



House of Commons
Defence Committee

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

Fourth Report of Session 2013–14

Volume I: Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

Additional written evidence is contained in Volume II, available on the Committee website at www.parliament.uk/defcom

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

HC 586
[Incorporating HC 941-i to -iv, Session 2012-13]
Published on 23 July 2013
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£17.50

The Defence Committee

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Conclusions and recommendations

Standard of education

1. We note the MoD's commitment to maintaining high standards in SCE schools. We are satisfied that the procedures in place, including Ofsted inspections, ensure the standard of teaching in schools attended by Service children is at least 'good', or that where weaknesses are identified they are addressed. (Paragraph 16)

Levels of achievement

2. It is encouraging to note that Service children's progress is broadly in line with other pupils even though they face considerable challenges. However, mobile Service children do not perform as well as non-mobile Service children. With greater recognition of their needs and focused additional support, Service children could do even better. The Government should ensure that these children are given every opportunity to maximise their potential. (Paragraph 20)

Access to education

3. The nature of Service life means that families have to be mobile if they are to accompany the Service parent. That moves can be made at short notice, or during term-time, means that parents may not have time to research the schools in the area, and may not get a place in their preferred school, as places in high performing schools are unlikely to be available either at short notice or part way through the school year. It is clear that there is a contradiction at the heart of the Covenant, in that Service families' mobility makes it difficult for parents to get places in the schools of their choice. The timescale for the implementation of the New Employment Model will not help those children currently in education. The MoD needs to consider further how it can assist parents to gain access to their preferred choice of schools. (Paragraph 27)

Conflict with the School Admissions Code

4. The Government should explain how it intends to resolve the conflict between the Armed Forces Covenant, which says that Service children may need special arrangements to access school places, and the Schools Admissions Code which sets out a strict timetable for admissions, to ensure that Service families can access the schools of their choice when they need them. (Paragraph 31)

Funding of school places

5. Availability of school places will be a significant issue as large numbers of Service families are re-located as a result of re-basing and the withdrawal from Germany. We seek reassurance that there will be sufficient places for the children moving as part of major re-basing moves and the withdrawal from Germany. The Ministry of Defence must provide information promptly to allow the Department for Education to liaise with Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to ensure that the right

number of places and adequate funding will be provided in advance of major moves. (Paragraph 37)

6. Schools with significant numbers of Service children on their roll experience additional challenges, including a lack of the appropriate level of funding throughout the school year and difficulties caused by high levels of admissions through the school year. The Government should work with Local Authorities to ensure that appropriate funding is available. Where there is competition for places between Service children and the resident population, and both have equal merit, we question who will provide the funding for additional school places. One option may be for the Ministry of Defence to fund additional buildings, if needed, and the Local Education Authority to pay for staff and on-going maintenance costs. (Paragraph 38)

Advantages of Service life

7. While we acknowledge the challenges facing Service children we must not forget the advantages of Service life for children of Service families. (Paragraph 40)

Service children with Special Educational Needs

8. The lack of clarity about the number of Service children with Special Educational Needs is disturbing. The Ministry of Defence and the Department of Education should liaise with the Devolved Administrations to establish how many Service children have Special Educational Needs across the UK so that the scale of the problem is known. (Paragraph 43)
9. Service children with Special Educational Needs are spread across the English local authorities, the Devolved Administrations and SCE schools overseas. The number in any one local authority or administration is likely to be small. We consider that, with the will and support of Government and engagement with the Devolved Administrations, it must be possible to make things easier for those families in this difficult situation. It is unacceptable that no progress has been made on our predecessor Committee's 2006 recommendation that Service children with a Special Educational Needs should be given a statement which would be accepted by all schools. We welcome the Minister's commitment to resolving the issue, and expect to see prompt action. (Paragraph 49)

Children and Families Bill

10. The Children and Families Bill has no specific clauses relating to the needs of those children of Service personnel who have Special Educational Needs. It is disappointing that the Government has not taken this opportunity to incorporate the commitments made in the Armed Forces Covenant into this new legislation. However, we hope that the provisions of this Bill will ease some of the difficulties faced by Service families who have children with Special Educational Needs. (Paragraph 51)

Devolved Administrations

11. We urge the Government to work with local authorities and the Devolved Administrations to reach agreement that Service children's SEN statements are recognised by all, without exception, across the UK, demonstrating the country's 'moral obligation' to this very small number of children and their families, who deserve our full support. (Paragraph 53)

Transfer documents

12. We are dismayed that no appreciable progress has been made on the transfer of pupils' records since our predecessors' 2006 report. Service children and their families deserve better. Only now is work being undertaken to develop a Service children's transition document. We are pleased that the Devolved Administrations are broadly supportive of a common approach to the transfer of information. We recommend that the Government liaise with the Devolved Administrations, local authorities and others to reach a UK-wide agreement on a transfer document for Service children and a process for ensuring it is used, to resolve this issue once and for all. (Paragraph 59)

Continuity of education

13. We recognise that as a result of mobility children encounter difficulties in the consistency of their education. When moving mid-year pupils can repeat topics, for example. Evidence also suggests some children may not be academically stretched as much as they should be. We recommend that under the New Employment Model, Future Army 2020, and Future Force 2020, the MoD undertakes to minimise, as far as possible, moves during the school year, and restricts, wherever possible, the movement of whole units to an appropriate time in the academic year. (Paragraph 65)
14. Maintaining continuity in their children's education is a major concern for parents. We support the principle of paying CEA to those families who choose to send their children to boarding school to provide continuity. The MoD should clarify the rules on CEA and reassure Service personnel that entitlement to CEA is not under further review and will not change at short notice. (Paragraph 75)

State boarding schools

15. The Ministry of Defence should ensure that all Service personnel are aware of the availability of the Continuation of Education Allowance. It should also advertise more effectively the existence of the state boarding schools. (Paragraph 83)

Safe-guarding children

16. The safety and well-being of children is paramount and the rules should not hinder movement of pupils in cases where, for example, there have been suggestions of abuse. The MoD should clarify the rules on CEA and its role in the decision-making process when parents wish to move their children to another school during a key

stage of education. We recommend that in principle the MoD should be more prepared to leave to parents the difficult judgement of when to move a child; while it is axiomatic that a “Continuity of Education Allowance” is designed to provide continuity, the name of the allowance should not be a major barrier to the parents deciding what is best for their child. (Paragraph 88)

Service Pupil Premium

17. We support the payment of the Service Pupil Premium to support Service children. However, we are not convinced that this expenditure is adequately monitored for value for money for the taxpayer, and to ensure that it is used to the best possible advantage to the Service children themselves. The Government should introduce guidelines on how the Service Pupil Premium should be spent. It should also require schools to make more transparent how this money is spent. The Government should monitor and publish this information and share examples of best practice. (Paragraph 95)
18. Ofsted should be asked to report in more detail on the results achieved by use of the Service Pupil Premium to ensure that the funding is meeting the particular needs of Service children. The DfE and the MoD should also report on the overall level of expenditure on the Service Pupil Premium. (Paragraph 96)
19. The anomalies in the payment of a Service Pupil Premium across the Devolved Administrations indicates a contradiction between the Armed Forces Covenant and the practice across the UK. The Government should liaise with the Devolved Administrations to encourage the same level of support for all Service children across the UK in line with the Covenant. In its response to this report the Government should set out why the Service Pupil Premium can at the same time represent good value for money in those areas which have it and be unnecessary in those areas which do not. (Paragraph 100)

Local Authority funding

20. We are concerned that the introduction of the Service Pupil Premium has replaced other forms of funding, so that schools with a significant number of Service children may not benefit as much as was intended. The Government should ensure that Local Authorities do not use the Service Pupil Premium to replace other funding. (Paragraph 102)

The Ministry of Defence Support Fund for Schools

21. The Government should publish figures showing the distribution of the Support Fund for Schools across all parts of the UK, and encourage applications from Welsh schools to ensure all regions get their fair share. (Paragraph 105)
22. The Government should publish details of the ways in which the Support Fund for Schools money is spent in support of Service children, and give examples of good practice so that best use is made of this limited resource. We agree with the Scottish Government, that the Government should maintain this Fund after the planned four years to provide pastoral and other support to individual schools where needed. The

need will rise as significant numbers of Service children move during re-basing and the withdrawal from Germany. (Paragraph 108)

Support for bereaved families

23. We are reassured that a range of funding is available to support the education of children of a parent killed in the service of their country, though such payments need to be made promptly to avoid unnecessary hardship or worry for bereaved families. (Paragraph 113)

Conclusion

24. We support the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant, in that:

Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. (Paragraph 114)

25. In this inquiry, we have identified that the mobility required of Armed Forces personnel means their children face considerable challenges in achieving the same access to education as the rest of the UK population. During the inquiry it has also become clear that in order to meet the obligations made in the Armed Forces Covenant, the Government is dependent on the voluntary agreement of the numerous bodies who all play a part in providing education for the children of Service personnel. (Paragraph 115)
26. In our view there is a conflict at the heart of the Armed Forces Covenant because the Government is dependent on the commitment of those who provide education services—Government Departments, Local Authorities and the devolved administrations—offering the same provision to all Service families wherever they live in the UK. The Government must demonstrate its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by seeking the co-operation of the Devolved Administrations and Local Authorities to ensure that its obligations are met. (Paragraph 116)

1 Introduction

1. This inquiry is the third in a series of inquiries into the *Armed Forces Covenant*, which was published by the Government in May 2011.¹ The Covenant is the Government's acknowledgement of the commitment owed by society to the Armed Forces, recognising the sacrifices they and their families are required to make as a result of their service to the country. The Armed Forces Covenant says:

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

The Covenant covers a range of issues including terms and conditions of service, healthcare, education, housing, benefits and tax, responsibility of care, deployment, support after Service and recognition.

2. The Armed Forces Covenant states the Government's commitment on the education of the children of members of the Armed Forces as follows:

Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to, education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. The Services should aim to facilitate this in the way they manage personnel, but there should also be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting. For personnel posted overseas, the MoD [Ministry of Defence] provides early years and educational facilities where the numbers support it, although the range of provision and choice may not be as great as in the UK. In certain cases assistance will be available to support Service children's continuity of education, given the requirement for mobility.²

3. The Defence Committee undertook an inquiry into Educating Service Children in 2006,³ and made a number of recommendations regarding the education of Service children. During the current inquiry, we have followed up aspects of that earlier inquiry to see which recommendations have been taken up by the Government, and where issues are still outstanding.

4. The Armed Forces require their personnel to be mobile, and personnel may be accompanied by their families in some circumstances. We announced an inquiry into Educating the Children of Service Personnel in December 2012. In this inquiry we have

¹ The Armed Forces Covenant
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49469/the_armed_forces_covenant.pdf

² *Ibid.*

³ Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005-06, *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054

considered how this mobility impacts on the education of the children of Service personnel, and what can be done to reduce the negative impacts of mobility on families. In particular, we focused on:

- The difficulties facing Service families in achieving the same standard of education for their children as they would if they were civilians in the UK or overseas;
- The provision of education for all Service children from pre-school to age 19, including those with special needs;
- The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs;
- The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families; and
- The adequacy of oversight and monitoring of Service Children's education.

5. As part of the inquiry we visited the Wellington Academy in Tidworth where we took oral evidence from pupils, staff and parents. The Wellington Academy is a purpose built state school, opened in 2009 to serve military families and others on Salisbury Plain. The school has 1,000 pupils and provides boarding facilities for 100 students. The Academy has the second highest number of Service families in the country. We would like to thank Andy Schofield, Principal, and his staff at the Academy for hosting our evidence session. We thank those students who agreed to give oral evidence to the inquiry; their views and experiences contributed to our inquiry enormously. We also thank the National Audit Office for running an on-line consultation on our behalf and producing a report analysing the results. We were pleased that over 1,000 Service families took part in the consultation, and thank all the contributors for participating and sharing their experiences. We held four oral evidence sessions, received 14 pieces of written evidence, and invited comments from Ministers in the Devolved Administrations. We thank everyone for their contributions, including the assistance of our Specialist Advisers⁴ and the staff of the Committee during this inquiry.

⁴ The Specialist Advisers' declaration of relevant interests are recorded in the Committee's Formal Minutes which are available on the Committee's website.

2 The provision of education for Service children

Background

6. Different Government departments and many other bodies have a role in the provision of Service children's education. Advice from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to parents in *A guide for Service Families UK Education Systems*, explains the four education systems across the UK. A summary of the guidance on UK and overseas education is given in Box 1.

Box 1: MoD Guidance on UK education systems and education overseas

In the UK, responsibility for the making of education law and guidance has been devolved to the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh and Irish Assemblies. In England, legislative responsibility for education continues to lie solely with the UK Parliament at Westminster.

Structural and other differences between the four 'home' countries have existed for a long time but the more recent formal devolution of statutory responsibility for education law to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has not only emphasised existing differences but continued to establish further ones.

Service families moving around the U.K. often find themselves in confusing situations resulting from these differences. These differences may relate to a number of factors:

- differences in age ranges of phases of education
- different examination and assessment systems
- different curricular structure and content
- different admission systems
- different statutory approaches to meeting children's special educational / additional support needs
- higher education funding routes and arrangements

And for education overseas the guidance is as follows:

- If you are offered an overseas posting you will have to look carefully into the education available for your children.
- The type and quality of education available will differ from country to country and often from one part of a country to another. Remember that what is right for one child is not necessarily right for another and the age and ability of your child will have an effect on your decision. The opportunity for a child to be educated in a different system and different culture can have tremendous advantages but you will have to weigh up carefully the advantages and disadvantages.
- Education overseas can be roughly divided into four different types. There are areas where we have our own MOD schools provided through Service Children's Education, countries that are predominantly English speaking, countries that are non-English speaking but where you have access to English speaking International schools and non-English speaking countries where the only option is to attend the local school.

Source: Ministry of Defence⁵

⁵ MoD website www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service

Ministry of Defence

The Directorate Children and Young People

7. Within the MoD, the Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) is responsible for:

providing the professional leadership and direction for the MOD's work in support of Service children and young people, at home and overseas, in order to ensure that they are provided with every opportunity to achieve the best possible outcomes and fulfil their potential. Governance is achieved through the multi-agency/multi-disciplinary MOD Children and Young People Trust Board, supported by a framework of sub-boards and steering groups, including the MOD Safeguarding Children Board.⁶

Children's Education Advisory Service

8. The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) is:

part of DCYP, and provides information advice and support to Service parents on school admissions, Special Educational Needs, curricular discontinuity, continuity of education, and non-MOD provision overseas. CEAS also works closely with all four UK education departments and their subordinate authorities and schools.⁷

The Secretary of State for Education and the Department for Education

9. The Secretary of State for Education is responsible for providing education services in England.

The Secretary of State has wide powers including powers to resolve disputes between Local Authorities (LAs) and school governors, and between LAs. He has powers of intervention to prevent LAs and school governors from acting unreasonably in the performance of their duties. If the Secretary of State is satisfied that a LA, or school governors of a maintained school, have failed to discharge their duties he may give directions to enforce the performance of a duty.⁸

Local Authorities

10. Local Authorities amongst others are responsible for provision of state education:

Local Authorities (LAs) have a wide range of general and specific duties and powers in relation to education. The general duties include a duty to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population of their area. The duty has been extended to require LAs to promote high standards and ensure fair access to educational opportunities. They must provide schools and

⁶ Ev 69

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ *Constituency work: school-related matters*, Standard Note SN05396, House of Commons Library, 4 June 2013, <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05396>

equipment for pupils, secure ‘diversity in the provision of schools’ and increase ‘opportunities for parental choice’.⁹

Devolved Administrations

11. The Devolved Administrations are responsible for education matters in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We invited the Devolved Administrations to contribute to this inquiry and clarify their commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. We were encouraged by the positive responses we received from the Devolved Administrations, who were clearly aware of the challenges Service families and their children face.

On school admissions, the Welsh Government said:

In Wales, a new School Admissions Code and School Admission Appeals Codes, came into force on 15 July 2009 following consultation. These Codes have been updated and revised to reflect Regulations and good practice already existing in Wales. One of the changes made is that, admission authorities must treat a Forces family as meeting the residency criteria for a school catchment area, so long as they can provide evidence that they will shortly be posted there. The Welsh Government will remain alert to the needs of Service families and will consider changes to the code if they appear necessary.¹⁰

The Welsh Government told us:

The Welsh Government is committed to supporting the Armed Forces Community in Wales and published a Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community, in November 2011. The Package of Support covers those matters that are devolved, including education. It outlines commitments that are consistent across the UK and those that are tailored to Wales. We are currently in the process of updating the Package of Support. The revised version will contain more specific information on the education of Service children in Wales.¹¹

The Scottish Government told us:

The Scottish Service Children Strategic Working Group [...] consists of representation from Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Children’s Education Advisory Service (CEAS) and the voluntary sector and the Ministry of Defence. The SSCSWG is chaired by one of my officials and emerged from the work of the previous Children from Service Families Network which brought together a range of educational experts and stakeholders. Pulling together the key strengths and knowledge of these experts has allowed us to make real

⁹ *Constituency work: school-related matters*, Standard Note SN05396, House of Commons Library, 4 June 2013 <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05396>

¹⁰ Welsh Government, *Welsh Government Package of support of the Armed Forces Community in Wales*, 2011 www.armedforceshealthpartnership.org.uk/media/1809773/welsh_government_package_of_support_for_the_armed_forces_community_in_wales.pdf

¹¹ Ev 94

progress in Scotland in supporting children from Service families and helped frame the on-going work of the Strategic Group.¹²

The Northern Ireland Executive told us that:

The Department of Education (DE) officials are represented on a local Services Children Forum (NISCEF) chaired by the MoD, which considers issues affecting the education of Services children here.¹³

Standard of education

12. The Armed Forces Covenant says that the children of Service personnel should receive the same standard of and access to education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. Service children attend Local Authority schools in England or their equivalents in the Devolved Administrations, independent schools, state boarding schools, MoD schools overseas—which are run by Service Children’s Education (SCE), part of the MoD, or other schools overseas. The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (Ofsted) is responsible for inspections of all state schools, including SCE schools abroad, and oversight for some private schools. Other private schools are inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.¹⁴ Ofsted said:

We report directly to Parliament and we are independent and impartial. We inspect and regulate services which care for children and young people, and those providing education and skills for learners of all ages.¹⁵

13. Ofsted plays an important role in inspecting and evaluating schools to ensure all meet the required standard. Ofsted told us:

Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector (HMCI), Sir Michael Wilshaw, is determined that every child should have the opportunity to go to a good school. As part of the drive for further improvement, the ‘satisfactory’ grade was removed from the school inspection framework last autumn and replaced by a ‘requires improvement’ judgement.¹⁶

and

The new inspection framework, places greater emphasis on the performance management of teachers and how effective school leaders and managers are in ensuring that teaching helps all pupils to achieve as well as they can.¹⁷

14. Responses to our on-line survey included some concerns about the quality of education in SCE schools overseas including:

¹² Ev 92

¹³ Ev 92

¹⁴ <http://www.isi.net/home/>

¹⁵ Ofsted website www.ofsted.gov.uk

¹⁶ Ev 89

¹⁷ Ev 90

“Service Schools overseas were a mixed bag in terms of quality of teachers, school facilities and attitudes of other children.” Service parent, Army

Comments on the standards of SCE schools from the RAF Families Federation’s included:

My child moved to a SCE school overseas but the standards are very low in comparison with their UK school. The constant stress over education is our main reason for applying for redundancy - the benefits no longer outweigh the down sides.¹⁸

Lieutenant General Berragan, Adjutant General, said that the MoD had a system for sharing best practice and for developing continuous improvement to raise standards across the whole organisation, and, as the Army drew down from Germany, the MoD was keeping its best teachers.¹⁹

15. Ofsted told us that for the first time since inspecting SCE schools overseas, it had identified a problem in an inspection of one overseas school (the Haig Primary School, Gutersloh).²⁰

[...] inspectors judged the standard of education in an SCE school as inadequate, in December 2012, placing the school in a category of concern. In this school, standards in reading and writing were much lower than they should be because too much teaching was inadequate.²¹

We asked the MoD what steps it was taking in response to this Ofsted report, and were assured that the issues were being addressed. General Berragan advised us that a new head teacher had been appointed, the school had established an executive committee to support and challenge the school, and a primary consultant had also been appointed to the school.²² The MoD is taking steps to ensure that the school is given the additional support it needs to reach a ‘good’ standard.

16. We note the MoD’s commitment to maintaining high standards in SCE schools. We are satisfied that the procedures in place, including Ofsted inspections, ensure the standard of teaching in schools attended by Service children is at least ‘good’, or that where weaknesses are identified they are addressed.

Levels of achievement

17. The Department for Education (DfE) analysed the educational attainment of Service children and their characteristics and published a report in July 2010.²³ That report found

¹⁸ Ev w24

¹⁹ Q 442

²⁰ Ev 90

²¹ *ibid*

²² Qq 440-441

²³ The Department for Education, *The Educational Performance of children of Service Personnel*, July 2010

that, on average, Service children performed better than non-Service children. The report also found that mobile Service children did not perform as well as their non-mobile peers.²⁴

18. DfE statistics also show that Service children were found to be less likely to be deprived than non-Service children, and less likely to be identified as having a Special Educational Need (SEN), though similar proportions of Service and non-Service children were seen to have a SEN statement.²⁵ Service children all have at least one parent in full time employment and are brought up in the disciplined environment of Service life. The DfE report suggested that Service children could be expected to perform even better than they do:

service children perform at least the same as, if not better than their peers across the Key Stages; although we noted this is not necessarily the case across the country. [...]. The fact that service children outperform their peers may therefore be surprising to some. However, [...] we noted that service children are on average less economically deprived than their peers and less likely to have an identified special educational need. Economic deprivation and having a SEN are both associated with lower attainment so we may expect service children to perform relatively well on average. On the other hand, service children were more likely to be mobile and mobile children tend to do less well at school.²⁶

19. The Families Federations' view is that Service children do very well considering the difficulties they face. Such difficulties include issues of mobility, the absence of a parent or parents on deployment, and the other emotional demands of Service life. Bill Mahon, from the RAF Families Federation, said:

Could they perform better? Absolutely. I am sure that they could if more schools, teachers and support organisations had a better understanding of the issues that the children face in all the things that we have discussed: getting them into the school that is right for them and that parents want them to go to; understanding the impact that it can have on the child, both educationally and emotionally; and understanding mobility and deployment issues.

It is still variable—different schools react in different ways to a new child arriving in the school. If we can put more common practices in place, the opportunity is there for the children to do even better.²⁷

And Kim Richardson, from the Naval Families Federation, said:

I think the fact that they are doing as well as they are is something we should be quite proud of. [...] It is not a normal home life for a lot of Service children. If you have a serving person who is away a lot, you are living a lone-parent lifestyle for good parts of that child's educational career, if you like. I would not like to see them singled out

²⁴ The Department for Education, *The Educational Performance of children of Service Personnel*, July 2010

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Q 31

and looked at in any specific way [...]. If we are doing all right, then we are doing all right. It is very much an individual issue.²⁸

20. It is encouraging to note that Service children’s progress is broadly in line with other pupils even though they face considerable challenges. However, mobile Service children do not perform as well as non-mobile Service children. With greater recognition of their needs and focused additional support, Service children could do even better. The Government should ensure that these children are given every opportunity to maximise their potential.

Access to education

21. Getting a place in the school of their choice can be a problem for Service families as they may not get sufficient notice of a move to get their child or children into the most popular schools, which are often oversubscribed. Service families may also be moved part way through the year, causing difficulties in accessing places in schools. The Rt Hon. Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for Defence, Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, said:

Part of the nature of Service life is mobility. If you are the child of a Service family, there is a possibility that, in the course of your education, you may move several times.²⁹

22. We heard evidence about the levels of mobility some Service families experience. Catherine Spencer, Army Families Federation, said:

[...] over 70 per cent of the families who answered our survey had moved at least twice in five years; some had moved up to five times in that five-year period. So there is a very high ratio of mobility, which obviously impacts on children.³⁰

Kim Richardson added:

[...] You then have a family who, despite doing all the homework and knowing what is right for their child, are given an address of the place they are going to, and that is it. It is take it or leave it. They will have to take a school place perhaps at a school that they would not necessarily have chosen.³¹

Students at the Wellington Academy told us that they had attended “six or seven schools”³² and a parent said that “my son is now in his ninth school”.³³ This was confirmed by responses to our on-line survey:

²⁸ Q31

²⁹ Q 447

³⁰ Q 4

³¹ Q 16

³² Q106, q127

³³ Q 187

Of the 1,000 parents in the consultation sample, almost all (96 per cent) had moved at least once since their children started school, with 28 per cent saying they had moved seven times or more.³⁴

23. Respondents to our on-line survey said that families may be given short notice of a move:

“My child’s education doesn’t seem to be a priority when re-locating. Found out posting address in the middle of Christmas holidays. School admission forms had to be on the [...]th Jan. That gave us seven days to contact schools and make a choice from 300 miles away.” Service parent, Anonymous³⁵

24. We are pleased that our predecessor Committee’s recommendation that local authorities and schools accept a notice of posting as evidence of address has been accepted, allowing parents to apply for a place ahead of their move.^{36,37} However, families may not have a home address until much closer to the date of the move, and, in some locations, Service accommodation covers a wide geographical area. In such cases, parents may not know which will be the nearest school until much nearer the date of their move. Catherine Spencer said:

Things are beginning to improve, [...] because we can now use a unit address. In some areas, that means that you can actually apply for a school place before you have moved into that area. That is a really positive change. It does not always work, though, because there are areas such as London, Salisbury and Catterick where the area that you could be posted to is so large that you do not necessarily know where within that area you are going to be housed, so it is difficult to apply for a school in that area. We are seeing progress, but there are still difficulties.³⁸

25. The MoD is undertaking a review of Service personnel terms and conditions of service, called the New Employment Model (NEM), to include career structures, pay, accommodation and training.³⁹ The MoD told us that:

In the longer term it is hoped that the New Employment Model should reduce overall mobility; meanwhile improvements in maintaining continuity of education through measures such as the retention of Service quarters to see out critical stages of education have helped.⁴⁰

Gavin Barlow, MoD Director of Service Policy, said:

we would also expect through the implementation of the New Employment Model to do quite a lot to address the underlying problems associated with Service life. We

³⁴ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writew/941/naopart3.pdf

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005-06, *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054

³⁷ Q 380

³⁸ Q 22

³⁹ MoD website <https://www.gov.uk/new-employment-model>

⁴⁰ Ev 71

will, through the employment model and the opportunities offered by rebasing, reduce the level of turbulence that Service families experience. I am thinking particularly of the Army; when it occurs, the withdrawal from Germany will of itself reduce the level of turbulence and challenge that is currently presented to those Service families as they move to and from overseas locations.⁴¹

However, the MoD said that implementation of the NEM will take some years:

Changes under NEM will be introduced incrementally after 2015 and into 2020 and so it is too soon to say when NEM is likely to provide a substantial impact on the level of mobility for Service children. In addition other factors such as the withdrawal from Germany are likely to have an impact.⁴²

26. It is clear to us that the Covenant commitment that “the children of Service personnel should receive the same standard of and access to education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live” cannot be met without special arrangements in favour of Service families to gain access to schools as indicated in the Covenant:

The Services should aim to facilitate this in the way they manage personnel, but there should also be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting.⁴³

However, we heard that this proposal is itself divisive. Catherine Spencer considered that:

We need flexibility, and we also need to make sure that we do not put ourselves in a position where we annoy the civilian population by being seen to take places away from their children. It is a very difficult line to tread.⁴⁴

27. The nature of Service life means that families have to be mobile if they are to accompany the Service parent. That moves can be made at short notice, or during term-time, means that parents may not have time to research the schools in the area, and may not get a place in their preferred school, as places in high performing schools are unlikely to be available either at short notice or part way through the school year. It is clear that there is a contradiction at the heart of the Covenant, in that Service families’ mobility makes it difficult for parents to get places in the schools of their choice. The timescale for the implementation of the New Employment Model will not help those children currently in education. The MoD needs to consider further how it can assist parents to gain access to their preferred choice of schools.

Conflict with the School Admissions Code

28. The Armed Forces Covenant says that Service families should have special arrangements to support their access to schools if necessary. The Schools Admissions Code, the statutory guidance from the DfE, details the arrangements for admission to

⁴¹ Q 364

⁴² Ev 84

⁴³ The Armed Forces Covenant
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49469/the_armed_forces_covenant.pdf

⁴⁴ Q 22

schools to ensure fairness, including the timings for application and offers.⁴⁵ The Code, which has the force of law, says that school places must be allocated and offered in an open and fair way.⁴⁶ The Armed Forces Covenant and the Schools Admissions Code appear to be in conflict with each other.

29. The Schools Admission Code requires that applications for school places have to be made in October for secondary school and January for primary school, and places are allocated in March for secondary schools and April for primary schools.⁴⁷ It is often the case that schools perceived to be the best are oversubscribed, so will not carry any vacancies.

30. The Schools Standards and Framework Act of 1998 limited the size of infant classes to 30 pupils per teacher. Amendments to the Act in 2012 permitted children to be admitted as exceptions to this infant class size limit.⁴⁸ The Schools Admission Code says:

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

The excepted children include children with SEN, looked after children, children admitted after an appeal, children who move into the area outside the normal admissions round for whom there is no other suitable school place, twins, and:

children of UK service personnel admitted outside the normal admissions round.⁴⁹

However, we heard that this exception can cause problems. Susan Raeburn, a primary school head, said:

[...] the agreed number in each year group for me is 38. [...] It is a number that I legally have to stick to, so until I have 38 in a particular year group I can’t say I am full, but it doesn’t work like that with forces schools. I have one year group that only has 11 children in it, I have another year group with 42 children in it, so it is not the same amount in each year group, so you are trying to constantly juggle[...] I have really high numbers in my classes at the moment.⁵⁰

and

⁴⁵ Department for Education, *The Schools Admission Code 2012*, 1 February 2012
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213254/school-admissions-code-2012>

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, para 12
<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/pdf/s/school%20admissions%20code%201%20february%202012.pdf>

⁴⁷ *Ibid*

⁴⁸ The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 (SI 2012/10)

⁴⁹ Department for Education, *The Schools Admission Code 2012*, 1 February 2012
<http://www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/statutory/g00213254/school-admissions-code-2012> para 2.18

⁵⁰ Q 353

Under the new regulations since September it is saying that we don't have to limit at 30. So if somebody wants to come to your school and they are a forces family, you have to find a way of accommodating them. But the trouble is that with no money to pay for an extra teacher, what do you do as the classes grow and grow and grow? I have no money and I can't just suddenly employ somebody because there is no money to do it.⁵¹

31. The Government should explain how it intends to resolve the conflict between the Armed Forces Covenant, which says that Service children may need special arrangements to access school places, and the Schools Admissions Code which sets out a strict timetable for admissions, to ensure that Service families can access the schools of their choice when they need them.

Funding of school places

Pupils moving mid-school year

32. At our evidence session at the Wellington Academy, head teachers of schools with a large Service population told us about difficulties they experience with funding. Schools are allocated their funding once a year, the allocation is based on the numbers of pupils on the school roll one day in the first term. Susan Raeburn said:

The count has been brought back further even. It is 4 October 2012 for funding. If a child turned up at school on 5 October, you are educating them for 18 months with no money for them and it is just not on, really. It is just difficult.⁵²

33. No account is taken of additional pupils joining the school later in the year, or the additional demands a high turnover of pupils cause for staff in schools with a mobile population. We heard from these head teachers that the school roll can increase significantly during the school year. Susan Raeburn said that three or four pupils had joined her school every week since the start of term.⁵³ She said:

I think my biggest barrier to offering a top education is finances because we have a constantly rising roll. Currently 50% of the pupils in my school have no funding attached to them. You do your census on one particular day of the year; however many you have in your school on that day is what determines your finances. I am struggling to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear at the moment, simply because by my reckoning I am about £150,000 down on funding, and I am having to just try to stretch what I have. So it is very difficult to provide a top education without funding, from my point of view.⁵⁴

Andy Schofield, Principal of the Wellington Academy, said:

⁵¹ Q 354

⁵² Q 316

⁵³ Q340

⁵⁴ Q 270

We do have new students almost every week. It dries up a little bit as they get older, GCSE and A-Level. We try to limit it to certain weeks, but if we allowed people to come in as and when they applied, we would have people every week.⁵⁵

34. The problem is exacerbated if significant numbers of Service families move at the same time. Susan Raeburn said it was difficult when a whole regiment was moving on or out at the wrong time.⁵⁶ The situation is more difficult still if a child with Special Educational Needs joins the school. Susan Raeburn said:

If that child was not in your school when the census happened, so if they have got a statement and they need 30 hours a week one-to-one support and they happen to not be in your school on that day, you have to fund that until the next census comes around and then six months later the new financial year kicks in, because they were not in your school. When I say, “I have no money to support this pupil”, “Oh, it is in your budget.” No, it is not, because the pupil was not on my census. So I have this continually. They will just say, “We have no money. We can’t help you”.⁵⁷

The movement of large numbers of families

35. Martin Bull said the DfE was planning for the move of significant number of Service pupils, in advance of the withdrawal of forces from Germany:

Two years ahead the local authorities know the number of children we expect to be in a particular local authority in a particular cohort. Of course, because we have new children coming, we are going to go back and have a look at what we provided for those local authorities, and see whether we can provide additional funding to help them with high mobility numbers, using the numbers that we have just found out are coming over from Germany back to England. We do this by writing to the local authorities and speaking to the funding teams. Our individual teams, which work on admissions, funding and all the other areas, speak to the local authority contacts to make sure that everybody is very informed about the numbers arriving.⁵⁸

36. We are concerned about what will happen when the re-basing programme commences and withdrawal from Germany gathers pace. These movements could lead to a greater concentration of Service children in some areas, for example Salisbury Plain, leading to additional pressure on local schools. The MoD said that it prepared for large scale moves of Service pupils by generating accurate figures for the DfE in advance of moves from Germany back to the UK.⁵⁹ Martin Bull said:

The important thing that we need to remember is that we have children who are coming between 2013 and 2017. What we have done is that the DfE has worked with [...]Service Children’s Education, and we have looked at the number of children in primary and secondary school and what year they are coming back to England. We

⁵⁵ Q 342

⁵⁶ Q 313

⁵⁷ Q 332

⁵⁸ Q 376

⁵⁹ Q 360

have then identified the local authorities that they are going to be coming to. Yesterday I spoke to the Minister, Elizabeth Truss, and she has agreed a set of actions, which will include writing to those local authorities to alert them in advance of the number of children we expect to return, and to try to work out ways in which we can support them through pupil funding in the years to come.⁶⁰

Olivia Denson, from the CEAS, confirmed they have had similar discussions with the Devolved Administrations:

Yes, those conversations do take place, and they take place across the border as well, with Scotland, where there will be some changes. Yes, we do have those conversations to assist and support in the planning in those areas as well. [...] And in Wales.⁶¹

37. Availability of school places will be a significant issue as large numbers of Service families are re-located as a result of re-basing and the withdrawal from Germany. We seek reassurance that there will be sufficient places for the children moving as part of major re-basing moves and the withdrawal from Germany. The Ministry of Defence must provide information promptly to allow the Department for Education to liaise with Local Authorities and the Devolved Administrations to ensure that the right number of places and adequate funding will be provided in advance of major moves.

38. Schools with significant numbers of Service children on their roll experience additional challenges, including a lack of the appropriate level of funding throughout the school year and difficulties caused by high levels of admissions through the school year. The Government should work with Local Authorities to ensure that appropriate funding is available. Where there is competition for places between Service children and the resident population, and both have equal merit, we question who will provide the funding for additional school places. One option may be for the Ministry of Defence to fund additional buildings, if needed, and the Local Education Authority to pay for staff and on-going maintenance costs.

Advantages of Service life

39. We heard extensive evidence of the disadvantages of Service life for children, but it must be noted that some witnesses drew attention to the advantages of this life. Students who gave evidence at the Wellington Academy said:

I have enjoyed it. I love living around the army. I love being an army family.⁶²

I think I found it pretty easy, [...] because I had older brothers and they would always look out me, so I found it normal. I didn't really care because I liked moving away, going to see new things, new houses and new people, meeting new friends. I have always liked that.⁶³

⁶⁰ Q 373

⁶¹ Qq378-379

⁶² Q 122

⁶³ Q 129

You are able to learn languages differently. In Germany, I was immersed in the language so I was able to pick up on it a bit easier. In Cyprus, I started learning Greek, which is a new experience, which is quite nice.⁶⁴

Susan Raeburn said:

I have got an amazing school. I have about 40% EAL [English as an Additional Language] pupils. We have absolutely fantastic cultural diversity weeks that are just probably one of the best things about the school. We are very lucky and the children are great salt of the earth kids. A lot of them who come to us have all sorts of amazing experiences and just a lot of life, a lot of energy, and I see it as a very positive place to work. I have worked with Service children for 11 years now so I feel very comfortable with it.⁶⁵

A Service pupil's response to the Army Families Federation Annual survey of the opinions of families was:

Forces education allowed me to develop my personality, and to become independent. The mixture of children and the constant changes of location, etc., made me adaptable. The places we lived gave me another kind of education, making me tolerant and understanding. I think, if you're intelligent, the changing of schools doesn't hurt—if you need a bit of 'help', it can be a problem.⁶⁶

40. While we acknowledge the challenges facing Service children we must not forget the advantages of Service life for children of Service families.

Service children with Special Educational Needs

41. It is unclear how many Service children in the UK have Special Educational Needs (SEN) or have been formally assessed as to their needs and the educational resources to meet those needs—a Statement. The MoD provided figures on the current number of Service children with SEN in Table 1.

⁶⁴ Q 139

⁶⁵ Q 283

⁶⁶ Ev w9

Table 1: The current number of Service children with Special Educational Needs

Service	Number of children
Army	1545
Royal Air Force	435
Royal Marines	32
Royal Navy	216
Civil Service	32
Total	2260

Notes: (a) Of these some 850 have Local Authority (LA) statements and of them 14 have joint funding agreements to enable them to attend specialist boarding schools.

(b) Our records show that there are 34 LAs who have statemented children on our register (although some remedial work needs to be done on this as not all children with statements indicate which LA has produced it. The information will be on the file, but this will involve checking some 700 files)⁶⁷

Source: Ministry of Defence

42. Martin Bull said that the SCE had a database of children with SEN of some 2,000 children.⁶⁸ The MoD told us:

The figure of 2000 reflected only those registered with CEAS; RN and RAF parents are not required to register their children, and some Army parents elect not to do so. CEAS/SCE track SEN numbers accurately overseas, where MOD has statutory responsibility for doing so, but within the UK this responsibility remains with the DfE and devolved equivalents.

The most recent DfE Census identified 925 Service Children registered with a statement (1.6 per cent of the total number of Service Children), and a further 7,240 with SEN but without a statement (11.2 per cent of the total number of Service Children).⁶⁹

The range of figures provided suggest that the number of Service children with Special Educational Needs is somewhere between 2,260 and 8,165 (925 with a statement and 7,240 with SEN but without a statement).

43. The lack of clarity about the number of Service children with Special Educational Needs is disturbing. The Ministry of Defence and the Department of Education should liaise with the Devolved Administrations to establish how many Service children have Special Educational Needs across the UK so that the scale of the problem is known.

44. In its 2006 Report, our predecessor Committee identified a number of difficulties that Service children with Special Educational Needs and their families faced, including delays in getting children assessed by an educational psychologist for Statementing purposes and the consequent delays in the provision of support to those children. It recommended that

the DfES and the MoD consider introducing, as a priority, a system whereby Service children with Special Needs are given a Statement of educational needs which can be taken with them as they move between schools, and is accepted by schools as the

⁶⁷ Ev 77

⁶⁸ Q 475

⁶⁹ Ev 86

basis for support which they will provide. The Statement should be time-limited and reviewed regularly.

45. Our predecessor Committee also recommended that the feasibility of a ‘statementing passport’ for Service children with special needs be explored.⁷⁰ In a 2011 report on Children in Service Families, Ofsted drew on our 2006 report and identified similar shortcomings in provision in schools and local authorities in England, noting particular difficulties with the transfer of statements of Special Educational Needs.⁷¹ Ofsted told us:

For children with special needs, the continuity of provision for their needs may be broken and their progress slows. These children are particularly susceptible to anxiety in this context.⁷²

46. Evidence provided by parents to our on-line survey confirmed that the transfer of information for children with SEN is still a problem:

Respondents also commented on schools sometimes failing to properly assess children upon arrival in their new school. This was particularly worrying for parents of gifted children or those with special educational needs:

That it always takes so long for the school to get organised with ability levels and when we moved this time it took 10 weeks before the school helped my daughter who is query dyslexic. During reading time she had to sit in a corner and draw bunnies. School said this was because it took so long to learn about new children. Service parent, Army⁷³

47. In written evidence submitted on behalf of Service Families, the Army Families Federation told us that, for those families choosing not to use the CEA (Continuity of Education Allowance) system to help deal with their child’s SEN, the effect of mobility on an SEN child can be more severe. Comments on the problems of moving a child with SEN are given in Box 2 below.

Box 2: The difficulties of moving a child with Special Educational Needs

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

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

⁷⁰ Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005-06, *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054

⁷¹ Ofsted, *Children in Service families*, May 2011, page 5

⁷² Ev 91

⁷³ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 para 2 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writtev/941/naopart3.pdf

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

Source: *Army Families Federation*⁷⁴

48. The MoD and DfE told us that they were still looking at the issue of transfer for England.⁷⁵ The Devolved Administrations have their own systems for dealing with SEN children. The MoD said that regional representatives from CEAS were engaging with the Devolved Administrations.⁷⁶ We are dismayed that there has been no appreciable progress on the provision of a Special Needs transfer document since the recommendation in 2006. The Minister said:

Clearly, the Department has not made fast enough progress on this matter, but I will look you right in the eye and tell you that we are going to make some progress on it now.⁷⁷

49. Service children with Special Educational Needs are spread across the English local authorities, the Devolved Administrations and SCE schools overseas. The number in any one local authority or administration is likely to be small. We consider that, with the will and support of Government and engagement with the Devolved Administrations, it must be possible to make things easier for those families in this difficult situation. It is unacceptable that no progress has been made on our predecessor Committee's 2006 recommendation that Service children with a Special Educational Needs should be given a statement which would be accepted by all schools. We welcome the Minister's commitment to resolving the issue, and expect to see prompt action.

Children and Families Bill

50. The *Children and Families Bill* in the 2013-14 session of parliament amends legislation relating to children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The Bill makes provision for identifying children and young people with SEN and assessing their needs. The Bill requires local authorities to have regard to the wishes of the child and their parents, and to enable them to participate in as fully informed way as possible in decision-making, with a focus on achieving the best possible educational and other outcomes.⁷⁸ The Bill requires a local authority to prepare a personal budget if asked to do so for a child or young person for whom it maintains an Education Health and Care (EHC) Plan or for whom it has decided to make a Plan.⁷⁹ The provisions extend to England and Wales, but most of the provisions will operate mainly or exclusively in England.

⁷⁴ Ev w4

⁷⁵ Qq 475-476

⁷⁶ Q 475

⁷⁷ Q 476

⁷⁸ Children and Families Bill, [Bill 32 (2013-14)]

⁷⁹ *Ibid*

51. The Children and Families Bill has no specific clauses relating to the needs of those children of Service personnel who have Special Educational Needs. It is disappointing that the Government has not taken this opportunity to incorporate the commitments made in the Armed Forces Covenant into this new legislation. However, we hope that the provisions of this Bill will ease some of the difficulties faced by Service families who have children with Special Educational Needs.

Devolved Administrations

52. We were encouraged by the Devolved Administrations' responses to our request for information about Service children with Special Educational Needs. The Welsh Government told us:

In discussion with the Department for Education we have offered to address the issue of Service children with special needs moving to Wales when we revise our Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Our intention is to ensure that Welsh local authorities use the information in the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan to inform any assessment of a child's needs. In practical terms a local authority in Wales may be advised in the Code that before an assessment takes place they are to look at the educational element of the EHC plan and agree the educational provision unless they have a very good reason to suspect that it cannot be provided, or is unsuitable.⁸⁰

The Northern Ireland Executive told us:

Although Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) are not transferrable between jurisdictions, where a child has a statement, schools and the ELBs can take cognizance of this whilst a statutory assessment is undertaken.⁸¹

The Scottish Minister told us:

I would welcome the opportunity to reassure you that the Scottish Government is only too aware of the many challenges children of Service families can face, particularly around accessing learning.⁸²

and

[...] This legislation places a Duty on local authorities in Scotland to identify, meet and address any additional support needs of pupils for whose education they are responsible.⁸³

53. We urge the Government to work with local authorities and the Devolved Administrations to reach agreement that Service children's SEN statements are recognised by all, without exception, across the UK, demonstrating the country's

⁸⁰ Ev 94

⁸¹ Ev 92

⁸² Ev 92

⁸³ Ev 93

‘moral obligation’ to this very small number of children and their families, who deserve our full support.

Transfer documents

54. Our predecessor Committee’s 2006 Report identified problems with the transfer of pupils’ information to new schools. During our inquiry the Committee heard evidence that the general transfer of information between schools when Service children move continues to be a major difficulty for Service families, and for staff at the receiving schools. Head teachers from primary schools who gave evidence to us at the Wellington Academy said:

We have been keeping stats on it because it is taking so much time. Only about 25% of our pupils arrive with records or any kind of evidence from the last school. If you are lucky you might get it a few weeks later in the post. With one school up north, it was not a Service school, I think we made 23 phone calls to them trying to talk to somebody about special needs, and it is just absolutely so frustrating.⁸⁴

We do rely on paper, handing envelopes over and chasing records and all that. We do have what is called a CTF, which is a common transfer file, which is an electronic transfer of children’s data, but[...]schools do not have one system, [...]but when that child transfers [all the receiving school] will see is their year 2 SATs result. So we do get children where this common transfer file comes through, we open it up and there is no data on there for the child whatsoever.

It needs to be one system for everybody, [...] where it doesn’t matter whether you are in Birmingham or wherever, [...] then you will get all the information electronically. You are not relying on someone handing you a bit of paper that they might have lost in transit somewhere.⁸⁵

55. The MoD told us about a project to produce draft guidance for schools on transferring information quickly and directly between schools, including across the Devolved Administrations, which is being funded by the £3 million Support Fund for Schools. Olivia Denson said:

It is to look at the transfer of records and information about Service children when they move. It is a year-long project to come up with statutory guidance that will be used to produce the information base that is needed for schools when children move.⁸⁶

and

The idea is that everyone is signing up to this document, which will become a Service children’s transition document to be used universally by Service children.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Q 285

⁸⁵ Q 344

⁸⁶ Q 388

⁸⁷ Q398

56. The Devolved Administrations emphasised the need to work closely with the MoD to ensure minimal disruption to a child's education. The Welsh Government told us:

Effective communication between all relevant parties is vital in ensuring minimal disruption to a child's education. In the context of the Army's re-basing plans, it will be particularly important that MOD officials work closely with Welsh Government officials to plan for the arrival of any Service children that come into Wales, in order to minimise any disruption to their education.⁸⁸

In Wales, there is a statutory duty on schools to send an electronic file of Common Transfer information to a child's new school within 15 school days.⁸⁹ The Scottish Government told us it was:

fully supportive of the ADES National Transitions Officer (NTO) who is currently being funded through a successful bid to the £3M Fund. The NTO will work with Scottish local authorities, their schools, Children's Service partners, and Armed Forces Services to enhance policy and practice which will take into account the unique features affecting the education of Service Children. One element of the work of the NTO is to look to establish seamless transitions for learners from Armed Forces families with successful school placements and to support families through this process.⁹⁰

The Northern Ireland Executive told us:

General transfer of information between schools when Service children move is a recognised problem here. Feedback from the local Services Children Forum suggests that schools would welcome a consistent format for the transfer of documentation.

57. We are concerned that the transfer of records will deteriorate with the increased volume of moves as the Army withdraws from Germany, the plans for re-basing take effect, and when RAF and Naval bases are consolidated.

58. Susan Raeburn and Karen Ward, primary school head teachers, said that data provided by the SCE schools overseas was not recognised by the DfE.⁹¹ Karen Ward added:

I had basically 48 out of 61 children whose data was recognised. There were another nine children who had taken year 2 SATs exactly under the same conditions but because it was in Germany or Cyprus it wasn't recognised by the DfE.⁹²

Martin Bull said that there 'was a glitch in the data in one particular year when this happened', and that the 'problem has been resolved and will not happen again.'⁹³ We are satisfied that the DfE has taken action to resolve this problem.

⁸⁸ Ev 95

⁸⁹ Ev 95

⁹⁰ Ev 93

⁹¹ Q 338–339

⁹² Q 338

⁹³ Q 400

59. We are dismayed that no appreciable progress has been made on the transfer of pupils' records since our predecessors' 2006 report. Service children and their families deserve better. Only now is work being undertaken to develop a Service children's transition document. We are pleased that the Devolved Administrations are broadly supportive of a common approach to the transfer of information. We recommend that the Government liaise with the Devolved Administrations, local authorities and others to reach a UK-wide agreement on a transfer document for Service children and a process for ensuring it is used, to resolve this issue once and for all.

3 Continuity of education

Continuity of education

60. As we have already illustrated, a continuous theme of the evidence taken from families, their representatives and from the Committee's on-line survey is concern over the lack of continuity of education for the children of Service families. We heard evidence from families, submitted on their behalf by the Army Families Federation, and from contributions to our on-line survey. Examples of the comments we received are given in Box 3 below:

Box 3: Concerns of Service families about continuity of education

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

Over the past two years not only have my son's grades dipped quite dramatically but his self-esteem seems to have been affected too. I believe this is due to the frequent school moves and lack of stability.

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

"I have been to lots of primary schools before I was sent to boarding school. I was finding it hard to make new friends again and again but since going to boarding school I have made friends that I will have for the rest of my schooling." Service child, Army

Source: Army Families Federation and NAO on-line survey⁹⁴

61. Some parents expressed concern that mobility meant children did not always complete the curriculum. We heard evidence from a number of sources that children miss parts of the curriculum and repeat others. While schools must teach certain subjects as part of the syllabus, it is up to individual schools when they cover a particular topic. This can be exacerbated if children move between the Devolved Administrations and England.

62. The MoD's guidance explains that children can start school for the first year of their statutory education at different times in Scotland and Northern Ireland compared to England and Wales. This can have a knock-on effect regarding the year group to which children may be admitted. There are also differences between the Administrations about

⁹⁴ Ev w11, National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writew/941/naopart3.pdf

when children move between phases of education, for example moving between primary and secondary schools.⁹⁵ Catherine Spencer said:

It is also to do with the curriculum, because there are differences between [...] the age at which you start school in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England, so that can cause difficulties as well; you may find children jumping up or down. We have numerous reports of children finding that they have moved schools and then, maybe at the end of key stage 2, they have studied the Vikings three times but they have never done the Romans, so they miss chunks of education. One of the things that could mitigate that is making sure that the curriculum lays down more what is taught in each term, but that will not suit every school because of resources.⁹⁶

Students at the Wellington Academy told us of their experiences, see Box 4 below:

Box 4: Experiences of students on their education in moving schools

When I first came here I found it really easy because when I was back in Nepal we had already covered all the stuff.

I only did up to year 9 in Jamaica, which is equivalent to year 10 in England because there is a year difference in the school year, but the education, what I had done in year 9 was all of the year 11 syllabus. So, basically, when I came here it was like just getting the qualification, not really getting the teaching. [...]

Boring? Well, it was nice at times because everyone in the class was—because they have to put you in the lower set. I was supposed to be above everyone in the class. Basically, when they gave me the exam papers just to see 95 per cent on it, it was like, “Okay”. I already knew the stuff, but, yes, still it is 95 per cent.

Source: *Evidence to Defence Committee* ⁹⁷

63. Variation in schools’ teaching styles was also highlighted as adding additional pressure on how Service children adapt and cope in their new schools. Contributors to our on-line survey told us of:

“The pressure placed upon Service children to conform to the new and/or different teaching expectations of the different schools they are placed in. This can be found in young children learning to write (differing writing styles between schools) through to high school pupils having to catch up very quickly with differing syllabus.” Service parent, Royal Air Force⁹⁸

64. MoD guidance provided to parents acknowledges these difficulties:

Individual schools decide within year groups and Key Stages when to deliver the required components of each national curriculum. For mobile Service children, this can mean that they either repeat and/or miss out parts of their required studies;

⁹⁵ Ministry of Defence, *A Guide for Service Families: UK Education Systems*, January 2013 www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/172954/ceas_brochure_lores_spreads.pdf

⁹⁶ Q33

⁹⁷ Qq 146-149

⁹⁸ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 para 2 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writewv/941/naopart3.pdf

whilst schools must work with them and their families to ensure that any gaps are properly covered, this can place additional burdens on such children, in addition to any emotional turmoil they may experience through their mobility or a loved one's deployments.⁹⁹

65. We recognise that as a result of mobility children encounter difficulties in the consistency of their education. When moving mid-year pupils can repeat topics, for example. Evidence also suggests some children may not be academically stretched as much as they should be. We recommend that under the New Employment Model, Future Army 2020, and Future Force 2020, the MoD undertakes to minimise, as far as possible, moves during the school year, and restricts, wherever possible, the movement of whole units to an appropriate time in the academic year.

Boarding schools and continuity

66. Parents' concern over the lack of continuity and the emotional difficulties frequent moves may cause their children lead many Service families to take the decision, which many find difficult, to send their children to boarding school.

I believe that sending our son away to school was the most difficult decision we have ever had to make as parents and one we did not take lightly, but I do feel this was the right decision for our son. The stability that boarding school offers has alleviated anxieties on us as parents as we know that our son will now continue to have continuity of education and reach his full potential academically.¹⁰⁰

And a response to our on-line survey was:

My child is now in boarding school so the negative impacts have been minimised. That said, the impacts on the wider family of having to board should not be ignored. Boarding has been a decision based on a balance of achieving continuity in education against the 'loss' of our child from the family home – a significant concern that has produced immense pressure. Service parent, Army¹⁰¹

67. The MoD advises parents to send children of secondary age to boarding school:

At the secondary stage of education the appropriateness of local provision changes. Schools outside the UK work towards different examinations and qualifications and parents should be prepared to consider the option of sending their older children to a boarding school in the UK. The potential difficulties for a student in the middle of an examination course, if appropriate, transferring back to the UK from the education system of another country, cannot be overstated. For this reason, boarding (either in the UK or at an SCE school) is recommended for children who

⁹⁹ Ministry of Defence, *A Guide for Service Families: UK Education Systems*, January 2013
www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/172954/ceas_brochure_lores_spreads.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Ev w11

¹⁰¹ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writev/941/naopart3.pdf

would otherwise be returning to the British system in the final year of Key Stage 3 or beyond.¹⁰²

Continuity of Education Allowance

68. Service families who choose to send their children to boarding school to provide continuity in education can apply for financial assistance from the MoD. This assistance is called the Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA).

69. The MoD told us that there were two main principles associated with eligibility for CEA: accompanied service and educational continuity. CEA is available to any serving personnel, and is available for children of 8 years of age until the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of 18. Service personnel can claim up to a maximum of £6,147 per child per term in the current financial year.¹⁰³ The rates vary according to whether the child is a junior or senior boarder, and if they are boarding or at day school. Parents must pay at least 10 per cent of the school fees, and any fees in excess of the sum of the 10 per cent allowance and the CEA allowance maximum.¹⁰⁴

The importance of the Continuity of Education Allowance

70. In our on-line survey families told us that they relied on the CEA to provide continuity:

“The CEA has allowed our children the continuity and security that they need in their education, particularly for the son with dyslexia. No matter where we moved, the boys have always had their friends at school and the familiarity of the staff and the establishment. This has been very important during my husband’s numerous deployments.” Service parent, Army

“CEA remains absolutely critical if Service children are not to be disadvantaged by the regular location moves. If you want a contented serviceman/woman prepared to serve their country without distractions you need to offer something like CEA to those that need it.” Service parent, Royal Navy¹⁰⁵

71. We heard evidence that CEA plays a part in the retention of personnel. In evidence submitted by the Army Families Federation, a Service parent said:

I feel that choosing the boarding school option was the most difficult decision that we have had to make in life so far. If the Continuity of Education Allowance had not been available, then I think that my husband would have considered leaving the Army. The impact of mobility would have been too great on our children’s education as we have moved 15 times in 22 years so far.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Ev 71

¹⁰³ Army Families Federation website: www.aff.org.uk

¹⁰⁴ Ev 72

¹⁰⁵ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writtev/941/naopart3.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Ev w11

“CEA (Board) is necessary to allow my child stability during their secondary education if I am to continue to serve as flexibly as the Service requires. Any reduction in CEA would cause me to question my continued service in the military because while mobility is key to a productive career it must not be at the expense of my family life. They put up with enough disruption (willingly) but I would not tolerate cuts that impacted my child’s chances of achieving her full potential academically. I would also not be prepared to pursue a career that required me to live away from my family, perhaps only seeing them at weekends.”¹⁰⁷

Tightening of the rules on eligibility for the Continuity of Education Allowance

72. In October 2011 the then Minister for the Armed Forces announced the conclusions of a review into the CEA. Following that review the MoD maintained the core principles of CEA, though there were some improvements to governance and tightening of rules on eligibility for CEA.¹⁰⁸ The review led to concerns amongst Service families about their entitlement to CEA and the longer term effect on their children’s education. Parents said:

The process to get CEA is difficult and constantly changing. Service parent, Army ¹⁰⁹

The CEA rules need to be relaxed. When one child is in receipt of CEA the other child(ren) should not be disadvantaged by constantly having to move to fulfil a set of very archaic and poorly thought through rules. Service parent, Army ¹¹⁰

I have seen children's education and therefore their potential long term prospects destroyed by SDSR due to withdrawal of CEA and unexpected moves.¹¹¹

73. The MoD told us:

A complete re-write of the CEA policy is underway in order to make the regulations more easily understood by the recipients and more easily governed by the CEAGT (Continuity of Education Allowance Governance Team).¹¹²

We asked the MoD whether this current re-writing of the rules around CEA would mean further changes or cuts in the payments or entitlement to them. We were assured that it would not and that the re-writing of the rules was a matter of clarification and not a major change of policy.¹¹³ Gavin Barlow said:

What we are talking about is clarification of the rules set. There have been a number of changes incrementally since the SDSR, including the one I just mentioned about

¹⁰⁷ Ev w23

¹⁰⁸ HC Deb, 13 October 2011, col 36W5

¹⁰⁹ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writew/941/naopart3.pdf

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Ev w24

¹¹² Ev 73

¹¹³ Q 480

withdrawal, some of which is being dealt with in defence information notices and so on. That has contributed to a situation where we want to rewrite the whole thing so that it is easier to understand and is really clear. It is part of the work we are doing generally on our allowances to make them more readily accessible and understandable.¹¹⁴

74. Staff at Wellington Academy told us that applications for CEA at post-16 were being turned down ‘quite a lot’. The staff also said that applications for funding at A-Level have to be made before students finished their GCSEs

Obviously we know at post 16 it seems to be turned down quite a lot. We are finding that if somebody applies at A-Level then they are not going to get the funding, yet they have been with us for five years, or been somewhere else and they want to leave to move to this area. They know they are going to be posted halfway through their A-Levels, but if they don’t apply before they finish their GCSEs they are probably not going to get it at A-Level. We find that sometimes if they are going to be posted, they are a day pupil, they may not get it for the second year of A-Levels or the second year of their BTech course, which means they have to transfer, go somewhere else, and obviously it is quite difficult, I think, because we are matching exam boards, schools have different option groups, are they going to fit in, are their options going to fit, which then could affect university choices.¹¹⁵

We received some evidence questioning the value of the CEA. Parents told us in evidence submitted on their behalf by the RAF Families Federation that:

We made a lifestyle choice which requires me to commute but has enabled our children to attend a first rate grammar school at no cost to us or to the military. In contrast I see many others placing their children in a fee-paying school. [...]there is an adequate state boarding system - it should be the ONLY option for CEA. I recognise that my views may be controversial but I believe I have a reasonably balanced view based on my personal and professional experiences.¹¹⁶

Whilst we recognise that this particular allowance is an emotive one which generates much debate and discussion, we seek to remind those involved, [...] of the fundamental purpose of the allowance. That is to ensure continuity of education for those Service children who might otherwise be affected because they are a member of a military family. It is never an easy decision to place a child into the boarding school system, and there are long-term financial implications for the family, but it is one that many parents have to take to ensure that their child(ren) get the best start possible.¹¹⁷

75. Maintaining continuity in their children’s education is a major concern for parents. We support the principle of paying CEA to those families who choose to send their children to boarding school to provide continuity. The MoD should clarify the rules on

¹¹⁴ Q 480

¹¹⁵ Q 345

¹¹⁶ Ev w26

¹¹⁷ Ev w22

CEA and reassure Service personnel that entitlement to CEA is not under further review and will not change at short notice.

Take-up of CEA

76. There has been a significant reduction in the number of claimants of CEA since 2009-10. Gavin Barlow said this resulted from:

the reduction in overall numbers of Service personnel over that period, and also with the changes to the involuntary separation rules, which probably account for several hundred of the reduction in claimants, but the number is about where we would expect it to be at the moment, given the trends in take-up of the allowance and the impact of the rule changes that we have put in place. I would refer also to much more careful governance within all the Services, which have all looked at their CEA claimant community carefully to make sure that all the claims are well founded and properly documented. During that process, a number of people have withdrawn from claiming the allowance who perhaps did not meet those standards, and some others are perhaps more reluctant to put themselves forward as well, but it continues to support well over 4,000 claimants. The allowance is very well used and needed by the Service community.¹¹⁸

77. During the inquiry we heard evidence that the rate of take-up of CEA remained lower amongst lower paid ranks. The MoD told us:

The overall CEA claimant community currently comprises 2,476 Officers (60%) and 1,631 Other Ranks (40%); a ratio that has remained relatively unchanged during the period under scrutiny. Although the ratio of Officer to Other Rank claimants is around 1.5:1, the proportion of claimants within each group is significantly different. Officer claimants represent 8.3% of all serving Officers (30,010) whereas Other Rank claimants represent only some 1.1% of all serving Other Ranks (145,930).¹¹⁹

78. Gavin Barlow explained the differences in the rate of claimants between the ranks:

That very much reflects the demographic of the Service community. Most of the junior ranks will not have school-age children, whereas you will find that not all, but the majority of those who serve with school-age children—for CEA purposes, children aged over eight—will be senior non-commissioned officers, or officers. I think the peak—the largest block of claimants—is round about Captain/Major level. That is where the demographic peaks, but that is just representative of the nature of the Service community as a whole, rather than an idea that it might be in some way an officers' allowance or something of that nature, because it is not. It is available to all Service personnel who meet the mobility requirements and have children of the relevant age, if they wish to have it.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ Q 483

¹¹⁹ Ev 73

¹²⁰ Q 484

Nevertheless, we heard evidence that they may still be a lack of awareness of the allowance among lower ranks:

The only reason we got brought on to it is because at the time I was working at Sandhurst Royal Military Academy and there was a lot of officers who had children who seemed to take advantage of it but there was not very many soldiers. I do not know if it was to do with the cost or money, because obviously that subsidises quite a lot of the cost. However, I think the majority of it was because the soldiers were not possibly aware that they could do it.¹²¹

Staff at the Wellington Academy expressed the view that boarding is seen as something officers traditionally did:

My point about ordinary soldiers is that it appears as slightly alien, it is an alien concept. It is possibly an alien concept to ordinary people, boarding, boarding schools. It has this sort of connotation, so I think there is a lot more that could be done about that. Then we will fill our places, so we don't want to advertise it too well, because there aren't many places left anyway. There are hardly any places in state boarding anyway.¹²²

State Boarding Schools

79. During the inquiry we found a lack of awareness of the state boarding school system. Andy Schofield, the Principal at the Wellington Academy, said:

I think there is a point here about the strength of the state boarding system, which I am a strong advocate of. We have 35 boarding schools and it is a bit of a Cinderella element.¹²³

80. The cost of tuition at state boarding schools is met by the state, so Service families would be required to contribute only to the boarding costs. This could help those who may find the cost of contributing 10 per cent of the fees a disincentive, or who may find a state rather than independent school a more acceptable option.

81. Evidence from the State Boarding Schools Association said that by September 2013 there would be 37 state boarding schools. The Association said that there were fewer Service children at state boarding schools than might be expected, as less than 10 per cent of boarders at state boarding schools were Service children in receipt of CEA.

82. The Association suggested possible reasons why this might be the case, including the difficulty of entering a child for a selective entrance examination if the family are located abroad, that applications had to be made in autumn but notice of a place not given until spring, and independent schools offered places before Christmas. The Association also

¹²¹ Q 232

¹²² Q349

¹²³ Q349

expressed the view that a lack of funding for the maintenance of the schools may make them less attractive to parents.¹²⁴

83. The Ministry of Defence should ensure that all Service personnel are aware of the availability of the Continuation of Education Allowance. It should also advertise more effectively the existence of the state boarding schools.

Safe-guarding children

84. Issues regarding the safety of children at an independent school were brought to our attention during the course of this inquiry. We were surprised to learn that parents' continuing entitlement to CEA depended on value judgements by the MoD in such cases. We asked the MoD for clarification of their role, as there are occasions when parents might reasonably want to move their children to another school. For example, we were made aware of issues regarding a change in entitlement to CEA where there were concerns about abuse in a school. The MoD's role in decisions on entitlement to CEA when parents wish to move their children in such cases was not clear.

85. The MoD view is that the purpose of CEA is to ensure continuity of education. Gavin Barlow said:

But clearly if the Service parent wants to make use of continuity of education allowance, there is an expectation from us that that is there to provide educational continuity. So there is a fairly high bar on Service parents committing to that at the outset and maintaining it. But clearly if there is a good reason for moving a child, that is possible.¹²⁵

86. Following two evidence sessions at which questions regarding the protection of children were raised the MoD provided further information.¹²⁶ However, the information provided lacks clarity and it is difficult to relate the figures to other information provided. For example it is unclear how many cases have been brought to the attention of CEAS, and when and for how long schools have been removed from the MoD database. There is a lack of robust procedure and guidance in place to ensure families have the confidence to remove children where there is a child protection concern.

87. The MoD told us that a re-write of the rules would clarify the position:

The CEA regulations are currently being re-written in line with the outcome of the Ministerial Review of CEA conducted in 2011 and the following wording will be included:

¹²⁴ Ev w28

¹²⁵ Q 365

¹²⁶ Ev 82, Ev 87

If the child is in immediate danger or there is a safeguarding issue, the child may be withdrawn immediately and advice may be sought from CEAS and casework submitted as soon as possible retrospectively.”¹²⁷

We note that the revised ‘*reasons for Changing School during a Stage of Education which may be acceptable in certain circumstances*’ does not include child protection issues.¹²⁸ This omission should be rectified in the current revision of the regulations.

88. The safety and well-being of children is paramount and the rules should not hinder movement of pupils in cases where, for example, there have been suggestions of abuse. The MoD should clarify the rules on CEA and its role in the decision-making process when parents wish to move their children to another school during a key stage of education. We recommend that in principle the MoD should be more prepared to leave to parents the difficult judgement of when to move a child; while it is axiomatic that a “Continuity of Education Allowance” is designed to provide continuity, the name of the allowance should not be a major barrier to the parents deciding what is best for their child.

¹²⁷ Ev 87

¹²⁸ Ev 82

4 Financial Support Schemes

Service Pupil Premium

89. In April 2011 the DfE introduced a pupil premium in England to provide additional support to children from low-income families who were eligible for free school meals, looked-after children and children from families with parents in the Armed Forces. The Service Pupil Premium is paid directly to schools in England to support Service children on their register. The premium increased from £250 to £300 per pupil per year from April 2013. Schools can spend this money as they see fit. The Premium is part of the Government's commitments made in the Armed Forces Covenant.¹²⁹ Martin Bull said:

The Pupil Premium is there to help schools and mobility, and that is based on the number of children in the school census identified as Service children. It is there to be used to help induct that child and get that child's curriculum up to speed, so that they can go straight into class and not learn about the Tudors three times. It is there to help them with social, emotional and pastoral needs. It has increased reasonably over the years since we introduced it. There is a strong commitment for us to retain that Service Premium. The money is there per pupil: it is £300 this year, which is good news—it was £250 in the first year—and we are hoping it will rise.¹³⁰

90. Evidence we heard from parents at the Wellington Academy at Tidworth, the Families Federations and the on-line survey indicates that not all parents are aware of the premium, or are not aware of how it is spent. Bill Mahon said:

Our evidence is that a majority of families have not heard of the Service Pupil Premium, and do not know what it is for. A communications message and piece are required to help promote it, perhaps more so than there is at the moment.¹³¹

And the RAF Families Federation told us that:

Comments have also been made about the way that the funds are being spent, with many parents asking how their schools should be using the funding to best support Service children. While many schools are already making the best use of these funds, and sharing best practice with others, we have received evidence to the contrary from other young Service family members. One told that her school had spent the funds on arts supplies while another had organised a trip just for the Service children but this then caused problems with the non-Service children, who challenged why they were being treated as a special case.¹³²

The NAO told us that:

¹²⁹ The Armed Forces Covenant: *Today and Tomorrow*, www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49470/the_armed_forces_covenant_today_and_tomorrow.pdf

¹³⁰ Q 451

¹³¹ Q 68

¹³² Ev w22

Seven in ten (72 per cent) respondents were aware of the Service Premium. Awareness was lowest among Royal Marines families (58 per cent aware, 22 out of 38) and highest among Royal Air Force families (79 per cent aware, 151 out of 192).

However, of the 718 respondents who were aware of the Premium, only 14 per cent (102 parents) knew how their children's school spent this additional money, 28 per cent (201) said that they did not have children at state/maintained schools since April 2011 (and hence would not have had children eligible for the Service Premium), and 58 per cent (415) did not know how the Premium was spent. Of the 102 parents who knew how their children's school spent the Premium, the majority (80 per cent) thought that the money was helpful to the Service children at the school, with 41 per cent saying that it was 'very' and 39 per cent that it was 'fairly' helpful.¹³³

91. The DfE gave us a range of examples of how the Service Pupil Premium funds had been used. It also provided examples of its use on its website.¹³⁴ For example, many schools use the additional funds to provide pastoral care and support for children whose Service parent may be on operations. Martin Bull said:

The DfE worked with the MoD and wrote to about 1,000 schools known to us to have high numbers of Service children on the roll and we gathered case studies. [...] A head teacher might offer one-to-one tuition to help the child catch up in terms of the curriculum. It might be used to help induct them and provide a smooth transition from a school abroad to the new school. There might be support for a buddy system. Another example relates to SEN and whether support is needed around SEN for a child, so there is immediate support if the child arrived really quickly and was not known about in advance. It has been used a number of different ways.¹³⁵

Expenditure on the Service Pupil Premium

92. Schools with a significant number of Service children can receive a substantial amount of money. MoD provided expenditure statistics on the premium as follows:

The total annual expenditure on the Service Pupil Premium since its introduction.

- Service Premium financial year 2011–12: 45,070 children – £9,014,000 (rate of £200 per service child).
- Service Premium financial year 2012–13: 52,370 children – £15,712,000 (introduced ever measure and increased rate to £250 per service child).
- Total for 2011–12 and 2012–13: £24,726,000.

¹³³ National Audit Office, *The education of Service children: findings of an National Audit Office consultation*, April 2013 paras 3.8 and 3.9 www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmdfence/writev/941/naopart3.pdf

¹³⁴ www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium

¹³⁵ Q 453

- Service Premium financial year 2013–14 rate increased to £300 per service child. However, the timing of data means we do not yet have final pupil numbers for this year.¹³⁶

Evaluation of the Service Pupil Premium

93. Ofsted told us:

from February 2013, inspectors will report specifically on the performance in English and mathematics of pupils supported through the pupil premium compared to all other pupils in the school. Inspectors will highlight any differences between the average point scores for English and mathematics and whether gaps are narrowing for [...] children of service families and all other pupils.¹³⁷

94. We note that Ofsted have strengthened their inspections to report on performance in English and mathematics of pupils supported by the Pupil Premium from February 2013. But we look for more evaluation of spending on the Service Pupil Premium and evidence that this funding is used to support Service children in the particular problems they face, for example the provision of pastoral care when a parent is deployed on operations; difficulties a child may experience when they change schools part way through a school year, or where there are conflicts over the curriculum between the new and old school, and gaps may need to be filled.

95. We support the payment of the Service Pupil Premium to support Service children. However, we are not convinced that this expenditure is adequately monitored for value for money for the taxpayer, and to ensure that it is used to the best possible advantage to the Service children themselves. The Government should introduce guidelines on how the Service Pupil Premium should be spent. It should also require schools to make more transparent how this money is spent. The Government should monitor and publish this information and share examples of best practice.

96. Ofsted should be asked to report in more detail on the results achieved by use of the Service Pupil Premium to ensure that the funding is meeting the particular needs of Service children. The DfE and the MoD should also report on the overall level of expenditure on the Service Pupil Premium.

97. The Armed Forces Covenant applies to all Service personnel and their families across the UK, however the Service Pupil Premium is paid only in England. Northern Ireland operates a similar scheme where qualifying schools receive an additional £405 per child (2012–13 rates) for each full-time pupil from a Service family.¹³⁸ This money is used to bridge learning gaps caused by the transient nature of Service children.¹³⁹ It can also be used for pastoral care services.¹⁴⁰ In written evidence, the MoD said that the Welsh DfE and

¹³⁶ Ev 87

¹³⁷ Ev 89

¹³⁸ Ev 92

¹³⁹ Ev 92

¹⁴⁰ Ev 92

Skills had not yet formally considered the option and the Scottish Service Children's Stakeholder Network, chaired and facilitated by the Scottish Directorate for Learning, have judged that such an option is not currently required in Scotland.

98. In its contribution to this inquiry, the Scottish Government said:

we have not implemented the Pupil Premium or the Service Pupil Premium. The distribution formula used to allocate the Scottish Government's funding to local authorities has been developed over a number of years and is based on the relative need of each local authority, including levels of deprivation (take up of Free School Meals and income support). The needs based formula for local government funding was reviewed in 2009 by a joint Scottish Government/Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) group. It concluded that the existing needs-based indicators were reasonable and generally a fair indication of need.¹⁴¹

The Welsh Government said

There is no Service Pupil Premium in Wales. However, there is support available for children of Service families in schools in Wales through our School Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant. These grants are the Welsh Government's principal means of providing financial support for our three national priorities for schools: improving standards in literacy; improving standards in numeracy, and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Responding to the challenges we face in improving our educational outcomes in Wales by taking action in isolation on different parts of the education system is counter to the aims of the grants. All Service children in Wales, including those that come to Wales in the future, will benefit from the funding available to schools through these grants, as will each pupil in Wales.¹⁴²

99. Evidence from Service families questioned why the Service Pupil Premium is not paid for all Service children across the UK.

We live in Wales and the schools do not receive the Service Premium but the children at schools in Wales still face the same issues that they do when they move in England. There are not many postings in Wales but our children have to learn Welsh, the Service Premium could really benefit the children in giving them extra assistance in this new and unusual language.[...]It shouldn't matter where the child is at school, it should be all children have this premium or none of them.¹⁴³

Whilst we welcomed the financial support that the Premium brings to schools with Service children, many families have asked why it only applies to those in state schools in England. Those posted to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have challenged why their children do not get the same support and feel that they too are being disadvantaged.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Ev 93

¹⁴² Ev 94

¹⁴³ Ev w7

¹⁴⁴ Ev w22

100. The anomalies in the payment of a Service Pupil Premium across the Devolved Administrations indicates a contradiction between the Armed Forces Covenant and the practice across the UK. The Government should liaise with the Devolved Administrations to encourage the same level of support for all Service children across the UK in line with the Covenant. In its response to this report the Government should set out why the Service Pupil Premium can at the same time represent good value for money in those areas which have it and be unnecessary in those areas which do not.

Local Authority Funding

101. We were concerned to hear from head teachers during the evidence session at the Wellington Academy that some Local Authorities might have taken payment of the Service Pupil Premium into account when allocating funding and removed other sources of funding. Susan Raeburn said:

The local authority used to give us something called the Forces Protection Factor, so when the Pupil Premium came in everyone was kind of saying, “Oh, you are so lucky. You have an extra £40,000 for your school” or whatever. I think the first year the Pupil Premium came in the local authority took away the Forces Protection Factor. [...] We ended up £1,000 worse off, because we got our Pupil Premium money and then they took away the Forces Protection Factor, saying, “We are not paying this anymore”.¹⁴⁵

And

The other thing is that my understanding is when the new funding streams were being discussed in our local authority, one of the streams that Wiltshire could have chosen to fund us on was mobility. [...] they said it was too complicated to be able to put it into practice [...] so they discounted that as a possible way of supporting the funding.¹⁴⁶

Andy Schofield said:

I think the biggest problem in terms of funding across the board for schools that have a high proportion of military families is that on most measures of deprivation we don't really register, [...] Here you do not get that core funding. It is assumed that because your free school meals level is generally low then you must be in affluent Wiltshire, and that is completely the opposite. [...]. There needs to be an additional funding element. [...] the overall level of funding is not high enough to enable us to do those longer-term things. We should not have to rely on £3,000 grants from the military to do a bit of counselling. It should be systemic.¹⁴⁷

102. We are concerned that the introduction of the Service Pupil Premium has replaced other forms of funding, so that schools with a significant number of Service children

¹⁴⁵ Q 311

¹⁴⁶ Q 322

¹⁴⁷ Q 314

may not benefit as much as was intended. The Government should ensure that Local Authorities do not use the Service Pupil Premium to replace other funding.

The Ministry of Defence Support Fund for Schools

103. The Ministry of Defence Support Fund for Schools provides £3 million a year for four years (2011-15) to help mitigate the effects of mobility and deployment for schools with a Service children population. The MoD told us:

The fund was set up to provide funding to maintained schools with Service children, (regular and reserves forces), to help them provide mitigating action where their Service community were experiencing either exceptional mobility and/or deployment and this was impacting upon the school. Any grant from the fund is paid directly to the school to implement the mitigating action which should benefit the whole school not just those Service children within it.¹⁴⁸

State schools across the UK can apply to the Support Fund for assistance. In oral evidence, the MoD and the DfE gave us examples of how this fund may be used, including supporting pupils in the Devolved Administrations in place of the Service Pupil Premium. Table 2 below shows how these funds have been allocated across the four nations of the UK.

Table 2: Distribution of the Support Fund for Schools

Country	Service Children		2011 Fund		2012 Fund		2013 Fund	
	Numbers	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
England	45,000	91.1	1,861,185	69.5	1,802,830	60.1	1,678,983	58.9
Scotland	2,500	5.1	421,627	15.7	711,101	23.7	588,242	20.6
N Ireland	900	1.8	325,641	12.2	382,982	12.8	454,680	16.0
Wales	1,000	2.0	70,183	2.6	103,079	3.4	128,408	4.5
Totals	49,400		2,678,636		2,999,992		2,850,313	

Source: Ministry of Defence¹⁴⁹

104. The figures show that Scotland and Northern Ireland receive a disproportionately high percentage of the funds based on Service children numbers. As schools in the three Devolved Administrations do not receive the pupil premium it is not unreasonable for England to receive less, but schools in Wales should be encouraged to apply for funds in line with those made in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

105. The Government should publish figures showing the distribution of the Support Fund for Schools across all parts of the UK, and encourage applications from Welsh schools to ensure all regions get their fair share.

106. However, it must be remembered that the Support Fund for Schools is a relatively small fund (£3 million per year over four years, compared with an average annual Service Pupil Premium payment of £12.4 million).¹⁵⁰ We consider the plans for this expenditure

¹⁴⁸ Ev 74

¹⁴⁹ Ev 84

¹⁵⁰ Ev 74, Ev 84, Ev 87

are very ambitious for a relatively small amount of money. As with the Service Pupil Premium, there is lack of evidence on the value for money of this expenditure.

107. The Devolved Administrations have acknowledged some of the benefits of the MoD Support Fund for Schools. The Scottish Government said

The Scottish Government has welcomed the £3M Fund and has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, CoSLA and ADES to ensure it was promoted across Scotland and fit for purpose within devolved responsibilities.

We have fully supported this fund, specifically one of my officials is the chair of the regional assessment panel here in Scotland. I am aware that there is one year funding left from this Commitment and I am confident that our work here in Scotland will draw in another good level of quality bids. It is unfortunate that this fund will come to an end prior to the movements taking place as part of the re-basing review.¹⁵¹

And the Welsh Government said:

I am pleased to inform the Defence Committee that generous funding from the MOD's Support Fund for Schools with Service Children is already helping several Welsh schools support Service children. [...] Welsh Government officials will be working closely with their MOD counterparts to devise a means of encouraging more Welsh schools to apply under the next funding round.¹⁵²

108. The Government should publish details of the ways in which the Support Fund for Schools money is spent in support of Service children, and give examples of good practice so that best use is made of this limited resource. We agree with the Scottish Government, that the Government should maintain this Fund after the planned four years to provide pastoral and other support to individual schools where needed. The need will rise as significant numbers of Service children move during re-basing and the withdrawal from Germany.

Support for Bereaved Families

The Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme

109. The Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme provides university and further education scholarships for the children of Service personnel who have died on active duty since 1990:

The aim of this scheme is to give the children of those who have died in the service of their country a head start in life by enabling them to obtain a university degree or further education training. The Scheme is funded by BIS, DfE and the devolved

¹⁵¹ Ev 93

¹⁵² Ev 94

administrations, but is administered by the MOD. To date, 95 children have benefited from the scheme.¹⁵³

110. The scheme pays £1,500 a year to encourage children to stay on in Further Education, and up to £13,950 (for tuition fees and maintenance) to help those children to study for a university degree).¹⁵⁴ The scheme is not means tested.

School Fees

111. Concerns regarding the ability of bereaved families to meet the on-going costs of school fees were brought to our attention during the course of our inquiry. We heard concerns that the continuity of children's education could be endangered when families could not maintain payment of school fees. We also heard that there could be delays in the payment of pensions and other entitlements.

112. We sought assurance from the MoD that provision was made for these families. We were concerned that these families were reliant on charities or school bursaries to maintain continuity of education in such cases. The MoD told us that:

- a. There will be no new entitlement for any child not already in receipt of CEA when the claimant dies or is invalided, irrespective of any future parental aspirations for the education of a child.
- b. CEA will continue to be paid up to the end of the current stage of education or for up to 2 full terms after the term in which the death or invaliding of the claimant occurred for each child, whichever is the longer extension
- c. If the child is already studying for public examinations, CEA will continue to be paid for up to 4 years or to the end of the term in which the child takes the examination and then leaves school, whichever is soonest, e.g., for a child aged 14-16 years who moves onto A-level studies, this would normally be up to 4 further years, for a child aged 16-18 years it would normally be up to 2 further years.

and

Child/Children's Payment—Child/Children's Payment is an income stream paid monthly to eligible child(ren) in order to provide financial support following the loss of their parent, guardian or person on whom they were financially dependant. It is normally payable up to the age of 18 (or until the child commences full time paid employment), or up to the age of 23 if still in full time education. The Child Payment is taxable and is adjusted in respect of any benefit paid under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Ev 74

¹⁵⁴ Ev 75

¹⁵⁵ Ev 84

113. We are reassured that a range of funding is available to support the education of children of a parent killed in the service of their country, though such payments need to be made promptly to avoid unnecessary hardship or worry for bereaved families.

5 Conclusion

114. We support the aims of the Armed Forces Covenant, in that:

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

115. In this inquiry, we have identified that the mobility required of Armed Forces personnel means their children face considerable challenges in achieving the same access to education as the rest of the UK population. During the inquiry it has also become clear that in order to meet the obligations made in the Armed Forces Covenant, the Government is dependent on the voluntary agreement of the numerous bodies who all play a part in providing education for the children of Service personnel.

116. In our view there is a conflict at the heart of the Armed Forces Covenant because the Government is dependent on the commitment of those who provide education services—Government Departments, Local Authorities and the devolved administrations—offering the same provision to all Service families wherever they live in the UK. The Government must demonstrate its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by seeking the co-operation of the Devolved Administrations and Local Authorities to ensure that its obligations are met.

Formal Minutes

TUESDAY 9 JULY 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot, in the Chair

Mr Julian Brazier	Sir Bob Russell
Mr Jeffrey Donaldson	Bob Stewart
Adam Holloway	Ms Gisela Stuart
Penny Mordaunt	Derek Twigg

Draft Report (*The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 3: Educating the Children of Service Personnel*), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 116 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fourth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence, reported and ordered to be published on 19 March and 16 April 2013 in the last Session of Parliament and 18 June 2013, was ordered to be printed with the Report.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 10 July at 2.00 p.m.]

Witnesses

Wednesday 30 January 2013

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Kim Richardson OBE, Chair of the Naval Families Federation, **Catherine Spencer**, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation, and **Bill Mahon**, Director, RAF Families Federation Ev 1

Monday 4 March 2013

Amy Walker, Year 12, **Rushane Carter**, Year 12, **Avash Sherchan**, Year 11 boarder, **Victoria Centeno**, Year 11 boarder, **Connor Malone** and **Dan Caterick**, students at Wellington Academy, Tidworth Ev 16

Annemarie Botha-Jones, **Mrs Carol Morris**, **Mrs Kelly Lockhart** and **Mr Mark Lockhart**, Service parents Ev 23

Andy Schofield, Principal, Wellington Academy, **Rakesh Patel**, Assistant Head, Boarding, Wellington Academy, **David Maxwell**, Assistant Head, Head of Sixth Form, Wellington Academy, **Kate Robinson**, Head of Department, Wellington Academy, **Julie Tremlin**, Extended Services Co-ordinator, **Karen Ward**, Head Teacher, Clarendon Junior School, Tidworth, and **Susan Raeburn**, Head of Kiwi School, Bulford Ev 32

Tuesday 16 April 2013

Gavin Barlow, Director, Service Personnel Policy, Ministry of Defence, **Martin Bull**, Assessment, Curriculum and General Qualifications, Department for Education, **Olivia Denson**, Children's Education Advisory Service, Ministry of Defence, **Kathryn Forsyth**, Chief Executive, Service Children's Education, Ministry of Defence, and **Colonel Clive Knightley**, Acting Director, Ministry of Defence Directorate Children and Young People Ev 46

Tuesday 23 April 2013

Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for Defence, Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, **Lieutenant General Berragan CB**, Adjutant General and **Martin Bull**, Department for Education Ev 57

List of printed written evidence

1	Ministry of Defence	Ev 69: Ev 82: Ev 86
2	Ofsted	Ev 89
3	The Northern Ireland Executive	Ev 92
4	The Scottish Parliament	Ev 92
5	The Welsh Government	Ev 94

List of additional written evidence

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

1	AFF (Army Families Federation)	Ev w1: Ev w9: Ev w11
2	Diana Sheldon	Ev w12
3	Dr Alison Baverstock	Ev w13
4	Fiona Cuthbertson, Keystone Consulting	Ev w17
5	Joy O'Neill, The Service Children Support Network	Ev w17
6	RAF Families Federation	Ev w21
7	The Duke of York's Royal Military School	Ev w26
8	State Boarding Schools' Association	Ev w28
9	Boarding Schools' Association	Ev w31
10	Naval Families Federation	Ev w32
11	Philippa J Bleach, Head of History, Connaught School, Aldershot and Professor Martin L Parsons, Research Fellow, University of Reading	Ev w36
12	Appleford School, Wiltshire	Ev w39

List of unprinted evidence

The following written evidence has been reported to the House, but to save printing costs has not been printed and copies have been placed in the House of Commons Library, where they may be inspected by Members. Other copies are in the Parliamentary Archives (www.parliament.uk/archives), and are available to the public for inspection. Requests for inspection should be addressed to The Parliamentary Archives, Houses of Parliament, London SW1A 0PW (tel. 020 7219 3074; email archives@parliament.uk). Opening hours are from 9.30 am to 5.00 pm on Mondays to Fridays.

National Audit Office survey

List of Reports from the Committee in Sessions 2012–13 and 2013–14

The reference number of the Government's response to each Report is printed in brackets after the HC printing number.

Session 2012–13

First Report	Ministry of Defence Supplementary Estimate 2011–12	HC 99 (HC 577)
Second Report	The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 2: Accommodation	HC 331 (HC 578)
Third Report	MoD Main Estimate 2012–13	HC 133 (HC 607)
Fourth Report and First Joint Report	Scrutiny of Arms Exports (2012): UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2010, Quarterly Reports for July to December 2010 and January to September 2011, the Government's Review of arms exports to the Middle East and North Africa, and wider arms control issues	HC 419
Fifth Report	Future Maritime Surveillance	HC 110 (HC 827)
Sixth Report	Defence and Cyber-Security	HC 106 (HC 719)
Seventh Report	Defence Acquisition	HC 9 (Session 2013–14, HC 73)
Eighth Report	The work of the Service Complaints Commissioner for the Armed Forces	HC 720 (Session 2013–14, HC 505)
Ninth Report	Ministry of Defence Annual Report and Accounts 2011–12	HC 828 (Session 2013–14, HC 292)
Tenth Report	Securing the Future of Afghanistan	HC 413 (Session 2013–14, HC 461)

Session 2013–14

First Report	MoD Supplementary Estimate 2012–13	HC 291
Second Report	MoD Main Estimates 2013–14	HC 517
Third Report and First Joint Report	Scrutiny of Arms Exports and Arms Control (2013): Scrutiny of the Government's UK Strategic Export Controls Annual Report 2011 published in July 2012, the Government's Quarterly Reports from October 2011 to September 2012, and the Government's policies on arms exports and international arms control issues	HC 205
Fifth Report	The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 4: Education of Service Personnel	HC 185

Oral evidence

Taken before the Defence Committee

on Wednesday 30 January 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier
Sandra Osborne

Sir Bob Russell
Bob Stewart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Kim Richardson OBE**, Chair of the Naval Families Federation, **Catherine Spencer**, Chief Executive, Army Families Federation, and **Bill Mahon**, Director, RAF Families Federation, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Ladies and gentleman, may I welcome you to an unusual Defence Select Committee hearing? It is unusual because in this hearing we are conducting two inquiries at the same time, which I don't think we have ever done before. Nevertheless, I am sure that you are up to the task, and we hope that we will be. We are a small gathering, but a very select gathering. That is because of other Committee meetings going on at the same time this afternoon to which people have to go. Anyway, we have lots of questions for you, and you are most welcome. Would you like to introduce yourselves? Because we have seen you so frequently, Kim Richardson, would you like to begin?

Kim Richardson: I am Kim Richardson. I chair the Naval Families Federation. I am a nurse by background. My husband served in the Navy. My father was in the RAF. I have one brother who is currently serving in the RAF and one who has just left the Army. So it's quite a good background.

Catherine Spencer: I am Catherine Spencer, chief executive of the Army Families Federation. I have been married to a man in the Infantry for the last 15 years and I have three children.

Bill Mahon: My name is Bill Mahon. I am the director of the RAF Families Federation. I started with the organisation in September last year, after just over 32 years' service in the RAF. I am married, with two grown-up children.

Q2 Chair: Thank you. The evidence from the families federations has always been very valuable to us, not least, for example, in the report that the Defence Committee did in 2006 about Service children's education, and I would like to thank you for that before we begin. I shall open with a rather general question. What are the Services' and the Service families' main concerns, or joys for that matter, in relation to their children's education, would you say? Who would like to begin? Kim Richardson.

Kim Richardson: I would say that it is an emotive subject, because the education of your child is a very personal thing, so it is one of those topics where one size really doesn't fit all. I am glad we are—well, I hope we are going to talk about mobility during the course of our session.

Chair: We will.

Kim Richardson: But it is not just a mobility problem. Getting the general public, and schools, to understand

our children is a bit of a challenge at the moment. We are not engaged in a conflict that is a Gucci conflict. It is something that people have views about. At the moment, where education is concerned, it is one of the most personal aspects of a family's life and one of those things that is quite difficult, in many instances, to influence.

Chair: Would either of you like to add anything to that?

Catherine Spencer: I am happy to add to what Kim said. I think she is right: it is a personal issue. I would say overall that the concerns of our families are about ensuring that their children are not affected by the soldiers' service, that they are able to access continuity of education, that they are able to get their children into their school of choice and that their children are able to experience an education that is as similar as possible to that of a civilian child.

Bill Mahon: I would agree with all of that, but I would add that it is one of those decisions that people make that also has an impact on other areas of their lives, whether it be whether or not to send the child to boarding school, whether or not to buy a house, settle down and move away from the mobility package or, as is increasingly the case, whether or not to stay in the Service in the first place. So it is connected to a whole series of other major decisions and influences on Service life for the family.

Q3 Chair: So far as you can tell, centred as each of you is in your own Service, is the situation different across the different Services, or is the situation similar?

Bill Mahon: No, it is different. Each of the Services, even in today's world of jointery, common operations and so on, is still very, very different in its culture and very different in the way families approach Service life. It is probably fair to say, in terms of children's education, that with the Navy, families tend to buy their own house and settle down quite early on in their career. With the Army, people tend to move around in the main—en masse unit moves. With the RAF, we probably sit somewhere between the two. With things like state school versus boarding school, house ownership or not, and the degree of mobility and the way that mobility applies, I think the culture is very different between the three Services, even in this day and age.

Kim Richardson: What Bill has said is quite right. Our families tend to put their roots down and integrate into communities: only 15% of the naval Service actually live in Service families' accommodation. But that brings its own challenges, because we are the most separated of the three Services by some long way, and the most deployed. Putting roots down does not solve all the problems; it actually presents problems in itself.

Q4 Chair: You do not have to add anything if you agree.

Catherine Spencer: I would just add that obviously the Army has significantly more people who move more frequently, so we are more prone to mobility issues. We obviously have a very large population in Germany and in Cyprus, and more overseas postings, so we are affected more by being posted overseas and being moved around the UK. The statistics that I have here show that over 70% of the families who answered our survey had moved at least twice in five years; some had moved up to five times in that five-year period. So there is a very high ratio of mobility, which obviously impacts on children.

Chair: In the last inquiry, we took evidence from one child who had moved either 11 times in 13 years or 13 times in 11 years. It is a very important consideration.

Q5 Sir Bob Russell: May I ask a follow-up question? I thought that there was a more settled way in the Army now, although I can only base that on the particular garrison town I represent. In the past, in Colchester, you would have the infantry regiments constantly changing, every two and a half years and at numerous barracks, but now it is the Headquarters of 16 Air Assault Brigade, it seems a more settled community. Is that a fair comment or have I missed something here?

Catherine Spencer: There is an aspiration for that to be fair. Unit moves will become less frequent, and certainly, when we have the rebasing announcement and units are brought back from Germany, there is the aspiration to have super-garrisons. But within those units, there are personnel who will move more frequently. Of course, families base their belief on their experience, so until we have a very long period of stability, with people really seeing that they don't move round, families will continue to believe that they will be affected by mobility.

Q6 Chair: That is very well put; thank you. Are there any other respects in which these things are changing? The advent of super-garrisons is clearly one respect; the withdrawal from Germany, when it comes, will be another. Are there any others?

Kim Richardson: The Navy are looking at centres of specialisation as well. But we are a fairly static community to start with, so perhaps there might be some lessons to be learnt from what works for our families and what does not.

Bill Mahon: We also have the new employment model coming along, which the MOD is working on. That is staged over a long period of time, admittedly, but one of the aims of that is more stability and less mobility enforced on the family.

Q7 Chair: That will affect all sorts of things, including education and housing?

Bill Mahon: Absolutely.

Q8 Sandra Osborne: A considerable number of families are affected by a parent serving away from home; how does that impact on their children's education?

Kim Richardson: It depends on what you mean by serving away from home. I think that there are as many challenges for a family when the serving person is weekending—only home at weekends—as there are when someone has gone on a deployment for six months. I worked in a secondary school as the nurse, and I used to dread it when it was a Service child who needed collecting to be taken home, because getting hold of somebody who is serving and encouraging them to come and collect a child from school is quite difficult: because they focus on the job, wherever they are, it very much falls to the partner at home to do those supportive bits and pieces. It is not just about the longer periods of time. It is about them not being there and not being able to do the things that perhaps other people take for granted, such as attending parents' evenings or dropping someone off at school and collecting them at the end of the day.

Q9 Sandra Osborne: Are there additional challenges when people are deployed, for example in Afghanistan? Does that have particular issues for families?

Catherine Spencer: When families are deployed, there is obviously the period of deployment, which is a worrying time for the family, because of perhaps media reports. The parent at home is in effect the single parent solely responsible for that child and so has far more work to do with that child, because they are not having the support of the soldier at home. We must not forget that it is not just the period of deployment; there is also a significant period of training before the soldier deploys, so we have families who are existing in that single family unit, with one parent responsible for parenting for significant amounts of time. That is not because the soldier does not want to be involved, but because he is away on training courses or deployed.

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

Bill Mahon: The first thing I would say is that it is incredibly variable. Some children are far more resilient than others. For some of the older children whose Service parent has deployed for the fifth, sixth, seventh or 10th time, they are perhaps getting used to it. It is an incredibly variable response. Some are far more resilient than others, but inevitably, depending on where the Service person is deployed, there will be stress and worry.

Interestingly, we had a lovely comment from a child whose father was in Afghanistan. He said that he was incredibly proud of what his dad was doing, but he worried about his mum being a single parent left at home on her own.

30 January 2013 Kim Richardson OBE, Catherine Spencer and Bill Mahon

Q11 Chair: How old was this child?

Bill Mahon: To be honest, I am not sure, but I suspect he was a primary school child, so under 11.

Kim Richardson: The only thing I would add is that there is a part to be played here by schools, and the covenant is going some way towards that. A school understanding a Service child is the difference between a child adjusting and feeling that they are supported outside the home or not, so I really feel that they have a big part to play.

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

Kim Richardson: There is always more that could be done. We have quite a lot of support available to families. The Children's Education Advisory Service do an excellent job in supporting families, but there is always more that can be done. Certainly at the moment the Navy is looking at what it is doing for the families of deployed personnel, whether it is booklets or worksheets. We are doing all right, but we could do better is how I would sum it up.

Bill Mahon: I think that it has improved. It is improving as the schools and teachers, in particular, become more aware of Service children in the school and more aware of the potential impact of deployment on the child. Again, from our evidence, it would seem that it is variable. The level of support that is available to them is improving, so it is positive in that respect, but it does rely on the school being aware of the Service child in the school and the fact that mum or dad is away. It tends to be the schools that have a lot of Service children that are probably best at handling those sorts of issues, which is exactly what you would expect. It is perhaps in the schools where there are not many Service children, where they might be an unusual element of the school population, that that knowledge and awareness is not always there. Once that knowledge and awareness is there, they tend to be pretty good at picking up and running with it and providing the support that the child may or may not need.

Q13 Chair: Do you have any examples of where both parents are in the armed forces at the same time, with the consequent concerns that might arise?

Kim Richardson: I think they are a group on their own. It is not just serving in the same Service, but when one is serving in one Service and the other is serving in another. They definitely have challenges. There are things in place in the Navy whereby one parent is deployed and the other is ashore, but even doing that can have its challenges. There is an understanding, and we probably do the best that we can, but the point at which they make decisions about the future is when they are struggling to be a good serving person and a good parent and that is not quite meeting in the middle.

Catherine Spencer: I agree. When two people are both in the armed forces and have children, one of the main reasons they leave is that they decide one of them cannot meet the needs of the child and of the Services.

Chair: Thank you.

Q14 Sir Bob Russell: As the Prime Minister tells us, the Armed Forces Covenant is enshrined in law. It says that the children of Service personnel should receive the same standard of, and access to, education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. In your experience since the Armed Forces Covenant came in, and in the opinion of Service families, are their children receiving the same standard of education as other UK children?

Kim Richardson: That is interesting, because it is how you determine the standard of education. Some of our families are struggling at the moment. For example, along the south coast we have a real shortage of Service family accommodation. In years gone by, you would do all your homework, you would look at which good schools there were in the area to which you were moving and you would then put your bid in for where you wanted to be.

Q15 Sir Bob Russell: So why is there a shortage of family accommodation?

Kim Richardson: Possibly because we are seeing people selling their own homes and going into Service family accommodation at the moment, or perhaps we sold off a bit too much in certain areas. Why there is a shortage in certain areas would be a good question for you to ask.

Q16 Sir Bob Russell: I may well be pursuing that, because my experience is the opposite. I shall come on to that in a minute.

Kim Richardson: I think that Salisbury plain is similar to the position of the south coast. You then have a family who, despite doing all the homework and knowing what is right for their child, are given an address of the place they are going to, and that is it. It is take it or leave it. They will have to take a school place perhaps at a school that they would not necessarily have chosen.

Q17 Sir Bob Russell: I shall use the phrase "an Army school" for shorthand purposes. Would that be at an ordinary school as opposed to an Army school?

Kim Richardson: Yes, that would be a local school.

Catherine Spencer: There are no forces' schools on mainland UK.

Q18 Sir Bob Russell: The reason why I asked the question is that, from local experience, we know that the Education Act takes precedence over the Armed Forces Covenant. We have an Army school that is not taking Army children because it is filled up with civilian children. Is that an experience you are having around the country?

Catherine Spencer: I am so sorry. I do not understand.

Sir Bob Russell: I am using the term "Army schools" as shorthand, because historically most of, if not all, the pupils came from Army families but, because of the way in which the character of the Army estate has changed—houses are being sold as private homes—there is now a large cohort of children who live in Army houses but whose parents are not serving in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. But the Education Act gives

them the same rights to go to the local school that, historically for 50 years, has had a military ethos.

Although the school is an Army school, run by the local education authority, all its ethos is for the children of Army personnel, but Army children cannot now always gain access to it because the places are filled by civilian families living in former Army houses. Is that an experience around the country? A head teacher has said that she wants to keep the ethos that she and her predecessors have developed, but the whole military ethos has been reduced because of the non-military children in her school.

Catherine Spencer: I do not think that I have evidence specifically on that. Because we are a very mobile population, we find that getting children into school continues to be difficult, although we have seen within 2012 a reduction in difficulties as the new schools' admission code 2012 came in. Getting children into school continues to be an issue. One of the other problems that we find is that you might get one child into the school of your choice but you might have to put a sibling into another school. That becomes very difficult, particularly because you will probably be living in an area where you do not have a network of support, so the logistics of trying to get to two different schools in the morning can be very problematic.

Q19 Sir Bob Russell: Absolutely. We as a Committee are doing this inquiry, and I am very keen that whatever recommendations we make will enhance and improve the current situation. I am hoping that colleagues, when we come to recommendations in due course, will point out that it is all very well having an Armed Forces Covenant enshrined in law if the reality is that it does not mean a lot for many Army families because the Education Act takes precedence.

Kim Richardson: We have got to be very careful that our families are not seen to be favoured over the civilian community. It is a really fine line to tread. What I would not like to see is our families becoming unwelcome in certain areas because they are being given priorities over and above the civilian population. I understand where you are coming from, but it is a very fine line to tread.

Sir Bob Russell: It may be a fine line, but it is one thing to have an Armed Forces Covenant enshrined in law if the reality is that it does not deliver what it says on the tin.

Q20 Chair: Before we move on, you are saying, are you, that you would not want precedence over local families?

Kim Richardson: I think that our families have to be considered, and the mobility aspect of moving in outside the normal times when schools fill their places has to be considered, but we have to be careful what we ask for. I would say depending on what your recommendations are, and I do not know what they are going to be—

Sir Bob Russell: We do not know.

Kim Richardson: No. It would depend on what view we had.

Q21 Sir Bob Russell: I would suggest to you that there has to be flexibility.

Kim Richardson: Yes.

Sir Bob Russell: Because of course Army families, Navy families and RAF families do not move in August.

Kim Richardson: No, they do not. Flexibility and consideration are very good things. I would support that.

Q22 Chair: Catherine Spencer, you were nodding there.

Catherine Spencer: I would agree with that. We need flexibility, and we also need to make sure that we do not put ourselves in a position where we annoy the civilian population by being seen to take places away from their children. It is a very difficult line to tread. Things are beginning to improve, and they have improved because we can now use a unit address. In some areas, that means that you can actually apply for a school place before you have moved into that area. That is a really positive change. It does not always work, though, because there are areas such as London, Salisbury and Catterick where the area that you could be posted to is so large that you do not necessarily know where within that area you are going to be housed, so it is difficult to apply for a school in that area. We are seeing progress, but there are still difficulties.

Q23 Sir Bob Russell: What about—sorry, Mr Mahon.

Bill Mahon: I was merely going to say thank you. It is important that we remember that the Armed Forces Covenant is there to remove and mitigate disadvantage, not to provide some sense of advantage.

Q24 Sir Bob Russell: My concern is that the way it is being enacted by the local education authority places Army children at a disadvantage. That was the thrust behind my question.

Bill Mahon: I recognise and understand the sort of situation that you are describing. In RAF terms, however, we do not have any evidence of that.

Q25 Sir Bob Russell: I have the evidence. What about the education of Service children in Germany and Cyprus? I will come on to the Falklands in a separate question. Are you happy with the standard of education services in Cyprus and Germany?

Catherine Spencer: I think, broadly, we are happy with the standard of education. I have had children attend schools in Germany and Cyprus, and in general the story that we get back is good. There has, unfortunately, been one SCE school that has recently failed an Ofsted and is now in special measures to improve that. I have certainly been impressed by the actions taken by the SCE to try to address that situation. It is, of course, down to individual children as to what their experience of those schools is. There are differences across SCE schools. In general it is good. One of the things that has been a problem for Service children is curriculums. Even in Germany, we see differences in curriculums in SCE schools. I think standardising curriculums across Germany and across

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SCE schools would be helpful. That would help with the mobility issue.

Q26 Sir Bob Russell: Have any of you had any feedback from Service families with children attending schools on the Falklands?

Bill Mahon: No. We were on a visit to the Falklands about 18 months or so ago, and I cannot remember anything on education coming up.

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

Kim Richardson: I think they do, but I think you find the Falkland islanders send their children home to secondary school education as well. There is one school they tend to use. When the Falkland islanders are doing it themselves, that perhaps tells us something.

Q28 Sir Bob Russell: I will be suggesting to colleagues in due course that perhaps we should consider a virtual classroom of video links, which I have been told about, so that children of secondary school age can still live with their parents on the island, but can be in a classroom on the island with youngsters all around the globe and be taught by a teacher. But we will come on to that.

May I just finish off on the Community Covenant, which, as you know, is closely linked to the Armed Forces Covenant? Do you have any examples or experiences of schools using or getting involved with the Community Covenant, either with the provision of facilities or funding activities?

Kim Richardson: I think there is an awful lot going on out there at the moment. One of the good examples is Argyll and Bute—so we are going up into Scotland. They recognise that they have a very transient Service population there. They also recognise that there is a change in syllabus between Scotland and England. They have used the Community Covenant as a way to put support in place for families who have moved from England to Scotland, and they have produced really good leaflets to describe what the changes in education are. I applaud that.

Q29 Sir Bob Russell: Will you, in due course, provide the Committee with examples that you are aware of? Would any of those examples, to the best of your knowledge, include facilities, as opposed to what you have just described? It may be a children's play area, for example, for joint use in a school.

Kim Richardson: Yes.

Q30 Mr Brazier: It may be quibbling with words, but I am slightly uneasy about what Kim Richardson left on the record there. Let us be absolutely clear, because this does affect the Army more than it does the other Services. If I have read you right, you are saying that you do not want people in the local community to perceive Service children as being

specifically advantaged. But in an area like mine, with selective schools and massive competition, unless you have in place—I am really looking for a comment from Catherine Spencer—mechanisms, as we do now, which significantly advantage Army children coming into the base, in terms of getting places in local school, no Army child would ever get into any of the better schools because it just does not work like that. The best places go—they are filled—and the best primary school places are all absolutely full. Unless one was very lucky on timing, Army children would get completely squeezed out of it. It is, to some extent, resented in the local community. I have had, a couple of times, people come to complain about Army children being given advantages. What you are talking about is equality of outcome, isn't it?

Chair: What is your view?

Catherine Spencer: I think we really have to look at what those mechanisms are to see how that is going to impact on the local community. Of course, we want Service families to have the best possible access to state education, but it becomes difficult when they are prioritised or given more special access to education than the civilian population. But we want them to be able to move into an area and be assured that they are going to have at least one or two schools of their choice.

My own experience, when I moved to Kingston upon Thames was that my house was allocated about four months before I moved there and I was allocated a school that was, by the local authority's own admission, the worst school in the borough. I had to wait until two days before the beginning of term when I finally found a place for my child at a school that was nearby and that I was satisfied with.

It is a very difficult situation for us to be in. While we want to ensure that our families have access to schools, we also have to be cautious that we are not perceived to be having special treatment.

Kim Richardson: The Children's Education Advisory Service is very good at offering support to families that are appealing school places, and it does very well with appeals. I wouldn't want you to think that I don't think our families are special, because I do.

Chair: I don't think we think that.

Kim Richardson: I come from a Service family—my father was in the Air Force—and I moved around on a regular basis.

It is a very fine line for us to tread. What we are doing here today is representing the views of our families, and as many families would have a problem with being given advantage over the civilian population as would like it. So I think it is a very fine line for us to tread to say that we would go one way or the other.

Catherine Spencer: I agree with that.

Q31 Chair: Despite all the difficulties of mobility that we have been talking about, all the statistics show that Service children do well in their education—as well as, if not sometimes better than, those from the non-service community. That is obviously good.

You might expect that, given the fact that Service families, by definition, have at least one person in work, and that person is in a degree of work where there is a level of discipline and work ethic that must

rub off on the family. So you might expect that. You might therefore expect Service children to do significantly better than the remainder of the population. Do you think that that is fair? Do you think that Service children fulfil their potential? Is there anything we could do to try to help them do even better?

Bill Mahon: From the evidence that we see, first of all, I would say that that level of attainment is a bit of a sine wave. Particularly once children get to secondary school, as they move between schools, their performance may dip, and they have to work hard to come back up to a level of attainment that the school might accept. But I think that once the child is over that initial hump, and if the school is aware of their background and puts things in place—additional support, using the Service Pupil Premium and so on—to help bring them back up to that level, then in general—every generalisation is wrong in the specific—they do perform well.

Could they perform better? Absolutely. I am sure that they could if more schools, teachers and support organisations had a better understanding of the issues that the children face in all the things that we have discussed: getting them into the school that is right for them and that parents want them to go to; understanding the impact that it can have on the child, both educationally and emotionally; and understanding mobility and deployment issues.

It is still variable—different schools react in different ways to a new child arriving in the school. If we can put more common practices in place, the opportunity is there for the children to do even better.

Kim Richardson: I think the fact that they are doing as well as they are is something we should be quite proud of.

Chair: Absolutely.

Kim Richardson: It is not a normal home life for a lot of Service children. If you have a serving person who is away a lot, you are living a lone-parent lifestyle for good parts of that child's educational career, if you like. I would not like to see them singled out and looked at in any specific way, because we do not look at the children of firefighters, policemen and other people from disciplined services. If we are doing all right, then we are doing all right. It is very much an individual issue.

Catherine Spencer: We have to be very cautious about saying whether or not they are really doing better. The data that you are referring to is probably from a 2011 report which suggests that they are doing better than the national average. I would query that—¹

Chair: Actually, no; 2010.

Catherine Spencer: We would query whether children are doing better, because I think that that survey looks at Service children when compared with the whole population. Our concern with that would be that that is not a similar sample of children, because Service children come from a family where at least one person is working and, quite often, from a two-parent family.

It would be interesting to compare that with a similar sample group.

The other comment that has been made to me is that that report does not include those children who have opted out where there have been significant issues with the effect of mobility and Service life on their education and they have decided to use boarding schools because, for whatever reason, that child is not coping in the state system. It is perhaps difficult to use data like that to say that they really are doing better, because certainly the families that I speak to say that their children are definitely affected by mobility.

Chair: That is helpful. We can ask questions about that and follow that up in later evidence sessions, so thank you.

Q32 Mr Brazier: Reports have indicated that the main issue affecting Service children is mobility. We have touched a little on that already, but could you say a little more about mobility? Would you start, Catherine Spencer, because yours is the most mobile of the three Services.

Catherine Spencer: Sorry; do you want me to—

Q33 Mr Brazier: In general terms; there were two more specific things that I was going to come on to, but we might as well put them together. Are there any advantages at all of mobility in this context? And what can be done to limit the negative effects? We will come to boarding school and continuity of education in a moment, but is there anything else that you would like to say first about mobility?

Catherine Spencer: In terms of mobility, the main problems are, as I said earlier, getting into a school and having choice over where you send your child to school. Then the problems are surrounding friendship; friendship is always important but becomes more important as children get older and find it more difficult to make friends.

It is also to do with the curriculum, because there are differences between—I think you are probably aware—the age at which you start school in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and England, so that can cause difficulties as well; you may find children jumping up or down. We have numerous reports of children finding that they have moved schools and then, maybe at the end of key stage 2, they have studied the Vikings three times but they have never done the Romans, so they miss chunks of education. One of the things that could mitigate that is making sure that the curriculum lays down more what is taught in each term, but that will not suit every school because of resources.

In terms of advantages, I think—

Q34 Mr Brazier: I am sorry; just to stop you for a moment. Presumably, from your point of view, the move towards academies that have far more control over their curriculum and away from a standardised curriculum makes the problem worse? Or does it not?

Catherine Spencer: I will have to be honest and say that I do not have enough experience of that to answer that question fully, but I would expect that that would be the case.

¹ Note by witness: Our figures are from “Educational Attainment of the Armed Forces Children in England” in relation to 2011—published March 2012, DfE.

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Mr Brazier: Sorry; please go on with what you were saying.

Catherine Spencer: In terms of advantages, of course our children learn to be resilient, to make friends; they learn independence, coping strategies and how to live in a variety of different environments. I would not want paint a picture that it is all doom and gloom; of course, there are advantages, but I think that most parents who I speak to would say that the disadvantages significantly outweigh the advantages.

Q35 Mr Brazier: I am sorry; as you have mentioned it again, I will quickly put a question that I asked earlier again, but I will be much more specific. In an area like mine, where there is huge competition for primary schools and very little population mobility—people do not move into or out of the area very much—the best schools only really get their places in August for the incoming intake at year 5. They get very few vacancies in the middle of years and very few vacancies in further years up. If we did not have a scheme in which, at least informally, Service children were explicitly given preference—something I have had a couple of people complaining to me about in my surgery—the practical effect will be that Service children will almost always go into the last places in the least desired schools.

Do you think it is right that we have that sort of system or not? Without it, Service children would be hugely disadvantaged.

Catherine Spencer: It is a difficult question for me to answer. As a parent, if I was moving into an area now—I have got three children and have experienced that horror of having to move and get them into a school—I suppose individually I would really like to think that I am able to get them into the school of my choice.

As we said earlier, the difficulty is the perception that Service children are treated differently or as a sort of citizen plus, if you like—above the normal population. So it is a really difficult question to answer. Of course, individually, we all want the best for our children. The individual Service person is going to be very pleased by that system.

Kim Richardson: May I add that the Service has a part to play here. When they move their people has an impact on when the children start school. It is not just about the schools and the number of places they have. Each of the Services has a part to play here. It does not just happen for schools. It happens for child care facilities, where we have a static civilian population. It affects all sorts of aspects of different areas into which our families are moving. If there are schools that find they have no flex at all and it is likely that our children are going to be refused those places—

Q36 Mr Brazier: Automatically?

Kim Richardson: Automatically, then perhaps that is something we need to look at differently.

Q37 Mr Brazier: Let's move on to continuity of education allowance and boarding school. First, would you like to say something about attitudes towards children boarding. We may need all three Services on

that and then we will ask specifically about the allowance.

Kim Richardson: I think the attitude to boarding school is a divisive one. For my constituents, there is a percentage of people who think that it is a lot of money spent on a small number of people that could be going on something else. There are also others among my constituents who say that without that they would not stay in the Service, because it allows their children to have continuity of education.

If you put a group of Service families in a room, half and half, you would have a very interesting debate because it is very much about how that impacts on you and the decisions you make for your children.

Bill Mahon: I think it is an incredibly individual and personal thing. Each family has a different set of circumstances and a different set of criteria to consider. I think Kim is right that if you put 100 families in a room, you would find 50 in favour and 50 against the concept. It varies enormously.

Kim Richardson: But, saying that, it is important that it remains. I would also say that those people who, over the past few years, have been creative or fudged the system have made life difficult for those people who are genuine claimants and who need continuity of education allowance in order to support their children and continue playing a part in the naval Service. So it has to stay, but it is one of those subjects that everybody has a view on.

Q38 Mr Brazier: Catherine Spencer, you are the most mobile Service.

Catherine Spencer: Yes, we are the most mobile Service. It remains an incredibly important allowance for our families to access and it is accessed by a wide variety of families. There is obviously a perception that it is an officer allowance and I accept that. We have to remember, of course, that you are only entitled to that allowance if you actually have children of 8+. So there are a lot of people in the armed forces who will never be in a position to be entitled to it, because they will not have children of the right age. We have to remember that, when we look at the figures and the sort of people who are claiming it.

To give you an idea of how important it is to our families, about two years ago there was a review into CEA. A survey was sent out which was not particularly well communicated to our families. It caused widespread panic and we had at least three or four days of phones constantly ringing. The biggest response to anything in AFF's 30-year history was what people perceived to be the threatened removal of CEA. We know that the armed forces put up with a lot, but one thing they won't put up with is their children being messed around. I have to state passionately how important it is to armed forces' families from a wide variety of backgrounds. In fact, in our most recent survey, we noticed that of those people claiming it, 22% were not in the category of officers. Of those who are officers, about 30% are what we call late entry officers, so they would have come up through the ranks, if you like.

So it is a really important allowance, claimed by a very wide range of people. It is an expensive allowance for the taxpayer, but it is also an expensive

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allowance for the individual soldier to afford, which means that in general they are not choosing those top public schools; they are using schools that they can afford. There are state boarding schools which are well used and we would like to see access to more state boarding school places and more schools giving significant discounts to the armed forces. It mitigates the issues of mobility that we have already spoken about and it allows the soldier to stay in the armed forces.

A lot of us out there would not allow their soldier to continue serving if they thought their child was going to be continually changing schools. It is that choice of accompanied service. The Army remains committed to accompanied service and until we see that period of stability where we live in one place for years on end, where we can settle in our own houses and be confident that our children will be able to attend one school, it remains vitally important.

Q39 Mr Brazier: Just one more question on continuity of education. Going back to mobility for a moment, your husband, I think, is an Infantry officer?
Catherine Spencer: He is.

Q40 Mr Brazier: Presumably, since about the time you had children, he has more or less done an alternation of regimental and staff jobs, has he?

Catherine Spencer: He is back at regimental duty at the moment, yes. We have been in Cyprus, Germany and he is currently back at regimental duty.

Q41 Mr Brazier: Where is that?

Catherine Spencer: In Tidworth with the Royal Welch.

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

Kim Richardson: It has had an impact. For those people who are sailing a bit close to the wind, it has been a good thing that we have tightened up the rules. We have seen a reduction over the last five years of the numbers taking up CEA, but the amount per person has gone up. So we have just less than 750 personnel who actually take up CEA. The governance team that has been put in place to govern the CEA has been a good move, because it has liberated the Children's Education Advisory Service to get on and do what it should be doing, which is advising and supporting families, not policing CEA. So whilst it has reduced the numbers, I think it was necessary.

Bill Mahon: May I support that? What we tend to see is that the number of people who now are appealing against decisions and the time taken for some of those appeals to be heard is an added piece of stress and grief that families do not always need. We have roughly the same sort of numbers as the Navy in terms of people applying and getting the allowance. It is a major factor in some of their decision making, as I said earlier. We are seeing cases where significant

sums of money are being recovered from families at the moment because of the changes and the tightening of the rules and regulations. I think most people would agree that that needed to be done and that it was the right thing to do. But I think people now are far more careful and they deliberate far more carefully about the decision than perhaps they did in the past. I would support what Kim said about CEAS and the vital role it plays in advising and guiding people, particularly when some of the policy can be open to interpretation. That is something we are working with the policy people on.

Q43 Bob Stewart: Mrs Richardson, you said a couple of minutes ago that those people who fudge the system may spoil it for others. Could you give an example of fudging the system?

Kim Richardson: In the past, before things were tightened up in terms of how it was regulated, families have taken continuity of education allowance but not been mobile, or as mobile as they should be. So we have some very good families who stick by the rules and do it exactly the way that they should, but we have some families who have been creative in how they interpret mobility, which is not fair to those people who genuinely stick to the rules.

Q44 Bob Stewart: Forgive me, but I would have thought the system would have outed them because they would have a home address in the claim form for continuity of education allowance. The system I recall when the world was black and white and I did it, was that we had to prove every term exactly where we were when we submitted bills. The paymaster or the paying authority would know exactly where you lived and would have outed someone. So you mean to say people can actually circumnavigate that?

Kim Richardson: There have been ways in the past. We have had people who have taken Service families accommodation but not moved. They have stayed in their own home. We would not have the number of cases of people being pursued for money that they owe if we did not have some of these cases where—

Q45 Bob Stewart: So they are followed up?

Kim Richardson: But now I sense it is tighter. For those people who manipulated the system it wasn't well received by the rest of the general Service. It really wasn't. It wasn't seen to be clever.

Q46 Bob Stewart: My last question is this: what is the allowance at the moment?

Catherine Spencer: You have to pay at least 10% of fees. Our experience is that most families will be paying significantly more than that. I would have to get back to you.

Q47 Bob Stewart: So it is floating; it is not a set amount.

Catherine Spencer: Yes, it is a set amount. So if you choose a more expensive school you will pay well over 10%.

Q48 Bob Stewart: Are we talking in the region of £6,000 a term?

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Chair: I understand that personnel can claim up to £6,074² per child, per term. They must pay at least 10% of the school fees and it is somehow taxable.

Mr Brazier: The individual doesn't see the tax, though. It is grossed up. The MOD pays the tax.

Bob Stewart: So that is £6,000 and if you choose a school for £8,000 you pay £2,000.

Q49 Sandra Osborne: Are the criteria for eligibility to the allowance purely based on mobility? Are there groups of people who are not currently eligible for it who feel they should be? Is it controversial in that respect?

Catherine Spencer: That is an interesting question. Because you have to be mobile, the criteria are that you would have to have children who are in key stage 2 or above and that you have to be mobile. We don't have much evidence of people contacting us to say that they should be eligible for it because, of course, it is to provide continuity of education allowance, so you should be a mobile family.

Q50 Sandra Osborne: So all mobile families are eligible, no matter what their circumstances?

Bill Mahon: That is one of the criteria.

Catherine Spencer: Could you be more specific on the particular groups you are concerned are excluded?

Q51 Sandra Osborne: The way you were talking, I wondered whether there was a view out there that some people are getting it in an unfair way, and other people are not getting it. But that is not an issue.

Catherine Spencer: No. My comments earlier about being eligible for it are about the need to remember, when we look at the statistics of who is claiming CEA, that you must have children in key stage 2 or above to claim it. Sometimes the figures are rather disingenuous, saying that x% of the Army claim it, and it looks very small. But when you compare it with those who are actually eligible by having children of the right school age, then it is considerably more acceptable.

Chair: Let us now move on to the subject of special educational needs.

Q52 Sir Bob Russell: By the way, Mrs Spencer, going back to when you cast doubt on when statistics indicate that Service children perform on average as well as other children, I share your concerns. I had a debate on the turbulence factor—many years ago, admittedly. My recollection is that it is the opposite: that Service children were not matching the average because of the turbulence.

The previous Committee had a report on education in 2006. I want to come in on the special educational needs part of that. One of the key factors of that concerned statementing when youngsters move from one local education authority to another. Has that problem now been resolved? If a child gets a statement from Hampshire country council and moves

² Note by witness: That is last year's figure. £6,147 for secondary school.

to Essex, does the statement go with them or do they have to start all over again?³

Catherine Spencer: I think there is progress, in that there is an aspiration that there will be one certificate that will move with them. Certainly in the written evidence that we have submitted, we have suggested that a governing body, such as CEAS, is able to produce a certificate that is then mobile with that child, so that the family does not have to start all over again. One difficulty is that provision may differ in each area. Something that could help that is the terminology of provision. That is often different in each area, and it would help families to understand what is available in each area if there were more clarity.

Q53 Sir Bob Russell: So, although the Committee six or seven years ago made recommendations, it is still a problem.

Catherine Spencer: I think that is families' experience, yes. Certainly the evidence we have had shows families having to get reviewed statements each time they move. There is work under way to produce a meaningful transfer record to help speed up this process.

Q54 Sir Bob Russell: Where do you see the problem? Is it in individual education authorities, or is it the system in general? I was told that this matter had been resolved five or six years ago. I am really disappointed to hear that it has not been resolved.

Bill Mahon: I don't think it is systemic. I think there might be hot spots. I would accept that the level of performance is variable between authorities. My wife is a primary school teacher and I quizzed her on this last night. With her school, special educational needs certificates and all the information about a child comes when that child arrives in school. If a child with SEN moves on to another school, once they have confirmation that the child has arrived and enrolled and is safely there, the information is forwarded as a matter of course through the school system. I think there has been some improvement. Is it perfect? No, but it is sorting its way.

Q55 Sir Bob Russell: You have led me on to my next question. What more could be done to help them?

Bill Mahon: Common processes and a requirement to ensure it happens—that these are applicable across the school system.

Q56 Sir Bob Russell: So is it at official level rather than at the individual school where families experience the problem? It is bad enough moving, but if you have a child who is statemented, that is an additional difficulty.

Bill Mahon: It can be a massive stress and strain. The evidence we have is that quite frequently schools themselves are very good at doing this sort of thing,

³ Note by witness: Statements go with the child to the new LA. These are normally reviewed annually but on moving the new LA will normally want to review the statement as soon as possible to ensure they are meeting the child's needs. It is good practice to send the documents to the new LA before the family moves.

but at local authority level there can be differences in how the process might be applied.

Q57 Sir Bob Russell: I wonder if I might ask the Service families about social services. Clearly education is just one aspect of special educational needs. There are the other bits and pieces that go with it, which are usually social services. Is that a problem as well?

Kim Richardson: It is interesting. I share a building with the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, which is a very good charity. I went and had a chat to the lady that runs it. I asked for a bit of feedback on special educational needs, and she said that they assisted 530 children of serving personnel last year and 598 ex-serving. But it is the 530 serving that are interesting. Of those, 393 children had some form of disability or illness. That is quite a statistic, so what it tells me is that they are not necessarily getting what they would like to from the normal routes and processes.

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

Kim Richardson: I still think that the Armed Forces Covenant is in its early days. I think it is a work in progress. I see us being in a better place now than we were a few years ago. I have been in this job for nine years now. To get interested parties from the Department for Education, the Department of Health and other Government Departments—Scotland, Wales—around the table discussing our families is quite a step forward. We are at a point where we need to ask lots more questions about what is not being delivered. I still do not think that we have all the answers.

I thought I was reasonably well informed until I spoke to the Children's Fund. Now that has given me something that perhaps I need to go away and look at in more detail. There are lots of people dealing with our families out there. Are we gathering up that evidence as well as we could? Perhaps we are not. Round the table when we go to our meetings, you have a group of people asking what more they can do. That is a very good place for our families to be in. What we need to do is make sure that we give them something that they can reasonably do.

Q59 Sir Bob Russell: Do you have experience of a social services department providing equipment for a child with special needs? I can give you the example of a child requiring a special bed. When the soldier was transferred to another part of the country, the social services department refused to let them take the bed, on the basis that it belonged to this local authority and the other one would have to buy one when they got there. Is that an isolated incident or do you think it is a general one?

Kim Richardson: I have not heard of that instance, but I have heard that when families have approached local authorities for equipment, the local authority has

realised that they come from a Service family and will direct them to the Children's Fund, because they know that they will provide them with the equipment that otherwise the local authority would have to. Perhaps that is a different way of looking at it, but I know that that has been the case.

Q60 Sandra Osborne: On special educational needs and the school passing information on about the child, are you aware of any problems that families have experienced when transferring their children between schools?

Catherine Spencer: We have evidence that shows that the transfer of records for all children is being looked at. There is currently a lot of work going on into what sort of information needs to be passed between schools, but of course it is even more important when it comes to a child with special educational needs.

I suppose what we would like to see is a form that is succinct and meaningful, asks the right questions and prepares the incoming school well for the child that they are going to have. Also, we could do with that SEN statement of need being produced by an organisation such as CEAS, so that it is very obvious what that child needs when transferring to a new school.

Q61 Sandra Osborne: Are there any other particular groups of children who have a specific problem other than special educational needs?

Kim Richardson: May I come back to the point that Catherine addressed? Several families who find that there are difficulties with special educational needs and moving take the option of CEA, because it is the only way.

I have a quote from a very nice lady with three lovely children, who says that she sees it as continuity of specialist support. She is now committing her family to being mobile, so for the two other children it will be a bit challenging. Her eldest son has special education needs and is flourishing for the first time because he is somewhere stable where they understand him, and so they feel that is the right decision for them as a family. So we are back to families trying to do the best they can, very much on an individual basis.

Q62 Sandra Osborne: That support should be available, surely, without having to resort to being mobile?

Kim Richardson: Yes.

Q63 Sandra Osborne: So there is a problem there?

Kim Richardson: Yes.

Catherine Spencer: Of course, one of the other problems of mobility is getting those special educational needs identified in the first place. We have an example of a child with Asperger's, whose family say that perhaps if they had not been so mobile—if they had been in one school for a significant length of time—that issue might have been identified earlier. We also see significant cases of dyslexia, which do not seem to be identified until much later on. We are beginning to do some work to see whether there is a

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higher rate of dyslexia among the Services community.

Q64 Sandra Osborne: Are you aware of any difficulties when children transfer to different parts of the UK? You said earlier that Argyll and Bute does a good job in that respect. What is your experience of other areas?

Kim Richardson: Sometimes if our families are moving to an area with a concentrated Service population, there will be a slightly better understanding of the whole issue of mobility. I think sometimes our families struggle when they go to places where there is not a concentrated group of Service families—perhaps they have moved and are going to put some roots down. Hopefully, we will touch on the Service Premium while we are here. When a child is the only one in their school who is from a Service family, and they have special educational needs, I would imagine that for those families life becomes just a little bit more difficult than is ideal. This is particularly the case when the family is trying to make that transition and that move, and perhaps the serving person is not there to provide support because they are away.

Q65 Sandra Osborne: As you know, the curriculum is different in Scotland, and people in Argyll and Bute are coping with that. Do you know of other areas doing the same thing, or which should be doing the same thing?

Kim Richardson: They should be. I spoke to somebody in Argyll and Bute who has a very good working relationship with the local area. Helensburgh is well known for being predominantly a Service community. They did not need to do that, but they have chosen to do that, and I think that is a very powerful message. They understand that there are challenges when people move between England and Scotland on top of everything else, and they are doing the best they can to make that transition easy. So perhaps Argyll and Bute could be held up as being an area that is thinking laterally.

Catherine Spencer: We see issues between the devolved Administrations as children move between Northern Ireland, Scotland or England, such as differences in the age at which they start school. I think if a child's birthday is between March and September, that might affect which year they are put in. We have had examples in the past of children going up a year and then going back into that same year when they have moved back. There are also issues with the curriculums.

Bill Mahon: We face the same issues.

Q66 Chair: Some parents do not actually declare that their children are Service children. Why would that be?

Kim Richardson: Scrolling back a bit, when we were talking about identifying pupils as being Service children, we had a number of telephone calls from really quite worried parents; it dovetailed with DVDs or CDs of people's contact details going missing or appearing in places where they should not have done. I sense that what they did not want was to find

themselves on a nice disc containing names and addresses of Service children.

Now, it is about choice. An element of our population does not want to be seen as being any different. They want to be seen as the same as everybody else. They do not necessarily tell people that they are a Service family and that they are Service children. We have to respect that decision and choice. The downside is that, with the Service Premium, the school will not benefit from that extra money if it does not tick the box.

Chair: Talking of which, I call Sir Bob Russell.

Q67 Sir Bob Russell: I have to say that that is an experience I have never come across. Obviously, I am not doubting it, but it is a completely new one to me. Service children are identified as a group that would benefit from the introduction of the Pupil Premium. As we all know, it is currently £250 per pupil per year, and that goes up to £300 a year in April. Just to put that into a constituency context—these are rough figures—the six schools in my constituency have a large number of children from Army families, and it is about £250,000. It is a lot of money.

Coming back to your point, I know that the Army children in my constituency and in other military areas will be scattered around the other schools. Assuming that the school knows that Private Jones's two children have an Army dad, how do they apply for the Pupil Premium, and what do they do with £500?

Kim Richardson: If the process is the same as it used to be when I worked at a school, we have a pupil census. It is a case of ticking a box to say that you are a Service family. If the family choose not to tick that box, I do not think that it is beholden on the school to tick the box on their behalf, because they are making that choice; I am fairly sure that a school would not actually tick the box. It is down to the parents to tick the box.⁴

Q68 Sir Bob Russell: Do you think Army, Navy and Air Force families whose children go to a state school, obviously in the UK—if it is not in Cyprus, Germany or whatever—are aware of what the Pupil Premium is and how they can apply for it, or does the school apply on their behalf? Are people falling between the various stools here?

Bill Mahon: Our evidence is that a majority of families have not heard of the Service Pupil Premium, and do not know what it is for. A communications message and piece are required to help promote it, perhaps more so than there is at the moment.

Q69 Sir Bob Russell: But would an Army family say to the school, "We are an Army family," or would the school know that they were an Army family? Where is the onus?

Bill Mahon: It is through the annual census that the school employs. We find that the majority of parents start the kid at school with the information that it is a Service child and they are a Service family. The

⁴ Note by witness: There are 3 censuses a year. The January Census has a box checked as non-service child by default. The school must uncheck this box manually. There is no SP in SCE schools.

majority sign the piece of paper to that effect. But it is not a catch-all.

Q70 Sir Bob Russell: I recognise that there will be some families, through reasons given, at a school that is not predominantly military-orientated where they do not wish to announce it, but within those schools that are predominantly military-orientated, what should we, as a Committee, recommend to the Government to ensure that the children for whom the Pupil Premium has been designed get the money to which they are entitled?

Kim Richardson: We need to be asking schools to tell us how they are spending it.

Q71 Sir Bob Russell: Ah, that is my next question.

Kim Richardson: If you speak to some families, they would say to you, "Pupil Premiums made no difference whatever" because they have approached the school that their children go to, asked for feedback on how it has been spent and have not been told how it has been spent. In some schools, it is seen as being a small amount of money and has been absorbed into their normal day-to-day running costs. We get a real variation of how people feel about the Pupil Premium because it depends what the school has done with it.

Q72 Sir Bob Russell: What you have just said is fascinating. I am sure that out there are brilliant examples of how schools are using the Pupil Premium collectively.

Kim Richardson: There are.

Q73 Sir Bob Russell: From what you have said, there is an indication that other schools are less than brilliant.

Kim Richardson: Yes.

Bill Mahon: Spreading good practice. My understanding is that Ofsted have picked up on this, and at an Ofsted inspection the school is now required to explain that, "Yes, we have this many children in receipt of SPP; this is what we have used it on and this has been the benefit for the children as a result."

Q74 Sir Bob Russell: That is an Ofsted recommendation. If we as a Committee recommended to Government that there should be an annual publication saying, "This school has x pupils and y money, and this is how it is spent," that would be transparent and accountable. Is that something you would welcome?

Kim Richardson: I would have to say that I would not like to see the Pupil Premium increased until we know how it is being spent now. I know it is going up to £300, but I think we need to stop there and ask how it is being spent. In the early days, I wrote to several schools asking them to tell me how the money had been spent. I did not even get a response. Families had asked me to raise it with the schools directly.

Catherine Spencer: It happens every January. We publicise it; I am sure you do as well. We encourage families, through social media and our website—we make sure we advertise the need to sign up to the Service premium, which of course differs from the Pupil Premium. More families need to know about it.

As to encouraging best practice, like Kim and Bill, we have had examples of families coming to us and saying, "We are not sure what the school is spending it on."

That might be an issue of communication from the school—we are not saying that schools are not necessarily spending it on the right things or on the purpose that it is intended for, but there needs to be more transparency there. I am really pleased to say that we are going to do a Service premium award, with the blessing of the Department for Education.

We are going to recognise best practice; we are going to ask schools to tell us what they are spending it on—that will be educational for other schools, which can find out how to spend it; and we are going to look at schools with vast numbers of Service pupils, but also those with maybe only one or two, and see how they are spending it.

Q75 Sir Bob Russell: I appreciate that it can't be every school, because of what you just said—it will range from 70%, 80% or 90% of their pupils down to only one or two, so it has to be done sensibly—but thank you for that.

I am concerned that I am being told by you that the concept of the Pupil Premium is not universally understood by many parents. That then causes me a further problem, which leads to my next question: we are advised, as a Committee, that there are a range of financial schemes available to families to assist with their children's education, but if they are not aware of the Pupil Premium, how aware are they, if at all, of the other schemes?

Catherine Spencer: Do you mean the continuity of education allowance?

Q76 Sir Bob Russell: Anything that is there to assist. It could be for children with disabilities, or special grants—whatever is available for the children of Service personnel. How is that information disseminated to schools and parents?

Kim Richardson: We all do the best that we can. People often only find out about these things when they are out looking for them. I feel that there is a partnership here, and it is a job for the schools as much as for the parents arriving in the new area: there may well be facilities and arrangements in one area that are not available in another, so perhaps communication and understanding on the side of the schools is something that could be looked at.

I know that in the early days of the Pupil Premium, we had contact from schools, saying, "We have heard this is on the radar, but we don't know anything about it." Yet it had been publicised and published; it was out there, but they still did not know. Connecting those two parts up would be helpful.

Chair: What we are talking about, as well as the continuity of education allowance, is the pupil premium, which we have been talking about a lot; further support to schools affected by deployment and mobility, like the support fund for schools; the Armed Forces bereavement scholarship scheme; and the higher education scholarship. It would be helpful if more people could be aware of all of those things. There is a final question on this particular inquiry—

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we will come on to our second one, briefly, in a moment.

Q77 Bob Stewart: I was going to talk about bereavement, and the bereavement scholarship scheme, which is, fundamentally, £1,500 a year to encourage children of Service personnel who have been killed. Would you like to make any comment on whether that helps? I am sure that it does, but would you like to comment on that particular scheme?

While we are at it, £8,240 is paid to try to encourage children who are bereaved to go to higher education. I presume that that means university. Would you like to comment on that?

Kim Richardson: I contacted the Royal Navy, Royal Marines Widows' Association, to ask them that specific question and their feedback was that they have not actually had any of their members apply for the bereavement scholarship scheme, partly because it is only for those people who have lost partners as a result of Service action. The majority of their widows do not fall into that category.

I also spoke to the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, who said that most schools will offer a bursary to enable children to remain at a school they are attending on the death of a father. They find that schools are actually pretty good at helping families out should they fall into that sort of very sad situation.

Q78 Bob Stewart: I suppose that it is more likely to occur in the Army, Mrs Spencer, so perhaps you might care to add a comment.

Catherine Spencer: I wish I had more things to give you. We tend to represent serving families. When a family becomes bereaved, they tend to be represented by another organisation. I do not actually have any feedback apart from to say that one can only imagine that any financial support is going to be very welcome in such a situation.

Q79 Bob Stewart: I mention that because my daughter is a patron of the Forces Children's Trust, which mainly looks after war widows and children and takes them out. When I have hosted them here, as people such as Mr Arbuthnot know, and have spoken to these widows, who have brought their children here three times since I have been a Member of Parliament, they do not seem to be aware of this business. It is perhaps incumbent on your organisations to publicise that more. The MOD should of course do it, but I would suggest that you and organisations like yours should actually put a bit of thrust into this one, because it is quite a lot of money and the widows to whom I have spoken seem largely ignorant of it. In fact, I have not met anyone who knows about it.

Bill Mahon: I am afraid that that does not surprise me.

Kim Richardson: It is disappointing.

Q80 Bob Stewart: It has to be, by definition, the Army, because the Air Force and the Navy are not losing at anything like the same rate. Or, of course, the Royal Marines—forgive me, Mrs Richardson.

Kim Richardson: Be very careful, please.

Bob Stewart: I almost committed the cardinal sin there—

Kim Richardson: Again.

Bob Stewart: What do you mean “again”? *[Laughter.]* I am off this question.

Q81 Chair: Before we move on to our next inquiry on the education of Service personnel themselves, as opposed to the children, is there anything that you would like to say about the education of Service children that you feel you may not have covered fully? I will now plug our website. From Monday, you can google the Defence Committee and put anything on the website that you have not said today. Is there anything else that you would like to say about Service children?

Kim Richardson: I wanted to say that I actually got a lot of feedback from families. It has probably been one of the most difficult sessions to give you feedback on—everything is very divisive because how people regard education is very personal. All the evidence that we have—the written comments and things—we are going to let you have, so that you have everybody's views. For those people who are looking in today and thinking, “I did not say that” or “I have not been represented,” it is important that we give you everything that we have, so that you have that overall view.

Chair: That would be much appreciated and will be very helpful.

Q82 Bob Stewart: One final little question, which is quite weird and perhaps a statement. Does it help your organisations to be seen at Defence Committee sittings? Does it help Service families that you are here? Is this good public relations for you? Do you feel that this is a very worthwhile activity, or do you have another opinion?

Catherine Spencer: I think it is hugely worth while, because it demonstrates that, for all the evidence and issues that families bring to us, we listen to them and have this amazing opportunity to feed it right into Government. So I think that it is hugely important and very appreciated.

Q83 Bob Stewart: And you speak for all three?

Bill Mahon: I think that we are the only voice they have got, sometimes, with this level of access.

Bob Stewart: That pleases us immensely.

Q84 Chair: Our inquiries would be greatly hindered if you didn't do this, so we are extremely grateful to you.

Kim Richardson: I was just going to add that the Children's Education Advisory Service—I really hope that you are going to talk to them in some detail—are a fount of knowledge on a lot of the subjects that you have covered today. Please take some time to talk to them and pick their brains.

Catherine Spencer: May I add one point? Fairly soon we will get a rebasing announcement, when we will hear about how units are going to be moved back to the UK. We obviously have a reduction in the number who will require Service family accommodation, but that will mean that we have some areas—I expect the

Salisbury plain—where we will see the number of school places needed rising very substantially. We know that a lot of communication goes on about infrastructure, but we really need our families to see tangible evidence of those conversations and the negotiation that is going on, in order to provide them with evidence that they are being thought of.

Q85 Chair: I can tell you that we are intending to visit the Salisbury area to pursue these questions.

Catherine Spencer: It is not just that area—I used that as an example.

Chair: Yes, but you make a very good point.

Q86 Sir Bob Russell: Chair, may I just follow up on your question and what Mrs Spencer said? Are you suggesting that we need to encourage local education authorities to have physical capacity that they can vary, so that there is flexibility in the system? That is basically what I was trying to get at earlier.

Catherine Spencer: That would be an aspiration, wouldn't it? We have certainly seen situations where bases have been closed down because one unit has been in there but moved out, and we have lost the pupil places in that school for when the next population comes in. There have been some really good examples of good work done in the past—I wouldn't like to give the impression that it never works—but we need families to believe that the infrastructure, the school places, will be available.

Sir Bob Russell: If Her Majesty's Government can build a settlement of the size that it has at Camp Bastion, it should be possible for civil engineers in this country to put down two or three new classrooms just like that.

Q87 Chair: We are now moving on—

Bill Mahon: I am really sorry, but I just wanted to say that some of the most impactful evidence—if I can put it that way—that we have received is from the children themselves. If you are not planning to, I urge you to take the opportunity, if you can, to talk to the children themselves about their experiences. It really is invaluable.

Q88 Chair: We intend to do exactly that. In our last inquiry we did exactly that and I entirely agree that it was extremely impactful.

We are now moving on to the inquiry into the education of Service personnel. It may well be that you have not had a huge amount of feedback on some of the issues that we are going to look into, but have you had any comments or complaints from families about the provision of literacy and numeracy support to personnel in the Armed Forces?

Bill Mahon: No.

Kim Richardson: From my perspective, no. I must admit that after the suggestion that we might be asked some questions on this subject today, I did quite a lot of digging.

Q89 Chair: And still, “No”?

Kim Richardson: No, I was really quite surprised. I actually don't think we are blowing our own trumpet enough on some of the really good stuff that is

happening. I want to say thank you, because I have a bit of work to go away and do to find out a bit more about what we are doing in the Naval Service.

Chair: The trouble is that if we report on that, it will get absolutely no publicity whatever.

Kim Richardson: No, good news never does, does it?

Chair: That is the way life goes.

Catherine Spencer: The evidence that we collect, and we do not get much—I am not able to comment on literacy and numeracy issues for the Service person—is on access to adult education for the serving spouse and the difficulties that they encounter in trying to afford a course or being in a location long enough to be able to do that course. The comments that we get really are on that serving spouse. I am not qualified to talk about the Service person.

Q90 Chair: Okay. That is a different issue but an important one, nevertheless.

Catherine Spencer: It is outside the scope of this; I appreciate that.

Q91 Chair: Okay. So you have no complaints about learning credits?

Bill Mahon: No.

Q92 Sandra Osborne: Do you think that the armed forces have done enough to make sure that the training that the personnel receive will lead to civilian qualifications when they leave?

Kim Richardson: People could always do more. I am absolutely sure that we can do more, but when I asked about resettlement and jobs outside the Service, I was told that 94% to 97% of those who leave the Service get a job within six months, which seemed to me to be quite a good statistic. I know that we still have areas where we could be doing better; our naval medics' qualifications do not naturally transfer across into civvy street, which seems mad to me because they have such good training. I am sure that we still have gaps, and I wonder whether those gaps are there because they are in the “too difficult to resolve” pot.

Q93 Sir Bob Russell: On the last point, I am surprised to hear that, because my experience of the hospital at Camp Bastion was that it was a mixture of NHS medical personnel who are Reservists serving alongside the full-time personnel. There is also a special unit between the NHS and the MOD that is learning the experiences of trauma injuries and what have you in Helmand province for the benefit of civilian casualties. In fact, you have a better chance of survival from a trauma attack in Helmand province than you have from a motorway crash because of the way that that has been geared. So I am really puzzled to hear what you have said.

Kim Richardson: That is perhaps an example that you could ask for some more information on.

Sir Bob Russell: I will do, because I thought, actually, that there was good dovetailing going on between the MOD and the NHS.

Bob Stewart: We are meant to be asking the questions, not answering them, but I suspect that it is to do with combat medics. The medics—such as my cousin—are trained to be on the front line to deal with

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trauma and huge battle wounds. They are particularly trained for that, and that, probably, does not make them eligible to run a ward in a general hospital. I suspect that that is the answer, but forgive me for suggesting an answer because the Chairman specifically told us that we were not allowed to prior to this session and I have just incurred his wrath.

Chair: We are not meant to be giving evidence; we are meant to be asking the questions.

Catherine Spencer: Could I answer the question you asked about transferring out and qualifications? As an organisation, we do not hear much about the Service person's resettlement credits and taking their qualifications from their military life into civilian life, but we do hear from families who would like access to resettlement credits. As you know, there is a very good scheme of allowing Service personnel to have resettlement credits, but they do not all use them; maybe because they leave the Services with a trade of their own.

We would love for the Service spouse to be able to access those resettlement credits, because if we are

able to provide training for the spouse to enable them to get a good job, that can help the resettlement period for the soldier as well when they leave.

Q94 Sir Bob Russell: We are dealing here with education of Service personnel. The Military Corrective Training Centre provides brilliant training, although the qualifications for entry are restrictive. Have any of you been involved in the Ofsted inspections of armed forces initial training?

Kim Richardson: I haven't personally, but I have been to the Corrective Training Centre, and I was very impressed.

Sir Bob Russell: I am glad.

I will not ask any more questions, Chair, because if the answer is no, the other questions fall.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed to all of you. We have already made it plain how valuable we find these sessions, and we are pleased that you do, too. It has been most helpful, certainly to the first inquiry, and rather encouraging for the second.

Monday 4 March 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Dai Havard
Sandra Osborne

Sir Bob Russell

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Amy Walker**, Year 12, **Rushane Carter**, Year 12, **Avash Sherchan**, Year 11 boarder, **Victoria Centeno**, Year 11 boarder, **Connor Malone** and **Dan Caterick**, student at the Wellington Academy, Tidworth, gave evidence.

Q95 Chair: Thank you very much for coming to talk to us. I understand that some of you have been asked whether you would like to talk to us and some of your parents have been asked whether you would like to talk to us. We are most grateful to you for coming to do it anyway. As the Defence Committee, we are doing an inquiry into the education of the children of Service families. We have done this before, in 2006. We will need to get from you some sort of flavour as to what life is like with all the moving around you have to do, what life is like when your parents are away on active Service, things like that. It is not meant to be the Spanish Inquisition. If it turns out to be the Spanish Inquisition, then stop us and say, "Hey, that is not what I signed up for".

Can we begin by introducing yourselves? Tell us your name. I know we have your name tags in front of you, but this is for the record. Tell us your names and your ages. Let us start with that; tell us your names and ages.

Amy Walker: My name is Amy Walker and I am 17 years old.

Rushane Carter: My name is Rushane Carter. I am 16 years old.

Avash Sherchan: My name is Avash Sherchan and I am 15 years old.

Victoria Centeno: I am Victoria Centeno. I am 16 years old.

Connor Malone: I am Connor Malone and I am 16 years old.

Dan Caterick: I am Dan Caterick and I am 17 years old.

Q96 Chair: Can you remember to speak as loudly as you can, please, because we are elderly politicians getting deaf. Who would like to begin by saying what life is like? I know you have not experienced not being a Service child, but tell us what life is like, your experiences of education. Who would like to begin? Rushane, would you like to start?

Rushane Carter: Well, education is good because you get to get educated in different places, but at the end of it, if you are in the middle of your education, like last year when I was, you can get pulled out so easily. Last year I was doing sixth form and halfway through the year my dad had to move, so basically I had to get pulled out. Then I had to do exams, but I couldn't do it in Colchester because it was so far away. It was Colchester to down here, so it would be kind of impossible to go all the way back to Colchester. The

army does not have any facilities to accommodate you in that period.

Q97 Mr Havard: You would have preferred to stay in Colchester, would you, and done your exams?

Rushane Carter: I would have preferred to stay in Colchester just to finish that year and then move down here.

Q98 Mr Havard: Board there or something to do it, away from your family?

Rushane Carter: Yes, I would do that, because my dad is always not there so it would not make much difference.

Chair: We have the Colchester MP here so let us move it to you.

Mr Havard: It is all his fault.

Q99 Sir Bob Russell: Thank you for that kind comment. What school were you at in Colchester?

Rushane Carter: I was in the Colchester Sixth Form College.

Q100 Sir Bob Russell: That is a different environment from a school, isn't it?

Rushane Carter: Yes.

Sir Bob Russell: It is 16 to 19. Thank you.

Q101 Chair: Who else? By the way, have you all been at this academy since it started?

Victoria Centeno: No.

Connor Malone: No.

Q102 Chair: No? Victoria, when did you come here?

Victoria Centeno: I was not always a Service family, so my mum only got married to someone in the Services when I started year 9. I moved here at the start of year 9 and I just carried on here since then.

Q103 Mr Havard: How old is year 9?

Victoria Centeno: That is around 14 to 15.

Q104 Chair: Are you 15 now?

Victoria Centeno: I am 16.

Q105 Chair: Who else would like to—yes, Connor.

Connor Malone: I started the same year as Victoria. I have been to quite a few different schools here, there and everywhere, like Ireland, Cyprus, Germany, and it has been quite varied. I have found that if it is an entire army school I have been able to fit in a bit

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better. When it is a mixture of army and civilian you still have the split divide of, “Oh, they are army, I am civilian. I don’t understand what their life is like”. There has never been a real connection between the two, never been integrated as well as we could have.

Q106 Chair: When you say you have been to quite a few different schools, can you say how many?

Connor Malone: I believe roughly six or seven schools due to moving around.

Q107 Chair: If anybody wants to chip in with a question, do feel free. Can you come back to that point about all army schools? Those were overseas, were they?

Connor Malone: Yes, in Germany and Cyprus.

Q108 Chair: But this school is what, 40%, is it, armed forces?

Connor Malone: About that.

Q109 Chair: How does that work out? Do the other kids here not fully understand what Service life is like?

Connor Malone: We have the CCF where you can join up and you can learn about army life and being a soldier as such, but then there are certain year groups might have more percentage of army, whereas—I can’t remember what the aggregate is—one year group has more civilian than army. For my year group, there are quite a lot of army children and we have grown up with each other. Then there are the other ones who have grown up with each other, so it depends. In my one, because nearly everybody I know is army, I am all right because they are my friends and if my dad goes on tour they know what it is like because their parents have gone and so on. Then there are the others who will argue every job is as dangerous as the army but they don’t understand how bad it can sometimes get if you hear on the news that someone has died in your battalion and you have that horrible thought, “Is it my parent or is it someone I know?”

Q110 Mr Havard: If it is a disadvantage that the other people that do not understand and so on, what are the advantages for you of being in a mixed environment? Are there any advantages? Do you get an advantage because you are a Service family?

Connor Malone: I think there is an advantage in that I can make more friends, but there is a disadvantage that I will move and they will stay here. I have a considerable amount of friends because I have moved with the army, which is quite a good advantage, but then when I go to move I will be moving with some people and I will have to leave so many people behind to then make more friends and start anew.

Q111 Mr Havard: Does anybody think there is an advantage in being in a mixed environment? Do you learn anything from the other pupils in the sense that you do not get a narrow experience, you get a broader experience? No? Yes?

Rushane Carter: If you are in a mixed environment, it is better than to be all army. If it is all army, everyone just moves to different places, but if you are in a mixed environment you could have the experience of how would it be if you were outside the army or if you were inside the army. Basically, both of them seem like the same but just with one parent going out somewhere else.

Q112 Mr Havard: You are nodding, Amy. Do you think so? Do you think there are advantages?

Amy Walker: I think there is an advantage in escaping the army life for a little while. You get to go round a friend’s house who have their own houses all decorated how they like, because obviously in the quarters you can’t do that. It is nice to escape for a little while, be with their family and maybe have a dad or mum home for dinner, because sometimes in the army they are working late. It is a good advantage.

Q113 Mr Havard: Anybody else?

Victoria Centeno: I don’t really see the difference because I have lived both lives, civilian and army, but I do like having some of my civilian friends because, as Amy said, you can escape for a bit to their houses and see what it is like to live more of a civvie life.

Q114 Chair: You do have civilian friends? It is not a complete switch?

Victoria Centeno: Yes, I do have civilian friends.

Q115 Sandra Osborne: Connor, you talked about if your parent is deployed and the fact that the other kids do not necessarily understand the issues. Are there other issues that you are affected by that the children who are not from Service families are not affected by? Can anybody think of anything?

Connor Malone: I personally have not experienced this, but I have had friends where their parents have come back and, in a sense, they have come back a changed person. From experiences from the war they have had problems and there has been—

Victoria Centeno: Deaths and stuff.

Connor Malone: There have been cases like when my stepdad first came back he didn’t stay with us for a few weeks. He stayed somewhere else. He didn’t want to disturb our way of living because he was still a bit troubled from being out there. On one tour he lost quite a few of his friends, which is upsetting for anybody. I have known people to have nightmares and wake up screaming, so it is—

Victoria Centeno: Having that in the home straight after not having them there for six months is a lot worse than not having them there at all because you know they are there and you know they are troubled.

Q116 Sir Bob Russell: Does the academy provide any support for students whose parents were as you have quite graphically and movingly described? Does this academy provide any support for you?

Victoria Centeno: I guess if they don’t know about it they can’t really provide anything. I guess if we did tell them they probably would provide support, but if

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we didn't then they wouldn't have a way of knowing it, I guess.

Q117 Chair: What would make you tell them about it?

Victoria Centeno: I guess if you were comfortable enough with then you would, but sometimes with family problems it feels like they should stay in the family and not become anyone else's problems instead.

Q118 Sir Bob Russell: We are going to make a report to the Secretary of State for Defence. Is there anything on that aspect you feel we should be saying, that there should be a proactive move from the educational leadership in an academy, a school or whatever? Is that something they should pre-empt and go to you to start with rather than wait for you to go to them?

Victoria Centeno: I think it should be a matter of the child going to the school or a teacher they feel comfortable with, but I suppose if you approach them and they don't feel comfortable they are most likely to retract and not ever want to really open up to them.

Q119 Chair: Dan, you are being very quiet.

Dan Caterick: Yes.

Chair: Is this usual?

Dan Caterick: Not normally.

Q120 Chair: What has your experience been like?

Dan Caterick: With the moving part, I am quite lucky because my dad has been stationary for quite some time with his career. We lived up north when he was based in Catterick and I think that was in about year 3.

Q121 Chair: That must have been confusing for you.

Dan Caterick: Yes, I was very, very young.

Chair: No, your being called Dan Caterick.

Dan Caterick: Oh, yes.

Mr Havard: In Wales you would have been Dan Barracks, just to make sure they know the difference.

Dan Caterick: But at the same time I was very, very young when he was based down there. We moved here when he was posted in Tidworth. I didn't quite understand what was going on and why we were moving and I had to change schools, but once my mum and dad explained it to me I was like, "Right, okay". I joined Zouch in year 3 and it went on from there. I have been here ever since.

Q122 Chair: What has it been like?

Dan Caterick: I have enjoyed it. I love living around the army. I love being an army family. I have a lot of civilian friends here and up north. It is good to see how the different lives are because not only can we go to their houses and see what civilian life is like, where they have both parents coming in every night, but they can see what army families are like with having parents deployed to conflict zones and various places like that and not having them there all the time. It benefits both, really, but I enjoy living the army life.

Q123 Chair: Any downsides?

Dan Caterick: I think the only downside would be not having my dad there 24/7 as he is always deployed somewhere, Scotland, Wales, Afghan, places like that.

Q124 Chair: What is the consequence of that? What is that like?

Dan Caterick: I think it has a big impact on my family because the father figure is not in the family for quite a long period of time so it impacts on us there. I am the eldest child in my family and I feel I have a responsibility to look out for everyone when my dad is not there.

Q125 Chair: Is that good or bad?

Dan Caterick: I think that is a good thing because it teaches me responsibility and to look out for my family and look out for others.

Q126 Chair: Yes. Avash, you are being very quiet. Is this normal?

Avash Sherchan: I don't think so.

Q127 Chair: How many schools have you been to?

Avash Sherchan: I have been to quite a few, especially in primary school. I moved around a lot when I was in primary school, but in secondary school I have not moved around a lot. I think I have been to six or seven schools.

Chair: Six or seven schools?

Avash Sherchan: Yes.

Q128 Chair: That is a lot more than most kids go to, isn't it?

Avash Sherchan: Yes.

Q129 Chair: What has it been like for you?

Avash Sherchan: I think I found it pretty easy, to be honest, because I had older brothers and they would always look out me, so I found it normal. I didn't really care because I liked moving away, going to see new things, new houses and new people, meeting new friends. I have always liked that.

Q130 Chair: But you have to, don't you, really, because you lose friends at the same time as making new ones?

Avash Sherchan: Yes, especially when I moved here from Nepal. My dad was working in Kathmandu in the British Embassy there as the defence attaché, and I made quite a lot of friends when I was there. I went to the international school. I made a lot of friends, really good friends. When I left I was really sad because I would never see them again.

Q131 Chair: What effect does that have?

Avash Sherchan: I am not sure, really. When I first came here I was quite depressed because I would always be really quiet and didn't talk to anyone.

Q132 Mr Havard: When you moved between the schools—I know you have done it to some degree or another—is there anything that would have made that easier? These days everybody is connected to everybody, aren't they? You can talk to people on

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whatever it is called, Skype, in Nepal or whatever, can't you?

Chair: We are technologically challenged here.

Mr Havard: Dull is the word. I am just trying to think what are the ways in which maybe that process could have been made easier for you. Were there any sort of provisions that could have been made that would have made the move easier—we were talking about you possibly staying on a little bit and moving. Are there any other things that could be provided that might make moves easier?

Amy Walker: Maybe having someone from the school who has just moved there or been there a while who is in the army. You don't follow them but they introduce you to people and that. When I first moved to this school, I had moved from Germany and my friend had literally moved a month before me and she came to the same school, so I had her address. I knew I could go to her before going to the school so I—

Mr Havard: A recce troop?

Amy Walker: Yes, an induction before I got thrown in there randomly. When I was younger I did not have that, but I was quite lucky because we moved back and forth to the same place. I was in Hohne and then we moved to Boddington and then back to Hohne, so we knew a few people, the teachers there knew us, so it was quite a smooth transition.

Q133 Chair: So a sort of buddy system?

Amy Walker: Yes.

Q134 Chair: Is there one here?

Amy Walker: I don't think there is.

Q135 Chair: Presumably if there were, you would be aware of it?

Amy Walker: Yes. I had the girl I knew anyway already. I have only moved here once, but there have been people who have moved here and you get given someone in your class you can go round with and that.

Victoria Centeno: I didn't get that when I first moved here. I think other people have, but I didn't get that.

Amy Walker: Yes, some people do.

Q136 Chair: But presumably that would be a good thing to have not just in Service schools but in pretty much any school. For new people coming in, someone to show them around would be a good thing.

Amy Walker: Yes. It is really scary starting a new school.

Q137 Chair: You presumably would be rather happy to do that sort of thing yourself now, now that you have got used to it?

Amy Walker: Yes.

Chair: The Government would like it because it would be free.

Q138 Mr Havard: They think. The overseas thing—you said you were in Germany. People have been in schools overseas and over here as well. Are they different experiences? What is the different experience? Are you in a British school in a foreign land and, therefore, in part of Britain? What is the

experience of being in education abroad? How different is it?

Connor Malone: In Cyprus to me it was just—because I was a bit young when I first moved there so it was just—

Q139 Chair: How old?

Connor Malone: I think I was six or seven, so I didn't fully understand the moving process. I knew the flight was extremely long but it was a case of—

Mr Havard: Not as far as Nepal.

Connor Malone: I know. It is a case of you are in a camp so you are sort of secluded from everybody else, but the locals knew you were English and they were fine with you. In my school I had English friends that lived outside of the camp. Their parents had moved over there for work, so I met quite a few different people. You are able to learn languages differently. In Germany, I was immersed in the language so I was able to pick up on it a bit easier. In Cyprus, I started learning Greek, which is a new experience, which is quite nice.

Q140 Chair: How many languages do you speak?

Connor Malone: Properly? English. I know some French, some German, some Greek. I have tried to bridge on to Latin but that is too hard.

Chair: Latin? We have no military outposts in the Vatican.

Q141 Mr Havard: Up at Catterick with the Romans. What about other people's experience of being abroad?

Amy Walker: I didn't think it was too bad in Germany. I didn't live on camp so that was probably a good thing. You lived in not a village but there was loads of British military people and the local Germans knew that you were part of the military and you were English and they were really friendly. It was kind of like living in Britain but with German people, if that makes sense. It was quite nice to be able to go into town, just like shopping in England really.

Q142 Mr Havard: You said you went to the international school?

Avash Sherchan: Yes, I used to go to a British school. It was called the British School at Kathmandu and it was full of diplomats' sons and daughters. There was an army camp there as well and all the children from there used to go to the same school.

Q143 Chair: So not at all just British people but from lots of other countries as well?

Avash Sherchan: Yes, like the French Embassy or the Indian Embassy or stuff like that. There were a range of different people from different countries in the one school, but it felt like I was still in England because all my teachers were English and we would always speak English.

Q144 Mr Havard: There is a disruption because you have to move, but you gain an experience while you are there.

Avash Sherchan: Yes.

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Q145 Mr Havard: One of the questions we have down here is which was better. I do not know, was it better? It is different. Did you find it was better?

Avash Sherchan: I thought it was better because the classes were small. There are not as many students as in a proper school here. Probably my whole year is as big as the whole school back in Nepal, so I found it better back in Nepal.

Q146 Sandra Osborne: Whenever you have changed schools, have you managed to go in at the same level as you have previously been taught as far as the curriculum is concerned or were you at a higher or lower level? Were you finding you were being taught things you had already been taught or you were behind the rest of the class? What was the situation?

Avash Sherchan: When I first came here I found it really easy because when I was back in Nepal we had already covered all the stuff. When I first came here I found it really easy so I cruised along.

Mr Havard: That is with the small classes.

Q147 Chair: Is that a good thing or a bad thing?

Avash Sherchan: That is a good thing.

Q148 Sandra Osborne: What about the rest of you?

Rushane Carter: I was in Jamaica and of my subjects the CXC is like what I am doing now at A-Level because my mate Danny is doing everything we have already done, everything we are doing now. I only did up to year 9 in Jamaica, which is equivalent to year 10 in England because there is a year difference in the school year, but the education, what I had done in year 9 was all of the year 11 syllabus. So, basically, when I came here it was like just getting the qualification, not really getting the teaching.

Q149 Chair: Was that boring?

Rushane Carter: Boring? Well, it was nice at times because everyone in the class was—because they have to put you in the lower set. I was supposed to be above everyone in the class. Basically, when they gave me the exam papers just to see 95% on it, it was like, “Okay”. I already knew the stuff, but, yes, still it is 95%. Moving down here now, just because the college is—this one has just added sixth form on to the entire school, but the other school I went to it was a full sixth form so they had more options and subjects. I had to limit my subjects down here, not that much, but still—

Q150 Mr Havard: So the range of subjects is smaller?

Rushane Carter: Yes, the range is smaller, but it is basically the same thing. They just exclude ones that are not necessarily needed to go university, but if you want to have them before you go in then that would be good.

Q151 Chair: What is everybody else’s experience of this? Dan?

Dan Caterick: Well, I have not really been moving around across seas and stuff. Like I said, the only moving that I have been doing was from up north to

here. Since year 3 I have been in Tidworth, but we go back and forward now and again for holidays and to visit family and stuff like that. When we moved down here, we had no family down here and that was pretty hard because my nana and granddad, my auntie and uncles, my cousins, they are all up north. It is basically just me and my family here. I think that was quite hard for me because I was quite close, or I still am quite close, to my grandparents and I don’t like not seeing them every day. I only get to see them about two or three times a year, which is pretty hard but, like you said, we still have Skype and phones and stuff like that.

Q152 Chair: Your grandparents are good at that, are they, the Skype stuff?

Dan Caterick: Phone calls. I think Skype would be pushing the boundaries a bit.

Mr Havard: They are not silver surfers yet, then?

Dan Caterick: Yes. One thing I really do enjoy is going back up north and I have got a lot of friends up there. None of them have any experience with the army whatsoever and I like to tell them what it is like living around the army and living in an army environment. They seem pretty intrigued and they are like, “Oh wow, that must be really amazing” and I am like, “Well, sometimes it is, but sometimes it is not because you have to deal with not having one parent there, having them go away and stuff like that”.

Q153 Chair: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Dan Caterick: Two sisters.

Q154 Chair: Two sisters. How have they taken to it?

Dan Caterick: I think they have taken to it really well. They were born down here so they have been army family all of their life. They don’t know much different apart from when we go up north and visit, because it is not army up north where I am from whatsoever, apart from Catterick and stuff like that. They go down there and they do not see any of that stuff and it is all civilian-based life and all that, but I think they have taken it really well and they have coped pretty well as well.

Q155 Chair: Some of you board, don’t you? Which of you board? Victoria and Avash, you board. Do you know why your parents have taken that decision, or was it you who took that decision? Victoria?

Victoria Centeno: I took it because I don’t have many options for sixth form if I don’t want my A-Levels to be disrupted. My dad went on tour on Friday and he will be back in early September or October, depending on how much they learn from this tour. That means if I start my A-Levels and I suddenly have to move then those will be disrupted and I don’t want that to happen. I had that happen during year 8 and some tests during that time and it kind of messed it up a bit. I have to go to a boarding school for sixth form and explore my options.

Q156 Chair: What do you think of that? Is it a good idea, a bad idea?

Victoria Centeno: Yes, I like it.

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Q157 Chair: From the sound of things, it was essentially your decision?

Victoria Centeno: Yes. Well, it is their decision, too, because they don't want my A- Levels to be disrupted either.

Q158 Chair: Yes. They went along with it, but it was your decision?

Victoria Centeno: Yes. I think it is much easier to revise and things like that in boarding because you have a lot more facilities, there are other people to help you. I live in obviously army housing on a camp and it is quite hard to revise when you have two little sisters running around you. It is just quite cramped and quite hard.

Q159 Chair: What is the moving that would happen that would mean that you had to board? Whereabouts does your family live now?

Victoria Centeno: I live around 15 minutes away from here in Upavon in a camp called Trenchard Lines.

Q160 Chair: But you board nevertheless?

Victoria Centeno: Yes, because the MoD funding does not start from sixth form. It starts from year 11, so I have to board now in order to get the funding throughout sixth form.

Q161 Chair: So if you were not boarding now you would not be able to board at sixth form?

Victoria Centeno: No, and on my dad's salary we wouldn't be able to afford the boarding fees here.

Q162 Chair: This is all news to me so it is a jolly good job you have come here. Thank you. Avash?

Avash Sherchan: I only came to boarding because my grades were falling and my dad wanted me to study, because this is my final year of GCSE, in order to get good grades. That is the main reason he sent me here.

Q163 Chair: In your case it was his decision, not yours?

Avash Sherchan: Yes, it was his decision.

Q164 Chair: It was not because of mobility, it was because of the grades?

Avash Sherchan: Yes.

Q165 Chair: Where does your family live?

Avash Sherchan: My family lives in the same camp as V's, in Trenchard Lines.

Q166 Chair: Have you found that the boarding has helped your grades?

Avash Sherchan: Yes, I think it has helped my grades a lot because I revise more when I am at boarding. There are teachers around and they tell us to study, whereas if I was at home I would not study. I would just play on my Xbox and go on Facebook and watch TV.

Q167 Chair: Okay. How representative do you think you two are? How many people would be boarding because of grades or the worry about young kids

running around stopping you revising, as opposed to boarding because their parents were constantly being away on deployment?

Victoria Centeno: I do not think we are very representative, to be honest.

Chair: You are not very representative?

Victoria Centeno: I think most people move into boarding because their parents move around a lot and they don't enjoy that kind of lifestyle, so their parents choose to put them into boarding or the children suggest that they should move into boarding to help them with studying, because moving disrupts studying a lot, I think.

Chair: Yes, it does.

Q168 Sir Bob Russell: Is this boarding availability purely for the children of military personnel or could civilian families take it up as well?

Avash Sherchan: No, anyone can join.

Victoria Centeno: Yes. I think there are a lot more civilian families than there are military families in boarding right now.

Q169 Sir Bob Russell: So there are civilian families in boarding?

Victoria Centeno: Yes.

Sir Bob Russell: Thank you.

Q170 Sandra Osborne: Is there anything else that you want to tell us about your education? Had you thought of anything you wanted to say before you came to this meeting or anything that has arisen during the meeting?

Chair: You may have not wanted to say anything at all.

Amy Walker: I think there should be a little bit more support maybe. My dad has just gone away and my older brother is about to go away tomorrow, I think. My little brother finds it really difficult to concentrate at school when he has no dad figure at home. My dad has been away and my older brother has been his dad figure for a while, and now he is going away, so my little brother finds it really hard to concentrate. My mum does warn teachers that he will be quite angry in class or he doesn't do stuff. I know it is not an excuse for behaviour, but he takes his anger out there and he comes home and he doesn't take it out there. He just needs that little bit of support and the teachers to understand that he is going through a hard time. Even though my mum does warn them, sometimes teachers don't think. I think it might have been philosophy, there might have been a subject about the army or something like that, and my brother would take it really personally, quite personally.

Q171 Mr Havard: How old is he?

Amy Walker: He is 15 years old.

Mr Havard: He is 15?

Amy Walker: Yes, but when my older brother went two years ago, I think it was, that was a really hard time for him. He didn't mess around but he was really angry for the entire six months.

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Q172 Mr Havard: So this is a different sort of buddy system you are talking about maybe?

Amy Walker: Yes. I think all the teachers need to understand a little bit that he is not doing it because he doesn't want to do it. Sometimes he might do because he is not the sort of person to sit down and do work, but sometimes he doesn't because he is angry or he is upset. He is not the person—boys are not really—to let their feelings out and that. He does not at home with me and my mum. It is really hard for him to—

Q173 Mr Havard: Do you think it is a sort of mentor system? Do you know what a mentor is?

Amy Walker: Yes. I did try to find someone in my sixth form who had been through the same as him to talk to him, but he finds it really hard to talk to people and this person didn't put in the effort. I think he needs someone who will be there. He doesn't like to talk to his older sister because it is not—

Q174 Chair: Probably he would need someone of his own age, wouldn't he?

Amy Walker: Yes, maybe.

Q175 Chair: How well do you think the teachers understand the pressures on the kids?

Amy Walker: I think some teachers may understand a bit more than others because a lot of teachers have been to military schools or taught there before because their husbands are in the army and stuff like that. Some of the teachers don't really have a clue. Well, they have some sort of clue but not as much as some others do.

Q176 Chair: But you would think that teaching somewhere like this they would quite quickly cotton on to what life was all about, or is that—

Amy Walker: I don't know. With the change from Castledown to the academy we have had loads of new teachers and I think they are not as—well, they don't know as much of the military as the ones before because they had been here.

Q177 Mr Havard: You were in that school before? You have been in that transition as well?

Amy Walker: Yes, I was.

Q178 Mr Havard: You were not all in that transition but you must have been, Dan, were you?

Dan Caterick: No. What happened was at the end of year 6 in Zouch Primary School I moved back up north because I was not particularly—I was not really enjoying living down here at the time. I moved back up north with my grandparents for about four years, and then I moved back down here in year 9.

Mr Havard: Okay. I was interested in the transition from the old arrangements to the new arrangements.

Q179 Chair: So for four years your grandparents were looking after you and your parents were down here?

Dan Caterick: Yes.

Mr Havard: He was boarding with his grandparents.

Chair: Yes. Does anybody else want to answer Sandra's question about what we have missed out in our questioning? Bob has another question that he would like to ask, but does anybody want to have a go at Sandra? No.

Q180 Sandra Osborne: Does anybody ever make comments to you about the situation in Afghanistan?

Victoria Centeno: No, I don't think—

Sandra Osborne: You don't have any pressures that way?

Connor Malone: They did in my old school.

Sandra Osborne: They did?

Connor Malone: We were based in Kingston-upon-Thames and my school was about three or four miles away. I was the only army child in that particular school, so I sort of stuck out from everybody else. I had those friends that were like, "Oh, that's awesome, it's an army life", but then there was those, from their parents' opinions, who were really rude towards me and said horrible things about soldiers in Afghanistan, which personally I got quite annoyed at. A few of them were saying horrible things about people who died. To me they need an education on what it is like and how it is different. I went in there blind. I started there as a year 7 so at first they didn't know, but when it came to tours I was not in some of the lessons because I was personally stressed out from it. Then they were always passing comments like, "Oh, your dad is out in Afghanistan. I hope he dies". The school, because they didn't really know anything about army life, didn't know how they could help me. They just took it as, "Oh, they are just being idiots" but they didn't realise the effect it actually has on you and how angry I got and how annoyed I got because of these people being so silly and so stupid and saying comments that they don't realise how much it could affect someone.

Q181 Mr Havard: It is interesting because our inquiry is about how the Ministry of Defence is looking at providing education for Service families' children and so on, but what you are saying is there is another side to that as well, that in some way or another in the state schools that Service children go to maybe there is not enough understanding in terms of how they can help Service children rather than the other way round.

Connor Malone: I personally think that the Army should look at where army children are in state schools so they can help them out, because I was in there blind. The friends that were based where I was, they were going to different schools and they were in their own little groups, whereas I was the only army child, no one understood and it was quite difficult. It would have been nice if there was someone I could go to, so if the Army were helping out a bit more to help me understand what is going on and to stop me being so angry about it all.

Dan Caterick: I had a pretty similar experience when living up north. When I first moved down there—I think it was 2011, 2010—my dad was in Iraq. Up there, I was at a school that had no army connections at all; everyone was civilian. No one understood and

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I used to get in trouble a lot in that last school. I wouldn't blame it all on pressure because my parents were down here and obviously my dad is in a conflict zone and I am not with my parents or with my mum to be there for her and my sisters and stuff like that. It was pretty annoying because no one around me understood how I felt. My best friend who was down there, his dad had come out of the military a couple of years before, so at least he kind of knew what I was going through. I was quite lucky to have a best friend like that, but with everybody else I had a few comments similar to those Connor had, like, "Oh, your dad is in Afghan. He is doing a pointless job. We should not even be over there". It was like, "Well, how can you say that sort of stuff to me when my father is over there fighting for our country and you have not had any military experience or had family in the military and you don't know what it is like to have loved ones over there in danger?"

Q182 Mr Havard: Your schools did not have people like the Army presentation team or any of the other things come in so that other people in the school could begin to understand the context?

Dan Caterick: No. My grandparents went in to speak about it and the head teacher up there, and all the other teachers essentially, just swept it under the rug, "Oh, we will have a word with the people that are causing you these problems". Nothing really got done about it and I think that partially could come down to they don't really understand much about army life and stuff like that and understand where I was coming from with these problems. They just saw me as a troubled child, not wanting to learn or anything.

Q183 Sir Bob Russell: I am grateful for both those last two contributions because in a previous evidence session we have been told that some parents do not want a school to know that their child or children are from a military background. The examples you have

given are the other side of the coin and I am most grateful for that. Dan, I understand you are in the Combined Cadet Force. Could you tell us what advantage or disadvantage that has? Are there any members of the CCF who are not from military backgrounds themselves?

Dan Caterick: There are quite a lot of members in the CCF who are not from military backgrounds, about half of us. I think that is very useful because if their family is not in the Military then they can join the CCF and see what it is all about, get a taster of what it is like in military life and what you have to do in it and all the rules and regulations. I really enjoy the CCF. As I said, I really enjoy living around the Army and things like that, so when I heard that the school was going to have a Combined Cadet Force I jumped at the chance.

Q184 Sir Bob Russell: You volunteered?

Dan Caterick: Yes. I have been in it since it started two years ago. I love it.

Sir Bob Russell: Thank you very much.

Q185 Chair: Is anybody else in the CCF? Two of you. Is there anything else we have missed out? Are there any questions we asked that were wrong? Is there anything you would like to say to us that you will feel tomorrow, "If only I had said this"? No? You will regret it after. Thank you very much indeed. If I may send through you a message to your parents, to those of you who were invited to come and give evidence because your parents wanted you to, and also to all of you actually, your parents are extremely lucky in you. I think that the sense of responsibility and the articulate way you have talked to us today has been most impressive and we are all most grateful to you. Thank you very much. Now we have to shove you out because we have the parents coming.

Sir Bob Russell: Well done.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: Annemarie Botha-Jones, Mrs Carol Morris, Mrs Kelly Lockhart and Mr Mark Lockhart, service parents, gave evidence.

Q186 Chair: Let us start and when Annemarie Botha-Jones is around she can join us. Thank you very much indeed for coming to help with our inquiry into the education of Service children. The purpose of this inquiry is to find out whether as a country we are standing by the covenant, and education of children is a key part of that. It is not intended to be a grilling session. It is intended to get from you as parents the issues that you think we need to be considering and thinking about. We are most grateful to you for coming to help us with the inquiry, therefore. If at the end of this session you feel that there are things that we have not covered that we really should have done, as with the students we have just been talking to, do please let us know. It would be a shame if you went away this afternoon thinking, "If only I had told them X, Y and Z". You will feel that anyway but,

nevertheless, help us out here. Immediately after this session with you, the parents, before we get on to the staff, I think we should have a five-minute break just so that people can—

Mr Havard: Coffee.

Chair: Coffee, says Dai. Would you like to introduce yourselves? Mr Lockhart, shall we start with you?

Mr Lockhart: Yes, I am a Company Sergeant Major currently serving with IRF. My daughter attends this school. I have been in the armed forces for 17 years and Kelly asked me to come along today to join in with the conversation.

Mrs Lockhart: I am Kelly, Mark's wife. Our daughter Melissa attends this school.

Mrs Morris: My son Jay attends this school and I have been an army wife for nearly 20 years now.

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Q187 Chair: How many schools has your—just one child or—

Mrs Morris: I have two children and my son is now in his ninth school.

Q188 Chair: Ninth school. Your other child?

Mrs Morris: My daughter Holly is 11. She starts here in September, but she has actually only had three schools.

Q189 Chair: Three schools, right. How old is your son?

Mrs Morris: He is 15.

Q190 Chair: How about that for you?

Mrs Lockhart: Melissa and Carly, her sister, have only had three schools.

Q191 Mr Havard: What is the range of age of your kids?

Mr Lockhart: Melissa is the eldest. She is 14. Carly is our youngest. She is 10.

Q192 Mr Havard: So she is not here yet?

Mrs Lockhart: She is due to start in September.

Q193 Chair: Have your kids been to mostly civilian schools for most of their lives?

Mrs Lockhart: Yes.

Mr Lockhart: Yes.

Q194 Chair: How about you, Mrs Morris?

Mrs Morris: Predominantly, yes, but we have had two years in private schools due to a posting overseas, still run on the British curriculum.

Q195 Chair: Was that a private boarding school?

Mrs Morris: No, private day school.

Q196 Mr Havard: Both the children went there, did they?

Mrs Morris: Yes, they did.

Q197 Chair: As I said, the point of this is to discover whether the covenant is being fulfilled or not. One of the things that it says in the covenant is that the standards of education for children of armed forces families should be at least as good as for non-armed forces families. Do you think that is what you are getting or do you think that is what you have?

Mr Lockhart: Broadly speaking, I would say yes. However, I think there are exceptional circumstances for serving parents and their kids, as in times when they are away on tour or there may be other exceptional circumstances where the child may be affected in their schoolwork or you may need to take the child out of school because you need to spend time with them. For example, at the moment I am on pre-deployment leave myself, waiting to go to Afghanistan. I have two weeks before I go to spend time with my family, but obviously my kids are still attending school. There is not anything exceptional there for them to get extra time off, for example. Broadly speaking, education wise, we have not had any massive problem, to be fair.

Mrs Morris: I would agree with that.

Q198 Sir Bob Russell: You mentioned the number of schools that your children have been to. Have you had problems getting them into the school of your choice?

Mrs Lockhart: No.

Mrs Morris: No.

Q199 Sir Bob Russell: That has never been a problem?

Mrs Morris: No.

Mr Lockhart: It has not personally, but we know quite a few people who have had issues.

Mrs Lockhart: People that have had issues trying to get them in, yes.

Q200 Sir Bob Russell: Where I come from, the garrison town of Colchester, it is becoming a serious problem. So it is not a problem here? Okay, that is fine.

Mrs Morris: Sometimes it is a large issue when it comes to primary schools. Obviously they are not as big as the secondary school and some people have set requirements with regards to primary education. If they look and see that these schools are not providing that, they will look elsewhere and it is then that problems do start arising.

Q201 Mr Havard: Your son has made a lot of changes. They were in the early years, were they, most of those changes?

Mrs Morris: They were in the early years. I don't know, I think if you are a grounded family your children are quite grounded and his—

Q202 Mr Havard: I am just wondering whether then was the time that you had difficulty finding a choice or getting—

Mrs Morris: No. It depends on the location as well that you are posted to. Like you say, if you are from a big garrison town then—

Q203 Chair: Mrs Botha-Jones, welcome.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Hello. Sorry.

Chair: I said at the beginning we are just trying to find out about the experience you have had of education for your kids. Can you tell us how many children you have and what age?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Five.

Chair: Five?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Yes. I have two here at the academy, one who is nine, and two are serving soldiers. One of them went to boarding school and had the allowance and the others haven't. I am not married in the forces any more so we are not entitled to it. But with Louis, he went from when he was eight years old, and then we got divorced a bit later on when he was in the last two years of his education so he would have lost the allowance. The school that he went to gave him a bursary, so thankfully he was able to finish the education, which was really useful. Had they not, that would have been really quite turbulent, I think.

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Chair: Thank you. We are in the middle of a question about turbulence at the moment.

Q204 Sir Bob Russell: I wonder if I could ask the question I have just asked the other parents here. Have you had problems getting your children into the school of your choice?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: With Louis, we were in Germany so we brought him back to the UK because we did not feel that we could get the education that we wanted at that time. We did access the allowance so that he could go to boarding school and that was really helpful. More recently with the three younger ones I have pretty much been based here in Wiltshire, so it has been quite stable for them. They have not really had to move around too much. It is such a large garrison that I have been able to move around within the same space and we have not had to move, so that has not been too much of a problem.

Q205 Sir Bob Russell: So that has not been an issue for you?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: No.

Q206 Sir Bob Russell: Could I ask all of you has this been an issue: what effect do frequent postings have on the continuity of children's education?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I was a forces child and it was quite turbulent for me. We moved every couple of years, so I did find that quite difficult. Like I said, with my youngest it has not been too bad because we have stayed in the same place, but in my personal experience it was really quite difficult changing schools every two or three years.

Q207 Sir Bob Russell: Does anybody else want to come in on that one?

Mrs Morris: Yes. We move every two years.

Chair: Every two years?

Mrs Morris: Every two years. We are not—

Mr Lockhart: Sorry, I think generally speaking, across the board if there is a parent who is in the forces and they are moving on through their career, the natural progression is that you will move every two to three years. It is more the exception to the rule that you stay in the same area. You could be posted within the Tidworth Garrison to a new job, but normally it would be to another area. It could be Cyprus, it could be Germany, or it could be anywhere across the world, really.

Mrs Morris: If you are attached to a regiment, you are with that regiment. My husband is a corps so we get posted to a regiment, hence our many moves.

Q208 Sir Bob Russell: That leads on to how much notice of a move do you get?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: You get or you are supposed to get?

Mrs Morris: That is a good question. It can be anything. Three months would be nice, but we have had a two-week move before where we have been up in Lancashire in Blackpool and my husband has been given two weeks' notice to go out to Sierra Leone for a year.

Mr Lockhart: I think it massively depends on the post, on what post becomes available. For example, somebody could get moved on from a job so that job then becomes available. You might be ideally suited to go to that job because you are finishing your old one. Therefore, it would be a fast-track posting. You get a quick posting order. You would be told, "In two or three weeks' time you are moving on to your next job".

Q209 Sir Bob Russell: You may not want to answer this next question. Do you think the Ministry of Defence take into account the family commitments of a soldier when they do a posting?

Mrs Lockhart: No, I don't think they do.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Not in an individual posting perhaps, I don't know. My husband was corps, like yours, Carol, and not so much, I don't think, from my experience.

Q210 Sir Bob Russell: If you get a two-week notice or a three-month notice—even three months is relatively short in the grand scheme of things—how do you choose the schools for your children prior to a move? What assistance do you get?

Mrs Morris: Personally, I would first of all go to the HIVE, which is our information centre for forces families, and ask them for a list. The internet is amazing now. You can research all the Ofsted reports. You can do your own research.

Q211 Sir Bob Russell: As the Chairman indicated, the purpose of this inquiry is to see how the Armed Forces Covenant can be implemented for army families, and navy and air force families but we have army here today. We need to make recommendations to the MoD, if there are any problems, on what improvements need to be done so, if you are able to, let us know where there are failings. If you are getting a three-month notice, one-month notice, how are you assisted in moving your child from the current school and what assistance you get in moving them to the new school or schools?

Mrs Morris: You don't. You do it yourself.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think it depends on you as a parent and how much time you put to that. It is very individual. You go on the internet and you research it and you look at Ofsted reports and you find out what is relevant and important. You put that time in. It is very individual as to how much effort you have beforehand.

Q212 Mr Havard: Just following on from what Bob said, clearly there is a big difference between three months and two weeks in terms of doing it.

Mrs Morris: We moved just before September. I had to try to get my son into a school down here before he started his reception year. Thankfully, I was able to do so, but not everybody is that lucky.

Q213 Mr Havard: That is a little bit like the sort of question I was going to ask you. In a sense there are two questions. The first question is do you think there should be exceptional arrangements, exceptional support as it were, if it is very, very short that might

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not be there if it is longer, and whether or not this question of the time of the year when things are happening would need extra support?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I would say definitely yes, because it is so important, particularly if they are just starting school before the reception.

Mrs Morris: It is daunting enough for a child to start school, let alone move, make new friends, start school, not know anybody and walk into that classroom.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: My friend has just moved from here. Her husband has been promoted. I think he got less than three months' notice. They have gone down to Lulworth. Their daughter will go into Bere Regis School for 18 months and then she has to come back here. She is only an hour away, but because he can't be quartered here—I have literally just come back from there, it has taken less than an hour, but she has had to move schools, come in there, and 18 months later she will be back and come back to school again. It is quite disturbing. She is only young. She is only seven, eight, nine years old, that sort of age.

Mrs Morris: It gets harder as they get older.

Mr Lockhart: I think a lot of units and regiments have families officers, welfare officers, who are a good port of call, but I think those jobs are personality driven. It will depend on the person who is doing the job as to how much help you get. If there was somebody there who was in place to solely deal with aid and help to parents, or giving them advice on which schools the children could move to, what the reports were like and everything else, then I think as a child of a serving soldier you should come towards the top end of a list because of going back to the military covenant and the fact that—

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think that is a good point because there is no one individually just in charge of education. It is a very broad spectrum, the families officer or the HIVE, so you will get a section of it, but there is no one solely there to give you that advice.

Q214 Sir Bob Russell: Is this a problem with individual postings as opposed to a whole battalion or a whole unit being moved en bloc?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Maybe. I think if it is a whole battalion, it is a whole bloc, you will get a list. There is the list of primary schools, there is the list of the local schools, and then it is up to you to research and find out which one you want.

Q215 Sir Bob Russell: My final question is what more do you think could be done to help you and other parents with children's education when they are moving, whether that be army, air force or navy?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: For me, having that information beforehand, a bit more fluid and a bit more evidence in place, would be really crucial, I think, an actual port of call to go to to find out, like you said, to access the reports and have that information. You have to think about so much it can be quite daunting, so if you had something that was a bit more connected would be helpful.

Q216 Chair: Mrs Morris or Mr Lockhart or Mrs Lockhart?

Mrs Morris: When you do move, you are not worried about your house or where you are going to be living. Some people do, obviously, but mine is always what are the local schools like. Thankfully, my son has done really well and is continuing to do very well at this school, but not everybody is as lucky. They are not as fortunate to have these types of schools on their doorstep. When we lived up in Blackpool in Weeton we were in the middle of nowhere and would have to travel at least 40 minutes to the local primary school. When you have a family who don't drive, it is tough. It is very tough. It is tough on the children as well.

Q217 Chair: Mr and Mrs Lockhart?

Mr Lockhart: I think each case would have to be looked at quite individually because there is that much of a broad brush of different jobs, locations, different capabilities, different children.

Mrs Lockhart: I think we were quite lucky, weren't we, with where we have been? We have been quite lucky. We got them in the schools that we wanted.

Mr Lockhart: However, like I said at the very start, I know quite a lot of people who have had absolute trouble getting their children into schools that they want to get them into, because even on a unit move, for example, there is that many people moving as one unit. If it is an individual move, you may be going somewhere abroad and it may be a bad time of year to try to get your children into certain schools. I think a little bit of thought and care needs to be given to the children when they start fresh somewhere brand new that they are not expected to be at the same level as the remaining other students at the school that they are moving to. They may have been taught slightly differently, they may be at a slightly different level, they may be affected because of the actual physical move, or they may have parents who are away at the time on an operational tour, for example. I think a bit of thought and care needs to be given to those also.

Q218 Mr Havard: Can I float an idea? I am just thinking about what you were saying, Mark. There are people who are helping you. They are good people, but they are individuals and they are doing their best and some are better than others. I am wondering where they get their support from. I am wondering where the education service supports other parts of the process to actually know and understand or give them some help. I do not know what your direct relationship with the education service is in that sense, but is somebody behind the immediate people? Do you see the point I am trying to get at? I am trying to figure out an idea for myself here, whether this is something we need to look at about the support that is given to the people who support you.

Mr Lockhart: I think that probably needs to be looked at. Having dealt with a number of different organisations, agencies, personnel and people that can help you, maybe they are not fully up to speed on everything that is available or all the help that they can give or where they can go to get help to give to you. Maybe that is an option that could be looked at.

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Q219 Sandra Osborne: What impact do you think it has on a child's education when they have a parent serving away from home?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think it would have a huge emotional impact. Again, we are really lucky with this school because we are in a garrison area so we are quite open and have empathy towards that, we are quite aware of it, but if you do go out into the sticks and you are an individual posting it is quite difficult. There is no connection there, unless you are in a garrison area, particularly with that school, so the child could be going through some emotional wellbeing and maybe that school might not be aware of it because there is no standard set across the board. Does that make sense? There is no training that I know of in place.

Mrs Morris: Not every school has the pastoral care for the child. Certainly, like Mark has said, he is due to deploy and the majority of your regiment is deploying, isn't it?

Mr Lockhart: Yes.

Mrs Morris: When you have one soldier or officer who is going out on a lone Service job and one child is left in his class and everybody else's daddy is home, that is when it gets difficult.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: They are very good here in the primary schools. They are really good. They all send letters and they do emails and everything else because it is a garrison town so they are all very aware of it. They write to their brothers and all the rest of it but, as Carol says, we all know lone—we were often in a posting where it was just us attached to a big regiment and so that was always quite difficult.

Q220 Sandra Osborne: We have been told that some parents in that situation do not really want the schools to know that their children are from a Service family. How do you feel about that? Can you understand why people would do that?

Mrs Lockhart: We were on a company for 10 years, weren't we, so Melissa and Carly went to a normal school. They were the only army kids who were there but whenever you went on tour they were fine, weren't they?

Mr Lockhart: Yes.

Mrs Lockhart: They knew that Mark was in the army. All the kids in the class used to write letters. The school was really good.

Mr Lockhart: I think the schools here are broadly aware that a lot of the parents go away a lot of the time if they are obviously serving in the armed forces. For example, at my youngest daughter's parents evening, which was about a week and a half or two weeks ago, we spoke quite a bit in depth about my going away and how it would affect my youngest daughter because she is starting her SATs pretty much at the same time, nearly to the day, that I am due to go away. There is going to be an obvious effect with her schoolwork and things like that so I can't understand why people would not want the teachers or other people to know that they are going away.

Q221 Chair: Before we get off this subject, you are not related to Reservist families but do you think the issues are similar for when a Reservist is deployed

abroad and the child of that family has to cope with the sort of issues that you are talking about for Regulars, or are they worse or what?

Mrs Morris: I think it would be the same, they would probably go through exactly what we go through, but it would be up to that individual to inform the school that their spouse—because it is not always daddy, is it, it is mummy as well who goes away. I deal with a lot of schools and I do know that they have some form of pastoral care in place, but not everyone does. They don't have the resources to do that.

Q222 Sandra Osborne: Is there any additional support provided when a parent is deployed to an area of conflict?

Mrs Morris: With regards to education?

Sandra Osborne: Yes.

Mrs Morris: With the regiment?

Sandra Osborne: Or with the schools.

Mrs Morris: We do not get a letter home saying—have you received a letter home from any of the schools saying, "We understand that your—"

Mrs Lockhart: Carly's school has. They have sent letters saying if your child has a parent that is due to deploy let them know and then they will keep an extra eye on them. That is in the primary school at Clarendon.

Mrs Morris: That is a fairly new initiative, is it not?

Mrs Lockhart: Yes.

Mrs Morris: Yes, definitely.

Q223 Sandra Osborne: So they do provide support to the children in the school?

Mrs Lockhart: Yes.

Mrs Morris: Just being aware.

Q224 Sandra Osborne: Just being aware?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think they are doing a deployment club. Aren't they doing a "Daddy's Going Away Club" or something?

Mr Lockhart: There are a number of different things like that that are ongoing, not solely with the schools but with families officers and things like that, but it is a fairly new thing.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think that because it is such a big garrison, if you have got a brother or sister or mum or dad or somebody, they will set aside certain times of the day. My daughter at the moment, her brother is in Afghanistan, so she goes along and she writes an e-bluey, and she gets that time to do that.

Q225 Sandra Osborne: Presumably you think it is an advantage to your kids being in a school where they are 40% of the kids. That is an advantage.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Definitely, yes.

Q226 Sandra Osborne: Is there anything more that you feel could be done in terms of providing support that is not there at the moment?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: If all schools were like this or in this area that would be a good starting point, I think.

Q227 Mr Havard: There are all sorts of statistics about how Service children perform against other

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children and all the rest of it, and it basically comes out more or less the same. There are some people who say, “Well, perhaps they do better because they are in a more structured and disciplined environment most of the time”, but that is not the question. The question is are they able, in this environment, to recognise their potential? Do you think your children are being able to do that?

Mrs Morris: I think sometimes it falters when children do move from other schools. The reports are not always available and they do not get to know that child. It is just a new child turning up, not everybody gets to read the report, which I think should be done, especially if they are a military child like my son who has had so many schools. They can then assess and see what he has done and where he has been and what he is capable of doing.

Mr Havard: We have some questions later on about transfer of information and understanding and so on. It is a very important area. That is why we have a set of questions about it.

Q228 Sir Bob Russell: Following on from Sandra Osborne’s question, we have had evidence that some parents in the Services don’t wish it to be known that the children have a daddy or mummy in the army, navy or air force. That is not the experience I have come across, but apparently there are examples of that. But bearing in mind where we are today is a big army area—and I think 40% or so of the students at this academy come from army families—is it the case that army families feel a lot happier that their children go to school or academy where there is a large number of children from a similar background or do they prefer them to be at a school where they are the minority?

Mr Lockhart: I think it would depend on the school, to be fair. It could benefit the children from going to a school where there is a large number of other pupils who have parents in the forces because they all understand each other and they understand what they go through emotionally and things like that.

Mrs Morris: It is a quite good support network for those pupils.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I wanted my son to not have that experience. I chose to send him to a boarding school that did not have many forces families. I wanted him to interact with other people and not be dominated with just military, so I chose a different school.

Q229 Sir Bob Russell: We are down to parental choice then. In other words, some parents prefer the military ethos to be the dominant feature and others would prefer it to be—

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I felt he had enough of that at home as a background and I wanted him to have a different interaction.

Sir Bob Russell: That is interesting, thank you.

Q230 Chair: Can I ask about boarding? You have had one child at a boarding school.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I also went to boarding school with the allowance as well.

Q231 Chair: Have you experienced boarding?
Mrs Lockhart: No.

Q232 Chair: No. Mrs Morris? No. Can I ask to those of you who have not chosen to make use of the Continuity of Education Allowance, was there any particular reason why not?

Mr Lockhart: It is something that me and Kelly looked at a couple of years back. The only reason we got brought on to it is because at the time I was working at Sandhurst Royal Military Academy and there was a lot of officers who had children who seemed to take advantage of it but there was not very many soldiers. I do not know if it was to do with the cost or money, because obviously that subsidises quite a lot of the cost. However, I think the majority of it was because the soldiers were not possibly aware that they could do it.

Q233 Chair: It is lack of awareness rather than anything else? But you were aware of it and yet you decided not to.

Mr Lockhart: Only because—

Mrs Lockhart: We researched it, didn’t we?

Mr Lockhart: Yes, we researched it, we had a look at it and it just did not work out for us because we were moving back to here and we heard about this particular school, which sounded absolutely fantastic for the kids to move into. So it was something that we looked at but discounted.

Q234 Chair: Okay, thank you. Mrs Morris?

Mrs Morris: Throughout our travels we have never had to even think about boarding school. I think at different stages of the child’s education my son—we moved overseas for a couple of years. He was due to start secondary school. It was offering the British curriculum so we felt we did not need to put him into boarding school for that. He would then be coming back ready to start his GCSEs and sit his option year. So, sometimes it is down to the timings and he will continue now until he has finished and he is 16 and continue to do sixth form here. For my daughter—again it is all down to timing—to spend a couple of years out of her primary education experiencing a life overseas and then to come back, we did not need to go through that route either.

Q235 Chair: Mrs Botha-Jones, you are a brilliant subject for this experiment. Why did you choose to send one child to boarding school and why did you choose not to send other children to boarding school?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I would have sent all of them had I been able to afford it. It carries on from what Carol has said. Had we sent the next two they would have cut off at a vital time because my husband left the forces so then we would not have been able to carry on and that is really important. We would have got so far and just not been able to financially afford to finish their education. We didn’t want to risk it so they came straight—it was this school as it happens, so it was fantastic, but they would have got so far down and then would not have been able to finish.

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Q236 Chair: The availability of the allowance was key for that decision?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Absolutely, yes.

Q237 Chair: But it was not key, Mr and Mrs Lockhart, necessarily for your decision, or was it?

Mr Lockhart: No, it played a factor, but it was not a key factor.

Q238 Chair: Have the changes of the rules of eligibility made any difference in your decision?

Mr Lockhart: At the time, no. It was pretty much me who made the decision, but what did play a part was a lot of rumour that was going around the forces at the time that it was going to be abolished completely. There were a number of different things that I had heard. What I did not want to have was children in that situation and then me not being able to afford to pay for it, which was another deciding factor.

Chair: Thank you. Anything else we ought to ask about boarding that we have not asked? No.

Q239 Sandra Osborne: What about children who are under school age? What are the issues as far as that is concerned? Is there good access to early years education? Are there any particular programmes with the very young age group?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I think they are easier to—

Mrs Morris: You can move them easier.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Yes, they seem to be easier to settle. Maybe there is less pressure. Certainly for mine the younger they were they just seemed more excited about going to a new school and less nervous or anxious. I never really had a problem with it, to be honest.

Mrs Morris: Within this garrison we have some very good primary schools. We also have the Sure Start Centres. The Wiltshire County Council do a lot and fund a lot within our garrison, so there is always Mums and Tots as well and lots of children's activities available to those parents, should they wish to partake of them.

Q240 Mr Havard: Special education needs. I do not know if you have any experience or you have any friends who have. The Defence Committee did a report back in 2006 and we came up with some recommendations about what might be needed in terms of this and these statements and policies and people being able—because they are moving. The difficulty seems to come more at the moving position than it does once they are in a settled position. Do you have any experience you can help us with? There is going to be some changes in special needs education. There is a Bill currently in Parliament to make changes. I wonder if you have any observations.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I do not have any personally but I have a couple of friends with children, one of whom was statemented and one had dyslexia, and she found that it is quite difficult for continuity. She felt she had to start all over again, and so moving every two or three years it was a case of start again and it is quite an uphill battle sometimes, so she felt quite frustrated. Then once she settled it was fine, and it happened to be again a school in this

area for the support, but up until that point she did find that quite a struggle.

Q241 Mr Havard: None of your friends or—

Mrs Morris: I have not experienced it with any friends either but in my employment I get a lot of phone calls from parents.

Q242 Mr Havard: Remind me what you do.

Mrs Morris: I work for the Army Families Federation and my colleague behind me, Lucy, is our child care and education specialist. Within my role I do experience a lot of families. They have either moved here and they feel like they have gone to the bottom of the list or their child is currently having an assessment for, be it, dyslexia, Asperger's, any other special needs, and they are scared to move because they feel that they are not going to get the support that they have received here. Especially if it is a year or two years down the line, prior to that child starting school they just—you can see the negativity, their shoulders slump and they go, "Here we go again, we've got to start all again". Obviously that is not the case and there are things in place, but I send them on to Lucy.

Q243 Chair: We have had some helpful evidence from the Army Families Federation.

Mrs Morris: I believe Catherine Spencer provided that.

Q244 Mr Havard: There are questions about numbers of psychologists and all sorts of differences, so we have had some detailed submissions.

Mrs Morris: There are schools out there as well that can provide the assistance. Appleford School in Shrewton deals with dyslexia and dyspraxia and parents can claim the boarding school allowance for that. But it is not a forever school so that child is then brought up to the level required to go into a state school.

Q245 Sandra Osborne: One of the issues in relation to mobility that has been used with us is the difficulty sometimes in the transfer of information from one school to the next school. Is that something you have experienced yourselves?

Mrs Morris: Personally I have.

Mr Lockhart: Personally it has never been an issue.

Mrs Lockhart: No, it has never been an issue.

Q246 Sandra Osborne: You have never had that as an issue? But you have, Mrs Morris?

Mrs Morris: I have, yes. You have a child who wants to go to the school and they start the new school and you have your first parents evening and you sit there and you think, "Are they actually talking about my child? Do they know what my child is able to do?" When you ask them that, they say, "Oh no, we haven't seen the reports". It is not with every school that we have been to. Then you wonder why your child is not interested in going to school, because he has not been able to get into the sports groups he has wanted to do because other people are already in there or other lessons. It can be quite discouraging for them.

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Q247 Sandra Osborne: Would you know if the information has been transferred before the child starts the school? Would you be aware of that?

Mr Lockhart: I think not unless you personally look into finding out the information or if you ask on a parents evening.

Mrs Morris: You do not get like a receipt from the school saying, "We have received your previous school's report".

Q248 Sandra Osborne: You just assume it has been done.

Mrs Morris: Sometimes they give it to you.

Mrs Lockhart: I take it myself to hand in to the new school.

Q249 Sandra Osborne: You take it yourself?

Mrs Lockhart: Yes.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: I am the same, give them a pack.

Q250 Sandra Osborne: Do you think that is reasonable?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: No.

Q251 Mr Havard: But it works.

Mrs Morris: A pupil does not get given a number. With the NHS medical system you are given a number and they can access that wherever you move to around the country. They can't do that with a pupil. If those reports were logged on to a system then the school can access it.

Q252 Sandra Osborne: Has anybody moved to different parts of the UK? Anybody moved to Scotland?

Annemarie Botha-Jones: No, that is abroad.

Chair: If you listen to the way Sandra is speaking—

Mr Havard: There is a Celtic friend over here. Be careful. You are very surrounded; there are two of us.

Q253 Sandra Osborne: It is just it is a different education system and we were wondering if there are any problems associated with that in terms of curriculum.

Mrs Morris: If we could go back to when you were saying different levels. Mark mentioned about the different levels of education. When a child moves, there are certain expectations sometimes within schools. Again, if they were given that information on that child they know that prior to the child starting school and get things put in place ready.

Q254 Sandra Osborne: We have heard evidence about people being taught, I think it was about the Tudors, three times.

Mrs Morris: I was going to say about three times, yes. Romans.

Mr Havard: I am not going to comment on that.

Q255 Sir Bob Russell: This is on the financial support assistance. Could I ask the four of you, are you aware of something called the Pupil Premium?

Mrs Morris: Yes.

Mrs Lockhart: No.

Q256 Sir Bob Russell: That bears out what we have been told in the past. Pupil Premium is paid directly to schools to support Service children on their register. Schools can spend this money as they see fit. The premium is currently £250 per pupil per year and in April it will go up to £300. The question is if you are not aware of that—and it is not a criticism—it would suggest, would you agree, that the schools have not shared this good news with the children of Service personnel?

Chair: Nor have they given you a say in how it is spent.

Mr Lockhart: So that money obviously does not go solely to aid or to help the Service children. It goes to the good and benefit of the school.

Q257 Sir Bob Russell: The Pupil Premium is a scheme brought in as part of the coalition agreement to assist children from various backgrounds, and one of those backgrounds was the children of Service personnel. That money goes to the children of Service personnel whether they are at a big school like here, where 40% of the students are from a military background, or those one or two children in isolated schools. But, of course, if the isolated school is not told that is no criticism of the school. It is up to the Committee what we do, but I suspect there may well be a recommendation going out to make sure that schools, academies, colleges, tell parents what this money is and what it is being spent on, because coming back to something you said earlier, Mrs Morris, where is the money coming from to support whatever it was, that could be where the money comes from. That is obviously up to the school to determine.

Mrs Morris: In all fairness, on the application form there is a box saying, "Are you a military family?" so the school is aware. Whether underneath that box it states what the Pupil Premium is about, I am unsure because I have not had to go down that route.

Q258 Sir Bob Russell: My question was, do you know how the Pupil Premium is being used to support your children—

Chair: I think we know the answer to that.

Sir Bob Russell:—and we know the answer because you did not know it existed.

Mrs Morris: Can I just say, it is available. You can find out. I encourage the families to speak to their chair of governors, to speak to the treasurer, because they have to list what they are spending that money on. If we move next year, the premium for my daughter would go to the school, but then she could be moved on again in six months and she has not had any benefit from that premium but the school is getting the money.

Q259 Chair: From the sound of things then you are fully aware of it. You are not only fully aware of it, you are encouraging the parents to find out exactly what is going on.

Mrs Morris: Yes, I am.

Q260 Sir Bob Russell: Also further funds are available from what is known as the Support Fund, so I think that the answers to my question are indicative

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of perhaps what the Committee need to look at. I am sorry that you are not aware of the Pupil Premium or what the various education establishments that your children go to are doing with the money they are receiving.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: We were saying about making everybody aware by the families officer or whoever. Maybe having some area solely dedicated to education, it could be at that point when you are looking for a school and applying to the school you would be encouraged to then find out about the Pupil Premium and be made aware of it. At least then you are, but if you are not aware of it you don't know.

Q261 Chair: We have been asking you lots of questions. What are the questions we should have been asking? What have you not told us that you are longing to tell us? Anything? Mr Lockhart, you are looking as though there is something on your mind.

Mr Lockhart: I think there is always going to be issues with serving soldiers and their kids in schools wherever it is across the country, whether it is abroad, whether it is here in the UK. I think each family needs to be looked at on an individual basis and, as well as families officers and everything else that goes along with it, there needs to be somebody or something in place that can help and aid families, the kids, in their life before they leave the previous school if they are moving on to a different school. It is a wider broad brush knowledge for teachers of schools, for example, who do not have a large number of kids who are kids of serving soldiers, just to make those people aware, teachers and everybody else, that they are getting kids in who may be affected, especially if their parents are away serving abroad, because I do think it affects them.

Mrs Morris: We do have a good Service. We have the Children's Education Advisory Service who are there to advise families with regards to education.

Q262 Chair: How useful do you find them?

Mrs Morris: They are very useful. They can help with applications. If an application has been denied they can help you with letters to provide it. Especially if that child also has a statement, they can assist with that.

Q263 Chair: Do you think that the Children's Education Advisory Service is widely recognised as a resource for parents?

Mrs Morris: It is advertised very widely. Whether the parents choose to use it or not—

Mrs Lockhart: I have never heard of it.

Q264 Chair: Mrs Lockhart is shaking her head.

Mrs Lockhart: I have never heard of that.

Mrs Morris: It is always in our magazine and it is always advertised with the HIVE and the welfare teams are very well aware of it.

Mr Lockhart: It is one of those if you know then you would use it. But personally, knowing a lot of soldiers and a lot of soldiers' wives, I know that they do not know about it because, Kelly, this is obviously the first time that we have heard it.

Q265 Mr Havard: One of the things about the covenant that is being taken on is that local authorities are describing their own covenants as well to see how they can relate to the national covenant. We asked the question earlier on about devolved administrations, which you do not have any experience of, but obviously Sandra and I have. It is about how you get consistency of applications across the whole of the United Kingdom, but also, if we just take England, how you get it with local authorities. So there are some opportunities. I am interested in what you were saying, Mark, about whether or not that means there ought to be more support from both sides of that so the understanding gets better and the mentors are there to help each side to understand one another. That seems to be an opportunity that I think is there. I am putting words into your mouth and I should not be, but is that the sort of thing you are thinking of?

Mr Lockhart: I believe that would be massively helpful, to be fair. It makes complete and utter sense. There is no reason why it should not be there, other than cost possibly. But I say, yes, it should be there.

Q266 Chair: It was suggested to us this afternoon by one of the students and so it might well be a useful thing to come out of this.

Annemarie Botha-Jones: Some sort of blueprint that is across the board nationally. We are lucky in this area, but then to push that out across the board and roll it out so that everybody knows how to access things in the community and in the education system and what support networks and pastoral care needs to be in place, so it is there ready when the child comes.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I hope it was not too ghastly an experience for you appearing in front of a session of Parliament, which I suppose this is, but we are most grateful to you and it has been very valuable. We will now have a three or four-minute break to see whether we can get Dai some coffee.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Andy Schofield**, Principal, Wellington Academy, **Rakesh Patel**, Assistant Head, Boarding, Wellington Academy, **David Maxwell**, Assistant Head, Head of Sixth Form, Wellington Academy, **Kate Robinson**, Head of Department, Wellington Academy, **Julie Tremlin**, Extended Services Co-ordinator, Wellington Academy, **Karen Ward**, Head Teacher, Clarendon Junior School, Tidworth, and **Susan Raeburn**, Head of Kiwi School, Bulford, gave evidence.

Q267 Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I am sorry this is a bit late in the day but we are most grateful to you for helping us with our evidence session into the education of Service children. The purpose of our inquiry, as I have been saying, first, to the students and, second, to the parents, is to look at the covenant and see whether it is being fulfilled, so we are going to be asking questions about that. This is not meant to be, in any sense, the third degree or any sort of exam or even interview. It is just meant to give us the opportunity to get information so that we can write a report eventually to Parliament.

Can I say, first, to Mr Schofield, thank you very much for your hospitality and for having us at an academy that is obviously doing extremely well and very good things are said about it. You, at least, have been listening to the evidence. Before I begin asking other questions, is there anything you want to say arising out of what you have heard people say this afternoon? There may well be, but is there anything you would like to say about it? If not, I can just charge straight into—

Andy Schofield: Yes, there are plenty of thoughts that have gone through my head while they have been talking but I am quite happy to save them and perhaps, by way of summing up, if things do not emerge during this conversation we can mention any points that we have missed.

Q268 Chair: Absolutely. The first question then is, the covenant provides that the children of Service families should have an education at least as good as the children of non-Service families throughout the UK. Do you, by and large, think that that is happening? The first thing I should do is ask you to introduce yourselves, please, because there are lots of us and lots of you, if you would not mind. Shall we start, Susan Raeburn, with you at the end?

Susan Raeburn: Susan Raeburn, Head Teacher of Kiwi Primary School on Bulford Camp, so five miles in that direction.

Kate Robinson: Kate Robinson. I am Head of Performing Arts and I am also an army wife.

Rakesh Patel: Rak Patel, I am Director of Boarding and Director of Sports.

Andy Schofield: Andy Schofield, Principal of the Wellington Academy.

Karen Ward: I am Karen Ward. I am the Head of Clarendon Junior School in Tidworth.

Julie Tremlin: I am Julie Tremlin, the Extended Services Co-ordinator for Tidworth.

David Maxwell: David Maxwell, Assistant Principal and Head of Sixth Form.

Q269 Chair: Thank you. The covenant, do Service families get as good an education as other families? Who would like to begin? Mr Schofield.

Andy Schofield: I think, and I said when I was talking to members of the Committee earlier just off the

record, that I feel the military covenant, in our eyes, is that they should get better, there should be positive discrimination. For example, and I have said this to some of the politicians I have met since I have been the head here, that in terms of admissions, if we can do it, we will admit people. If it means allowing parents to have holidays when the serving personnel come back on R and R, we will let them have a holiday during term time, and we are quite sympathetic to any requests for time for maybe the student to go for a day out with their parents if they have just come back, anything like that. We would positively discriminate in favour of the high proportion of students we have here in the military. We welcome the military covenant and, given where we are in Wiltshire with such a high proportion of military families and being in such a position in the garrison, it is something that is on our minds all the time.

Q270 Chair: Any different comment on that?

Susan Raeburn: I think certainly even before good was compulsory for teachers now—we are saying good or better is the only acceptable outcome for lessons and teaching—very much we worked to that because we said we knew people needed to be good teachers in order to mitigate all the issues we have to overcome: the mobility, parents being deployed abroad and so on. I think my biggest barrier to offering a top education is finances because we have a constantly rising roll. Currently 50% of the pupils in my school have no funding attached to them. You do your census on one particular day of the year; however many you have in your school on that day is what determines your finances. I am struggling to make a silk purse out of a sow's ear at the moment, simply because by my reckoning I am about £150,000 down on funding, and I am having to just try to stretch what I have. So it is very difficult to provide a top education without funding, from my point of view.

Chair: We will ask the others if you want to answer my question but before I do, Bob, you wanted to follow up on those ones.

Q271 Sir Bob Russell: Mr Schofield, I was very impressed and admire what you said about providing an opportunity for students to have time off with parents coming back on R and R. How does that impact on your statistics, because they are not in the classroom?

Andy Schofield: It is interesting. Up until very recently—and I think there is a glitch in the system—our attendance statistics were outstanding, nearly at 95%, and there is no real reason why they could not be even higher than that, and that is because students enjoy coming here and enjoy being in the school. I have had talks, on the back of the Command Services White Paper, with the cross-departmental group that came to visit about the law is that you attend school

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for 190 days of the year, half sessions on 190 days of the year, so it does not say by law that everybody has to be here at the same time. So we are quite happy to have an agreement. We have not implemented it yet but we are thinking seriously of having a plan where we say, “Okay, you do your other two weeks at some other time” and we put a provision in place for military families to enable that to happen and therefore their attendance would be 190 days out of the number of the days that they are meant to be here. It would just be 10 of the days would be different because they have had two weeks holidays at another time. Does that sound like that is breaking the law?

I did talk at quite a high level with Ministers about making the change. I talked to Michael Gove about making a change in the law to allow that to happen. I said also, “Academies are meant to push the boundaries and experiment and surely that fits in with the general thrust of government policy”. So I said, “We will do it anyway and then you can tell us if it is wrong”. The worst thing that would happen is Ofsted would come along and say, “We don’t like that”. That would be after it had happened anyway.

Q272 Sir Bob Russell: I applaud what you are doing, and I congratulate you on how you have squared the circle.

Andy Schofield: If somebody had an attendance of under 85%, it would not matter whether they were military or civilian, we would not be allowing them two weeks out on holiday.

Q273 Mr Havard: Can I ask you about the local authority? You are an academy so the local education thing does not quite apply, but there are local authorities that are establishing their own covenants to try to fit in with the national covenant, and there are other aspects of local authority provision that will impact on you, social services, all sorts of different aspects, isolation. Education does not work in isolation in that sense. What discussion have you had with the local authority? Is there any relationship there that might help you?

Andy Schofield: Huge discussion with the local authority. I came from a small urban unitary authority to do this job and one of the attractions was perhaps not being quite so wedded to a local authority as I had been in my previous school, which was a community school. As an academy, I have had more discussions, sensible discussions, with the local authority, a lot of it through the Military Civilian Integration Programme, which is quite massive here across the plain. I was at County Hall on Thursday talking to the leader of the council and one of the senior officers about strategic planning for the traditional housing that is going in, most of it military, into the local area. They are very forthcoming in terms of making sure there is provision for new build and all sorts of things like that. The very building we are sitting in stands as a testament to somebody’s confidence in providing a state of the art £32 million facility. It is for military and civilian, 50/50, but it stands as a statement. It is confidence that somebody had somewhere—thank you very much, Andrew Adonis—in this community.

The local authority were instrumental in making sure that this happened and have been very strong supporters across a wide variety of different areas, from the soft side, emotional side, right through to the hard side in terms of numbers and planning and funding of what we are trying to do here.

Q274 Chair: Does anybody else want to answer the question about whether the covenant is being fulfilled?

Karen Ward: I would also like to endorse that because both Clarendon Infant School and Clarendon Junior School—the infant school had two additional classrooms built last year. I have four additional classrooms being built at this point and that is because the local authority very much wants to invest in this area and make sure that parents get the right to places where they want their children to attend. They have invested quite heavily in this area, not just in the academy but also in local schools, so that has been very good.

Q275 Chair: Have you identified the same problems that we have heard about funding?

Karen Ward: I do not have the same issues as my colleague at Kiwi in terms of finances. My finances are pretty secure and I do not have the same issues with that, no.

Q276 Chair: Why not?

Susan Raeburn: It is a rising roll.

Q277 Mr Havard: You have a very different demographic in your school, don’t you?

Susan Raeburn: Yes, because I have about 40% English as an additional language, not that that affects the funding as such, but the issue we have had is that a housing estate of married accommodation was knocked down a couple of years ago. They built a new estate and, as that is filling up, more and more people are coming in. This issue about if the children are not in the school on the day of the census, it is all right people saying, “How are you spending your Pupil Premium?” Actually, I have 50% more children who should have the Pupil Premium who were not in the school on the right day so they do not have it. It is very frustrating. If you get one in, one out, that is fine, you have lost a pupil but you have gained a pupil and it kind of works itself out, but the schools that are losing out are the ones that have the rising rolls, because my numbers are going up, up, up all the time. I am expected to fund more teachers, more TAs, buy chairs and tables and books and I just do not have the funds for it and yet we are having to—everyone is suffering in the school. The kids who are already there who we have funding for are suffering because their money is having to be spread so thinly across everybody.

It is not an excuse to anything because we are still doing our very best with what we have. I have to say the garrison are absolutely amazing. The amount of free opportunities and exciting learning opportunities that they help me with that do not cost me a penny is great, otherwise I would really struggle. But it is difficult and I do not know what the solution is.

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Q278 Chair: Would I be right in saying that this is almost entirely an army area and so that you do not have much experience of any differing issues between the different Services? Would that be fair?

Susan Raeburn: Yes, it is nearly entirely army. There are a few people who are seconded from other Services but I would say, yes. I maybe have two people that are air force or navy.

Q279 Chair: Have you noticed any different issues there?

Susan Raeburn: Their expectations are quite different. I have one pupil who has just recently joined the school and has been to RAF schools previously. I think some of the issues are probably quite different, and even levels of attainment and things are quite different in those schools. When we talk about the armed Services, sometimes it is not always as clear as it might be because if you were to look at the Services separately you would get a different picture, I think

Q280 Sir Bob Russell: I want to put this question to the principal and the two heads. Are there any advantages of having large numbers of Service children in your schools?

Andy Schofield: Yes, there are. This is Wiltshire so if it was not for the Service children here it would be quite monocultural and most people would not, I would suggest—well, they are not all farmers talking like that, but it would be very—we have this bit of a joke in assembly about it and we say, “We are not a school like that, are we?” You look round the room and there are a wide variety of people from different regions of the United Kingdom and different nationalities and also different languages represented, and the same goes for our boarding house where there are quite a lot of international students. It adds a rich diversity.

I think that overall, in terms of the ethos of the school, this school is predicated very strongly on the ethos that we include everybody and our job is not to sift them out and start excluding people in terms of building emotional resilience among the students, which is absolutely crucial if you are in a military area because there is this degree of emotional nervousness in the background all the time with people being posted constantly. 4,500 troops went out about March-April from the garrison and at any time somebody could be badly injured or whatever. That makes us far more conscious, and I think quite rightly, of the emotional and social needs.

That fits quite nicely with the way I think schools should be run. Although you might think in a garrison town it would be a good idea to tell everyone what to do and order them around and march them about, that is the opposite of what a lot of our students need because they get quite a lot of that anyway from the army life. It is great when you talk to parents because they all just shut up and sit and listen. I wish the kids did that all the time. I think it is a distinct advantage. I do not think when you have that number of military families in the area you can think of it as anything other than hugely positive, because if you don't, you

get yourself into all sorts of issues in terms with the local community.

Q281 Sir Bob Russell: Thank you. Ladies, do you digress from that?

Karen Ward: I would agree. I spent seven years in Germany before I came out here. I worked for Service Children's Education, as Susan did also. We both came out from Germany to posts here. So I have worked with children with—

Q282 Sir Bob Russell: So in Germany there were exclusive military schools?

Karen Ward: Yes, but there was a civilian component as well, obviously teachers and support services, but very much predominantly military. So I had that experience for the last eight years and very much value that community.

Q283 Sir Bob Russell: What were the disadvantages, if any?

Susan Raeburn: For me it is purely financial, that is all.

Sir Bob Russell: I will come back to that later.

Susan Raeburn: I have got an amazing school. I have about 40% EAL pupils. We have absolutely fantastic cultural diversity weeks that are just probably one of the best things about the school. We are very lucky and the children are great salt of the earth kids. A lot of them who come to us have all sorts of amazing experiences and just a lot of life, a lot of energy, and I see it as a very positive place to work. I have worked with Service children for 11 years now so I feel very comfortable with it.

Q284 Sir Bob Russell: So it is on the record when the Committee come to consider all the evidence, so that we can comment on what is on the record, what are the additional challenges, if any, that having so many Service children present to your academy and your schools?

Susan Raeburn: For me mobility is the toughest one, the moving in and out all the time. People say you have the Pupil Premium now, which is good because each pupil moving in will take about seven additional hours so you could have a steady roll, perhaps more like Karen's school, but what you do not see is people going, people coming. So it looks on the surface like your roll has not changed, but children coming and going takes an awful lot of time, like showing families round. We do something called a passport when children come, so each day for their first week they are spending time one to one with an adult working on things to help them settle in. It is like an induction process. Similarly when they leave it is two or three hours work to write a report, get everything ready, contact the next school.

I was listening to the parents speak earlier about really struggling with getting records in from other schools. Schools that are predominantly forces schools are quite good at doing it because it is very common for us to have children going in and out, but we really struggle with schools who maybe only have a few of those children because it is not a common thing for

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children to leave their school mid-year. Special needs children come in who have serious needs and we do not even know they are arriving. They knock on the door, “Hello, we moved in yesterday, we would like to start now” and you know nothing about the children and you can’t prepare because you do not have the information.

Q285 Sir Bob Russell: That is a very serious challenge. Is the exchange of school reports better between military schools as opposed to between military schools and, if I can use the term, civilian schools? You know what I mean, the shorthand language I am using.

Andy Schofield: No, I would not claim that. It might be in primary.

Susan Raeburn: I find it is. If they come from places like Germany—yes, primary is probably a bit different.

Andy Schofield: Some of the primary stuff is good.

Susan Raeburn: If they come from schools from Service Children’s Education, for example, I know, having worked that system, there is a very strict system that all the schools follow. If a family turn up and you say, “Can I have your records from the last school?” “Oh no, they did not give them to us”, I would know that that would be really unlikely so I can follow that up. But I would say otherwise it is hit and miss. We have been keeping stats on it because it is taking so much time. Only about 25% of our pupils arrive with records or any kind of evidence from the last school. If you are lucky you might get it a few weeks later in the post. With one school up north, it was not a Service school, I think we made 23 phone calls to them trying to talk to somebody about special needs, and it is just absolutely so frustrating.

Q286 Chair: Is there anything you want to add, Karen?

Karen Ward: No, I agree.

Q287 Sandra Osborne: What do you think the impact is on the children’s education if they have a parent serving away from home?

Kate Robinson: Obviously it is going to have an impact but I think within the school we are pretty robust at making sure that everyone is aware of the situation. Some children cope with it very well, others do not, but I think the school itself is very understanding about that. We have counsellors; they know where to go for support, the heads of year, the tutors. It is a very robust system of support for the children and also for the parent that is left behind as well. There are good communications. I think in terms of the support we give them, it is quite strong. Every child is an individual. Some take it in their stride and others struggle a bit more with it.

In terms of their actual education, I don’t know. I think we just support them through it. All children experience traumatic events in their lives and learn to deal with it.

Q288 Sandra Osborne: What about if the parents are deployed to Afghanistan?

Kate Robinson: That is a difficult time. That is a very difficult time. It is amazing how the children will go through a period of it being difficult and quite often settle down to it, and they do. I have been through the experience myself. You settle into a new routine. The first couple of weeks are difficult. You settle into a new routine; they come back on R and R; it is difficult for a time; they settle into a new routine. It is just working with the children and the emotions that they are going through and the parent. But there is that support there and I think we do everything we possibly can. It happens, it is going to happen, we can’t stop that happening, as long as we give them the support, the counselling, the time when it does happen.

Q289 Chair: Sorry, you said coming back on R and R it is difficult for a time. Can you expand that, please?

Kate Robinson: You get into a routine. Be it dad or mum who is away, your life changes so you get into a new routine. They come back on R and R, it changes again for two weeks. It may be that the child has time off school and then they are taken away again, and it is settling back into the new routine.

Q290 Sandra Osborne: I did not get the impression from the students that there was a formal support system there. In fact, some of them said they would like someone to go to or a mentor or something like that.

Kate Robinson: They all have form tutors that they can go to. The tutors are always notified when that is happening, when dads or mums are off on R and R so that we are informed about that. That is the first support—

Q291 Sandra Osborne: Who tells them?

Kate Robinson: The parents tell them. If there is a mass exit because a battalion are off, then we are aware of it. Form tutors know, they have a list of the army children, so we know who the army children are. We had somebody in to see us just before—I can’t remember when it was.

Andy Schofield: Just before the major redeployment.

Julie Tremlin: It was the last deployment, last year, wasn’t it?

Kate Robinson: The last major deployment we had someone in to talk to us, to go through, as members of staff, what to expect, how to deal with it. Parents email us, parents contact us, they let us know, and for things like R and R we might get—because obviously that does not happen with everyone coming back, that happens at specific times. We have student managers, heads of year, form tutors. There is quite a lot of pastoral care within the system that the children can use. At one stage we had a counsellor specifically for military children.

Julie Tremlin: We have a specifically funded counsellor.

Q292 Sir Bob Russell: Who funded it?

Julie Tremlin: The MoD service.

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Q293 Sandra Osborne: Was it one specific counsellor?

Julie Tremlin: Yes. We have two counsellors here, one specifically for Service pupils that is funded by the MoD service funds that we applied for. An application was put in for the academy and for the schools in this area to fund counselling, so all the schools provide good counselling.

Q294 Sandra Osborne: Is it if the students approach someone in the support role or is there a mechanism for an approach to be made to the student? In other words, is it just self-referral by somebody?

Kate Robinson: Yes.

Sandra Osborne: It is just self-referral?

David Maxwell: No, it is not. It is both.

Q295 Sandra Osborne: It is both?

David Maxwell: Yes, absolutely.

Q296 Sandra Osborne: Is there something more that you think could be done? What could be done that has not been done at present, do you think?

Julie Tremlin: There has been talk about looking at like a lunchtime support group. We set one up in Karen's school with the support of the NSPCC Army Centre in the area, and one of the unit welfare officers came and looked at the cycle of deployment, so we know about when things are going to stop and start. He has looked at it and mentioned that he would like to come and do some more work, perhaps doing an informal either in school or after school club that young people can either buy into or access for a specific time. We are very aware that we have a large group that are about to deploy again now, they are deploying as we speak, and the unit welfare officers tend to keep in touch with us and let us know when they are going.

Q297 Sandra Osborne: Does anybody have any experience of being in a school where there is only a few Service children?

Rakesh Patel: Yes, in my last school we had seven.

Q298 Sandra Osborne: What was done for these children?

Rakesh Patel: They were all full-time boarders at the time so their families generally lived—they were from a range of Services but generally it was the Royal Air Force and we had only two from the army. Again, we had a counsellor, because we were an independent school so they used the CEA money and we topped up the rest of the money from a bursary within the independent school. It would have £3,000 or £4,000 extra on top as opposed to the state boarding costs. All the staff were given counselling training and mentoring training and then generally met them once a week. But that was with all the children, so we did not make them feel that they were different. They met with the whole boarding house, but we only had 40 boarders at the time.

Q299 Chair: One of the students in front of us this afternoon said it might be an idea, because of the

problems of constantly moving to different schools—and presumably some of the other problems as well arising from the turbulence of Service life—to have a buddy system within a school so when someone comes from a completely different school there is someone they can always go to. Have any of you experienced any such system and what do you think of the idea of bringing in such a system in your various schools?

Susan Raeburn: We use one. We have the passport system, which is partly one to one with an adult working on different aspects of welcoming the pupil in, but also that includes allocating somebody who looks after them and makes sure that they are okay for those first few days.

Q300 Chair: That is a different idea. Having an adult who can look after you is one thing but having someone of your own age—

Susan Raeburn: The adult does the one-to-one work as in they go through the induction process, but that also includes their being allocated a pupil as well who looks after them, does a tour of the school with them and that kind of thing as well. It is a two-tier thing.

Q301 Chair: Is that just a few days?

Susan Raeburn: Yes, the first few days. I think we have found in experience as well what happens is the teacher will often allocate that pupil a buddy but it is important that you listen to the new young person because they might not get on that well with the person you have allocated, so that is something that we do with the adult. We check that they are happy with the person who is looking after them. If not, they choose somebody who they feel they can relate to. Quite often children, forces children particularly, are very adapting and they gravitate to people who they can relate to and so on.

Q302 Chair: So you have such a system in your school. What about in this academy or in your school?

Karen Ward: We do very similar.

Chair: You do?

Andy Schofield: Yes, we have a similar system in place. It should be more rigorous, I think. I know when I went to Avon Valley, which is a local secondary school down the road, they have a very well-tuned integration system that they use and they almost don't let the student out into the school for about a week while they assess them. Some of it is because they have no records or anything like that on the student. We do do some of that, and we certainly have buddying up, but it was obvious from the comments of some of the students that that could be strengthened.

Given the level of turnover in people arriving at the school, like three children will arrive at the school from one family and all start tomorrow, literally sometimes it is not because we do not recognise they would benefit from having buddies, and I think, as has been pointed out, sometimes it will arise naturally in a tutor group. Somebody will say straight away, "Right, pair that person up", and some of them don't want buddies.

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David Maxwell: Also, because they are coming from a particular environment in the military life, they often know people already. It is quite uncommon, unusual, for somebody to arrive who doesn't know anybody, because they have been in Germany or Cyprus or wherever they have been.

Andy Schofield: It can be cross-age as well. We have a cross-age mentoring and buddy system in the school, so it would not necessarily be somebody automatically in the same year group.

Q303 Chair: But it is something you think should be more rigorous?

Andy Schofield: I think so, yes.

Kate Robinson: We started quite a lot this year with the humanutopia, didn't we, which was not just military but support for children in general from older year groups, so we did kick off the year with quite a—

Andy Schofield: Yes, we have had a big drive this year on cross-age mentoring and it is something that would benefit all our students. It is going to benefit half those students in the military, clearly, and it is done with that flavour because, as I said earlier, we are thinking about resilience and whether or not the students are coping with the general ethos of the school. That is the key bit for all of them. But I still think some of it could be more rigorous, yes. I do not think you can take too much care over that sort of thing.

Q304 Sir Bob Russell: I was very impressed with what you have told us about the support given to children when parents are being deployed to Afghanistan or whatever, and also the fact there was MoD funding for the counselling service. It may well be that we have to ask the MoD for this one, but I will try it. Were you notified of this or did you have to apply? In other words, were you aware of this fund or did it just arrive as a cheque in the post? How did it happen?

Julie Tremlin: No, we were notified fairly early on, because the team are based just up the road in Andover. We were advised very, very early on of the first tranche of funding and we applied for a project across the primary schools.

Q305 Sir Bob Russell: Did it happen across the country, not just because the office is down the road?

Susan Raeburn: They would only do it if they know that your school has forces children. I think we are lucky, people will know our schools have forces children, but I think, certainly initially, it was probably fairly hit and miss. If people do not know your school has Service children, they might not forward that email on to you.

Q306 Sir Bob Russell: That was really what I was probing. I am sure we will ask the MoD about it.

Susan Raeburn: We don't want you to tell everyone, because then there is more chance of us getting a successful bid in.

Q307 Sir Bob Russell: The Select Committee is looking across the United Kingdom, yes.

Andy Schofield: There was a national rollout and there was a launch of it in London, where they wrote to all the head teachers of schools, primary, infant, junior and secondary who had over a certain percentage, 10%, of military children, and they briefed everybody at a national meeting in London.

Q308 Sir Bob Russell: But when the troops were deployed—I just want to get this clear in my mind—did you have to apply for that funding or did the MoD offer it?

Susan Raeburn: That is the £3 million pot that is here every year for four years.

Sir Bob Russell: We will get it clarified.

Susan Raeburn: It is that pot of money that we have all applied to.

Andy Schofield: We bid for it, yes.

Susan Raeburn: Bid for it, yes.

Q309 Sir Bob Russell: Right, that is for the deployment. Can we talk about when the troops are not deployed, which is most of the time, fortunately? What support mechanisms do you have in the academy and the schools for the children of military personnel? Do you have any other systems of support or is it they are just children who happen to have a mum or dad in the army?

Susan Raeburn: We work very closely with the Army Welfare Service—I think all the schools do—and also with unit welfare officers. The issue that we have, and I think all the schools are the same, is that I have something like 17 or 18 different units represented in my school, so it isn't just 4 Rifles or 11 Anglian. There are children from loads and loads of different regiments within this garrison, so I have to liaise with a huge list of people because if it is that family, it is this person, if it is that family, it is this person and so on. But I think we all have really good relationships with our key unit welfare officers.

Q310 Sir Bob Russell: What you were indicating earlier is there is a bureaucracy, there is a cost involved. How is that funded?

Susan Raeburn: The cost involved for—?

Sir Bob Russell: All that administration you are doing.

Susan Raeburn: We just have to make our budget stretch.

Q311 Sir Bob Russell: So there is no additional funding for that purpose?

Susan Raeburn: No. The local authority used to give us something called the Forces Protection Factor, so when the Pupil Premium came in everyone was kind of saying, "Oh, you are so lucky. You have an extra £40,000 for your school" or whatever. I think the first year the Pupil Premium came in the local authority took away the Forces Protection Factor.

Sir Bob Russell: Which they should not have done.

Susan Raeburn: We ended up £1,000 worse off, because we got our Pupil Premium money and then they took away the Forces Protection Factor, saying, "We are not paying this any more".

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Q312 Sir Bob Russell: Which local education authority was this?

Susan Raeburn: I couldn't possibly say. I will let you work this out. I am five minutes down the road.

Q313 Sir Bob Russell: We will come on to the Pupil Premium later. You must put to this the Committee, that if the Committee was to make any recommendations to the Government—

Susan Raeburn: My recommendation would be—and I think I might even copyright it—that pupils who are forces pupils need basically a virtual credit card so that their funding goes with them. It just does not work. I really do not think this count once a year—if you have a whole regiment moving in or out at just the wrong time, you are really up the creek without a paddle.

Sir Bob Russell: I am fully aware of that, unfortunately.

Q314 Chair: Do you want to do the Pupil Premium now?

Sir Bob Russell: Thank you.

Chair: Hold on, Bob. Mr Schofield?

Andy Schofield: I think the biggest problem in terms of funding across the board for schools that have a high proportion of military families is that on most measures of deprivation we don't really register, as you clearly know from being an MP for a garrison town. If you have large numbers of students coming into a school in Tower Hamlets who have English as a second language and huge levels of mobility, they are funded at a huge amount per pupil and the schools have quite a significant funding level, higher than we do, to cope with that sort of thing. Here you do not get that core funding. It is assumed that because your free school meals level is generally low then you must be in affluent Wiltshire, and that is completely the opposite. All the things that Susan described, we are struggling to do on the back of a very modest level of funding. There needs to be an additional funding element. Local authority funding is difficult, but academy funding is an absolute minefield. The Pupil Premium comes in while the rest of it drops and it is very difficult to unpick it, but the overall level of funding is not high enough to enable us to do those longer-term things. We should not have to rely on £3,000 grants from the military to do a bit of counselling. It should be systemic.

Q315 Sir Bob Russell: I am sure the Committee, when we come to consider matters, will take into account the point that Mrs Raeburn has made, that money on the Pupil Premium you then lost because they withdrew another fund, which I don't think was what the Government intended.

Can I ask the academy and the two schools, do you claim the Pupil Premium for all the children from military families?

Susan Raeburn: I would like to think I do. Obviously we work on information that the parents give us, but we can work out often from addresses as well. We know which are all the Service family accommodation streets and things, but obviously it is the first question

we ask them when they come in. 97% of my pupils are, so—

Chair: Mrs Ward, just for the record, I noticed that you were nodding.

Karen Ward: Yes. We are 85% military at my school, so we have some 270 children who are military. Yes, we do everything I think that we can to make sure that we access that funding.

Q316 Sir Bob Russell: Going back to the point that Mrs Raeburn made when on the allotted day 365 of the year there is the judgment, are you suggesting to the Committee that perhaps when it is a question of military children arriving that the start date is when they arrive, whenever that start date is? Would that be—

Susan Raeburn: I think so. The count has been brought back further even. It is 4 October 2012 for funding. If a child turned up at school on 5 October, you are educating them for 18 months with no money for them and it is just not on, really. It is just difficult.

Q317 Sir Bob Russell: The Committee will be making recommendations, and as I understand it—correct me if I have it wrong—we are talking about the movement, the mobility of children of military personnel all across the Services, when the child arrives at the schools or the academy is when the Pupil Premium should start for that individual?

Susan Raeburn: Or just their normal funding, their normal age-weighted pupil unit. That is the biggest, because we are talking nearly £3,000 a pupil per year in primary school.

Q318 Sir Bob Russell: So it is the total funding and not just the Pupil Premium?

Susan Raeburn: Yes. The Pupil Premium is great, that extra £300, but compared to the actual amount you would get from the local authority, it is a drop in the ocean. It is a luxury if you have that.

Sir Bob Russell: What you have said is all on the record now, so that will be considered.

Q319 Chair: Before you move on, there is an important point that you have raised and that Mrs Raeburn raised just now about the Pupil Premium causing the reduction of other local authority money.

Susan Raeburn: I wouldn't like to cast aspersions that because we got that they took it, but I am just saying that at the same time we got the Pupil Premium, the Forces Protection Factor, which we had always had, stopped.

Q320 Chair: Did you have the same experience, Mrs Ward?

Karen Ward: I have only been a head here for 18 months—

Susan Raeburn: You might not be so aware of that, yes.

Karen Ward: Yes, I think it happened before I came, to be honest.

Q321 Chair: Mr Schofield?

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Andy Schofield: Not relevant. Our funding was a new arrangement from 2009 when the school ceased to be the previous school and became the academy.

Chair: Yes, I see.

Q322 Sir Bob Russell: But I am grateful for that, because we do need to investigate. The whole purpose was this was additional money, not the—

Susan Raeburn: Yes. Well, it might be coincidental that both happened at the same time, but that is why I did not get too excited about it, because I was worse off. The other thing is that my understanding is when the new funding streams were being discussed in our local authority, one of the streams that Wiltshire could have chosen to fund us on was mobility. For me, that was quite exciting, “Wow, we might gain a bit here that we have lost with the Protection Factor”. They took the decision, they put it out to the heads to “consultation”, and they came back and said, “No, we are not going to use mobility as a possible funding stream”. When I asked, “Why is that, because you have so many forces children? Surely mobility is a massive factor in Wiltshire” they said it was too complicated to be able to put it into practice and all that it would result in would be every pupil in Wiltshire would get £5.60 to contribute towards mobility, despite the fact that you might have a school that does not have any mobility. They said they couldn’t possibly narrow it down and put it where the schools are mobile, so they discounted that as a possible way of supporting the funding.

Q323 Sir Bob Russell: The Armed Forces Covenant, enshrined in law, has the unanimous support of Parliament, even if a local education authority thinks it could do differently, so that needs to be looked at. The Pupil Premium is currently £250 per pupil per year. Next month it goes up to £300. Can I ask how that money has been spent and do parents know about it?

Karen Ward: That is interesting for me. The parents you have represented here, while they weren’t representing my school, they are all my parents as well, so I was very interested sitting at the back hearing them say, “We don’t know”. The information is on our website. It is a requirement that it is on there and the information is on there but clearly, for me, they are not accessing that information because they are all sitting there saying, “No, we don’t know how it is spent”. So that is—

Sir Bob Russell: Except Mrs Morris at the end did say.

Karen Ward: She knew about the Pupil Premium, didn’t she, but I don’t think she could answer how it was being spent in the schools where her children were, and her daughter attends my school. So that is something that clearly I need to address as a head teacher, because although the information is sitting there, they are not accessing it and they do not know. But we do have to report on how we spent money in the previous year.

Q324 Sir Bob Russell: So it is being monitored? You are monitoring it?

Karen Ward: Yes, and we have to report on our plans for the future. It is quite robust, because we have to report on how that is impacting the pupils who are getting it.

Q325 Chair: Can I just say I would suspect that the issue that has arisen there is not unique to your school. I suspect that it is—

Karen Ward: Yes, but obviously as they are my parents and they were all sitting there—and I was sitting behind them—and they were all saying, “No, no” and I was thinking the information is there, that is something that I need to take back and learn from because they have not accessed it.

Q326 Sir Bob Russell: But that is also something the Committee might want to make recommendations on; that all schools in receipt—Service schools, that is—need to make it clearer.

Susan Raeburn: Yes, make it much more explicit to people.

Sir Bob Russell: That is not a criticism. This is still early days.

Karen Ward: I think there needs to be some clarification as well, because we don’t just get Pupil Premium money for Service people, we also get it for looked after children, we get it for free school meals, which obviously are relatively small in my school. There is a lot more emphasis on measuring how you are impacting on children’s progress with money that has gone for free school meals and looked after children. I don’t know if the other heads will agree with me, but I was under the impression that the Pupil Premium money for Service children was to support particularly emotionally, because there is obviously, as we all recognise, an emotional impact on having a serving parent. So it was much more about emotional support than it was the impact on progress, although we do use the money to support children’s progress where necessary.

Q327 Sir Bob Russell: Would you agree if it was publicly known how schools were using the Pupil Premium that the best practice could be shared?

Karen Ward: Yes.

Q328 Sir Bob Russell: That is the way I was looking at it, not as a criticism but rather in a positive way.

My last question to the principal and two heads is about the Support Fund. Is that something that you make use of?

Susan Raeburn: Do you mean the £3 million per year from the MoD?

Sir Bob Russell: Yes.

Susan Raeburn: Yes, I have made three bids. The first two have been successful and we are waiting to hear on the third one, but I have certainly had money to buy things for the school that we wouldn’t otherwise have bought that have really helped support deployment and helped morale and emotional wellbeing of the children.

Q329 Sir Bob Russell: Is that fund large enough?

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Susan Raeburn: No, it is never large enough. More money, please.

Sir Bob Russell: £3 million is probably about one day's wages for Chelsea, isn't it?

Susan Raeburn: We will always be very grateful for more money, but I am just glad it is there. It is better than nothing.

Sir Bob Russell: Thank you.

Q330 Mr Havard: Any vacancies at Chelsea? Some of these funding arrangements are somewhat runic, as far as I am concerned, in all the Administrations, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and so these relationships are going to be hugely important.

One of the things that is going to be changing soon is special needs education stuff and also looked after children, because of the Bill that is currently in Parliament. Can I just ask you about the special needs education bit? Our Committee made recommendations in 2006, and they have been echoed by stuff that Ofsted looked at last year, and now there are going to be changes, one of which was this passport ability idea that you mentioned, Susan.

Susan Raeburn: Yes.

Mr Havard: Can you just tell me what we need to know about special needs education as far as you are concerned with Service children?

Karen Ward: One issue I have come across is it is not so bad if a child transfers from another authority in the UK, but we had a case last year where a child transferred from Germany, had a statement in place in Germany. Having worked out there, I know everything was done exactly the same, the same process was followed. The child came to us and Wiltshire did not recognise the statement because it had been given in Germany and we had to start the whole process again.

Susan Raeburn: I have just had that as well, and therefore you have to start all over again with the process.

Karen Ward: Yes. So you get an educational psychologist in to work with this child they don't know, your teachers are being asked to write reports and they hardly know the child.

Susan Raeburn: You have to get a medical.

Karen Ward: You are having to explain to the parents that you will do everything you can to support that child through this process, but the child joined us in January and it was June before a statement came through. Yes, and it was exactly the same provision that—

Q331 Mr Havard: But you are both saying that this is something that happens because of things that happened outside the UK?

Susan Raeburn: Sometimes there can be problems with other local authorities within the UK as well.

Karen Ward: I have had two children come in, one from Germany and one from another authority. For the one from the other authority, Wiltshire honoured the statement in the short term and we had to do a quick review and turnaround to assess the needs. It was completely different because the provision

continued and we had to justify why it should still continue.

Q332 Mr Havard: You were just contextualising it for your particular place?

Karen Ward: Yes.

Mr Havard: That is a different thing.

Karen Ward: Yes, whereas the one from Germany it was as if it hadn't happened—

Susan Raeburn: You start from scratch.

Karen Ward:—and we completely had to start from scratch and it took six months.

Susan Raeburn: In the meantime, you are trying to find—and again, with no money anyway.

Karen Ward: Yes.

Susan Raeburn: The other issue about special needs as well is that again nearly all the funding for special needs is in your budget, which is—how many times have I heard that? The point is if that child was not in your school when the census happened, so if they have got a statement and they need 30 hours a week one-to-one support and they happen to not be in your school on that day, you have to fund that until the next census comes around and then six months later the new financial year kicks in, because they were not in your school. When I say, "I have no money to support this pupil", "Oh, it is in your budget." No, it is not, because the pupil was not on my census. So I have this continually. They will just say, "We have no money. We can't help you".

Q333 Mr Havard: I know you have 97% Service children, so it is a bit of a difficult question to answer. I am just trying to see whether there is a sense that it is different if they are military families' children or somebody else's children. Is it a generic problem or are there elements of it that are specific to military families?

Susan Raeburn: I think it is worse, because quite a lot of our children do come from Cyprus or Germany, therefore it is not recognised and you have to keep starting from scratch. I think that is the really difficult thing for those families. The other issue we have quite often is if they move around frequently, we get children who should have had some really serious support put in many years ago. We had a child recently move from Dorset, from Blandford, to us and the school said, "Oh, we know that they had quite a lot of needs, but we knew that they would be moving in the next few months so we haven't started anything off". We get this, don't we? It is very common.

Karen Ward: Yes, "We were about to start the statement".

Susan Raeburn: "We were going to, but because we knew they were moving, there was no point. We will let you" and then we are starting from scratch, whereas that child is seriously lagging.

Q334 Mr Havard: You are in the school, you are doing this in the school. How does the military assist you with the problems that you have just identified? Is it through the families networks or—

Susan Raeburn: We don't often know they are coming. We really don't.

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Q335 Mr Havard: Do you have any support for this?

Susan Raeburn: No, not really. SEAS is there and I have used them, more when I was in Germany, to be fair, because children with special needs can't come to Germany and access schools unless they have gone through a kind of screening process with SEAS, so I have worked with them quite intensely in the past, and I do ask my families to register with them if they have special needs. But there isn't really a lot of support out there for it, anything sort of in addition to what any other child would get.

Andy Schofield: I think it is a subtle point as to whether this is different for civilian or military. I think the point at which it is what has just been said about the recordkeeping sort of tone, they have moved to so many different schools. It is not just stated. In fact, in stated children probably you might have a better record of what has been going on. It is below that threshold, high level of need, they have never been stated. That is where you have a few problems, especially being pushed from pillar to post, going to a school and not made to feel welcome. They have a load of problems, they move off somewhere else and they move here, there and everywhere. Those are the sorts of things that cause the problems. I think the level of assessment that is needed, if this community area had its own educational psychologists you could get most of these assessments done as part of that integration programme as soon as the students come into the area. We could share it around if it was funded somewhere else. All right, schools could fund it altogether, but it is again putting stuff on to schools and saying what they would do. If it was funded from outside that would make a major difference, so you could have proper, professional diagnoses rather than wade your way through all this paperwork and guess at the bits that are missing.

Q336 Chair: It is quite shocking that we identified this as a major problem in 2006, Ofsted identified it, partly drawing on our report, in 2011 and we are still in the same situation.

Andy Schofield: The education psychology services in most local authorities have been dismantled since then, since you reported on that in the first place. Maybe not in Wales, but certainly in England.

Mr Havard: That is another issue, but it is a really important issue of how the covenant is applied in some consistent form across the country.

Chair: We are just about to get on to that.

Mr Havard: That is really important.

Q337 Sandra Osborne: You are obviously getting children from throughout the UK, but there are devolved Administrations, there are different educational systems, certainly in Scotland. I don't know much about Wales, but it is very different in Scotland. What sort of problems does that throw up, if any?

Susan Raeburn: Certainly for primary schools, we get beaten with a big stick by Ofsted if the attainment is not good enough in the school, but the difficult thing for us is that I have 40% EAL. They often come from Africa, Nepal, Fiji. They haven't done their Key

Stage 1 SAT so you can't measure—Karen will get the same thing—children coming in at any point at all during their education who have not done the tests at the right time, therefore you can't measure how much impact you have had on them. I think that is the case for those coming even from Scotland, where it is a different system, Northern Ireland and so on. We do struggle with that because you can't prove prior data, therefore you can't prove how much value-added those pupils have had.

Andy Schofield: If you are a small school with a high level of mobility, that could tip you over into an Ofsted category if you are not careful. If you have only 30 kids in year 6 and a third of them—

Susan Raeburn: I have had six in a cohort once in year 6 and five of them are EAL pupils that were not even in the UK and didn't do Key Stage 1. You still get reported on as a percentage and it is just crazy and ridiculous.

Q338 Chair: When you say EAL, is that English as a second language?

Susan Raeburn: English Additional Language, yes.

Karen Ward: We get what is called a RAISEonline report, which is what Ofsted looks at, and mine is based on 79% of my cohort, so all the percentages and we are put into the league tables and everything else based on 79% of the cohort, not 100% like everybody else, because they are not recognising—what is worse is I had basically 48 out of 61 children whose data was recognised. There were another nine children who had taken year 2 SATs exactly under the same conditions but because it was in Germany or Cyprus it wasn't recognised by the DfE. Therefore, that data are sitting there, but I have this divide, so I have the data that are out there in the public domain and then my data with these children included. So they took their year 2 SATs under exactly the same conditions, as Susan will endorse. I was quite horrified when I came over here, having worked in that system and done everything exactly the same, statementing procedures, SATs, everything exactly the same and yet—

Susan Raeburn: You're Ofsteded in exactly the same way, so yes.

Karen Ward: Yes, Ofsted come. In fact, it is HMI that inspect Service Children's Education schools and then you come here and find that if they took their year 2 SATs in Germany, they do not recognise it, do not acknowledge, but the data are there because I found it for those nine children last year. But I am operating with two sets of data, the public data, which says I am this, and then my data, which show me up here, and it is very frustrating.

Q339 Mr Havard: So in terms of applying the covenant, if the Ministry of Defence has to discuss with other Government Departments the consistent application of the covenant, this is a particular area that they need to find a solution to, either in terms of a special military formula or something—that is for them to do—that would be a fair point, would it? This is a significant issue that has to be addressed in terms of your funding.

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Susan Raeburn: Yes, it is. Prior attainment, it is massive.

Karen Ward: Also in terms of what is reported.

Susan Raeburn: Prior attainment. It is just so difficult, and quite often the figures are so way off what the reality is, or you might have made the most amazing progress with that pupil, and it is pupils coming in three months before they take their SATs and then you are responsible, you are accountable for what has happened, and we struggle with that a little bit.

Q340 Chair: Can we just get the figures right? You have a school, Mrs Raeburn, which has 97% military?

Susan Raeburn: It changes every week, but it is about 97%. New pupils start every single week since September, every week without fail.

Sir Bob Russell: Every single week?

Susan Raeburn: Every week we have two, three, four pupils start, a couple of people go, so it is every single week.

Karen Ward: We have the same.

Q341 Chair: 40% of your pupils have English as an additional language?

Susan Raeburn: About 40% are English additional language, that is right.

Q342 Chair: Mr Schofield, what about you?

Andy Schofield: 40% Service families, 10% EAL. We do have new students almost every week. It dries up a little bit as they get older, GCSE and A-Level. We try to limit it to certain weeks, but if we allowed people to come in as and when they applied, we would have people every week.

Q343 Chair: Mrs Ward?

Karen Ward: We are 85% military and 17% are EAL.

Q344 Chair: That is very helpful. I have asked this of everybody else, so I should finish by asking this of you. What should we have asked?

Susan Raeburn: "Would you like some more money?"

Mr Havard: We don't have any money.

Susan Raeburn: That is the answer I always get from everybody.

Karen Ward: There is one thing that has not been covered that I think would be very helpful, which I feel quite strongly about, and that is when data are transferred. We have talked about the transfer of records and we do rely on paper, handing envelopes over and chasing records and all that. We do have what is called a CTF, which is a common transfer file, which is an electronic transfer of children's data, but because schools do not have one system, I could input levels of attainment for my children every month, if you like, from year 3 up to year 6, but when that child transfers the receiving school won't see all that data. All they will see is their year 2 SATs result, and if they didn't take that in the UK there will not be that either. So we do get children where this common transfer file comes through, we open it up and there is no data on there for the child whatsoever. When you

think of all the time we are investing inputting all this data into this electronic system and then you find that you ping this off to the receiving school and they are not able to access that information just seems madness to me.

Susan Raeburn: I concur. It needs to be one system for everybody, a bit like the NHS system where you can—well, I am not saying it like that, but you get the idea, where it is one system where it doesn't matter whether you are in Birmingham or wherever, the information you put in—we all have our own kind of ways of storing data on the pupils and logging their progress, and I really do think it needs to be one system and then you will get all the information electronically. You are not relying on someone handing you a bit of paper that they might have lost in transit somewhere.

Mr Havard: Now I know why I am on the Defence Committee and not the Education Committee.

Q345 Chair: Mr Patel, is there anything that you would like to add to what—

Rakesh Patel: Just talking about the CEA allowance and the—

Chair: Yes, tell us about the CEA allowance.

Rakesh Patel: Obviously we know at post 16 it seems to be turned down quite a lot. We are finding that if somebody applies at A-Level then they are not going to get the funding, yet they have been with us for five years, or been somewhere else and they want to leave to move to this area. They know they are going to be posted halfway through their A-Levels, but if they don't apply before they finish their GCSEs they are probably not going to get it at A-Level. We find that sometimes if they are going to be posted, they are a day pupil, they may not get it for the second year of A-Levels or the second year of their BTech course, which means they have to transfer, go somewhere else, and obviously it is quite difficult, I think, because we are matching exam boards, schools have different option groups, are they going to fit in, are their options going to fit, which then could affect university choices. So I think it is pretty big.

Then the second point is making it more high profile, I think, for forces families. Obviously I am a great advocate of boarding, because I think it does work. It gives you that continuity, it gives you that settled feel, and then is there a chance that we can support them travelling home on weekends if they want to go home on weekends, whereas it doesn't seem to be—the CEA could work with the State Boarding Association and make that a little bit more of a push towards parents. First-time buyers within boarding—is it their world? They are not sure. Many parents, if they buy boarding for the first time, I think find it difficult to come into a boarding school because it is still the old-fashioned Tom Brown days rhetoric, where it is not like that at all obviously now—

Chair: It is not?

Susan Raeburn: No, it is wonderful. It is great, yes.

Andy Schofield: It is a bit like Hogwarts, isn't it?

Rakesh Patel: Yes, it is a bit like Hogwarts. But it obviously gives them the opportunity for their mentoring a bit more. I think it is a bit more stringent

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in terms of the academics in the evenings as well and there are the extracurricular activities that maybe some forces can't afford to take their children to the clubs around the area to access. They can do it under a one-shop roof, really. I don't think there is a lot of communication that way. If they can work with the State Boarding Association to make it a bit more high profile—

Q346 Chair: What proportion of your boarders are military boarders?

Rakesh Patel: 20%.

Chair: Only 20%?

Rakesh Patel: Yes. We get a lot of phone calls and it is, "I am not sure we can afford that". "But you do get 90% off." "Oh, I didn't know." That generally changes straight away—

Chair: I can imagine.

Rakesh Patel:—because at the moment a lot of families think they just can't afford it, because they see roughly around £10,000 and think they can never fund that. Then we explain what the CEA is, "Oh right, I better go and look into that", and then it is the process they have to go through and the documentation they have to go through before they can even access it.

Q347 Mr Havard: How many do you have?

Rakesh Patel: 20% of the house we have.

Mr Havard: No, how many in total and what are the numbers?

Rakesh Patel: We have 60 boarders.

Mr Havard: 60?

Rakesh Patel: Yes.

Q348 Chair: But it is interesting that they contact you about boarding while not being aware of the allowance. It is extraordinary that they have even got that far.

Rakesh Patel: We would put them in contact, because obviously we try to raise the profile of boarding.

Andy Schofield: I think there is a point on the CEA that it is more obvious to officer families than it is for squaddies.

Q349 Chair: Why do you think that is?

Andy Schofield: I think it is traditional. Officers traditionally used to send their children to independent boarding schools and I think there is a point here about the strength of the state boarding system, which I am a strong advocate of. We have 35 boarding schools and it is a bit of a Cinderella element. People thinking of boarding schools think it is Wesley College, it must be something private. It is not, it is state-funded. I think it was evident from the evidence that was given by the parents that there was a difference between the amount of information. It is not so much, as I say, squaddies but it is ordinary soldiers, ordinary soldiers, we are surrounded here by ordinary soldiers—

Sir Bob Russell: We don't have squaddies in Colchester. They are soldiers.

Andy Schofield: You know what I mean, ordinary soldiers rather than officers. So officers are well aware

of it, but aren't necessarily looking to place their children in state boarding schools, so I think there is a gap there. There is clearly a gap and it is something the military could address. There is clearly an issue and it also affected by the fact that they are driving down the amount of money that is being spent on the CEA. It is meant to drop from, what is it, £18 million to whatever the projected figure is, so there may be an issue there in terms of making—you say, "Well, why don't they know about it?" Maybe even if you don't make it difficult to apply for, you just discuss that it might disappear or that it might not continue, would you want to take that chance and stick your kid into a—and my point about ordinary soldiers is that it appears as slightly alien, it is an alien concept. It is possibly an alien concept to ordinary people, boarding, boarding schools. It has this sort of connotation, so I think there is a lot more that could be done about that. Then we will fill our places, so we don't want to advertise it too well, because there aren't many places left anyway. There are hardly any places in state boarding anyway.

Q350 Chair: So Harry Potter hasn't helped?

Andy Schofield: Harry Potter has probably helped a little bit, yes.

Q351 Chair: One question we haven't really covered is the amount of notice you get for when a child is coming to your school. How much notice do you get and what—

Karen Ward: It varies.

Susan Raeburn: The new admissions procedure came in about two and a half years ago now. I was a bit sort of, "Oh" because it was taken out of our hands. Basically the people came to the school where they wanted a place and they said, "We want a place in the school". You said, "Yes, I have space" or, "No, I haven't" and you just did it. Now it is the frustration of your having to apply to the local authority and so on. They are very good with my school—I don't know how you find it—in that I have a really good relationship and we usually do verbal agreements rather than making people wait for weeks on end to get in. But for me, I think the notice to leave is the frustrating one. Quite often people say, "We are leaving today". "You are leaving today? Right, okay."

Andy Schofield: Yes, a month before their GCSEs.

Susan Raeburn: Yes, "We are leaving today". I have had that. The last two children to go, one last Friday, "We are leaving today" and you have absolutely no idea and so therefore you can shove their books in and make a little note, but you haven't had time to write a leaving report or anything else. So sometimes it is the system that is tricky for them, and our system, i.e. the admissions, can get a backlog and it can take quite a long time—

Andy Schofield: I am tempted to quote the Military Covenant, really. When people turn up at the doorstep, "Do you have space in a room?" I don't say, "Fill a form in and come via the local authority and come back in three weeks".

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Susan Raeburn: No. We do, we work with the LA very closely and we bypass the red tape really, I suppose. Do you do that as well, Karen? Yes.

Karen Ward: Where we can, yes.

Andy Schofield: Unless you are completely full.

Susan Raeburn: Yes, if you are full, you are full.

Q352 Sir Bob Russell: What do you do when you are full and an army family turn up on Monday morning?

Susan Raeburn: You would have to go through the LA and discuss it with them. They will know what state the other schools are in in the area and I think you negotiate. But it is a difficult one, because obviously we are not limited in Key Stage 1 classes now to 30 because of this, but when I got to 40 in a class I was like, "Right, okay. I can't" but I had no money to obviously pay for another teacher, so I had to just go more in debt to do that. But we had to then split the class into two at Christmas, because every week there were more and more children coming, so we split it into two classes of 20. But yes, when you are full—the thing is, if you turn them away and then you are told by the LA you have to take them, you don't want to start off with that family on the wrong foot because you have already rejected them and then a week later you are told you will have them. So we do, where possible, try to say, "We will find a space or a way to take you" because you don't want to have that bad relationship really from the word go.

Andy Schofield: We take them. It depends where they live. It is easier for us because we are the only secondary serving the Tidworth area, Tidworth and Ludgershall. So if they are in Tidworth, Ludgershall, Perham Down, surrounding villages, we will take them, and if it makes a class size too large, we will always rely on the fact that somebody will probably leave next week anyway.

Susan Raeburn: It doesn't always work like that, as I have found with my receptions class.

Andy Schofield: It clearly doesn't, but that is how I justify in my own mind if I have to put up teaching classes to 37.5.

Susan Raeburn: Yes, I have classes of 36, 37 in all my classes now at the moment, except for my reception, which I have split.

Q353 Sandra Osborne: But why is that allowed?

Susan Raeburn: Because it is. There is no cap on Key Stage 2 and the agreed number in each year group for me is 38. That is the PAN, the Published Admission Number, which is an historical thing. It is a number that I legally have to stick to, so until I have 38 in a particular year group I can't say I am full, but it doesn't work like that with forces schools. I have one year group that only has 11 children in it, I have another year group with 42 children in it, so it is not the same amount in each year group, so you are trying to constantly juggle, "Oh blimey, this class has too many. I better move some from here into here". So, not only do they have this issue where they have to keep moving schools, once they are in a school you often have to keep moving them within the school to juggle your ridiculous numbers of children, because

you don't have any funding to pay for another teacher to open another class up. So it's difficult. I have really high numbers in my classes at the moment.

Q354 Sandra Osborne: But that sounds like a situation where children from Scotland then are disadvantaged, because you have limits in Scotland.

Susan Raeburn: Certainly we do have limits in Key Stage 1 here, or we have, of 30, but under the new regulations since September it is saying that we don't have to limit at 30. So if somebody wants to come to your school and they are a forces family, you have to find a way of accommodating them. But the trouble is that with no money to pay for an extra teacher, what do you do as the classes grow and grow and grow? I have no money and I can't just suddenly employ somebody because there is no money to do it.

Andy Schofield: The Garrison Commander is on our governing body and he holds these regular meetings where he regularly explains to us that there are X number of thousand troops coming into the area and there is this movement and that movement. At the moment, we are just waiting for this big announcement about the expansion of housing in the local area. About three years ago, he very confidently predicted, gave us our numbers, we put it all into the system, worked out our class sizes and none of the troop movement happened. I think it was the Anglians moving in. There was no housing. They all went into Andover. But we still had the funding. We were based on predicted numbers; we still had the funding for it. Two years later, the Department for Education realised, whatever the funding agency is now, and took £275,000 back out of our budget. They said, "But you had the money". We said, "Yes, but we had the money to create the additional—the class sizes were 26 instead of 31 across the board. We had the money, we spent it on what we were meant to have spent it on. We didn't steal it and put it in the bank". They still took, two years later, £275,000 out of last year's budget as a result of that. So forward planning, you do it properly and you can't. It is really risky.

Susan Raeburn: That is the thing, you can't really forward plan.

Andy Schofield: Really risky. Something happens, something changes in the theatre or military operations change and they don't turn up, and that happens quite regularly. We are often briefed on what is happening. I have to stop writing it all down now. I am thinking, "Well, until they arrive, I am never going to believe it".

Q355 Mr Havard: That it is retrospectively done?

Susan Raeburn: Yes, we have to be a bit reactionary, but it is very, very difficult. It is impossible for me to forward plan, really.

Andy Schofield: £275,000 is quite a lot of money to be suddenly just taken, even though we got it. Our budget is obviously a lot bigger than the primaries, but even that is quite a hit.

Chair: I think we are going to have to draw this evidence session to a close, but it has been—

Andy Schofield: I am just getting going.

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Chair: Thank you very much indeed. It has been very illuminating and most helpful and from our point of view, at any rate, rather enjoyable. We have learnt a lot.

Tuesday 16 April 2013

Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Julian Brazier
Mr Jeffrey M. Donaldson
Mr Dai Havard
Mr Adam Holloway

Mrs Madeleine Moon
Penny Mordaunt
Sandra Osborne
Sir Bob Russell

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Gavin Barlow**, Director, Service Personnel Policy, Ministry of Defence, **Martin Bull**, Assessment, Curriculum and General Qualifications, Department for Education, **Olivia Denson**, Children's Education Advisory Service, Ministry of Defence, **Kathryn Forsyth**, Chief Executive, Service Children's Education, Ministry of Defence, and **Colonel Clive Knightley**, Acting Director, Ministry of Defence Directorate Children and Young People, gave evidence.

Chair: Welcome to all of you and thank you for coming to give evidence to this inquiry on educating the children of Service personnel. Mr Barlow, would you like to begin by introducing everyone, please—or is that a tall order?

Gavin Barlow: I might ask them to chip in as we go. I am Gavin Barlow, the Director of Service Personnel Policy. I have responsibilities for policy on the Armed Forces Covenant, the New Employment Model and Armed Forces remuneration, including allowances, among other things.

Policy and delivery responsibilities for the education of Service children are largely delegated by the Ministry of Defence head office to the Army, so I have brought a team from Army Command to provide some much needed subject matter expertise and a representative from the Department for Education, reflecting its considerable responsibilities in this area. May I ask the team to introduce themselves from left to right?

Olivia Denson: Good afternoon. My name is Olivia Denson. I work for the Directorate of Children and Young People and I am also the head of the Service Children's Education Advisory Service.

Colonel Knightley: My name is Clive Knightley and I am the acting Director of the Directorate for Children and Young People, so my key responsibility is the MOD-level policy for children and young people in defence.

Martin Bull: Hello, my name is Martin Bull. I am from the Department for Education and am the chap who wrote the education chapter in the original Armed Forces Covenant. I have general responsibility to make sure that we meet our commitments in that.

Kathryn Forsyth: I am Kathryn Forsyth, the acting Chief Executive of Service Children's Education. My responsibility is for 33 overseas schools worldwide and for child care for nought to three-year-olds as of 1 April this year.

Q356 Chair: Thank you all for coming. Please do not feel that you all need to answer every question; if you do, we will be here until breakfast. In theory, we have less than an hour, although in practice it will probably run on a little. I will begin. How many Service children are there?

Gavin Barlow: It is difficult to be precise; we quote different figures in different places, I think. It is about 64,000.

Colonel Knightley: It is 64,500, based on the figures from last year.

Q357 Chair: Who collates those figures?

Colonel Knightley: Those are figures that we have collated from the information available on the joint personnel administration management information system, figures held by the Department for Education and their devolved colleagues, and the numbers for those educated outside the UK, for whom the MOD obviously has responsibility, directly or indirectly. Obviously, those are the figures that we own ourselves.

Q358 Chair: Have you brought in new systems to keep track of the number?

Colonel Knightley: Last year, an additional member of staff was allocated to look at this particular issue.

Q359 Chair: Why last year? We identified the absence of the figure in 2006. Why did it take you until 2012?

Colonel Knightley: At the risk of being evasive, I was not in the directorate at that time and I cannot find any evidence to explain why that person was brought in and allocated that task only last year.

Olivia Denson: The DfE did start to count Service children in state schools in 2008—so only two years after the House of Commons Defence Committee made its point. They count the children in England.

Q360 Chair: A two-year delay is better than a six-year delay; that is true. Are you confident that the figure is accurate?

Colonel Knightley: It is sufficiently accurate for our purposes. We need to know the broad figures overall so, for example, we can give those figures to the Department for Education so that when they are calculating the bill for the Service pupil premium, they have a reasonably accurate figure for what the bill is likely to be.

We can rely on those broad figures because when we deal with specific issues, where the number is of critical importance—i.e. when we are moving large

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numbers of Service families and their children to new or different locations—we generate the very accurate figures and maintain them throughout that process.

So when the headquarters of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps moved back from Rheindahlen to Innsworth in Gloucester, the detailed figures were generated from Kathryn's organisation, and kept up to date, so that we were able to brief Gloucester county council in great detail on the numbers, age groups and other detail on the children coming back. We have done that as well for the recent move of Army units from Waterbeach up to the former RAF Kinloss. It is an ongoing process for more troops coming out of Germany in the early rebasing announcement into the Stafford area, and that is the process that we will use for the rest of the rebasing.

Where we need accurate information, we can generate it and keep it up to date for that. We have that general figure for broad planning and we can generate the detailed figures when we need them.

Q361 Chair: So you have the details only on an ad hoc basis?

Colonel Knightley: I think saying "ad hoc" is probably a tad harsh; it is about when we require that data. It would be wasteful to maintain a level of accuracy of that data when we do not use or need that accuracy in our day-to-day work. It is the general understanding of the broad numbers and then focusing in when there is a specific requirement where we absolutely must know an accurate figure for the number and all the other details of those Service children.

Chair: Thank you.

Q362 Mrs Moon: I would like to talk about the Armed Forces Covenant, which states specifically that children of Service personnel should receive the same standard of and access to education as any other UK citizen. Do you think that Service children are disadvantaged compared with other children?

Gavin Barlow: As the requirement for the Covenant recognised, the position of Service personnel and their families certainly has the potential to create disadvantage, so we need to take action at least to level the playing field. That applies particularly when we are dealing with the issue of the high levels of mobility of Service children. We think we have made good progress in reducing disadvantage, but there is clearly more to do.

Q363 Mrs Moon: What more do you need to do?

Gavin Barlow: As one example, we have relatively recently introduced the Service pupil premium and we know that that has been well taken up by schools across England. But we need to do more work both to identify and promote best practice and assess the impact of what is happening.

As officials and Ministers have said to the Committee on a number of occasions, the Covenant is a work in progress—a process, rather than an event. We have taken some major steps towards reducing disadvantage, but we need to monitor what is going on and to be ready to improve if we can.

Q364 Mrs Moon: So the greatest disadvantage that you would identify is the fact that you are not closely monitoring the Service pupil premium?

Gavin Barlow: No, I would go on to say that we would also expect through the implementation of the New Employment Model to do quite a lot to address the underlying problems associated with Service life. We will, through the employment model and the opportunities offered by rebasing, reduce the level of turbulence that Service families experience. I am thinking particularly of the Army; when it occurs, the withdrawal from Germany will of itself reduce the level of turbulence and challenge that is currently presented to those Service families as they move to and from overseas locations.

Q365 Mrs Moon: In relation to the continuity of education allowance, are the rights to move school the same as anyone else's in the UK who is purchasing private education? If you are unhappy with the school—with the care that the school provides—do you have the same right to move?

Gavin Barlow: It is absolutely possible to make a case to move for good reasons, but we take the view that the continuity of education allowance is there to do what it says. Any parent has the right to buy private education if they wish to on any basis they wish and to move schools as often as they want, and that applies to Service children as well. But clearly if the Service parent wants to make use of continuity of education allowance, there is an expectation from us that that is there to provide educational continuity. So there is a fairly high bar on Service parents committing to that at the outset and maintaining it. But clearly if there is a good reason for moving a child, that is possible. *[Interruption.]*

Q366 Mrs Moon: Very quickly, as we have to go to a vote, may I ask you to provide the Committee with the grounds and the reasons for a right to move a child who receives continuity of education allowance, in particular where a parent is concerned in relation to sexual abuse or sexual assault on that child? Could you provide that to the Committee please?¹

Gavin Barlow: Olivia, would you like to comment?

Olivia Denson: I can say something more about that, actually.

Chair: We now have to suspend the Committee. I do not know how many votes there will be, but each vote normally takes 15 minutes. If Members could get back as quickly as possible, I would be grateful. I apologise for this, but democratic requirements require it.

Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.

On resuming—

Chair: We do now have a quorum, and I propose to start the session again, despite the small number of colleagues in the Committee. I hope you will not take that amiss, but we will have some fantastic answers even if we may be rather short on questioners. I am sorry about that.

Q367 Mrs Moon: Going back to the continuity of education allowance and the right to move, may I ask that when you provide the written evidence that we

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have asked for, you also send us details of how many requests to move you have received in the past 10 years?

Olivia Denson: Ten years?

Q368 Mrs Moon: Yes, and the reasons for the requests to move, how many of those requests were granted and the reasons for either refusing or agreeing to those moves.²

Q369 Chair: If you could answer that, we will be grateful. I must admit that it was the first time I had heard that the continuity of education allowance involved value judgments by the Ministry of Defence between different schools. We may come back to that, because we have a lot more questions on the continuity of education allowance.

Moving on to a completely different issue, reports have indicated that the main issue affecting Service children's achievements is mobility. What is being done to reduce the frequency of moves for Service families?

Gavin Barlow: Clive, do you want to start off with the short-term view on how we manage mobility at the moment? Then I might say something about the New Employment Model.

Colonel Knightley: Sure. All the single-service assignment authorities always attempt to move families at a time that causes the least turbulence to them, and they always attempt to give at least four months' warning. Inevitably, though, operational necessity, the unforeseen and frequently the unforeseeable, the knock-on effects of one move dragging through another and, last but not least, sometimes the choice of the Service parent him or herself, do not always allow that to happen. Even though that policy is in place, the reality is that there is still a lot of movement and turbulence, and it does not always occur at the time of the year that is best suited to schools admissions for pupils.

Chair: Indeed. We will come on to that.

Gavin Barlow: And clearly, in the longer term we have aspirations to move mobility down—to increase stability, if I speak English. One key area that will take some time to develop is the aspiration under the new employment model to develop new career structures, which the currently most mobile groups, particularly officers, will involve a greater degree of streaming than is currently the case. More officers will be offered more stable careers. But mobility will always be a feature of Service life—there will always be greater mobility requirements in the Services than you would typically find in other organisations—and we will continue to need policies that enable us to manage that and manage the impact on people.

Q370 Chair: What is the time scale for these changes—for example, for the New Employment Model having the effect you are talking about?

Gavin Barlow: The bulk of the New Employment Model changes will not really start to come into effect until after 2015. Particularly for the Army, I do not think we will reach the broad, sunlit uplands of the future, more stable model until we have completed

the process of withdrawing the bulk of forces from Germany. That whole process in itself, never mind our career management aspirations and so on, will inevitably involve a lot of relocations, both from Germany back to the UK and within the UK to make space. That will not just be within the Army, either, but it will also have an impact on the Air Force over that period. So there is a degree of instability coming, which we will have to plan for and manage as best we can.

Q371 Chair: You say “We will have to plan for”.

Gavin Barlow: We are planning for it.

Q372 Chair: Do you have plans in place to ensure that local authorities will have spaces for those children coming back from Germany?

Gavin Barlow: Yes, indeed.

Q373 Chair: What sort of plans? Can you describe them to me?

Gavin Barlow: Clive, do you want to say something about that first? Then I will ask Martin to come in.

Colonel Knightley: Yes. Going back to my earlier answer on pupil numbers, once the ministerial announcement of the detail of the rebasing occurred, we were then able to start generating the first tranche of the more detailed figures that I referred to earlier. Because it is a move from Germany, the bulk of that work fell to Kathryn's organisation, which allowed her to pass those planning figures to Martin for England, and through our other routes to the devolved equivalents, so they all have those figures.

Martin Bull: Absolutely. The important thing that we need to remember is that we have children who are coming between 2013 and 2017. What we have done is that the DFE has worked with Kathryn from Service Children's Education, and we have looked at the number of children in primary and secondary school and what year they are coming back to England. We have then identified the local authorities that they are going to be coming to. Yesterday I spoke to the Minister, Elizabeth Truss, and she has agreed a set of actions, which will include writing to those local authorities to alert them in advance of the number of children we expect to return, and to try to work out ways in which we can support them through pupil funding in the years to come.

Q374 Chair: Oh, good, so you did this yesterday.

Martin Bull: Absolutely. I spoke to Elizabeth Truss yesterday.

Q375 Chair: Was it helpful that we had an inquiry today?

Martin Bull: It was helpful, but this particular work was done a few weeks back, so we have been pre-planning. It was not just for this particular meeting.

Q376 Chair: Right. And how do you consult with local authorities on finding those increased school places?

Martin Bull: We kind of work two years ahead, so two years ahead the local authorities know the number of children we expect to be in a particular local

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authority in a particular cohort. Of course, because we have new children coming, we are going to go back and have a look at what we provided for those local authorities, and see whether we can provide additional funding to help them with high mobility numbers, using the numbers that we have just found out are coming over from Germany back to England. We do this by writing to the local authorities and speaking to the funding teams. Our individual teams, which work on admissions, funding and all the other areas, speak to the local authority contacts to make sure that everybody is very informed about the numbers arriving.

Q377 Chair: Okay, thank you. Kathryn Forsyth, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Kathryn Forsyth: I don't think so, no. Martin's covered everything.

Chair: We like that sort of answer. It is not just local authorities, is it?

Q378 Mrs Moon: Are you having the same conversation where bases are being closed and whole units are moving to another area and another base? Are you having similar conversations there?

Olivia Denson: Yes, those conversations do take place, and they take place across the border as well, with Scotland, where there will be some changes. Yes, we do have those conversations to assist and support in the planning in those areas as well.

Q379 Mrs Moon: And in Wales?

Olivia Denson: And in Wales.

Q380 Mrs Moon: We had some evidence from families saying that they found difficulties in finding schools when they were moved at short notice and during the school term. How are you going to improve the situation?

Olivia Denson: A number of actions have already been taken to improve that. Inevitably, there will always be some difficulties for families that move—it happens for civilian families as well—when they move out of the normal round. Short notice, of course, does not help, but in fact, in working with the DFE in the code on admissions, they have made some changes to that to allow Service personnel to use their notice of posting as a means of obtaining dialogue with the local authority about a school place, instead of having to wait for an address. At the same time, we have the Children's Education Advisory Service, which provides some specific advice and information to families who are in that position, in terms of accessing school places. That Service is successful in terms of the support it gives.

If you would like some figures, last year, for example, we supported 198 families with appeals for school places moving out of the normal round, 143 of which were successful.

Q381 Mrs Moon: So obviously you monitor the numbers of children moved at short notice and in-term moves.

Olivia Denson: The ones that contact us for help and advice. I am sure that there are others who do not use

us for that necessarily. They do not have to, but we keep data about the ones that contact us and the ones that we support and help.

Q382 Mrs Moon: So you do not have data on how many children are being impacted.

Olivia Denson: No, not exclusively.

Q383 Mr Brazier: What proportion of local authorities has now accepted the notice of posting in lieu of a fixed address? That does seem to be—representing an existing base—the absolute key to it.

Olivia Denson: All the local authorities have had to because it is part of the legislation. However, the issue for Service families is that when they move, they may be moved to a location to work, but they could be housed eventually some distance from where they will actually be working. That is the problem with using the notice of posting. It might enable them to approach a local authority, but when they finally get their housing allocation, they could be living somewhere else, which is not as close to the school as they thought. In a sense, that problem does not always make it easier for them to get their places. The legislation is helpful, but only so far.

Q384 Mrs Moon: What difficulties do you experience transferring Service children within the devolved Administrations?

Olivia Denson: The admissions legislation outside of England is very different in all areas, and it is actually a lot easier for children to get places, because they still use the catchment area of schools—taking the number of children that live in the catchment—in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Q385 Mrs Moon: Do you find it easier to move children in the devolved Administrations?

Olivia Denson: We do not move the children, but when they move, it is easier for them to get places in the devolved Administrations.

Q386 Mrs Moon: You have two members of staff—one in Scotland and one in north Yorkshire. Why did you choose north Yorkshire to talk to devolved Administrations?

Olivia Denson: Sorry, we do not have two members of staff in those areas. We have two members of peripatetic staff who are based in England. Because of where they live—they work from home—one focuses on the north of England and Scotland and one on the south and the rest of England. They provide support across that divide. We just have two peripatetic staff.

Q387 Mrs Moon: It says one is employed in north Yorkshire by North Yorkshire council.

Olivia Denson: That is for a different project. That is a separate, one-off project.

Q388 Mrs Moon: Can you explain what that project is?

Olivia Denson: Yes. It is to look at the transfer of records and information about Service children when they move. It is a year-long project to come up with

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statutory guidance that will be used to produce the information base that is needed for schools when children move.

Q389 Chair: That is an issue of records then, is it?

Olivia Denson: It is records—transfer of information about children, transfer of records, yes. That post is there for that.

Chair: I see, okay. That is helpful, thank you.

Q390 Mr Donaldson: Significant numbers of Service families are affected by parents serving in a conflict area—Afghanistan being one example. What does the MOD do to reduce the impact on the children of such families?

Colonel Knightley: If we start with the Service person himself or herself, clearly the now very comprehensive pre-deployment training and preparation for the deploying Service person and his or her family covers all areas of welfare. Included in that is advice on the impact that the deployment is likely to have. The emotional cycle of deployment is a technique that we use. As well as providing that information to the parents, we importantly strongly advise them—we cannot force them—to let the school where their children are and any other youth organisation that they are involved in know that the serving parent is going to be deployed and over what period of time.

It is probably important to mention that not all parents will make that contact, some because they simply fail to do so and others as a conscious choice because they, for whatever reason, do not want the fact that they are deploying to be exposed to others. As long as parents let such organisations know, that is where we look to see the impact of various things. Key among those is the Service pupil premium and equivalents elsewhere—where they exist—but, more importantly, is the MOD's £3 million fund, which allows those schools, when they know that they have children with impending deployments, to focus on the additional pastoral care to take them through.

Q391 Mr Donaldson: In the event that tragedy strikes and a soldier is killed on active Service and a child is in a fee-paying school—as I understand it the current arrangements are that the income of the soldier ceases with immediate effect—what arrangements are in place to support families in those circumstances?

Gavin Barlow: Pay ceases, but other forms of income then kick in through the pension and the compensation scheme. Clive, do you want to say any more about how that experience happens in practice?

Colonel Knightley: It is not my area of expertise, but you can talk to the general—

Olivia Denson: In general terms, we do have a benevolence information package available. A number of schools have already made it clear that in the circumstances that you described they would continue to fund a child, usually to the end of a stage of education. We have a number of welfare contacts that can actually have that dialogue with a school if a situation such as that arises.

Q392 Mr Donaldson: What do you mean by “stage of education”?

Olivia Denson: The end of a key stage, such as year 7, year 11 or whatever. Generally, where we know that they will make that kind of provision, the schools will step in and do it. There are a number of other sources of funding if funding is not immediately available from the school, but we will then support and help to find appropriate placing, if it is necessary for some reason, for the child to change. In most instances, however, the school will respond positively and keep the child until the end of the stage of education.

Gavin Barlow: Indeed, continuity of education allowance is also maintained until the end of the stage of education in the event of a death.

Q393 Mr Donaldson: It is only anecdotal, but I dealt with the case of a constituent and there seemed to be a gap. In the end, it was the Army Benevolent Fund—the soldiers' charity—that stepped in and plugged the gap, so I welcome what you say and I hope that the gap has been covered in terms of at least some provision until other measures are put in place. In this particular case, I think it took an inordinate amount of time for the pension and other things to kick in, so there was an immediate loss of income with absolutely nothing in place to cover this kind of thing. I have noted what you said.

What, if any, involvement do you have with schools?

Gavin Barlow: In what circumstances?

Mr Donaldson: In terms of the practical support that you need to give children of Service personnel who are on operational deployment.

Martin Bull: Perhaps I could answer that question. That is what the Service premium is for. When the Service premium came in, alongside the pupil premium, it was very much designed to meet social and emotional needs as well as dealing with mobility issues. It is very different from the pupil premium, which is purely about disadvantage. Service children are not disadvantaged in the traditional sense. They perform better than the national average. They do well in GCSEs. The reason why we have the Service premium in place is that they can experience differences in schools and in their family environment that lead to them feeling upset and distressed. The Service premium has been used to provide emotional support—pastoral support—providing help when perhaps mum or dad are at war and they have anxieties and concerns; and for death in service, supporting the child and being conscious that the child is going through a difficult time. It is very much there to provide the cost that comes with having somebody to sit with a child and look after the child. We have some very good written case studies from the first year, when the Service premium was only £250, where schools have used the money wisely to provide exactly that sort of care.

Mr Donaldson: Chairman, it would be useful if we could have a note on the arrangements in place to cover the gap between soldiers' income ceasing in the event of death and other measures kicking in to provide support in circumstances where because of the nature of their Service their children attend fee-paying schools.

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Q394 Chair: Would it be possible for you to provide us with such a note?

Gavin Barlow: Yes, we could do that.³

Chair: Thank you very much.

Q395 Mrs Moon: You talked about the Service premium, the £250 that is there to help with the social and emotional needs of children. From my background reading, I understand that the money that goes to the devolved Administration in Wales, which according to my figures is close to £250,000, does not actually follow the child.

Martin Bull: It is only in England—

Mrs Moon: What can we do to ensure that Service children who are being educated in the devolved Administrations have their social and emotional needs dealt with, and that the money we provide to do that reaches those children?

Olivia Denson: We have a number of networking groups in the devolved Administrations, and they have each considered, and are considering, whether they need to replicate the pupil premium. The Welsh group is considering that. It is a Government Committee. At the same time, the £3 million fund is provided on a bidded basis to schools that have that kind of need. Many of our schools in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland benefit from the £3 million fund to support things such as deployment. The Scottish system has decided that it does not need to replicate the pupil premium. It has other ways of meeting the emotional needs of children. Northern Ireland already has a premium, and the Welsh group is considering whether it needs to replicate that. It will make that decision based on its own policies.

Q396 Mrs Moon: Has Scotland decided that it does not need the money?

Olivia Denson: It uses the money from the £3 million fund. It does not delegate money as a pupil premium to schools. The allocation of resources to schools in Scotland is done differently from that in England.

Mr Holloway: I just want to back up what Jeffrey was saying. I have met a number of people where the gap was being filled by friends or regimental funds.

Q397 Chair: We will get a note.

The £3 million fund is not devoted entirely to solving the problem of the transfer of records, is it?

Gavin Barlow: No.

Colonel Knightley: No, not at all.

Q398 Chair: Why is there still a problem with the transfer of records? We identified the problem in 2006. Ofsted identified the problem in 2011. Last month we took evidence from head teachers who say that there is still a problem. Why is there still a problem?

Martin Bull: There is a document called the common transfer file, by which schools have to transfer information within seven days when a child moves. It contains information about the pupil in terms of their educational attainment and where they are in their key stages, and that does tend to be completed. Records from overseas schools to maintained education seem

to work reasonably well—I think you would agree, Kathryn—with records going back as good as the teachers who are completing the particular forms to allow the information to travel.

Where you have the problem is with the additional information that comes with a child—things like the portfolio of evidence, the examples of their work and the stuff that really tells you about how well a child is doing and that the teacher needs in order to make the right assessments when they arrive. It is difficult to transfer large files, because that is quite costly, so parents are often required to take the file with them when they move. Generally, my feedback is that that works well, but on occasion it does not work so well, because mum and dad are packing lorries, and putting their children in cars and getting on planes; a lot of other factors come into play, so it is not completely perfect.

A piece of work is going on, however, that Olivia might be able to enlighten us about; it is using money from the £3 million fund to do a piece of research that will look at having something that might support the common transfer fund—not to replace it, but perhaps enabling better transfer of records.

Olivia Denson: We have used a very small part of the £3 million fund to fund a project, which is one person working in North Yorkshire to do the necessary research. In the bid, we referred to the previous findings of the House of Commons Defence Committee and the Ofsted report, saying that the piece of work was essential for those reasons. He has done the research across the devolved Administrations as well; one of the problems is the different legislation for the needs of transfer documentation, so he has taken account of all the requirements across the devolved Administrations. He also sought advice and input from SCE and, in consultation with the schools he has worked with, he has now come up with draft guidance for schools on what needs to transfer and on what is really helpful to teachers about children when they move. It does not in any circumstance replace the local legislation, instead it is supplementing and adding to it. It is about making sure that the information is transferred quickly and directly between schools, possibly using CEAS as the postal interface when we do not know where children are going. One of the reasons why parents end up taking the files occasionally is that we do not always know where the children are actually going to be going to school, even if we know the area, for all the reasons we rehearsed earlier.

The idea is that everyone is signing up to this document, which will become a Service children's transition document to be used universally by Service children.

Q399 Chair: At Tidworth, we were disappointed to find that an issue that we had identified in 2006, which was identified again by Ofsted in 2011, remained an issue last month. I am pleased that something is being done, although it is painfully slow.

Something else that has arisen is the issue of SATs results. As we understand it, the Department for Education does not recognise SATs results from

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schools overseas, even though the conditions are the same. Is that true?

Kathryn Forsyth: No. I have spoken to Karen, who was one of our deputy heads in Service Children's Education and who I believe gave you the evidence. What she was talking about was the RAISEonline document that is used for Ofsted. I am not sure where the disconnect is. Our information goes to the Department for Education—it is recognised—but what was not happening was that the information was then transferred to a RAISEonline document that Ofsted use for school inspections, which is helpful in measuring progress.

Q400 Chair: But the end result is that people feel that the SATs results are not recognised in this country.

Martin Bull: There was a glitch in the data in one particular year when this happened. SCE scores have a serial code, a number, like other local authorities; in this one particular year, there was a glitch when the data were not transferred to RAISEonline. The problem has been resolved and will not happen again, but that is where the information about SATs not being recognised came from.

Chair: If you recognise the problem and have put in place something to ensure its resolution, let us move on to special educational needs.

Q401 Mrs Moon: The 2006 report from the Committee identified particular problems for families with children with special educational needs. One problem that still seems to exist is local authorities recognising previous schools' statementing processes. What can be done to ensure that Service families' children who have statements do not need to start the assessment process all over again?

Olivia Denson: It is part of the legislative process, and there are a number of things that we have done in the interim to ease that. Inevitably, there will always be difficulties when children with special educational needs move, because the educational needs are contextual. It is about where the child is and how they relate to their peer group; their needs may be different in another location.

Local authorities do recognise other local authorities' assessments and statements, but they may not make provision to meet those needs in the same way as the previous authority was doing. Sometimes they do not explain it very well to the family who are on the receiving end. However, if a family let us know that they have a problem in that way, we will always provide support and advice to them at a number of levels—in terms of simple advice and information about what they can do; sometimes it is more complex in that we have a case meeting with them and the school or with the local authority; and we will ultimately go to appeal or tribunal if there is outstanding resistance to meeting the needs of that child.

Q402 Mrs Moon: Can I ask about your procedures in relation to safeguarding children, and in particular safeguarding children with special educational needs? Do you have standards that schools are required to

comply with, both where you have continuity of education allowance and where the schools are within the military school system, to ensure that where there are allegations they are reported to the local authority's safeguarding children boards or follow the safeguarding of children process?

Colonel Knightley: On the first point, just to be absolutely clear, the Ministry of Defence has a near statutory responsibility where we are acting in lieu of a local authority overseas in delivering education and other child services. In overseas locations, we hold the responsibility for all the safeguarding. We stand up, we have our own local safeguarding children boards, and we have an assured process that delivers it. Within the UK, that statutory responsibility lies with the local authority or equivalent in the area, and we have no statutory powers to investigate or take action, but clearly we have the same responsibilities as any other citizen or organisation who becomes aware of an issue that needs to be raised promptly with the appropriate authorities. Olivia, who gets involved in that process, can put some flesh on those bones.

Olivia Denson: If we are made aware of an allegation or concern, we approach the local authority concerned. It is their decision whether they take any further action or investigate it. We always ask a family who make any allegations to us—bear in mind that our information usually comes from Service families—to put them in writing to us. We do not wait for that while we proceed; we advise them about what to do while we make the referral to the local authority ourselves. It is then up to the local authority whether they investigate the allegation and what they do about it. We remain involved and engaged with them while they do that, but frequently they choose not to go beyond that point and investigate. If they choose to investigate, there are obviously all sorts of protocols that come into place in terms of their responsibilities with schools, and ours as well.

In a situation where there are serious safeguarding concerns and we are anxious about the well-being of children in a setting, we suspend the school from the list of schools that families can go to. From that point on, no Service child using CEA would be admitted to that school. Families with children already there are offered the opportunity to move their children without loss of entitlement or loss of funding. The thing swings into place very rapidly at that point. It is then up to the families whether they move their children or not.

The issue sometimes with children with special needs is finding an appropriate alternative place for them. Boarding and special independent schools that offer the sort of support that some of these children need are few and far between. None the less, we will not leave any child in a setting that is clearly not appropriate or right for them. That swings into place and we then work with the local authority by simply being involved in their meetings and so on to ensure that the support and the necessary information about the children is collected—the casework and everything else. We work with the local authority on improving and restoring the school to its proper status.

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Q403 Mrs Moon: Could you provide the Committee with details of how many schools have been identified where families have come forward with concerns and allegations in relation to abuse, and could you tell us the form of that abuse? You do not need to name the schools. I appreciate that. Will you also tell us whether any children are still being funded in those schools and whether guidance has been issued to families who remain in the school?

Olivia Denson: Certainly there is one at the moment where that has been the case, and there has been one in my past that I can recall in doing this work.

Q404 Chair: There is one.

Olivia Denson: There is one at the moment.

Q405 Chair: And only one.

Olivia Denson: Only one at the moment where we have taken those steps.

Q406 Chair: Only one where you have taken those steps. Only one where you have decided that there is an issue of importance?

Olivia Denson: No, it is not us who make the decision. It is the local authority or the police that make the decision, not us. We are not the investigating authority. We make the referrals to the investigating authorities. They might investigate and say there is no question to answer. There have been other allegations brought to our attention, but one of the issues here is that sometimes families will make allegations based on their own view of a situation, which, when it is then further investigated, does not hold up as a safeguarding concern.

Q407 Mrs Moon: So there are other schools where—

Olivia Denson: Where there are allegations.

Q408 Mrs Moon: Could we have an indication of how many other schools? How many allegations against each of those schools? Also, whether they have been investigated and the time period from which you had the start of allegations to action being taken?

Chair: We are not looking for the names of the schools, because that would be a breach of all sorts of things.

Olivia Denson: Yes, I can provide that. How far back would you like me to go?

Q409 Mrs Moon: Ten years.

Olivia Denson: I don't know if we have data for that.

Q410 Mrs Moon: They would sit side by side.

Olivia Denson: We have only been in existence since 2004, so I have nine years' worth of data.⁴

Chair: Thank you very much. Getting more deeply into it, the continuity of education allowance. Julian Brazier.

Q411 Mr Brazier: Could I say first, although it is not related, how nice it is to see Martin Bull here? I remember, in a previous Parliament—I was on the

Defence Select Committee 10 or 12 years ago—when it was absolutely impossible to get any interest. It is a measure of how much things have moved on under successive Governments, Labour and Conservative, that we now have such good input from DfE.

On the continuity of education, we have heard from Service families that parents want to maintain continuity, but the recent tightening up of the rules on eligibility appears to have caused misunderstanding and concern. Certainly those of us with Service bases have had letters on this. What are we doing to make the system clearer, Mr Barlow?

Gavin Barlow: We have done quite a lot of communication on the continuity of education allowance already. You will recall, I think it is fair to say, that there was quite a controversial review of continuity of education allowance that reported in 2011. There was a lot of communication at that stage about what the implications of the review were. Latterly, we have been reviewing—we are reviewing—the presentation of the detail of regulations around continuity of education allowance, which are contained in the document called JSP 752, which a lot of Service families are familiar with, and it is being restructured. We have consulted with representative Service personnel and units to make sure that it is much better and easier to understand than the current set. It is not about substantive changes, but making it easier to see what the allowance is about, how it is administered and so on.

Q412 Mr Brazier: There has been a significant reduction in the number of claimants. Can you say something about balancing, really, three things: the needs of the Service child; the requirement, clearly, to cut costs, which has inevitably been a factor at the moment; and, thirdly, the key importance of maintaining the Service interest in protecting particular areas? For example, it has been put to us that the new rules can give a perverse incentive for people who have had particularly expensive training where there is only one location for that specialist skill. If they make a career move, and effectively the taxpayer loses that training, they will then be able to continue with the continuity of education allowance, and if they stay in an expensive speciality, they will lose it. Is that factor taken into account? What is the underlying parameter of the review? What factors are being balanced?

Gavin Barlow: Let me separate that out. First, dealing with the issue of costs, we took steps under the SDSR to review the whole allowances package, and that included the continuity of education allowance, in particular. There were a number of measures taken at that point to tighten up the allowance, and one in particular that has had the most significant impact on numbers, I think, was the removal of the automatic entitlement to involuntary separation status for CEA for appointments in London and, indeed, for sea-going appointments, as well.

Our aim, in doing that, was to re-enforce the principle that the continuity of education allowance is there to support families who are committed to accompanied Service and are required by the Service to move and therefore they have to be given that option to maintain

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continuity of education through boarding. All of the reviews that have taken place, both at the time of the SDSR and the subsequent review that completed in 2011, and further policy developments as we have gone on through the New Employment Model, have stuck to that principle.

Q413 Mr Brazier: So the Service interest does not come into it. The fact that there may be a requirement to keep an expensive skill in one location, but people then realise that it is only by giving up on that skill and moving off with a career choice that they can keep—it is a little bit like, and I do not mean to draw an offensive parallel, how the benefits system, or something with a sound principle behind it, can end up having perverse consequences for the taxpayer.

Gavin Barlow: The continuity of education allowance is not designed to be a retention incentive. I entirely accept that, for some individuals, it is, de facto, because it provides an enormous amount of benefit for them, but that is not the purpose of the allowance and the policy is very clear that we will not use it for that purpose. If people, through their specialist requirements and their posting plots, do not any longer attract the continuity of education allowance, that may create retention issues for those particular groups or specialist branches. Clearly, we do, within the remuneration constructs, have other mechanisms through which we can, if we need to, deal with groups who might see retention problems as—

Q414 Mr Brazier: I understand, but when you are trying to have a more settled Service, my point is not just about retention, but about retention in that skill. A simple career move to another, different, speciality—anything. I am not going to keep you for too long on that, but whether it is somebody who has developed the cyber-warfare construct in the Royal Signals, which can only be delivered from Corsham, one could give a large number of examples where you are going to have a perverse incentive, from the Services' point of view, that is not retention in the sense of staying in uniform. The problem is that they are going to move away from where their expensive skill can be used. But the answer is no, it is not part of it.

Can I move you on? You say, in the written evidence, if a child's family home is static for "an extended period of time" and the family is not mobile, the child is not subject to the upheavals of Service life and there is no need for CEA. That is obviously a perfectly reasonable proposition. But how long is an extended period? Because there is a danger that a family's eligibility may chop and change. What does "an extended period of time" mean?

Gavin Barlow: Can you remind me, Olivia?

Olivia Denson: A tour of assignment: three years.

Gavin Barlow: Yes.

Q415 Mr Brazier: Three years, so effectively if you do two postings in a row in the same place during the second one your entitlement to CEA will disappear. Or will it disappear if you do a third one? How does that work?

Gavin Barlow: It certainly would be subject to review so it would not necessarily disappear. Part of it is

about triggering a process of review so that we can be clear that they are still entitled to the appropriate certificate. Ultimately it is about the assignment authority making a judgment on the probability of further moves.

Q416 Mr Holloway: But it can work the other way from what Julian Brazier is saying. Able people can take jobs that they would not otherwise take overseas in order to get the allowance. I can think of a one very prominent example who took a very big job in Afghanistan for just that reason.

Gavin Barlow: It could do.

Q417 Chair: But you will be given notice if your CEA is likely to be reduced or removed?

Gavin Barlow: Absolutely, yes.

Q418 Chair: How much notice?

Gavin Barlow: That would depend on the circumstances. For example, we do not remove people from CEA support in the middle of a stage of education—I think I'm right in saying that. Once you are into the defined stage then you know that you will maintain CEA, provided that you have not broken one of the other conditions. Essentially that is the case.

Q419 Mr Holloway: One of the widows from Afghanistan made the point to me a couple of years ago that one of the things she discussed when she was getting married to her husband was about whether he would stay on as a married officer and the fact they would get what was called the school fees allowance. I think you would save loads of money. But an awful lot of people took on their careers on the basis that this was part of the package. I imagine that we have lost some good people because of that. It is particularly hard for the widows. If your husband had managed to survive and live another 15 years, your kids would have gone to what invariably would be better schools. They lose that too when their husband dies.

Gavin Barlow: I don't think that is a new point as a result of the reforms.

Q420 Mr Holloway: No, I understand that.

Gavin Barlow: Indeed, for the bereaved, as discussed already, the allowance is maintained until the end of the educational stage.

Q421 Mr Brazier: I think I know the answer to this, but I will ask it anyway. Given that the CEA is available to all serving personnel, why is it not taken up more widely by other ranks? What is being done to make other ranks more aware of the allowance?

Gavin Barlow: The split is about 60:40 officers to other ranks. It has been pretty stable for as far back as we have gone through the records on CEA. It is partly a demographic point. In terms of the numbers of Service personnel that we have, the vast majority are other ranks. So, many of them serve a relatively short period in the Services. That is particularly true of the Army. They will tend not to have so many children who are eight and over.

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Q422 Mr Brazier: Just on that point. It would be helpful if you could give us the other split which is between those who started as other ranks and those who have been officers all the way through. In other words, if you moved that crucial tranche of people who have become officers by the time their children are old enough for secondary education, do you know what the split there is?

Gavin Barlow: I don't. I will see if we can answer it.

Q423 Mr Brazier: Could you write to us? That would be very kind. A final question on this but an important one: in your written evidence you told us that a complete re-write of the CEA policy is under way. Clearly there will be a certain amount of apprehension out there. When do you expect it to be completed and what is the main aim?

Gavin Barlow: I am happy to clarify that. I referred earlier on to the fact that we are revising the wording in JSP 752, which includes the CEA rulebook, if you like. That is what I am talking about. It is not about changing the policy substance. We have no plans for significant revision of the policy substance at this stage.⁵

Chair: It is helpful to know that. Thank you.

Q424 Mrs Moon: Can I take you back to the pupil premium? You have already told us that you are looking at gathering evidence about how it is spent. We already know that you are chasing it up with Wales and looking for new ways to make it work there. Can you tell us whether this information is publicly available? If it is, can we please have copies of the information you hold?

Martin Bull: The Department for Education is not required to gather evidence about how the Service premium has been spent, but we have collected soft case studies for the first year, which are on the DFE website and have been shared widely with schools just to give an idea of how they should be thinking about spending the money.

Schools are required to say how they spend the Service premium and to publicise that on their website. We will know how much impact the Service premium has had from performance tables. Also, Ofsted will look at it as part of its inspection. We will hear results over time through those routes.

Colonel Knightley: Part of the bidding process for the £3 million fund requires schools that are in receipt of the Service pupil premium to show how they have used it, as part of the support for their bid for the £3 million fund. There are a number of ways in which we are getting a good feel for how it is being used.

Q425 Mrs Moon: And in relation to Wales?

Olivia Denson: We can only wait and see what the Welsh Government decide to do.

Q426 Mrs Moon: Can you keep us in touch with any decisions that come out?

Olivia Denson: Certainly.

Q427 Mrs Moon: For the support fund for schools, do you keep records of applications for additional funds and how the money is spent?

Colonel Knightley: Yes. The £3 million fund—having inherited the process, I can claim no credit for it—is impressively well assured. I have described some aspects of the bidding process. Unlike the pupil premium, which is a pushed fund, if the bid is not sufficiently strong, schools simply will not get money from the fund. Also, before they can put a bid in for the subsequent year of funding, they have to show how they have used the previous year's money. We have an audit process at the end of the year, and we are just gathering the evidence from the first year of the fund.

We are looking at every single successful bid that was made, seeing how schools spent the money—in very much the same way as Martin described, on the DFE website—and using that to collate and distribute good practice, so that people can put even better bids in for subsequent rounds. That is working very well.

Q428 Mrs Moon: Is that £3 million England only?

Colonel Knightley: No. This is pan-UK. The MOD's £3 million fund crosses all the countries in the UK. It is the one fund. It is a level playing field for all four home countries.

Q429 Mrs Moon: Given that the pupil premium does not go to Welsh or Scottish schools, how do you assess what they have done, if you are not able to show how they have utilised the pupil premium?

Colonel Knightley: In the process by which those bids are looked at, which results in the ultimate decision on funding, we have a series of regional panels that look at bids from a particular region. Within Wales, they were looked at by a separate body. That allows the local knowledge and understanding to be present when the bid is assessed. The panel process, which ultimately comes to a single over-arching funding panel in our headquarters, also looks at the Service pupil premium dimension. There is a comparison, in terms of the funds that might be allocated, between a school in England, which is also getting funding through the Service pupil premium, and a school in Wales, which is not.

I can give you a specific example. I was a member of that final funding panel. In one specific case we were endorsing a decision made by the regional panels that reflected that and made sure that the £3 million fund was—we are back to advantage and disadvantage—properly weighted to reflect the fact that the pupil premium is not currently in place, certainly not in Wales.

Q430 Mrs Moon: Can you give us evidence of how that money is spread across the UK?

Colonel Knightley: The totality of the £3 million?

Q431 Mrs Moon: Yes. So that we get an idea of where the spend is. Obviously, we would expect a concentration of money in certain areas where we are aware that there are large numbers of Service families. Please do not think that we are looking to see it at the

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level of individual schools, but it would be interesting to have a footprint of where the money is.

Colonel Knightley: For that very reason, we do map the data, so we can show you them by county and by country.⁶

Q432 Mrs Moon: Are you carrying out any research into the best practice and use of the additional funds?

Colonel Knightley: Yes, because the audit process for the £3 million fund is as objective as we can make it, looking at where success has been achieved. We do visit as many schools as we can. We simply do not have the people available to visit all of them. In some cases, we will be taking evidence from the school. In as many cases as we can, we will be going out and visiting the school concerned, and we then analyse those data. That is where we get that best practice from.

Q433 Mrs Moon: Given that the pupil premium is not in Scotland or Wales, are you happy that you can still meet the Service Covenant requirement that children of Armed Forces families are not disadvantaged anywhere in the UK?

Colonel Knightley: Yes, I think we can, for the reasons that were given earlier in terms of there being a different funding model. Clearly, the power is devolved, and we are limited in that. But on my list of concerns, there is nothing that is characterised by a significant difference between one country within the UK and another as a result of the way in which those devolved powers are applied.

Q434 Mrs Moon: I can tell you that as a Welsh MP I get complaints from serving members of the Armed Forces that their children do not get the pupil premium.

Colonel Knightley: We have had those data as well whenever we publicise the Service pupil premium—of course we cannot target it to Service personnel only within England. I spend quite a lot of my time, along with the rest of the staff, on that matter. We get quite a lot of queries in from individual Service personnel via our website on the intranet and on the internet about just that.

Q435 Chair: I was going to ask a question, which was going to be the final question, about the risk of duplication between all the different bodies that oversee Service children's education, but I think, and this is a warning to the Minister, that I will put that question to the Minister instead. I have another final question, which you will hate yourself for, Mr

Knightley. You have just mentioned on your list of concerns an issue that was not very high on it. What is at the top of your list of concerns?

Colonel Knightley: My priority has to be to make sure that, where we are in lieu of a local authority and therefore have statutory responsibility, we are doing the best we can. Although I hope that we have given you an idea of the very close interest we take in those who are delivering for our Service children within the UK, our absolute priority and what features on our comprehensive risk register is those areas where we have statutory responsibility. So my concern is safeguarding overseas to make sure that we are meeting the spirit as well as the letter of safeguarding legislation. It is overseas where we have that statutory responsibility, and safeguarding is always at the top of my list.

Q436 Sir Bob Russell: My apologies to the panel; I have been absent because I have been juggling with another Committee. As you know, our inquiry is "The Armed Forces Covenant in action? Educating the Children of Service Personnel". Mr Bull, do the Education Acts trump the Armed Forces Covenant when it comes to the education of the children of military personnel?

Martin Bull: I could not answer that question here I am afraid—not confidently.

Chair: Mr Barlow, you look as though you might have something to say.

Q437 Sir Bob Russell: If I can explain the background to my question, you will understand where I am coming from. The Armed Forces Covenant says that priority should be given to the children of military personnel. That is fine; we agree with that in principle. But the reality is that if there is an "Army" school—I use that in quotation marks because obviously it is a local authority school—which over the decades has been predominantly if not exclusively for the children of military personnel, and some of the MOD houses are sold off into the private sector, for social housing or owner occupiers or whatever, and there is a large number of children, they could, and indeed in my constituency it is already happening, take precedence over the Army children, who may move in at awkward times of the year when the school is full. That is why I asked whether the Education Acts trump the Armed Forces Covenant. I think the answer is, yes it does.

Chair: I suspect that is another question for the Minister.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you very much indeed for giving evidence in a very helpful way to our inquiry today.

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Members present:

Mr James Arbuthnot (Chair)

Mr Dai Havard
Mr Adam Holloway
Mrs Madeleine Moon
Penny Mordaunt

Sandra Osborne
Sir Bob Russell
Ms Gisela Stuart

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Rt Hon Mark Francois MP**, Minister of State for Defence, Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, **Lieutenant General Berragan CB**, Adjutant General and **Mr Martin Bull**, Department for Education gave evidence.

Chair: Welcome. Thank you very much for coming to give evidence on the Armed Forces Covenant in action. The first subject is educating the children of Service personnel, and then we will move on to the second inquiry. Minister, this cannot be the first time that you have given evidence in front of this Committee—or is it?

Mr Francois: I believe it is, Chair, yes.

Q38 Chair: Well, you are most welcome. We had some private briefing from you beforehand, but we welcome you to this session to give evidence. Would you care to introduce your team?

Mr Francois: Thank you very much, Chairman. On my left is Lieutenant General Berragan, the Adjutant General, and to his left is Mr Martin Bull from the Department for Education. To my right is Mr Gavin Barlow, the Director of Service Personnel Policy.

Q439 Chair: Thank you. You will be aware that we had a good evidence session last week. One of the issues that we raised was this: the Armed Forces Covenant says that the children of Service personnel should receive the same standard of and access to education as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live. Do you believe that they do?

Mr Francois: I think broadly they do, Chair. We said in the Armed Forces Covenant annual report, the first of which, as you know, was published in December last year, that we were reviewing the impact of the measures we have taken so far, including changes to the school admissions code and to the Service Pupil Premium. We think we have made good progress in these areas, but we know there is more work to be done.

I think it is fair to point out that Service children broadly do better than the national average and by and large they get good GCSE results. We know that other factors come into play that have an impact on Service children, including challenges with mobility, admissions and curriculum continuity, and I noticed from the transcript of last week's evidence session that all of those factors cropped up; but that is why we have the commitment in the covenant to do our best for Service personnel and their families, and we think those children are broadly getting an education that is comparable to, or in some cases even better than, that received by their civilian counterparts.

Q440 Chair: But Ofsted have told us that for the first time their inspectors judged the standard of education in an SCE school to be inadequate. What are you doing about that?

Mr Francois: Are you referring to Haig school?

Chair: Yes.

Mr Francois: That is the one that springs to mind. In fact, we have done quite a lot about that in short order, but perhaps I can ask the Adjutant General to give you a briefing on that.

Lieutenant General Berragan: It is my responsibility. Service Children's Education reports to me as the Adjutant General—I run, on behalf of the MOD, Service Children's Education.

You are right to say that the school was found to be unsatisfactory in a report last year. Since then, in January this year, they have had a monitoring report from HMI Ofsted, which noticed an improvement in education at Haig school. It is very clear to Ofsted that improving the education is the highest priority in the school, and they have said that the speed at which the issues that they identified have been addressed is laudable.

The head teacher at the time of the inspection has now left and has been replaced by an outstanding and experienced teacher from another school within SCE whom Ofsted rate as outstanding as a head teacher, so we have put in one of our most talented head teachers. As well as that, we have established a bespoke executive committee to support and challenge the school in making the improvements it needs. Additionally, a primary consultant has been appointed to the school to work alongside the teachers to deliver the improvements needed and to monitor the children's progress reports.

Haig will remain a priority until such time as HMI judges the school to no longer require of additional measures. It is important to note, however, that as—

Q441 Chair: Surely it will be longer than that, because you would like to get it as good as possible? Merely adequate would not be good enough.

Lieutenant General Berragan: Absolutely, but under special measures it will obviously get the attention it needs.

SCE continues to have a higher proportion of good schools than the national average, at 47% versus 46%, and of outstanding schools, at 25% versus 16%. In terms of inadequate schools, SCE has 3%, whereas

the national figure is 6%. We are very proud of our SCE schools and we take action wherever we see something like this happening. I can assure you that that is work in progress.

Q442 Chair: It would be quite wrong of the Committee to concentrate only on the failures, so to the extent that I have contributed to that, I apologise. Nevertheless, parents said in an online survey we did as part of the Committee process that the schools are a mixed bag. What do you say about that and how would you try to bring the lower-performing schools up to the uppermost?

Mr Francois: May I take that first, Chairman, then I will ask the AG to come in? When I said that in some cases, Service children get perhaps a better education than some of their civilian counterparts, I was partly basing that on the fact that the number of our schools that are rated outstanding is higher than the national average. I also take your point that you do not want to focus excessively on one school, but with regard to the one we were just talking about, all of us as constituency MPs will know from our own patch that if you have a school with a particular problem like this, it is important not to let it run but to address it with some energy quickly. I believe that in this particular example, that is exactly what has been done. So where we have had problems at the lower end of the scale, as it were, it is fair to say that we have attempted to intervene and sort them out, and it is also fair to point out that we have had some success at the top end of the scale too. The AG may want to amplify that.

Lieutenant General Berragan: SCE has a system in place for sharing best practice among these schools and for developing continuous improvement, and an ethos of continuous improvement across the board to raise the level of the lower-performing schools—the more patchy schools. However, what they have also done is secure places at the National College for School Leadership, where they are sending some of their key middle and senior managers and school leaders, to develop them and raise standards across the whole organisation. Additionally, as we draw down from Germany, we are managing those people across the schools, so that as we close a school in one place, we are keeping hold of our best teachers in the schools that are remaining open until the back end of the Germany draw-down.

Q443 Chair: Thank you. Overall, there has been a good performance from the schools that educate Armed Forces families. Is it possible to say that these schools contain a very high proportion of people whose parents are in work—in disciplined, really valued work—across the country, so we would expect a high degree of performance? Is it fair to say that maybe you could get the performance up even more?

Mr Francois: On a wider philosophical point, Chair, to chance my arm slightly, I think that children across the country deserve a good education even if their parents are not in work and even if they come from very difficult backgrounds. I am not taking you on, Chairman, but I think that all children from all backgrounds deserve a decent start in life, and I

believe that education is a very important part of that. That said, you point out fairly that we have a number of Service children who come from good backgrounds; clearly that helps them and, in some ways, makes the teachers' jobs a bit easier, but we do not want to be complacent about that in any way. We are looking to continually improve the schools we run along the lines that the Adjutant General outlined.

Chair: Okay, fair enough.

Q444 Sir Bob Russell: Minister, you will be aware that the Prime Minister has said that the Armed Forces Covenant is enshrined in law. As somebody who served on the Armed Forces Bill Committee, I think there is agreement across the House that all of us need to do what we can to ensure that what is said in words is delivered in practical terms. With that in mind, how can the Government meet the obligations of the Armed Forces Covenant, when mobility makes it so difficult for parents to get their children into the school of their choice?

Mr Francois: The first thing to say is that, as you know, I served on the same Committee, and without puffing ourselves up too much, I think we can be proud that we contributed to the process of enshrining the key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant in law. I am not playing up to you, Chairman, just because you served on it too.

If I could just make a few general comments about disadvantage and mobility, as you know, one of the key principles of the covenant is “no disadvantage.” If you go back a few years—I know this anecdotally from speaking to friends of mine in the Services—there was definitely a problem. When a unit moved from one area to another, if they moved mid-year, a lot of the good school places were taken up, and perhaps some years ago we did not give those Service personnel and their families as much support in finding a school place as we could have done. To some degree, the parents were left to sort it out for themselves. I do not believe that that is now the case at all.

When a large unit move is coming up, we plan that quite a way in advance. We know where that unit will be going from and to, and we work with the local education authority in the area to look at the availability of places. We also now have a system, as I think the Committee knows, where you can use your posting notice to enable you to apply for a place in a new school. Before, you were in this Catch-22 dilemma: you could not apply until you moved, but by the time you moved all the good places had gone. So measures are now in place to overcome those difficulties. Mobility is still an issue, but less than it was perhaps a few years ago.

Q445 Sir Bob Russell: I think the bureaucracy has certainly improved, but I shall be coming to some questions later on in this session—not immediately—that will come as no surprise to Mr Barlow and Mr Bull, because the reality is not quite as you have described. I only wish it was. I will return to that in my questions later on.

Mr Francois: Okay. At the risk of delaying you now, Sir Bob, I think that, from memory, the families

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continuous attitude survey in 2011 said that about 11% of families recorded a problem with actually finding a school place.

Sir Bob Russell: Eleven per cent?

Mr Francois: Yes. I think that that was down slightly to 10% in 2012. One in 10 is still an issue, but that probably compares favourably with the sort of situation we were discussing a few minutes ago.

Q446 Sir Bob Russell: I am sure that the national statistics are as you state, but later on I will suggest that it is not like that everywhere.

Mr Francois: Okay.

Q447 Ms Stuart: Before we move on from the subject of mobility, it is a problem whether it is a Service family or not. I have seen schools in Birmingham that have mobility rates of more than 60%, so there must be some lessons to be learned from how the sector generally deals with the difficulties of mobility that we could apply to help Service families. However, are there some elements of the mobility problem that you think are Service-specific, or is it a general problem that happens to affect Service families disproportionately?

Mr Francois: Part of the nature of Service life is mobility. If you are the child of a Service family, there is a possibility that, in the course of your education, you may move several times. However, at the higher level, if I can put it like that, we put a lot more resource and effort into planning unit moves and supporting applications for school places in a way that we did not a few years ago. That is one obvious area where I do not believe that we are now where we were some years ago. We do try to plan these things quite well in advance now. I think you looked at an example last week, Chairman, of moving the ARRC into Innsworth and the process followed there. That is one worked example, if you like. I do not know whether the Adjutant General has anything more he wants to add.

Q448 Ms Stuart: It is pupil mobility that I am after, not parent mobility.

Lieutenant General Berragan: I understand that—one is a knock-on from the other, I guess. We certainly try to give all our people as much notice of a move as possible, so that they can make plans and arrangements and also bring the children into that process, so that they are not surprised or daunted by it. We do not always achieve our target, which is a minimum four months' notice of posting. Sometimes we achieve much more than that, if it is a routine posting, but sometimes operational necessity or unforeseeable events mean that people move at slightly shorter notice—indeed, sometimes people opt to move at shorter notice because they want to go to a posting. But where people have a particular problem, particularly in terms of access, as Sir Bob said, we will assist them through the Children's Education Advisory Service, which has helped a number of Service families. In 2012, they supported 198 families who had appealed against their school admission, and 143 of those were successful with CEAS's help.

Your point about overcoming some of the disadvantages of mobility is where things like the Service Pupil Premium come in and also the £3 million MOD Fund for support to those state schools with Service children.

Martin Bull: It is interesting, actually. I think you are right, there are probably lessons that could be learned from local authorities that have had different sorts of mobility issue. Gypsies, Roma and Travellers move around, for example. There are lots of lessons we could learn from how local authorities have dealt with them, but the £3 million is there to help with reasonably high mobility rates and to give the local authority or clusters of schools, however they apply for it, a bit of money to look to effective ways of working together to manage that. That might be a pastoral support officer going to four or five primary schools, as will happen in Hillingdon, to offer support for the children coming in, but that is in its first year. Lessons could be learned from the £3 million Fund that could be rolled out and shared more widely, particularly as we draw down from Germany and when the large numbers start to arrive in 2015, but we will be doing that.

Q449 Chair: What is the total cost of Service children's education?

Martin Bull: In maintained education or in SCE schools?

Chair: In all of them.

Martin Bull: I would not know the answer.

Q450 Chair: Would you agree that £3 million, although very important, is nevertheless small beer compared with the issues that we are grappling with here?

Mr Francois: I think we do attempt to spend that money wisely.

Chair: Of course. Let us not spend too much time during the course of today—perhaps not as much time as we spent during the course of last week—discussing £3 million.

Q451 Ms Stuart: I think it is a very important point. The pupil mobility that would deliver you better education is a generic problem that might be disproportionate. In terms of our report, is the parent officer sufficient? It is not just a question of four months' notice, so you know it is coming; the schools themselves have to deal with the pupils. If you have schools where you know this is going to happen, do you think the £3 million will deliver that? If it does, what will it buy?

Martin Bull: Putting the £3 million to one side, the pupil premium is there to help schools and mobility, and that is based on the number of children in the school census identified as Service children. It is there to be used to help induct that child and get that child's curriculum up to speed, so that they can go straight into class and not learn about the Tudors three times. It is there to help them with social, emotional and pastoral needs. It has increased reasonably over the years since we introduced it. There is a strong commitment for us to retain that Service premium. The money is there per pupil: it is £300 this year,

which is good news—it was £250 in the first year—and we are hoping it will rise.

Q452 Chair: The improvement is dramatic.

Martin Bull: We have some reasonably good case studies. Soft evidence suggests that the money has been used wisely to deal with that mobility issue.

Q453 Penny Mordaunt: Could you give us a bit more detail about those case studies? I am interested in what is currently being done to lessen the impact that mobility has on a child's education. Can you give us some more examples?

Martin Bull: Absolutely. The DFE worked with the MoD and wrote to about 1,000 schools known to us to have high numbers of service children on the roll and we gathered case studies. I can give you examples of how it has been used. A head teacher might offer one-to-one tuition to help the child catch up in terms of the curriculum. It might be used to help induct them and provide a smooth transition from a school abroad to the new school. There might be support for a buddy system. Another example relates to SEN and whether support is needed around SEN for a child, so there is immediate support if the child arrived really quickly and was not known about in advance. It has been used a number of different ways.

The evidence is very soft, because we are not collecting evidence nationally on how schools have spent the Service premium. It is hard to judge and evaluate how schools have been kind to children and helped a child at a moment of anxiety and concern, for example, meeting the cost of an additional adult needed in the classroom to help that child settle that might have concerns about mum and dad being at war. Uncertainty and nervousness in the community can explode and lead to greater concerns across the school.

Q454 Penny Mordaunt: I fully appreciate that you can only do the qualitative stuff. Is there work going on to interview parents and children who have been through some of these case studies to see what has worked or what could have been done to help but was not?

Martin Bull: Our case studies are from head teachers, and they are named on the DFE website so that other schools can contact them directly if they want to learn more about what we have done locally. There has not yet been any follow-up work where we have interviewed pupils, teachers, heads or parents.

Q455 Penny Mordaunt: Is that something that you are considering doing?

Martin Bull: It is something I can go back and ask Ministers to consider, but not something that I can confirm today will happen.

Mark Francois: To amplify slightly, I was down in Devonport a few months ago having a discussion with a group of naval wives—when I visit garrisons or bases, as the AG will know, I normally try to put aside some time to meet with the families. In such conversations, you get a number of issues raised with you. One of the things that came up on the visit to Devonport was that a number of the parents wanted

to know exactly how the Service Pupil Premium was being spent. They wanted more information on exactly where the money was going. We now encourage schools to publish on their websites how they deploy the Service Pupil Premium—as you have heard, it can be used in a number of different ways—so that parents and others can, at least to some degree, track how that money is employed. Also, I think Ofsted is beginning to take an interest in how the premium is being applied in those schools where it does apply.

Martin Bull: Michael Wilshaw wrote out and he actually mentioned Service children in his letter. He will be asking inspectors to look at effective ways in which the Service premium is being used. There are some positive ideas out there that could be generated and shared more widely about how it is being used, but the Service premium did only start in 2011, and it takes a bit of time to get head teachers to understanding what the Service premium is for and encouraging them to use it in a constructive way.

Mark Francois: It is anecdotal, but the fact that we have Service parents debating when a Minister goes to see them how best the money should be employed is positive, because, one, they are very aware of it and, two, they want greater visibility about how it is put to good use.

Chair: Sir Bob Russell, you were intending to ask some questions about this. Would you like to ask anything else?

Q456 Sir Bob Russell: Thank you. I think that was a tactical ploy by the Minister to get his strike in ahead of the section on the pupil premium, so I congratulate him on that. When the Committee took evidence at a school down on Salisbury Plain, we got a bit of a mixed message suggesting that some schools and some parents were not necessarily fully up to speed with the pupil premium. Will guidelines now be issued stating what should happen and what should not happen? Will all parents be told about the pupil premium and what it is being spent on?

Mark Francois: Clearly, that was an anecdotal example, Sir Bob, but some parents are aware of it. In fairness, this has only been going for a relatively short period of time, so it is something that is still rolling out, but clearly some parents must be aware of it if they are debating how it should best be spent. The idea is to give the money to the school and allow the school to decide how best to deploy the resources in the light of their local circumstances.

Q457 Sir Bob Russell: But do you agree that the Government, the taxpayer, parents and all of us need to know that money allocated is being used properly?

Mark Francois: I do not see how I could disagree with that in principle. As I said, this is public money, so we encourage schools to publish on their websites how they deal with that money, and how they best deploy it. This is now on Ofsted's radar as well, so it is something they will be looking at when they conduct visits.

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Q458 Sir Bob Russell: And as was indicated just a few moments ago by Mr Bull, £3 million is not really a lot of money to spread around, is it?

Mark Francois: I am sure if we said that it was £4 million, Sir Bob, someone would say that it should be £5 million. To some degree, that is the nature of Government.

Martin Bull: We also have performance tables that will give us a strong indicator of how well the children are doing in those schools. We will have Ofsted inspections, performance tables and information publicised on school websites on how the money is being used, so we will have three reasonably good indicators.

Q459 Sir Bob Russell: Do you think that the Government and everyone need to stress the fact that the pupil premium, when referring to children of military personnel, is not in the context of children from disadvantaged backgrounds? I am wondering whether we need to make it clear that it is a Service premium to support the children of military personnel, not because they are children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Mr Francois: I completely understand the spirit of the question. The premium is really to try to make up for some of the additional challenges that Service children might face because of the way in which their parents earn a living. We have discussed mobility to some degree, as well as the whole pastoral side, particularly if one or even both of the parents are on operations. Yes, it is bespoke money for a reason. It is not for disadvantaged “social clients”; it is for a different reason. We should allow the Department to say something about it, too.

Martin Bull: Absolutely. It is interesting. There is more that we can do to promote the Service premium, and I am strongly behind that at the Department. Part of the actions that I discussed last week in Committee, which Minister Elizabeth Truss has agreed to, is to write to local authorities and schools that will feel the impact of draw-down from Germany and highlight the fact that communications need to be clear with schools and parents, and that we want parents to register children at school centres to trigger off that pupil Service premium. We also want to provide them with guidance and support to make sure that they spend the money wisely and in the right way.

I hope that we shall be looking at case studies on Service premium for 2012–13, as we did for 2011–12 in the first year—even if it were soft, just to get an indication and to help those schools that perhaps are not so sure about what the money should be spent on. There is a bit of a misinterpretation that some parents think that the money is for them. It is for their children, not the school. I have received many phone calls from Service personnel asking, “When is my child going to get this money? We want to do something.” So some of the communications messages to local authorities and schools need to be strengthened, but I see that as part of what my job will be in the next month.

Q460 Mrs Moon: Mr Bull, I worked briefly at the Department for Children, Schools and Families. I

remember that you had a supercomputer system, which I assume has been moved to the new Department for Education. It could actually track the performance of schools on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Does the computer recognise those schools where the pupil premium is being paid, and are you tracking performance that way, too?

Martin Bull: As far as I know, we are not.

Q461 Mrs Moon: Why not?

Martin Bull: I cannot answer that question, but I can go away and find an answer, and provide a note on it.

Q462 Mrs Moon: Perhaps it would be a way of actually checking whether the money that is coming from Mr Francois’s Department is benefiting those children, and whether you are seeing the outcomes.

Martin Bull: Absolutely. We would know through performance tables, of course, but we would not necessarily know how they did it. We would not know what changes the schools have made using the money that has led to the improvements or making sure that the children reach a high standard in education.

Q3 Mrs Moon: I remember that the results tracked performance as well. It seems that we are missing one of the areas that are available to the Department for Education. If you include in the system the fact that the money was going into individual schools, it might be another way of tracking.

Martin Bull: I will take that away, and come back with a note on it.¹

Q464 Mrs Moon: Thank you very much.

Can I return to my concerns about the fact that, for Service families living in the devolved Administrations, the pupil premium is not being targeted in the way that it is in England? It is going into an unhypothecated spend, which means that it is not reaching those schools where the children are receiving their education. Mr Francois, you talked about money allocated and being spent appropriately. As a Welsh MP I promise you that I get lots of phone calls on this. What can you do to make sure that Service personnel’s children in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not being disadvantaged if that premium is leading to such wonderful results in schools in England? How do we make sure that those pupils also get that help and support to mitigate the costs of the moveable life that their parents are involved in? What can we do and what are you doing?

Mr Francois: I will make a few broad remarks and then ask the team to contribute. Because these are devolved matters, the key here is to work as closely as possible with the devolved Administrations, to try to demonstrate where we believe that this has provided advantages in England and, where we can, to try to encourage the devolved Administrations, where devolution applies, to try to achieve similar effects via whichever methods they use. But, as you know, we do not have a Service Pupil Premium in the devolved Administrations in the way that we do in England per se. So—no pun intended—it is partly a process of education and dialogue, with us trying to explain to

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them the advantages that we believe it has delivered in England, for them to respect that under devolution, and to discuss ways in which we may be able to achieve those objectives in a devolved context.

Gavin Barlow: I think that is absolutely right. Indeed, the funding mechanism—the pupil premium—reflects the intervention necessary in order to create the right conditions within the particular funding framework for schools in England. It is the right approach there. There is a similar, slightly larger payment with a slightly different framework around it in the Northern Ireland context. In Scotland, the funding approach is completely different to the approach to schools in England and our dialogue with the Scottish Government has confirmed their very strong view that they do not need a system that operates ostensibly in the same way as the pupil premium to achieve the effects of support for Service children that that delivers in England.

With all of the devolved Administrations, the Department now has much improved working relations, as a result of work on the covenant, to address issues around education, among others, with them. I know that, particularly with Wales, that discussion continues on how best to match the approach taken in England through the pupil premium. Gerry, do you want to say anything else about the Army's view on how this works?

Lieutenant General Berragan: The other thing I would say is that since we set up the children and young people directorate—since your last investigation into this area—we are now much better equipped both at national and local levels. It starts really with a trust board, which I chair, which has around the table Martin from the DFE; the Department of Health; the local authority; Families Federations; and all of the commands. Through them, right the way down to the local level—the garrison, air station or naval base—there is a recognition that they need to work closely with the schools in their area to make sure that none of the Service children who attend those schools is disadvantaged.

So there is a feeling of responsibility throughout the Services that regional engagement is something that they must get involved in to make sure that Service children are not being disadvantaged. Also—I hesitate to mention it—the £3 million fund is also available to those schools who cannot access the pupil premium. When they make their bids for that fund, we take that into account; if they have a particular problem, say in Scotland, and apply for some assistance through the fund, that will be taken into account.

Chair: We have got slightly sidetracked here because we have gone down the pupil premium route, partly because of the wholly appropriate answers you have given. We were on mobility; one of the interesting issues about which is the New Employment Model.

Q465 Sandra Osborne: Could I follow on with the pupil premium for just a moment? I could be wrong but I believe that the money for the pupil premium comes from the MOD budget. Is that right?

Martin Bull: No, the pupil premium comes from the Department for Education; the £3 million fund comes from the MOD.

Q466 Sandra Osborne: You are very tactful about the devolved Administrations not taking that up, but they have signed up to the covenant like everybody else, so they should really be putting their money where their mouth is in that case. I am sure that that is a matter for us to take up.

Could I just ask about the New Employment Model? In the future, it is hoped that it will reduce the frequency of moves for families. When do you expect it to take effect?

Mr Francois: We are still developing the New Employment Model. Most of it will come into effect from 2015 onwards, once our combat troops have come back from theatre. In essence, NEM will mean greater stability for Service personnel and their families. It is the nature of Service life that they will still move from time to time, but they may move less. It may be easier for them to put down roots in the area in which they are living at one particular time. For instance, we are looking at house purchase incentives under NEM. So we will begin to see it roll out in a meaningful way from about 2015 onwards. But we are trying to look at some of these issues earlier in a wider NEM context. Do you want to follow up on that?

Lieutenant General Berragan: We aspire to greater stability, which is one of the areas that constantly comes up in the continuous attitude survey. People feel that the exigencies of Service life affect their families, their spousal income and their children's education, so it is absolutely a target. I suspect, notwithstanding the policies the Minister has outlined, that the Army will not really be able to achieve a greater deal of stability until the last final brigade comes out of Germany, by which time we will hopefully be, with the exception of a small proportion in Cyprus, largely UK-based for the first time in over 100 years. In doing so, we are keeping people stable. We are not moving units as we used to move units. We are grouping units into areas. For example, the move of the Signals into Stafford will see something like five Signals regiments and two Signals brigades all within about half an hour's drive of each other. That will enable people to settle their families, while still moving for career development purposes between jobs. We have targeted the lay-down of the Army on the basis of trying to achieve a much greater deal of stability without holding people back in terms of their career development. But it will take some time, and it is absolutely connected with the withdrawal from Germany.

Mr Francois: If I can just provide an example, we have to make provision for an additional brigade on Salisbury Plain as part of the withdrawal from Germany, and we will need to build new facilities and accommodation there. In a sense, for that extra brigade we will be starting almost with a clean sheet of paper. Part of that provision, for which the planning has already begun, will include asking how many extra schools we need and where they will be. We are already beginning to think about that.

Q467 Sandra Osborne: There will be a significant upheaval over the next few years, not just because of Germany, but because of the consolidation of RAF

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and Navy bases and rebasing in general. What other moves are you taking to reduce the impact on Service children of all that upheaval?

Lieutenant General Berragan: In each case of a staged move, such as the one you described of moving a naval base or an air station, we do very detailed planning, right down to individual children's stages of education and ages, and work with the families and the welfare staff within the station to identify where those children will go in the future station. We work with the DFE and the local authority schools to place them. As the Minister mentioned, that is exactly what we did when we moved the ARRC [HQ] [Allied Rapid Reaction Corps] back from Germany. We have just done it when we moved an engineer regiment from Waterbeach up to Scotland. We will take the same approach from here on in, because it works quite well. It enables us to make sure that we have time so that we can plan it in detail, and they understand where they are going. We can make sure that their records are ahead of them before they get there, and make sure their move is as smooth and easy as we can make it.

Martin Bull: Can I just back that up? There is really good collaborative work between the DFE and the MOD on this issue. We have had the announcement of the draw-down from Germany, and we know the number of children who will be coming and what years they will be in between now and 2017. It is an excellent time for us to pre-plan with local authorities so that we can look at the funding mechanism to make sure that local authorities' funding per pupil is right. We need to do positive things so that when those children and families arrive we can give them the best education from the moment they arrive. That is what we want to do.

Q468 Chair: There is a murmur from my right about the need to take into account devolved Administrations.

Martin Bull: Yes, that is in England—my answer was just related to England.

Q469 Chair: But your enthusiasm, which is infectious, is the sort of thing that will need to be applied to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Martin Bull: Perhaps I can go away and share my enthusiasm with Scotland and Wales.

Q470 Sir Bob Russell: I wonder if I could ask the Minister and Mr Bull to clarify this point on the new school or schools to be built around Salisbury Plain because of troops being returned from Germany: who is going to pay the capital cost of those buildings?

Mr Francois: I suspect we will make some contribution to the capital cost, but I suspect that we will need to discuss that in more detail with our colleagues from the DFE.

Q471 Sir Bob Russell: That was not a trick question, Minister; there is a genuine reason behind it. Perhaps we can park that one. In due course it will have to be asked anyway, because in due course the answer will need to be known—not today, but in due course. The line of questioning I was going to go into was that

the Armed Forces Covenant is enshrined in law—the Prime Minister said it is the law of the land—and the Education Acts are the law of the land, so which takes precedence when it comes to the education of the children of our Service personnel?

Mr Francois: I do not accept that there is definitely a conflict between the Armed Forces Covenant and the schools admissions code, for instance. In fact, the schools admissions code was modified in order to try to give effect to the covenant principle of no disadvantage. Going further and creating marked advantages for Service parents in comparison to others in accessing the schools of their choice is potentially possible, I think. But when we have discussed this with the Service Families Federations, they are wary about that, because they are wary about how that might be seen by adult civilian parents. We do have to take that advice into account.

One of the two key principles, as you know well, is the principle of no disadvantage. We believe that the admissions code has been amended so as to try to provide that in practice. As you know, for instance, in primary schools, in certain classes you can now go above 30 if you need to do that in order to accommodate an influx of Service children. We have tried to modify the code in a way that honours the spirit of the no disadvantage principle.

Q472 Sir Bob Russell: I have little doubt that you and I are seeking the same objective here, so my questions are not designed to try to create division. However, my understanding is—and I am going to cite the local education authority of Essex—that when it comes to schools admissions at Montgomery Infant School in Colchester, the Education Act takes precedence over the Armed Forces Covenant. We have to find a way of squaring the circle for the very reasons you quite rightly outline. We do not want either to favour or disfavour either military families or civilian families.

Mr Francois: On that point, Sir Bob, that is a fair way of articulating it, but because we are both from the same county, I happen to know that when the results came out for parents' preferences for schools, from memory, 94% of parents in Essex the other day got either their first choice or their second choice of school. The reason I mention that is that even for "civilian parents", not all of them get their first choice straight away. When we are talking about this we have to understand, on the one hand, that Service life can present some challenges, but equally that "civilian parents" have challenges getting kids into good schools as well; this is not, in fairness, a problem that is unique to the military. The question is, how do you get the balance right?

Sir Bob Russell: Minister, I think the only thing that is different is that we have the Armed Forces Covenant to support military families, whereas civilians do not have that. I thank you and your colleagues for your answers, which I am sure we will look at carefully to see whether there is a formula that the Committee can perhaps recommend in its report.

Q473 Chair: Surely the difference between civilian families and Armed Forces families is that while all

families have a certain degree of difficulty in getting a place in the school of their choice, the Armed Forces families have the additional hurdle of the mobility that goes with being a member of the Armed Forces or being in the family of a member of the Armed Forces.

Mr Francois: I think we are conscious of that. The sole point I was trying to make was that getting a good school place for your child is not a problem faced only by military parents. I would not want to overegg my point stronger than that.

Q474 Chair: Okay. Thank you. On conflict areas, there are large numbers of families with Service children where one or both parents are serving in a conflict area. What are the Ministry of Defence able to do to support the children of those families?

Mr Francois: Clearly we have a heavy responsibility in that area. When units are about to deploy, we lay on presentations and briefings for the family members who will be staying at home to explain as far as possible what that Serviceperson—in broad terms, at least—is going to be up to. We try to condition them in what to expect with communication back home and other things. We encourage parents to let the schools know when a serving parent is going on operations, so that the teachers can be aware and be sensitive to any change in that child's behaviour because their father or mother is not around and they are concerned for them. Do you want to add to that, General?

Lieutenant General Berragan: I can. I am conscious, having appeared before the Committee before, that I have to speak about things I hold up, because the record is written. I am holding up "A Guide for Service Families: UK Education Systems" and a "Supporting Children, Young People and Families During Periods of Deployment" booklet, both of which are provided in the pre-operation deployment briefings to the families of servicemen who are deploying. We hold those briefings not just for the servicemen and women, but their families, too. We try to give them as much preparation as possible and encourage them to contact the schools. Not all of them do, and some of them choose not to, but we do so wherever possible.

We also back it up. Where the schools are in a garrison area, our welfare staff will go and visit the schools and ensure that they know. I think you had some examples of that when you were in Tidworth. Clearly some families have children at schools outside of garrisons. It is possible that a school would be unaware that a child's parent is deployed, but we try to do everything we can to mitigate it and to help and support them.

Q475 Mrs Moon: I would like to move on to problems faced by Service families with children who have special educational needs. One of the issues that concerns us is the number of families, with a child who has a statement, who move regularly. They move to a new school, and the statementing process starts all over again. Are there opportunities for schools to be advised, instructed or guided?

One of the things that we were told by Mrs Denson in the previous sitting was that the contextual part of the educational assessment of children with special

educational needs—about where the child is, how they relate to their peer group, and whether their needs may be different in another location—is a tiny part of any statement. Why can schools not accept the larger statement and do the contextual part as the child settles into school? I have talked to teachers about this, and they have told me over and over again that every time the child moves, they lose their progress, because by the time the statement is ready the child may be moving on again. Is there anything that can be done so that the statement is kept and the contextual changes are done as you get to know the child?

Mr Francois: Do you want to go first?

Martin Bull: Yes. It is a really interesting question, and when it came up last week I went away and gave it some thought. To be clear, legislation about statements is the responsibility of local authorities. However, we are aware that statementing can sometimes take a long time, for example up to two years, which is totally crazy, I agree. I was trying to think about what we might do to improve matters for Service children—easy and quick wins and things that might work.

The first issue I want the Committee to be aware of is that we work very closely with the MOD. We are currently revising the draft SEN Code of practice, and we will want to ensure that it includes appropriate signposting to enable teachers and headteacher access to ready-made good practice and a DVD that has been developed by Service Children Education. We will be signposting them, so that schools know where to go. Information sharing is key here. We have also arranged for SENCO training abroad. Originally, SENCO training in England was not necessarily recognised in Germany, so we have made sure that SENCO training could be made available to those who need to take that training and support the SEN children abroad. You now have some consistency, in terms of how information on those children is reported and recorded, so that when information moves from, say, Germany to England, similar messages come across.

As you know, the Minister, Elizabeth Truss, mentioned last week that she has agreed that we can go ahead with planned communications with local authorities to alert them ahead of draw-down from Germany. That is also about alerting them to children with SEN. The SCE, which is part of the MOD, has a database of children with SEN; I think it is about 2,000 children². That is a lot of children, when you think about it. We can make sure that schools in England has access to the data when we know that the children are coming to those local authorities. We get them to pre-plan their provision. They probably could also access information and assessments early on, so that they can make their own judgments, based on local provision and consider what is available in the local authority to meet the needs of that child. We could do lots of pre-planning in that way.

I will be honest with you: a few children are going to fall through the net. With any children with SEN when they move around, whether they are an Service child

² Note by witness: Of which, 34 children are in SCE schools abroad and the rest in maintained education.

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or a civilian child, we are going to have some who fall through the net. However, these actions will have a positive impact over time. I think it will improve the support being offered to Service children with an SEN.

Mr Francois: If I may, I should like to add to that, because you have asked a very good question. When we were preparing for this session we discussed this. There are just a few points from where I sit. First, as Members of Parliament, we all have some ground truth on this. We know that it can sometimes take parents quite a long while to get a statement. That is not a partisan point; that can be under LEAs of different political colours. As Martin fairly said, it can sometimes be quite a process, so if you have fought your way through that process, got your child statemented and have to move to another area, and to some degree go back to square one, I can completely understand a parent's frustration in those circumstances. I think we need to look at whether there is anything we can do to help.

It occurs to me that this is a classic example of where the community covenant could be meaningful. I checked this morning the number of local authorities that have signed community covenants. This is hot off the press: it is 289, so going on for 300 local authorities across the UK have signed the community covenant. We are way beyond half now. By signing that covenant, local authorities, including LEAs, have pledged in effect to accept the two key principles, including the principle of no disadvantage. It strikes me that this is something to which we could alert LEAs, specifically saying that it can be a particular issue for Service children and their parents, and we can ask them, in line with the spirit of the covenant, to see what more they can do to try to give particular attention to Service parents coming in with kids who have statements. If they do need to go round the loop again to some degree, we will try to get some way to prioritise that. That is something that is definitely worth looking at.

Mrs Moon: I think that is an excellent initiative. I would take it back to the issue of the devolved Administrations: although Mr Bull can do what he can do in England, you are going to have to start those early conversations as a Department with the devolved Administrations. I am looking at you, Lieutenant General. In terms of the basing review, I have 600 families moving into the Vale of Glamorgan, where, especially when it comes to special educational needs, they will be looking to my local authority. We need that conversation to be happening in the same way.

Lieutenant General Berragan: We have regional representatives from the Children's Education Advisory Service who fulfil that function. They work for Olivia Denson, who appeared before you last week, and we are engaging with them. As you say, Scotland in particular takes a different approach to statementing special educational needs from England and some of the other devolved Assemblies.

Mr Francois: Although, in fairness, coming back to my community covenant point, quite a few of the local authorities in Wales have signed community covenants. Indeed, in Scotland, almost all of them have signed now. Being able to leverage that at a local

government level underneath the devolved Administrations could prove effective, because we are getting very good coverage in Scotland and quite good coverage in Wales.

Mrs Moon: Chairman, I wonder whether we could ask for an update on that.

Q476 Chair: Certainly we need an update on that in due course. As you have been speaking, I have been writing down what you have been saying. Mr Bull said that after last week's evidence session you had been trying to think what we could do to try to improve things, and that we could do lots of pre-planning. You, Minister, said that we need to look at whether there is anything that we can do to help, and that there is one particular thing that is definitely worth looking at.

That is all extremely encouraging and very nice. However, it is also, in its own particular way, disgraceful, because in 2006, we said, "We recommend that the DFES and the MOD consider introducing, as a priority, a system whereby Service children with Special Needs are given a Statement of educational needs which can be taken with them as they move between schools." That was repeated by Ofsted in 2011. It is wonderful to think that you listened to the evidence that we gave last week, but for it to have taken more than six years for nothing to happen is absolutely disgraceful.

Mr Francois: Let me take that head on. As a Member of Parliament, like the rest of you, I have dealt with parents whose children have been statemented. I can understand your frustration. I am not going to comment on other Ministers who may have held this portfolio in 2006. Clearly, the Department has not made fast enough progress on this matter, but I will look you right in the eye and tell you that we are going to make some progress on it now.

Chair: I should hope so, too. Gisela Stuart.

Q477 Ms Stuart: It may be helpful in that process if you could do us a note. Earlier, I think Mr Bull said that there were 2,000 children on the register. Will you let us know what percentage of the total number of Service children that represents? Is that proportionately higher or lower than the national average, including the devolved Administrations? With that, would you include a time scale of how, after six or seven years of inactivity, we could measure activity?

Mr Francois: We need to talk to our colleagues in the DFE. We also, in fairness, need to talk to other colleagues.³

Q478 Ms Stuart: I think it is a bit early to come up with excuses for why you may not be answering this in due course. Let's just try first, shall we?

Mr Francois: With respect, Ms Stuart, I was not making excuses. I have given a commitment that we are going to do something about it. I can't promise to come back here tomorrow morning and say that I have cracked it. In fairness, we need to talk to our colleagues in the DFE, but also colleagues in local

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government and the LGA, about what we can do on this.

Chair: Let us move on now to the continuity of education allowance and boarding schools. Sandra Osborne.

Q479 Sandra Osborne: The recent tightening up of eligibility for the allowance caused a level of misunderstanding and concern. What are you doing to make the system clearer?

Gavin Barlow: We have communicated a lot about the rules that we have changed on continuity of education allowance. I think I acknowledged in evidence last week that that had caused some concern, when the initial set of rule changes was put in place. Some of the things that we have done more recently have been in response to some of the feedback that we have had from families and from the chain of command.

We introduced a reform a few months ago that makes it easier for the parents of children who, for whatever personal reasons and circumstances, wish to withdraw altogether from CEA-supported boarding. The family can simply come forward and say that they do not wish to continue with CEA. That is fine. The process is now that they can simply withdraw from taking the allowance. It used to be much more difficult to do that. It generated a lot of casework for the Department and a good deal of ill-feeling among the families affected. That was a rule change we made in response to what people felt about how we were operating the allowance.

The other thing we are doing now is redrafting the rules that support the allowance and that are available to unit staff, families and the CEA advisory service—essentially, the people who have to operate the thing—to make it a lot clearer what the process is for obtaining eligibility certificates, how judgments will be made about that, and what the rules are around the allowance. We are testing that out with staff and parents around the Department to make sure that we get it right, and we will be providing more communication about that when we put that new rules set into place, but it is based on clarification and ensuring that the thing can be operated more easily, which should help, again, to deal with the concerns that families have had about how to access and use the allowance.

Q480 Sandra Osborne: So it is about clarification; it is not a matter of a major change of policy, which people may be concerned about if they feel you are looking at it again?

Gavin Barlow: Yes. They should not think that. We have not advertised that we plan a major change in CEA policy. What we are talking about is clarification of the rules set. There have been a number of changes incrementally since the SDSR, including the one I just mentioned about withdrawal, some of which have been dealt with in Defence Information Notices and so on. That has contributed to a situation where we want to rewrite the whole thing so that it is easier to understand and is really clear. It is part of the work we are doing generally on our allowances to make them more readily accessible and understandable.

Q481 Sandra Osborne: Have cuts in the funding of this been a factor and, if so, how do you balance that with the needs of the children?

Gavin Barlow: When the SDSR review of the overall Service allowances package took place, that was definitely driven by a requirement to save money. When we went through the allowances, we looked at the extent to which they could be justified in the circumstances that faced the country and, indeed, the Department at that stage. Some elements of the allowances package couldn't be, and some elements of the continuity of education allowance rules clearly needed tightening. The most significant of those was the rule that enabled people to access the continuity of education allowance when they were serving in posts in which they were designated as involuntarily separated: people who served in central London, at Permanent Joint Headquarters—in some posts—and at sea. That did not align with the fundamental requirement of CEA to support education continuity for parents who choose to serve accompanied—who follow each other—and through mobile postings. That was a major rule change that we made; we tightened up that rule. That was fair. We explained the reasons behind it, and although it was certainly unpopular with those who were accessing the allowance in that way—that was about 600 claimants when the rule change was introduced—it has been accepted by the Services and is operating well.

Q482 Sandra Osborne: So you can understand why there would be concern if people knew you were looking at it again. The review you are carrying out—will there be cutbacks associated with that?

Gavin Barlow: No.

Q483 Sandra Osborne: Why do you think there has been a significant reduction in the number of claimants since 2009–10?

Gavin Barlow: I would associate a large part of that with the reduction in overall numbers of Service personnel over that period, and also with the changes to the involuntary separation rules, which probably account for several hundred of the reduction in claimants, but the number is about where we would expect it to be at the moment, given the trends in take-up of the allowance and the impact of the rule changes that we have put in place. I would refer also to much more careful governance within all the Services, which have all looked at their CEA claimant community carefully to make sure that all the claims are well founded and properly documented. During that process, a number of people have withdrawn from claiming the allowance who perhaps did not meet those standards, and some others are perhaps more reluctant to put themselves forward as well, but it continues to support well over 4,000 claimants. The allowance is very well used and needed by the Service community.

Q484 Sandra Osborne: I believe there are far fewer claimants from the lower ranks of the armed forces than from the higher echelons. Why would that be?

Gavin Barlow: That very much reflects the demographic of the Service community. Most of the

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junior ranks will not have school-age children, whereas you will find that not all, but the majority of those who serve with school-age children—for CEA purposes, children aged over eight—will be senior non-commissioned officers, or officers. I think the peak—the largest block of claimants—is round about Captain/Major level. That is where the demographic peaks, but that is just representative of the nature of the Service community as a whole, rather than an idea that it might be in some way an officers' allowance or something of that nature, because it is not. It is available to all Service personnel who meet the mobility requirements and have children of the relevant age, if they wish to have it.

Q485 Sandra Osborne: Do you think they are all aware of its availability?

Gavin Barlow: Yes, I think it is a very well-advertised, well-known allowance.

Q486 Mr Holloway: I completely understand the need to save cash when we are borrowing north of £200 million every single day. I absolutely understand the need for cuts to this particular allowance, but for those who are capable of getting jobs in the civilian world, where they can generate the sort of money required to pay for private education, do you think that there is a danger that you will, as a consequence of this, lose bright people, not just now, but in future, and that, to some degree, perhaps you will lower the quality of people who are in the Services?

Lieutenant General Berragan: No. I think that, going back to Gavin Barlow's point, CEA is there for a specific purpose, which is to compensate for mobility—in other words, to allow people to obtain continuity of education, even though they are mobile—and often, as you rightly say, those who are moving fastest up the rank structure will probably be moving around as well. So it is there for that purpose, and I think it will remain for that purpose, for that particular cohort. I do not think there is any plan in the foreseeable future for there not to be some sort of continuity of education allowance for those people. I am not worried about it. If the nature of those people's career development and the trajectory of their rise requires them to move often, we will ensure that we provide continuity of education for them. Therefore, that would not be, or should not be, the reason why they perhaps go outside and get better-paid jobs somewhere else.

Q487 Mrs Moon: The Committee was shocked last week to learn that parents' ability to move their children, when they have concerns in relation to their overall welfare, involves a value judgment by civil servants in the Ministry of Defence on whether they are allowed to move. Are you happy that the MOD makes that judgment, rather than trusting families to know what is best for their child?

Lieutenant General Berragan: If we are talking about the safeguarding issue, let us be perfectly clear that if a child needs to leave a school—a child who is attending a school and receiving CEA—for safeguarding purposes, there is no question of that child not continuing to receive CEA in any future

school. If it is a safeguarding reason, it is pretty cut and dried. However, I go back to the point about it being called “continuity of education allowance”. There have to be some rules. I have seen examples in the past where people have moved children around the independent sector as they have moved—moving them close to them, for convenience—but that is not what continuity of education is about. There have to be some rules about how often you can move schools, particularly within stages of education, otherwise people might be tempted to abuse it. There has to be a balance.

Q488 Chair: Why?

Lieutenant General Berragan: Because why would we pay someone to move their child from independent school to independent school when, if they were moving, they could move from state school to state school? The whole purpose of continuity of education is to get continuity for that stage of education.

Q489 Chair: What damage does it do you?

Lieutenant General Berragan: It undermines the purpose of the allowance. Why would we pay them continuity of education allowance if they are not getting continuity of education?

Q490 Mrs Moon: Perhaps you can provide us with details of how many requests to move you have received and the reasons for those requests. You said very clearly that where it is an issue of safeguarding children, there would be no problem with a request to move, but that is not the information that I have received from families who have requested to move on the basis of safeguarding. Can we also have details of the numbers of requests relating to safeguarding, when the request to move was received and when the move was authorised? Last week, we were informed that it was not the role of the Ministry of Defence to investigate, and that it would be passed to local authorities.

Lieutenant General Berragan: We can certainly submit that, Mrs Moon. I think the point that was being made last week was that we have a statutory power and responsibility for safeguarding in places where we deliver education, such as in SCE schools and overseas. We have absolutely no statutory powers or responsibility in this country; those powers lie with the local authority. If a parent were to alert us to a safeguarding issue in a school in this country, the first thing we would do is point them in the direction of the local authority, or indeed the police, if it was that sort of nature of incident. The second thing we would do is alert the police or the local authority to that issue. It is not our responsibility to deal with it.

Q491 Mrs Moon: I fully understand that it is not your responsibility to do it. I want to be very clear: you would not require a family to maintain their child in a school where the family feels that the child is being abused while investigations are carried out, before you authorise a move?

Lieutenant General Berragan: We will submit that.

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Q492 Chair: You have told us the first thing that you would do, but if you were looking at it from the point of view of a parent, the first thing a parent would do is move their child.

Lieutenant General Berragan: Not necessarily. I know that is counterintuitive, but in some cases not necessarily.

Q493 Mrs Moon: If you say that a child cannot move while the local authority carries out its investigations, what steps does the Ministry of Defence take to ensure that that investigation is carried out, and carried out thoroughly? What oversight do you have of that case, given that you are paying for the education in a school where there are allegations of abuse?

Lieutenant General Berragan: I think that we are providing parents with the money to pay for education for their children, so ultimately this is the parent's choice. I think our responsibility is to alert the proper authorities if this thing is brought to our attention. It is not necessarily our responsibility to get between the relationship between the school and the parent. The parent is, after all, the person who has chosen the school for their child.

Q494 Mrs Moon: You are getting in the way of choice. You are saying that the child has to stay unless you give permission for the child to move, so that the continuity of education allowance goes with the child. You are getting in the way of that choice.

Gavin Barlow: Can I just offer a point here? Sorry to butt in. One of the things that we are doing at the moment in the clarification of the rules set is addressing precisely that point, to make it clear that safeguarding issues are a critical concern for us and

for parents, necessarily, and that where there are clear safeguarding concerns on the part of the family, we do not require lengthy casework, written submissions, applications and so on to be taken through the normal process that would apply if a parent wanted to move their child and break continuity of education. I am sure that it would be helpful, as part of our written submission, to set out the rules as we are going to clarify them. I think that they are essentially a description of the rules that are already applied in practice by CEAS and the SPVA. It would be helpful to make clear how we are setting out those rules so that people will properly understand them in the future, bearing in mind precisely your point that in these sorts of situations, safeguarding issues are of critical concern and properly outweigh concerns about education continuity per se.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed.

Q495 Mrs Moon: Can I just ask one final question? Can you confirm whether or not the Ministry of Defence gives advice to families where children have been abused? When the children are moved, taking with them their continuity of education allowance, are families given advice and guidance in relation to criminal injuries compensation and their right to claim that for the trauma the children have experienced? If you do not know, could you look at it?

Lieutenant General Berragan: I do not know the answer to that question, but I will look at it and come back to you.

Chair: I think that that brings us to the end of that particular inquiry. With the exception of the Minister, to whom we will hang on, if we may, I would like to say thank you very much indeed to the other witnesses.

Written evidence

Written evidence from the Ministry of Defence

MOD welcomes the decision of the House of Commons Defence Committee to extend its inquiry into the Armed Forces Covenant to the education of Service children. This memorandum aims to provide the Committee with all necessary and relevant information to aid their inquiry.

The Committee said it wished to examine the services provided for the children of service men and women, taking the opportunity to follow-up on the conclusions and recommendations of its Report *Educating Service Children*,¹ to consider which have been adopted by Government. The Committee wanted to consider the difficulties facing Service families when their children have to move schools during term time, including the transfer of schooling records to new schools. The Committee also wished to consider the particular problems facing those Service families who have children with Special Educational Needs and to look at the range of financial support schemes available to support all Service families.

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Within the four countries that make up the UK (all of whom have their own education departments) statutory responsibility for ensuring the provision of education to Service children lies with the local authority (or equivalent) within whose area the Service child resides. Outside the UK responsibility for the education of Service children lies with the Secretary of State for Defence, advised by the three Principal Personnel Officers (PPOs), with the MOD acting in lieu of a UK local authority when and where required.

The Adjutant General (AG) is the lead PPO for all issues related to Service children and young people, within the parameters set by the Secretary of State and in 2009 the MOD created a 2-star Directorate, Children and Young People (DCYP) to lead on all strategy and policy issues related to Service children and young people, including education. The Director Children and Young People is also the Chief Executive of MOD Service Children's Education (SCE), who provide the majority of educational settings for Service children overseas.

1. Role of Directorate Children and Young People

a. Reporting to the AG in his capacity as the Defence-wide lead for children and young people, the 2* Director Children and Young People (DCYP) is responsible for providing the professional leadership and direction for the MOD's work in support of Service children and young people, at home and overseas, in order to ensure that they are provided with every opportunity to achieve the best possible outcomes and fulfil their potential. Governance is achieved through the multi-agency/multi-disciplinary MOD Children and Young People Trust Board, supported by a framework of sub-boards and steering groups, including the MOD Safeguarding Children Board.

b. Where Service children and young people live in the UK, and where Local Authorities have the lead for providing support, the role of the Directorate, is to concentrate on developing strategic links and challenge at the appropriate level to ensure that the unique needs of Service children and young people are taken into account at national and local levels. In those areas where the MOD has direct responsibility for delivering services to achieve positive outcomes for children and young people the Directorate's main focus is to ensure that this work is effectively coordinated and directed.

c. The Children's Education Advice Service (CEAS) is now part of DCYP, and provides information advice and support to Service parents on school admissions, Special Educational Needs, curricular discontinuity, continuity of education, and non-MOD provision overseas. CEAS also works closely with all four UK education departments and their subordinate authorities and schools.

d. The Directorate has developed a comprehensive Children & Young People's Plan in order to provide a framework for outputs and outcomes to support Service children and young people.

2. Role of Service Children's Education (SCE)

a. The role of SCE is to provide an educational service to meet the needs of dependant Service children, including the children of MOD UK-based civilians and sponsored organisations serving outside the UK which, as far as possible, conforms in type, scope and standard to that required by the Education Acts in England (and takes into account developments in the education systems of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland), but also seeks to benefit pupils by their temporary residence outside the UK.

b. The Chief Executive SCE is responsible for the day to day management of the organisation and the provision of policy advice on Service children's education to the AG and PPOs within the terms of the SCE Framework Document and the approved Corporate Plan.

c. The MOD Children and Young People's Trust Board, chaired by the AG, provides strong governance through thorough Holding-to-Account and Risk Management processes. The Trust Board reviews SCE

¹ Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2005–06, *Educating Service Children*, HC 1054

achievements at the end of each school year, and monitors achievements in the UK through close dialogue with DfE and devolved equivalents.

3. *Education of Service Children Within the UK*

a. There are some 49,400 children of AF personnel in state education across the UK (England: 45,000; Scotland: 2,500; Wales: 1,000; NI: 900); they remain the responsibility of the Local Authority (or equivalent) where the family resides. In addition currently there are some 6,000 children of AF personnel in state and non-state boarding education within the UK.

b. DCYP engages with the four government education departments, representative head teachers, Local Authority officers and other stakeholders in the education of Service children across the UK through four forums:

- (i) In England : the Service Children in State Schools National Executive Advisory Committee leads an affiliation of state-maintained schools in England (initially around 7–800 schools, now growing, potentially, to around 5000) which exists to advise MOD and DfE on the issues schools and Local Authorities face in seeking to provide effectively for Service children, and to seek ways to address these within the context of the Armed Forces' Covenant.
- (ii) In Scotland: the Scottish Service Children's Stakeholder Network, chaired and facilitated by the Scottish Directorate for Learning, focuses on identifying and facilitating ways in which the aspirations of the Armed Forces' Covenant may be realised in Scotland.
- (iii) In Northern Ireland: the Northern Ireland Service Children's Education Forum, chaired and facilitated by the Army's 38 Brigade, works to support schools, education and library boards in providing effectively for Service children.
- (iv) In Wales: a forum similar to those established in the other administrations has recently been established.

(In effect, these fora replace the UK- wide Service Children's Education Forum (SCEF) established after the last HCDC Enquiry into the education of Service children in 2006 as, within the context of devolution, it is more appropriate and easier to focus on achievable outcomes if MOD (DCYP) engages with each administration individually and acts as the focal point for communication and dissemination between the groups. These links are further strengthened by the closer relationships established more widely under the Armed Forces Community Covenant).

4. *MOD Funded Schools in the UK*

a. Queen Victoria School. Queen Victoria School was established in Dunblane under Royal Warrant in 1908, and continues to be funded by the MOD to provide stability and continuity of education, within the Scottish system, for the children of UK Armed Forces personnel who are Scottish, have served in Scotland or are part of a Scottish Regiment. Fully boarding, co-educational and tri-service, the School takes around 270 pupils from the ages of 10/11 up to 18.

b. Duke of York's Royal Military School. Previously funded directly by the MOD, the Duke of York's Royal Military School, Dover became a state boarding school under the Academy Programme in 2010. The MOD is the academy sponsor, and pupils continue to come from predominantly Service families.

5. *Education of Service Children Overseas*

a. Education of Service Children in SCE Schools Overseas:

- (i) SCE provides education for some 8,100 pupils in 34 Schools and Foundation Stage Settings worldwide (NW Europe: 6,200 pupils in 24 schools; Cyprus: 1,300 pupils in 6 schools; Rest of the World: 600 pupils in 4 schools).
- (ii) SCE schools follow the English National Curriculum, administer national curriculum tests and public examinations and are inspected by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI). Teachers in SCE schools are UK-qualified professionals, and SCE provides a comprehensive programme of training and development for its staff.
- (iii) Each SCE school has a School Governance Committee (SGC) that represents the local service community in a manner similar to the way Governors work in the UK.
- (iv) Except for very small isolated detachments, primary schools are established in all overseas commands. Secondary school provision is available for all pupils in North West Europe and Cyprus, whether at local secondary schools on a daily basis—or in boarding schools in Germany. All secondary schools are run on comprehensive lines.

b. Education of Service Children in non-SCE Schools Overseas:

- (i) In areas overseas where an SCE school is provided, parents whose children accompany them at post will be offered a place at that school. An alternative option is the use of local schools. These may be state schools, to which pupils are admitted free of charge, or they may be independent fee-paying

schools. In the latter case where access to a SCE school is not an option, necessarily incurred school fees will be reimbursed, within set limits.

- (ii) In Extra Command Areas and Isolated Detachments overseas, it is unlikely that there will be an SCE school provided. In such situations DCYP, through CEAS and/or SCE will provide advice and guidance on the suitability of local provision to both Service parents and the Chain of Command. Some 1,000 Service children fall into this category, over half in North America.
- (iii) Local provision may not follow the English National Curriculum. Some subjects, such as religious education (which is a compulsory subject in the National Curriculum), may not appear at all, whilst in others the syllabus, teaching approach or coverage may be very different. In addition, National Curriculum assessments and tests may not be carried out at the end of each Key Stage. A further difference is that, in many locations, children do not begin formal schooling until they are six or seven years old.
- (iv) At the secondary stage of education the appropriateness of local provision changes. Schools outside the UK work towards different examinations and qualifications and parents should be prepared to consider the option of sending their older children to a boarding school in the UK. The potential difficulties for a student in the middle of an examination course, if appropriate, transferring back to the UK from the education system of another country, cannot be overstated. For this reason, boarding (either in the UK or at an SCE school) is recommended for children who would otherwise be returning to the British system in the final year of Key Stage 3 or beyond.

The Committee expressed an interest in the following areas:

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

a. Although statistics continue to show that Service children do not under-achieve by comparison with their civilian peers, the key challenge remains the mitigation of the adverse effects of the mobility of Service families and/or the deployment of a Service parent, in order that all Service children realise their potential. Although much has been done, the 2011 OFSTED Inspection confirms the difficulty of reconciling curricular discontinuity between and, with free schools and academies, within national educational policies.

b. There have been welcome changes to schools admission codes, and CEAS continue to assist parents who wish to make representations to admission panels.

c. In the longer term it is hoped that the New Employment Model should reduce overall mobility; meanwhile improvements in maintaining continuity of education through measures such as the retention of Service quarters to see out critical stages of education have helped.

7. The transfer of information about pupils between schools, in particular pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN). SCE wrote to overseas schools asking them to make use of SEN transfer documentation from September 2012 onwards. SCE and the DfE will review how well the SEN transfer documentation has been implemented by all SCE schools and maintained schools concerned. Separately, the DfE has committed to consult the MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People on drafts of the Children and Families Bill and its related guidance, particularly in relation to the sections on SEN matters. A project is also underway to further improve the transfer of pupil records of Service children within the UK, funded by the MOD £3M fund (details below).

8. The effectiveness of the various financial support schemes for all Service families. The MOD continues to provide a range of allowances to allow parents to provide continuity of education and to ensure that parents are appropriately recompensed if they are forced to pay for provision overseas that would be provided at no cost in the UK.

Below are responses to specific questions raised by the Committee, in relation to finance and allowances followed by other issues.

A. CONTINUITY OF EDUCATION ALLOWANCE (CEA)

The Aim of CEA².

1. The aim of CEA is to assist Service personnel to achieve continuity of education for their children that would otherwise be denied in the state maintained day school sector if their children were to accompany them on frequent and consecutive assignments at home and overseas.

Main Principles of CEA (Eligibility Criteria)

2. There are two main principles associated with eligibility for CEA; accompanied service and educational continuity. A CEA claimant must be accompanied by their immediate family at their assignment station so there must be an acceptance of family mobility. If a child's family home is static for extended period of time

² There are various forms of CEA: CEA(Board) (Junior and Senior), CEA(Day) (Junior and Senior), CEA(SENA) (Special Educational Needs Addition) (Board and Day)

and the family is not mobile, the child is not subject to the upheavals of service life and there is no need for CEA. Similarly, it is a fundamental condition that any child for whom CEA is being claimed remains at the school and completes a stage of education for which CEA is in issue.

Parental Contribution

3. All CEA claimants are required to pay a minimum contribution of 10% of the actual boarding and tuition fees levied by the school in respect of each child for whom they are claiming CEA. The parent is also responsible for any fees in excess of the sum of their 10% contribution and the CEA allowance maximum.

Service Child Eligibility

4. Generally, Service children are eligible for the purposes of CEA from the beginning of the academic year in which they reach the age of 8 until the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of 18.

Eligible Schools

5. The MOD maintains a list of schools that are eligible for the purposes of CEA; the Accredited Schools Database (ASD). In order for a school to be included on ASD they must be a member of an association affiliated to the Independent Schools Council and maintain facilities for the board and accommodation of their pupils. In addition, all state maintained boarding schools and those run by the MOD are also eligible for inclusion on the ASD if they provide boarding facilities.

CEA Calculation Methodology

6. Maximum rates of CEA are set by reference to the results of an annual survey of schools eligible for the purposes of CEA. The schools included in the survey are those attended by 75% of the child CEA population. An average of the schools' published fees for the forthcoming academic year is calculated and then discounted by 25% to reflect a combination of the average discount offered by schools to CEA claimants (circa 15%) and the minimum parental contribution (10%). The schools involved in the calculation of CEA for academic year 12/13 and the number of Service children (for whom CEA is claimed) attending them are detailed in the table at ANNEX A.

Divorced or Separated CEA Claimants

7. When CEA claimants are separated or divorced from their spouse, they may remain eligible providing they satisfy certain eligibility criteria. The claimant must be able to demonstrate that they are the prime mover in their child's life and accept complete financial responsibility for the child. There is no entitlement where the child is normally resident with the other natural parent or where any form of shared responsibility has been decreed by a court.

Provision of CEA to Families of Deceased/Medically Discharged Claimants

8. When a CEA claimant dies or is medically discharged from service CEA will continue to be paid until the end of the current stage of education in respect of any child for whom CEA was being claimed at the time of death or medical discharge. Where the child is already within two years of public examinations CEA may continue for up to 4 years. For example where a child is aged 9, then CEA will continue until the end of the preparatory or junior stage of education. Where the child is within two years of GCSE examinations then CEA may continue until that child has completed their 'A' levels.

Provision of CEA to Claimants made Redundant

9. When CEA claimants are made redundant the final payment of CEA is made for the academic term during which the claimant completes their final day of service. Where on the last day of service, a child for whom CEA is being claimed is within two years of public examinations, CEA will continue to be paid until the end of the academic term in which the child takes those examinations. Unlike following the death or medical discharge of the claimant, CEA eligibility will not extend from GCSEs into the 'A' Level stage of education.

Recent CEA Policy Changes

10. Following the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) a number of changes were made to the CEA policy in order to improve the governance of the allowance. A team was also set up within the Service Pay and Veteran's Agency to ensure probity and compliance with the CEA regulations; the CEA Governance Team (CEAGT).

In addition to the SDSR measures, the Secretary of State directed that a review of CEA should be conducted. The remit of the review was to develop a future approach to the educational continuity of Service children that would increase value for money and reduce costs but would also continue to support mobility within the context of life in the Armed Forces as it is expected to be in the future. Following the review, the core principles of CEA have been retained however a number of changes have been implemented:

A complete re-write of the CEA policy is underway in order to make the regulations more easily understood by the recipients and more easily governed by the CEAGT.

In acknowledging that Service parents may wish to provide educational continuity for their children in ways other than CEA, claimants are now able to withdraw from CEA without any financial implications.

CEA rate setting is now carried out in-house; the methodology is explained above. Beforehand, the rates were adjusted annually by a percentage factor provided by an external contractor (Employment Conditions Abroad). The advantage to the MOD by the calculation of CEA rates in-house is that it uses the schools that are actually attended by the majority of children for whom CEA is claimed therefore, the resulting rates are more reflective of the fees that claimants are actually paying.

11. The number of CEA claimants by Service and term is outlined at ANNEX B Fig 1. For Autumn Term 12, the total number of CEA claimants is *circa* 4,100, a reduction of *circa* 11% since Academic Year (AY) 11/12 and 21% since AY 09/10. The most significant in-year reductions have been within the RN/RM (-17%) and RAF (-15%).

12. A breakdown of CEA claimants between Officers and Other Ranks is at ANNEX B Fig 2. The overall CEA claimant community currently comprises 2,476 Officers (60%) and 1,631 Other Ranks (40%); a ratio that has remained relatively unchanged during the period under scrutiny. Although the ratio of Officer to Other Rank claimants is around 1.5:1, the proportion of claimants within each group is significantly different. Officer claimants represent 8.3% of all serving Officers (30,010) whereas Other Rank claimants represent only some 1.1% of all serving Other Ranks (145,930).

Within the overall groups, the highest numbers of Other Rank claimants are at the ranks of OR6 (384 or 24%) and OR7 (412 or 25%) while the highest numbers of Officer claimants are at the ranks of OF3 (728 or 29%) and OF4 (790 or 32%).

13. The overall number of Service children for whom CEA was claimed in Autumn Term 12 compared with the previous three AYs is shown in ANNEX B Fig 3. The reduction in numbers of Service children is in line with the reduction in claimants as the ratio of children to claimant is 1.46:1 compared with 1.44 (AY 09/10), 1.43 (AY 10/11) and 1.45 (AY 11/12).

14. The numbers of children in each school year group at the beginning of each of the last 3 AYs are shown in ANNEX B Fig 4. It shows that the increase in child numbers from one year group to the next is generally uniform until Year 7 when there is a marked increase (for GCSE stage of education). The numbers of children generally remain static until the end of the GCSE stage when a significant number of children are withdrawn from CEA for the 'A' Level stage of education. Before SDSR, the numbers of children in each year group was similar from one AY to the next however since SDSR the numbers of children have shown a year on year decrease, particularly in the preparatory stage of education.

B. THE SERVICE PUPIL PREMIUM

1. The Service Pupil Premium is provided by the Department for Education (DfE). Introduced in April 2011 it provided £200, per service pupil, to the school to assist the school in providing additional, (mainly pastoral) support. The premium increased to £250 in 2012–13 and will increase further to £300 in 2013–14.

2. Payment is based on the number of service children which schools report through the annual school census in January. However, parents are not required to tell schools that they are a service family at the point of enrolment.

3. With regard to the monitoring of how this money is spent, DfE did not initially require schools to state how their pupil premium was being spent. However, since September 2012 DfE requires that schools publish details of how their pupil premium is spent but this is not broken down into individual types of pupil premium such as service pupil premium. DfE have since worked with MOD and the Service Children In State Schools (SCISS) network to ask SCISS members to volunteer information on how they were using their pupil premium. Examples of good practice are now included on the DfE armed forces web page. This information will continue to be collected and shared via the web page and through the various MOD information sharing conferences that take place throughout England.

4. Whether it is paid across all four administrations (England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). The service premium is paid from the DfE and only available to maintained schools, free schools and academies in England. The Department of Education Northern Ireland currently funds a similar scheme, but the Welsh Department for Education and Skills has not yet formally considered the option and the Scottish Service Children's Stakeholder Network, chaired and facilitated by the Scottish Directorate for Learning, have judged that such an option is not currently required in Scotland.

5. Should the parents split up, and the child lives with a non-Service parent then the eligibility for the service premium, which is based on the MOD personnel status category, in essence means that if a parent retains financial responsibility for the child then they will be able to be eligible for the service pupil premium.

6. If the serving parent is seriously injured and leaves the Service as a result, or is killed. DfE have extended the eligibility for claiming service pupil premium this year so that those children who have a parent who has

died while in service is still eligible for service premium up to 2018. DfE has also stated that any service person who was eligible in 2011 but has since left the service, for whatever reason, will retain this eligibility for up to six years following their departure. Service personnel leaving in 2011–12 would be eligible for six years up to 2018, those leaving in 2012–13 would be eligible for five years up to 2018.

In such cases the entitlement to financial support schemes will not continue into further or higher education stages.

C. THE MOD SUPPORT FUND FOR SCHOOLS

Provides up to £3 million over 4 years to help mitigate the effects of mobility and deployment for schools with a service children population.

1. The MOD £3m support fund for state schools with Service children was announced in May 2011 with the first grants, totalling £3m, being awarded in November 2011, although actual payment was not completed until January/February 2012.

2. The fund was set up to provide funding to maintained schools with Service children, (regular and reserves forces), to help them provide mitigating action where their Service community were experiencing either exceptional mobility and/or deployment and this was impacting upon the school. Any grant from the fund is paid directly to the school to implement the mitigating action which should benefit the whole school not just those Service children within it.

3. The fund is now in its third year having provided £6m to 261 applicants over the past two years. To apply for a grant schools complete an application form where they state their evidence of need ie the effect that either exceptional mobility and or deployment is having on the school. The school states how this can be mitigated and what success will look like to the school. Applications are then scored by regional panels that mark the evidence provided by the applicants. Regional panels are made up of MOD representatives, education department representatives, head teachers and local authority representatives.

4. Scored applications are provided to a Funding Panel made up of members of the MOD's Directorate Children & Young People (DCYP), a central MOD finance member and an independent member of the Armed Forces Families Federation. The funding panel review the regional panel scoring and provide a strategic perspective on the applications determining the level of funding that should be received.

5. Applications can be made by all maintained schools, free schools and academies with Service children (regular or reserve forces) who are experiencing issues related to exceptional mobility and/or deployment. The fund is available throughout the UK and receives applications from the complete range of schools who apply either individually or in clusters. Local authorities have also applied on behalf of and in collaboration with their schools.

6. The distribution of these awards to schools thus far shows that in 2011 there were 277 applications from throughout the UK, totalling £7.8m. Grants that were subsequently awarded to 140 of those applications (50%) totalled £3m. In 2012 there were 230 applications from throughout the UK, totalling £7.6m. Grants were awarded to 121 applications (53%) and totalled £3m. The fund is oversubscribed.

7. With regard to recording how this money is spent, the application forms are completed by schools. These forms state the requirement, the action to be taken and the end result. The DCYP carry out an audit of the successful applications within 12 months of them receiving their funding. This audit confirms that the money has been spent as instructed and seeks evidence on how successful the mitigating action undertaken by the school has been. DCYP is in the final stages of completing the 2011 audit the results of which will be shared with partners and published on the DCYP webpage as well as at information sharing conferences throughout the UK.

D. ARMED FORCES BEREAVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME

1. The Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme (AFBSS) was created in April 2011 to provide university and further education scholarships for the children of Service men and women who have died on active duty since 1990. The aim of this scheme is to give the children of those who have died in the service of their country a head start in life by enabling them to obtain a university degree or further education training. The Scheme is funded by BIS, DfE and the devolved administrations, but is administered by the MOD. To date, 95 children have benefited from the scheme.

The Scheme

2. Eligibility. The scheme is open to an applicant who meets all of the following criteria:

- (a) Cause of Death. A parent of the applicant died whilst serving in HM Armed Forces and the parent's death was deemed to be attributable to their service, and for which the child or surviving parent is receiving benefits under a MOD attributable benefits scheme.
- (b) Date of Death. The deceased parent died after 0001 hours on 1 January 1990.

- (c) Relationship. At the time of death the deceased serviceperson had legal parental responsibility for the applicant, or the applicant was the biological child of the deceased and was born within 42 weeks of the parent's death. This includes biological children, adopted children, children subject to a special guardianship order and step children resident with and dependent on the deceased. Fostered children are not eligible.

What the Scheme Provides

3. Further Education (FE). The scheme will provide a scholarship to enable a bereaved child to stay in further education for up to 3 years in order to obtain the qualifications necessary to secure a place at university, although application for FE Scholarship does not require that child to go on to study at University. This will normally be paid for the last 2 years at school when GCE A Levels are studied, but may be extended to 3 years if required by the syllabus being studied. It will not be extended in order to repeat part of a syllabus or to retake exams.

4. University. The scheme will provide a contribution towards the cost of a first undergraduate course at a publicly-funded UK higher education institution, regardless of course length. The university scholarship contributes towards both the tuition fees and maintenance fees. Since tuition fees vary across the UK according to place of domicile and place of study the university scholarship is adjusted to provide a similar level of support to all applicants across the UK.

5. Existing University Scholarship Recipients. Those students whose study began prior to September 2012 will not be charged the new higher rate fees by their universities. Therefore, students already in receipt of a university scholarship who are continuing their education for further academic years will receive the same amount as they did for previous academic years.

6. Place of Study. Scholarships will only be provided for study in the UK. Those who are resident in either the Channel Islands or the Isle of Man, residence in England will be assumed. Funding will not be provided for study at any institution outside the UK, except as an integral part of a degree course at a UK university. For example, a year spent in France as part of a degree in French.

7. Foreign and Commonwealth personnel. Applicants who are not domiciled in the UK must obtain a place at a UK institution before applying for a scholarship. Scholarships will be provided as though the applicant is resident in England. Arrangements and costs for visas and travel will be the responsibility of the applicant; they will not be covered by this scheme.

8. Payments. Further education scholarships will be paid to either the parent or guardian or directly to the bereaved child. University scholarships will be paid directly to the student. For both scholarships 3 payments will be made each year by 31 October, 31 January and 30 April or as soon as confirmation has been received from the education establishment that the student has registered and is attending the specified course. The Service Personnel and Veteran's Agency (SPVA) will confirm both registration and attendance at the beginning of the academic year.

9. Income Tax. Scholarship payments will not be liable for Income Tax.

10. Means Testing. The award of a scholarship will not depend on the financial situation of the applicant or their family. The receipt of a scholarship should not preclude a recipient from applying for other financial support, such as the Government's Access to Learning Fund or university funds, should they find themselves in hardship.

11. Death of a Service Parent while at School or University. If a child becomes eligible for a scholarship during an academic year while in further education or at university, payments will be backdated to the start of the term in which their parent died or will begin from the start of the next term following a death during the holidays.

12. Academic Year. For the purposes of this scheme the academic year is deemed to run from 1 September to 31 August of the following year. The scheme does not set an end date on eligibility, nor is the child's eligibility affected by remarriage of the surviving parent.

13. Since the scheme began, there have been 95 successful claimants; 14 from children with a parent from the RN (incl RM), 36 from the Army and 45 from the RAF. The tables at ANNEX C include the ranks, service and locations of the scholarships and full details of the numbers and types of scholarships awarded. Predictably, in light of the relatively short duration of the scheme to date, more claimants come from ranks where one would expect parents to have children of higher education or university age.

14. Levels of award and scholarship rates for Academic Year 2012/13. The Further Education scholarship rate is currently set at a flat £1,500 for all students. The university scholarships rates are given at ANNEX C, but are made up of an amount to cover fees and a maintenance grant. The amount paid for fees will be the actual amount charged up to a maximum of £9,000. The maintenance grant is £4,950. These amounts will be reviewed annually.

15. Additional MOD support is provided to bereaved families, through the use of Casualty Notification Officers, Visiting Officers, longstanding welfare structures and close links with Service and bereavement

charities. Assistance regarding children's education following bereavement takes many forms. The SPVA will provide details of the Armed Forces Bereavement Scholarship Scheme to a family via the Visiting Officer who will go on to find answers or specialist assistance for any questions or concerns that the family has regarding education.

The MOD's Children's Education Advice Service continues to provide information, advice, support and representation for bereaved families as they transition into civilian life after a death. This will continue until such time that they either no longer need support or that their support is being appropriately provided by a civilian agency.

16. From April 2013 the Service Pupil Premium for schools will continue to apply to those Service children who were already eligible, for up to 6 years after the death of their service parent. The Service Pupil Premium also increases from £250 to £300 from April 2013.

17. Families living in Service Families Accommodation are permitted to remain for an initial 2 years and then beyond that for as long as is necessary on a case by case basis whilst they prepare for their long-term future. Immediate schooling needs are often one of the primary reasons for a family wishing to remain in Service accommodation, though the support network, friends and other connections all play a part.

18. Additionally, the MOD works closely with the charitable sector which continues to provide exceptional support for these families and for their children in particular, in partnership with the MOD.

19. The Defence Bereaved Families Group provides a forum for issues concerning the policy for care of bereaved families to be raised by representatives of those families, jointly chaired by the MOD and a representative of a bereaved families' organization. The Group consists of delivery and policy organisations and where improvements are identified appropriate, policy and processes are adapted. The Group have considered issues such as bereavement support, Military Inquest assistance, pensions and support for children; and a sub-group is currently reviewing the information provided to bereaved families to ensure that it is appropriately worded.

The Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Family Association (SSAFA) facilitate five self help groups that are considered to be extremely helpful by those involved. The MOD partly funds the management of these groups which are:

- The Bereaved Families Support Group (which includes Bereaved Children's Workshops) [200 members]
- The Bereaved Siblings Support Group [60 members]
- The Families of Injured Service Personnel [180 members]
- Siblings of Injured Service Personnel [30 members]
- Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum [450 members]

20. The support groups provide advice and mutual support amongst their members in an entirely confidential manner and the groups maintain a strong link with the Defence Personnel Welfare team to capture feedback and allay fears and concerns.

21. The Royal British Legion offers advice and support to families via its specialists and volunteer visitors as well as indirectly through its workshops, attended by MOD representatives, that have investigated with families how they believe that things could be improved.

22. With regard to the longevity of the AFBSS, as an element of the support available to bereaved children lasts up to the achievement of a first degree, whenever that may be.

OTHER AREAS OF INTEREST TO THE COMMITTEE

E. DEVOLVED ADMINISTRATIONS

1. Arrangements between the MOD and the devolved administrations regarding transfer of pupils. The devolved administrations each have a stakeholder network consisting of schools with Service children, Local Authority and Education Department members. MOD is represented on these groups through DCYP.

2. These stakeholder networks seek to raise the awareness of the needs of service children particularly in relation to their mobile nature. As part of grants from the MOD £3m fund two individuals have been employed, one in Scotland by the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES) and one in North Yorkshire by North Yorks Council, to look at the issue of the movement of Service children within and to/from the devolved administrations.

3. These posts are working closely with MOD representatives and sharing their data on transition widely including, in N Yorks, developing a transfer document for all Service children.

4. Statistics of how many "Service children" there are in total and how many in each of the four administrations. Based on 2012 statistics there are some 65,900 Service children in formal education. Some 49,400 are in state education within the UK (45,000 in England, 2,500 in Scotland, 1,000 in Wales, 900 in Northern Ireland) and some 6,000 Service Children attend State and Independent Boarding schools pan-UK. Some 10,500 Service children are educated outside the UK.

5. Statistics showing numbers of Service pupils in primary and secondary schools. Of the totals above 65% will be in primary education; 35% will be in secondary education. Detailed data is only required for a major event such as re-basing into a new area, and is generated at that time. This process underpinned the successful recent rebasing of HQ ARRC from Germany to Innsworth, Germany-based Army units to the former RAF Cottesmore area, and England-based units to the former RAF Kinloss. It also underpins the planned moves from Germany and the UK into the Stafford area.

E. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS (SEN)

1. The table below sets out the current number of Service children with SEN.

Army	1,545
RAF	435
RM	32
RN	216
Civil Service	32
Total	2,260

Of these some 850 have Local Authority (LA) statements and of them 14 have joint funding agreements to enable them to attend specialist boarding schools.

2. Our records show that there are 34 LAs who have statemented children on our register (although some remedial work needs to be done on this as not all children with statements indicate which LA has produced it. The information will be on the file, but this will involve checking some 700 files).

G. OTHER

The other main issues around the education of the children of Service personnel as MOD sees them are:

1. Mitigating the impact of mobility and parental deployment on the emotional wellbeing and academic achievement of Service children.

2. The challenge of achieving continuity of curriculum when Service children move between (and increasingly within) different countries, including the devolved administrations.

March 2013

Annex A

SCHOOLS ON THE MOD'S ASD USED IN THE CALCULATION OF CEA RATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2012–13

<i>School</i>	<i>Children</i>
Queen Ethelburga's College—York	170
The Duke of York's Royal Military Academy—Dover	162
Royal Alexandra & Albert School—Reigate	149
Royal Hospital School—London	139
Clayesmore School/Clayesmore Prep School—Blandford	
Forum	121
Licensed Victuallers School—Ascot	87
Warminster School—Warminster	87
Barnard Castle School—Barnard Castle	83
Gordon's School—Woking	81
King's College—Taunton	81
St Lawrence College—Ramsgate	80
Bromsgrove School—Bromsgrove	79
Hazlegrove Preparatory School, Yeovil	75
Forres Sandle Manor School—Fordingbridge	74
Kingswood School—Bath	73
Chilton Cantelo School—Yeovil	72
St John's College—Southsea	72
Dauntsey's School—Nr Devizes	67
Taunton School—Taunton	64
Wycliffe College—Stonehouse	64
Dean Close School—Cheltenham	62
Wycliffe Preparatory School—Stonehouse	61
Monkton Combe School—Bath	60
Queens College—Taunton	58
Kelly College—Tavistock	52
Culford School—Bury St Edmunds	51
Lincoln Minster (inc St Mary's Prep)	50

<i>School</i>	<i>Children</i>
Kingham Hill School—Chipping Norton	49
Stamford Endowed Schools—Stamford	49
Monmouth School—Monmouth	48
King's School (Bruton)	47
Pocklington School (incl Lyndhurst School [Junior])—York	47
Downside School (Inc Plunkett Jnr Section), Bath	46
Christ College—Brecon	43
Clifton College—Bristol	43
Finborough School—Stowmarket	43
Blundell's School—Tiverton	41
Cheltenham College—Cheltenham	41
Wymondham College—Wymondham	39
Bruton School for Girls—Bruton	38
Canford School—Wimborne	38
Chafyn Grove School—Salisbury	38
Sherborne School—Sherborne	38
St Mary's School—Shaftesbury	38
Woodhouse Grove School—Apperley Bridge	38
Millfield School—Street	37
Repton School—Repton	36
Haberdashers' Monmouth School for Girls—Monmouth	34
Lucton School—Leominster	34
St Peter's School—York	34
Rookwood School—Andover	33
Lomond School—Helensburgh	32
Fettes College—Edinburgh	31
Moyles Court School—Ringwood	31
All Hallows Prep School—Shepton Mallet	29
Malvern College—Malvern	29
Peter Symonds College—Winchester	28
Bearwood College—Wokingham	27
Godolphin School—Salisbury	27
Oakham School—Oakham	27
Stonar School—Melksham	27
Strathallan School—Forgandenny	27
Wellington School—Wellington	27
Worksop College—Worksop	27
Appleford School—Nr Salisbury	26
Chichester College of Arts, Science & Technology	26
Knighton House School—Blandford	26
Bedstone College—Bucknell	25
Farleigh School—Andover	25
Giggleswick School—Settle	25
Bloxham School—Banbury	24
Pangbourne College—Pangbourne	24
Sherborne School for Girls—Sherborne	24
Port Regis School—Shaftesbury	23
Royal Masonic School for Girls, The—Rickmansworth	23
Sexey's School—Bruton	23
Dover College—Dover	22
Fyling Hall School Trust Ltd—Whitby	22
Highfield School—Liphook	22
Rossall School—Fleetwood	22
Ashville College—Harrogate	21
Edington & Shapwick School—Bridgwater	21
Gordonstoun School—Elgin	21
King's School, The—Ely	21
Millfield Preparatory School—Glastonbury	21
Queen Mary's School—Thirsk	21
Read School—Selby	21
Bryanston School—Blandford	20
Durham School—Durham City	20
Hanford School—Blandford	20
Monkton Combe Preparatory School—Bath	20
Shebbear College—Nr Beaworthy	20
St Hugh's School—Woodhall Spa	20

<i>School</i>	<i>Children</i>
Boundary Oak School—Fareham	19
Plymouth College—Plymouth	19
Eagle House School—Sandhurst	18
Radley College—Abingdon	18
The Leys School—Cambridge	18
Framlingham College—Framlingham	17
Kingswood Preparatory School—Bath	17
Marlborough College—Marlborough	17
Oundle School—Oundle	17
Prior Park College—Bath	17
Ratcliffe College—Ratcliffe on the Wreake	17
Rishworth & Heathfield Schools—Rishworth	17
Westonbirt School (including Querns Westonbirt)—Tetbury	17
Abbotsholme School—Uttoxeter	16
Ampleforth College—York	16
Casterton School—Kirkby Lonsdale	16
Hampshire Collegiate—Romsey	16
Horris Hill School—Newbury	16
Mary Erskine & Stewart Melville College	16
St Edmund's School—Canterbury	16
West Hill School Trust Limited—Titchfield	16
Ardreck School—Crieff	15
Ellesmere College—Ellesmere	15

Annex B

Figure 1

CEA CLAIMANTS BY SERVICE & ACADEMIC TERM

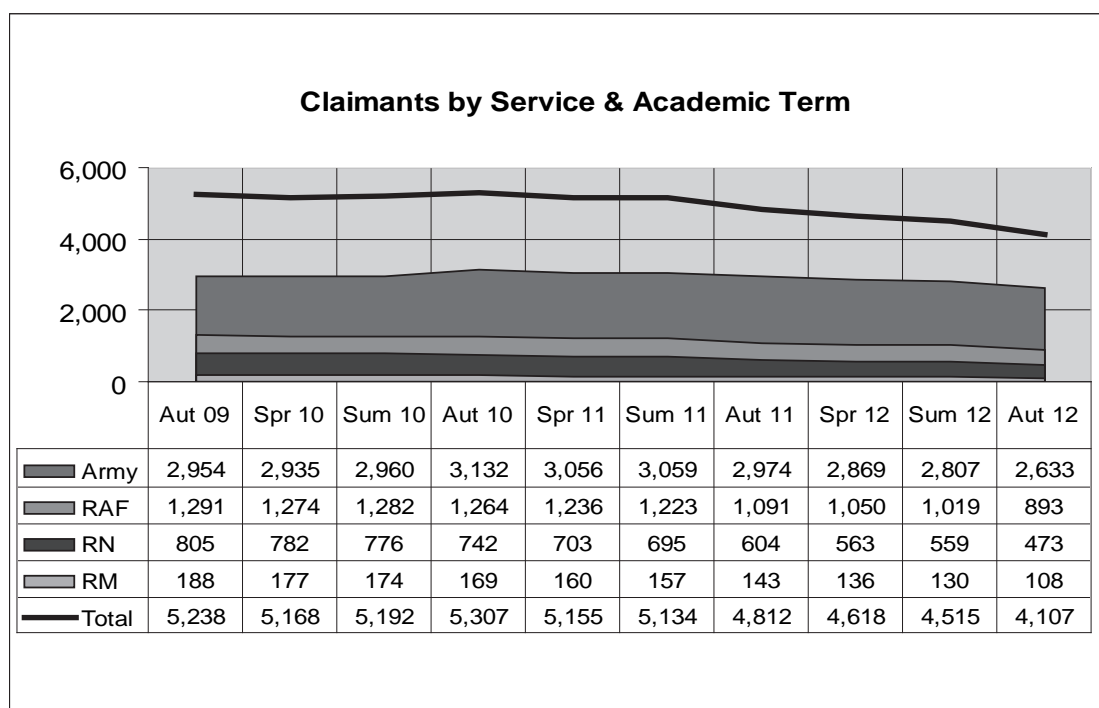


Figure 2

CEA CLAIMANTS SPLIT BY OFFICERS/OTHER RANKS & ACADEMIC TERM

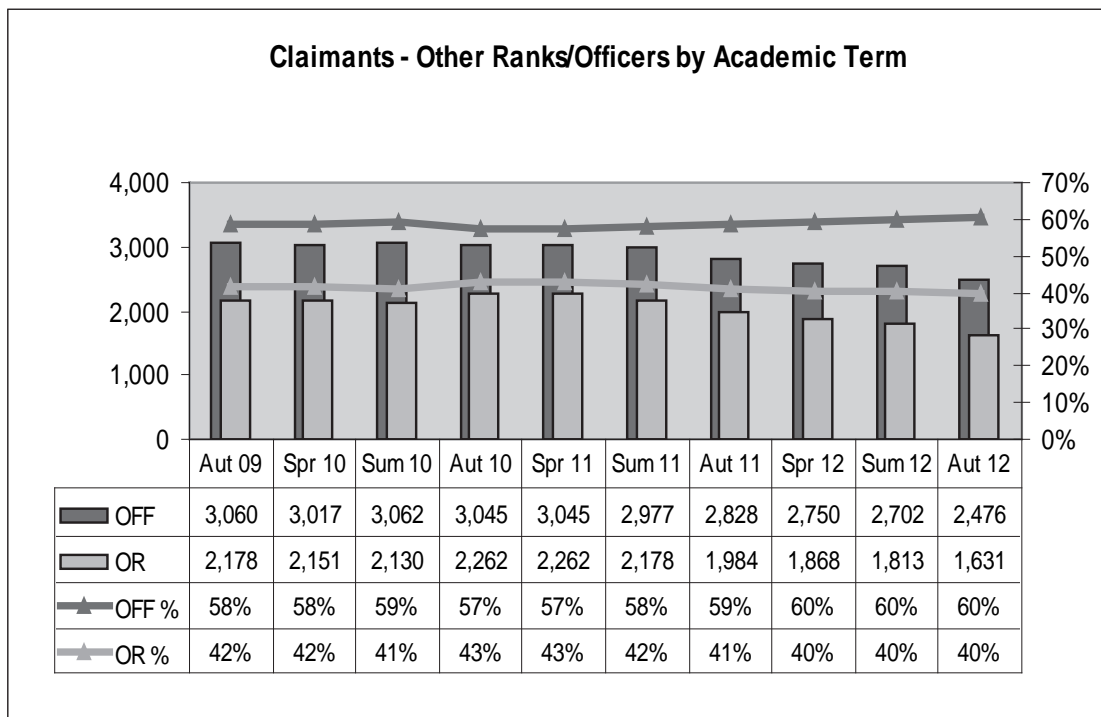


Figure 3

CEA CHILDREN BY SERVICE & ACADEMIC TERM

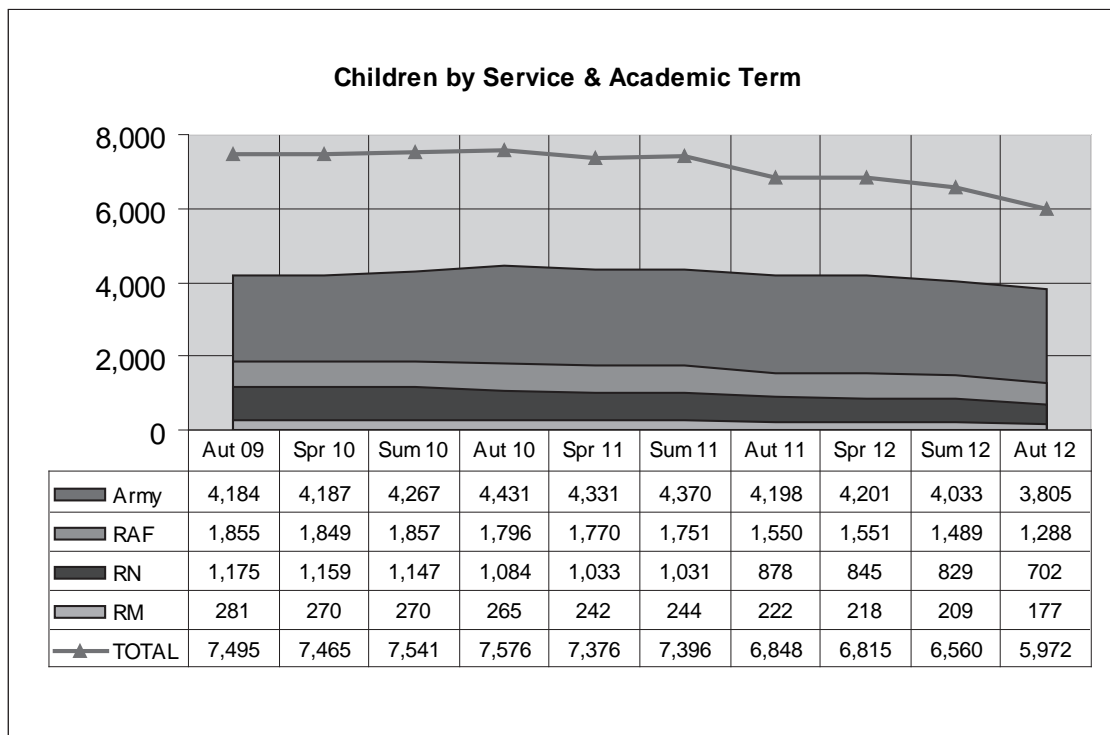
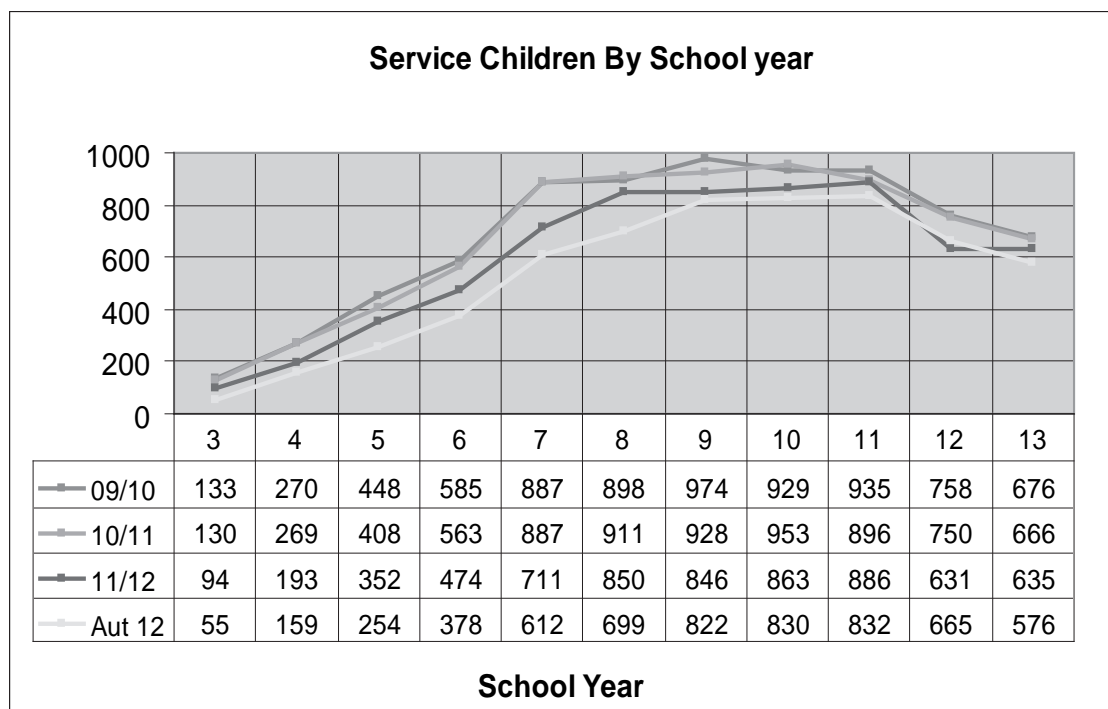


Figure 4

NUMBERS OF SERVICE CHILDREN IN EACH YEAR GROUP



Annex C

ARMED FORCES BEREAVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME—DATA

RECIPIENTS

<i>Royal Navy (7 Royal Marines)</i>		<i>Army</i>		<i>Royal Air Force</i>	
AB	2	Pte	2	SAC	2
LR	2	Sgt	9	Cpl	2
Cpl	1	S Sgt	3	Jnr Tech	1
PO	1	C Sgt	1	Sgt	2
CPO	1	WO2	3	Chf Tech	2
WO2	2	WO1	1	FS	4
WO1	1	Capt	5	WO	1
Lt	1	Maj	6	Flt Lt	21
Cdr	2	Lt Col	4	Sqn Ldr	6
Lt Col	1	Col	2	Wg Cdr	2
				Air Cdre	1
				ACM	1
		<i>England</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Wales</i>	<i>NI</i>
Further Education		23	3	0	0
University		53	7	5	4

LEVELS OF AWARD AND SCHOLARSHIP RATES FOR ACADEMIC YEAR 2012–13

<i>Studying in</i>	<i>Residing in</i>	<i>England</i>	<i>Scotland</i>	<i>Wales</i>	<i>Northern Ireland</i>
England		Up to £13,950 ¹	£6,770 ²	Up to £13,950 ¹	Up to £13,950 ¹
Scotland		Up to £13,950 ¹	£4,950 ³	Up to £13,950 ¹	Up to £13,950 ¹
Wales		Up to £13,950 ¹	£6,770 ²	Up to £13,950 ¹	Up to £13,950 ¹
Northern Ireland		Up to £13,950 ¹	£6,770 ²	Up to £13,950 ¹	Up to £8,415 ⁴

1 Made up of a maximum of £9,000 for tuition fees and £4,950 for maintenance.

2 Made up of £1,820 for fees and £4,950 for maintenance.

3 Made up of £4,950 for maintenance.

4 Made up of a maximum of £3,465 for tuition fees and £4,950 for maintenance.

Further written evidence from the Ministry of Defence

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOLLOWING THE SESSION WITH GAVIN BARLOW, MARTIN BULL, OLIVIA DENSON, KATHRYN FORSYTH AND COLONEL KNIGHTLEY ON 16 APRIL 2013

Question 366: *Please provide the Committee with the grounds and the reasons for a right to move a child who receives continuity of education allowance, in particular where a parent is concerned in relation to sexual abuse or sexual assault on that child*

The regulations dealing with a change of school within a stage of education³ will shortly be amended as part of the overall re-write of CEA regulations. This section of the CEA regulations is virtually unchanged from the extant regulations and will read as follows:

“09.0107. Changing School Within A Stage of Education. A claimant wishing to move their child to another eligible school other than at the end of a stage of education or in the circumstances as outlined at Paragraph 09.0125⁴ must seek advice at the earliest opportunity from the CEAS and their Unit HR concerning the effect of such action on the education of their child and their entitlement to claim CEA. Circumstances where the early change of school for a child may be acceptable are outlined at Annex D to this section. In such circumstances, a claimant should submit casework in accordance with Paragraph 09.0104⁵ including any independent evidence as required by Annex D. If the child is in immediate danger or there is a safeguarding issue, the child may be withdrawn immediately and advice may be sought from CEAS and casework submitted as soon as possible retrospectively.”

Annex D outlines the “Reasons For Changing School During A Stage Of Education Which May Be Acceptable In Certain Circumstances”:

- (a) Claimants Not Satisfied With Standards of Tuition or Conditions of Accommodation or Supervision at a Particular School.
- (b) Children Unhappy at a Particular School.
- (c) Poor Progress.
- (d) Closure of School or Boarding House.
- (e) Permanent Exclusion.
- (f) Significant Alteration in Fees.
- (g) Alteration of Curriculum.
- (h) Alteration in Standards.
- (i) Change of School on moving from Preparatory to Secondary School.

Question 367: *Continuity of Education Allowance and the right to move, please provide details of how many requests to move you have received in the past 10 years*

It is not possible to provide a full response to the question, with regard to Changing Schools, as details of case numbers are only readily accessible back to 2006 and the background reason for those requests only back to 2011. A summary of the casework submitted since 2006 is as follows:

CEA—DETAILS OF REQUESTS TO CHANGE SCHOOL DURING A STAGE OF EDUCATION

Year	Total Requests	Casework	
		Cases Upheld	Background Reason
2006	209	158	Not Available
2007	263	47	Not Available
2008	36	6	Not Available
2009	58	37	Not Available
2010	44	34	Not Available
2011	62	42	Education Provision ¹ = 13 Pastoral Care ² = 7 Unhappiness ³ = 9 Bullying = 2 Child Protection = 2 Exclusion = 9

³ JSP752, Chapter 9, Paragraph 09.0117

⁴ Paragraph 09.0125 refers to the ability of CEA claimants to withdraw from CEA without financial penalty.

⁵ Paragraph 09.0104 points to where the casework process is explained.

Year	Total Requests	Casework	
		Cases Upheld	Background Reason
2012	19	13	Education Provision ¹ = 3 Pastoral Care ² = 4 Unhappiness ³ = 5 Exclusion = 1
2013	1	1	Bullying = 1
Total	692	438	

NOTES:

1. "Education Provision" relates to cases where the school failed to provide: 'A' Levels in certain subjects; the additional tuition required by some students and support for Special Educational Needs (SEN).
2. "Pastoral Care" relates to cases where numbers of full boarders had diminished and where parents were unhappy with the standard of supervision and/or boarding facilities.
3. "Unhappiness" relates to cases where children were: not coping following the move of a sibling; not progressing well and becoming unhappy as a result and the parent's ill health caused problems in collecting the child from school.

In respect of the total casework, CEAS have been involved in 3938 cases for the retention of CEA following a change in the claimant's or child's situation. Of these, 209 cases constituted requests to withdraw a child from a school citing Bullying, Behaviour (of the child or other children), Depression, Unhappiness or Homesickness; only 2 of these 209 cases cited alleged sexual abuse (one in 2009, one in 2011; both of which were referred to Police and Social Services). CEAS endorsed 208 of the 209 requests, including both of the cases citing sexual abuse.

Question 403: *Please provide the Committee with details of 1. How many schools have been identified where families have come forward with concerns and allegations in relation to abuse. 2. The form of that abuse. 3. Whether any children are still being funded in those schools and whether guidance has been issued to families who remain in the school*

CEAS records show only the two allegations of sexual abuse shown in the answer above (2009 and 2011, from different schools; each allegation was peer-on-peer involving another pupil). In both cases the police/social services investigation, and actions taken by the schools, confirmed that there was no risk posed to other pupils. There was thus no requirement for CEAS to inform other Service parents and both schools remained on the MOD Approved Schools Database.

Question 408: *Please provide an indication of 1. How many other schools. 2. How many allegations were made against each of those schools. 3. Whether they have been investigated and the time period from which you had the start of allegations to action being taken*

This question initially related to schools where wider safeguarding concerns have required temporary or permanent removal of the school from the MOD Approved Schools Database. CEAS confirm that they have only had to deal with this situation twice. In 2009 an OFSTED inspection identified dangerous shortcomings in fire safety at a school, which was immediately removed from the MOD Approved Schools Database and parents of Service children at the school were informed at once; CEAS then assisted parents in finding alternative schooling. Once the school had carried out the remedial work and passed the requisite fire inspection the school was reinstated on the MOD Approved Schools Database. The second case involves Stanbridge Earls School in Romsey, Hants, and is ongoing (all detail is in the public domain already). Immediately after the publication of the findings of Special Educational Needs and Disability Tribunal that identified serious safeguarding shortcomings CEAS contacted all Service parents affected and the school was removed from the MOD Approved Schools Database until OFSTED completed a subsequent investigation. Service Parents were advised to remove their children and those that chose to do so were assisted by CEAS in finding alternative schools. The final OFSTED report is expected in late May.

With the exception of these two schools the specific nature of the remainder of the 209 cases identified in the answer to Q 367 did not require direct CEAS involvement. Only the local social services and/or police could answer this question.

Mrs Moon asked for information regarding concerns in relation to abuse in both sessions.

Question 409: *Please provide details of how many requests to move MoD has received and the reasons for those requests. The Committee was told that where it is an issue of safeguarding children, there would be no problem with a request to move. Please provide the details of the numbers of requests relating to safeguarding, when the request to move was received and when the move was authorised*

The detail held by CEAS is reflected in their answers to Qs 367, 403 and 408 above. As highlighted in the answer to Q 366 above, any request to change schools on the basis of valid safeguarding concerns would be granted; it would be helpful if Mrs Moon could encourage the families she mentions above to contact CEAS

without delay if they still have valid safeguarding concerns, and confirm whether the concerns were passed to the appropriate statutory authority (social services and/or police).

Question 370: *Regarding the timescales for the New Employment Model, Gavin Barlow said the bulk of the New Employment Model changes will not really start to come into effect until after 2015. When does the MoD expect that the NEM will start to impact on levels of mobility for Service children*

Changes under NEM will be introduced incrementally after 2015 and into 2020 and so it is too soon to say when NEM is likely to provide a substantial impact on the level of mobility for Service children. In addition other factors such as the withdrawal from Germany are likely to have an impact. Whilst NEM is seeking to support increased domestic stability there will continue to be a need for some mobility where this underpins Operational Capability and as a result some Service families may choose to remain mobile in order to avoid separated service. The study into children's education being led by DCYP is considering how continuity of education can best be maintained for families who continue to encounter a degree of mobility in their lifestyles.

Question 393: *Provide a note on paying school fees should a parent be killed on operations*

The extant regulations governing ongoing CEA entitlement in the event of the death or invaliding of a CEA claimant are detailed at JSP752, Chapter 9, Paragraph 09.0133. In summary this states that if the claimant dies or is invalidated from the Service, the following rules apply for further entitlement to CEA:

- (a) There will be no new entitlement for any child not already in receipt of CEA when the claimant dies or is invalidated, irrespective of any future parental aspirations for the education of a child.
- (b) CEA will continue to be paid up to the end of the current stage of education or for up to 2 full terms after the term in which the death or invaliding of the claimant occurred for each child, whichever is the longer extension.
- (c) If the child is already studying for public examinations, CEA will continue to be paid for up to 4 years or to the end of the term in which the child takes the examination and then leaves school, whichever is soonest, eg, for a child aged 14–16 years who moves onto A-level studies, this would normally be up to 4 further years, for a child aged 16–18 years it would normally be up to 2 further years.

Other sources of financial support for children come from:

Child/Children's Payment—Child/Children's Payment is an income stream paid monthly to eligible child(ren) in order to provide financial support following the loss of their parent, guardian or person on whom they were financially dependant. It is normally payable up to the age of 18 (or until the child commences full time paid employment), or up to the age of 23 if still in full time education. The Child Payment is taxable and is adjusted in respect of any benefit paid under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme.

Question 423: *Please provide details of Continuity of Education Allowance and the split between those who started as other ranks and those who have been officers all the way through*

Research has shown that around 30% of Army officers and around 15% of RN/RM officers were previously Other Ranks (ORs). Similar data is not immediately available for the RAF; however on the assumption that the proportion of RAF officer claimants, who previously served as ORs, is somewhere between the other Services and is judged to be some 20% then around 600 CEA officer claimants (out of around 4,000) were previously ORs. Put another way, of the current CEA claimant community, around 2,100 (or around 50%) were, or currently are, ORs.

Questions 430–432: *Please provide information on the use of the £3 million Support Fund for Schools, and the data promised by Colonel Knightley, and any other information available on how this money is spent*

Breakdown for first three years of the Fund (figures for 2013 are still provisional):

<i>Breakdown—£3M Fund for Service Children in State Schools</i>								
<i>Country</i>	<i>Svce Children</i>		<i>2011 Fund</i>		<i>2012 Fund</i>		<i>2013 Fund</i>	
	<i>Numbers</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
England	45,000	91.1	1,861,185	69.5	1,802,830	60.1	1,678,983	58.9
Scotland	2,500	5.1	421,627	15.7	711,101	23.7	588,242	20.6
N Ireland	900	1.8	325,641	12.2	382,982	12.8	454,680	16.0
Wales	1,000	2.0	70,183	2.6	103,079	3.4	128,408	4.5
Totals	49,400		2,678,636		2,999,992		2,850,313	

A map showing where the 2011 allocations were made in relation to military bases is attached at Annex.

Annex

PHOTO REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL ISSUES



Further written evidence from the Ministry of Defence

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOLLOWING THE ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION WITH RT HON MARK FRANCOIS MP,

LIEUTENANT GENERAL BERRAGAN, MARTIN BULL AND GAVIN BARLOW ON 23 APRIL 2013

Questions 460–463: *Please provide detail about a DfE record system which can track the performance of schools on a daily, weekly and monthly basis*

The DfE has no facility to monitor school performance on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. School-level test and examination results at the end KS2, KS4 and KS5 are published annually in the School & College Performance Tables at www.education.gov.uk/schools/performance. These include breakdowns of performance of particular groups such as Disadvantaged Pupils.

However, we do have the National Pupil Database (NPD), a pupil level database which matches pupil and school characteristic data to pupil level attainment. The School Census completed by state schools is the key source of data held on the NPD for pupil characteristics such as ethnicity, a low-income marker, information on Special Education Needs, and a history of schools attended.

There is also the RAISE online system, which can be accessed securely by local authorities, schools and Ofsted inspectors. It uses the underlying data found on Performance Tables which can be presented in a variety of reports and analyses. Schools can also use their own internal management information systems to carry out regular reviews of progress being made by individual pupils, specific pupil groups (such as those receiving Service Premium).

Question 475: *The Committee was told that there are about 2,000 Service children with Special Educational Needs. Please confirm the actual figure*

The figure of 2000 reflected only those registered with CEAS; RN and RAF parents are not required to register their children, and some Army parents elect not to do so. CEAS/SCE track SEN numbers accurately overseas, where MOD has statutory responsibility for doing so, but within the UK this responsibility remains with the DfE and devolved equivalents.

The most recent DfE Census identified 925 Service Children registered with a statement (1.6% of the total number of Service Children), and a further 7,240 with SEN but without a statement (11.2% of the total number of Service Children).

In Question 356 (of the 16 April session): *The Committee was told in that the number of Service children is 64,500, therefore do you agree that 3.1% of Service children have Special Educational Needs.*

The DfE answer to Q475 above provides the agreed percentage.

Question 477: *Please provide figures on the percentage of children with Special Educational Needs in the UK population as a whole*

Only data for England can be provided. In 2012, 226,125 children were registered with a statement of SEN (2.8% of the school population). A further 1,392,215 pupils have SEN without statements (17.0% of the school population) (Statistical First Release 14/2012, Special Educational Needs in England, January 2012). The majority (53.7%) of children with statements were taught in mainstream schools and 39% were taught in maintained special schools (SFR 14/2012):

“It may be helpful in that process if you could do us a note. Earlier, I think Mr Bull said that there were 2,000 children on the register. Will you let us know what percentage of the total number of services children that represents? Is that proportionately higher or lower than the national average, including the devolved Administrations? With that, would you include a time scale of how, after six or seven years of inactivity, we could measure activity?” Ms Stuart.

DfE data shows an upward trend in the number of Service children in maintained education between 2008 and 2012. It also provides information on the number of Service children registered with a statement and those Service children with SEN and without a statement. The trend since 2008 indicates an increase in numbers with SEN but one that is matched by a general increase in the overall number of Service children being registered by Service families with schools. The increase is linked to activities to promote the need for Service families to register their children with schools, so that the school can receive Service Premium funding. This data provided excludes Service children being educated overseas by Service Children Education and Service children in the devolved Administrations, which the department does not hold data on.

In terms of SEN, Service children are below the national average consistently since we started collecting data in 2008. Nevertheless, to fulfil our commitment, clauses in a forthcoming Special Educational Needs Bill will bring about radical changes to special educational needs provision, which will benefit children from Service families with special educational needs together with their peers. The clauses will aim to bring in a properly joined up assessment process, involving education, health and social care. The draft clauses have been the subject of pre-legislative scrutiny.

Question 494: *Please provide a copy of the clarified set of rules that Gavin Barlow offered*

See Annex.

Question 495: *What advice does MoD provide to families where children have been abused*

This question was couched with reference to advice and guidance on criminal injuries compensation for the child. This is a personal and private issue for the parents and as such advice may be sought by them. This advice may be given through unit and formation welfare and legal procedures, as any other legal advice is provided, but it is not a Ministry of Defence issue.

In addition please provide the following information for the Committee:

1. *The total annual expenditure on the Service Pupil Premium since its introduction:*
 - Service Premium financial year 2011–12: 45,070 children—£9,014,000 (rate of £200 per service child).
 - Service Premium financial year 2012–13: 52,370 children—£15,712,000 (introduced ever measure and increased rate to £250 per service child).
 - TOTAL for 2011–12 and 2012–13: £24,726,000.
 - Service Premium financial year 2013–14 rate increased to £300 per service child. However, the timing of data means we do not yet have final pupil numbers for this year.

In its written evidence, Ofsted said that from February 2013 it will report specifically on the performance in English and maths of pupils supported through the pupil premium compared to all other pupils in the school. Was Ofsted tasked to monitor just English and maths performance or does Ofsted intend to report on any other issues in regard to the use by schools of the Service Pupil Premium, for example pupil's behaviour or the provision of emotional support?

On this matter the DfE was referring to Sir Michael Wilshaw letter dated February 2013 to Headteachers and Chairs of Governors entitled "A Good Education for All". In this letter Sir Wilshaw explains the inspectorate's plan to look closely at the use of the pupil premium. He advises that Ofsted plans to report specifically on the performance in English and Mathematics of those children who are supported through the pupil premium, including the Service premium and, in particular, on any average point score differences between these and other children in the school.

Whilst it is right and proper for Inspectors to look at the use of the pupil premium funding, they may wish to look beyond the raw data of average point scores in this instance. The impact of the Service pupil premium can also be evaluated through other means to support an Ofsted judgment. Other measures could include parental questionnaires, NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) figures, exclusion data, attendance, punctuality, and specific case studies.

However, the measures in which Ofsted use in their inspections is something for Ofsted to decide upon, not for DfE. Clarification can be sought from Michael Cladingbowl, Director of Schools at Ofsted. Michael.Cladingbowl@ofsted.gov.uk

2. *When does the MoD expect that the last families will leave Germany?*

During the course of 2020.

Annex

The CEA regulations are currently being re-written in line with the outcome of the Ministerial Review of CEA conducted in 2011 and the following wording is included:

"09.0107. Changing School Within A Stage of Education. A claimant wishing to move their child to another eligible school other than at the end of a stage of education or in the circumstances as outlined at Paragraph 09.0125 must seek advice at the earliest opportunity from the CEAS and their Unit HR concerning the effect of such action on the education of their child and their entitlement to claim CEA. Circumstances where the early change of school for a child may be acceptable are outlined at Annex D to this section. In such circumstances, a claimant should submit casework in accordance with Paragraph 09.0104 including any independent evidence as required by Annex D. If the child is in immediate danger or there is a safeguarding issue, the child may be withdrawn immediately and advice may be sought from CEAS and casework submitted as soon as possible retrospectively."

N.B. Paragraph 09.0125 refers to the ability of CEA claimants to withdraw from CEA without financial penalty. Paragraph 09.0104 explains where the casework process is outlined.

OUTLINES THE CIRCUMSTANCES (INCLUDING THOSE WHERE THERE ARE ISSUES OF SAFEGUARDING) AS FOLLOWS

“REASONS FOR CHANGING SCHOOL DURING A STAGE OF EDUCATION

Which may be Acceptable in Certain Circumstances

1. This policy applies only in circumstances where the claimant wishes to move their child to a different eligible school and continue claiming CEA. The claimant must contact CEAS for advice before taking any action and casework must be submitted in accordance with Paragraph 09.0104 as soon as possible after the circumstances that may lead to a change of school emerge. However, if the child is in immediate danger or there is a safeguarding issue, the child may be withdrawn immediately and advice sought from CEAS and casework submitted as soon as possible retrospectively. Each case should be supported by a completed Annex C to this section, a letter from the Head Teacher and any applicable independent evidence or advice as required by this Annex. Where the advice of an Educational or Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist or any other suitably qualified individual or organisation endorsed by CEAS is required, the costs will be borne by the claimant.

Claimants Not Satisfied With Standards of Tuition or Conditions of Accommodation or Supervision at a Particular School

2. In cases under this heading it may be difficult to decide whether the circumstances leading to an intended break of educational continuity are genuinely outside the parent's control, on the grounds that it is the claimant's personal responsibility to satisfy themselves as to the suitability of the school before enrolling a child. It is recognised, however, that not all schools measure up to the claims made in their prospectus and it may be difficult for a Service parent to make an accurate assessment by merely visiting the school to inspect it before deciding to enrol a child. Claimants considering sending a child to a school need to take particular care to ensure that the school is in every way satisfactory.
3. If evidence can be supplied to show clearly that the claimant could not reasonably have foreseen the grounds for dissatisfaction, then consideration will be given as to whether a change of school for the child is justified. If evidence cannot be obtained, the request will be considered on its merits bearing in mind the previous reputation of the school and the weight of information available.

Children Unhappy at a Particular School

4. If independent evidence can be supplied from an Educational or Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist or suitably qualified individual or organisation endorsed by CEAS clearly showing that it would be intolerable for a child to remain at the present school, it will be possible to regard a change of school as justifiable under the regulations. Eligibility will, however, usually be retained only if it can be established that the child's unhappiness was clearly connected with that particular school, and that there are no grounds for supposing that another school would not prove entirely suitable.
5. It is possible that a child may become unhappy at a particular school following the departure of a sibling. Consideration will be given to allow a child to accompany the sibling to another school without affecting the claimant's eligibility to CEA. Such cases will be based on a comparison of the personal stability of the sibling with the continuity of their education and will require supporting independent advice from an Educational or Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist or any other suitably qualified individual or organisation endorsed by CEAS. Any costs incurred in this process will be the responsibility of the claimant.

Poor Progress

6. There may be cases when a boarding school is found to be unsuitable for a particular child, and the child's progress at the school is adversely affected. Where independent evidence can be produced from an Educational or Clinical Psychologist, Psychiatrist or any other suitably qualified individual or organisation endorsed by CEAS that a change of boarding school is desirable, a transfer of school will be considered acceptable.

Closure of School or Boarding House

7. Where documentary evidence is provided that the school or boarding facilities at the school are to close, a change of school will be authorised.

Permanent Exclusion

8. Where independent evidence from the school or other appropriate authority is provided as part of the case, permanent exclusion of a child from school will be regarded as a justifiable reason for a change of school. The new school must provide documentary evidence that they are aware of the circumstances leading to the expulsion. However, there must be no doubt that the permanent exclusion was irrevocable and entirely beyond the control of the claimant. A withdrawal instigated by the claimant, even at the express suggestion of the school authorities and with their consent, will not be acceptable under this heading.

Significant Alterations in School Fees

9. Provided that documentary evidence of significant alterations in fees is supplied, it will be possible to regard a change of school as justifiable. Details of the proposed school fees and an indication of the Service person's financial circumstances are to be included with the request.

Alteration of School's Curriculum or Standards

10. Alteration of Curriculum. Provided that documentary evidence from the present school authorities or an independent education consultant is supplied showing that the new curriculum is unsuitable for the child concerned, withdrawal of the child from the school will be considered.
11. Alteration in Standards. Applications under this heading may be difficult to substantiate, since a school may well be reluctant to admit that a fall in its standards has taken place, and it is not always possible or indeed desirable to seek independent corroboration of this. Where evidence exists of an alteration in standards that now make the school unsuitable for the child in question, the claimant must present it to the CEAS and seek their advice prior to the submission of casework. If it is not possible to obtain such evidence, an application will be decided on its merits, based on the weight of information available. Claimants must inform CEAS of the alteration in standards and seek advice in all cases.

Change of School on moving from Preparatory to Secondary School

12. Where a preparatory school ends at year 8 (age 12/13), it will be admissible to remove a child at the end of year 6 (age 10/11) in order to start another school covering years 7 to 11 inclusive (ages 11 to 16) with the express intent of providing a greater continuity of education at secondary school. There will be no allowance made for a further move at the end of year 8 (age 13) if this option is taken and CEA eligibility may be forfeited.

Written evidence from Ofsted

BACKGROUND

1. This submission is Ofsted's response to the Committee's call for written evidence on educating the children of service personnel. Ofsted monitors Service Children's Education (SCE), by invitation on a school by school basis, against the *Framework for school inspection*, published in September 2012 and amended in January 2013.

2. The submission draws upon published findings from the report, *Children in Service families*, published in May 2011. It also references evidence from HMCI's Annual report 2011–12 and an internal analysis of a small sample of Ofsted inspection reports, from SCE schools, published between July 2012 and March 2013. However, Ofsted's evidence does not cover, in detail, all of the issues raised by the Committee.

3. According to the report, Department for Education research report DfE-RR011: *the educational performance of children of Service personnel*, DfE, 2010: www.education.gov.uk/publications/RSG/AllPublications/Page1/DFE-RR011, there are 938 maintained primary schools and 423 maintained secondary schools with Service children on roll. These schools are inspected as part of Ofsted's routine programme of inspections.

4. Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI), Sir Michael Wilshaw, is determined that every child should have the opportunity to go to a good school. As part of the drive for further improvement, the "satisfactory" grade was removed from the school inspection framework last autumn and replaced by a "requires improvement" judgement.

5. Other important changes have been made to strengthen the inspection of maintained schools and academies. Since autumn 2012, inspectors have evaluated and reported on how additional funding provided through the pupil premium⁶ is being spent and its impact on raising standards. Ofsted's report, *The pupil premium*, published in September 2012, did not comment on outcomes for the children from service families at that time. However, from February 2013, inspectors will report specifically on the performance in English and mathematics of pupils supported through the pupil premium compared to all other pupils in the school. Inspectors will highlight any differences between the average point scores for English and mathematics⁷ and whether gaps are narrowing for the following pupils:

- pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and all other pupils (FSM and non-FSM pupils);
- children who are looked after and all other pupils (CLA and non-CLA); and
- children of service families and all other pupils.

⁶ Pupil premium is for pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, children from service families, and those children that are looked after. Year 7 catch-up premium is for pupils who did not achieve the expected Level 4 in English at the end of Key Stage 2.

⁷ Inspectors will do this separately for English and mathematics. They will report on the difference between average point scores at the end of Key Stage 2 for primary pupils and at the end of Key Stage 4 for secondary pupils.

6. Inspectors will also scrutinise the school's own assessment data and evaluate the progress made by those pupils who are eligible for the Year 7 catch-up premium.

7. The new inspection framework, places greater emphasis on the performance management of teachers and how effective school leaders and managers are in ensuring that teaching helps all pupils to achieve as well as they can. Weaknesses in teaching and learning and leadership and management are inherent features of schools judged to be "requires improvement" or "inadequate". For the first time since Ofsted has inspected SCE schools, inspectors judged the standard of education in an SCE school as inadequate, in December 2012, placing the school in a category of concern. In this school, standards in reading and writing were much lower than they should be because too much teaching was inadequate.

8. Inspectors evaluate the effectiveness of governance in schools when judging leadership and management during every Section 5 inspection. This is also the case in SCE inspections. Although no separately graded judgement for governance is made, inspectors comment explicitly on the effectiveness of governance within the report. Effective governance is an intrinsic part of good leadership. HMCI is of the view that radical changes need to be made so that governance arrangements are fit for purpose in all schools.

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

9. Although Service children achieve generally in line with their peers by the end of each key stage, for many of them, their learning slows, or recedes, because of continual moves. Often they need additional support to help them to catch up. Ofsted's evidence suggests some children do not achieve the grades they might have achieved if they had not been geographically mobile. When Service families' children attend many different schools, continuity and progression in learning is hard to achieve. There is more to be done to improve the quality of education these children experience.

10. Ofsted's evidence shows that children who face regular moves of home and school can suffer high levels of anxiety and stress. This problem is often exacerbated because the transfer of records between schools is not always properly coordinated and important information is delayed, or does not arrive at all. As a result, some children miss large parts of their curriculum entitlement and the additional support they need to help them to catch up. Local authorities have different systems for school admissions. Delays in admissions departments processing requests for school places, or finding a school that meets a child's needs create further difficulties for these families.

11. Service families' children may be susceptible to social and emotional disturbance while a parent or other family member is on active deployment. Children's behaviour may be very different before and after deployment. These are all times when anxiety levels run high and emotional stability is affected. Without accurate systems to track the movements of these children, there is a lack of continuity of support and provision for them as they move between schools. This is heightened in areas where small numbers of Service children are educated in mainstream schools and where there is less understanding of their needs.

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

12. Pre-school provision was outside of the planned scope of the Ofsted survey in 2011. Ofsted's inspections of SCE schools in the UK and overseas, suggest variable quality in pre-school provision. Our inspection evidence shows that few children in the Early Years Foundation Stages 1 and 2 stay in the same school for more than three years. Therefore, these children face the same challenges as older children, when they are required to make frequent changes in the schools they attend.

13. Parents interviewed in the survey told us it was very difficult to get their children into schools of their choice in the UK. Not all local authorities follow the School Admissions Code consistently. Some schools are over-subscribed. Some families do not always know their next location until the last minute. This means that some parents have to place siblings in different schools, even when their children are at the same stage in their education. Although the landscape is varied, some local authorities do sterling work, often led by educational psychologists, recognising that Service families' children may need fluctuating levels of support during moves or deployment. This is evidenced by the attention they give to identifying these children as a priority group, and putting tailored, timely support in place so children benefit and cope more effectively with their circumstances.

14. Provision for 14–19 year-olds was a key concern raised through evidence from the survey. SCE schools in Germany and Cyprus were not able to fully meet the needs of all of the 14–19-year-olds. Staying on rates in school sixth forms were too low. Young people were not always able to follow courses of their choice due to the limited range of options available to them. As a result, some young people dropped out of full-time education or training; their destinations were not specifically monitored and there was weak accountability for their outcomes.

15. Ofsted recognises the efforts made by the MoD to resolve the difficulties in providing education and services in the current, very challenging, military context. Nevertheless, there is scope to further raise awareness of the needs of Service families and children in the range of settings in which they are learning. The government has introduced additional funding (the pupil premium) to help to meet these children's needs more effectively,

but the true impact of social and emotional disturbance on these children and young people is not fully understood by all. Local authorities are not always sufficiently prompt in assessing children's needs through school admissions to ensure the help needed is in place at an early stage.

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

16. The survey report highlights the good practice found by inspectors and contains, for example, information on effective pastoral systems in a number of schools. Nevertheless, weaknesses in systems mean that some children's records may be given to the family as a child leaves the school. In the survey, parents and schools told us that, during family moves, these records may get misplaced and never get to the next school. Some headteachers prefer to send records directly but many families do not know which school their child will be going to.

17. Moving in Years 10 and 11 can be particularly disruptive to young people. Some move to schools and have to follow a different examination syllabus. Consequently, they do not always do as well as they could. For older children, there are anxieties about following the course of their choice and completing qualifications, as well as the issue of not having any sustained friendships. For these reasons, many parents opt to send their children to boarding schools for their secondary education.

18. Ofsted evidence shows that moves cause disruption and stress to families. Parents worry about their children being put into the right ability group or accessing an appropriate course. For children with special needs, the continuity of provision for their needs may be broken and their progress slows. These children are particularly susceptible to anxiety in this context.

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

19. Since April 2011, Service families' children are eligible (through schools) for pupil premium funding, provided by the government, to ensure additional resources are available. The focus of this is to mitigate the impact of high mobility and/or the active deployment of a family member. Ofsted has strengthened its approach to reviewing the effectiveness of pupil premium spending through the revised framework for the inspection of maintained schools. Early evidence suggests schools are not as effective as they should be in targeting this funding or analysing the impact of spending on children and young people's learning.

20. Where local authorities and schools recognise the importance of an early assessment and early interventions to meet the identified needs of Service families' children, they have a better chance of catching up with their peers and achieving well. Some local authorities "top up" the pupil premium funding with additional resources for these children. For example, in Buckinghamshire, Service families' children are included as one of their vulnerable groups. Multi-agency commissioning and additional resources, led by the Buckinghamshire Educational Psychology Service, are available to support them. Similarly, in North Yorkshire, Oxfordshire, Wiltshire and Hampshire, local authorities are very aware of the needs of Service families' children and provide additional resources for the schools they attend.

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

21. Ofsted monitors SCE by invitation, on a school by school basis, using the maintained school inspection framework. Survey findings from the 2011 report provide some insight into how the MoD and SCE monitored their own provision but since then the landscape has changed. Partnership working in Germany and Cyprus, under the umbrella of Pupil and Family Services, an arm of SCE, was strong at that time. Links to health services and behaviour support was found to be more disparate.

22. In the current round of SCE school inspections, inspectors note some declining school rolls and school mergers, as a result of re-organisation within SCE and as troops are drawn down from overseas. The number of pupils joining or leaving school at different times of the school year is often very high. For example, in one school in the current Year 4 class, over 50% of pupils have joined the school since Year 3. Positive relationships are reflected in the way many schools work with agencies, such as the Army Welfare Unit, to help support children's individual needs.

23. Service Children's Education has made the improvement of education, in the case of the school judged inadequate this year, to be highest priority. This is reflected in the secondment of two members of its staff into the school, immediately after the inspection, and in the speed of the action taken to appoint a new headteacher. Nevertheless, weaknesses were identified in the SCE statement of action and the school improvement plan. In line with other schools in a similar category, this school will receive regular monitoring visits from one of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) until its next inspection.

Written evidence from the Northern Ireland Executive

Thank you for your recent letter in which you invited comments on the challenges faced in educating British Armed Forces Service children in the north of Ireland. I have set out below information relating to each of the main issues in which you have asked for comments.

So far as the Service Pupil Premium is concerned, qualifying schools receive an additional £405 per child (2012–13 rates) for each full-time pupil designated in the school census as being from a Service personnel family. This money is allocated to schools under the Common Funding Formula and is part of the school's overall delegated budget. Schools are free to deploy such resources according to their own priorities. Monitoring of school expenditure is undertaken by the Education and Library Boards (ELBs) whose accounts are subject to audit by the NI Audit Office. However, the Department of Education (DE) officials are represented on a local Services Children Forum (NISCEF) chaired by the MoD, which considers issues affecting the education of Services children here. Local schools are also represented on this forum. Feedback from this group suggests that due to the transient nature of Services children, they could have moved schools 3 or 4 times, resulting in them missing important aspects of their education due to how and when the curriculum is taught. The allocation from DE would be used to bridge those learning gaps through either in-class or out-of-class catch-up learning.

The allocation can also be used for pastoral care services, for example through the employment of a classroom assistant who would have responsibility to help with emotional and well-being issues such as mental health problems when family members are on deployment in high risk areas; separation from extended family support; and pressures on pupils when they arrive half way through the academic year in making and sustaining friends.

DE is aware of the Ministry of Defence Support Fund, however this fund is not accessed through DE. Army Welfare Services, 38 Irish Brigade liaise with and direct the relevant schools here to the MoD Children and Young People website where the applications can be accessed.

Although Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN) are not transferrable between jurisdictions, where a child has a statement, schools and the ELBs can take cognizance of this whilst a statutory assessment is undertaken. Furthermore, although the Code of Practice on the identification and assessment of SEN here sets out a 5-stage process, as opposed to the 3-stage process in England/Wales, the time frame for conducting an assessment is the same in both jurisdictions, namely 26 weeks subject to the statutory exceptions. On receipt of a request from a parent or school to commence a statutory assessment, an ELB has 6 weeks in which to inform the school and parent if it will conduct the assessment. If the ELB decides to proceed with the assessment it has 10 weeks in which to do so. If, as a result of the assessment, the Board decides that a statement is necessary it must within 2 weeks serve a draft statement on the parent. This is followed by a further period of 8 weeks to enable the parent to discuss with the ELB the contents of the statement. At the end of this period the ELB must issue the final statement.

General transfer of information between schools when Service children move is a recognised problem here. Feedback from the local Services Children Forum suggests that schools would welcome a consistent format for the transfer of documentation.

John O'Dowd MLA
Minister for Education

28 May 2013

Written evidence from the Scottish Parliament

I would welcome the opportunity to reassure you that the Scottish Government is only too aware of the many challenges children of Service families can face, particularly around accessing learning. I also welcome the opportunity to provide detail on how Service children are supported throughout their learning whilst being educated in Scotland.

I am aware that members of the Defence Committee have met with some of our key stakeholders in Scotland who we work in partnership with. For instance members of the Scottish Service Children Strategic Working Group which consists of representation from Association of Directors of Education in Scotland (ADES), Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS) and the voluntary sector and the Ministry of Defence. The SSCSWG is chaired by one of my officials and emerged from the work of the previous Children from Service Families Network which brought together a range of educational experts and stakeholders. Pulling together the key strengths and knowledge of these experts has allowed us to make real progress in Scotland in supporting children from Service families and helped frame the on-going work of the Strategic Group.

Over the last 2 years we have jointly supported each other to develop useful resources for practitioners—through Education Scotland, and information for families through CEAS. Education Scotland is the national development and improvement for education Executive Agency of the Scottish Government. It is charged with providing support and challenge to the education system, from early years to adult learning.

PUPIL PREMIUM

As you refer in your letter in Scotland we have not implemented the Pupil Premium or the Service Pupil Premium. The distribution formula used to allocate the Scottish Government's funding to local authorities has been developed over a number of years and is based on the relative need of each local authority, including levels of deprivation (take up of Free School Meals and income support). The needs based formula for local government funding was reviewed in 2009 by a joint Scottish Government/Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) group. It concluded that the existing needs-based indicators were reasonable and generally a fair indication of need.

£3M FUND

Scotland has benefitted significantly from the last 3 years funding allocation—bringing in over £165,000 in 2011, over £700,000 last year and most recently this year saw over £630,000 come to schools and local authorities in Scotland. The Scottish Government has welcomed the £3m Fund and has worked in partnership with the Ministry of Defence, CoSLA and ADES to ensure it was promoted across Scotland and fit for purpose within devolved responsibilities.

We have fully supported this fund, specifically one of my officials is the chair of the regional assessment panel here in Scotland. I am aware that there is one year funding left from this Commitment and I am confident that our work here in Scotland will draw in another good level of quality bids. It is unfortunate that this fund will come to an end prior to the movements taking place as part of the re-basing review.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

The principal for additional support needs in Scotland is much broader than the focus on special needs in place in England. The current legislation and updated Code of Practice *supporting children's learning* recognises that children or young people may require additional support, long or short term, for a variety of reasons including if they have a bereavement, have interrupted learning (for example if their family is subject to regular moves), or have social emotional difficulties. This legislation places a Duty on local authorities in Scotland to identify, meet and address any additional support needs of pupils for whose education they are responsible. This also addresses the type of support provided through the pupil premium which is further evidence of our lack of requirement for the Service Pupil Premium in Scotland. It is important that authorities and schools look at the individual needs of the child or young person.

CURRICULUM IN SCOTLAND

This is in line with our curriculum on Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence, which is not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to education but recognition that every child is different and requirements vary from one child or young person to another.

This is our programme for improving educational outcomes—to put the learning at the centre of the curriculum, no matter what their social, economic or ethnic background. All children should benefit from an education system that is engaging, relevant and tailored in a way that supports their needs and aspirations.

At school, all pupils at all stages of learning should be able to expect a high quality of support and this support is all the more important when a child or young person experiences the traumatic loss of a loved one.

Education Scotland worked with partners with key stakeholders to pull together a number of useful resources for practitioners. These resources are held on their website:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners/positivelearningenvironments/inclusionandequality/servicefamilies/index.asp>

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

By working with partners in health and the voluntary sector, local authorities and schools must ensure that they have plans and strategies in place to ensure that they provide appropriate support to children and young people, so that they can access the services they need to help them cope with loss.

Through Curriculum for Excellence outcomes and experiences for health and wellbeing, schools are encouraged to work with their partners locally to plan their programmes for health and wellbeing explicitly, taking account of local circumstances and the individual needs of children. These programmes may include for example reducing the stigma of loss and promoting resilience.

Schools and their partners are encouraged to take a holistic approach to support and ensure it is weaved through every facet of school and community life.

TRANSITIONS

The Scottish Government is fully supportive of the ADES National Transitions Officer (NTO) who is currently being funded through a successful bid to the £3m Fund. The NTO will work with Scottish local authorities, their schools, Children's Service partners, and Armed Forces Services to enhance policy and

practice which will take into account the unique features affecting the education of Service Children. One element of the work of the NTO is to look to establish seamless transitions for learners from Armed Forces families with successful school placements and to support families through this process.

To provide you with further context to the work of the Scottish Government in supporting this vulnerable group of children and young people, the Scottish Government, for the first time, has one Minister, Keith Brown, who is responsible for Scottish Government policy on the Armed Forces and veteran community. This is a significant development and I would like to make clear what it represents.

It means for the first time there is a designated Scottish Government Minister who will, and does, put the interests of our Armed Forces, their families and veterans at the centre of their policy agendas. It makes sure this community is heard, listened to and involved in making a better place for its people.

We also have a new Armed Forces and Veterans Advocate within the Scottish Government, Lesley Evans. Lesley currently sits as the Director General of the Learning and Justice Department. As one of our most senior civil servants Lesley is able to shape the development of ideas, proposals and initiatives across the Scottish Government and in other public sector bodies so that they address the needs of our Armed Forces community including their families.

I do hope this goes some way to evidence the great importance the Scottish Government gives to this issue.

Michael Russell

28 May 2013

Written evidence from the Welsh Government

The Welsh government is committed to supporting the Armed Forces Community in Wales and published a *Package of Support for the Armed Forces Community*, in November 2011. The *Package of Support* covers those matters that are devolved, including education. It outlines commitments that are consistent across the UK and those that are tailored to Wales. We are currently in the process of updating the *Package of Support*. The revised version will contain more specific information on the education of Service children in Wales.

In line with *the Covenant* the Welsh Government established a Standing Committee for Service Children in Schools in Wales, in November 2012. This Standing Committee consists of educationalists; local authority officers; Welsh Government officials; Ministry of Defence (MOD) personnel and welfare officers. Together with this new Standing Committee we will be developing an informed national perspective in Wales about the issues relating to providing education for Service children. This work will ensure we obtain a greater understanding of specific challenges and identify other issues Service children experience in education. It will also involve exploring and disseminating examples of good practice in supporting Service children and their families, with a particular focus on work in schools. In addition, we hope to foster stronger links between the Armed Forces community and local services, especially educational institutions.

Your letter raises a number of queries on the differences in approach to the education of Service children across the UK, with specific differences noted between England and Wales. I have addressed each of your points in turn.

There is no Service Pupil Premium in Wales. However, there is support available for children of Service families in schools in Wales through our School Effectiveness Grant and the Pupil Deprivation Grant. These grants are the Welsh Government's principal means of providing financial support for our three national priorities for schools: improving standards in literacy; improving standards in numeracy, and reducing the impact of poverty on educational attainment. Responding to the challenges we face in improving our educational outcomes in Wales by taking action in isolation on different parts of the education system is counter to the aims of the grants. All Service children in Wales, including those that come to Wales in the future, will benefit from the funding available to schools through these grants, as will each pupil in Wales.

I am pleased to inform the Defence Committee that generous funding from the MOD's Support Fund for Schools with Service Children is already helping several Welsh schools support Service children. Eight bids were received under the 2013–14 funding round, of which five were successful in securing £128,408 in funding. The amount was distributed to a family of schools in Llantwit Major, which supports children from the St Athans base; two primary schools in Brecon and a further primary school in Haverfordwest. In Brecon the funding will support children of the Ghurkha regiment who have English language acquisition needs in addition to the other challenges already faced by Service children. In Haverfordwest it provides part funding for the 'Tell a Tale' project, which supports the improvement of speaking, listening and emotional skills. Welsh Government officials will be working closely with their MOD counterparts to devise a means of encouraging more Welsh schools to apply under the next funding round.

The Welsh Government would certainly want to ensure that children and young people moving to Wales have as little disruption to their education as possible. In discussion with the Department for Education we have offered to address the issue of Service children with special needs moving to Wales when we revise our Special Educational Needs Code of Practice. Our intention is to ensure that Welsh local authorities use the

information in the Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan to inform any assessment of a child's needs. In practical terms a local authority in Wales may be advised in the Code that before an assessment takes place they are to look at the educational element of the EHC plan and agree the educational provision unless they have a very good reason to suspect that it cannot be provided, or is unsuitable.

When school transfer arrangements are made in advance it is good practice for information to be provided in time for appropriate planning by the receiving school. Secondary schools or a new primary school should receive the school records of all pupils identified by their primary schools as having special educational needs. When such a pupil is admitted to a new school, the school should be in possession of a good deal of useful information about the child, including any detailed background information collated by the primary school SENCO; copies of Individual Education Plans prepared in support of intervention through School Action or School Action Plus and any statement of special educational needs. In Wales we place a statutory duty on schools to send an electronic file of Common Transfer information to a child's new school within 15 school days. This file includes key data about a child's special educational needs and should be followed by the transfer of the complete educational record. Common Transfer arrangements include transfers to schools in England.

Effective communication between all relevant parties is vital in ensuring minimal disruption to a child's education. In the context of the Army's re-basing plans, it will be particularly important that MOD officials work closely with Welsh Government officials to plan for the arrival of any Service children that come into Wales, in order to minimise any disruption to their education.

Unlocking every child's potential is at the heart of the Welsh Government's approach to education and all children and young people should be encouraged to achieve their potential, including the children of Service personnel in Wales.

Leighton Andrews AC/AM
Y Gweinidog Addysg a Sgiliau
Minister for Education and Skills

3 June 2013
