



MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD 2023

CELEBRATION PACK

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUNG
PEOPLE FROM ARMED FORCES
AND VETERAN FAMILIES



**FORCES
CHILDREN
SCOTLAND**

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INTRODUCTION

Forces Children Scotland supports children and young people from armed forces and veteran families to reach their potential and thrive – from supporting their education and mental health to much more.

We achieve this by working collaboratively across sectors to drive improvements that reflect and support the unique challenges they face. We amplify their voices, ensuring they are heard, and influence the development of policy and practice.

Thank you for choosing to use Forces Children Scotland's **Month of the Military Child Celebration Pack!** We hope we can help you to celebrate children and young people from armed forces and veteran families.

What is Month of the Military Child?

Children and young people from armed forces and veteran families can experience a unique life that is very different to that of their civilian peers. Month of the Military Child (MotMC) provides an opportunity to celebrate this unique identity, ensuring this community feel heard, are seen, and that their lives are better understood.

Recognising that the armed forces community is diverse, MotMC uses the colour purple, which represents each branch of the military – Army, Navy and Air Force. MotMC also represents children from serving, reservist and veteran families.

What will you find in this pack?

We have collated a range of activities so you can take part in MotMC, many of which include resources co-produced with children from armed forces and veteran families living in Scotland.

Resources such as these aim to put the voices and opinions of children and young people at their core. It should be their voice you think of while enjoying these activities.

Keen to learn more?

Do you want resources to help you when you work with children from armed forces and veteran families? What about tools to educate other people about this community, such as children in your classroom or your colleagues at work?

From a simple suggested tweet to an activity plan for educators, there really is something for everyone, so make sure you read on.

Awareness-raising discussions about any community can have the potential to cause upset or anxiety, depending on the experiences of those you are engaging with. When leading these activities, please consider any potential impact on yourself and others.



THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY

The armed forces and veteran community in Scotland is diverse. It includes individuals who are in active service with the British Armed Forces, those who are now veterans and those who are reservists. Their families are also included in recognition of the important role they play.

The British Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force all have different roles and expectations for those in active service. These three groups are together known as 'Tri-Service'. Children from armed forces families can also have 'sub-identities', with their serving parent working for either the Army, the Navy or the Air Force.

We don't know the exact figure of children and young people in armed forces families in Scotland but research is beginning to paint this picture. See below for the latest data.

WHAT RESPONSIBILITIES DOES SCOTLAND HAVE TOWARDS CHILDREN FROM THIS COMMUNITY?

1. Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is the Scottish Government's commitment to making sure every child, young person and their family receives the right support at the right time. This is to ensure all children and young people can reach their potential.
2. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty ratified by the UK. These rights apply to everyone under 18. The Scottish Government has set out to incorporate this treaty into Scots Law through the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill which was passed unanimously in 2021. Although the Bill has been stalled after UK Supreme Court intervention, we eagerly await the amended Bill being brought back to the Scottish Parliament.
3. The Armed Forces Covenant ensures that the armed forces community does not experience disadvantages, including children from armed forces families. The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies to pay due regard to the Covenant. This legal duty covers health, housing and education.
4. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 provides a legal framework for all children and young people with additional support needs in education. This legislation recognises that some children need additional support to ensure education is inclusive of their needs. This includes children from armed forces and veteran families, acknowledging the challenges they may face with education, such as changing schools or education systems due to a parent's posting.

AT LEAST **12,497** CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM SERVING, RESERVIST OR VETERAN FAMILIES ARE IN SCOTTISH EDUCATION RIGHT NOW AND THIS NUMBER WILL INCREASE IN COMING YEARS.

» OF THOSE:

4,125
(33%) HAVE A PARENT SERVING FULL-TIME IN THE ARMED FORCES

5,875
(47%) HAVE A PARENT WHO IS A VETERAN

1,187
(9.5%) HAVE A PARENT SERVING PART-TIME AS A RESERVIST

483
(3.5%) HAVE MORE THAN ONE SERVING, RESERVIST OR VETERAN PARENT

875
(7%) HAVE A PARENT WHO DID NOT SPECIFY THEIR STATUS

Source: *Rallying to the Flag – A Consolidated Picture of Armed Forces Children's Education in 2021: Laying Foundations & Promoting Development*



HOSTING A SESSION WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The following ideas can be used by anyone working directly with children and young people from armed forces and veteran families. This might be teachers in schools, lecturers in colleges or youth workers helping young people understand the wonderfully different communities we have in Scotland. Use the context-setting information on pages 4 and 5 to talk to children and young people about what Month of the Military Child means. You can then choose one of the activities below to start a discussion.

Share what you're proud of!

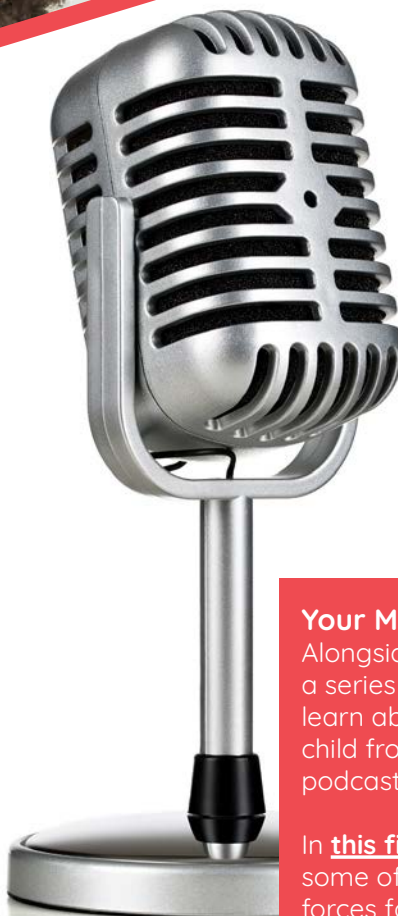
You might have children from armed forces families in your class or youth group. If they are comfortable with it, you could create some space for them to share what it is about their identity that they are most proud of. This could be done verbally or by creating an artwork to represent their identity. Get creative! If they would like to share their art with a wider community, tag us on social media (links can be found on page 12) and we will repost.



Forces Life board game

Forces Life provides an opportunity for others to learn more about the unique challenges faced by this group of young people when it comes to education and learning, mental health and wellbeing, and much more.

[Watch this video](#) about how our Forces Life board game was made. Contact us for your very own free board game!

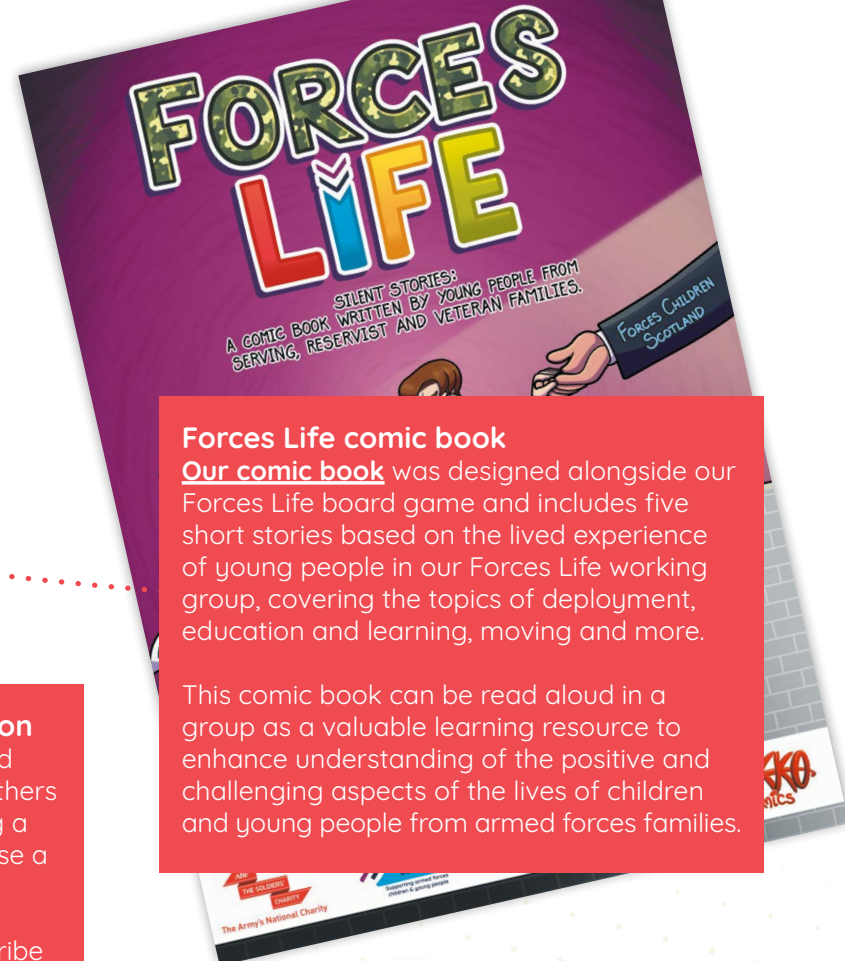


Your Mind Matters Podcast discussion

Alongside young people, we co-produced a series of podcasts which aim to help others learn about the positive aspects of being a child from an armed forces family. Choose a podcast to listen to together as a group.

In [this first podcast](#), young people describe some of best things about being in an armed forces family.

In [this second podcast](#), young people share their favourite memories of life in an armed forces family.



Forces Life comic book

Our comic book was designed alongside our Forces Life board game and includes five short stories based on the lived experience of young people in our Forces Life working group, covering the topics of deployment, education and learning, moving and more.

This comic book can be read aloud in a group as a valuable learning resource to enhance understanding of the positive and challenging aspects of the lives of children and young people from armed forces families.



Finish with a full group discussion, asking these questions:

1. What are some of the positive aspects of life in an armed forces family?
2. What are some of the challenges that children from armed forces families might experience?
3. What can we do this month to celebrate children from armed forces families?





HOSTING DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHERS

Our resources are not only for those working with young people. We would love everyone to learn more about life in armed forces and veteran families.

The following activities can be used to learn and spark conversation during team meetings or team development days:

» Activity idea #1

As a team, listen to some of the podcasts by Forces Children Scotland that amplify the voices of children and young people from armed forces and veteran families. Discuss with your team and share new insights you have!

1. **In this podcast**, young people describe the different transitions they might experience as part of an armed forces family.
2. **In this podcast**, young people share their top three things about military life.
3. **In this podcast**, young people describe some of the best things about being in an armed forces family.

» Activity idea #2

Contact us for your own copy of our Forces Life board game (pictured).

Our co-produced **Forces Life board game** provides an opportunity for others to learn more about the unique challenges faced by this group of young people when it comes to education and learning, mental health and wellbeing and more.

» Activity idea #3

Forces Children Scotland provides training or information sessions for professionals across Scotland to help increase their knowledge about this community and support people to develop effective strategies to help children and young people thrive when it comes to education and learning, mental health and much more.



Why not invite us to your team meeting to host a discussion and help you better understand the unique experiences of children and young people from armed forces families?

Email Learning@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk to find out more.

» Regardless of what activity you choose, make sure you take time to discuss what you have learned. You might want to use these questions as discussion prompts:

1. What one thing did you learn today that you didn't know about children and young people in armed forces families?
2. What are the positives and challenges associated with life in an armed forces family?
3. What steps will you take to celebrate children from armed forces families and learn their views?

SHOUT ABOUT MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD!

One of the simplest actions you can take during this Month of the Military Child is to talk to other people about this community.

We would love to see Scotland's social media feeds flooded with messages celebrating children and young people from armed forces and veteran families throughout this Month of the

Military Child! We have prepared some sample social media posts for you to use. Don't forget to tag Forces Children Scotland in your posts and use the hashtag #MonthoftheMilitaryChild

TWITTER POST

It's the #MonthoftheMilitaryChild @ForcesChildScot has created #resources to help civilian peers, #educators and #professionals learn more the lives of #youngpeople from #armedforces #families



FACEBOOK POST

It's #MonthoftheMilitaryChild and we are learning more about the experiences of #children and #youngpeople from #armedforces and #veteran families. Have a look at the resources shared by @ForcesChildrenScotland



INSTAGRAM POST

Did you know it's #MonthoftheMilitaryChild? @forceschildrenscotland created resources to help civilian peers, #educators and #professionals to learn more about the lives led by #youngpeople from #armedforces families. Search 'Month of the Military Child' on their website for more info!



WORKING WITH FORCES CHILDREN

You might work directly with children and young people from armed forces and veteran families this MotMC. For ideas for how to help them explore their identity and protect their wellbeing, our [Your Mind Matters Hub](#) is the perfect place to go. An online space designed by young people, for young people and those who support them.

» What is the Your Mind Matters Hub?

Children and young people told us being in an armed forces or veteran family can mean they face unique challenges when it comes to their mental health and wellbeing. We listened and secured funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund to work directly with children and young people to make our Your Mind Matters Hub happen.

Why not spend some time working through the Your Mind Matters Hub with the young people you work with, including:

1. Read the [brilliant guide from Rebecca](#), who shares her experiences and tips for those in armed forces families.
2. [Read this poem](#), created by young people, to help you discuss the experiences of those in an armed forces family.
3. Perhaps they would like to try [our wellbeing quiz](#)?
4. Or maybe they would like to try filling out this helpful [feelings tracker worksheet](#)?

» How children and young people can get involved

If the young people you work with are interested in knowing more about our participation work and how we co-produce, encourage them to [watch this video](#), in which we talk about how the Your Mind Matters Hub came to be.

If they are interested in finding out more about how to get involved with our participation work, please email nina.collins@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk



'PANICKING ABOUT BEING DIFFERENT' — REBECCA'S STORY.

Hi! My name's Rebecca and I'm a 20-year-old student. My dad was in the Army and when I was younger I moved around a lot. At the age of 10 I was sent to military boarding school because the schools I attended could never keep up with my records or my studies. I don't find it really difficult to fit in with peers who didn't experience the same things as me. I always found it really weird how my life was so different from everyone else. I also struggled to make new friends and always felt anxious that I was too different. Here are some of my top tips and things I've learned that helped me cope with military life and anxiety.

"I struggled to make new friends and always felt anxious that I was too different"

Tip 1: Being different isn't bad

So many people in the places you move to won't have been nearly as many places as you or done all the cool things you have done. A lot of people are interested in the places you've lived or travelled. Use it as a talking point.

Tip 2: Find a hobby you can do anywhere

Finding something you can take part in regardless of where you move is a great way to settle into a new place. I loved reading and my friend loved football. It meant that whenever we moved, we could find the reading club or the football club and immediately have something to get involved in.

WHAT ARE ANXIETY TRIGGERS?

Date _____

Sometimes, if or when we seek professional help, it can be good to have a record of what we've been feeling. Use this daily tracker below whenever you want to document how you're feeling and thinking.

How I feel in general today	How I feel about myself today
How I felt this morning	How I felt this evening
Today's thoughts	

WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT FORCES CHILDREN SCOTLAND?

We support children and young people from armed forces and veteran families when it comes to mental health and wellbeing, education and learning, participation, financial help, and much more.

» Youth Participation

We put the lived experience of children and young people at the heart of everything we do – from co-producing our projects and campaigns to helping to recruit staff and trustees. We do this using our own co-production process, CombinedForce.

Our youth participation projects provide children and young people with life-changing experiences, skills and experiences which inspire aspiration and shape positive futures. Click [here](#) to find out how to get involved.



» Financial Support

We know armed forces and veteran families can face unique challenges when it comes to managing day-to-day finances. From providing help to families facing financial crisis and funding respite holiday breaks, to supporting young carers and students to enhance independence and gain qualifications, we're here to help. Click [here](#) to learn more about the financial support we can provide.

» Mental health and wellbeing

We provide mental health and wellbeing services for young people and their families, such as:

1. Your Mind Matters

With support from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Your Mind Matters delivers a one-to-one and peer support pilot project at Hermitage Academy in Helensburgh.

2. Lighthouse Project

With support from ABF: The Soldier's Charity, we work with Queen Victoria School in Dunblane to deliver one-to-one and peer support services and co-produce peer mentorship activities and resources for peers, parents and professionals.

3. Mindful Connections

With support from the Scottish Veterans Fund, we provide holistic support to help families make the transition from serving to veteran life, overcome challenges to mental health and wellbeing and galvanise family relationships. Click [here](#) for more.

» Influencing hearts and minds

We ensure the lived experience and views of young people from armed forces and veteran families are considered in policymaking. Learn [more here](#) about how we do this.

We also offer professionals training and support to better understand forces life and grow in confidence when supporting young people with their education, mental health and more.

To learn more, email us at Learning@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk



THANK YOU!

Thank you for using Forces Children Scotland's Month of the Military Child Celebration Pack!

We hope you celebrate children and young people from armed forces and veteran families with us throughout April, and we would love to see how you choose to do so! Please tag us on social media so we can follow along with your celebrations.

At [Forces Children Scotland](https://www.forceschildrenscotland.org.uk) we celebrate children from the armed forces community all year. We are passionate about supporting children and young people from this community to realise their potential and thrive. If you are looking for support to help forces children to realise their potential and thrive, please reach out to us because we'd love to hear from you!

If you have any ideas about what resources would be helpful for us to create for next year's Month of the Military Child's Celebration Pack, please email us at learning@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk



**THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST**



Scottish Government
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