

# Service Families' Newsletter

February 2026



## Minister for Veterans and People welcomes Armed Forces Bill Extended Covenant Legal Duty



The Armed Forces Bill will deliver on the government's manifesto promise to extend the Armed Forces Covenant Legal Duty to every area of government and Devolved Governments, placing the Armed Forces community at the heart of policy and decision making.

### What does this mean for our people?

This will ensure that all government departments must consider the needs of the Armed Forces community when shaping policy. Decisions on childcare, education and training, employment, health and social care, housing, social security benefits, personal taxation, criminal justice, transport, pensions, immigration and citizenship, will take the unique challenges of Service life into account.

It gives serving personnel, reservists, veterans, and their families a meaningful voice and delivers on the Government's pledge to renew the nation's contract with those who serve and have served.

Click here to read the full report here



# Updates



## Armed Forces Covenant 2025: Key updates

### Service Children's Education

- Service pupils continue to achieve broadly in line with their peers, although small attainment gaps remain, particularly at transition points.
- Mobility remains the biggest challenge, affecting access to school places, curriculum continuity, and pastoral stability.

### SEND & Additional Needs

- Children with SEND/AN often face delays in assessment and provision when families move between areas.
- New MOD Local Authority Partnership guidance aims to help councils and schools provide more consistent support.

### Funding to Support Schools

- Service Pupil Premium continues to support over 76,000 pupils in England
- The Armed Forces Families Fund awarded £2.5 million across 34 projects supporting transitions, wellbeing, and targeted interventions.

### Early Years & Childcare

- From September 2025, families posted overseas will be eligible for 30 hours of funded childcare, aligning with the England offer.
- Wraparound childcare continues to expand, helping more Service families balance work and family life.

### UK-Wide Support

- Wales and Scotland continue to invest in dedicated programmes for Service children; however, the report highlights the need for consistent UK-wide data to fully understand outcomes.

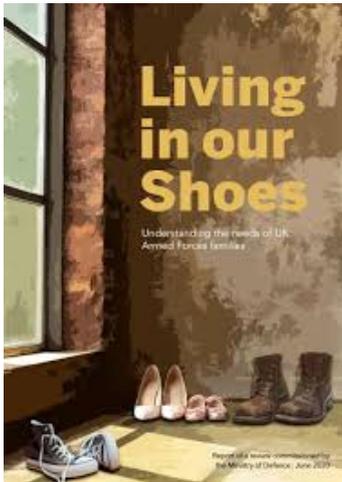
### Family Stability

- The MOD is encouraged to place family considerations at the heart of career planning, recognising the impact of mobility on children's education.

Click here to read the full report here



# Living in our shoes: understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families



Back in 2020, a review was commissioned by the Ministry of Defence into the concerns raised by armed forces families and recommendations for change.

## Recommendation 15

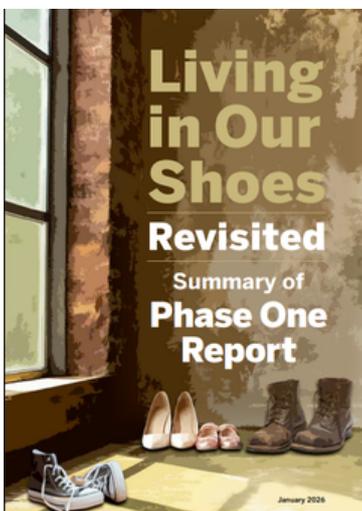
The Governments of the UK to make 'Getting It Right for Service Children' a national education priority in all nations of the UK, and take all necessary steps to ensure that Service children, especially those with special educational needs and disabilities, are not disadvantaged by Service life

One of the main concerns was:

'the impact of mobility and deployments on: children and young people; the employment and careers of non-serving partners; personal relationships; and the health and well-being of Serving personnel and family members.'



## 5 years on...



...the challenges continue. The Phase One report points to a number of key issues which need to be resolved if satisfaction with Service life is to be increased and the negative impacts on family life are to be reduced.

**Children's education:** concerns remain in relation to how school moves are managed, and the potential for educational disadvantage for children growing up in Armed Forces families, especially those with additional educational needs. Greater coordination is needed across the nations of the UK to ensure that children are supported at all times when they move from one educational system to another, including overseas. Attention needs to be given to the future positioning and role of Defence Children Services within Defence.

### Phase One High-Level Recommendations

#### Recommendations Addressing Continuing Concerns

##### Children and Young People

4. Work with the Department of Education and the devolved administrations to fundamentally understand the nature and scale of the disadvantage being faced by Service children in education in the UK, in particular those with special educational needs and disabilities, jointly agree the required mitigating actions, and determine MOD's future contribution to this work.



# What's on...



**ARMY WELFARE SERVICE** **ARMY BE THE BEST**

Scan the QR code to register children for sessions.

**Play Session**  
for Service children aged 5-10 years  
Strensall: Tuesdays 5.00pm-6.30pm

Arts & Crafts   Sports   Games

Baking   Messy Play   Imaginative Play

- Fun activities
- Make friends
- Try new things
- Supports well-being
- Supports learning

**Youth Club**  
for Service young people aged 11-16 years  
Strensall: Tuesdays 7.00pm-8.30pm

Pool   Arts & Crafts   Baking   Sports

Fussball   Air Hockey   Table Tennis   Trips

- Somewhere to go
- Something to do
- Someone to talk to
- Make friends
- Fun activities
- Supports well-being
- Try new things
- Learn new skills

Young people can bring a non-Service friend with them.

• Strensall: Hurst Hall Community Centre, Border Road YO32 5SR  
Sessions cost £1 and there is also a tuck shop selling sweets. Please contact Michael Bailey, AWS Community Development Worker, for more formation. Email: michael.bailey124@mod.gov.uk Tel: 077 6700 8982



**ARMY WELFARE SERVICE** **ARMY BE THE BEST**

## Volunteers Needed!

**Do you like playing games, sports, arts & crafts or baking?**  
If yes, could you help at our weekly Play Session for Service children aged 5-11 years (Tues 5.00pm-6.30pm) or Youth Club for Service young people aged 11+ years (Tues 7.00pm-8.30pm) held in Hurst Hall Community Centre, Strensall?

**Volunteer Requirements:**

- Enjoy working with children and young people
- Aged 18+
- Agree to a DBS check
- References taken up

**Volunteer Benefits:**

- A fun and rewarding experience
- Free training
- Ongoing support
- Enhance your CV and job applications

**For more information, please get in touch!** Michael Bailey, Community Development Worker  
Low Moor Centre, Fulford Tel: 077 6700 8982  
Email: michael.bailey124@mod.gov.uk

**Drop in clinics in York**

Hobmoor Children's Centre  
Monday 9am-12pm

Clifton Children's Centre  
Thursday 9am-12pm

The Avenues Children's Centre  
Friday 9am-12pm

Fulford Library  
The first Tuesday of every month  
9:30am-11:30am

Hurst Hall, Strensall  
The second Thursday of every month  
10am-12pm

**Healthy Child Service**  
HCS Telephone 01904 555475  
HCS-secure@york.gov.uk  
<https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/healthy-child-service>

**Healthy Child Service**

Please call 01904 555475 if you would like support with:

- Sleep
- Speech and language
- Toilet training
- Healthy eating
- Parenting support

*It's not just a Coffee Morning*

It's a chance to meet people, create networks and let the little ones play. All military families & serving personnel are welcome.

Hurst Hall Community Centre every 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month  
9:30 - 11:00 a.m.

We ask for a small donation of £1 per family which goes towards the cost of refreshments.



# ssafa

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**Armed Forces**  
charity

Bringing families together  
for more than ten years:

SSAFA Short Breaks applications open for  
2026

SSAFA's Short Break scheme offers a safe  
and inclusive time away for serving - and  
reservist - families who have a child with an  
additional need or disability, whether these  
are physical, behavioural, emotional, mental  
health or a combination of the above.



## SSAFA SHORT BREAKS 2026

Short Breaks for Forces families who have a child  
with an additional need and/or disability.

<b>8 - 10 May 2026</b>	Calvert Lakes, Lake District
<b>20 - 24 July 2026</b>	Calvert Lakes, Lake District
<b>3 - 7 August 2026</b>	Calvert Devon, Exmoor
<b>26 - 30 October 2026</b>	Calvert Devon, Exmoor

# ssafa

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**Armed Forces**  
charity



# PRIMARY SCHOOL AGED CHILDCARE OVERSEAS ALLOWANCE



**aff** army  
families  
federation

Registration for the new Primary School Aged Childcare Overseas allowance (PSACO) has gone live.

It reimburses before and after school childcare costs to working families in locations where WAC eligibility criteria can't be met due to local rules, or because Tax-Free Childcare accounts are not available.

You can find guidance and check your eligibility on [Discover My Benefits](#).



Little Troopers therapy programme returns in 2026 to provide military-specific therapeutic support for more than 1,000 children and young people from Army families.

This programme, funded by the National Lottery, offers face-to-face therapy for children experiencing challenges relating to having a serving parent.

If you think your child could benefit visit Little Troopers' website via the link in our comments and fill out a referral form.

## Forces Families Jobs

A new year means new challenges and goals to reach. If you're aiming to improve your career or step into something new as an Army spouse, Forces Families Jobs is here for you.

It offers a variety of advice, courses and job opportunities, so you can keep growing in your chosen career path.

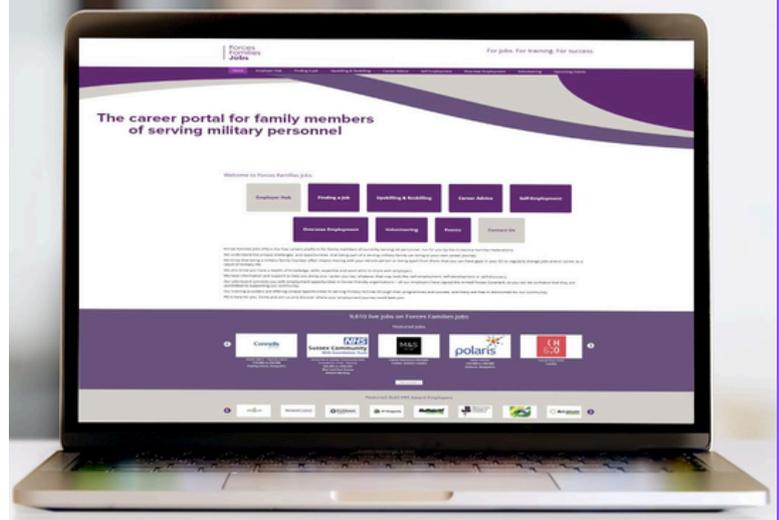
If you'd like to start a new role in 2026, visit FFJ's website here:

[Forces Families Jobs](https://www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk)

aff army families federation

**NEW YEAR  
NEW OPPORTUNITIES**

[FORCESFAMILIESJOBS.CO.UK](https://www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk)



## Monster Phonics Fun!

What makes sharing stories, songs and rhymes wonderful for children?

We will use a story book to explore ways to make stories and songs exciting and interactive for your child, using props, puppets and other materials to bring the story to life.

This is an introductory workshop which leads into the free 4-week 'Stories, Songs and Rhymes' course.



Who: Parents and Carers of 4 - 7 year olds  
Dates: 14 January 2026  
When: Wednesday Afternoons, 12:30 - 2:30  
Where: Low Moor Centre, Bray Road, YO10 4JG



Use the QR Code to enrol on the course or for more information call 01904 554277 email [york.learning@york.gov.uk](mailto:york.learning@york.gov.uk)

Funded by UK Government

## Early Start

Do you want to help your little ones thrive?

Let's play our way to super listening, talking, and sharing skills! We'll giggle with rhymes, explore wonderful books, and have fun with shapes, colours, and numbers.

Come join our free Early Start sessions to learn easy and fun ways to help your child grow. You'll get to meet other lovely families, swap stories, enjoy arts and crafts and share ideas.



Wednesday mornings 9.30 - 11.30,  
Low Moor Centre, Bray Road, YO10 4JG\*  
15th January 2026 - 26 March 2026

Free childcare may be available but please book to avoid disappointment.



For more information call Kerry Johnson on 07554 115547 or email [kerry.johnson@york.gov.uk](mailto:kerry.johnson@york.gov.uk) or visit [www.yorklearning.org.uk](http://www.yorklearning.org.uk)

Funded by UK Government

## Stories, Songs and Rhymes

Join our free 5 week course to boost your confidence in bringing stories, songs and rhymes to life for your little ones.

We'll share ideas and fun ways to engage children in speech, language, communication and play.

Find out how to tailor these activities to suit children of different ages and watch their early learning blossom.



Who: Parents and Carers of 4 - 7 year olds  
Dates: 21 January 2026 - 11 February 2026  
When: Wednesday afternoons, 12:30 - 2:30  
Where: Low Moor Centre, Bray Road, YO10 4JG



Use the QR Code to enrol on the course or for more information call 01904 554277 email [york.learning@york.gov.uk](mailto:york.learning@york.gov.uk)

Funded by UK Government

## Mixed Crafts

Ready for some creative fun? Our relaxed craft course is your perfect escape.

Discover exciting new techniques, with all materials provided. It's a fantastic way to learn new skills, boost your wellbeing, and create beautiful pieces you'll be proud to take home every time!



Who: Adults over the age of 19  
Dates: 14 January 2026 - 25 February 2026  
When: Wednesday Mornings, 9.30 - 11.30  
Where: Low Moor Centre, Bray Road, YO10 4JG



Use the QR Code to enrol on the course or for more information call 01904 554277 email [york.learning@york.gov.uk](mailto:york.learning@york.gov.uk)

Funded by UK Government



# Drop in clinics in York

**Hobmoor Children's Centre**  
**Monday 9am-12pm**

**Clifton Children's Centre**  
**Thursday 9am-12pm**

**The Avenues Children's Centre**  
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**The first Tuesday of every month**  
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**Hurst Hall, Strensall**  
**The second Thursday of every month**  
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**Healthy  
Child  
Service**

HCS Telephone 01904 555475

HCS-secure@york.gov.uk

<https://www.raiseyork.co.uk/healthy-child-service>

# Useful contacts



Army Welfare Service  
Serving the Service Community

For all Personal Support enquiries and referrals please contact the Intake and Assessment Team (the AWS welfare single point of contact) at:

RC-AWS-IAT-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk or 01904 882053 (civ) / 94777 3053 (mil)



21 Multi-Role Medical Regiment

Welfare Officer: Capt Kyle Bruce

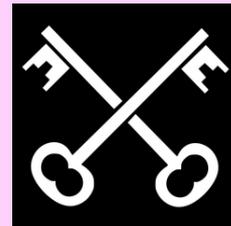
21MMR-RHQ-WELFARE-OFFR@MOD.GOV.UK

WO2 Nikki Robson

Email: 21MMR-RHQ-WELFARE-0MAILBOX@MOD.GOV.UK  
Tel: 01904 442989

(Out of hours welfare please call the guardroom on 01904 442864 and ask for the Duty Welfare Officer)

Unit Welfare Clerk  
Mrs Susan Wilson  
Email: 34Hosp-rhq-welfare-clerk@mod.gov.uk



2 Signals Regiment

UWO  
Capt Mark Davies

WO2 Carl White

2sig-spsqn-welfare-groupmailbox@mod.gov.uk  
Civ: 01904 651572 | Welfare Mob : 07973817562



01264 554004



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Beccy Dixon  
Service Families Liaison  
Officer



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# Service Families' Liaison Officer



## A message from me...

Hello everyone!

It's really positive to see the developments shaping future support for Service children across the UK. While there is still a long way to go, growing research and policy attention are helping to build a clearer understanding of the unique challenges these children can face.

The recent Service Children SEND conference held at York St John provided an invaluable strategic platform to raise awareness of the additional complexities faced by Service families and Service children with SEND. By bringing together researchers, policymakers, educators, health professionals, government representatives, and MOD colleagues, the conference supported meaningful dialogue across sectors. These shared conversations helped to identify priorities, strengthen alignment between research and practice, and reinforce the importance of coordinated, system-wide approaches to improve outcomes for Service children and their families.

This increasing focus is beginning to inform more joined-up approaches across education, health, and wider support services. Continued collaboration and sustained commitment will be essential to ensure this progress leads to meaningful, long-term improvements for Service children and their families.

I am acutely aware of the challenges that come with Service life and the impact these can have on Service children. At the same time, I strongly recognise and champion the rich experiences, strengths, and positive qualities that Service children bring to their communities, schools, and friendships.

Alongside supporting Service children, the wider military community, schools, and local Armed Forces welfare units, I continue to advocate for Service children and their families. By delivering training and working collaboratively with professionals and organisations who share this commitment, our collective voices are strengthened—helping to raise awareness of barriers, influence policy, and drive meaningful change, while also celebrating the diversity and value of Service life and Service children.

*Beccy*

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Supporters

