



army families federation
the voice of the Army community

Briefing

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Service Pupil Premium funding for Service children under five

AFF believes the Service Pupil Premium provided by the Department for Education for school aged Service children should be extended to include the under fives to help reduce the impact of Service life on their development and wellbeing.

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Background

The Government currently provides funding to support school-aged Service children through the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) as it recognises the impact Service life has on military children. Provision for Early Years' Service children is not included. LIBOR money has been allocated to assist with childcare infrastructure, but not to directly assist under-fives. In April 2015, the Department for Education (DfE) extended the non-Service Pupil Premium to include three and four year olds via the Early Years Census to build up resources for support; we would like this mirrored with an extension of the Service Pupil Premium, targeted specifically to support these children.

The Government's view on early years' education

The governmental aim for the extension of the Pupil Premium to the early years was to close the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers and to provide resources to improve their early educational experiences in order for better life outcomes. AFF believes this is also essential for Service children.

AFF would like to ensure that every step possible is taken to support the early years' cohort within Army families, both at home and in more formal settings. Extending the SPP in line with the early years' Pupil Premium would go some way to support this in mitigating the impact of frequent moves, changes in routine and disruption to who is familiar. It would also help to address the extra resources needed within settings e.g. research needed due to lack of child record history, settling in support after multiple moves and targeted help for early learning gaps.

There have been several governmental reports published on the Gov.UK website that support early years' education and the boosting effects it has on GCSE results. The 'Effective Pre-school Primary and Secondary Education (EPPSE) project¹ concludes specifically on how early years' experiences affect future learning, but emphasis is also given to the 'Home Learning Environment'. Further to this, evidence shows that 'Children who receive good-quality early years' education go on to earn around £27,000 more during their career compared to those who don't, and are also likely to do better at school - the equivalent of seven GCSEs at grade B compared to grade C2.

The DfE have also produced an Early Years evidence pack providing more evidence³ that the quality of pre-school provision is important: '... differences in quality make more of a difference than longer time.' AFF would like the evidence outlined in this paper recognised in the Service child context and for funding to enhance quality.

There is a wealth of research available highlighting the importance of early intervention. Recognising what is needed in terms of help and support is vital and most effective if it is implemented as early as possible in a child's life. When young children move multiple times before they are five years old, the logistics of providing the support needed can be quite a challenge.

Human impact

¹ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/472867/RR472A_Pre-school_and_early_home_learning_effects_on_A_level_outcomes.pdf

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/extra-funding-to-prepare-for-the-early-years-pupil-premium>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/early-years-evidence-pack>

Children under five need essential support when necessary, to help them through the complexities of an Army lifestyle. This lifestyle may include mobility, deployment on operational tours, training, uncertainty, isolation and separation from family. Evidence suggests that very young children can be impacted by both change and separation. Smooth transitions between key workers and locations when moving, and resources and staff training to help recognise the early signs of stress due to disruption are essential and need financial support.

In one garrison area of the UK, every unit will be involved in deploying to operational theatres in 2017. One nursery contacted us about the concerns they have for those families.

“I am a manager of a private daycare setting in Catterick Garrison and we have a large percentage of military families. We find these children often need additional support, emotionally as well as socially, throughout the year depending on deployment, tours and just the day-to-day struggle parents face - for example juggling guard duty with childcare opening times. We have families where mum is military and families where dad is military, or ex-military but working away, and this is particularly difficult. A school I previously worked at that accessed Pupil Premium funding, ran nurture groups including cooking and arts and crafts, and allowed children to talk about their experiences. I feel this is something that can be filtering down to benefit the Service children in the early years.”

AFF VIEW:

AFF believes in equality of support for all children, ensuring a positive and secure future. Within that, we ask for equality of support for Service children, irrespective of age. AFF urges the DfE to extend the Service Pupil Premium to provide targeted funding for the early years, to remove the age barrier, to improve and provide support where needed due to Service life, and to take away any disadvantage in line with the Armed Forces Covenant.