

19 March 2020

1. Under the current circumstances it has become necessary to consider introducing some flexibility into the current CEA regulations to reassure recipients that any deviation from CEA eligibility criteria caused directly by COVID-19 will not adversely affect their CEA eligibility. Similarly, if a CEA recipient becomes liable for any additional school fees as a result of the outbreak, they will be able to make a case for reimbursement to the Pay & Allowances, Casework and Complaints Cell (PACCC). Any additional school fees for boarding will be considered separately from routine CEA claims.
2. The circumstances that may require a deviation from current rules include (but are not be limited to) the following:
 - a. **The child is prevented from travelling to join their parents by governmental travel directive or the imposition of an isolation period; they are unable to join a designated guardian for valid reasons (e.g. the guardian is self-isolating) and continue to be accommodated at their school.** In this case, where the child remains at the school out with the normal academic term times, the CEA claimant will be entitled to reclaim any additional fees providing they are proportional to the routine boarding element of the school fees and only once authorised by the Chain of Command.
 - b. **A spouse or civil partner is prevented from re-joining the Service parent at their duty station by governmental travel directive or the imposition of an isolation period.** The guidance on Accompanied Status¹, dictates that when a Service person's spouse/civil partner is absent from the Residence at Work Address for a period of 90 day or more during a 12-month period, their ongoing eligibility for CEA will be reviewed. In conducting the assessment, exceptional circumstances relating to COVID-19 are to be taken into account.
 - c. **Where it is unsafe for a child to remain in the boarding environment at their school but they are able to convert to day-pupil status for the period covered by these arrangements.** In this case, if the child is able to live with their parents or a designated guardian and travel to the school daily, the claimant may convert to CEA(Day) from the beginning of the next academic term. This can apply even if their child has not completed 3 consecutives academic terms at the same school. Should the school be required to close altogether then the child should stay with their parents or designated guardian. In these circumstances CEA eligibility will not be adversely affected. If the school/boarding facility should re-open mid-term after CEA(Day) is in issue, any additional boarding fees may also be reimbursed.
 - d. **The child travels to an overseas area but is prevented from returning to their school because of a government travel directive, school closure or the**

¹ JSP752, Chapter 2, Section 1, AnnexA

imposition of an isolation period. Where the child is required to remain at the overseas duty station, the parent will continue to receive the additional Local Overseas Allowance until the child is able to return to their school and CEA eligibility will be unaffected.

e. **Where a claimant is about to complete their service and a delay in examinations causes an extension to the Academic year.** In these circumstances any additional school fees should be the subject of PACCC casework.

f. **Where the impact of COVID-19 on critical stages of education (GCSEs, A-Levels, B-TECs and Scottish Nationals and Highers or equivalents) and schools recommend an extra year of CEA.** In these circumstances, the reimbursement of any additional school fees should be the subject of PACCC casework with advice from Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS).

g. **Where a School closes following governmental direction; the length of closure is yet to be determined and the school fees are required to be paid before the start of the next academic term.** In these circumstances CEA claimants should submit their claims and pay the school fees. Should claimants receive a refund from the school at a later date the CEA element should be declared to PACCC.

Any other circumstances that arise should be considered on a case by case basis, through casework submitted to the PACCC taking into account the exceptional circumstances brought about by COVID-19. Any reimbursements from the school to the claimant that arise must be declared.

3. It will be necessary for parents to keep up to date with the situation as it develops in the UK, as well as in host nation/overseas assignment areas for those assigned overseas and make decisions based on the facts and guidance published by the UK Government (www.gov.uk) as well as any host nation guidance and arrangements.

4. The terms of this Directed Letter will remain in place until rescinded or replaced by the MOD's Armed Forces Remuneration Allowances lead. Any additional cost to CEA as a result of COVID-19 are to be captured so the information is available if required at a later date.