

## Students from armed forces families: Information for teachers, advisers and UCAS referees

Various unique factors may have influenced a Service child's motivations, choices and outcomes, such as:

- School moves that disrupted learning for a particular course of study;
- Frequent separation or a parent deployed on combat operations during examinations;
- Short stays at schools may limit opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities;
- Being a young carer or having a serving parent affected by a life-changing injury or condition;
- Lack of school/subject choice after short notice moves.

Research by the University of Winchester (McCullough and Hall, 2016) found that Service children accrue considerable strengths from their experiences, including independence, maturity, adaptability and relationship building, but they may need guidance to make the most of these in education:

- Service children appear to be one-third less likely to access higher education;
- They may have to work harder than their peers for the same outcomes;
- They are reported overall as attaining as well or better than non-Service peers at KS4 but these figures hide wide variations;
- They may achieve less than their non-Service peers if they have additional support needs.
- If they have had to attend a lot of different schools, their attainment is likely to be lower.

The Ministry of Defence's Directorate of Children and Young People's [UCAS blog article](#) about students from military families gives detailed background on the impact of a Service background and how students can make the most of this in their personal statement:

[www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/adviser-news/news/do-you-have-students-military-families](http://www.ucas.com/advisers/guides-and-resources/adviser-news/news/do-you-have-students-military-families)

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Service children (those whose parent or carer serves in the armed forces or reserves, or has done at any point during the young person's childhood) may have unique experiences, challenges and strengths which higher education institutions would like to understand.

### The student's UCAS application

Whether or not their parent is still serving, the student should be encouraged to refer to any strengths or challenges their lifestyle has brought. Encourage them to fill in application fields in full, such as identifying the armed forces as their parental occupation. It is important that parents understand the value in making the most of their child's unique experiences in an application. If students need clarification on issues such as fees and support entitlements, for example if they've lived abroad, encourage them to give their chosen university admissions team a ring.

### The UCAS reference

Mention obstacles in context, stressing any evidence of motivation to reach higher grades. For a Service child, mitigating factors might include high mobility, separation, parental deployment or a full time or occasional caring role. UCAS says of the contextual admissions process: "Applied robustly and within a holistic process, the use of contextualised data and information in admissions can be an effective tool in identifying applicants with the greatest potential to succeed in HE." As you work through [the UCAS references pages](#), keep in mind the often hidden strengths and challenges of a Service child's lifestyle.

The SCiP Alliance has produced a resource pack tailored to students from an armed forces family to help them reflect on their background and make the most of their assets in a personal statement. This can be used in conjunction with videos of university students talking about how their experiences have helped them. Search the resource bank at [www.scipalliance.org](http://www.scipalliance.org) for guidance and video resources to use alongside [UCAS's guidance pages and tools](#).