



# LESSON ONE: LIFE IN AN ARMED FORCES FAMILY

AGE GROUP: SECONDARY (11-14 YEARS)

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

### Students will be able to:

- » Understand what life is like for young people from Armed Forces families.
- » Explore emotions associated with frequent change, moving, and separation.
- » Suggest realistic ways they can support peers experiencing change.

## RESOURCES NEEDED

- » Interactive whiteboard
- » Forces Children Scotland video: [Life as a Forces Child](#) - See PowerPoint
- » Forces Life Choices card set (see attached)
- » Pens, sticky notes, or small whiteboards

## CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LINKS

- » **Health and Wellbeing:**  
HWB 2-05a / HWB 3-05a  
HWB 2-08a / HWB 3-08a
- » **Literacy and English**  
LIT 2-09a/3-09a

## LESSON BREAKDOWN (45 MINUTES)

### » Introduction (10 minutes)

Begin by asking the group: "What comes to mind when you hear the phrase 'Armed Forces'?" What do you think life is like for a family with someone serving in the forces?" Take 3-4 responses.

Then explain: "Today we're going to explore what life is like for young people who are part of Armed Forces families, and how frequent changes or transitions can affect their everyday experiences."

Using the PowerPoint slides, outline what the Armed Forces do and discuss some of the key positives and challenges faced by families who have a serving member.

### » Whole-Class Video (5 minutes)

Show the video clip "Life as a Forces Child" from Forces Children Scotland. Before starting the clip, prompt students with: "As you watch, jot down the challenges young people talk about, any positive experiences they mention, and any emotions that stand out."

After the video, give students a moment for a brief think-pair-share activity with the question: "What did you find most interesting or surprising?"

### » **Emotion Circle Activity (10 minutes)**

Explore emotional responses to Forces children's experiences.

- Write these emotions on the board: isolated, resilient, hopeful, frustrated, proud, overwhelmed, adaptable, uncertain, relieved.
- Pupils form two concentric circles (inner + outer).
- Teacher reads scenarios inspired by Forces children's life, e.g.:
  - "Moving to a new school mid-term."
  - "Parent deployed overseas for six months."
  - "Joining a club where you don't know anyone."
- Pairs discuss for 45 seconds which two emotions from the board fit best and why.
- Outer circle rotates, repeat with the next scenario.

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### » **Forces Life Choices Card Game (15 mins)**

Apply understanding of Forces children's experiences, emotions, and coping strategies. Set-up small groups (3-5 pupils). Each group receives a scenario card from the Forces Life Choices deck.

How to Play:

- Draw a Scenario: Read it aloud.
- Discuss Emotions: Which emotions would a child feel in this situation?
- Select a Choice / Coping Strategy: Decide how the child could respond.
- Reflect: Complete the reflection prompt on the card: How might this child feel? Which strategy is most helpful?

Groups can repeat with additional scenario cards for more discussion.

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### » **Plenary / Reflection (5 mins)**

Whole-class discussion:

"Which emotions came up most often?" "What strategies seem most helpful for coping with change?" "How can we support peers who may be experiencing similar challenges?"

Pupils complete a quick exit slip:

"One thing I learned about life as a Forces child"

"One strategy I could use or offer to support someone experiencing change"

### » **Teacher Notes**

For practical guidance, begin with our 'Top Tips for Professionals' on supporting children and young people during transition to civilian life. You can also watch our 'In Conversation' webinar on this topic, which introduces Armed Forces life and explains the Ruby Boots project.

### » **Trauma Informed Practice**

Please be mindful that a child may have had experience of trauma throughout their forces life and some questions may generate difficult emotions. The impact of trauma may make it difficult for a child to put their feelings into words, understand their emotions, or remember certain details. Forces Children Scotland advocate a trauma informed approach at all times. Please refer to our [online webinar from Karen Treisman](#) where she discusses trauma in an Armed Forces context.

**WATCH DR. KAREN TREISMAN'S  
WEBINAR ON TRAUMA:**



# LIFE IN A FORCES FAMILY: WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

## INSTRUCTIONS

- Print the playing cards. Each Scenario and its matching Choices/Reflection are placed opposite each other.
- Cut out the pairs, then glue or fold them so the Scenario is on the front and the Choices/Reflection on the back.
- Shuffle the finished cards into a deck.

## HOW TO PLAY

- Explain to pupils that they will be imagining themselves as Forces children, thinking about what life might feel like in different situations.
- Put pupils into small groups and give each group one card to start with.
- Pupils read the Scenario (front) and discuss: - What is happening? - How might a young person from a Forces family feel in this situation?
- Flip to the Choices (back). Pupils pick A, B, C, or D, explaining: - Why they chose it, - What emotions or outcomes that choice might lead to, - How it might feel if they were in that young person's shoes
- Groups may share their ideas with the class if appropriate.
- Rotate the cards so each group explores several scenarios, or allow them to draw new cards from the deck.

You join a new club, but people keep asking why you've moved so many times. It's getting tiring to explain.



## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Tell them openly what Forces life is like.
- B) Keep answers brief and focus on enjoying the club.
- C) Talk to the club leader if questions become repetitive or uncomfortable.
- D) Something else?

Your classmates don't understand what life is like in a Forces family, and you feel different.

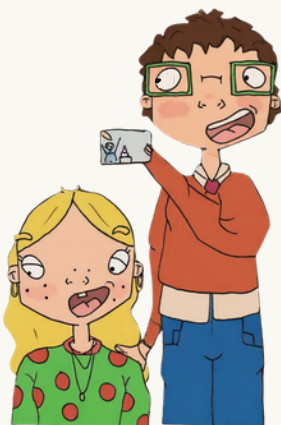


### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Explain a bit about your experiences to a trusted friend.
- B) Hide that part of your life so you fit in.
- C) Join a group with other Forces children to connect with people who "get it."
- D) Something else?

What could help them feel included?

Your best friend from your last posting stays in touch through TikTok, but now they're making videos with new friends and you feel left out.



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Write letters or messages to your parent.
- B) Keep your feelings to yourself and try not to think about it.
- C) Share your feelings with a friend or family member.
- D) Something else?

Because of your parent's Forces role, your family often travels long distances to visit them or to stay on different bases. This means you sometimes miss school events or time with friends..



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Tell your friends what your schedule is like so they understand when you can't be there.
- B) Keep quiet about it and hope people don't notice you're missing.
- C) Plan small catch-ups with friends when you are home to stay connected.
- D) Something else?

How can regular travel affect friendships, and what helps you stay connected?

You've moved schools several times, and as a result you've missed key maths topics that your new class already knows. You feel embarrassed and worried that others might notice



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Speak to your teacher privately and ask for help catching up.
- B) Stay quiet in class and try to figure it out on your own.
- C) Ask a friend to explain the parts you've missed.

How could reaching out for support help you feel more confident?

One of your parents has left the Armed Forces and is finding civilian life challenging. You've taken on extra responsibilities at home—helping with siblings, chores, or supporting your parent—and it's starting to affect your schoolwork and friendships.



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Talk to a trusted adult at school about what's happening at home.
- B) Try to manage everything yourself without telling anyone.
- C) Reach out to a friend for support or someone to talk to.

How can sharing your situation help you feel less overwhelmed?

Your dad is deployed, and the only time he can contact you is unpredictable. You feel you need to keep your phone with you in case he calls, but your school doesn't allow phones during the day.



### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

- A) Explain your situation to a teacher or pastoral staff and ask for a special arrangement.
- B) Keep your phone hidden and hope you don't get into trouble.
- C) Leave your phone in the office but ask staff to let you know immediately if he calls.

How can communicating your needs help reduce stress while following school rules?

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