



Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Service Children's Education Guide

Introduction

This guide has been written specifically for schools and education settings to ensure our Service children and families are receiving the utmost support we can offer and to ensure that any disadvantage they may suffer due to Armed Forces life is mitigated as much as possible.

The Directorate of Children and Young People (DCYP), part of the Ministry of Defence (MOD), has responsibility of oversight for all matters relating to children and young people across defence. The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise between the nation, our government and the Armed Forces community that states that no one should suffer disadvantage caused by military service.

The covenant extends to serving personal from Royal Navy, Army and RAF, regular and reservist. Also to their families and veterans and their families.

Local authorities have committed to this pledge and are charged by government to administer the covenant at a local level. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough this is managed through the Covenant Partnership Board and involves partners from across the county from all local authorities, healthcare, criminal justice system, Armed Forces charities and our local and regional Armed Forces units.

For more details on the covenant please see the '[Our Communities, Our Covenant](#)' report and the Armed Forces Covenant website.

The covenant is not a statutory requirement as yet but plans are in place to have this in law by the end of 2021. Irrespective of this, it is something the Councils have committed to and development work is ongoing to ensure that the covenant is upheld in every aspect of each authorities work.



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Armed Forces parents with their children

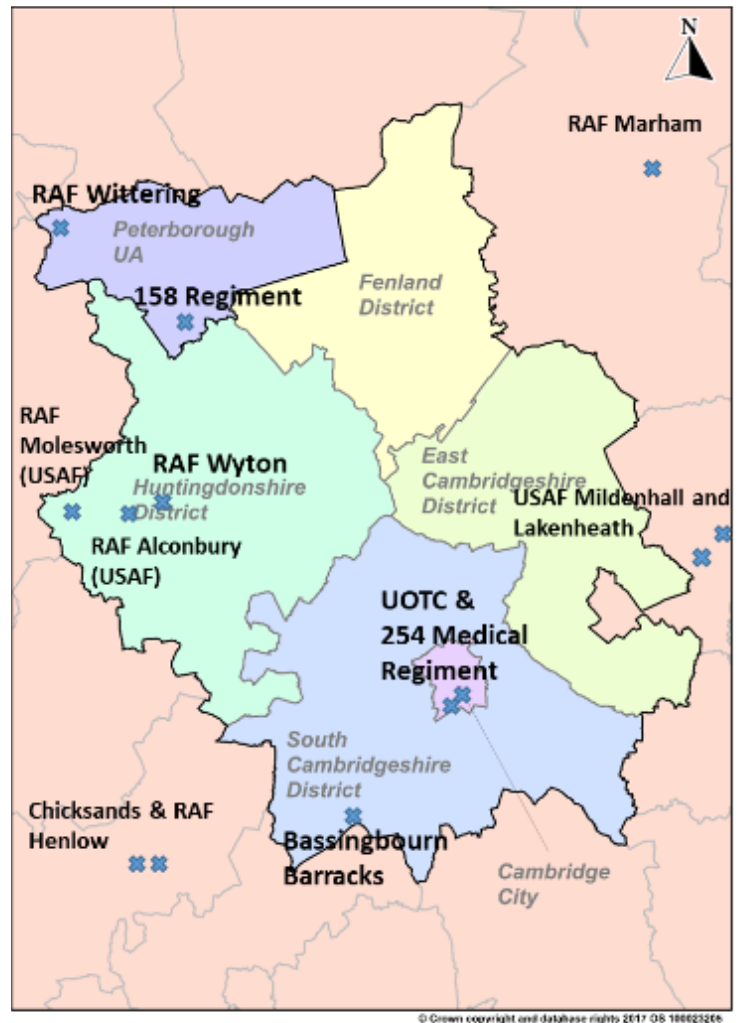
Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Armed Forces Community

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Armed Forces community consists of 3 Regular bases and 3 separate Army reserve units with RAF reserve units being based within the regular bases.

- RAF Wittering (RAF and Army)
- RAF Wyton (RAF, Army and Navy)
- Bassingbourn barracks (Army)
- 158 Regiment, Peterborough
- 254 Medical Regiment, Cambridge
- University Officer Training Corp (UOTC), Cambridge

We have US forces based at Molesworth and Alconbury with Lakenheath and Mildenhall bases just across our border in Suffolk.

We also have many families living in the county that are posted to units across our borders.



Armed Forces Map of Cambridgeshire

There are no exact figures for these families, however, it is an increasingly popular choice for families to not move each time their Service person gets posted but instead to remain in either their allocated Service Family Accommodation (SFA) which they rent from the MOD or their own properties, which they have purchased. SFA are usually located on or near a unit/station/garrison and the housing area is often referred to as 'the patch'.

Deciding to stay in the same area rather than move with their Service person means greater stability for the children and spousal employment but comes with its own challenges with one of the parents working away from home.

If you would like to find out more about FAM and its impact on Service life, you can get more information [here](#).

In terms of Service children claiming Service Pupil Premium (SPP) in 2019/2020 figures show we have 941 eligible children in Cambridgeshire Local Authority area and 451 eligible children in Peterborough Local Authority area. Totalling 1,391 Service children in our schools across the county. This is up from 891 in 2018/2019. We are expecting our Service Child Population to increase as many of our local bases are growing due to the military closing other units across the country.

The data on SPP can be found on <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium-allocations-and-conditions-of-grant-2019-to-2020>.

Armed Forces life and why it is important to recognise its impact on children and education

The Armed Forces lifestyle is truly unique. It is not simply another job but a way of life. There are many positives that go along with Armed Forces life and Service children strongly identify with being a Service child and part of the Armed Forces community.

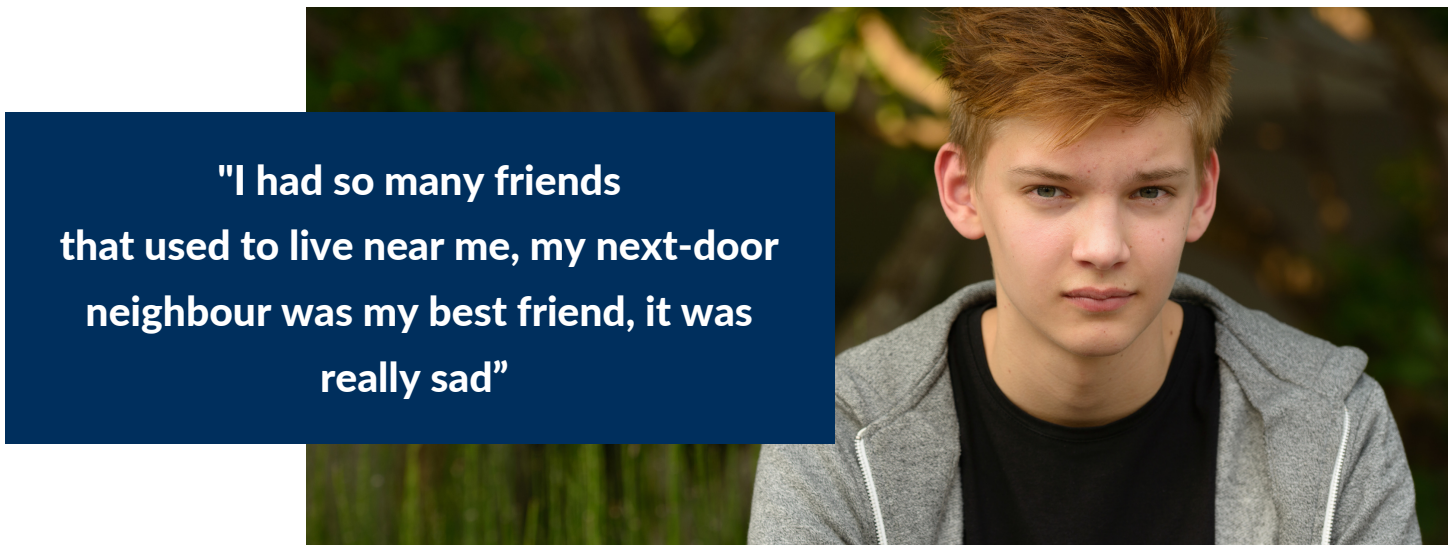
The Children's Commissioner Report highlights the Service child's voice and the resilience of this group of children.

However, there are some distinct challenges that many Service families face and we need to ensure that these can be mitigated where possible.



"I always kind of enjoy it because when I move to a new school, I enjoy starting again ... I'm always happy to start again."

Teenage girl standing by a tree



"I had so many friends that used to live near me, my next-door neighbour was my best friend, it was really sad"

Teenage boy with grey hoodie

"My Dad was away for three years, when I was two to five"



The main challenges that can be faced include:

- High mobility – moving around the country and the world
- Gaps in education/repetition of the same modules caused by high mobility
- Separation from parents for extended periods of time for deployment/exercise
- Regular separation caused from living apart; where the family choose to settle in their own properties away from the military base (this is termed 'living dispersed'), therefore, the serving person being away from the family home during the week
- Challenges of making and leaving friends/getting used to new school environments
- Emotional effects of dealing with a parent on a deployment particularly for older students who are more aware of the risks they face
- Management of SEN needs and getting assessments carried out
- Moving between different curricula and education systems – either within UK or overseas/UK

The Naval Families Federation have produced some great research on the emotional impact of deployment and on the regular separation known as 'weekending'. Although these reports centre on Naval families, the findings relate to all Armed Forces families.

The Service Children's Progression Alliance has produced some excellent research briefings on separation, resilience, moving schools, FE attainment and SPP. They are easy to read and highlight the key areas of interest.

The Common Transfer File should help schools to exchange information about a new Service child and their particular needs.

For some families they will have not had an opportunity to look around a school before making an application. Virtual tours or skype/video calls prior to admission can really support a child's integration and ease a family's anxiety about a move to a new area.

School place allocation can be a very testing time for Service families on top of all the other issues to do with moving location. The RAF Families Federation produced this useful guide for Service families and education providers to help mitigate some of the difficulties:

<https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/news/school-place-allocation/>.

Service Pupil Premium (SPP)

The SPP was introduced in 2011. It is given to all state funded schools (maintained by a local authority, academies and free schools) with reception to year 11 pupils from a service family. The funding is worth £310 per year per Service child.

To be eligible, pupils must meet the following criteria:

- one of their parents is serving in the regular armed forces (including pupils with a parent who is on full commitment as part of the full time reserve) they have been registered as a 'Service child' on the January school
- census at any point since 2016 one of their parents died whilst serving in the armed forces and the pupil
- receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme

SPP can be extended for 6 years after service on the Ever 6 Service Child Measure. The premium was extended, such that any pupil in Reception to Year 11, who has been flagged as a service child within the last 6 years, will continue to receive the premium (Ever 6 service child). SPP eligibility is for 6 years or year 11 whichever is sooner.

More details on this can be found on; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know>.



Students writing on the wall Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.

The premium must be used for pastoral support and/or to mitigate the effects of a military deployment and/or family mobility.

The funding should not be combined with normal pupil premium as the purposes are entirely different.

The funding is paid based on the total number of Service children but it should be spent to benefit those Service children for which it is claimed.

It is up to the school and governors to determine how it is spent however, schools must ensure transparency on how it is spent and OFSTED will consider this in its inspections. It is up to the parent to declare if they fit the eligibility criteria but schools can support this with communications prior to the census date to remind parents of the requirement for them to declare it.

The Army Families Federation have provided these ideas from schools across the country as to how it could be spent;

- Learning Support Assistant dedicated to the emotional wellbeing and academic achievement of Service children
- Weekly pizza lunch day or café for children with a parent away
- Reading Force materials
- Teddy bear mascots like Sergeant Camopatch
- Computer equipment for email and keeping in touch club/skype chat time

- Half-termly social events for parents and children
- Website page for Service families
- Themed visits and outings
- Forces choir
- Moving-schools support including 'My passport'
- After school clubs including combat club, football club, or sports themed particularly to involve more role models for the children
- Camera equipment for photographs
- Rapid writing programme
- Welcome films made by pupils
- Deployment display boards
- Still photo books and talking photo books
- Memory boxes for children moving on
- Homework support groups
- Around the world assembly
- Service children's base within school, with a bank of computers for scanning school work to email parents who are away and keep them in touch

Information and best practice guides for Service Pupil Premium can also be found here:

- https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/579866/20161221-DCYP_SPP_booklet_final_V3.pdf
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-examples-of-best-practice>

The Royal British Legion guide for supporting Service children provides some useful details on Service Pupil Premium alongside school admissions and wellbeing:

- https://storage.rblcdn.co.uk/sitofinity/docs/default-source/campaigns-policy-and-research/supporting_service_children_in_england_18.pdf?sfvrsn=ce83883b_2

Local examples of Best Practice

Wittering Primary

Wittering Primary School is sited next to RAF Wittering and serves approximately 55% of service pupils on its roll of approximately 330 pupils. The majority of Service families are RAF but we also provide for Army families as well as a small number of Navy.

We use our Service Premium money in a variety of ways. We provide access to a family support worker who can help at times of emotional stress such as deployment or if the children are struggling to settle.



Wittering Primary Library

We also use some of the funding to enable assessments to take place for SEN children so we can get in place what they need before another potential move.

We run our own Wellbeing Club and ensure that when children join us they are given a tour of the building with their peers and have a passport set up where we can show them where the things and support are that they need.

On top of this we may pick up some of the learning gaps that can appear due to moving between schools and teaching being at different points during the year. You have to be flexible about using the funding as need can change during the year and you never know what is around the corner. We place mental health and wellbeing of children very high in our priority list as we highly value children who feel comfortable and happy in our school.

Hinchingbrooke School



Hinchingbrooke School

Hinchingbrooke School has historically had a large number of pupils from Armed Forces backgrounds, as there has been a significant military presence in the local area for over eighty years. Even with the recently reduced military presence the school still has more than 70 children with an Armed Forces connection and therefore maintains regular contact with the MoD Schools Liaison Officer, based at RAF Wyton, to ensure that military families moving to the area receive up to date and relevant information.

Hinchingbrooke School and RAF Wyton look for ways in which to collaborate wherever the opportunity arises. For instance, during Remembrance Week the school runs a series of Remembrance Assemblies for all year groups. Service personnel attend the assembly, each day, as honoured guests and contribute to the assembly.

Demand for places at Hinchingbrooke is very high and the number of people living in the catchment area has increased, and continues to increase, significantly, year on year. However, the school will actively consider prioritising children eligible for the Service Premium. Hinchingbrooke School manages its own in year admissions and as such applications are made direct to the school rather than the Local Authority (LA), although a close working relationship with the LA means that should the school be unable to offer a place applications will be automatically forwarded to the LA, for consideration of a placement at the applicants second preference school.

What are Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Councils doing?

Admissions

The School Admission Code states that admissions authorities must allocate a school place to a service child ahead of them moving on a posting. It also states that a primary school may exceed the limit of 30 pupils to one teacher in a class in order to provide a place for a Service child if required for KS1.

Applications for school places should be submitted either via Cambridgeshire County Council or Peterborough City Council dependant on area in which the family will be or are living. In cases where schools manage their own admissions, this should be made clear on their websites.

Applications can be made prior to an address being assigned or confirmed as long as it is a secure posting. In which case, the unit address can be used for applications. To ensure the Councils can highlight Service child applications, parents do need to specify that the application relates to an Armed Forces family. As soon as a posting/assignment order is received the parents should make a school application at the earliest opportunity. In cases where it is not possible to provide a place at the parents' preference school(s), they need to be advised of their right of appeal.



School children

Appeals are submitted through the normal process details of which can be found on the City and County Councils' websites. The Admissions Team can advise on this process. CEAS can support families with admission appeals too. If a school who is managing its own admissions does not appear to be operating in compliance with the School Admissions Code, this needs to be raised with the Admissions Team and the Covenant Officer.

If schools are unsure of the correct way to apply the Code they can seek advice from the Admissions Team.

Although the statutory guidance is very specific as it only applies when moving on a posting, there are other situations that can cause direct disadvantage to a military family and should still be considered under the covenant agenda. For example, this would include moves on transition out of the military, as this is an enforced move and the child undergoes the same process as when on a posting it is just that this will be the last military move they make.

Armed Forces posting moves can happen at any time and do not often coincide with the school year and therefore result in 'in year' applications. All admission authorities, including the two Councils, need to be mindful of this and reflect this in their processes, taking account of the need for an Armed Forces family can contact a school when a move may happen during holidays or at very last minute. Military moves can be very stressful both physically and emotionally and although some families do get used to the high mobility that doesn't mean it isn't any less stressful and can often happen whilst the serving person is still working or out of the country meaning that issues with the school, house, work for non-serving spouse and the logistics of packing and moving are often left to the non-serving partner. This can be even more stressful when both parents are serving.

Although some processes cannot be by-passed we encourage Armed Forces families to raise any admissions issues with their welfare teams and the relevant admissions authority early so that any difficulties can be mitigated.

Advice for parents on admissions can be found [here](#).

Attendance Team

The Attendance team provides guidance to both Cambridgeshire and Peterborough schools concerning potential barriers to accessing education for Service pupils. Supporting the schools to increase their understanding of both the current and future needs of Armed Forces families, including the development of processes to aid examples of best practice.

Schools in Cambridgeshire are offered a consultation to review their current practice for supporting Armed Forces families to ensure where possible a consistent and systemic approach. Schools are able to access updated reading material and guidance to help promote creative ideas and information sharing.

All referrals received by the Attendance Team are thoroughly investigated to ensure that both the needs of the family and barriers to education have been understood prior to any legal intervention being initiated. The Team act as a broker to the school to aid future access to education for all military pupils.

Special Educational Needs

For those children that have special educational needs the high mobility rate can be even more of a challenge. If they are mid assessment for an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) this may need to be restarted at the next setting. Schools will need to seek advice from the SEN team for your area.

For EHC plans that are already in place, finding a new school that can accommodate this can be harder, and although most children's needs can be met in their local mainstream school some children will require a special school. SEN teams can help support with this and more information can be found [here](#).



Making SEND everybody's
Business logo

The Councils are committed to consider the specific needs of each family. If waiting times are going to greatly disadvantage a family that is expecting another posting or where they have already started the process elsewhere then been posted to the county, expediting this process in special cases can be considered. Our SEN and Early help teams will work closely with the schools and the families to assess the individual circumstances and try to mitigate any disadvantage foreseen but they do require the situation to be raised with them in a timely manner and as much information as possible from the previous setting to have been obtained

Schools can use the Common Transfer File to ensure information of the student's specific needs is communicated effectively. Therefore it really helps if schools have a good quality welcome pack and leaving pack for each service child to accompany the CTF.

Schools in England follow the [SEND Code of Practice \(2015\)](#) to meet the needs of children with special educational needs - pupils coming from overseas, Ministry of Defence Schools or schools from the devolved administrations may have had a different experience of SEN and will be accompanied with supporting documentation.

If a child is coming from overseas and/or cannot view the school beforehand it would be good practice to allow a video tour of the school or to meet their new teacher if possible to help ease the child into the new setting.

Useful links for additional support for schools and families



Forces Connect App – can be downloaded on any smart device and details all organisations in the county that can provide a variety of support for military and veteran families.

Support from the DFE and MOD

Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas>

MOD Directorate of Children and Young people (DCYP)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>

MOD support fund for schools - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-support-fund-for-schools-with-service-children-grant-application-pack>

Forces Additional needs and Disability Forum (FANDF)- <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/disability-support/additional-needs-and-disability-support>

Funding guide for RAF service children - <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/funding-support-raf-children-in-schools.pdf>

Service Children Alliances

Service Children Progression Alliance (SCIP) - <https://www.scipalliance.org/>

The SCIP Alliance have developed a new toolkit to support service children in our schools and their onward progression. More details can be found on their website with the full launch being end of 2020.

Service Children in State Schools Alliance (SCISS) - <https://www.sciss.org.uk/>

Service Family Federations

Army - <https://aff.org.uk/>

Navy - <https://nff.org.uk/>

RAF - <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/>

Military charity support

The Royal British Legion (Welfare and practical support for families) - <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

SSAFA (Welfare support) - <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/military-families>

Reading Force (reading scrapbooks to be shared with parent overseas to promote communication) - <https://www.readingforce.org.uk/>

Military Kids Club Heroes (project to support kids club in schools for service children) - <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/schools-learning/mkc-heroes/>

Little Troopers (variety of support from trips for separated families to education packs and support for schools) - <http://www.littletroopers.net/>

Scottys Little Soldiers (supporting bereaved service children) - <https://www.scottyslittlesoldiers.co.uk/>
<https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/education/charitable-support-for-children-and-young-people/>

Information on devolved administrations and Service Children

<https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/UK-school-year-comparison-table-2020-plus-devolved-state-edu-comparison-table.pdf>

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

<https://forceschildreducation.org.uk/>

