



BACKGROUND: There are over 800,000 young carers across the UK¹. Children and young people in armed forces and veteran families face unique challenges when also being a young carer. A Young Carer is someone who is under 18 who provides care for someone with a physical or mental illness or disability². This can include addictions as well. The person they care for may be a parent, a sibling or a grandparent. Some tasks young carers might help with are cooking, cleaning, helping manage the family finances, or providing emotional support or care. Being in an armed forces family can make the challenges of being a young carer even more difficult.

“it’s hard being a young carer”

Research shows that young carers are more likely than their peers to require support for mental health problems, including anxiety and depression, and are known to report poorer general health and have worse academic outcomes, life chances and opportunities for socialising³.

For young carers in armed forces families, they are faced with not only the challenges of being a young carer, but also the challenges of life in an armed forces family. For example, their caring responsibilities may change significantly when their parent is deployed or may happen suddenly if their parent is injured in service.

As with many challenges relating to children and young people from armed forces and veteran families, not enough is known about this group’s experiences and daily lives. We do not even know the number of young carers in armed forces and veteran families⁴.

IDENTIFYING due to the nature of life in the armed forces, families can relocate a lot, sometime as frequently as every two years. As a young carer, this may mean it is difficult to find support in a new area or for professionals to identify these young carers in time. Some young carers may not even realise what they are doing for their family member is considered care. It is important that places that interact with these children, such as schools, understand what it means to be a young carer and can identify those who may be one, to ensure they get the support they need.

¹ [Facts About Young Carers | The Children's Society \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/facts-about-young-carers)

² The Children’s Society, Evidencing the Need: Young Carers in Armed Forces Families (September 2017), page 8. [young-carers-armed-forces-families.pdf \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/young-carers-armed-forces-families.pdf)

³ The Children’s Society, Evidencing the Need: Young Carers in Armed Forces Families (September 2017), page 8-9. [young-carers-armed-forces-families.pdf \(childrensociety.org.uk\)](https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/young-carers-armed-forces-families.pdf)

⁴ Andrew Selous, Professor Janet Walker, Dr Gabriela Misca. Living in our Shoes: Understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families, (2020), page 78. [Living in our shoes: understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/living-in-our-shoes-understanding-the-needs-of-uk-armed-forces-families)

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EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

BRONZE AWARD

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“The school is not sure how to handle when I say I need to go home because mums in seizure”

“If you miss school, you won't know everything. My dad had cancer, so I missed school seeing him or taking him to the hospital”

“My current friends don't always understand why I can't go out or why I'm feeling down”

DEPLOYMENT deployment can be a difficult time for young carers in armed forces families as they lose the support of one parent. This may mean they must take on additional caring responsibilities at home whilst their other parent is deployed. It could mean added stress for the young person. This could also impact their ability to do their homework or concentrate on school. Due to these added responsibilities, the young carer may become isolated from their peers.

“Not a lot of time for myself as I make sure mum is ok, look after my 4-year-old sister, school and exams and doing household things to keep it tidy”

Due to frequent moves around the country and abroad, young carers in armed forces families may also not be close to any other family members who could have supported them.

HOW HAS FORCES CHILDREN SCOTLAND SUPPORTED YOUNG CARERS? At Forces Children Scotland, we provide a Young Carers Fund to help those in armed forces or veteran families who have a caring role. This grant helps to financially support young carers. This grant will reopen on 1st April 2024.

We also ran the Ignite Campaign with Fife Young Carers which was co-produced with young carers from armed forces and veteran families. The campaign raised awareness of what it was like to be a young carer from an armed forces or veteran family and of the support available.

We provide signposting to local young carer services to ensure that the support they need is in place as soon as possible.

CALLS TO ACTION: The Ministry of Defence must make sure that young carers are signposted to services at points of transition. This should include new postings, deployments and when families are moving out of the armed forces, particularly when the parent is leaving for medical reasons. The MOD will not always know when the serving person has children, so this needs to go to all staff but also to the partners and children of the serving person where this is known.

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The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrines the right for parents to receive appropriate support from governments to care for their children to the best of their abilities. This right is particularly important for young carers. Appropriate, independent family support needs to be in place to ensure these families thrive.

Local Authorities should ensure that all young carers from armed forces and veteran families have been assessed for a Young Carers Statement. Processes should be in place to ensure smooth transfer of the support and review mechanisms when a young carer from an armed forces family moves local authorities within Scotland or moves to another home nation. Local Authorities must uphold their duties under the Armed Forces Covenant and provide more support for young carers in armed forces and veteran families.

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