their rolls**. The SCISS website includes a variety of short, helpful factsheets aimed at support school leaders, along with current research findings following stakeholder surveys. Schools are encouraged to sign up for occasional news and information updates:

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- NGA Information Sheet - School Governors and Service Children.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 1 - School Admissions
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- SCISS Factsheet 2- Transfer of records.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 3- Mobility .pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 4- Service Pupil Premium.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 5 - Deployment and Separation
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- SCISS Factsheet 6 - SEND -Moving into England and Overseas.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 7- SEND - moving within England -with EHCP.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet 8- Op Community - NHS referrals for Service Families.pdf
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- SCISS Factsheet-Month of the Military Child.pdf

[Join our Mailing List | Service Children in State Schools](#)



**Royal British Legion (RBL)**

[Education and support for children of service families](#) | [Campaigns](#) | [Royal British Legion](#)

The country's largest armed forces charity supports members of the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, veterans and their families. This area of its website covers:

- Guidance for currently serving and ex-service families with children and young people.
  - Community networks and charity support.
- Information for those who are caring for children and young people with SEND

The RBL's *Teaching Remembrance* resources are designed to help teachers to introduce specific themes into the classroom. Although it primarily covers the History and Citizenship curriculum, it can also be used to support literacy and aspects of PSHE and Religious Studies.

[www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/schools-and-learning/learning-pack](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/schools-and-learning/learning-pack)

**Never Such Innocence**

[www.neversuchinnocence.com](http://www.neversuchinnocence.com)

A charity that aims to give children and young people across the world a voice on conflict. The charity offers opportunities to reflect on conflict throughout history and today through poetry, art, speech and song. It provides free, online resources; runs an annual competition; and can provide workshops in schools with skilled practitioners. The charity's excellent *Voices of Armed Forces Children Programme* invites Army, Royal Navy and RAF, military connected children, 6-18 years old, to share what a life as a dandelion, a military child, means to them. [Voices of Armed Forces children — Never Such Innocence](#)

**Little Troopers**

<https://www.littletroopers.net>



As a charity, *Little Troopers* ensures that British Armed Forces children and their families have access to child-focused support, providing fundamental resources and initiatives. It provides schools with a wealth of materials to use with Service children, blogs, Schools Projects, guidance and an online shop.

**Reading Force**

<https://www.readingforce.org.uk>

This charity supports forces and ex-forces families with free reading materials. There is a helpful 5-minute video overview on its home page. *Reading Force's* shared reading initiative encourages families to read, talk, and scrapbook about a book, improving communication and enriching relationships with books and each other – one page at a time. It also runs competitions.

**Forces Children's Education – Scotland**

[Forces Children's Education \(forceschildrenseducation.org.uk\)](http://forceschildrenseducation.org.uk)

The Scottish Government, Local Authorities and schools work hard to ensure that moving to Scotland has a positive effect on the educational outcomes of children from Armed Forces families. This website, created by the Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), has been created to bring all their efforts together and put the resources that parents and the education professionals who support their children need, together in one place.



### Forces Children Scotland

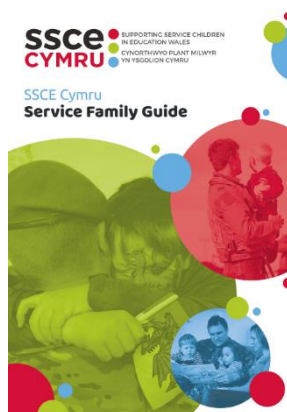
(the operating name of the Royal Caledonian Education Trust)

<https://forceschildrenscotland.org.uk>

As Scotland's oldest military charity, *Forces Children Scotland* helps children and young people from serving, reservist and veteran families across Scotland grow in confidence, develop new skills and gain valuable experiences by co-producing impactful projects and services to support mental health and wellbeing, education and learning and putting their unique experiences on the radar of civilian audiences. Its website has some excellent resources, such as its *Teen Talks* leaflet (2022) summarising Service pupil voice views and a *Teen Talks* poster [Publications – Forces Children Scotland](#).

### SSCE Cymru

<https://www.ssecymru.co.uk>



Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru is a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme, initially funded by the MOD's Education Support Fund and funded by Welsh Government since 2019. As well as collaborating directly with schools, SSCE Cymru has developed some fantastic guidance and digital resources for schools and families, hosted conferences and stakeholder days, and commissioned research to better understand the needs of Service children in education.

For example, in 2021, it published a comprehensive Service Family Guide. The aim of this resource is to provide information on education and living in Wales and the support that is available to schools, parents/carers and Service children. [Service Family Guide](#)

## Families Federations

### Army Families Federation <https://aff.org.uk>



The charity's website includes a comprehensive section on Education and Childcare, covering a range of aspects such as the MOD's Wraparound Childcare scheme (WAC).

### RAF Families Federation [www.raf-ff.org.uk](http://www.raf-ff.org.uk)



The charity's website includes a wide-ranging section on Education and Childcare: *'In this section you will find everything you need to know about Education and childcare for Service children; from early years and schools, including boarding schools, to Further and Higher Education, and even Adult Education.'*

### Naval Families Federation [www.nff.org.uk](http://www.nff.org.uk)



The charity's website includes a detailed education section (within its 'Advice tab'). A helpful guide for parents and adults supporting children and young people in times of parental absence is available at: [6656-NFF-Parental-Absence-Guide-DI.pdf](#)

## RAF Benevolent Fund

In 2021, the Charity published '*Growing Up in the RAF: the wellbeing of children and young people who have serving parents*'. The report gives a voice to children and young people who are growing up with one or both parents in the RAF. Its insights can:

- help parents, teachers and other professionals better understand the children and young people they are supporting, and
- help policymakers and service providers to develop better policies and services, to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

[2021 Growing up in the RAF report.pdf \(rafbf.org\)](https://rafbf.org/2021-Growing-up-in-the-RAF-report.pdf)



## Key sources of funding for schools and settings



**The Armed Forces Education Trust**

<https://armedforceseducation.org>

The Armed Forces Education Trust is a charity working for children and young adults whose education has been compromised or put at risk because of parents' past or current service in the Armed Forces. The Trust awards **individual grants** that help to make a difference to young lives, helping improve their educational opportunities or supporting special skills or talents. A useful, short video is available on its home page.

In 2025, the Trust opened a new round of **collective grants** for schools with Service children. This is likely to be an annual opportunity with schools, or clusters / LAs, able to apply directly to AFET.

[Collective Grants – Armed Forces Education Trust](#)



[Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)

This supports the Armed Forces Covenant through a variety of different funds, some of which can be accessed by schools.

In particular, the annual **Service Pupil Support programme** (part of the MOD's *Armed Forces Families Fund*) awards grants of between £5K to £150K for one to two-year projects that support Service children along their educational pathway. In June 2025, 34 grants were awarded, totalling £2,530,267.

[Armed Forces Families Fund: Service Pupil Support Programme – projects supported : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)

An annual *Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years* programme has also been in place in recent years. For 2025-26, This programme will award grants of between £5,000 and £80,000 will be available for projects which help enhance early childhood education and childcare settings of young children from armed forces families.

[Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme 2025-26 : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)

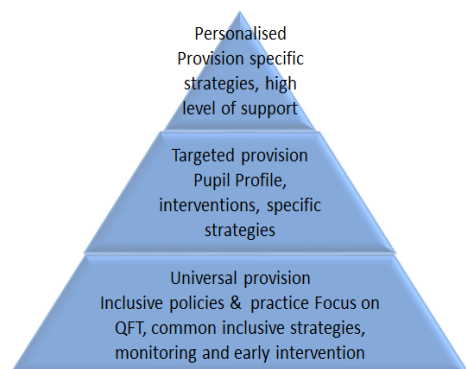


## Supporting Emotional Well-Being, Welfare and Behaviour

Service Pupil Premium funding is aimed at supporting social and emotional well-being.

### Three-Tier Model

Consider planning your provision for social, emotional well-being using the 3-tier model.



**Do individual children need 1:1 support at the most difficult times?**

**Do your Service Children need additional support, especially when parents are away?**

**Consider the needs of Service Children when planning your universal offer.**

### Oxfordshire County Council Educational Psychology Service

[Family Information Service](#) | [Oxfordshire County Council Educational Psychology Service](#)

The Oxfordshire Educational Psychology Service's provides a range of useful resources relevant in this area, such as *Supporting your child with anxiety about school – Parent/Carer Guide*.

### Drawing and Talking

[Drawing and Talking - Home page](#)

*Drawing and Talking Therapy* is the number one alternative to CBT and direct talking therapies, that can often be confronting or limiting in the processing of pain or trauma. As an attachment-based therapeutic intervention, *Drawing and Talking Therapy* is designed to complement CAMHS and other specialist therapies. *Drawing and Talking* allows individuals to discover and communicate emotions through a non-directed technique, setting it apart from existing solution-focused and cognitive-based therapies and interventions.

### Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA)

[elsa\\_leaflet.pdf](#)

ELSAs are teaching assistants who have had special training from educational psychologists to support the emotional development of children and young people in school. ELSAs have regular professional supervision from educational psychologists to help them in their work. ELSAs help children and young people learn to understand their emotions and respect the feelings of those around them. They provide the time and space for pupils to think about their personal circumstances and how they manage them.

## **General Support for Military Families (a selection)**

### **The Forces Children's Trust (FCT)**

[Forces Children's Trust](#)

The FCT supports children in need whose father or mother has died or has sustained life threatening injuries whilst serving as a member of the British Armed Forces.

### **British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS)**

[www.bfbs.com](http://www.bfbs.com)

The BFBS provides TV, digital, cinema and radio services that are available worldwide to the armed forces and their families. If overseas, BFBS brings families a free mix of the best of current British TV, live sport and big movies. Also see **Forces Net** for news <https://www.forces.net>

### **Soldiers, Sailors, Airman and Families Association (SSAFA)**

A UK charity providing life-long support to serving men and women and veterans from the British Armed Forces and their families or dependents.

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk>

## **British Army**

**British Army overview**

[Learn and explore | The British Army](#)

### **Army HIVE Information Centres**

[HIVE Information Centres | The British Army](#)

The HIVE Information Service provides information on behalf of the chain of command to the Service community and welcomes enquiries from serving personnel, dependants, partners, extended families, and the wider military community including veterans and MOD civilians.

### **Army Welfare Services**

[Army Welfare Service | The British Army](#)

The Army Welfare Service (AWS) is the Army's professional welfare provider; it delivers a comprehensive and confidential welfare service responsive to the needs of individuals, families and the Chain of Command in order to maximise the operational effectiveness of Service Personnel.

## **Royal Air Force**

**RAF HIVE**

[HIVE Finder | Royal Air Force](#)

The RAF HIVEs Service provides an information and welfare referral service to the Armed Services community, including serving Personnel, their families, veterans, Reservists, and civilians on Station.

### **RAF Welfare**

[Health & Wellbeing | Royal Air Force](#)

## **Royal Navy**

**Royal Navy local advice and support**

[Local support offices](#)

### **Navy Welfare**

[Support](#)