

A toolkit for schools:

# Supporting service children and families in Portsmouth

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# Foreword

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I am a proud Military wife of 20 years and mother of two young children; who like many service children experience significant challenges due to their parent's service

to the country. These children often appear to be coping and getting on with life despite the challenges they face. This can often be because they are masking their feelings, which leads to the misconception that all military children are resilient. Resilience is discussed in this toolkit and emphasises the importance of 'checking in' with these pupils, not just assuming they are okay.

The reason I developed this information pack was due to my voluntary role as the Chair of the Portsmouth Parent Board. The Portsmouth Parent Board are a voluntary group of passionate parents and carers who act as a link between the community and children and young people's services. We understand the ups and downs that come with parenting and want to make sure all voices are heard and considered. We carried out a poll regarding Service Pupil Premium and support available for service children in schools.

The results of the poll identified that there is still a significant lack of awareness of what service children experience and their needs within some schools in the city. Many parents feel that their children are not being supported effectively. It was also reported that some schools are doing great work with these children, and we have included some useful examples from them within this toolkit.

I appreciate that schools are working tirelessly to educate and support all of their pupils, therefore they may have limited time to look into some areas of research. This is why I have created this toolkit – to hopefully streamline this information but also provide links to further reading for those of you who are interested.

Where appropriate some of the information included is direct from the sources, e.g. some on the information on Service Pupil Premium and the Armed Forces Covenant section.

I would like to thank Cairiona Scully from Portsmouth City Council for her support, the Portsmouth Parent Board and also the schools, military charities, service families and other organisations that have been involved.

On the cover: HMS Diamond  
sails for deployment  
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# Introduction

## Why has this toolkit been created?

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Service children experience challenges that many of their peers don't and therefore are in need of additional support. In 2009, the 'Overlooked casualties of conflict' report by the Naval Children's Charity identified that there was a lack of awareness of what these children go through, and subsequently a lack of support in place for them. This prompted the Ministry of Defence to request a 2011 Ofsted survey to examine educational, and other outcomes for Service children and to evaluate the quality of provision made for them. It was following this review that Service Pupil Premium (SPP) was established and first awarded nationally in 2012-13.

The key findings of the 2011 Ofsted survey were as follows:

- Service children face challenges that often go beyond the experience of most of families and children living in the UK.
- The combination of deployment of a family member and regular moves of home and school can cause anxiety and stress for service families: education is disturbed, social networks are disrupted and parents left behind have to cope with the effects of being a 'lone parent'.
- There is a general lack of awareness of service children and their additional needs.
- Service children are susceptible to social and emotional disturbance while a parent or other family member is on active deployment. This was further heightened for some children with special educational needs and/or where parents were deployed in areas of military conflict.
- Problems with school admissions; a small proportion of the families interviewed had siblings in the same key stage in different schools because of unsuccessful applications and a lack of availability of school places.



Image: Squadron based at Royal Air Force Coningsby return from Op Biloxi. UK MOD © Crown copyright 2023



Image: Royal Navy RNSPT and his wife and child walking on Portsmouth beach. UK MOD © Crown copyright 2019

- Family mobility can cause issues with applying for schools, which can lead to siblings allocated to different schools, and transport issues.
- Children missing parts of, or repeating areas of the curriculum.
- Poor transfer of information about pupils between schools, with particular difficulties with the transfer of statements of special educational needs.
- Slow assessment and support for Service children with special educational needs or a disability.

In 2021 the Naval Children’s Charity published an **updated report**<sup>1</sup> reviewing the findings of their 2009 report – **The Overlooked Casualties of Conflict**<sup>2</sup>. It reinforced the original findings, which

influenced the introduction of the Service Pupil Premium, and highlighted areas where things have changed. These issues are covered in more detail, including links to the research that underpins the findings, in the 2022 ‘Armed Forces Community within the Solent’ needs assessment – **The Armed Forces Community Within The Solent**<sup>3</sup>

Through this toolkit, we are going to discuss the following:

**What** – Service children experience to raise awareness.

**Why** – Service children need support.

**How** – Service children can be supported at school.

**Who** – Organisations that can support your work with these children.

1 <https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-The-Overlooked-Casualties-of-Conflict-Update-and-Review-Report-Interactive-Singles-1.pdf>  
 2 [https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/overlooked\\_casualties\\_of\\_conflict\\_report.pdf](https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/overlooked_casualties_of_conflict_report.pdf)  
 3 <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/armed-forces-covenant-solent-full-feb-2023-aa-accessible.pdf>

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# Service children in Portsmouth

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Portsmouth is the home of the Royal Navy, and the Armed Forces are a significant part of the fabric of the city. At last estimate nearly 37,000 people living in Portsmouth were members of the Armed Forces community (either currently serving, a veteran, reservist, or immediate family members) – that is about 18% of the population<sup>4</sup>.

**58 schools**

out of the 60 schools in the DfE's 2021 pupil premium data file had pupils that were reported as Service children.

In total, there were

**927 pupils**

identified as service children in the data set, which is just under 4% of all pupils.



<sup>4</sup> [www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/community/portsmouths-armed-forces-community/](http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/community/portsmouths-armed-forces-community/)

Image:  
Child waiting for his Royal  
Marine dad to return from  
Afghanistan © Crown copyright

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# The Armed Forces Covenant Pledge

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The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, should be treated fairly and should suffer no disadvantage as a result of that service.

## A duty to support

In addition to a moral obligation to support all children to be at their best, in November 2022, a new statutory duty came into effect. The duty compels public bodies, including schools, to demonstrate due regard to the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant that highlight:

- a. The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces.
- b. The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.
- c. The principle that special provision for service people may be justified by the effects on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

The following education functions are within scope of the duty in compulsory education settings, that is, primary, secondary, and, for England only, compulsory further education:

- Admissions
- Educational attainment and curriculum
- Child wellbeing
- Transport
- Attendance
- Additional needs support
- Use of Service Pupil Premium funding (England only)

## A partnership approach

Portsmouth City Council has been working in partnership locally and nationally to improve support for service children. This includes being part of the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP). This is a partnership between the MOD and local authorities in England that have committed to work together to improve the experience and outcomes for all service children.

For more information please refer to the **MOD Local Authority Partnership guidance**<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> [www.gov.uk/guidance/mod-local-authority-partnership-modlap](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mod-local-authority-partnership-modlap)

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# Impact of service life on service children

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## Family life for children with parents in the Armed Forces

Children and young people with parents in the Armed Forces face challenges that may go beyond the experience of the majority of families and children living in the UK. The families of service personnel are often highly mobile and can experience prolonged periods of separation which can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety.

There are a number of key issues/ challenges that service families can face with regard to education and learning. Research completed by the Portsmouth Educational Psychology Service indicates that most of the needs of service families and children centre around anxiety and mental health due to parental separation.

## Primary areas of challenge for service children

**Deployment and separation** is when a service person is serving away from home for a period of time. This could be a six to nine month tour of duty, weekending, a training course or an exercise which could last for a few weeks.

**Mobility** is when a service family is posted from one location to another, including overseas and within the UK.

## Parental separation

Service life has a significant impact on families. Many are immensely proud of their loved one(s) serving but it can also be extremely challenging when they are away. There are several different types of separation as follows:

**Planned deployments** – These vary in time and can often be six to nine months away. This doesn't include all of the training leading up to the deployment, which can mean more time away from the family. Although families are often aware of these types of deployments in advance, the anticipation of the serving parent leaving can cause lots of anxiety for the service child. The whole process of the deployment creates a full cycle of emotions and behaviours which is discussed later in the toolkit.

**Short notice deployments and exercises** – Many serving personnel are on short notice to deploy which means that they are on standby to move within hours, days or a few weeks. These types of deployments and exercises can be extremely distressing for the family and cause significant disturbance to the emotional well-being of a service child and life in general.

**Deployments and operations of significant risk** – Some deployments or operations involve the serving parent being put at significant risk. This causes anxiety for the family due to the fact that they are not only missing the serving parent but also fearing for their safety.

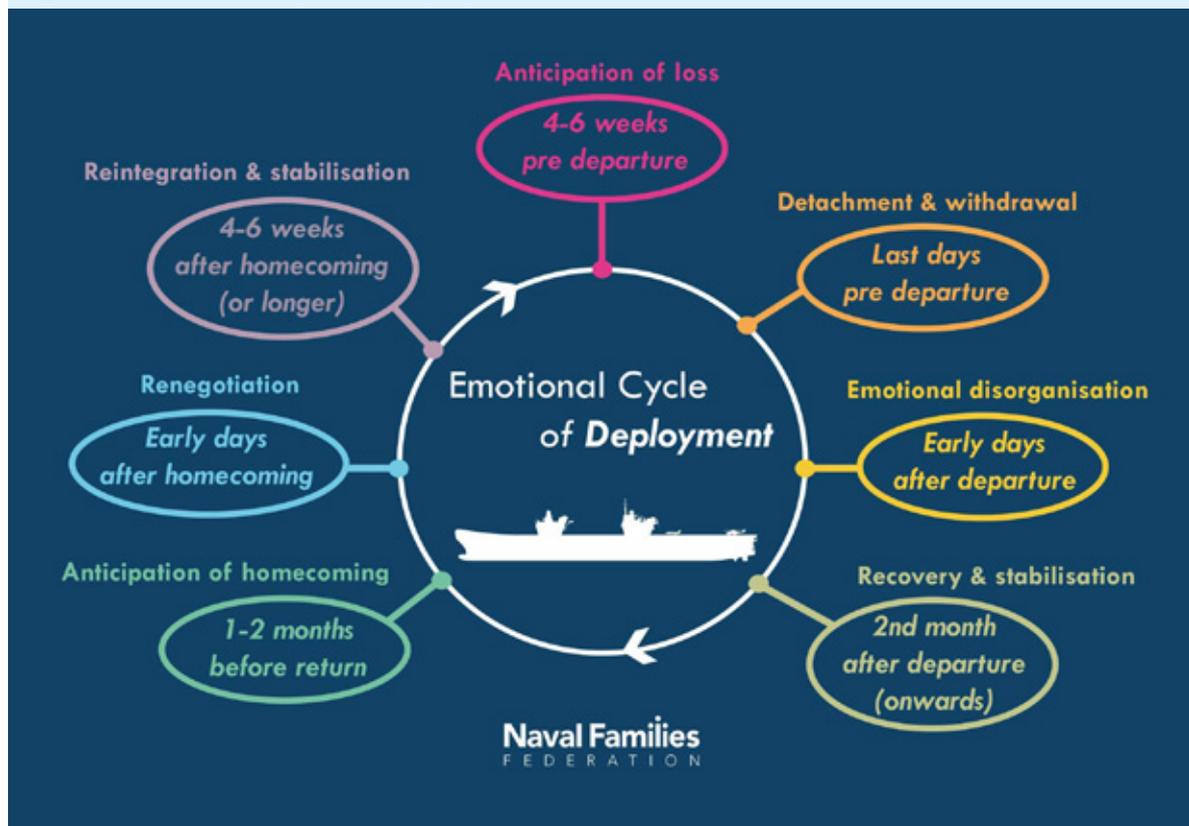
**Weekending** – This is where the serving parent is away from home during the week, often returning on a Friday and then leaving on a Sunday evening. Some children find the 'here-not-here' nature of weekending more challenging than longer deployments. Weekending also places a lot of pressure on the whole family to have 'perfect' weekends. The disruption of 'weekending' can be particularly challenging for families with children with SEND.

## Emotional Cycle of Deployment

The Emotional Cycle of Deployment is a model that was developed for Naval Families, to better understand the impact of deployment. This cycle applies to all services, not just the Royal Navy.

Whilst operating patterns are continually changing, it still provides a helpful tool for understanding and explaining changes in feelings and behaviour resulting from deployment. There will be individual differences in how people feel, and each deployment will be different.

**Figure 1:** Emotional Cycle of Deployment – Naval Families Federation



Source: [https://nff.org.uk/parental-absence/?fbclid=IwAR1q7pdBK4q71wo9ASKJKV974pYIXPBwE\\_I-D6BGTiNKTDptLCkchWcdFCA](https://nff.org.uk/parental-absence/?fbclid=IwAR1q7pdBK4q71wo9ASKJKV974pYIXPBwE_I-D6BGTiNKTDptLCkchWcdFCA)

## How the cycle can affect service children

Stage of deployment/separation	Examples of feelings/behaviours
Pre-deployment	Anxiety, anticipation, denial, mental/emotional/physical distance
Deployment/exercise – early stages	Sadness, loneliness, overwhelmed
Sustainment	New routines, confidence
Re-deployment/homecoming	Anticipation, anxiety, excitement, apprehension
Post-deployment	Reintegration, negotiation of routines

*NOTE: these feelings and behaviours are not isolated to the children, adults feel them too.*

For further information read the **Parental absence Parental-Absence-Resource**<sup>6</sup> document by the Royal Naval Families

Federation which shows the impact on children at different ages – pre-school, primary school and teenagers.

6 <https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Parental-Absence-Resource.pdf>

## Examples of how parental separation affects service children

<b>Finds it difficult to talk about feelings – confusing time for them when a parent is deployed</b>	<b>Separation anxiety</b>	<b>Fears for parents' safety – both deployed and parent at home (can feel very protective of the parent at home)</b>
<b>Fears parent won't return – they won't have a Mummy/Daddy anymore</b>	<b>Pushes boundaries – a rollercoaster of emotions from clinginess to pushing people away, regression, angry, frustrated, etc.</b>	<b>Masking – holds it together at school but really struggles at home</b>
<b>Feels isolated and alone</b>	<b>Sleep disruption</b>	<b>Withdraws from friends and family</b>
<b>Delayed responses – a parent can be 'back' or have left the military but this is when the emotions can overwhelm the child</b>	<b>Confused about feelings</b>	<b>Anger towards 'at home' parent</b>
<b>Upset by news coverage</b>	<b>Feels alone and that their friends don't understand</b>	<b>Feeling of ambiguous loss</b>
<b>Regression, e.g. bed wetting, sleeping in parents bed</b>	<b>Feels guilty when getting on with life</b>	<b>Clingy and reluctant to leave 'at home' parent</b>



Image: A soldier returning from Afghanistan is reunited with his son. © Crown copyright.

## Mobility

Family mobility is common for many service families and often results in frequent changes of school for many service children. For some children these frequent changes of school may help them develop a broad range of experiences, social skills and coping mechanisms, but it may also impact a range of factors relating to educational progression such as:

- Education is not a stable environment.
- New curriculum – gaps in children’s academic knowledge/repetition. GCSE options do not always match in different schools.
- Ensuring the correct information is passed on (e.g. Children’s Education Advisory Service, pupil information profiles).
- Disrupted social support networks/ friendships – impact on sense of belonging.

For some children frequent changes of school can cause issues with social support networks and friendships and lead to a feeling of isolation.

A useful resource on Mobility and moving schools is the **Service Children’s Progression Alliance document on moving schools**<sup>7</sup>.

## Schools admissions and applying for a school place

If a family is applying for a Portsmouth school, it’s important that they tick the box indicating criteria relating to Service Premium on the application form. Most Portsmouth schools (although not all) have Service Premium within their admissions criteria.

If a family are moving to Portsmouth as a result of a new posting, they can apply in advance, even if they haven’t got their new Portsmouth address confirmed (they can use the base they are being posted to as an interim address).

All information about admissions, how to apply and who to contact for more information is available on the **Portsmouth City Council website**<sup>8</sup>.

7 <https://www.scipalliance.org/assets/files/SCP-Alliance-Briefing-moving-schools-full-FINAL.pdf>

8 <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/schools/admissions/>



Image: A chief Petty Officer from HSM Richmond is reunited with his family after deployment at sea. © Crown copyright.

## Service families who have children/young people with Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities

The Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice (2015) provides statutory guidance for many organisations including local authorities and state-maintained schools and colleges.

Children of service personnel are specifically mentioned in the Code of Practice (section 10.53 onwards). Organisations with duties under the Code are asked to consider the difficulties service children with SEND may face that are unique to the nature of their serving parent's employment as outlined earlier in the toolkit, i.e. parental separation and mobility.

From section 10.55, the code of practice lays out in detail the action to take in respect of service children with SEN. The code notes that in meeting the aspirations of the Armed Forces Covenant, which attempts to eliminate or mitigate some of the potential

disadvantages faced by Service families, all those with statutory responsibilities towards Service children with SEN should ensure that the impact of their policies, administrative processes and patterns of provision do not disadvantage such children because of their Service-related lifestyle.

Further information and advice about the education of Service children with SEN, in England or elsewhere in the world, including the public funds available for boarding placements and the services available in SCE schools overseas, is available from the **Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) information page on the government website**<sup>9</sup>.

**Portsmouth's SEND local offer**<sup>10</sup> sets out the support, services and information available for children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

You can contact Portsmouth's SEND team for more information by emailing **[sen.education@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:sen.education@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)**

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service>

<sup>10</sup> <https://portsmouthlocaloffer.org/>



2 days before deployment



Daddy is home!

### Life of a service family with a child with special needs

"The photo above was taken two days before my husband deployed to Afghanistan. Just days before we had been told that our daughter needed to be tested for Spinabifida, Cerebal Palsy and a chromosome disorder. Not only this, but her twin brother had suspected Hydrocephalus so would need a scan and possible brain stent. We were devastated, but life had to go on.

My husband deployed while I began my journey to becoming a mother of a child with Special Educational Needs. Our daughter had multiple tests and our son had a scan. All of the results came back negative but further assessments lead to our daughter's diagnosis of Global Developmental Delay.

I spent hours and hours with paediatricians, physios, speech therapists and occupational therapists. Our house looked like a clinic, it had various contraptions to help my daughter build strength. She hated going in them but I knew they would help. I had to stay strong.

In the 20 years of being a service wife this was by far the hardest deployment we had ever experienced. We were so worried about the futures of our beautiful little babies and I also dreaded any unexpected knocks on the door, terrified that it would be the one that told me my husband was never coming home.

The other photo is the moment he returned home. It's the best feeling.

Our daughter was later diagnosed with ADHD and significant learning difficulties. She is now eleven and is a magical little soul who is now being assessed for Autism.

The twins have also experienced deployments where Daddy missed Christmas' and birthdays as well as lots of exercises and weekendings. All of these are difficult, especially for our daughter who struggles with change. Thankfully she has a wonderful big brother (by one minute) who has always looked out for her and has been a young carer and my little wing man when Dad's away."

## Veterans' children

It is really important to remember the children of veterans when considering the impact of service life on a family. Just because a parent no longer serves does not mean that the challenges previously faced have now gone. Veteran families also face new challenges which fall into the following key areas:

### **If the family lived on a Service Families Accommodation (SFA) estate they will have to move out**

– The family will suffer the dislocation of the move from a familiar supportive military family environment; moving from a housing estate where you share a very strong common bond with other families, to a civilian street often lacking that supportive network. Moving to your own property comes with new unfamiliar challenges. This property may also not sit within current school catchment areas for the children. Not only do the family then suffer the stress of moving out of the SFA but may have to change schools and lose friendships that have sustained them. If the family move, they will also have the usual challenges around finding and registering with local healthcare and dentistry services.

**Finances** – The change from a regular guaranteed wage and reduced rent housing (in comparison to the civilian rental sector) can create an environment of financial instability within the family. Schools must be aware that military families undergoing the transition to civilian life may also move categories financially in terms of the support such as free school meals. Furthermore, veterans traditionally are slow to come forward and ask for support or advice in this area.

**Living together** – The final and possibly one of the greatest challenges faced across all ranks, rates and sections of the military, is that of the family coming together under a single roof, day in day out. For the spouse or partner that has learnt to cope, run

the household and family routines mainly alone, it can be difficult to now share that responsibility with a veteran who is very much used to a certain style of structure and order in their life. Furthermore, if the veteran parent has suffered trauma in their military service this can begin to impact more directly on family life. Both the parents and the children may need emotional support from schools to navigate this change in circumstance.

*"I was 11 when my Dad left the Navy, I had always just got on with things and tried to ignore the sadness. I thought when he left everything would be better but when I was 13 all of the emotions I had suppressed came crashing into my mind. My Uncle was also deployed at the time so it was a lot to deal with. I really wish teachers had checked in on me more to see if I was okay"*

**Child of a Veteran who served 26 years in the Royal Navy.**

## Young carers

As already mentioned, some service families with a child with SEND have other children that are carers to their siblings. Some children are also carers for their parent who remains at home, or a parent who is a Veteran and might have a service-related injury or mental health issue.

### **Young Carers in Armed Forces Families<sup>11</sup>**

is a piece of support work by the Children's Society looking locally at the prevalence of young carers among the service child community. A young carer is a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person (Section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014). This relates to the care of any family member who is physically or mentally ill, frail, elderly, disabled or misuses alcohol or substances.

For further information visit the **Portsmouth City Council's statutory duty for young carers<sup>12</sup>** web page or email **[youngcarers@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:youngcarers@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)**

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/young-carers-armed-forces-families.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/support-for-carers/young-carers/>

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# Are service children resilient?

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Service children and young people are amazing and have many strengths, but they can experience significant challenges that many of their peers do not. For this reason, it is important that schools actually check in with their service pupils and not just assume that they are resilient and therefore okay. Especially as this apparent resilience is sometimes fragile and can mask what is really happening. It is also extremely important not to minimise and/or dismiss their feelings or concerns by assuming a child/young adult is resilient.

Labelling service children as 'resilient' causes some concern for many service parents. They see their children often masking their feelings or 'just getting on with things' rather than actually having the coping mechanisms and skills that come with being resilient. This was an issue also identified in the **Naval Children's Charity 2021 The Impact of Service Life on the Military Child**<sup>13</sup> with one of the key findings as follows:

- There is a lack of consensus regarding the resilience of service children, and concerns that this narrative is used to excuse the challenges they face as a result of military life.

Resilience is also discussed in the 2021 document **Growing up in the RAF**<sup>14</sup>, which noted that whilst the proper development of resilience and adaptability can be a positive aspect of service life; it is also important for these children to know that it's okay not to be okay.

## How can we develop resilience?

*"We cannot always change a child's circumstances, but we can give them the tools to cope and thrive."*

**Catherine, Princess of Wales**

True resilience needs to be worked on rather than assumed, this applies to everyone, not just service children.

Resilience is a muscle, work on it.



13 <https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-The-Overlooked-Casualties-of-Conflict-Update-and-Review-Report-Interactive-Singles-1.pdf>

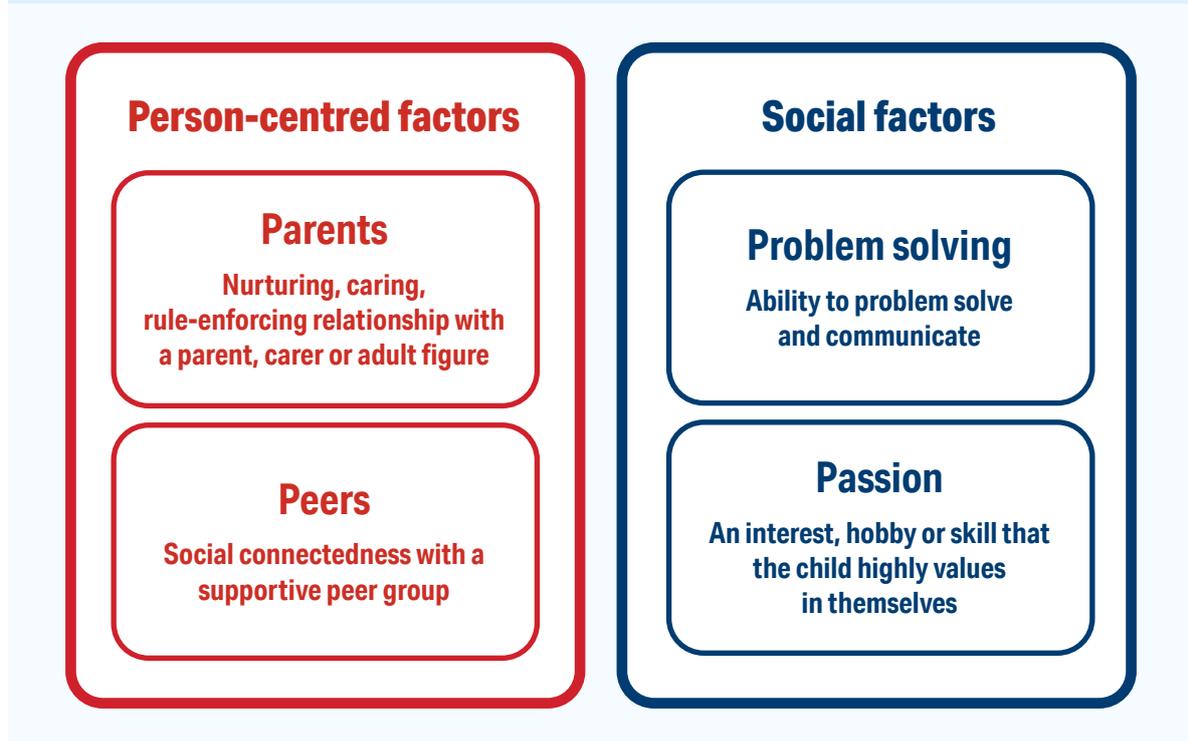
14 [https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021\\_Growing\\_up\\_in\\_the\\_RAF\\_report.pdf](https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021_Growing_up_in_the_RAF_report.pdf)

## Building resilience

There are some really useful resources at the end of the toolkit; one of which was kindly shared with us by Dr Pooky Knightsmith, a keynote speaker and author on improving mental health, who was keen to support

this toolkit. Dr Knightsmith shared her work with Lucas Shelemy for the 'Young Minds' paper on building resilience in the face of adversity. The following figure is featured in this document.

**Figure 2:** The 4 Ps': key factors that protect and promote resilience in children and young people in the face of adversity



Dr Knightsmith also wrote an article in Sec Ed called The voice for Secondary Education (link to full article available in the resource section) where she gives guidance on four skills that are key to developing resilience:

- **Communication** – important that children learn how to communicate clearly, so they can express concerns.
- **Problem-solving** – developing effective problem solving skills helps build resilience.
- **Healthy coping** – using techniques like mindfulness, breathing strategies, exercise, etc.
- **Understanding emotions** – being able to understand emotions and also to know when to get help.

### Importance of having a trusted adult in a child's life

Like many, Dr Knightsmith believes that each child needs positive and trusting relationships with at least one adult in their lives. Many service children have someone at home that they can talk to when they are worried but they can also be concerned that they don't want to worry their parents with issues that they are experiencing, especially when the parent is at home whilst the other parent is away. For this reason, it is important that they have someone they can talk to at school. Please ensure that your service children know who the service lead is at school.



Image: Child awaits return of HMS Kent © Crown copyright

## Becoming a listening school

Dr Knightsmith also promotes the concept of becoming a listening school by ensuring that a school has a truly child-centred ethos where every child is heard and respected. Many schools in Portsmouth will already have ways for pupils to give feedback and feel that they are being heard. In addition to this, it would be beneficial for schools to consider their service community and how they engage with pupils and parents.

## Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSAs) in Portsmouth

The Portsmouth Educational Psychology service trains and supervises approximately 100 ELSAs across Portsmouth schools. ELSAs are emotional literacy support assistants working in schools.

They:

- Help children develop positive relationships, emotional literacy and resilience skills, and helpful beliefs.
- Plan and deliver individual (and small group) support programmes.
- Help children to feel valued and listened to.
- Advocate for the child in the school.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.portsmoutheducationpartnership.co.uk/>

ELSAs can support service children to develop their social and emotional skills and work with them to prepare them and support them through periods of challenge such as deployments, moves and so on. For further information about Portsmouth's ELSA programme please contact Philippa Wilson [philippa.wilson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk](mailto:philippa.wilson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

## A needs led city – the Portsmouth context

Portsmouth is a 'needs-led' city and relationship-based approaches are at the core of how schools and services come together to support children and their families. Much of the work already going on in the city will support and benefit service children and their families. Schools and services across the city continue to benefit from city-wide training and support around children's health and emotional well-being, restorative approaches, relational practice, trauma informed and attachment aware approaches.

Further information about work in this area can be found on the **Portsmouth Education Partnership website**<sup>15</sup>.

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# Voices of Service families

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*"Our Daddy used to go away a lot to dangerous places which made me really sad and scared that he would be killed"* **Service child**

*"I was scared that Daddy's helicopter would be shot down and he would never come home. It's the best feeling when he comes back and gives me a big cuddle"* **Service child**

*"When your child looks at a photo of themselves and says "you were away again when we were there, weren't you Daddy," it hurts. I worry how the same thought affects them and will affect them in the future. I want their school to know this is how they feel even when I'm back home, not just when I'm away. Even when they seem fine, they might not be. Knowing that teachers are aware and check in on our kids as their Dad is in the military is important to me. The pastoral care that is provided to them, in whatever form it takes, gives me a peace of mind that they are being looked after at school. My family are as much a part of the service I have given to my country as I am and I couldn't do it without their love and support. I strongly believe our children deserve the same support in all aspects of their lives."* **Serving parent**

*"My 10 year old struggles so much when her Daddy deploys. It is like watching her go through a bereavement again and again. Her school can be hit and miss, with her labelled as "dramatic" and children calling her a "cry baby". It breaks my heart to see the pain and sadness in her life. My seven year old son seems less affected, but none the less he is not "resilient". He can have unusual anger outbursts. He is so young, he cannot express his emotions and they seem to burst out of him every once in a while. His Dad is his "best buddy and I miss him so much"* **Service partner**



"The biggest challenge is trying to prepare the kids for deployments and homecomings with an ever changing program. We can't do countdowns because the programmes change... and that's heartbreaking. Preparing for deployment is the worst because we end up saying goodbye and then he's back, and then he goes and then he's back again.... It's exhausting. I think the other biggest issue is support and childcare. When you don't have family nearby, there really is no one to call on. This is exasperated when you or the children are poorly." **Service partner**



"Being a service child is very tough, but when they come home it is the best feeling ever. My Mummy and Daddy are my heroes." **Service child with both parents serving**

"Being a service parent, and a service woman brings its own challenges. Having no close family means I have an amazing network of friends who support us on the occasions that service requirements mean we are both away at the same time. I also rely heavily on Service Pupil Premium to support my daughter at school, with resources and support she may need.

The Portsmouth Military Kids (PMK) network has been great and is a very well managed group who offer experiences and events for service children. Initially my daughter's school did not take up all the offers from PMK, however after I engaged with the head teacher and stressed the importance of the events and benefits it has on the service child, they now fully engage in everything the organisation offer and my daughter has taken part in some amazing activities and even met HRH Princess Anne" **Service parent**



"As a family we have experienced planned deployments where we have had months leading up to my husband deploying. Also when he was given 24 hours notice to deploy. Both were difficult to process and equally heart breaking for the children and us as adults. **Service parent**

# How can we support service children in Portsmouth?



Department  
for Education

## What is Service Pupil Premium and the expectations of schools?

Service Pupil Premium (SPP) was introduced by the DfE as part of its commitment to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant and in recognition of the specific challenges children from service families face. Children in state schools, academies and free schools in reception to year 11 who meet the eligibility criteria currently attract £310 (correct at time of writing). Money is paid directly to the school and paid for the total number of service children as a whole within the school and not specifically allocated to individual children.

## The purpose of the Service Pupil Premium

Eligible schools receive the SPP so that they can offer pastoral support during challenging times and to help mitigate the negative impact on service children of family mobility or parental deployment.

- **Mobility** is when a service family is posted from one location to another, including overseas and within the UK.
- **Deployment** is when a service person is serving away from home for a period of time. This could be a six to nine month tour of duty, a training course or an exercise which could last for a few weeks.

## How Service Pupil Premium differs from the pupil premium

Service Pupil Premium is there for schools to provide mainly pastoral support for service children, whereas the pupil premium was introduced to raise attainment and accelerate progress within disadvantaged groups.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Schools should not combine Service Pupil Premium with the main pupil premium funding and the spending of each premium should be accounted for separately. Source: **Service Pupil Premium: what you need to know**<sup>16</sup>

## Eligibility criteria – pupils attract SPP if they meet one of the following criteria

- One of their parents is serving in the regular armed forces (including pupils with a parent who is on full commitment as part of the full time reserve service.
- They have been registered as a 'service child' on a school census since 2016, see note on the DfE's ever 6 service child measure.
- One of their parents died whilst serving in the armed forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know>

Children have to be flagged as service children ahead of the autumn school census deadline. Service parents need to make the school aware of their status by talking to the head teacher or school admin staff.

## Department for Education's ever 6 service child measure

The premium was extended, such that any pupil in reception to year 11, who has been flagged as a service child since the 2015 autumn school census, will continue to receive the premium (ever 6 service child). Please see the ESFA's pupil premium grant guidance for more information.

Ex-service personnel should tell the school if they left the armed forces within the last six years. Under the DfE's ever measure, schools will continue to receive SPP for up

to six years for children whose parent(s) left the armed forces, provided the children were recorded as service children in a school census from 2016 onwards (prior to their parent(s) leaving the forces). The ever measure also applies when service parents divorce or separate or when a service parent dies in service.

### IMPORTANT NOTE

Some parents do not know what SPP is to make aware that their children are eligible to receive SPP. It is therefore important that schools ask. The same applies if a pupil has moved schools as many parents assume that the information transfers to the new school. Portsmouth City Council have shared the letter template on the following page for schools to use.

## Example letter for schools

### Have you let the school office know that you are from a service family?

Our school receives additional funding called Service Pupil Premium to help us support children from service families. This funding allows us to provide additional support (usually pastoral) in recognition of the specific challenges that service children may face.

Service Pupil Premium money is paid directly to the school and is paid for the total number of service children as a whole within the school and not specifically allocated to individual children. You can find out how we use our Service Pupil Premium here **(INSERT DETAILS/LINKS TO SCHOOL WEBSITE)**

We can only receive Service Pupil Premium funding if we know that your child is from a service family. Please can you inform the school office of your eligibility of your (or your partner's) service status before the annual school census which is the first Thursday in October every year.

Our school receives Service Pupil Premium for pupils if:

- A parent is serving in the regular armed forces (including pupils with a parent who is on full commitment as part of the Full Time Reserve Service).
- Your child has been registered as a 'service child' on the school census at any point since 2016 (known as ever 6 service child measure).
- A parent has died whilst serving in the armed forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme.

*PLEASE NOTE: children are eligible for Service Pupil Premium for up to six years after their parent has left the Armed Forces.*

## Accountability

All eligible schools and their governing boards are accountable for how Service Pupil Premium funding is used. They are held to account for the spending of this funding through the focus in Ofsted inspections on

the progress and attainment of their wider pupil premium eligible pupil cohort.

An example of how to report this is as follows:

Name of school: .....		Academic year: .....	
Number of Service Pupil Premium Pupils.....			
Service Pupil Premium Lead:.....		Governor/Trustee lead:.....	
Measure		Details	
How did you spend your Service Pupil Premium allocation last year?			
What was the impact of that spending on Service Pupil Premium eligible pupils?			

This information should be included within policies on websites. Some schools within Portsmouth have now created separate policies for Service Pupil Premium.

## Self-assessment – how is your school doing?

The Service Children’s Progression Alliance (SCiP) have developed a useful toolkit shown below. Within in this toolkit is a self-assessment which enables schools to easily

identify and evidence where their work with service children is effective, and where/how this could be developed further.

**Figure 3:** Thriving Lives toolkit – The 7 effective principles



Source: <https://www.scipalliance.org/assets/files/SCiP-Alliance-Thriving-Lives-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>

## Examples for how to use Service Pupil Premium

**Provision of staff:** Start by making sure all staff and governors are aware of the needs of service children in general and the specific needs of the service children at your school.

- Dedicated member of staff with responsibility for overview of the personal and academic development of service children.
- Teaching assistant to provide pastoral support and guidance for children and families.
- Learning mentor support to work with children and young people to build social skills, self-esteem and develop positive attitudes to learning.
- A designated member of staff who the service pupils can talk to when needed

**Communication and engagement with parents:** it's so important to engage and connect with service parents so that you can support their children and help the families feel part of the school community together.

- Designated staff member to act as direct link/point of contact with parents.
- Providing an information/resources page on school website for service families to include information about SPP and how it is used to support service pupils.
- Provide newsletters/notices on school boards/schools' social media.
- Direct letters to families introducing them to the service lead and how their child can be supported. An example letter is show below:

Dear .....,

We have been made aware that your child is from a service family. Sometimes service children can face significant challenges throughout their lives due to the impact of service life. We would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to **(INSERT NAME OF DESIGNATED PERSON)** who is our service lead. Please feel free to contact them if you would like to let them know of a service parent going away or if they are experiencing any other issues, so that we can support your child.

We are also pleased to let you know that we also support our service children in the following ways:

- Lunch/after school clubs where they can meet other service children
- Trips for service children
- Etc.
- Etc.



Images: Children from the Defender's club at Cumberland Infant School

**Provision of activities:** It's so important for these children to be able to connect and share experiences.

- Extra-curricular activities to enable service children to take part in certain activities that may not have been available to them due to the absence of one of their key adults. This could include, going to the theatre, museums, the Historic Dockyard, etc.
- Moving schools support including 'My passport'.
- After school clubs.
- Lunch clubs.
- Welcome films made by pupils.
- Homework support groups.

**Provision of resources:** These are just a few examples of resources that can be used.

- Personalised jigsaw puzzles/cushions, scrapbooks, books, memory boxes, travelling/deployment teddies.
- Computer equipment for Skype chat time.
- Camera equipment for photographs.
- Service children's base within school, with a bank of computers for scanning school work to email parents who are away and keep them in touch.
- Deployment display boards.

More information is available on the **Government website**<sup>17</sup>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-examples-of-best-practice>

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# Portsmouth schools

## Examples of good practice

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**School:** Solent Infant School

**Number of service children:** 40 (approx.)

**Designated person:** Angela Clark



### Understanding the importance of supporting service children

*"It is vitally important to support our service children in order to ensure that they gain the resilience required to cope with life as a service child. By working with and supporting our families we can help to alleviate some of the pressures which they can face. Our children learn that they are part of a unique community and that by being part of this group they are celebrated."*

**Angela Clark, SPP lead**

### How we support service children

- Run an after school club once a week called Forces Friends that our service children can attend.
- In my joint role as TA and ELSA, I meet with parents to help with behaviour at home and how to cope with deployments.
- We have Solent Teddy Bears that the deploying person takes with them and the child keeps one. Photos are sent into school of the bear on deployment and shared with the class or whole school at assembly.
- We email children's work to deployed person.
- If children are finding deployment particularly difficult then they are taken out to work in small groups to support them.
- We have a lending library of books that parents can support to support children at home.
- We celebrate Armed Forces Day in June – and link up with our Infant school. We invite service parents in to share activities e.g. diving equipment, fire fighting demo, pitching tents, cooking. We also involve the whole school in some tasks to raise awareness e.g. design a medal.
- Service families picnic after school on a Friday in the summer.
- Ask parents each half term for an update of movements/changes in circumstances.
- Dedicated page on school website with info for service families on it and links to message me directly.
- Part of PMK so children can attend trips/ experiences/ remembrance service etc.

**School:** Wimborne Primary School

**Number of service children:**

24 (and one child who is not officially a service child but lives in a service household).

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:**

Mrs Mandy O'Mahony



**Understanding the importance of supporting service children**

*"As a service wife of 27 years I am all too aware of the possible impact having a parent in the forces can have. Supporting children in school and allowing them time with others of a similar background allows them to feel more "normal" and promotes inclusivity. Service children often feel a sense of responsibility for the parent left behind and can be reluctant to share their worries and concerns with them for fear of upsetting them. Hopefully knowing that they have an adult who understands outside of the family home encourages them to talk."*

**Mrs Mandy O'Mahony**

**How we support service children**

For further information on how we support service children please see Wimborne Primary Schools **service children document**<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.wimborne.portsmouth.sch.uk/service-children>

**School:** St George's Beneficial  
CofE Primary School

**Number of service children:** 2

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Andrew Gilbert



### How we support service children

- Belong to PMK (Portsmouth Military Kids).
- Last July the two boys attended the PMK sports day, at Christmas they attended a special church service in the dockyard and prior to that we purchased arts and crafts resources to take part in the hand print project displayed in the dockyard church for remembrance.
- We have also bought deployment resources (books) in the last two years.

### Impact

Opportunity to mix with other children from the services during sports events which provides an appreciation and acknowledgement that as service children they have a different kind of home life (which can make it harder for them to integrate within a single community in the long term).

**School:** Cumberland Infant School

**Number of service children:** 10

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Kat Hedges



### Understanding the importance of supporting service children

*"I truly believe that the support and care we offer our service children is essential. These children have experiences in their home lives that can be very different from many other children, so it is vital they know that they have a space to share and come together. One, or sometimes both parents are in the military, and are often deployed which can be tough on everyone.*

*The children are so proud to be a part of 'The Defenders' club and bring excitement and a lot of enthusiasm. I think it sums it up when one child told me recently "In the Defenders club we look after each other". The activities are designed carefully to enable children to talk about themselves and how they are feeling – what they are good at, what they like, what makes them happy. We celebrate these children and everything that they are, building self confidence and self belief – which shines through in all that they do."* **Kat Hedges**

### How we support service children

Cumberland have a designated **web page**<sup>19</sup> for their service children showing the different ways they support the children.

### Impact

- Children know they have a group of other children, who are now their friends and who 'look out for each other'.
- Children are more confident to share their thoughts and ideas in whole class situations, not just small groups.
- Children's self confidence is higher – this shows in the way they present themselves on a day to day basis.
- Children are more empathetic and understanding to each other, as they have continuous opportunities to share their own worries and feelings.

### Quotes from service children at Cumberland

*I feel calm when we are in Defenders Club.*

*We love each other, we make sure we are all okay.*

*We do lots of fun stuff, we play with each other. We have fun.*

*It makes me excited when I know I have Defenders Club.*

*I like it when we are together, it makes me feel happy.*

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cumberland.portsmouth.sch.uk/school-life/service-children-1>

**School:** Solent Junior School

**Number of service children:** 40

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Louise Witt



### Understanding the importance of supporting service children

*"As a Navy wife and Mum of two boys, I really can understand the need to support our Armed Forces children in school. Our young people need to be able to understand and talk about how they are feeling, to enable them to cope with the pressures that being a part of a service family can bring. It is great to be able to provide support to help them realise they are a part of a unique community in school and out."*

**Louise Witt, Lead LSA/ELSA**

### How we support service children

- As ELSA I meet with children to help them cope with deployments.
- We have a family support email and deployed parents are encouraged to email their children at school so special messages can be delivered to class. The child can also reply from school.
- We have Solent Teddy Bears that the deploying person takes with them and the child keeps one. Photos are sent into school of the bear on deployment and shared with class or whole school at assembly.
- We have a Forces Friends lunch once a month so all the children can come together.
- Children make memory boxes to collect work or activities they would like to share with the deployed parent when they return.
- We celebrate Armed Forces Day in June – and link up with our Infant school. We invite service parents in to share activities e.g. diving equipment, fire fighting demo, pitching tents, cooking. We also involve the whole school in some tasks to raise awareness e.g. design a medal.
- We ask parents each half term for update of movements/changes in circumstances so we can inform all staff who work with the children of any changes in circumstances.
- Dedicated page on school website with info for service families on it and links to message me directly.
- We are a part of PMK so children can attend trips/experiences/ Remembrance service etc.

### Impact

- Creating a community in which the children and families feel a part of.
- Someone always there for the children and families when they need it the most.
- Celebrating our Armed Forces children in our school environment.

**School:** Miltoncross Academy

**Number of service children:** 33

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Charlotte Mason



### **How we support service children**

The Connecting Forces Group consists of members of staff with military connections, including military wives, children of service personnel, and ex-service personnel. Our aim is to provide all service pupils with a friendly support system during times of deployment, weekending and military life.

### **What we do**

- We meet every Tuesday from 3pm until 4pm at the top of the LRC.
- Our current project involves designing and creating Flags of Thanks in conjunction with the Sewing Soldier.

- We also work closely with the Company of Makers creating bunting out of military uniforms.
- ACE tutor support – 1:1 pastoral meetings
- A recently completed project saw the group creating painted pebbles for the D-Day Remembrance in Portsmouth.

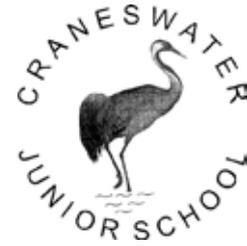
### **Impact**

- Improved well being.
- Students know there are safe adults for them to talk to in school.
- A wider understanding of family military life across the school for staff.

**School:** Craneswater Junior school

**Number of service children:** 15

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Lucy Lynch



### How we support service children

- The main area of our supportive work is through our military club, which as you know is every week. The purpose of this club, is to provide all children with a safe and supportive environment. We get together with the group to provide activities, often relating to military life. It enables the children to talk openly, allows them to share stories, worries and offer support to each other. The juice and biscuits provided are also a winner!
- The majority of the Pupil Premium is spent on the two people running the club.
- Also, we attempt to take part in any of the activities provided by PMK. We also attend the PMK meetings alongside staff from other schools, in order to keep up to date.

### Impact

- The club seems to have a positive impact on the children. They talk openly, share stories and always say they enjoy it! Quoting Maya, she tells me she loves it and that it is her favourite part of school!
- The children connect really well and are able to talk through their feelings of loss and missing someone. They are reassured that their parent will be returning from service and we celebrate the dates when parents are returning, rather than dwelling on the length of time away.
- As staff, we thoroughly enjoy the club and spending time with the children.

**School:** King's Academy Northern Parade

**Number of service children:** 74

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:**

Miss L Davies & Mrs S Rose

**Governor /Trustee lead:** Steve Dowdell



Northern Parade Schools

King's Group Academies

### How we support service children

- Weekly Service club – staff and resources – During these sessions, children have the opportunity to socialise with other children who have a parent serving in the armed forces. They learn about different roles within the armed forces and learn about different locations around the world where their parents may be serving. They take part in activities including pebble painting and creating a service children board showing all the different locations their parents may have visited. There are stories about separation anxiety and helping service children feel less isolated.
- Service children's sports day (transport).
- Pastoral support.
- Deployment Bears.
- Armed Forces Day – service children's resources.

### Impact

- Increased attendance.
- Key support during parental deployment.
- Strong community.
- Good parental engagement.

For more information visit the **King's Academy Northern Parade website**<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.npschools.co.uk/page/?title=Service+Families&pid=105>

**School:** St Jude's School

**Number of service children:** 55

**Service Pupil Premium Lead:** Hannah Shark



### Understanding the importance of supporting service children

Service pupils have a unique and often regularly changeable experience whilst growing up. Consistent support for pupils, and the family is imperative for them to thrive in school. One or both parents working away for periods of time or 'weekending', the family relocating, and their service friends moving away are all contributing factors that mean support for pupils is essential to promote the emotional welfare needed for their development and readiness to learn.

### How we support service children

- Twice a year a survey goes out to parents for us to gather useful information about changes/parents being away/request pastoral support. They can of course email/phone/speak with us at any time but we find this is a useful tool to pro-actively plan the right support.
- Pastoral support is provided either individually or in small groups depending on the needs of the child. The groups typically facilitated are: building positive friendships, making right choices, self esteem, social skills, attention and listening skills. Individual weekly check-ins are tailored to the child's needs.
- Monthly social groups with their service peers. This will be a time of getting

to know each other more, validating them as a valuable part of the school community, planning annual assembly (see below), games and refreshments.

- Annual assembly by service pupils around the time of Month of the Service Child/Armed Forces Day. This gives them a voice within the school community and educates the wider school around why they go to extra groups/trips etc. At this assembly we also present each service child with a certificate that says "We see you, we value you, we are here for you".
- We attend as many trips/city wide events for service pupils as possible including: sailing with Boleh, PMK crib service and PMK sports day.
- We have a termly party style event for all service pupils and a parent to attend: Christmas quiz, Easter egg hunt, summer party.
- In school colouring competition around Armed Forces Day for all pupils with a prize for each class to embed the culture of celebrating our strong service family links.

### Impact

- Positive feedback from parents.
- Children are excited about and engaged in activities and events – they will eagerly ask when the next group is.

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# Supporting pupils in Portsmouth

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## Pompey's Military Kids (PMK)

Pompey's Military Kids is a joint initiative for the tri-services set up by representatives from various schools across the city, in partnership with Portsmouth City Council and the Naval Families Federation. Local schools are already sharing good ideas and best practice and working much more collaboratively. The group also organises events and activities which bring service children together from across Portsmouth, to encourage them to interact and make new friends. This means that there is now a network of young people who are helping and supporting each other within the wider community.

PMK is a support network open to all Portsmouth schools that meet half termly to:

- Share ideas for how to use SPP to support children's emotional wellbeing.
- Share resources/best practice.
- Offer a range of activities such as termly trips or events for children, an annual service children sports day and opportunities to try out sailing supported by the Boleh Trust and others.

If your school would like any support, guidance or further resources please contact [office@aggies.org.uk](mailto:office@aggies.org.uk) who runs Pompey's Military Kids (PMK).

To sign up to PMK visit the **Aggies website**<sup>21</sup>

*"Without the support groups and activities for children and grown ups alike, we cannot form our own support networks with families in the same situation. Schools need to play a better role with their Service children and understand that deployments are a bereavement process for children and no matter how they express this, the support needs to be in place and constant. Some schools service leads, chop and change, which is no good for children who need stability and familiarity in their lives. I feel each school should have a governor in place for service children, to oversee the support is relevant, constant and utilised."*

**Katie White, Aggie's Community Waves  
Portsmouth - Coordinator, PMK Lead**



<sup>21</sup> [www.aggies.org.uk/practical-activities](http://www.aggies.org.uk/practical-activities)



**Portsmouth**  
CITY COUNCIL

## Portsmouth Educational Psychology Team

Shared Mailbox:

**EducationalPsychologyService@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

Offer training, advice and guidance to schools.

Contact Caitriona Scully, Senior Educational Psychologist by emailing **Caitriona.scully@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

## Portsmouth Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) team

SEND information is available on the **Portsmouth City Council website**<sup>22</sup>.

The SEND team can be contacted on **sen.education@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

## Portsmouth SEND Local offer

The **Portsmouth SEND Local Offer**<sup>23</sup> details the information, support and services that Portsmouth City Council expects to be available in our area for local children and young people aged 0-25 with Special Educational Needs and or Disability (SEND).

## School admissions

All information about admissions, how to apply and who to contact for more information is available on the **Portsmouth City Council website**<sup>24</sup>.

## Little Blue book of Sunshine: Portsmouth edition

The **Little book of Sunshine**<sup>25</sup> is a really useful booklet on mental health, including descriptions and top tips for dealing with the following:

- Stress
- Anger
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Body image and eating problems
- Relationships
- Loneliness



## Kooth

Health and Care Portsmouth commissioned an online counselling and wellbeing service for 11-25 year-olds in Portsmouth. Kooth helps to reduce waiting times for young people seeking help and removes stigma around mental health and accessing services. Kooth integrates with face-to-face local services to ensure a seamless transition for young people.

## Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) support for children and young people

A quick reference guidance for children/young people, parents and professionals is available on the Portsmouth City Council website. It explains the different mental health issues that people might have and has information on getting advice, when to get help and getting more help. More information can be found on the **Portsmouth City Council website**<sup>26</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/schools/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://portsmouthlocaloffer.org/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/schools-learning-and-childcare/schools/admissions/>

<sup>25</sup> [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Sdg2EAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=Sdg2EAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/health-and-care/health/mental-health/mental-health-support-for-young-people-semh/>



## Naval Families Federation

The Naval Families Federation exists to give Royal Navy and Royal Marines families a voice and representation to the Ministry of Defence, Ministers, other government departments, the Chain of Command, and civilian service providers. As an independent charity, they provide support and guidance on matters affecting the daily lives of Naval Service families, acting as an advocate when appropriate to resolve complex issues. They regularly meet with decision makers to present evidence gathered from the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Community.

**The NFF website**<sup>27</sup> contains key information and guidance that could be of value to you when supporting service children and their families. They have also developed a wide range of resources, tailored to the needs of service families; this includes signposting to a number of charities, many of which are included in the **Strengthening Families**<sup>28</sup> offer of support. Our **education page**<sup>29</sup> holds specific resources and information relating to children and young people.

The Naval Families Federation works at both a national and regional level, as well as overseas. In Portsmouth, we are committed to working in partnership with other key agencies locally to support Royal Navy and Royal Marines families. This includes engaging with Portsmouth City Council to represent families at the Solent Armed Forces Covenant Partnership Board; representation on the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Military Mental Health Alliance and as active members of the Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP) South Hub, co-led by the University of Portsmouth. The

NFF jointly created Pompey's Military Kids (PMK) and now collaborates with Aggie's to support the development of your local schools' network.

Stay in touch with the NFF by **signing up to Homeport magazine and/or regular e-updates**<sup>30</sup>.



## SCiP Alliance and South Hub

The Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP) bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and funders to build a stronger evidence-base, better policy, and enhanced support for service children's education and progression, placing their voices at the heart of all they do.

The SCiP Alliance **Thriving Lives Toolkit**<sup>31</sup> provides schools with a framework of seven principles through which to reflect on what they can do to support their service children and a set of CPD resources.

This provides a detailed resource introducing the evidence base, what schools can do to support their service children and who can help.

The SCiP Alliance – South Hub provides:

- Opportunities locally for service children – the University of Portsmouth runs Creative Forces days each year for groups of local service children from schools. These offer students from armed forces families a chance to explore university life and their identity as a service child. These days include university campus tours, taster workshops and interactive group sessions. Included in these days are

<sup>27</sup> <https://nff.org.uk/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://nff.org.uk/family-resources/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://nff.org.uk/education/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://nff.org.uk/subscribe-homeport/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.scipalliance.org/assets/files/SCiP-Alliance-Thriving-Lives-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf>

a professional development session for practitioners and school staff who support service children.

- Regular professional development network meetings for all practitioners/school staff who work to support service children.

For further information and details see the **South Hub website**<sup>32</sup>.



### Veterans' Gateway

The **Veterans' Gateway**<sup>33</sup> service is the first point of contact for all tri-service veterans, and their families. Its expert content covers welfare areas: housing, employment, finances, living independently, mental wellbeing, families and communities, and physical health.

Its unique support (both in the UK and abroad) is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant. And supported by charities and organisations and individuals, including the National Health Service (NHS), the Government of the United Kingdom and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).



### Naval Children's Charity

The Naval Children's Charity provides support to children, aged up to 25, with a parent who serves or has served in the Royal Navy, the Royal Marines, Reserves and Royal Fleet Auxiliary. We believe that

to be the child of someone who serves, or has served in the Royal Navy should be a positive and enhancing experience – something to be borne with pride. For those children where life is more difficult, we are there to help.

We support our children and families through five key areas: Health, Wellbeing, Security, Education and Life Chances. Where a family is in crisis and in need of immediate financial support we provide grants for basic needs such as groceries, utilities, school uniform and clothing. Where the needs of the child are more complex we assess what is needed and help with funding towards those complex needs, particularly around disability and illness. Each case is assessed and handled by the caseworking team and families are means tested to ascertain the level of financial support that can be offered.

For those children and young people who are not in crisis we provide resources to support them with deployments and separation, their mental health and wellbeing, grants towards educational support, particularly further and higher education. We are developing a range of opportunities to improve their outcomes and develop transferable life skills such as communication, resilience and teamwork.

To access support you can contact us through the **Naval children's Charity website**<sup>34</sup> or directly by emailing **caseworkers@navalchildrenscharity.org.uk** or phone **023 9263 9534** or go to **RN FPS, SSAFA** or visit the **Lightning Reach website**<sup>35</sup>.

32 <https://www.scipalliance.org/hubs/southern-hub>

33 <https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/>

34 [www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk](http://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk)

35 <https://www.lightningreach.org/>

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# Useful resources

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## Resources, research and reports

### Ofsted report 2011

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-201112>

### The experience of parental absence in Royal Navy and Royal Marines families: a guide for parents and adults supporting children and young people

[https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Parental-Absence-Resource.pdf?utm\\_medium=Email&utm\\_source=GovDelivery](https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Parental-Absence-Resource.pdf?utm_medium=Email&utm_source=GovDelivery)

### Making sense of the emotional cycle of deployment for children: resource for parents, carers and schools

<http://www.nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Homeport-pull-out-Making-Sense-of-the-Emotional-Cycle-of-Deployment.pdf>

### Service children: A guide to teachers' professional development

<https://www.scipalliance.org/assets/files/Service-children-CPD-guide-2020-TF-group-report.pdf>

### SCiP Alliance South Hub – An Introduction to Supporting Service Children in Schools

<https://www.sunoutreach.org/events/an-introduction-to-supporting-service-children-in-schools/>

### 2021 Growing up in the RAF

[https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021\\_Growing\\_up\\_in\\_the\\_RAF\\_report.pdf](https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021_Growing_up_in_the_RAF_report.pdf)

### Supporting Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) handbook

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-children-in-state-schools-handbook/service-children-in-state-schools-handbook-2013>

### Naval Children's Charity 2021 full report

<https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-The-Overlooked-Casualties-of-Conflict-Update-and-Review-Report-Interactive-Singles-1.pdf>

### Naval Children's Charity 2021 Summary

<https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/The-Impact-of-Service-Life-on-the-Military-Child-Summary-Report-Interactive-Singles.pdf>

### Living in our Shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces Families – report of a review commissioned by the Ministry of Defence, 2020

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/895236/Living\\_in\\_our\\_shoes\\_Full\\_Report\\_\\_1\\_\\_embargoed\\_30\\_June.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/895236/Living_in_our_shoes_Full_Report__1__embargoed_30_June.pdf)

### Forces in Mind Trust, A Decade of the Covenant, 2022

<https://s31949.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/A-Decade-of-the-Covenant-Digital.pdf>

**Children from military families – Office for Students, 2020 briefing on factors affecting access to higher education among children from military families**

<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/effective-practice/children-from-military-families/>

**The effect of non-operational family separations on family functioning and well-being among Royal Navy/Royal Marines families (2019)**

<https://nff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Non-Operational-Separations.pdf>

**Stories for service children**

**Books for all to Support RN/RM Community**

[https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/books-for-all/?fbclid=IwAR2OuTDHAHLGoylgr8uZOKAr0aqelsl\\_2S5l1FrFMa3fE0KXqRUd6TSqaqw](https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/books-for-all/?fbclid=IwAR2OuTDHAHLGoylgr8uZOKAr0aqelsl_2S5l1FrFMa3fE0KXqRUd6TSqaqw)

**Storybook Waves helps members of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Fleet Auxiliary maintain the link with their children by recording a bedtime story for them to listen to when a parent is serving away from home**

<https://www.aggies.org.uk/storybook-waves>

**Reading Force: A shared reading initiative that uses books to bring service children and families together**

<http://www.readingforce.org.uk>

**Resilience**

**Young minds – Building resilience in the face of adversity**

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/professional/resources/understanding-trauma-and-adversity/>

**Dr Pooky Knightsmith – Resilience presentation**

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/mental-health-practical-approaches-to-developing-pupils-resilience/>

**Reading force ‘Never assume resilience in forces children’**

<https://www.readingforce.org.uk/never-assume-resilience-in-forces-children/>

**Dr Pooky Knightsmith – article for Sec Ed on building resilience**

<https://www.sec-ed.co.uk/best-practice/mental-health-practical-approaches-to-developing-pupils-resilience/>

**Family lives – how to build resilience and emotional health in children**

[https://www.familylives.org.uk/media/how-to-build-resilience?gclid=CjwKCAjwu4WoBhBkEiwAojNdXuQLarFOVgHat2ly1t\\_6yT87G3VIsr1EwmkUnqYPwyOZiIXY1Dkx0CDRgQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.familylives.org.uk/media/how-to-build-resilience?gclid=CjwKCAjwu4WoBhBkEiwAojNdXuQLarFOVgHat2ly1t_6yT87G3VIsr1EwmkUnqYPwyOZiIXY1Dkx0CDRgQAvD_BwE)

**Twinkl have some really useful activities and games to help children and young people build resilience**

<https://www.twinkl.co.uk/blog/building-resilience-in-children-10-top-tips>

**Five ways to build your child’s resilience – BBC Bitesize**

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zy4rn9q>

**How to Build Mental Resilience – The Children’s Society**

<https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/young-people/well-being/resources/mental-resilience>

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# National support for service children and families

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Aggies – Dame Agnes Weston’s Royal Charity for the Naval Service (or “Aggie Weston’s”) is one of the oldest Naval charities. Aggie’s Pastoral Workers offer support by phone, through social media, at events, or on occasions through home visits. The team are to listen, encourage, signpost and provide practical support.

<https://www.aggies.org.uk>



Naval Families Federation – support and resources for Royal Navy and Royal Marines families and schools.

<https://nff.org.uk>



Army Families Federation – Supporting Army families worldwide.

<https://aff.org.uk>



Royal Air Force Families Federation.

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



The Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS) – The CEAS (part of DCYP) provides confidential and impartial advice to service families on a wide range of educational issues including:

- Parental rights and responsibilities.
- Children or young people’s rights and responsibilities.
- Special Educational Needs and/or Disability.
- School admissions and appeals.

CEAS does not make decisions about a child or young person’s education; CEAS advise families to allow them to make informed decisions. CEAS has created a moving schools guide for parents and a Pupil Passport for children.

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



Little Troopers – support and resources for all children with parents serving in the British Armed Forces.

<http://www.littletroopers.net/>



Solent Mind – Anchoring Minds. Emotional wellbeing support for Royal Navy and Royal Marines families.

<https://www.solentmind.org.uk/support-for-you/our-services/anchoring-minds/>



SSAFA FANDF Group – a tri-service group for current serving families or individuals who have a child or adult dependent with an additional need and/or disability.

<https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/disability-support/additional-needs-and-disability-support>



Support Organisations – Supporting service children in state schools.

<https://www.sciss.org.uk/support-organisations/>



Family Lives – offer core family support services through a helpline, live chat and email support. They also offer tailored support around issues such as bullying, special educational needs and support for specific communities.

<https://www.familylives.org.uk/about/our-services?referer=/about/our-vision-and-mission?referer=>

## **Portsmouth Parent Board**

Home-Start Portsmouth, The Haven,  
17 Lake Road, Portsmouth. PO1 4HA

**02392 734400**

**deniseb@hsportsmouth.org.uk**

## **Educational Psychology Service**

Inclusion  
Children, Families and Education  
Floor 2 Core 6  
Civic Offices  
Guildhall Square  
Portsmouth, PO1 2EA

**023 9268 8612**

**Caitriona.scully@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**

Shared Mailbox:

**EducationalPsychologyService@  
portsmouthcc.gov.uk**