



Ministry  
of Defence

# Information for Care Leavers joining, serving or leaving the Armed Forces

## Care leavers joining, serving or leaving the Armed Forces

This booklet provides some general guidance on what you can expect from your local children's services or social care support team and how the Ministry of Defence (MOD) will support you through the recruitment process, initial training and beyond.

If you are or have been looked after in foster care, residential care, supported accommodation, or in a placement following social work involvement, and are looking to join one of the three armed services you may be legally entitled to support from children's services or social care.

The details of how this will look will depend on your circumstances and where you live – the legislation about support for care leavers is different depending on whether you are from England, Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

As someone who has been in care, we would suggest that you share any decisions about joining the armed forces with the people who are currently supporting you. This is a very big life choice which should be at the fore front of any future plans – your Pathway or Aftercare or Leaving Care plan (dependant on where you are currently living).

The Armed Forces is committed to making sure that as a care-experienced person you have the support you need to progress in your career as set out in the information below. If you have previously been looked after but are no longer legally entitled to support from your local authority area, you are able to access support from the MOD.

## Application and recruitment process

**I am a Looked After child or care leaver and thinking of joining the Armed Forces. What help am I entitled to from my social worker, key worker, or personal adviser? How will they help with my application and the recruitment process?**

As a care leaver you are able to access ongoing support from your local area. The terms used for this support and those providing it will be dependent on which part of the UK you live in – the term 'key worker' is used below, as a general term.

As a care leaver you should be able to access the practical and emotional support needed to make a successful transition to adulthood.

This can be support to help you to attend appointments and get advice that you will need to be successful with your application to the Armed Forces. This can include financial support with travel and clothing for interviews.

You may also need support to open a bank account and make applications for appropriate documents, including a passport and driving licence and getting your National Insurance number. You may also find it useful to set up an email account so you can use that to keep in touch.

If you are under 18 years of age you will also need consent to join the Armed Forces and we will let you know who the correct person is to give that consent.

If the local authority that looked after you is in England, they are required to publish their 'local offer' for care leavers. This will include your legal entitlements, as well any additional

discretionary support that the local authority provides. Please visit your local authority website for more details of its care leaver local offer.

## Apprentice care leavers bursary and employer funding

Service personnel who are care leavers are eligible for the bursary if they have not received this bursary payment before, either whilst in Service or enrolled on a previous apprenticeship with another employer/apprenticeship provider. They also need to meet one of the following criteria:

- a. An eligible child** – a young person who is 16 or 17 and who has been looked after by the local authority/health and social care trust for at least a period of 13 weeks since the age of 14, and who is still looked after;
- b. A relevant child** – a young person who is 16 or 17 who has left care after their 16th birthday and before leaving care was an eligible child; or
- c. A former relevant child** – a young person who is aged between 18 and 21 (up to their 25th birthday if they are in education or training) who, before turning 18, was either an eligible or a relevant child.



## As a serving member of the Armed Forces

### **What help am I entitled to if I get into difficulties, have problems or issues and I want to talk to someone?**

The military is committed to providing all care experienced people with emotional and practical support and welfare advice. This support is available throughout the time you are serving, which may extend well beyond when you turn 25 years old.

We have our own online network for care leavers, managed and run by care experienced serving personnel, and you can access the network via Defence Connect, an information site for Service Personnel, once you have joined up.

We will continue to offer you support with family time (contact) and keeping in touch with your Family. This can include travel and accommodation costs.

Even when you have 'joined up' you are still able to have ongoing support from your leaving care/after care team. As part of your plan to move to independence and leave care (whether that's from a foster placement, residential care or another placement), you should have an agreement on how you will keep in touch with your key workers. This plan should be reviewed with you regularly to make sure it's still supporting you and meeting your needs as they might change.

The Armed Forces will also provide you with support, but you can keep in touch with your key worker in a number of ways – through face to face visits, phone calls or emails. This should be agreed and set out in your personalised plan.

As someone who has been in care there may be a range of entitlements that you can receive. These vary across the UK but can include travel costs, the provision of laptops and tablets, and celebration grants.

Each of the forces also has its own welfare providers and you can self-refer to those in the Service in which you have enlisted or ask your training instructor.

## Armed Forces welfare contacts

### Army

#### **Unit Welfare Officer**

The Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) sits within your Chain of Command and can offer assistance and welfare advice.

#### **Army Welfare Service**

You can also refer to the Army Welfare Service (AWS), which provides welfare support. It sits outside of your Chain of Command and is the Army's professional welfare provider. The AWS provides a confidential welfare service responsive to your needs and those of your family. AWS offers practical and emotional support and welfare advice. This is in addition to any support you receive from your Local Authority or area.

### **Contact Information**

Army Welfare Service – Intake and Assessment Team

T: 01904 882053

E: RC-AWS-IAT-0Mailbox@mod.gov.uk

## **Royal Navy and Royal Marines**

### **Divisional Officer and Regimental System**

The Divisional Officer (DO) and Regimental System is available and accessible to you for advice on service, career, financial and other private matters. Your DO will be aware of the welfare organisations and funds available to assist you.

### **Royal Navy Family & People Support**

The Royal Navy Family and People Support (RN FPS) Team provides second line welfare and a comprehensive social work service. You can refer to the RN FPS for practical and emotional support, as well as welfare advice. This is in addition to any support you receive from your Local Authority. They also provide proactive information and community support.

### **Contact Information:**

RN FPS Portal

T: 0800 145 6088 or 023 9272 8777

E: navynps-peoplesptrnfpsptl@mod.gov.uk

(from mid Apr 21: navy-peoplesptrnfpsptl@mod.gov.uk)

W: [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/community-and-support](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/community-and-support)

RN Forum: [www.royalnavy.mod.uk/forums](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/forums)

Facebook: @RoyalNavyFPS

## **Royal Air Force**

### **Your Personal Support (Welfare) Dept**

You can receive first line welfare support from your Personal Support (Welfare) Dept, who are the focal point for specialist welfare advice on stations and can assist those who cannot resolve problems from within their own resources.

### **Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association**

The Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) provides a social work support service outside of your Chain of Command, who can deal with a range of support issues within the service environment. This is in addition to any support you receive from your Local Authority.

### **Contact Information:**

Soldiers' Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association

T: 03000 111723

E: [psswsRAF@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:psswsRAF@ssafa.org.uk)

You can also access additional support via your registered medical officer at any time.





## Discharge and resettlement from the Armed Forces

**I am leaving the Armed Forces in six months from now and I am getting worried about finding a job and accommodation. What help am I entitled to?**

It will be important that plans are put in place to support you when you are leaving the Armed Forces . If you are still receiving support from your local authority/children's services key worker, then you can ask for a representative to attend any meetings that are being held to arrange your discharge to support you.

It will be important for those people supporting you to be aware of any discharge as soon as possible so that suitable accommodation can be found and applications for housing made if required.

If appropriate, you can be supported to make a housing application in the area where you wish to live. As a care leaver you may be awarded a higher priority for housing, but this will depend on your circumstances and what arrangements are in place in the local area where you wish to live.

As a care leaver you may also be able to claim additional allowances for help when you leave the armed forces so that you are able to make your accommodation ready for you to live in – you will need to check with your key worker/support team from your local area about what you are entitled to.

As part of your support package you can be assisted with accessing career's advice including support to attend appointments and interviews. You may also be entitled to Welfare Benefits and you can get advice on this from your own worker. Some areas have specialist benefits advice workers who can also assist you with applying for the correct benefits.