



House of Commons
Defence Committee

The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 3: Educating the Children of Service Personnel

Fourth Report of Session 2013–14

Volume II

Additional written evidence

*Ordered by the House of Commons
to be published 9 July 2013*

The Defence Committee

The Defence Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Ministry of Defence and its associated public bodies.

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Sandra Osborne MP (*Labour, Ayr, Carrick and Cumnock*)

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The Reports of the Committee, the formal minutes relating to that report, oral evidence taken and some or all written evidence are available in a printed volume. Additional written evidence may be published on the internet only.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Alda Barry (Clerk), Dougie Wands (Second Clerk), Karen Jackson (Audit Adviser), Ian Thomson (Committee Specialist), Christine Randall (Senior Committee Assistant), Rowena Macdonald and Carolyn Bowes (Committee Assistants), and Sumati Sowamber (Committee Support Assistant).

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List of additional written evidence

(published in Volume II on the Committee's website www.parliament.uk/defcom)

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Written evidence

Written evidence from AFF (Army Families Federation)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2011 AFF asked families if they were “prepared to accept the military lifestyle (frequent moves, standard of housing, long periods of separation etc) providing their child(ren)’s education was not adversely affected. 98% of families (1,359) agreed”.

Despite heightened awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant, welcome changes to the Admissions Code and Admission Appeals Code, the permission to use unit addresses rather than SFA addresses to secure a place at a school, families continue to feel that mobility impacts significantly on their children.

For mobile families, each time they move they enter a lottery; whether they get a choice of schools (overseas) or whether they get children into a good or failing school. Will their child be studying a different curriculum or redoing or missing bits from the one they are already on? If they move between Scotland and some overseas locations they might have to go up or down a year. Children with SEN issues find mobility often exacerbates their condition or delays diagnosis.

It is no wonder when we asked Service families to feed into this report that the retention of CEA continues to be such an emotive subject—for some parents continued service depends on the retention of CEA—it is the only acceptable compromise.

Our report breaks down into the subheadings given by the Committee:

1. The difficulties facing Service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were civilians in the UK or overseas.
2. The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs.
3. The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with SEN.
4. The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service children’s education.

We also look at attainment and the effects of redundancy and transition into civilian life.

Our main recommendations:

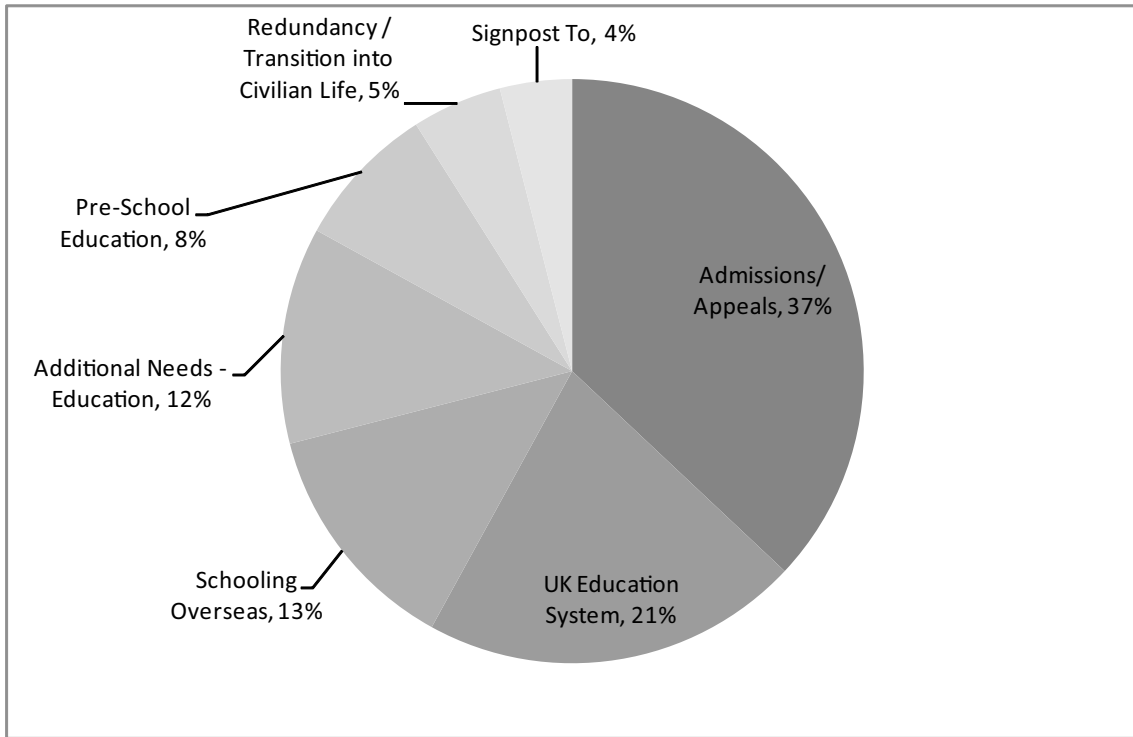
- That an organisation such as CEAS endorses a SEN “summary of need” that would detail provision required that LAs have to adhere to.
- That the option of CEA is retained for *any* Service family that remains mobile.
- That Service pupil attainment is judged not against the whole population but against families with at least one working parents to give a more like for like analysis.
- That CEAS is resourced more effectively.

“My 12 year old has been to five schools. The duplication in curriculum (eg he repeated a term’s history study of the Victorians); the end of friendships after a year, and especially the lack of opportunity to develop relationships and leadership skills in one school has been a real handicap.”

In 2011 AFF asked families if they were “prepared to accept the military lifestyle (frequent moves, standard of housing, long periods of separation etc) providing their child(ren)’s education was not adversely affected. 98% of families (1,359) agreed”.¹

¹ http://www.aff.org.uk/linkedfiles/aff/affceareportfullversion_mar2011.pdf

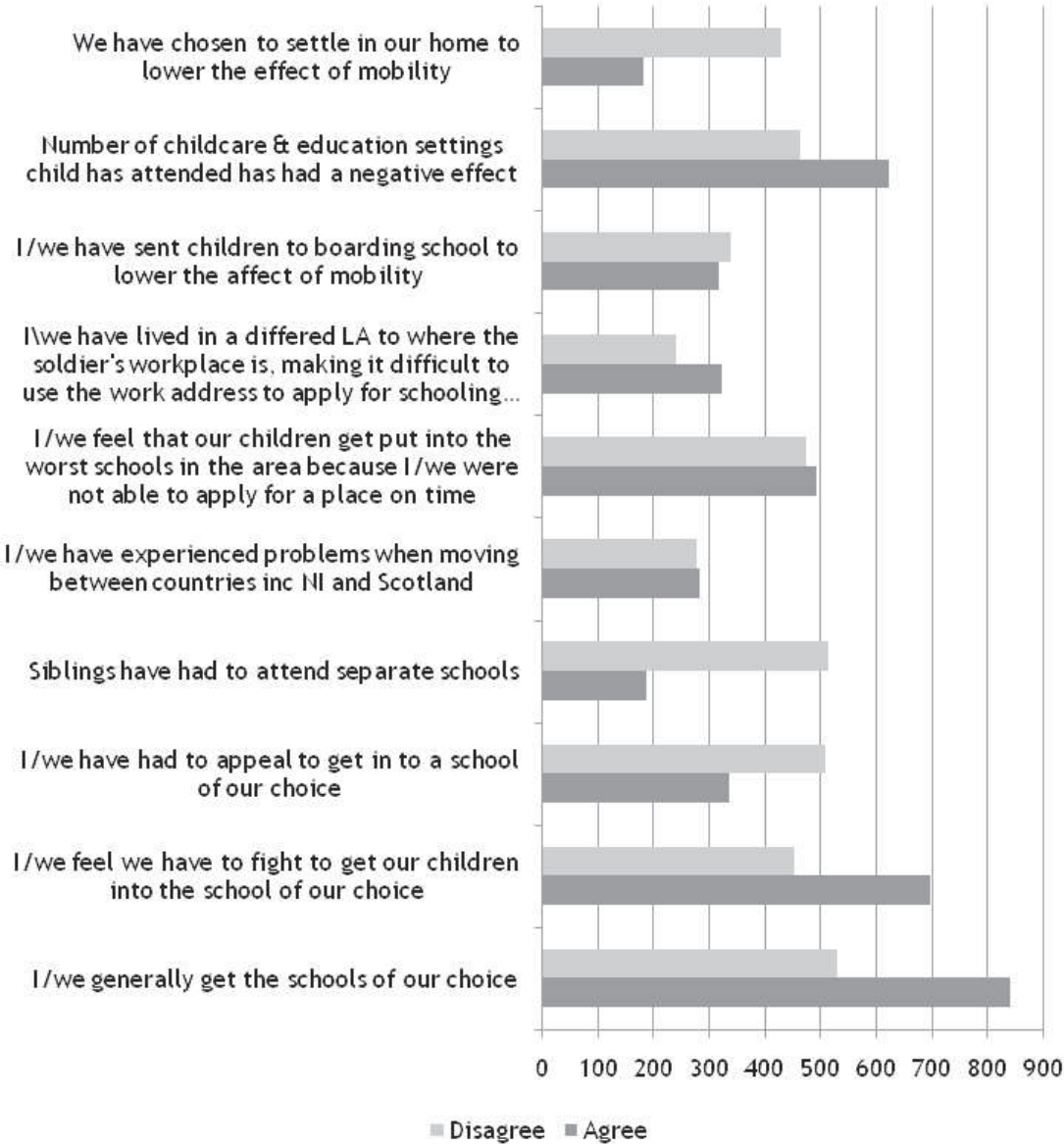
In 2012 AFF dealt with around 400 queries regarding educating children of Service personnel. Our Education & Childcare Specialist works with the Army, Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS), Service Children's Education (SCE) and Local Authorities (LAs) to help resolve some of these queries.



We have broken this report down into the areas that the Committee are particularly interested in.

1. The difficulties facing Service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were civilians in the UK or overseas

AFF’s annual survey on the opinion of Army families² in June asked “when moving, which statements regarding the impact of mobility on children do you agree or disagree with?” (1,703 families responded to this particular question):



1.1 Allocation of places

The new School Admissions Code 2012 and School Admissions Appeals Code 2012 have considerably helped military families in getting their children into school outside the normal admissions round. Particularly in infant classes as mentioned in the code. We are waiting to see the impact on families applying to Academies as they have their own admissions criteria but realise government guidelines state that they should be guided by the admissions code.

However, despite LA’s agreement to accept unit addresses instead of SFA addresses, families still struggle to get their children in to schools. In areas such as London, Andover and Catterick using a unit address is nugatory as the SFA is geographically dispersed over a 20 mile radius and sometimes more in London.

“We were given Non Availability Certificate (NAC) therefore only issued address 14 days before assignment date. We have four children, two studying GCSE’s and two with SEN. Fourteen days was not long enough [to sort our family out].”

² http://www.aff.org.uk/linkedfiles/aff/about_aff/aff_research/affgrabpublic2012final.pdf

1.2 Getting families into the same school

The code has recently changed which means that military families are no more disadvantaged than civilian ones. However, AFF would still argue that military families don't have access to the same resources as civilian ones who are settled in an area. Military families often do not have the support of family and friends or a network where they can ask for help in getting their children to more than one school in the mornings. Civilian families make a choice to move whereas Service families must move on posting if they occupy SFA.

CASE STUDY

An F&C spouse has an appeal with a primary school regarding one of her children due to start P1 in August. She already has one of her children in the school but they have told her there are no places for the other one. This family already live on a remote patch which is further away from the barracks than the others. The school their child currently attends is a Catholic School which is very important to them; the school they have been offered for the other child is a round trip of around 20 miles in completely opposite directions. The family also have very young children and the husband is deploying to Afghanistan in September when the school term begins—which is causing huge stress for this family. The spouse is quite shy—she is Fijian and she would like support at the appeals meeting as she feels she cannot fully explain the full impact this separation will have on the family unit.

1.3 Transfers within UK and overseas postings

A family moving between England, NI and Scotland face difficulties with not only the curriculum but year entry dates.

“Due to postings in [UK] Scotland and Northern Ireland we have adversely affected our children's education as they are in three totally different systems where the entry dates vary. A child born in August in England will go in to a particular school year, but would be in the year below in NI or Scotland. Therefore, our daughter went down a school year, then back up, then down again. She is now in boarding school and is back up a year again.”

This issue is not just isolated to the UK. There are examples where SCE is not provided for families and they use the local schools. This could mean that a child that has started school may go back to nursery (Kindergarten or Pre—K in the US) and that they have to jump a year when they come back. There is a lack of information available for a family which currently is largely gleaned from the current occupant of the post.

Transfer of records is not standardised therefore it can be a lottery for families as to how and what meaningful records are passed to the next school.

1.4 Curriculum

“My son studied the Egyptians and Tudors three times during his primary education!”

Aside from a child repeating a topic there are also issues when a child arrives mid-term and has missed out on work already carried out by the class. Despite all coming under Directorate Children & Young People (DCYP). The curriculum even changes when moving between SCE schools!

1.5 Continuity of SEN provision

For those families choosing not to use the CEA system to help deal with their child's SEN, the effect of mobility on an SEN child can be more severe.

“I think what I am trying to say is that life is difficult enough when you have children who find just existing in the world a difficult task. Adding extra stress to the family trying to sort out support for your children, in addition to separated and operational tours is not good for anyone. There has to be some way of Service children having an SEN Passport of some sort that can move from LA to LA and at least give a starting point. The last thing our children need is gaps in their provision. Moving will almost certainly cause some regression in their learning patterns and ability to cope with life and stopping provision altogether or changing it significantly will not help. Usually we as parents have already fought hard to put provision in place, we know that it works for our children and we don't need someone else saying... ‘We have to re-assess before you can have that provision again.’”

“We are moving to Dorset. One of our children has SEN. We have 15 hours on the current statement but Dorset LA has said that a child needs 20 hours to qualify for support.”

“Frequent moves have meant that my son (who is in Year 6) has possibly slipped through the net, as he is currently awaiting diagnosis for Asperger Syndrome. If there had not been so many school moves, we feel this could have been diagnosed sooner. When he has entered a new school, and we have had issues, it has been blamed on the changes or his dad's occupation.”

CASE STUDY

I have four children. The eldest two (boys) are now 17 and 15 respectively, the younger two (girls) are 13 and 11. The two boys have both had SEN statements (registered with CEAS) since they were six for autism, ADD and Semantic-Pragmatic speech disorder.

The single biggest disadvantage the boys have faced is the requirement for an LA to create and then maintain their statements as we have moved around. In my view it is absurd that CEAS cannot be given statutory authority to grant and then maintain a statement. Currently we are reliant on Oxon CC maintaining the boys' statements but when we return to UK we will be back to arguing with (in all likelihood) another LA all over again. Add to that the reality that we are due posting in 2014 at exactly the moment when our eldest son is due to finish his current provision—but because we have no LA to “deal” with (because we do not know where we are posted) we cannot set about planning the funding etc for “what happens next?” for him.

If CEAS cannot gain either the statutory authority to grant and maintain a statement or to consider post compulsory education provision/needs then it could be better for us to be “assigned” a single LA who then oversee our boys all the way through irrespective of where we are posted. If that meant joint funding through an LA or contractual provision to have a military secretariat within an LA, it would be better than CEAS without the power to grant and maintain a statement when overseas and/or when moving about within Britain.

The new SEN Code of Practice sets out plans for a new “Local Offer”. In practice, this is likely to be problematic for mobile families as offers will differ from LA to LA and also from England to Scotland, for example. AFF is pleased that families will have more say in how their funding is spent on their child, and recognise that the Government understands that it is fundamental that, as a mobile family, parents really do know their child best. Families are quite rightly worried about a lack of continuous seamless support for their SEN child on posting.

AFF would like to see an organisation such as CEAS endorsed to offer a SEN “summary of need” that would detail the provision required and have to be taken up by schools. We would also like to see some reassurance or guarantee that funding will be available for a family moving into a new area and that the LA budget will allow for this without potentially the need for a lengthy appeal.

1.6 Friendship issues

With moving and separation often on the horizon friendships at school often provide the central stability for a Service child. If a change is necessary during a posting due to change of stage of education then it is vitally important for that child to maintain precious friendships already made and to optimise the years spent in one place. It is also worth noting that other Service families offer shared experience which helps children in tough circumstances.

1.7 Other

“On moving we have been told that our daughter cannot be given a place at the local junior school as she has not attended the infant school which is the feeder school.”

2. *The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs*

2.1 SCE provision

Currently provides education and childcare for families with children up to 19 who are posted overseas. Predominantly this is in Germany and Cyprus. There are concerns for adequate provision during drawdown in Germany as numbers of pupils get fewer. There is also some concern that one primary school failed an OFSTED inspection last year.

AFF is concerned as families do not have a choice of school as they do in the UK and that a school in special measures is all that is on offer is plainly not good enough. Also as the school is run by a MOD agency, surely there should be more rigorous checks in place before this situation is allowed to happen?

2.2 Lack of vocational courses overseas

In line with the UK, AFF would like to see more vocational courses on offer for children up to the age of 19. The Residential Support Scheme (RSS) provides help with the accommodation costs of learners aged 16 and over, who need to live away from home to study because their course is not available locally. The RSS is managed by the Young People Learning Agency (YPLA) in conjunction with Department for Education (DfE) for 16—eighteen year olds and Business Innovation Skills (BIS) for 19+ year olds to address unfairness for those young people living with a family member who is a Service person overseas. However, it creates quite a pressure on families to allow a 16 year old to go back to the UK on their own to undertake these courses.

2.3 Sixth Form provision

Generally SCE students perform well against their civilian peers with a one to 2% rise above average for attainment. However, in Germany, Sixth form provision and attainment is a problem. 4.5% of students achieve an A* at A Level, which is well below the national average. 32% achieve an A*/A grade—this is five

percentage points below the national and 52% achieve A*-B grade—this is nine percentage points below the national.

In the last academic year the total number of students studying for A Levels was 126. The number of students is decreasing. SCE's worst achieving secondary school results came from Windsor, a school which is closing but currently offering one-to-one tuition for some students. It operates on a full complement of staff but this clearly shows that students need peers.

2.4 Investment in state boarding schools

The Duke of York's state boarding school is about to increase its capacity to 700. AFF would like to see more state boarding school places available for children of Service personnel. We are also aware of plans to potentially offer vocational courses for children at the Duke of York's School which we welcome.

AFF recognises that some state boarding schools have Service children high on their admissions criteria but this is no guarantee of a place. As one school told me "we can't find a place when there isn't one".

3. *The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs*

DCYP has recruited a project manager (David Walker) to look into the need for a standardised form to use for Service children who move schools. This project is supported by the £3 million Support Fund. This is for all military children whether they have SEN or not. AFF is contributing evidence to help where possible and welcomes the creation of a form specifically for Army families.

4. *The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families*

4.1 Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA)

CEA address the effect on mobility of children and allows families to access continuity of education.

"By the age of six, my eldest son was on his third school. He took almost a year to settle in but refused to participate in team activities and got easily frustrated in lessons if he did not pick it up quickly enough. In the meantime I found moving, struggling for an address and then fighting for entries into schools that could meet his needs unbearably stressful. At eight he started at a prep school—again it took him a year to settle in, to accept that he could form relationships without fear of loss and to catch up where frequent moves and differing curriculum had affected his attainment. Two years later he is in the A stream and participates fully in team activities and has a circle of friends. As for me, knowing that his education is secure, I face each new move (three since starting at prep school) with equanimity."

Despite the press painting this allowance as an officer's allowance, it is not. In our 2011 CEA survey³ 22% of respondents were Senior NCOs or other ranks. An additional factor to consider is that 30% of those in the category "officer" are Late Entry Officers.

As long as any member of the Armed Forces is mobile, AFF will support the retention of CEA. Whilst we recognise that this is an allowance and the parents must expect to pay some form of contribution to the school, there have been significant increases in fees that will discourage some families. AFF will monitor these increases to check that schools remain affordable. Whilst we are pleased with the increase in state boarding schools which are significantly less expensive, we also recognise that to some families, the small numbers of boarders or flexi boarding is just not suitable for those posted overseas or some distance from the school. Adequate provision of weekend activities will help to stave off isolation and loneliness which could make the situation *intolerable* for the child.

4.2 SENA

SENA is the Special Educational Needs Addition allowance. This can be claimed by Service families if a child, who is already in receipt of CEA, is then found to have Special Educational Needs (SEN). AFF is monitoring the cost of Special Schools' fees as often these schools are significantly more expensive than mainstream boarding schools. One Special School's fees are £14,000 so the family had to find £4,240 a term after claiming CEA and SENA (at time of enquiry £9,760 combined). This is unrealistic for a soldier to afford.

Families have also expressed their concerns over continuous assessment to "prove" that their child still has an additional need, despite in some cases this need being a recognised life-long condition such as Down's Syndrome. In reality this means that families live with the continual pressure of not knowing whether their next funding application will be accepted or not.

This year AFF is investigating whether more children of Service personnel are likely to be Dyslexic. Initial conversations with an educational psychologist suggested that this is an area that more research is needed.

³ http://www.aff.org.uk/linkedfiles/aff/affceareportfullversion_mar2011.pdf

4.3 Additional allowances in JSP 752

Service Children's Visits (SCV) home from boarding school are only for the beginning and end of term (six single flights per child per year). There is no provision for either half-term or exeats. This allowance covers only a third of the costs at the most. Boarding school culture has changed over the last decade, moving towards a more flexible boarding system that has reduced the numbers of pupils that stay in at the weekend. This puts pressure on Service parents to bring their children home more often, which is expensive.

The allowance of one single return flight for children over 18 in full-time education was withdrawn. This has caused a huge financial concern for families who accepted a posting far away without realising that they would need to fund three return flights a year on average. Children at university often cannot work to maintain rent for accommodation as they are studying full time and most university accommodation is unavailable in the long holidays.

4.4 Service Premium

AFF welcomes the Service Premium but would like to see the expenditure of it used more successfully across England. We would like to see adequate training for teachers and support staff to enable them to offer effective pastoral care.

CASE STUDY 1

It transpires that my son's head teacher was not aware that we were from a Service family and, as a result, could not explain how the Service Premium was being utilised. The school administrator said it was on SIMS⁴ that our son's father was in the Services (but whether or not this enough to trigger the LA to pay the school is anyone's guess). I just spoke to the LA and they had no idea how a school would know when to claim Service Pupil Premium as the question on parent's profession is not asked on any admission forms. We had previously made the school aware of our family background and also on occasions my husband would pick our son up in uniform. However, do you know what the correct admin process is, because a) I'm still not sure whether the school is getting it, and b) if they are, they are clearly not using it for the purpose it was intended.

CASE STUDY 2

We live in Wales and the schools do not receive the Service Premium but the children at schools in Wales still face the same issues that they do when they move in England. There are not many postings in Wales but our children have to learn Welsh, the Service Premium could really benefit the children in giving them extra assistance in this new and unusual language. I do understand that schools are funded differently in Wales but in my opinion it shouldn't make a difference, this money should go straight to the school. My husband serves his country (as did I for 10 years), we pay taxes too but our children's schools are missing out on this benefit. It shouldn't matter where the child is at school, it should be all children have this premium or none of them.

AFF is launching in 2013 the "Service Premium Award" to highlight best practice amongst schools claiming this premium. The details are yet to be finalised but we anticipate offering two or three awards to schools of different sizes. AFF is also currently looking at working with the devolved parliaments and MOD agencies to show the need for this funding and highlight the disparity for Service families.

4.5 £3 million Support Fund for state schools with Service children

This support fund has been made available to assist publicly funded schools, academies and free schools throughout the UK to mitigate the effects of mobility or deployment of their Service communities; Regular Armed Forces and Reserve Forces. £6 million has been allocated in the first two years.

AFF welcomes this fund that recognises that mobility and deployment that brings particular issues to a Service child and will continue to publicise it.

5. *The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service children's education*

5.1 CEAS

Under-staffed and under-invested and probably under-utilised. Families report huge frustrations in getting hold of staff. There is currently just one telephone number and one email address freely available to cover the whole world and both professionals and families. This helpline is open part-time hours which is inadequate. CEAS currently has two Parent Support Officers who are experts in helping families appeal for school places, amongst other duties. They are a lifeline to mobile Service families and do outstanding work to help them

⁴ SIMS (School Information Management System) is a management information system used by over 22,000 schools in England, Wales and Northern Ireland to meet the changing needs of schools over the last 24 years.

The system enables schools to manage student and staff information across all areas of school life including registration, finance and payroll, timetabling, progress tracking and assessment, and whole-school communication.

but are restricted in that there are only two of them to cover the whole of the UK and families returning from abroad.

AFF would like to see easier access to help families via a more informative website and longer telephone opening hours to cover at least one session out of normal working hours. Should out of office hours be trialled?

5.2 SCE

SCE is currently being restructured and from this year will come under DYCP and they will lose their agency status. A new chief executive is currently being recruited.

AFF is closely monitoring the situation in Gutersloh regarding the primary school that failed its OFSTED inspection. This situation demonstrates the lack of choice parents overseas face when a school fails they have no other option.

6. Other matters for consideration

6.1 Attainment

AFF welcomes both the SP and the £3 million support fund for state schools to help support Service pupils. Whilst we recognise that these funds are not to increase attainment, very little is being done to monitor individual progress. If a Service child is above the national average at the end of Key Stage 1 and then does not progress at the same pace in Key Stage 2 but still scores 1% above the national average, there does not appear to be an indicator to say that this child is failing. In fact it could be shown that Service children are equal or one to two percentage points above the national average. Because of mobility and the number of schools that Service children attend, they should be carefully monitored and historical data should be taken into account. These historical records are often difficult to obtain by schools and are easily lost. Currently the information on the DfE website regarding attainment does not take into account the children who left the state sector either because they were failing to progress or because of the high number of schools they had attended or both.

The “Educational Attainment of the Armed Forces Children in England in relation to 2011” suggests that Service children achieve better than the national average. The sample of Service children has been compared with the whole population (some of whom will be unemployed or working only part time). The OFSTED 2011 report⁵ states that Service children all come from families with at least one working parent. It is also likely that a higher proportion of children in the Service family sample come from two-parent homes than the whole population. Clearer evidence would need to compare like with like as it is possible that the analysis of more similar sample groups may demonstrate that Service children are not attaining at a higher level than a comparable group.

6.2 Redundancy/Transition into civilian life

How does the Armed Forces Covenant work for those leaving the Army?

CASE STUDY

Sgt X was a non-volunteer in the first redundancy tranche and was made redundant with an exit date of September 2012. He unsuccessfully appealed the redundancy decision.

His daughter had started a combination of GCSEs and BTec at the local school. Sgt X had never claimed Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) and had chosen to move his children around with him on postings.

The family knew that they did not wish to settle in the area but realised that the combination of courses that their daughter was undertaking could not be replicated at any other school. This was verified by Children’s Advisory Education Service (CEAS). Sgt X decided to apply for retention of his SFA to allow his daughter to finish the courses. His request was for a 10 month extension.

DIO rejected the request and Sgt X approached his chain of command and AFF to help. AFF agreed to help because we felt the following:

If Sgt X had been claiming CEA his daughter would have been allowed to complete her course. Despite his mobility, if Sgt X had continued serving and been posted during this period of his daughter’s course he would have been entitled to request retention (it may not have been granted but is rarely refused).

AFF therefore felt that Sgt X and his family had been disadvantaged by service, although acknowledging that housing was very tight in the area that Sgt X required retention, which might then disadvantage a Service family coming in. Sgt X informed us he was happy to pay local rent.

⁵ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/28108/ChildreninServicefamilies.pdf

Under the conditions of redundancy, the redundancy cell clarified that Sgt X was able to request for retention for 93 days at Service rates and then a further 93 days at local rates. He would then require just over three more months to see his daughter through.

After nine months of Sgt X appealing, AFF campaigning and CEAS issuing an impact statement, DIO's decision was overridden by PS4 allowing Sgt X's daughter to complete her state examinations. As soon as they were finished, Sgt X moved his family away from the area on gaining employment somewhere else.

And finally one pupil's positive view:

"Forces education allowed me to develop my personality, and to become independent. The mixture of children and the constant changes of location, etc, made me adaptable. The places we lived gave me another kind of education, making me tolerant and understanding. I think, if you're intelligent, the changing of schools doesn't hurt—if you need a bit of 'help', it can be a problem."

January 2013

Army Families Federation supplementary evidence following oral evidence session on 30 January 2013

Q10 Sandra Osborne: Does the stress and worry of having a parent deployed impact on the children's education?

AFF's comment: We disagree and would say that as children grow older they deal with each deployment differently which could be better or worse but either way—different.—

Q12 Sandra Osborne: How much support is available and is there more that could be done?

AFF's comment: SCE have information available for schools to access online and the AFF has a useful deployment tab on its website.

Q19 Sir Bob Russell:

AFF's comment: The Schools Admissions Code within The Education Act has been changed to specifically help Service families and we welcome that.—

Q27 Sir Bob Russell: Chair, the reason I ask that is because it has been suggested to me that the primary provision is fine, but the secondary level is not so good. Families are therefore putting their children into boarding schools. We have questions on boarding schools later, but I wonder whether you have heard anything.

AFF's comments: Whilst key stages one and two teaching standards are excellent, there's a very real need for new premises for the tiny school. The single option for senior schooling locally means that many families with older children select a boarding school in the UK for their child's education, and this brings with it its own difficulties, especially in terms of travel for holidays. In this age of electronic communications, the cost of telephone and internet from the island's single supplier is prohibitive. Averaging £130 per month for limited data download.

The Falkland Islands Community School opened in 1992. It offers 18 subjects at GCSE level in Stanley. There is hostel accommodation for the students.

Those students who achieve appropriate grades are funded for A level courses at Peter Symonds' Sixth Form College, Winchester or to attend Chichester College to acquire National Diplomas or NVQs. The Government also offers grants to attend Higher Education courses, mainly in the UK.

Q30 Mr Brazier:

AFF's comment: Infant classes (those where the majority of children will reach the age of 5, 6 or 7 during the school year) must not contain more than 30 pupils with a single school teacher. Additional children may be admitted under limited exceptional circumstances. These children will remain an "excepted pupil" for the time they are in an infant class or until the class numbers fall back to the current infant class size limit. The excepted children are:

- (a) Children admitted outside the normal admissions round with statements of special educational needs specifying a school;
- (b) Looked after children and previously looked after children admitted outside the normal admissions round;
- (c) Children admitted, after initial allocation of places, because of a procedural error made by the admission authority or local authority in the original application process;
- (d) Children admitted after an independent appeals panel upholds an appeal;
- (e) Children who move into the area outside the normal admissions round for whom there is no other available school within reasonable distance;
- (f) Children of UK Service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round;

- (g) Children whose twin or sibling from a multiple birth is admitted otherwise than as an excepted pupil;
- (h) Children with special educational needs who are normally taught in a special educational needs unit attached to the school, or registered at a special school, who attend some infant classes within the mainstream school.

Since 1997, it has been unlawful for infant aged classes to contain more than 30 children with one qualified teacher, with a tiny number of permitted exceptions. The purpose of this legislation was to try to give young children starting school the best possible chances of success by limiting class sizes. However, mobile Service families with children needing Key Stage 1 (infant) places in schools have often found the inflexibility of this legislation difficult to live with.

In the light of the Covenant and representations made by the MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People (DCYP) to the Department for Education (DfE), the Code has been amended to try to strike a balance between the original intentions of the infant class size legislation and the needs of mobile Service families with children requiring Key Stage 1 school places when they move to a new area.

It is important to note that admission authorities are not required to treat all Service children in Key Stage 1 as "excepted pupils"; they are empowered to do so in respect of only those who are the subjects of in-year applications. In other words, they can but they do not have to. Where a number of Service children require in year admission to a Key Stage 1 class at the same time, for example, it is inevitable that some admission authorities will be reluctant to see significant increases to infant class sizes over and above the legal limit.

Q42 Mr Brazier: One of the points of that new configuration, however stable it may be in theory, is that the staff jobs are still all in south-east England, whereas most of the regimental jobs are not. My last question is, has the recent tightening of the rules on eligibility for CEA had a significant impact on the forces and the way they see the allowance?

AFF comment: This is not an accurate reflection of the Army: Staff jobs are in Herford, Catterick, Abbeywood etc.

Q58 Sir Bob Russell: If we go back to the all-singing, all-dancing Armed Forces Covenant that is now enshrined in law, what should this Committee be recommending that the Government of the day put into practice in terms of what the Armed Forces Covenant has led people to believe will happen?

AFF comment: The Armed Forces Covenant needs to correlate with the new SEN code of practice currently being reviewed.

Q59 Sir Bob Russell: Do you have experience of a social services department providing equipment for a child with special needs?

- The term Special Needs is only now used for Special Education Needs and the term used should really be Additional Needs otherwise it can offend people and be confusing.
- Social Services do loan equipment but this involves an OT assessment and could take some time because patients are prioritised due to their condition. The patients with highest priority can on average wait for 3 months for assessment, although those with terminal illness can often be rushed through.
- Some equipment is not provided by the Social Service such as special medical beds which are provided by the PCT usually the community nursing staff. Social Services do provide beds such as an up and down bed if it is purely for accessibility and transfer needs.
- If a family move to another LA/PCT they can take equipment with them but it depends on what it is and the LA/PCT. If it is a special bed this probably wouldn't be feasible because some equipment requires specialist assembling for health and safety requirements. However the PCT/LA can make an arrangement to buy the equipment if need be.
- Some equipment can be kept such as portable grab rails and such as equipment that would cost more to clean than to replace.

I hope this answers this question fully enough. I did have an enquiry yesterday about this very matter so we do have some evidence that supports this and the family are considering buying some equipment themselves because at the moment they are struggling.

Q63 Sandra Osborne: So there is a problem there?

AFF comment: No! These are two different issues. The SEN pupil could have local support without being mobile and if this was not available then the LA would provide it privately. The SEN child would be able to apply to stay in the quarter because of their needs. The issue for these families is the 26 weeks statement process and starting it in the first place. It has to be instigated by the LA.

Written evidence from families submitted by the Army Families Federation

I attended the Defence select committee session in London on Service Children's Education and spoke to you at The Wellington Academy last Monday. I have put together some evidence as discussed regarding the choices we face when choosing boarding school for our children. I have asked two colleagues with different experiences to contribute to this as I felt that their voices should be heard too.

My husband is serving in the armed forces and we have two children. Four years ago, having watched our eldest son struggle with different curriculum and teaching methods in schools both in the UK and in Germany, we decided that he had endured as many changes in schools as he could cope with. He was missing vital steps in learning and was coping with different teaching methods guided by different Local Authorities. An example of this was when he learnt cursive writing in Year R in Kent and then this did not follow on in Germany in the same way, and again was different when we returned to the UK. We also had concerns about his progress.

Our choice as we saw it consisted of my husband going away continually for the rest of his Army career and becoming at best "Weekend Dad" with me settling in one place with the boys, or maintaining the family unit and moving on posting which meant sending our sons away to boarding school or changing their school an infinite number of times. I feel that choosing the boarding school option was the most difficult decision that we have had to make in life so far. If the Continuity of Education Allowance had not been available, then I think that my husband would have considered leaving the Army. The impact of mobility would have been too great on our children's education as we have moved 15 times in 22 years so far.

I also feel that it is significant to point out that if my husband was not in the Army, neither of my children would be in boarding school through choice. We would settle in an area and the local choice of schools would be a stable long term decision.

We have all found this hard at times. Choosing the right school was extremely important. The school had to be able to understand our life and had to be up to the task of pastoral care. Flexi-boarding or weekends from Friday afternoon till Monday morning without any structured activity in particular worried me. Although this may sound obvious, I found that this was the case in several schools that I looked around. For the children, it is also extremely important that they do the same as their peers regarding exeat. I am pleased to tell you that since they have received this stable education, they have thrived and have been able to concentrate on learning. They have made long term friends, have a history within the school and they have individually received specific help for the gaps in their learning.

These next two examples are from my colleagues:

I am married to a serving soldier in the armed forces and we have four children. Last year we were faced with the difficult decision on whether or not to send our eldest son to boarding school. Our son is nine years old and has attended four schools since the age of four and this was beginning to take its toll on him. Over the past two years not only have my son's grades dipped quite dramatically but his self-esteem seems to have been affected too. I believe this is due to the frequent school moves and lack of stability.

As a parent the most important thing to me is the social and emotional development of my child, however, it was evident that our son was struggling and this led us to make the difficult decision to send our son to boarding school.

I believe that sending our son away to school was the most difficult decision we have ever had to make as parents and one we did not take lightly, but I do feel this was the right decision for our son. The stability that boarding school offers has alleviated anxieties on us as parents as we know that our son will now continue to have continuity of education and reach his full potential academically.

My son started boarding at eight. It was his fourth school. Our decision to send him was not actually about any academic issues even though he had experienced three different curriculums but was about his emotional and social wellbeing. Never a hugely outgoing child, each move saw him retreat further into himself. By the last school before boarding, he refused to participate in any school activities outside the classroom and actively avoided making friends.

I was not convinced that a full boarding environment would suit him and for a while I was correct. It took two years before the school felt he had fully settled in. Academically he has always done well but he is now trying out every activity the school has to offer and he stands confidently within his peer group.

My husband and I have moved eight times over 13 years. Most of these moves have been big ones: Germany-Yorkshire-Glasgow-Swindon-Germany etc, making settling in one location with husband commuting impossible. Our last two postings only required us to move 50 miles. I kept my job and commuted but DIO policy meant that we had to move houses so even a small move would have meant a school move for my children. And even if we had not moved, who knows where we will go next meaning our children need to stay where they are to guarantee continuity of education.

We have always been pragmatic about our lifestyle and the implications it has had on my career (what career?), our finances and my social and emotional wellbeing. I try to trade those off with the advantages of this lifestyle (although struggling to think of any while I sit in my mouldy house, but I know there are some!). But the moment you begin to mess with my children's education then the deal is off!

Thank you for the opportunity to add this to the enquiry. If you have any further questions then do not hesitate to be in touch.

March 2013

Written evidence from Diana Sheldon

I write this as an army wife of 39 years, mother of three children and a primary school teacher who has done much of my teaching in schools where there has been a large proportion of Service children.

I hope to say a little about each of the following:

- How the children feel;
- Problems for parents;
- Issues for teachers/schools.

1. As a mother and a teacher I have seen how news of a move immediately unsettles children regardless of how old they are. Some get over excited and switch off to the current school or situation and just look forward to the new one hoping all problems will go away. Then come down with a hard bump when all problems reappear.

There are others who recoil in horror at the thought of another change and become very shy and quiet and do not meet the new challenge very well at all.

Then there are those who appear to just carry on but can't voice their concerns so just bury their problems and hope for the best.

2. The problems common to all these groups are well known—work still difficult, areas of curriculum that you haven't covered have already been done so you don't understand what is going on, other children already have friendship groups and don't want to include new ones, new school with different expectation to the one you have just left etc. An example of this last point about expectation is my eldest daughter who moved school after GCSEs and was then predicted with a C for English A level. When I approached the teacher and asked what the problem was he said she was doing fine and there was no problem she was a perfectly average student and should pass without any difficulty. When I pointed out that neither my daughter nor I would be happy with anything less than an A grade he dramatically changed his attitude and said he hadn't realised her ability and that obviously she had just been coasting since the move. Even at that age she was unaware that the move had had that effect on how she was working and was horrified when it was pointed out—fortunately it was discovered and dealt with in time because I wasn't afraid to challenge the teacher.

3. My youngest daughter was a case when it came to making new friends. By the age of seven she was starting new fifth new school and said to us that she just wanted to go to boarding school so that she could make friends and keep them. Heartbreaking to send your child to boarding school at the age of eight but that is what we did.

4. One of the main decisions for some Service parents is the "if" or "when" of boarding school. Often dependant on rank and where you live, if there are no other children of the same age on the patch during term time because they are all away then there is pressure to do the same but this doesn't suit all children, or all parents. For many the cost is just prohibitive whilst for others it is the expected thing to do. If future knowledge of postings could be better forecast then one could make a more informed decision but often you only have an idea about the next one posting and that is often very last minute.

5. The vast majority obviously stay in the state day system and the problems of trying to get your child into the local school if you move mid-term or mid-year are well known. Often the school with a vacancy is the one that other parents didn't want and often a less good school. So we have children who need special help and support going to schools where this is not available and the problem grows.

6. Some parents are unaware of the gap that begins to form between the performance of their child and the level that they should attain. This gap continues to grow for many children until the point where they need a statement of special needs. This process takes some time and if you are posted during the process there are occasions where you have to start all over again in the new area. If possible parents should be advised to not move the family until the statement has been approved. Many are unaware of this until after they have moved.

7. Not having an address until just before moving is another problem on posting, especially if there are quarters in several areas for the unit you are going to. All this stress and hassle comes at the same time as you are trying to pack up, organise removals and start at a new job. No wonder the children don't know what to do and feel unhappy.

8. I do know of one family who couldn't get their 13-year-old son into school for six weeks when they moved to the Birmingham area from Germany. They were told "don't worry, you won't be prosecuted, it's not your fault". They weren't worried about being prosecuted, just wanted a school place!

9. The issues regarding transfer of information between schools is well known and a continued problem. I have already mentioned those in the process of being stated but for all children there needs to be a smooth system put in place. Those with SEN issues in particular need a point of reference so that there is adequate ongoing provision for those where problems have been identified and proper monitoring of progress.

10. In schools where there is a high proportion of Service children and therefore constant movement I believe there should be an individual whose sole job it is to support those children who are about to move and prepare them for that move and then help them collect together their work and belongings for the move. Also be there to welcome new children and be their guide and helper when they first arrive. Look out for them at playtime and make sure someone plays with them, explain to them how the lunch system works and things like that. Also to be the POC between the new parents and the school and report back on how the child is settling in and answer any issues that the parents might have. This person could be another parent or an LSA employed specially for this role but someone who is not the class teacher or the head. Someone who has time to listen to both child and parent, especially if there is a language issue for the parent, for example, Nepalese-speaking, and they need time to understand newsletters and instructions sent home.

11. *However, at the moment the biggest concern in the school where I'm teaching is a new strategy that has been introduced that would cost nothing to put right but is causing lots of upset and stress.* The new system for applying online for a school when you move means you have to go through the LEA you are leaving before you apply to the new LEA. For example, if I'm living in Hampshire and moving to Yorkshire I have to notify Hampshire that I am moving but this can only be done four weeks before moving, so I can't apply to Yorkshire until that time. I know a place can't be *allocated* until four weeks before being needed but there is no reason why an interest can't be registered and the schools notified that there is someone who would like a place. Then information about waiting lists etc can be exchanged and everyone knows what the position is. We currently have several families very upset and concerned about this relatively new procedure because they are the sort of families who wouldn't dream of ringing the schools in the area they are moving to if they have been told online that they can't apply yet. If I haven't explained this very well please contact me again or one of the local education areas for clarification on how the scheme works and the trouble it is causing.

In summary, nothing really very new, just the same old problems that have been going on 39 years, at least to my own personal knowledge. Hopefully something can now be done.

January 2013

Written evidence from Dr Alison Baverstock

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information to this inquiry. I am responding to this request:

- As a Services wife of nearly 30 years;
- As a mother of four Services children (currently 24, 22, 19 and 17);
- As former Osnabruck Garrison Coordinator (1991–93) for the newly formed Federation of Army Wives (FAW, now the Army Families Federation, AFF); worries over education were frequently raised;
- As a university lecturer who has researched and written extensively about parenting (*Whatever!* and *It's not fair!* are both published by Hachette);
- As founder and director of Reading Force (www.readingforce.org.uk) which promotes the use of shared reading to assist effective and preferably inter-generational communication within Services families, particularly during periods of separation, deployment and associated stress.

SUMMARY

The children of Armed Forces families often have difficulties in accessing the same standards of education as their civilian counterparts, due to their greater mobility, ongoing anticipated instability within the community they join, and associated inability to plan ahead. All of these factors can have an impact on both levels of engagement within their education and their involvement within the school environment.

In general, attitudes towards Services families within schools are improving and levels of awareness of the particular challenges they face increasing. But further developments could usefully both promote their better engagement and highlight the valuable lessons in diversity and change management they potentially offer. Whereas they tend to attract attention for the administrative burden they bring, Services families also have much to offer the schools and communities they become part of.

I would like to offer information on the following specific points.

1. Access to equal standards of education

“Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area where they live.” (The Armed Forces Covenant)

Services' quarters are generally located close to relevant bases/local services and so families will probably technically have access to associated community schools. In practice, their ability to ensure access is much less certain.

Since the detailed monitoring of schools and the public availability of the associated reports/results began, access to the most favoured schools within areas of high population density has become vastly more competitive, and civilian families tend to plan well ahead to achieve places for their children. There are regular reports in the media of how homes with the right postcode for particular schools attract a premium and many associated tales of tactical moves by families keen to achieve access. I have known family planning be similarly orchestrated to ensure continued access to a particularly popular school.

Services parents are denied the ability to long-term plan. No application can be made for a school place until the family has an address, and shortage of quarters in some locations means you often only get allocated a quarter just before a posting—and the school you would have chosen is already full. Popular schools with no remaining places have a waiting list, which is often held by the local educational authority, further distancing the incoming Services families from understanding how the process works. The children of Services families, who arrive late but lack special needs, go to the bottom of the list.

As a personal example of this process in action, we were posted to London just before our eldest son (then rising five) was due to start school, but until we had an address we could not apply for a school place. The move took place in the middle of December and although the local school was anticipating vacancies (ironically due to Services children moving) when we moved it still had no space for him. We eventually heard during the Christmas holidays where he could start school for the first time in January. This was not an ideal beginning to a child's school career, and provided no chance to prepare him—other than buying the sweatshirts at the last minute. Two years later, on leaving this posting, we were not able to find out whether we had places at the school for our (by then two) school age-children until just before moving. This meant that in our pre-move visit to show the children where they would be living, we were not able to show them their anticipated school.

Different arrangements for starting school/curriculum delivery can be similarly confusing. For example, our daughter started school twice; once where schools took rising fives, and then in a second location where schools only took children in the term when they were five. It is obviously the parent's responsibility to help the child manage change, but perhaps local authorities could be more aware of the associated difficulties.

If you do not get access to the school of your choice, or your children are scattered between several schools, it is possible to appeal. In my general (not subject to any wider research) experience such appeals are well supported by Services' legal teams and appeals are usually won—but inevitably result in a delay before the child can start, and then the difficulty of integrating within a school that did not want you in the first place, in the knowledge that you will be moving on before too long. There is a further difficulty in that Services personnel are used to rules and to raising issues within a prescribed chain of command, and so appealing outside the system to a local education authority, with which they have no prior connection, feels particularly uncomfortable.

If you have several children and cannot gain places for them all at the same establishment, you may end up with the difficulty of trying to get several young children to different schools at the same time of day; particularly awkward if there are distances to travel and the partner does not drive (relatively common for soldiers' wives). Such logistic difficulties also impact on a partner's ability to get employment.

Suggested solutions

- Being a Services child should bring priority points for a school place within a local education authority along with adoption, children in care, special needs, siblings etc.
- Schools should be allowed to go above their official quota of pupils to take incoming Services children, as it is likely that the overall total will subsequently fall again due to postings.
- Both these policies would hopefully reduce the need for appeals, but appeals process that does remain should be vastly speeded up and made more informal (so less of an ordeal).

2. *Mid school year postings*

A mid school year posting is the most disruptive type, and may result in three class teachers in a single year (eg September, January, September). It can be particularly difficult if schools in the new location are full and a child has to wait for a place; this delays the making of new friendships and often results in them pining for relationships left behind.

In my experience schools respond variously well to mid-year moves. This is an opportunity to show how to manage change and integrate new faces into the classroom, and our children have certainly benefitted from this. But it is also the opportunity to allocate children according to gaps in groups rather than through full and appropriate identification of their abilities and intended learning outcomes—and can be seen by all involved as an administrative burden. The documentation from the previous school does not necessarily arrive at the same time as the child.

Suggested solutions

- Promote a system similar to the that operating within the US Military, where I believe postings are always in the summer so accompanying children can start the new term with everyone else.
- Allow schools to go over their yearly quota of pupils for mid-year arrivals to ensure rapid involvement in a school on arrival.

3. *Early years provision overseas*

Many units make their own provision. This can mean there is not much mixing between units, which may or may not be desirable.

4. *Effective arrangements for transition between schools*

Teachers and school administrators I have talked to (notably since setting up Reading Force) are keen to help pupils manage an anticipated move, and talk of better planning of the process. This is to their credit, but in practice many Services families will *not* be willing to inform a school of a likely move until the very last moment. This for a number of reasons:

- Arrangements for postings do change. Seemingly firm commitments for specific postings are not infrequently changed at the last minute—it's important not to give up a school place until you are completely sure you will be moving. If you have already formally informed the school that you will be leaving, you cannot then ask for the place back.
- Parents do not wish to interrupt or compromise friendships with information about a forthcoming move until they have to—once a child knows they are leaving they may find themselves less included by friends, or themselves disengage from the school community/curriculum.
- Giving up your child's place at a school is a very painful experience; the parents have watched them make friends, themselves bonded with other parents, and avoiding the issue by not informing the school until the last minute is perhaps not to be unexpected.

The school the child is leaving is required to transfer records to the new school, but in practice this can take a long time, and is particularly difficult if you are not yet sure of the new address (because you are holding out from making a decision in order to try and get several children into a single school, and whichever can offer places for them all will be the chosen establishment). Several times we were given a package of information on each child for us to take with us and ourselves deliver.

Suggested solutions

- Understand why parents may not be willing to provide information on their forthcoming move.
- Offer a confidential alerting procedure which enables parents to informally announce anticipated arrangements, and receive guidance on effective management of the process, but without commitment. This would enable schools to plan better and help parents share the problem.
- Make better arrangements for the transfer of supporting documentation; encourage the new school (where known) to contact the previous one—to learn more about a different institution. This could become a topic/theme to benefit the whole class/school.
- Acknowledge the pain of children left behind when Forces children move on.

5. *Families with special educational needs*

This is particularly difficult as you build up relationships with case-workers with knowledge of your specific situation and then have to move on and build up a supportive relationship with a new team. Some families opt to be stable due to particular difficulties/good solutions with local establishments, but then they have to cope with single-parenting during the working week/month (depending on distance to be travelled between new job and quarter).

Suggested solutions

- Consider a points based system which could move with you, or documentation in the form of a passport that accompanies the child.
- Some of the practices/documentation used on behalf of “looked after” children might be usefully examined—see British Agency for Adoption and Fostering.

6. *Support for Services families in settling into new schools*

Over the years, and with four children, there were a number of strategies we used to promote swift settling in:

- Have some form of leaving event from the first school and acknowledge the pain of leaving friends—as well as the situation of those who remain; encourage them to keep in touch;

- Choose a school where Forces children are in the minority, so they would be understood but not become part of a self-isolating group. We always wanted them to integrate and encouraged them to take part in whatever the school/local community put on (eg music festivals, Irish dancing, local gym club etc);
- Quickly ask a classmate back for tea—especially the individual who had volunteered to “look after” the new child in the class (a common way in which schools manage the integration of new pupils);
- Offer to get involved with the school, perhaps by joining the PTA, helping at the school fair/gardening day/swimming pool rota.

Suggested solutions

- Offer information on strategies for effective transition between schools in a leaving pack for moving families, or provide regular features in the *AFF Journal*. During the first Iraq war, FAW made available a useful short guide, in bullet point form, to help children deal with their fathers’ absence—something similar on moving schools might be helpful.
- Produce similar information for schools.

7. How many Services children are there within a school?

One interesting finding from the research that accompanied Reading Force is that Services families do not always identify themselves as such to the schools they join—as they do not wish to be labelled. It is not uncommon for civilian families to advise their children *not* to make friends with Services children because they risk being abandoned when the children move on.

We found in feedback from schools which used Reading Force that there were instances of the project helping schools to identify who are the Services children and also promoting links between Services children in different classes and year groups, which increased their ability to offer mutual support. The availability of the Forces Pupil Premium, and school requests for relevant children to be identified as such in order for them to access the funds, has similarly been helpful in promoting awareness of Services children within schools.

Suggested solutions

- Consider whether the number of Services children on a school’s roll should be required information.
- Allow this information be captured confidentially so if a family does not want to share publicly they do not have to.

8. Attitudes towards Services children

Once frankly seen as a bit of a nuisance for school administrators (they arrive late, leave early, require lots of administration and can attract irritation from the local population who want access to the places they occupy) in recent years I have observed significant progress in attitudes towards Services children and their more welcoming accommodation within schools. This may be due to the higher profile of overseas engagements involving troops and the work of associated charities. At a recent conference in Birmingham, organised by the Services Children’s Support Network, the good intentions of educational professionals were strongly in evidence—although this perhaps may be anticipated from what was a self-selecting audience.

In future, in addition to promoting and managing their effective transition through various schools, perhaps the *benefits* of having Services children could be more effectively advocated. As parents, I feel one of our most important roles is to promote both a lack of fear of change and an ability to manage change as a process. Appreciating the experience of Services children, and the changes they must accommodate and build on, can surely help their classmates (and perhaps even their teachers!) empathise with the processes they go through—and help them develop useful strategies for dealing with change too.

Services families are often “joiners in”, who contribute to school organisations and have a “can do” mentality. They broaden the community and add diversity—certainly our own children regularly added sectors to class pie charts showing place of birth, when almost everyone else had been born in the local hospital. Services children also connect their classmates with the wider world; their experience is particularly linked to national events and what is in the news.

This differentness can be built upon through associated schools offering support to Services children with particular issues—eg postings and deployment, moving—through establishing drop in centres at regular times of the week and featuring initiatives such as Reading Force.

Suggested solutions

- Could schools with particularly strong experience of managing Services children be nominated as mentor schools; able to offer advice to those with less awareness? I realise that SCISS is a very valuable body, but think that schools have to self-nominate to join. Does their expertise get more widely shared to all schools, including private/public ones where many Services pupils are boarding?
- Enable the voice of Services parents with relevant experience to be heard, and to influence the debate.

- Should the issue of the effective management of Services children be more prominent as a measure of a school's overall effectiveness—monitored by Ofsted, regularly featured in Inset training days?

January 2013

Written evidence from Fiona Cuthbertson, Keystone Consulting

Just as a bit of background I used to work in the Commons (for Laurence Robertson) and was a parliamentary candidate and councillor (under my maiden name Bryce). I have therefore been involved with politics for over 10 years and I now run Keystone Consulting which helps people to understand Parliament and how to get involved and my speciality is education and social inclusion.

As we all know the education of children of army personnel is often taken on by boarding schools at great expense and also facilitates the separation of parent and child. However, it occurs to me that there may be another—and cheaper way—of dealing with this problem effectively.

Education can be provided to those who are disenfranchised from the education system through online live lessons facilitated by technology, and therefore this could surely be seen as a possible solution for those students that find themselves unable to be educated locally because of where their parents are stationed abroad ie: in the Falklands.

An example of such technology is the Nisai Virtual Academy (NVA), an award winning online learning community created and maintained by the Nisai Group (<http://www.nisai.com/>) that is internationally recognised as a world leader in personalised learning. This is because they can provide an education in almost all possible subjects online meaning that they can source their students from anywhere therefore providing all with the opportunity of an effective education no matter where their location. In addition, the NVA technology is more cost effective. For the 10 students in the class who would otherwise need boarding school education, the equivalent of only one teaching salary would be being paid using this type of technology.

It would be great if you could put some time in your diary to discuss this further, or agree to allowing the Nisai Group the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Committee so they can explain how this type of technology can help your current review. Please let me know if either of these may be possible.

December 2012

Written evidence from Joy O'Neill, Founder and Chair, The Service Children Support Network

AUTHOR

Joy O'Neill has been a Service wife and mother for the past 21 years. Her children have been educated in England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Germany and Cyprus. She is also an early tears and primary teacher, university lecturer, doctoral student, National Governance leader and reviewer.

Joy has worked to directly support Service children and their families for over 19 years in the UK and overseas. Her practical and research work, which has included secured funding for Service children and piloting a ground breaking support role, have been praised nationally. She has delivered training across the country on the specific needs of the Military Family.

Concerned by the increasing issues for Service children she founded the Service Children Support Network which works with schools, education, health and welfare professionals to support Service children. Her first book on these issues, *Service Children: A Guide for Education and Welfare Professionals*, was published in August 2011. Her second book, *Why do we have to move?* is a children's story aimed at Service children on the move and is due to be published in January 2013.

INTRODUCTION

Service life is unique and the experiences that Service families face will often be very different from those of the civilian community. Service life offers both benefits and challenges and the majority of Service families will take these in their stride. However, at times, such as a posting and transition to a new area and during operational deployments, these pressures may be very difficult to cope with. Service life does not make families vulnerable *per se* but I think it is important to recognise that many Service families will move in and out of vulnerability as a result of the context in which they live.

I think it is also important to acknowledge that Service children are individuals and one size does not fit all. Some children will cope with the challenges they face and may even thrive as a result of the opportunities to travel around the country and overseas. However, for other children their experience will not be positive as they struggle to come to terms with a highly mobile lifestyle and parental separation as a result of deployment.

The difficulties facing Service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were civilians in the UK or overseas

Ofsted, in their 2011 survey, described Service children as a unique group. Inspectors found that Service children faced a number of issues including: problems with school admissions, children missing parts of, or repeating areas of, the curriculum, poor transfer of information about pupils between schools, slow assessment and support for Service children with special educational needs and a general lack of awareness of Service families and their additional needs.

When Service families are relocated to new areas they face an often bewildering array of differences and inconsistency, such as encountered when moving between the education systems of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and of course, overseas locations (outside of Service Children's Education schools). Pupils may arrive with very little prior notice and with little or no documentation from their previous school. Children may have gaps in their education through having missed certain parts of the curriculum or conversely, they may have covered a particular topic many times over. Many Service children have had thirteen–fourteen moves by the time they reach secondary school and often for Service families the only consistency is inconsistency (Ofsted, 2011).

In my research projects in 2008, 2010 and 2012 parents and teachers identified the main issues as mobility due to parental postings and separation from the service parent due to operational deployments with additional potential issues such as Special Educational Needs, Additional Educational Needs, English as an Additional language, Continuity of Education and Bereavement and Trauma. My findings suggested that it was not unusual to find that children faced a number of these issues at the same time. Additionally many Service parents felt that the needs of their children were not understood by schools.

Service children told me of their confusion on arrival at a new school. How would they find their way around and where would they eat their lunch were common concerns. They often found the school rules and new ways of working confusing and didn't always want to tell the teacher if they didn't understand a topic or lesson.

On arrival at a new school children will be faced with a number of new social demands. They will need to make relationships with peers and staff in order to achieve a sense of belonging, value, purpose and security. They will need to become familiar with the new organisational demands, the practical day to day rules and routines of the school as well as the physical layout of the school site. Finally they will also need to become familiar with the academic demands of the new school such as the curriculum and teaching and learning styles. Beadel and Bradshaw (2011) suggest that the determining factor in whether the transition is positive or negative will be the amount and quality of support provided to the child and how involved the children are in their own movement process. Schools can support the transition by giving children the knowledge they need about their new environment for example the physical layout of the school site, the rules and routines, the people within the school and the approach of the school towards learning.

Galton *et al* (1999) were commissioned by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) to review the impact on pupils' progress as a result of the move from one school to another, which they called *transfer* and the move from one year group to the next within a school, which they called *transition*. They found that many pupils experienced a stall in progress after transfer. They estimated that up to two out of every five pupils would fail to make the expected progress during the year immediately following the change of schools and that any decline in progress may be accompanied by a fall in motivation. They anticipated that some groups of pupils would be more at risk than others in losing ground at these critical moments in their school careers. I would suggest that children who move frequently including Service children would be one of the groups at risk. If a Service child moves on average every two years, dependant on their parent's Service, rank and role, they could potentially be losing academic ground not only as they prepare to leave a school but also for the twelve months after they have arrived in their new school. In some cases they may be academically disadvantaged for fifteen to eighteen months out of every two years.

The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs

In order to consider this question further it is first necessary to define "who is a Service child". Typically, and for the current pupil premium, a Service child is defined as a child with one or both parents serving as members of HM Forces. However, this does not consider the children of reservists, the children of a separated Service person, the children of a deceased Service person or the children of veterans. Just because a child suddenly finds themselves becoming a civilian child does not mean that the Service child issues have suddenly gone away Fossey (2012, p 7).

Presently, not enough is being done to consider the on-going educational and welfare needs of bereaved service children. When children lose their service parent they will eventually have to move out of quarters and into civilian life. This means a second loss of friends, home, health care, school, social identity etc. Service children whose parents divorce still have the same issues to deal with and as such should still be treated as a service child. Veteran's children should continue to be supported as many of these children will have experienced a significant portion of their lives living within the military culture.

Anecdotal evidence shows that too often Service families feel that their context and cultural identity may not be understood or valued by the civilian community they now find themselves in. It is crucial that any policy change also considers the needs of Service children in the widest context.

Presently the majority of Service children are educated within the state system but many teachers and practitioners may not be aware of them within their schools and settings. This is perhaps not surprising as there are no accurate records of the numbers of Service Children in the UK despite the introduction of the PLASC census marker for Service children in England.

The issues for the very youngest Service children have not been addressed nationally at present and this should certainly be an area of focus in 2013 and beyond.

For primary and secondary aged children issues can begin before the child moves into school as often over subscription in local schools can impact on admissions. Children may even face a period out of school while admission appeals take place. Induction and transition processes do not happen as standard in schools. Many children have gaps in learning as a result of repeated moves and this is often not clear on school records, which normally only have information from the last school. Conversely, children may face repetition in learning as each school will plan their curriculum in a different way. Moves during exam years (9, 10 and 11) are particularly detrimental. Many schools do not have an understanding of the issues that arise in Service life and the nature of mobility in respect of Service children. This really should be the first step to providing them with effective support. Moving can be very stressful for children and research from the US suggests that the first two weeks are key in settling Service children pastorally and that until this has been done effective learning cannot take place.

I am aware from both my research and anecdotal evidence from schools across the country that often Service parents who believe that their child may have special educational needs are reluctant to share this information with schools. Parents have explained to me that they fear an SEN diagnosis will stop their Service spouses from being posted overseas. The widely held perception being that SCE schools cannot or will not cater for children with special educational needs.

As with the early years not much work has currently been done with the oldest Service children and this is also an area that needs immediate focus in 2013.

The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs

The concerns around the transfer of information from the releasing school to the receiving school have caused a great deal of concern for many years now. These issues have been considered by many organisations and examined by many pieces of research yet sadly the situation remains unchanged because school records are not being transferred promptly enough or even at all. However, for children with Special Educational Needs this situation is all the more serious. If schools do not arrange for the prompt transfer of accurate transition documentation to a child's new school it is inevitable that on occasion, a child with SEN will arrive at a school and the school will be unprepared. In addition to this, parents may not be either willing or able to supply the school with any interim information. This may be because not all parents are fully aware of their child's particular situation, or it could be because they are reluctant to disclose such sensitive information fully. At this point it can take a school many months to move through the accepted SEN processes only to find that the child is on the move again. Often the parents then have to start all over again in the new area.

Research suggests that in order for children to make a successful transition into a new school they need to settle quickly and feel valued and teachers need to learn about the new children as quickly as possible (Edgington, 2004, Alsop and McCaffrey, 1993, Foley and Rixon, 2008, Beadel and Bradshaw, 2011). Making connections with parents and previous schools prior to arrival or at the very least on arrival to gather any pertinent academic and pastoral information on each child would also assist in providing the timely information required by staff. Rudduck and McIntyre (2007) also claim that children's learning can be improved by consulting pupils.

In 2001 The US Army Secondary Education Transition Study carried out a detailed piece of research that focused on three aspects associated with Army children and transition: "Procedures", the transfer and interpretation of records, "Policy", the curriculum requirements and "Support and Systems", the partnership between the schools and the units and the social and emotional needs of the student. In summary they found that: "Record transfer and interpretation systems are neither consistently efficient nor effective" SETS (2001, p10) but that in any move the issues of timely transfer of records are critical. They also concluded that "learning is certainly impeded as the military connected student concentrates on adjusting" and that the most "fragile window of time for students was the first two weeks at the new school and the last few weeks before leaving" SETS (2001, p95).

In my 2012 research I found that despite the information not arriving from the previous schools, teachers were reluctant to ask pupils or parents for any information about their previous experiences even if this would help fill in the gaps.

The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families

I believe that the introduction of the Service Pupil Premium and the MOD £3M fund sends a message of the importance of Service children as a group. However, I have my doubts as to whether the education profession as a whole understand why Service children have been afforded this priority group status. From discussions with parents and teachers I believe that many schools do not know if they have Service children in their school partly because they are unsure as to what characterises a Service child and partly because some schools are too embarrassed to ask who is a Service child. Additionally some Service parents are reluctant to disclose the fact that they are Service family. There also appears to be some confusion as to why the pupil premium exists in England but not in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Within those schools who are claiming pupil premium there seems to be a split as to those who are effectively using the funds and those who are unsure of how to use the premium. In these lean financial times I suspect that some schools may be using pupil premium to plug the holes within the school budget rather than focusing on interventions to support Service children. I believe that in order for schools to fully support the needs of the children within their school they need to have a good understanding of the children and in the case of Service children, the context in which Service families live and the events that may impact on their lives. Additionally School Governors should ensure that they also understand the needs of the children within their school and that they hold the school to account over their allocation of funds.

Finally I am concerned that once the financial incentives are removed that Service children will once again become invisible and unsupported in many schools.

The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service Children's education

The Ofsted 2011 report highlighted a number of concerns around Service Children's Education. I would be interested to know if these issues have been addressed satisfactorily.

My own experiences with Service Children's Education schools have generally been positive, however, from discussions around the country with many professionals and parents I consider there to be some misconceptions around Service Children's Education. First and foremost that many people do not know who has responsibility for Service Children in the UK and assume that it is the MOD when in fact it is each local authority. Secondly that both parents and professionals are often unaware that the MOD Children's Education Advisory Service exists to support Service families with educational issues. Finally, that many parents perceive Service Children's Education Schools to be unable to support children with Special Educational or Additional Needs and for that reason I think it would be appropriate to investigate these perceptions.

CONCLUSIONS

- The pastoral and academic needs of Service children should be at the heart of policy and practice. Policy makers and professionals should allow Service children and families should have a voice in any change process. It should be recognised that they are the experts in their own lives and as such should be consulted;
- Research should also play a part in informing policy and practice. We have very little research in to Service children in the UK; however, despite this when taken together as a body of work it can offer some thoughtful insights into many of the issues;
- The unique culture and context of Service children and their families should not be overlooked by policy makers or practitioners;
- Professionals should have an understanding of the context in which Service children live in order to better support them. It should be acknowledged that even in schools with many Service children this understanding may not exist;
- The needs of Bereaved Service Children, Reservists Children and Veterans Children should not be overlooked in any policy changes;
- School admissions and the provision in place to support transition are often patchy and inconsistent;
- The transfer of information about pupils between schools is a major issue in many areas.

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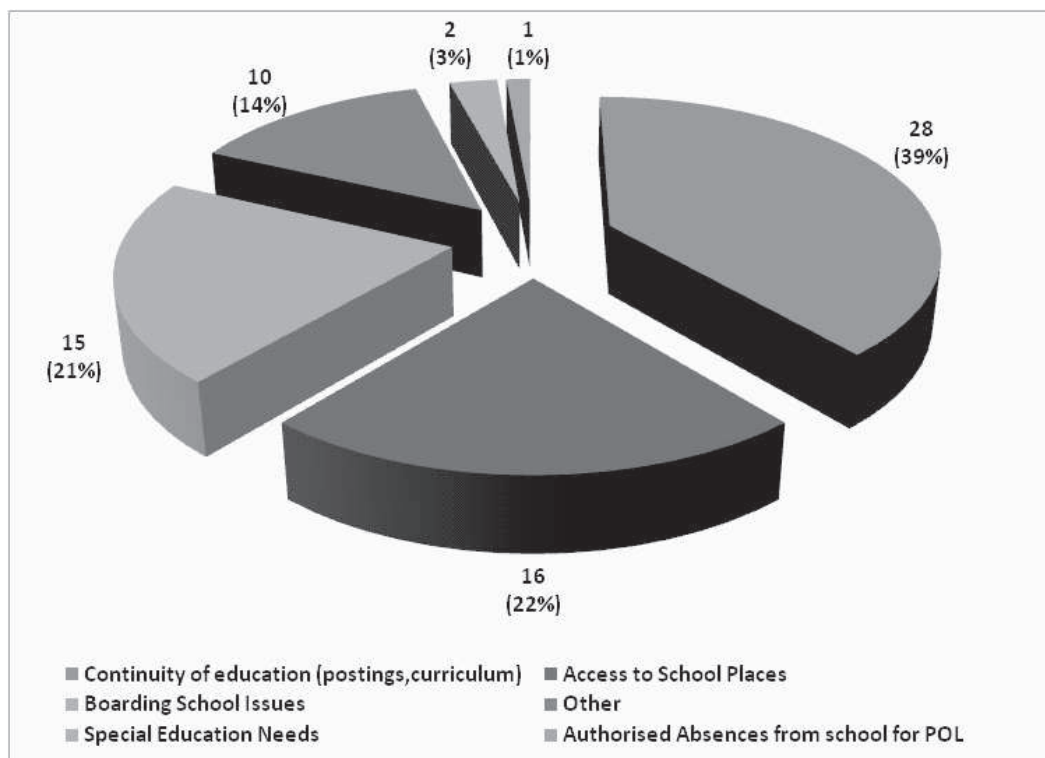
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January 2013

Written evidence from the RAF Families Federation

In response to the Defence Select Committee announcement regarding the new inquiry: The Armed Forces Covenant In Action? Part 3: Educating the Children of Service Personnel, the RAF Families Federation undertook analysis of the appropriate evidence recorded on our confidential databases to identify and collate the key concerns raised by RAF families.

REACTIVE EVIDENCE—SUMMARY OF SERVICE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION ISSUES REPORTED TO RAF FF DURING THE PERIOD 1 JAN 11–31 DEC 12



For ease of reference, we have summarised our reactive evidence under the five key areas that the Committee intends to focus upon.

1. *The difficulties facing Service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were civilians in the UK or overseas*

The main concerns raised by families include:

Mid-term moves—Parents face problems arranging school places when their permanent assignment orders are issued with a move date which occurs during the middle of an academic term.

Siblings not being offered places in the same school—Siblings of similar ages are being offered places at different primary/secondary schools; parents then have to go through the formal appeals

process in an attempt get the decision overturned. Parents can also face challenges when trying to transport children to/from different schools at the same time, especially if they are living in a remote location.

Applying for school places when there is no Service Families Accommodation (SFA) address available—Whilst local authorities should now accept an assignment order which specifies a Unit Address as proof that a child is moving to the area, problems have arisen because DIO have then allocated SFA to the family which could be up to 20 miles away from their new unit.

Lack of understanding of Service life—Feedback has been received that, despite the Armed Forces Covenant, some Local Authority staff still do not understand the challenges faced by a mobile Service family and appear unwilling to provide any support or flexibility with regards to school places or children’s education.

Lack of recognition of the challenges faced by Service children—Younger Service family members have recently commented that some teachers and pupils do not understand what it is like to be a Service child and will not make any allowances. The younger family members talked about the usual challenges they face trying to cope with their studies, which are then exacerbated by frequent moves and periods of separation due to operational and non-operational deployments. There was also a sense of frustration about the lack of personal control Service children have over their own education.

2. *The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs*

Challenges when moving between schools—Our evidence indicates that many Service children have encountered problems when moving between schools. These problems included, but are not limited to: having to change GCSE options as the subjects were not provided at their new school; different syllabuses; pupils having to study the same topics twice, or even three times; different examination boards; and moving from one education system to another eg Scotland—England.

3. *The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN)*

Challenges for those children with SEN—Our evidence indicates that families face challenges when transferring their child(ren) between local authorities, especially if they have SEN. Parents have told us that they have experienced frequent delays when arranging specialist support within the learning environment. These delays are due, in part, because some schools will not accept the Statements or other documentation provided by the “losing” school/Local Authority and on many occasions insist that families begin the whole process again. Although we recognise that this is an issue for many families who have children with SEN in the UK, it is a particular concern for Service families who are much more mobile and are likely to move several times during their children’s school years.

4. *The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families*

Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA)—Families told of the problems they have faced as they are no longer entitled to claim this particular allowance due to recent changes to the policy. Some families faced the prospect of withdrawing their children from an environment that has effectively been their “surrogate home” for a number of years and we have evidence of the impact that this has had on one young girl, in terms of both her education and her emotional and physical wellbeing.

Whilst we recognise that this particular allowance is an emotive one which generates much debate and discussion, we seek to remind those involved, whether they work in MoD Policy, SPVA, the Single Service manning teams or local HR staff, of the fundamental purpose of the allowance. That is to ensure continuity of education for those Service children who might otherwise be affected because they are a member of a military family. It is never an easy decision to place a child into the boarding school system, and there are long-term financial implications for the family, but it is one that many parents have to take to ensure that their child(ren) get the best start possible.

Service Pupil Premium—Whilst we welcomed the financial support that the Premium brings to schools with Service children, many families have asked why it only applies to those in state schools in England. Those posted to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have challenged why their children do not get the same support and feel that they too are being disadvantaged.

Comments have also been made about the way that the funds are being spent, with many parents asking how their schools should be using the funding to best support Service children. While many schools are already making the best use of these funds, and sharing best practice with others, we have received evidence to the contrary from other young Service family members. One told that her school had spent the funds on arts supplies while another had organised a trip just for the Service children but this then caused problems with the non-Service children, who challenged why they were being treated as a special case.

£3 million MoD School Fund—There still appears to be a lack of awareness about this particular source of funding, which is available to state schools across the UK. We have therefore been proactive in promoting this

fund, especially to those families posted to units in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and have encouraged them to speak to their children's schools to make them aware.

5. *The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service Children's education*

The RAF Families Federation attends regular meetings with the MoD Children's Board and the SCE Owners Board. We welcome the opportunity to engage with those within the MoD and Department of Education who are responsible for the oversight and monitoring of Service Children's education and provide appropriate feedback and evidence as required.

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

PROACTIVE EVIDENCE

The following comments were made by RAF family members who completed various on-line surveys, which the RAF Families Federation ran in 2011 and 2012

Comments extracted from the 2011 Future Accommodation Survey:

"Our choice to remain together as a family outweighs the negatives of our young children moving school on a regular basis. However once the children reach secondary school age this changes to reflect the opposite. We feel that at this age it is imperative to provide continuity of education. We will therefore have to make some serious decisions regarding our lifestyle at that time."

"Decisions to educate our children away from home are not one taken easily or lightly. However with continuous movement around the country/world the children have to be given a chance to have a stable education. Each move as the child gets older becomes increasingly difficult, socially and educationally—they often miss large chunks of a subject or end up doing it twice—often there are no places at the nearby schools and the children have to be split up or travel huge distances to a school which would not necessarily be your first choice -which adds to an already stressful environment."

"Threats to family life (education, housing etc) are a key factor for stress in military families' lives. The constant uncertainty and threats of removal of housing, CEA, changes in pensions etc, undermine confidence in a military career/lifestyle and quite frankly leaves families feeling insignificant and subject to policies that affect us, but do not take our views into account."

"My family live in our own home due to the detrimental effect on my children's education of frequent moves (less than 18 month's duration). I have lived apart from my family for 4 out of 8 years due to OOA and 'weekly commute' tours."

"If the MOD could provide me with a career that enabled me to remain settled (without it affecting promotion) I would have no issue in sending my child to a local school."

"CEA (Board) is necessary to allow my child stability during their secondary education if I am to continue to serve as flexibly as the Service requires. Any reduction in CEA would cause me to question my continued service in the military because while mobility is key to a productive career it must not be at the expense of my family life. They put up with enough disruption (willingly) but I would not tolerate cuts that impacted my child's chances of achieving her full potential academically. I would also not be prepared to pursue a career that required me to live away from my family, perhaps only seeing them at weekends."

"I have lived in SFA in order to provide a settled education (boarding school) for my daughter. It is unfair that I will lose access to SFA when my child finishes education. She will be unable to visit me at my place of work and spend time with me because the only available accommodation for me will be SLA, even though I am still a single parent."

"As both parents are serving members we cannot settle the family and be unaccompanied and often we cannot be accompanied as we are posted to different areas. We are in a fabulous position at the moment where we can live together, but we know this will not be long-term. I have a child who had been to 4 different schools in 6 years and thus having CEA has been invaluable to allow him to have stability in his education, something we could not achieve without CEA unless either my husband or I left the services and we were able to settle the family in one area, whilst the other served unaccompanied."

Comments extracted from the 2011 Childcare Survey:

"I would not be able to work full time without the children attending boarding school as the costs of childcare are too high and my husband's shift pattern makes it difficult to work and look after children and then the frequency and length of deployments also have a major impact."

Comments extracted from the 2011 Family Definition Survey:

"If the government and most insurance companies count anyone in full time education as a dependant then the MOD should as well. Most young people can't afford to move out of the family home until mid to late twenties now and civilian families are able to support their children—why should we be any different? It doesn't cost the MOD anymore"

Comments extracted from the 2011 RAF Way of Life Survey:

“My children have grown up without a father figure except for weekends. This has had an adverse effect on our relationships due to them having to make possibly the incorrect choices without my help and advice. I took my unaccompanied post to allow them uninterrupted final years in education, but I regret the time spent away now.”

Comments extracted from the 2011 Employment and Training for Families Survey:

“Once the son or daughter of a Service person ceases full time education and commences work post 18 technically they should not continue to reside in the Service Family Quarter of a Serving Member of the Armed Forces. In the current Housing climate this is an archaic rule which is likely to be frustrating to most Service Families. It is also particularly frustrating for the A1 staff at Units who have to appear to be the big bad guys and police an outdated and frankly insulting concept. This needs a giant leap into the 21st Century if we are truly value our people otherwise it is a damning indictment on an out of date organisation.”

Comments extracted from the 2011 Youth Survey:

“Boarding school has given me stability during my secondary education. I had five schools during my infant/junior education and could not face another move during secondary school. Each move got harder. Boarding I have made friends and feel settled and happy.”

Comments extracted from the 2012 Pay, Pensions and Other Staff Survey:

“As we have children within 2 years of taking exams we made the decision that their education was more important especially as moving to my parent unit would entail swapping from a Scottish to English education system. At present we have been separated for over 2 years and are over 8 hours by car away.”

“You need to be able to opt out of CEA if your family decide to settle down in one place without the risk of having to pay everything back or go through a long staffing process that may not go your way. We are fed up with being threatened with having to pay all the money back if we want to settle down as a family. Once you are in you are locked in until the children finish. It is also not good if you have children with special educational needs and have to keep reapplying for the extra money. It is not like their disability clears up after two years.”

Comments extracted from the 2012 Nations Support to the RAF Survey:

“My child moved to a SCE school overseas but the standards are very low in comparison with their UK school. The constant stress over education is our main reason for applying for redundancy—the benefits no longer outweigh the down sides.”

“SDSR was done too quickly and without any concern for the long term impact on personnel and capability. I have seen children’s education and therefore their potential long term prospects destroyed by SDSR due to withdrawal of CEA and unexpected moves.”

“Why can’t the service children in receipt of CEA be allowed to finish their entire secondary education before being abandoned. Being allowed to finish GCSE’s is very noble but why not be allowed to complete A levels too as that’s all part and parcel of secondary education and it’s not the child’s fault the Government/MOD/Country is in a mess but they seem to be paying the ultimate price too.”

“The rigid interpretation of CEA regulations forced me to put my eldest son into state education, away from his cohort from junior school. He has subsequently moved to another state school because he did not fit in. I have adjusted my career aspirations, in that I am now no longer able to make my family mobile and this has been the major contributing factor in my decision to leave the service at my next opportunity.”

“I decided to buy private accommodation to ensure my children were stable through their education and I have lived away from home as a result. Although not the best situation, we prioritised their needs above ours to provide continuity.”

In readiness for the Defence Select Committee inquiry into educating the children of Service personnel, we asked families to provide current evidence of any concerns they have about their children’s education. The following comments were provided by families during the period Dec 12–Jan 13.

Comment:

“My daughter had to come out of her boarding school due to a longer posting time of 5 years but had already been in the system for 4 years. She has found the transition very hard and after a year and a half of being out is still suffering. She has lost all her confidence and does not go out. She used to be an accomplished sports person but now does not take part in any and does the minimum at school. She has become depressed and has started to see the Children and Adolescent Mental (CAMs) health team; such is the effect this has had.

I feel that even though I understand the reasoning behind her coming out, I also feel that this is part of the system which is letting down the children in this situation. Main stream schools are very different from the private education and after being within it during her growing years (just aged 8

till 12) transition is hard. She has not had much support from the new school as they just keep telling her that she will get over it, and the small group of friends she has made do not understand the emotions she is going through. It is like she is going through a bereavement of sorts. The Doctor has been very concerned for her hence the referral to CAMS.

I feel that the length of postings should be taken into consideration but perhaps each case should be looked at an individual level. Because of this posting my husband has been away for about a year and a half for training and so we, as a mother and daughter, have been left to get on and deal with the effects. I too am now seeing the mental health service as I have been so worried about the effects of the change of schooling has had. To see a vibrant, athletic and confident young lady turn into a shadow of her former self is very hard to deal with when you know that you cannot do anything about it but be there to support her.”

Comment:

“Both my children have struggled with 3 schools in 3 years and were affected by the removal of the boarding school allowance. Schools follow the National Curriculum and can teach it in any order; this means that my children sometimes repeat work or don’t cover some areas at all. We went to a meeting at the school regarding the new funding for forces children and were asked what they should spend it on. I said ‘one to one’ support to address gaps and improve confidence but they said they couldn’t as it would not be enough. The new funding is just lip service—I’m not impressed.”

Comment:

“My children are 12 and 10 and the schools have always known they are forces children and claimed the money. But what do schools spend the money on as I see no visible sign of it? Can I ask the school what they spend it on and how would I go about that?”

Comment:

“I am very proud of my SCE education. I was lucky to attend 5 primary schools and 1 secondary school in BFG for my whole education. I feel the time and skill of the teaching staff from foundation to sixth form is second to none, I know that the help, guidance and support is why I went on the a 1:1 BA Hons in Public Relations, and a 1:1 MA in Economics. We need to keep encouraging the children in times that are hard!”

Comment:

“Regarding the transfer of children with special needs—I have a child with autism and it was difficult to step into the same services when we moved. The transfer of paperwork between schools was slow and we then had to join the queue for services for my child. The school could only refer them when they had been there a year as they have to see how my child coped, which was rubbish as their disability is permanent. Moving schools within the same area is equally difficult for these children. The pupil premium—I have never seen anything that has been specifically implemented in the schools where my children have gone, even though they have known they are Service children.”

Comment:

“I am writing to you reference the poor service that Service Children with Special Educational Needs receive from the Bucks Educational Services and believe that CEAS should be doing more to ensure that the services they require are in place for them on posting.

We moved to Buckinghamshire from overseas in August 12. My son has High Functioning Autism and has been statemented for the last five years; it is a legal document stating that he should have support from the county’s autism services, speech therapy and occupational therapy. I was assured by Bucks Education Authority that his statement would be in place by his start of Secondary School in September. A week before the start of term upon enquiring why I hadn’t received the statement they informed me that they had only recently issued the provisional one and had started the process from the date that we moved to the county in August in accordance with their rules, even though the statement was only copied from his previous one and there were no extra documents to obtain. The statement was then issued in November and only then was my son put on a waiting list for speech therapy and autism help (due to this he has still not received either).

I feel that, as a Service Child, he has been disadvantaged by moving and the help not being in place. Fortunately his school have been great and educational support has been provided in class (which they could have refused due to his statement not being in place and so funding not provided). If Service children with SENs in Bucks are not statemented they would not receive the services without waiting for a very long time and would probably be on the move again before receiving help which is so unfair.”

Comment:

“Our children have received an excellent and free-to-us education by us taking the decision to settle the family and have me commute (weekends for the last 3 years). I have some experience of special needs since our daughter has speech issues—these nearly scuppered an overseas posting; however,

the RAF came up trumps with funding and support to ensure no disadvantage. The transfer of relevant information from SCE to her next UK primary school was not ideal—but easily manageable.

As a finance-orientated governor of a local school, whilst we welcome the pupil premium for Service children, frankly because most of ours are well settled, it is hard to identify how to spend it specifically on Service Children. That said, as one of the lowest funded LEAs in UK, we do welcome the additional support!

Regarding monitoring and oversight, I would have to say that much of that lies with parents and ensuring that they know what support is available.

I will, if I may, climb on my hobby horse of CEA. We made a lifestyle choice which requires me to commute but has enabled our children to attend a first rate grammar school at no cost to us or to the military. In contrast I see many others placing their children in a fee-paying school. To my mind, far better than supporting this extreme subsidy, the push should be to develop state-provided boarding facilities (which we know already exist) and requiring CEA to be put towards those costs. Whilst that is merely recirculating government money, it does bring some levelling and might reduce the extreme skew which CEA currently produces in the overall allowances package, enabling other more deserving causes to see the light of day. In short, there is an adequate state boarding system—it should be the ONLY option for CEA. I recognise that my views may be controversial but I believe I have a reasonably balanced view based on my personal and professional experiences.”

Comment:

“There is a problem with Service children not being supported by schools when their parent has been deployed. I noticed a change in my child’s work but they don’t get any additional support. Also, we have had problems with finding school and pre-school places when we have moved areas, as we are always at the bottom of schools or pre-school lists.”

Comment:

“Many may not wish to take advantage of the funding available for their children to attend boarding school. For me, I would like to live with my children and see them at the end of every working day as much as possible. Therefore I believe consideration should be taken when posting families so that it does not fall within the academic year. I have two children who are not yet at school age. I do not look forward to choosing between living with them and seeing them regularly or providing more continuity regarding their education. It will determine my future within the RAF. The RAF claims to support families. More support and consideration in this area is required. If this cannot be done, then make it clear when people join that they choose a career which is not just service before self but also service before family welfare”

Comment:

“We are currently living overseas. We have two children, one of whom has Special Educational Needs and we have faced many challenges trying to meet these needs, especially as we live off-base. I feel that many of the agencies both here and in the UK should have supported us during this posting but have not been able to, due to a lack of knowledge or experience about the education system in the country we are living in.

When we lived in the UK my son’s statement transferred OK between counties but I am worried about what will happen when we return from this posting. We hope to return to the county we left in the hope of someone remembering us as but I fear that we will have to start again from scratch on our return.”

January 2013

Written evidence from the Duke of York’s Royal Military School

HISTORY AND CONTEXT

1. In 1801, His Royal Highness Frederick Duke of York laid the foundation stone in Chelsea of what was to become the Duke of York’s Royal Military School. Originally it was an orphanage for children of soldiers killed in battle and was Britain’s first co-educational state funded and state administered school.

2. The first boys and girls entered the school in 1803 and in 1909 it moved to its present location in Dover. In 1980 the school, which had previously only been open to children of non-commissioned soldiers, was opened to all ranks. In 1992 it became a Tri-Service school. Girls were reintroduced in 1994.

3. In September 2010, the school gained Academy status, moving from the control of the MOD to that of the DFE, with the Secretary of State for Defence as sponsor. As an Academy, the school is no longer selective and now has an open admissions policy.

4. The school remains a fully boarding establishment and is the only state funded 100% boarding school offering mainstream provision. There are no day pupils, weekly or flexi-boarders. All pupils experience the same egalitarian and accessible nature of provision for seven days a week during term.

5. The school is committed to maintaining its unique and iconic military links and traditions combining education, military heritage and spiritual provision centred upon the Chapel. The Secretary of State for Defence is the Academy sponsor. The Adjutant General chairs the Trustees and is a Governor, alongside the Chaplain General, representative officers from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, a representative from Service Children's Education and a number of retired senior military personnel of star rank.

6. Currently, 61% of pupils have parents who are serving with over 75% who meet a broader definition of Service Children such as given in point 21 of the Conclusions and Recommendations of the 2006 Defence Committee report Educating Service Children.

7. Before entering the Duke of York's, on average, pupils will have been to more than four different schools and some have attended ten or more.

8. The school was recognised as "good" in its first full Ofsted inspection as an Academy in November 2012.

EDUCATING CHILDREN OF SERVICE PERSONNEL

The difficulties facing service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were children in the UK or overseas

9. An understanding of military life is an advantage in a school for the support of service children. A school like the Duke of York's Royal Military School provides such in depth support and understanding because we are very much part of the military family with the Senior Leadership Team and Governing Body committed to retaining this position. All staff and those pupils who do not come from service families are in sympathy with the role and expectations of the military.

10. Children of service families often talk about the support they give each other. We think this is a powerful ingredient that helps their learning. They relish the chance to establish firm friends, have continuity of teaching staff, and be amongst others of a similar background, none of which can be guaranteed in schools outside the military family.

11. The disjointed nature of service life makes it more difficult for parents who may be absent for extended periods to support education at home. Boarding creates a distinctive and supportive community with particular friendship bonds. The psychological effect of this is important. It provides the stability that may be missing elsewhere in pupils' lives to which the impact of operational tempo upon family life and a high divorce and separation rate amongst military families are also contributory factors.

12. The greater uncertainty of service life postings and the current threat of redundancy is destabilising to families and to the children in the school.

The provision of education for all service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs

13. There is a £25 million building programme at The Duke of York's Royal Military School. This will allow the number of pupils on roll to increase from 450 to 722. This expansion should benefit the military. However, we are obliged by the DfE to adhere to the Kent Admissions Procedure which is totally inappropriate for DoYRMS. Our catchment area, as a fully boarding school, is both across the nation and around the world, wherever there are military bases for UK forces. The deadlines involved in admissions are disadvantaging and discriminatory towards military families and children as decisions need to be made early in the academic year. Most frequently, military families have made their decisions much later, by mid to late summer, and this is most often by direct approach to the school rather than through the LEA.

14. With confirmation of postings coming throughout the year, it would be advantageous to military families if we were able to have greater flexibility in admission procedures. Whilst we would wish to meet the terms of the Armed Forces Covenant through offering a place if required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting, we are unable to hold such places for those from military families.

15. The school is increasingly attractive to non-military families in view of its ethos and high standards of academic and pastoral provision. Current admissions arrangements mean that places may have to be allocated to non-service families at the expense of those in the military with the concurrent risk that the distinct and supportive atmosphere offered to military families may be watered down.

16. There is a strong case to extend the DoYRMS age range to include Years 5 and 6 with admissions being heavily weighted towards military families. This could help secure the percentage of military families in Year 7 and thereafter, as well as extending the provision being offered to service children. Parents have expressed an interest in such a move.

The transfer of information about pupils between schools in particular pupils with special needs

17. We are no longer a selective school and therefore cater for children of all abilities with an intake that is broadly in line with the national average.

18. Information received about new pupils is not always timely and of good quality. As a result, the school uses the Service Children's Pupil Premium to provide baseline testing and data. All pupils entering the school are also screened for SEN as the fractured educational background of many service children may mean areas of concern have not been fully identified in previous schools. Non-service children with such issues are picked up much earlier in nursery, infant and primary schools and strategies immediately put in place to meet their needs.

19. Before entering the Duke of York's, on average, pupils will have been to more than four different schools and some have attended ten or more. This has a huge effect on the teaching process and prior attainment data is often almost non-existent in such cases. The lack of continuity of education makes data which is provided an unreliable guide to the true performance and potential of these children.

20. We do find that in our environment, those with SEN make rapid progress and, overall, perform at a level above national averages for such groups at GCSE.

21. The safeguarding and social needs of children from service backgrounds are not always well documented because of their mobility though support from Welfare Officers is readily forthcoming when requested.

The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all service families

22. We welcome the Pupil Premium for service children which we have used effectively for assessment and intervention with such pupils and, in particular, to help establish baseline performance and identify SEN requirements for those with fractured educational backgrounds.

23. We have noticed an increase in the amount of approaches to external agencies (eg, SSAFA, ABF, RBL—women's section) for additional financial support to meet boarding fees where MOD support is no longer available.

24. The extension of compulsory education to 18 years old, with the accompanying need for continuous support, entails a greater level of provision for service children.

25. We are mindful of the Nepalese community within the services and the accessibility of support they receive. We are appreciative of Regimental Welfare Officers that help provide such access through, for example, assistance with the completion of forms.

26. Looking at the proportion of children helped by CEA and the associated eligibility criteria, the question, "is the covenant being fully met?" arises.

The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of service children's education

27. We welcome the requirements to publish details of the use of the Pupil Premium for service children and the scrutiny of this which comes through Ofsted monitoring and inspection.

28. We would welcome greater scrutiny of the achievement of service children through distinct analysis of their performance as against school and national averages within DfE and Ofsted RAISE online reports.

29. We would be pleased to assist or sponsor other schools which have a high percentage of service children.

January 2013

Written evidence from the State Boarding Schools' Association

This submission is made on behalf of the State Boarding Schools' Association (SBSA), a members' association for the 38 state boarding schools in England and Wales, and a sub-set of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), which represents the interests of 484 boarding schools in the UK, the majority of which are independent schools in membership of the Independent Schools Council's constituent associations.

I am Hilary Moriarty, National Director of the BSA and SBSA

SUMMARY

1. By September 2013, there will be 37 state boarding schools.
2. Three (Royal Alexandra and Albert School near Guildford, Gordon's in Woking, Sexey's in Somerset) have more than 40 CEA recipient boarders.
3. Nine of the state boarding schools are grammar schools, with selective entrance exams at 11 or (in one case) 13. These schools have no CEA boarders.
4. All state boarding schools may interview for suitability for boarding.
5. The Admissions Code dictates that no place, not even a boarding place, may be confirmed until "national offer day," 1 March before the September of entry into Year 7.

6. The immediacy and certainty of an offer well before Christmas of a boarding place in an independent boarding school for the following September is likely to be very attractive to Forces personnel, militating against pursuing a state boarding place.

7. In state boarding schools as in independent boarding schools, it appears that there are large concentrations of CEA pupils in particular parts of the country (eg the South West and Yorkshire) which presumably follow Forces location patterns. State boarding schools which are outside these “hot spots” will be less attractive to Forces parents.

8. State boarding schools themselves are suffering from uncertainty because of the lack of any government strategy statement concerning their future capital funding. Since the schools are legally unable to make surpluses on boarding income, maintaining high standards of boarding accommodation depends upon government financial support which is not even in prospect at the moment. 23 have had no major funding in the last 10 years. This may well make them unattractive to Forces parents.

9. State boarding schools cannot offer reductions in fees for Forces personnel because their boarding fee must cover the cost of providing a boarding place. Cross-subsidy is illegal.

STATE BOARDING SCHOOLS

10. There are 38 state boarding schools, soon to be 37. The Westgate School in Winchester will close its boarding in the summer of 2013 following the LA’s decision to take over the premises for a new primary school. The majority of the schools are academies.

11. Three of the schools have brand new boarding facilities and opened for boarding in September 2011. Two of these—The Priory LSST in Lincoln, which actually has boarding only for sixth formers, and The Wellington Academy in Wiltshire—specifically quoted demand for places from Services Personnel in their bids for funding to build the boarding accommodation.

12. The Admission Code under which all these schools operate provides that boarding schools must give priority (after looked after children) for boarding places to:

- (a) Children of members of the UK Armed Forces who qualify for Ministry of Defence financial assistance with the cost of boarding school fees.
- (b) Children with a “boarding need”.

13. At the time of writing, the schools have in the region of 5,000 boarding places. We do not have exact figures, but when this Association was given sight of numbers of pupils in receipt of CEA in a list of all schools involved in 2009–10, there were only 367 such children. It appears, therefore, that less than 10% of boarders at state boarding schools were Forces children in receipt of CEA. The question arises, why so few?

POSSIBLE REASONS

14. Nine of the state boarding schools are grammar schools, with entrance examinations, mostly at 11, but for Cranbrook at 13. It appears none of these academic schools have CEA recipients. It may be that entering a child for a selective examination when the family may be nowhere near the school at the time of the test is too difficult. If a child were to take the test, there is then a delay waiting for the results. During that time the family may decide to proceed down what appears to be an easier route into a non-selective school.

15. All state boarding schools are permitted to interview a prospective pupil to judge a child’s suitability for boarding. This interview must not constitute covert selection in a non-selective school. It is strictly to do with suitability to board.

16. Most parents of boarders are likely to be seeking a school for their child a year ahead of entry. This allows for the process—examination for a selective school, interview for any boarder—and for the family to make a considered decision.

17. An application to an independent boarding school is likely to result in an offer of a place, or a refusal, reasonably quickly, certainly before Christmas in the year before entry.

18. However, admission into a UK state school, including state boarding schools, is governed by the Admissions Code. This dictates that no child may be told they have a place at a school ahead of “the national offer day”—usually 1 March in the year of entry to Year 7. This rule applies to boarders as well as day pupils.

19. Even a parent who would like to send a child to a state boarding school may decide to accept a place at an independent school because it is allowed to offer a place immediately. Parents and child have the next step of the child’s education sorted by Christmas. To turn down an independent school place, on the chance of admission to a state boarding school being given in March, is to risk the independent school having filled all its places. No wonder independent schools are more attractive, even if they are more expensive.

20. It is possible that Forces families do not find state boarding schools attractive in a highly competitive market. This may be because of under-funding for capital investment in these schools. Under the Labour government, 12 schools received funding for major building or improvement in boarding accommodation. New-build boarding was provided in three academies with no previous experience of boarding. 23 existing

state boarding schools received nothing. State boarding schools may charge boarding fees only to cover the cost of providing boarding; they may not store up reserves for future projects; they may not borrow against assets. How are they to continue to provide what modern parents want from boarding?

Since the last General Election, there has been no government spending on state boarding, and no statement of strategy or intent for the future of state boarding schools despite repeated requests to Ministers for clarity on this matter. Without financial support, boarding at these schools will wither and die. That may be their own problem. But without recognition of the problem, without reasonable capital investment, the boarding accommodation currently available in state schools will fall into disrepair and the appeal of these schools to any parent or child will weaken. No Forces family should feel they are choosing a second rate school for their child.

LOCATION

21. It is interesting to note that a few schools have large numbers of Forces children: in 2009–10, The Royal Alexandra and Albert School, near Guildford, had 162; Gordon's near Woking had 69; Sexey's in Somerset, 40. This is of a piece with regional concentrations of CEA recipient children in independent schools, presumably matching the distribution of Forces personnel throughout the country. Many Forces children are in schools in the West Country, but also in Yorkshire—Queen Ethelburga's College in York had 168 such pupils. Clayesmore in Dorset had 121, Chilton Cantelo in Yeovil 135. (An indication of the decline in numbers of CEA children in boarding is that at Chilton Cantelo now, there are only 55 youngsters in receipt of CEA).

22. It should be noted that The Royal Alexandra and Albert School is able to take boarders from the age of 8, which might be a factor in so many Forces children attending it. Parents may see it as a useful school for real continuity of education, with progression from junior to senior school virtually assured.

23. There may also be an effect influencing school choice arising from Forces personnel knowing people who have already chosen a school and whose children are happy there. The large concentration of Forces children in some schools suggests that word of mouth may also be a factor for parents. In effect, Forces children constitute a strong and mutually supportive sub-set of boarders in a school. Schools might well profess experience and success in dealing with the particular problems the children of serving Forces personnel might present; parents might see a school with a high proportion of Forces children and a good track record as suitably experienced and reliable.

24. The written evidence of the Duke of York's Royal Military School offers detailed analysis of the problems for a school when it is actually, specifically a school for the children of Forces personnel, now made into an academy becoming increasingly attractive to other parents and therefore unable to hold places for possible Forces applicants because of the Admissions Code.

IN DEFENCE OF THE PRINCIPLE OF BOARDING PLACES BEING AVAILABLE FOR FORCES CHILDREN

25. Children moving from school to school is highly disruptive and unsettling (for them and others).

26. Service children are more like to have gaps in their knowledge and to repeat areas of the curriculum, as no two schools cover the same topics in the same order at the same time.

27. Socially, service children are at risk of not being able to develop meaningful relationships with their peers or teachers, for fear of not being there tomorrow.

28. Even where there are good state schools available near to a base, the amount of churn created in the whole of the school community by postings and deployments is unsettling and disruptive, both of which reduce student progress.

29. Where children believe they are likely to move from one school to another it is less likely that they will "buy in" to the school's values and culture or to have a sense of belonging (something that is very important in the military psyche). It would be useful if the MoD were able to conduct research on the long term emotional impact of parental mobility on service children, related to mental health, feeling valued and being a part of society.

LAST COMMENTS

30. It is understandable that the MoD should wish to encourage Forces parents to choose a state boarding school for their children, given that in these schools the state already pays for education. The cost of a boarding place is therefore approximately half the cost of boarding at an independent school.

31. Admission to the most academic state boarding schools, the grammar schools, is complicated by the demands of the 11+ or the 13+ tests which must be taken at a particular time in the year.

32. The mechanisms for admission to a state boarding school, as dictated by the Admissions Code which is not designed for boarding applicants, *actively militate against* any parent choosing a state boarding school, but the difficulties it causes are particularly acute for Forces personnel. For Year 7 entry, parents will not know if their application is successful until March 1. The most successful and therefore popular state boarding schools are likely to be the most over-subscribed. Places cannot be held in case a Forces child appears later in the year.

The Admissions Code, designed for fair entry for day pupils, is a *crucial obstacle* to more Forces families choosing a state boarding school for their child.

33. Without clarity from Government about its strategy to support state boarding, and investment in their infrastructure, the state boarding schools will cease to be attractive to Forces families and many of them will be forced to abandon their boarding completely.

Hilary Moriarty
State Boarding Schools' Association

February 2013

Written evidence from the Boarding Schools' Association

This submission is made on behalf of the Boarding Schools' Association (BSA), a members' association which represents the interests of 484 boarding schools in the UK, the majority of which are independent schools in membership of the Independent Schools Council's constituent associations. The State Boarding Schools' Association (SBSA) with 38 member schools, is a sub-set of the BSA, and has made a separate submission to the Committee.

I am Hilary Moriarty, National Director of the BSA and SBSA

SUMMARY

- Independent school boarding is more expensive than state boarding.
- But there are too few state boarding schools to offer real choice.
- CEA should therefore remain available for use by eligible personnel at an independent boarding school, of which there are more than 400.
- Many have built up considerable expertise in nurturing the children of Forces personnel, offering them stability and community instead of upheaval and disruption.
- Severe decline of CEA market will have a drastic impact on independent boarding schools, causing some to cease their boarding operation, reducing scope for parental choice and with considerable impact on local economies:
 1. A place at an independent boarding school will cost the customer more than a place at a state boarding school. In these stringent times, the wish for the MoD to support a boarding place for a Forces' child at a state boarding school rather than in an independent boarding school is easy to understand.
 2. However, an intrinsic part of the Covenant with Forces personnel is that the CEA is meant to support Forces parents. Their right to preference when choosing a school for their child is important, if the choosing of a school is not to be even more stressful than it may be now.
 3. While there are 38 state boarding schools, and will be only 37 by September 2013, there are more than 400 independent boarding schools. This number offers real choice for parents and children.
 4. Independent schools are many and various: highly academic and selective; less academic; non-selective; specialising in sport or art or music or drama; for children up to 11, or 13, or 16, or 18; for girls only, or boys only, or co-ed; in the country or in town; large or small; or large school with small boarding numbers; near an airport or a major station or the motorway. All of this is what real choice is about.
 5. Many boarding schools have built up considerable expertise in supporting the children of serving Forces personnel with their particular anxieties and difficulties over and above any which any child might suffer in school. Boarders are separated from their parents; not many of them live in daily fear of the death of a parent on active service. The fact that some schools have large numbers of Forces children indicates that the parents are seeing their children as joining a discrete group of boarders within the school who will know and understand and sympathise with their particular situation. It is also testimony to the fact that the schools are doing an excellent job of creating a stable learning environment for the children, whose future lives depend upon their academic and other success in school, without fear of disruption or upheaval.
 6. Choice for a family with one or both parents deployed overseas will include working out who will be near the child/children at boarding school and available in an emergency. Choice of school can be as much about location of grandparents as it is about the school's academic record.
 7. Crucially, when an independent boarding school considers a child for a place, they can make a quick decision and offer immediately—in October a year ahead, for instance—a place for the following September. A definite offer as early as this gives parents and child certainty as early as possible, well before a place can be confirmed by a state boarding school.

8. BSA therefore submits that it is important that the CEA for Forces personnel eligible to claim it should continue to be available to be used in the school of the parents' choosing, without restraint or prescription.
9. Children in receipt of CEA constitute 11% of the independent schools' boarding market. The recent tightening up of regulations and governance of the system has already had an impact, with new MoD children in independent schools last year down to 992, from the previous year's figure of 1,790. Long term changes to the terms and conditions of service in the Forces will certainly reduce the demand for CEA even further.
10. There is no doubt that falling numbers in this key area of the boarding market will have a dramatic impact on boarding schools. It is very possible that some schools will close their boarding houses completely, reducing still further the choices available to Forces families. One school in the South West, for instance, has seen its CEA boarders fall from 135 in 2009–10 to 55 in 2012–13. Impact on local economies, particularly in the South West, for instance, where there are large concentrations of Forces children in boarding schools, would be severe.

Hilary Moriarty
National Director

February 2013

Written evidence from the Naval Families Federation

NFF WEBSITE POLL ON DEFENCE SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY: EDUCATING THE CHILDREN OF SERVICE PERSONNEL

Results: 09/01/13—28/01/13

Responses: 17

POLL TEXT

“Along with the other Family Federations, the NFF is submitting evidence to the Defence Select Committee inquiry on the education of the children of serving personnel; we are keen to know your views. This survey closes on 28 January.

This inquiry is the third in a series of inquiries looking at the Armed Forces Covenant in action. The Covenant states that “Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live”.

This is an opportunity to express your opinions on the positives and negatives of Service children's education in the UK and overseas.

In particular, the Committee is interested in:

- The difficulties Service families face to achieve the same standard of education for their children as civilian families.
- The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs.
- The transfer of pupil information when moving schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs.
- The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families.
- The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service Children's education.
- The poll is just one question; an open text box for your general comments. Responses are anonymous.

The survey closes on 28 January.

QUESTION 1. YOUR COMMENTS

- It is wrong that service children are not able to access their catchment schools when they move into a new area. My experience was that I had two juniors school aged children in two different junior schools who started at the same time each morning and finished at the same time. Neither school could offer two places. A logistical nightmare!
- have used boarding schools funded by the navy, best decision I have ever made great education. very important for secondary school aged children to be able to stay in one school to minimise disruption to education and social development by moving round every two years.

-
- We find it varies and two of children have missed out lots with all the moving and lack of picking this up upon moving schools even though we being school packs. Boarding school is good as we choose this route for elder two but even with it being a forces school it has also failed to pick up the gaps in education and this causes issues for our children. Service premium needs to be made clear as to what it is to be used for as the schools get it but we see no change in the support to our children. If any extra is given at all.
 - I am still in receipt of CEA for my children. If that were not the case I imagine that my children would be severely disadvantaged by moving, in my case, from civilian life into the Navy and (so far) one major move from Plymouth to Gosport and another imminent to Faslane. The moves of school would have come at the midpoint of GCSE or A level course preparations which, according to their teachers, would mean they would inevitably have covered some parts of the relevant syllabi twice and other parts not at all. Access to boarding schools has been essential for their educational success and the lack of it would have been disastrous for them.
 - I think this would be a good idea on improving all of these services. Having a child and having been a military child I know how difficult it was. School records were lost for me and it resulted in me repeating an amount of school work. Moving and starting again making friends etc was also hard. However it may also have a bad effect on some children. Children may think they are getting special treatment so keeping it at adult level would be the best option. So a teacher wouldn't go in a class and say who is a military kid etc. like you wouldn't do for single parent families.
 - There are still many families struggling to get their child statemented and supported with complex educational needs.
 - We have never used schools in “base ports” and have found little or no support when it comes to our local schools. My daughter (now 9) has struggled from day one at school, many of her issues began when her dad was deployed for nearly 20 months over a period of two years—she completely withdrew from peers and learning, no support was forthcoming from anywhere I looked or asked for help, including naval agencies! Her school decided she must have autistic tendencies—she did not even after I showed them all the signs and symptoms that a child who is coping with deployment could have they refused to listen or even read them. We have since changed school and hope that they have a greater understanding. The pupil premium is a fantastic idea in principle but useless when it amounts to a small sum as the only forces child in school. My children's money disappeared into the ether never to be seen or heard of and certainly not used for their benefit. It was only after I claimed that the Navy had contacted me to find out what had happened to the premium that the school miraculously managed to produce an IEP to support my daughter in English...
 - Without the CEA my children's schooling and indeed their whole life chances would have been seriously impeded. We have had 13 service moves in 20 years, so being able to give my children stability in their education has been invaluable. If the CEA were to be abolished, my husband would leave the Marines immediately.
 - We had no problems with the very first school that our eldest attended since we were in the right area for the right time. We had no problems with a school place when serving abroad but our eldest daughter, diagnosed by the consultant paediatrician and local health visitor with Aspergers syndrome had little support at the forces school. On our return to the UK, our eldest had to go to boarding school—we got our next appointment location at the end of June for removal in mid August—we couldn't leave a secondary school to chance for our eldest so she has had to go away since serving separated doesn't work well for our marriage. Our youngest is at a low performing school (she was a year 5 entry) and whilst she is achieving to a degree, it's not to the same level as before. She is following her sister away because we have 18 months left in this posting—PERHAPS—and we don't want to gamble with her future. So, to keep our eligibility for CEAS (and we do recognise it as a privilege) we know that we can be moved at a moment's notice causing my job opportunities to shrink even more and we are criticised by non military friends for our choices. Can't win! I need to find more information on accessing support for the eldest and possibly for the youngest who is showing signs of dyslexia. This is not instantly straightforward. We don't want to disadvantage our kids and find it hugely frustrating that we are criticised in trying to help the kids settle...
 - My Granddaughter is to start early years nursery school and I have been advised that schools receive extra funding for service personnel children.
 - Service children should have the same opportunity as “civilian” children—the problem is not enough places at good schools for either category in many locations. My step-children do not live with us and are therefore excluded from the pupil premium but spent their primary school years changing schools frequently—they get no extra help in their secondary school to help “recover” from that disruption, nor the impact on them when their Dad deploys.

- CEA provides an ideal footing to assist in supporting your child's education whilst maintaining the ability to provide a stable education environment for your children. However this comes at a high cost for parental relationships with added pressures of frequent moves because "you are signed up" and receiving CEA. Having moved five times in six years due to service commitments, and nine times in 14 years my children are now struggling to identify where home actually is. Trying to establish roots and balance education needs comes at a high cost when in the service, to all relationships within the family.
- I agree that Service Children have a right to the same standard of education as non Service personnel. However, I don't think this should MOD funded CEA. It eats up too much of the MOD budget for too few benefactors. Service Personnel should have priority access to state funded schools.
- My school seems to have no idea how to allocate the service pupils premium to our children, and cannot provide adequate informal to what the funds have been used for in previous financial years.
- All service personnel children should have the best in education with schools passing on any information to the new schools for the children. This I feel should benefit the progress of learning and help for the children and their progress through their educational years with help and support to each and every child's needs.
- While I would never wish to see any child disadvantaged in their educational needs, I don't think that children of Service personnel should receive preferential treatment over and above their non-Service contemporaries. While I appreciate there is an impact on the quality of family life due to Service circumstances, provisions can be made for the Service person (rather than the whole family) to be inconvenienced—by means of "compassionate" assignments or financial assistance—rather than having to relocate as a family unit and thus disrupting access to education. If a family chooses to take this option, that is their decision, rather than a mandated requirement of the Service. Non-Service families also face disruption due to the working circumstances of the breadwinner(s) but in the whole, their companies do not feel the need to provide a relocation package or educational grants for their children. The choice to have children while serving is a family decision, not a primary consideration for the Armed Forces. Harsh, I agree, but personal sacrifices have to be made.
- State education in Portsmouth is poor and forced us to send our children to private school. When abroad this included boarding school. I find it difficult to understand why someone cannot go to boarding school and claim CSA just for 6th form. My daughter has never been to boarding school having accompanied me abroad; should I be posted abroad again I would be unable to claim CSA for her. This is wrong. As a local school governor, the provision of extra money for service children is to be congratulated. As a parent of older children, the provision of child care used to be poor and difficult to arrange. It is pleasing to see Creches on base and much better provision overall. However poor standards of education still abound in Portsmouth and finding a good level of state education remains a challenge.
- Main concerns noted by the RN & RM Children's Fund, I have looked at the problems of the children where the parent is serving as their problems are not quite the same as those of the ex-serving population. During the year the RN & RM Children's Fund assisted 530 children of Serving personnel and 598 of ex-serving personnel, these were new beneficiaries during the year 2012–13.

During the year the children's fund assisted 393 children (of serving personnel) who had some form of disability or illness. Managing life in the service and coping with children who need numerous hospital appointments and extra care is truly hard, especially if the family swings to being a one parent family when mother or father are away, hard to think of a solution but the financial pressure (even with disability allowance) is great particularly if there are other siblings.

Childcare continues to be a problem, a young single mother may find herself paying £600 of her net pay of £800 for childcare, it is very hard to budget on £200 per month and mum will quickly fall into debt and then need charitable support. The RN & RM Children's Fund assisted 133 children with childcare during the year.

CEA—the tightening of the rules has definitely caused some problems and some bitterness, especially where two men in the same type of work find that one of them is likely to move and is therefore eligible and the other is deemed unlikely to move and is therefore not eligible. We believe that people are very nervous of embarking on the CEA route now and there is a definite feeling that this allowance is going to be phased out. The children's fund have supported 36 children with educational costs 12 of these were cases where the father was no longer eligible for CEA, but it was in the child's best interest to remain at the school.

The RN & RM Children's Fund is working with Naval Welfare and the NFF to provide support for the families of those deployed both while the serving person is away and when they return. An increase in Operational Stress Reaction has been noted making the return to family life more difficult and therefore the impact on the children confusing. We have noticed a steady rise in the number of separations and divorces where there has been regular deployment.

The RN & RM Children's Fund has been assisting a number of widows with finding suitable education for their children, we have not been made aware of the Bereavement Scholarship Scheme, however most schools will now offer a large bursary to enable children to either remain at the

school they were attending on the death of their father or move to a more suitable school in the changed circumstances.

- All three Service families' federations have been asked to submit evidence for the Defence Select Committee inquiry into educating the children of Service personnel. Here is some feedback. The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families; Overseas Preschool specifically Kindergarten. Typically in the UK I would receive 15 hours free per week. So to boost the hours up to a standard school week, it was costing me an extra £250 (approx 2,500 per year) per month and I was paying less tax due the mod childcare voucher scheme. Here in Brussels the British School in Brussels currently charges approx 7,500 euro per school year (critically not per annum) currently I can reclaim the fees on a termly basis. My question is why do I as a Petty Officer, in an area of Europe that is notoriously expensive where I have lost approx 4–5,000 euro per year in loa, have to pay these costs up front? Unacceptable in my view. Many thanks.
- My husband is a seagoing sailor with 16 years of service. During that time he has had one shore job and apart from courses, has spent the rest of his time in deployed ships. A typical year would see my husband away for three months of disjointed pre-deployment sea trials and work ups and six months at sea. In that time he has missed over half of the children's birthdays, their first steps, first words, learning to ride bikes, learning to swim, the list goes on. As little children the boys took this in their stride and their mood seemed to be a reflection of how I was coping and how much time I could give them. They didn't seem to expect Daddy to be there all the time and were just delighted when he was.

The boys are now at school and my poor husband missed all the first days, including William starting at Boarding School. As I type my husband still hasn't seen him in his new uniform, six months on. The children are becoming young men and prefer the company of men; they now ask about my husband often, when is he coming home? and worse of all, will he come home? The emotional impact of having a parent coming and going is significant. Six months when you are six seems like forever. When this is coupled with an uncertainty about how long the family will stay in one place and when and where the next post will be, it is extremely unsettling.

We have had a positive experience of the state sector with our children at infant level. The school is well used to service families and is accommodating about time off to visit relations and Daddy of course. They have used the Pupil Premium to set up a group for families, using an established SEAL (social and emotional aspects of learning) framework. It consisted of evening sessions where children and adults addressed the same issues in separate groups and looked at how to talk about and cope with them. It also served as a lasting network of support for families experiencing the same difficulties. From my experience as a teacher and a parent, I don't think that the possibilities offered by the Pupil Premium are widely understood, this may account for its poor use and uptake.

Our eldest son has learning difficulties (namely dyslexia and high functioning autism). This exaggerates the effects of change and instability. William has found his father coming and going, together the uncertainty about his future very distressing, at times becoming quite withdrawn. We like to spend as much time as possible together as a family (and are therefore "mobile"), this is likely to result in several moves in the future. For this reason we are claiming CEA for William. So for William, who has a Statement of Special Educational Needs, CEA also means Continuity of Specialist Support, as his extra help (occupational therapy, speech and language therapy), all come from within his school. We now know and can tell William with certainty, that he will be attending this school until the end of this academic phase. This is a great relief and comfort to us all. He is flourishing and the specialist help and added support from the other children he lives with is transforming him. He now gives regular eye contact and has become very socially confident and independent.

We were very anxious about applying for this allowance. Like others I have spoken to, we were worried that we would not be eligible and that we might have to pay the fees back if our situation changed. We are also still very concerned that the allowance may be withdrawn or that it may not be available for our other children, who will then be forced to move from pillar to post with no chance of continuity of education. The nature of Service Families is a sense of duty and the question of whether we deserve to take this allowance for our children weighed heavily on us. Sending a child away is an agonizing decision and is not to be taken lightly. Accepting CEA has given us a lifeline and helps to reconcile the sacrifice and compromise that our lifestyle necessitates.

One of the most significant effects on a child whose father is away is the mother's mental health. I know that my children's mood and behavior deteriorates dramatically when I am having a "difficult week". The normal problems continue when a parent is away and like Atlas, the remaining parent carries it all. Trying to maintain a career, caring for sick relatives, bereavement, all whilst dealing with the emotional well being of small and unsettled children can be exhausting to the point of desperation. My support comes from my military friends and neighbours and this is possible as I live in a military quarter. Before children, when we lived in our own home, I was completely removed from this support and was not aware of any that was available to me. There is help available, I don't think that it is widely known about and there seems to be a stigma attached to asking for it. The obvious way to spread this information is via the ships and my husband does pass on HIVE

newsletters to me. The ships are working lean manned and at full stretch and it would not be reasonable to expect them to oversee welfare beyond the ships company themselves.

February 2013

Written evidence from Philippa J Bleach, Head of History, Connaught School, Aldershot and Prof Martin L Parsons, Research Fellow, University of Reading

As a result of Parental deployment, Service Children can experience a significant number of school transfers which can lead to a number of related issues including:

- feeling of “rootlessness”;
- separation anxiety;
- possible psychiatric or behaviour problems;
- a disrupted education;
- difficulty in making and maintaining friendships;
- feeling a burden of responsibility towards siblings and parents; and
- an overwhelming fear of the death of a love one.

Many teachers and care-workers assume that all Service children are already able to deal with the consequences of being a Service child and will be receiving some support from welfare services within the army; many of these children are simply seen as being resilient and able to get by. Whilst this may be true of many Service children, there are those who do find it difficult to cope; socially, emotionally and academically. Research (Bleach) reveals that there is a clear need for a more structured network of support to help Service children face any difficulties that arise within their educational experience. As a result it is suggested that particular attention should be drawn to the importance of the provision of in-service teacher training and support in Service Child matters.

Despite the high concentration of Service Children in particular schools across the country, the interests of this group are generally played down due to the assumption made about their resilience. Whilst conducting the research, it became quite apparent that for many educators and parents, Service Children were not viewed as needing particular assistance and there were a number of adults who even questioned the use of the term “war child” being connected with this cohort of children.

Further interviews and discussions with adults and the children involved in this school based study,⁶ demonstrated that there is a huge lack of understanding about the social and emotional difficulties that Service Children may face. Two key questions became apparent:

- How can the presumptions about Service children be dispelled?
- How can an improved awareness of this group of children be put into practice in order that a valuable network of support is made available?

The pastoral leaders who regularly have to deal with the social and emotional issues of teens and are in direct contact with parents, have had no formal training on the needs of Service Children, despite the school’s close geographical proximity to the Aldershot garrison and having had to deal with Service Children on a fairly regular basis. Although there is an army welfare contact, this is rarely used, instead those pastoral leaders who have needed to, have taken the initiative and arranged in-school counselling sessions for particular Service Children when required and have also listened carefully to concerned parents. However, the issues that are specific to Service families are not mentioned in pastoral training courses, and it is only due to the experience and personal depth of empathy, that this particular group of teachers have been able to provide support. All pastoral leaders said that they would very much welcome specific training on Service children and families.

Many teachers do not realise that Service Children’s emotional and social problems do not just suddenly stop when the parent leaves the forces or comes back home. For many the problems encountered will reverberate throughout their life.

The main issues that arise in the relationships between Service Child and parent are:

- Separation anxiety.
- Pressure of responsibility on both parent and child.
- Competitiveness.
- Attention seeking.
- Lack of open and transparent communication.

⁶ Forty students of both genders, from a range of racial backgrounds, ages 11 to 16 and whose parents have previously been deployed or who are currently serving in the armed forces took part in the study. The response from parents was disappointing with only eight participating. This is a trend of the school; lack of parental response and also those parents not wanting to draw attention to their service family background. In addition, 20 staff members of varying lengths of teaching career participated in the study.

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN

When it came to asking students about their educational experience as a Service Child, the responses were consistent:

- Students felt that constant movement led to repetition of topics, missed curriculum elements and a feeling of being “left behind” (32 out of 40).
- When parents were deployed concentration was affected in school, partly as a result of problems sleeping. 21 students out of the 37 children of current serving personnel said that they had trouble sleeping when their parent is not there, even if they are on duty on a UK base near home.
- Students felt that the majority of teachers did not understand what life was like as a Service child; not all children commented on this but out of the 18 that did:
 - (i) 11 believed that teachers were unaware of their problems;
 - (ii) four said that only teachers from Service backgrounds could understand;
 - (iii) one said he would prefer it if teachers didn’t know anything about his Service child status; and
 - (iv) four said that teachers “*try to understand*”.

Another key comment by students related to the question of transport, as some relied on taxis getting them to and from school. This had caused them problems as the taxi timings were inflexible and students were picked up straight after school. As a result some could not participate in extra-curricular activities.

All parents who took part in the study felt that there was more support and help for Service families during KS1 and 2. Beyond that, parents commented that there needed to be:

- more awareness amongst secondary staff of how to help and support Service Children when they are in school;
- increased help and support when parent(s) are on deployment; and
- more flexibility in allowing holidays during term time when parents get back from a forces tour of duty.

Go into any book shop and pick up books on teacher training, and you will be unable to find any clear advice on the educational needs of Service children, yet you will find chapters on the inclusion of SEN, EAL and Gifted and Talented pupils. Although there may be groups in the UK focused on improving the educational experience of Service Children, questions need to be raised on the impact that these groups are truly having.

In our opinion the Select Committee are advised to consider the following issues when reviewing and evaluating the education of service children.

PUPIL TRANSFER

(a) Schools should be aware of and acknowledge the time scale of children settling into schools and the “switch off” phase when they know that they are leaving. This usually amounts to two weeks at either end of the process. Therefore a child is in danger of “losing” a month of schooling at each transfer.

(b) There should be a statutory time-scale regarding the transfer of pupil records between schools. This should be within a *maximum* of seven days of the pupil moving. Such documents should include an overview of the number of schools attended and the places to which the parent(s) has been deployed and, if possible, the nature of the deployment eg Front-line action, support/admin role.

This should also include children of civilian contractors who are attached to service units in combat areas.

(c) Very detailed academic record keeping on Service Children should be kept up to date and available at short notice outside of the normal termly/half-termly phases. This is important at all Key Stages, but critical in exam years.

(d) With reference to exams: It should be noted that some pupils may be repeating topics and in some cases having to comply with subject regulations in totally different exam boards. This is a severe disadvantage to all such pupils in years 10–13. Exam boards should be made aware of the problems as they pertain to specific individuals and alternative arrangements and/or allowance in final assessments should be made.

(e) Provision should be made within the reception schools for those service pupils recognised as having special needs and learning difficulties above and beyond those linked specifically to Service Children. Such information should be highlighted on the transfer documents and include action(s) already in place so that there can be some continuity of approach at the receiving school(s).

(f) It should be noted, that in some cases, levels of support indicated in Special Needs Statements are NOT transferable between LEAs. There needs to be continuity of provision.

SCHOOLS/STAFF

(a) Teachers and the school in general should be aware of the problems associated with child/parent separation. (see Peter Heinl. Splintered Innocence). This should be a whole-staff responsibility, but with a senior member of the Pastoral team being given the task of overseeing the support/mentoring of service children.

(b) The effect that such separation has on children depends on a number of criteria which are personal to the child concerned. It is very easy to maintain a holistic approach to Service Children within an establishment, whereas the strategy should be one of dealing with them as individuals.

(c) Each child can be affected by:

- (i) Their position within the sibling hierarchy. Many children at the upper end often take on a parental responsibility which is only alleviated while they are physically at school. At home their responsibilities can create a great deal of emotional strain and anxiety.
- (ii) Some have to organise younger siblings which often puts pressure on them at the beginning and end of the day and disenfranchises them from post-school extra-curricular activities.
- (iii) The same children can often act as carers and emotional support for their mothers dealing with deployment, and also from their fathers who have returned from conflict either with a serious injury or with PTSD.
- (iv) When a child exhibits what seems on the surface to be anti-social and attention-seeking behaviour, s/he is usually dealt with within the behaviour policies of the school without necessarily considering the domestic background of the child. The latter is often not disclosed because the child does not want the situation to come to the notice of the authorities. Therefore, some children become labelled as disruptive when all they need is contact with someone who understands the situation, is a possible sounding board, and in extreme cases, access to a physical location where they can simply vent their anger and frustration.
- (v) Many service children find it difficult to make and maintain friendships and relationships. Again, this can depend on the position of the child within the family. Research (Parsons et al) shows that one of the long-term effects of separation is the problem of maintaining long-term relationships. This is due to the child realising that their position is transitory, so why make the effort. A sense of rejection is ever present and is a trait that can last into adulthood. Although some schools attempt to place service children within friendship groups, such actions should not be forced and any reticence on behalf of the child should not be seen as standoffishness, arrogance or disinterest.
- (vi) School staff and the authorities need to be aware that War related trauma in children can extend to the third generation. (Heinl, Parsons, Sandelin-Benko).

INSET

(a) The responsibility of Service Children in schools should not lie with the Pastoral Team alone. A series of INSET sessions in school should inform *All* staff of their roles and responsibilities, and how to recognise some of the symptoms which would indicate a child having problems.

(b) Staff should be made aware of the strategies available in school to provide support to such children.

(c) Schools should be advised on how best to use the Service Pupil Premium.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

(a) Service families, especially those of NCOs should be made aware of the existing provision of financial support for boarding fees in state schools. Although recognising that this could exacerbate the problems of separation, for those in exam years this could nonetheless provide social and academic continuity.

(b) At present, Service Children are only eligible for Free School Meals or Service Pupil Provision....not both. This seems to be an anomaly which needs to be rectified.

(c) There needs to be a minimum two-year post-service monitoring of Service Children whose parent(s) have left the armed forces. For some the problems remain, especially where the father is suffering from physical/mental trauma. To cut off any support immediately the parent has left employment could have a devastating effect on the child(ren).

(d) Make the present provision within the OFSTED inspections regarding Service Children a much more important issue. Especially where schools have a high proportion of service children on roll.

(e) Establish a regulatory body within the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Defence with the specific responsibility of monitoring the education of service children.

WITHIN SCHOOLS

- (a) Appoint someone with responsibility for Service Children..
- (b) Be transparent and use “deployment” as part of curriculum and lesson planning.
- (c) Deal with service children as “individuals” not as a holistic group.
- (d) Have a separate section in school library for books dealing with service life, deployment, friendships, bereavement.
- (e) Use Service Pupil Premium strategically.

January 2013

Written evidence from Appleford School

BACKGROUND

Appleford School is a specialist co-educational school for pupils with dyslexia and associated learning difficulties with an age range of 7–16 in Shrewton Village, Salisbury, and Wiltshire. There are currently 65 pupils on the school roll, of which 26 are the children of armed forces personnel (40%). Appleford is registered with the DfE as a Specialist Residential School. All pupils at Appleford have an educational psychologists report and many (21–32%) have a statement of Special Educational Needs. In a recent Independent Schools Inspectorate Inspection Appleford was graded as Excellent.

1. Specific Comments:

- (a) *Current MOD Policy.* MOD policy is that children of members of the armed forces have the same standard of access to education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live, given the requirement for mobility. Comment—we believe that children of servicemen currently are better looked after for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision than many of their civilian counterparts. Our evidence is mainly drawn from our local knowledge of the Larkhill, Buford and Tidworth garrisons, the pupils drawn from these garrisons receive much better SEN than they would in the Wiltshire Council schools. Access to SEN is severely limited due to cash and SEN policy constraints in Wiltshire Council, parents frequently have to wait for considerable periods of time before they can have their children statement, then very limited levels of SEN support are available—frequently this is restricted to one to one support delivered by learning support assistance in Wiltshire schools. In comparison military parents with mobility certificates are able to access via SENA(SP) superior levels of SEN delivered at Appleford by highly qualified teachers (not LSAs) supported by LSAs for English and some math’s classes. At Appleford pupils also are able to have direct intervention for Occupational Therapy, Speech and Language Therapy and psychotherapy—some ¾ of the current placements for psychotherapy as an example are taken up with children of military families.
- (b) *Future MOD Policy.* In the future we understand that many of the parents of children with SENA will lose their mobility certificates. This will mean that their children will no longer be able to access SEN provision (paid for by the military). Comments—We believe that in the future that the children of members of the armed forces will not receive the same access to SEN education *as another citizen in the area in which they live*. This is based on the fact that a serviceman/woman has little control of where they live and therefore that a post code lottery will occur over access to SEN. We are already aware that access to SEN is a post code lottery, eg Wiltshire Council is poor and has to be hard fought for—normally in SEN Tribunal, Hampshire is much better and Warwickshire is much the best of three local authorities for SEN provision. Please note there is evidence that there is an 18–24 month regression for SEN pupils when they move between school—this is important when a pupil is forced to move schools when it is found that their current school is unable to provide for their needs.
- (c) *Annex A.* At Annex A are two comparison cases for children of servicemen—both Army.

2. *Conclusion.* The major issue is that in the future there definitely will not be a level playing field between the servicemen and their civilian counterparts.

	<i>Current Rules</i>	<i>Future Rules</i>
Child1	Child 1 is chronically dyslexic, as was her father, her father lost his entitlement to SENA(Sp)	Child 1 now attends a local secondary school where her SEN needs are not being fully met.
Child 2	Child 2 has chronic dyslexia and suffers from an attachment disorder which frequently results in behavioral issues, Mother has a mobility certificate,	Mother may lose her mobility certificate and lose entitlement to SENA (Sp). Mother has applied for statutory assessment which has been refused by Wiltshire Council; mother will have to fight to have the case resolved. If the Statutory Assessment is not accepted Child 2 will be forced to attend a school with low support levels for his needs.

David King
Headmaster

March 2013
