

Northamptonshire Protocol for working with Armed Services

The frequent moves of Armed Service families makes it essential that Armed Service authorities are aware of any concerns regarding safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children from a military family.

Local Authorities have the statutory responsibility for the protection of children of service families in the United Kingdom. When families are based overseas, responsibility for the safeguarding of children is vested with the Ministry of Defence who work with the [Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Families Association \(SSAFA\)](#).

The Armed Services are fully committed to co-operating with statutory and other agencies in supporting families and in the protection of children. While some military families may live within barracks, many live within local communities as Armed Service staff may be deployed to other local military establishments such as Territorial Army Centres or Armed Services Careers Offices. Whenever a case comes to the notice of the civilian authorities, information about child welfare concerns should be shared with appropriate contacts in the Armed Services.

All three Armed Services provide a Social Work service that operates similarly to local authorities in the UK in respect of safeguarding of children.

- In the Royal Navy this is provided by the Naval Personal and Family Service (NFPS) and the Royal Marines Welfare Organisation;
- Within the Army this is provided by the Army Welfare Service in partnership with SSAFA;
- In the Royal Air Force by SSAFA. (The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen's and Families Association is an independent charity contracted to the Ministry of Defence for the provision of certain welfare services).

SSAFA and local authorities are responsible for liaising about the movement of children who require protection from significant harm. SSAFA should be informed of any Armed Service child who is the subject of a Child Protection Plan whose family is about to move overseas and full documentation provided. Reciprocal arrangements apply for any child returning to the UK from overseas.

Commanding Officers have the power to grant an Emergency Protection Order (EPO) in respect of a British child living overseas. Such an order remains in force for 24 hours after the child returns to the UK. Children's Social Care must then decide whether to apply to the Family Proceedings Court for a further EPO.

Where Children's Social Care believes that a child subject to current safeguarding concerns is from an ex-Armed Service family, SSAFA can be contacted to establish whether there is existing information, which might assist investigations.

Young people under 18 may also join the Armed Forces as recruits. Commanding Officers have a particular responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of these young people under the MOD's welfare arrangements. Any Care Leaver joining the Armed Forces has unrestricted access to Northamptonshire Social Care workers.