



University of
Lancashire

Supporting Service Children "Achieve Your Potential"

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Where opportunity creates success



Exploring Service families hidden needs

UK Armed Forces Personnel Numbers

As of **1 October 2024**, the UK Service Personnel numbered about **181,550**. Over half serve in the Army (**56%**), with the rest more evenly split between the Royal Navy/Royal Marines and the RAF.

Children of Armed Forces / Service Families

Estimated to be **over 120,000 children** with at least one parent serving in the Armed Forces in the UK. According to the MOD's Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey (2025), **78%** of Service families have children; **71%** are children under 5.

In England, for the school year **2021-22**, about **79,986 pupils** were eligible for the **Service Pupil Premium (SPP)** in state schools. It excludes private schools, children whose parents served in the past but not recently, overseas postings etc.

Higher Education / Participation among Service Children

The participation rate in Higher Education (HE) for young people from Armed Forces / Service families is much lower than the average. Estimated at **24 %**, compared to a national average of about **43 %**. Research by the University of Winchester and UCAS suggests only **4 in 10** Service children will consider University.



Objectives of the College for Military Veterans and Emergency Services

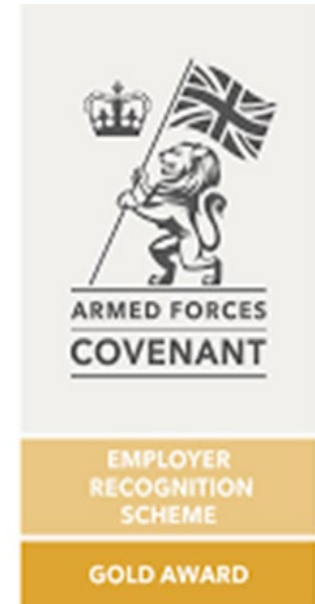
To conduct fresh, recognised and impactful research across the Armed forces community.

To engage with existing and future strategic initiatives within the Armed forces community.

To embrace the ever changing foot print of the Armed forces community and adapt our work for a 'best fit ' approach.

Maintain and grow partnership working, collaborating with key stakeholders such as the MoD and Third sector organisations.

Demonstrate the impact of our research on the lives of members of the Armed forces community.





Deborah's story....

- Joined in 1984, based in Germany
- Represented my serving units in Sport
- Moved into Management Consultancy
- Link into Education when I had children,
- Qualified as a Sports Coach teaching in primary school
- Careers, Curriculum & Welfare Governor
- Launch of Careers Ideas working in partnership within education providers





Anna's story.....

- Left school with no qualifications
- Trained as a Nurse
- Joined RAF, travelled the globe
- Part of Medical Evacuation team saw active combat
- Returned to education to complete Masters
- Followed husband's career
- Children raised in MOD schools
- Governor within MOD
- Lecturer at University of Lancashire





Understanding Military Life

- Service children often deal with separation, relocation, and sometimes isolation.
- Military culture is underpinned by a rank structure, work-hard play-hard, “can-do” environment and task orientated organisation based on team work, following orders and getting the job done. Bound by a set of values and standards.
- Systems are different across the country/ies e.g. transfer of Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP), continuity of education, GP and Health Services – service person will access MOD their family NHS.
- Support during times of transition and military mobility is key
- There’s a broader support network you can access to support service families, SCiP, SCiSS and the Armed Forces Covenant...

Emerging themes

- A safe space to be heard and understood
- Feeling safe, able to speak out
- Mental health impact
- Barriers navigating Career pathways



'Achieve Your Potential'

September 2024 – July 2026

Project brief – to identify the challenges faced by forces children in further education 16-18 group, raise awareness of how this unique cohort can be best supported, particularly those with SEND, and identify the benefits of tailored support to enable them to thrive and 'Achieve their Potential'.

Research highlights the key barriers they face, including:

- **Frequent mobility** – Disruptions to education, difficulties in maintaining long-term friendships, and gaps in learning.
- **Parental deployment** – Emotional stress, increased responsibilities at home, and potential impact on academic performance.
- **High independence levels** – While this can be a strength, it can also lead to heightened anxiety, stress and reluctance to seek support.
- **Education and career choices** – Service children often consider family mobility when making decisions about post-16 and post-18 education, requiring additional guidance and support.



Case Studies on missed SEND opportunities

Student A

- Labelled a lazy learner
- Failure to recognise SEND
- Impact to mental health
- Lack of confidence
- Feeling misunderstood –
- Lack of educators understanding the challenges

Family B

- Multiple missed SEND opportunities
- MOD couldn't offer accommodation post 18 when student left education
- No right to remain with family
- Failed to thrive at school – left with no qualifications
- Impact on ability to find employment
- Mental Health - anxiety

Student C

- Multiple missed SEND opportunities
- Failed to thrive at school – left with no qualifications
- Felt misunderstood in education – navigating different systems
- Felt bereft at moving – leaving friends, having to start again
- Impact of fathers PTSD on family – leading to family breakdown increased responsibilities
- Younger siblings reliance on her – seen as their 'best friend'



Case Study Family B.....

- Conducted full SEND assessment both children
- Created a comprehensive EHCP plan for School and Local Authority
- Supported mother with PIP Tribunal application - providing advocacy
- Liaised with MOD family welfare teams regarding evidence of SEND
- MOD recognised need – awarded larger accommodation
- Supported student to explore Career options following move – successful in gaining job offer
- Supported additional applications to support student access journey to work grant
- Liaised with school to offer CPD staff training
- Liaised with employer to discuss reasonable workplace adjustments – offering CPD to raise awareness
- Offered on-going support to whole family throughout duration of projects



Education: A Pathway to Well-being

- Person centred approach to address needs of partners
- Develop a package of support which includes skills planning
- Assess impact on spouse well-being when supporting family
- Assess skills maps to inform career options
- Work collaboratively with academic institutions on the support needs of the armed forces community
- Guide Educators on how to record data for their institutions
- Develop a peer mentoring and coaching model for spouses
- Dispel myths around military spouses
- Use statistical data to compliment package of support



Case Studies

Impact on Spouses Career and family life

- Undiagnosed learning needs
- Inability to pursue career due to frequent mobility
- Inability to pursue qualifications due to constant moves and family support needs
- Feeling isolated and lonely
- Strain on marriage
- Unaware of support available outside the wire
- Culture of hierarchy – results in staying silent



Key questions to ask

Mobility:

What impact does frequently moving home and school have on a child's life?

How does it affect their friendships, their family relationships and their school work?

Deployment:

How do children cope with a parent, or parents, being deployed?

How does it change their experience of home and of school?

Support:

What support can be put in place to enable service children to better manage the complex challenges?

How can we identify missed SEND opportunities?

How can we access resources to support us?



Focus of Staff CPD

Who is this CPD for?

- Further Education lecturers and tutors
- Learning support staff and SEND coordinators
- Curriculum managers and pastoral teams

What does the session cover?

- Understanding the lived experiences of military children particularly those with SEND
- Case studies and student journeys (including deafness, ADHD, anxiety, and late/no EHCP)
- Practical adaptations for inclusive teaching and workshop-based learning
- Promoting resilience, self-worth, and identity
- How to embed support in vocational settings
- Signposting to resources, charities, and funding routes.

Why this CPD?

Military-connected students often experience:

- Disrupted learning due to frequent school moves and late admissions
- Gaps in SEND assessment or delayed EHCP processes
- Emotional wellbeing challenges linked to mobility, isolation and caring responsibilities
- Barriers to trust and re-engagement with education

These sessions provide practical tools, understanding, and strategies to support these learners within your college environment.



Recommendations.....

- Earlier identification supports better outcomes
- Understand the learner's journey
- Be aware of the impact to spouses – particularly around deployment – meet with them
- Access support links, free resources – SCiP Alliance
- Appoint Armed Forces Champion in your educational setting
- Review and update relevant policies and procedures to ensure needs are represented
- Offer bereavement support
- Share success stories

Ask the key question:-

Has anyone in your family ever served in the Armed Forces?



Recommended resources....

Supporting Military Students in Scotland – Key Resources & Actions

National Guidance & Toolkits

Forces Children's Education – resources for schools (Education Scotland)

Welcome Scotland Guide – advice for families & schools on transition (gov.scot)

Scottish Funding Council (SFC) – support for veterans & families in FE/HE

ADVANCE Network – Armed Forces & Veterans Champions across colleges & universities

Charities & External Support

Forces Children Scotland – student funding, wellbeing & digital access support

Scotty's Little Soldiers (STRIDES) – bereavement & life skills programme

ASA Scotland – engagement, awareness, and school visits

Royal British Legion Scotland – veteran & family support, community links



Thank you and Questions

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Recommended links....

<https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/armed-forces/the-lancashire-hub/>

<https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/expert-guidance/care-caring/support-service-children>

<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/information/professionals/young-carers/armed-forces-young-carers>

<https://www.forcesemployment.org.uk/who-we-help/we-support-young-people-from-military-families/>