

SUPPORTING THE TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

» WHAT IS RUBY BOOTS?

Ruby Boots is a school-based peer mentoring project for pupils from Armed Forces communities in Edinburgh and Fife.

Inspired by the ideas of children and young people themselves, Ruby Boots connects pupils whose parents are in the process of leaving the military or have recently done so with peers who have already made that transition. By sharing their experiences, they build support and understanding together.

Peer support groups run in school and community settings, offering an important sense of connection and belonging. Sessions are facilitated by Forces Children Scotland's Ruby Boots Project Coordinator, who also trains buddies to ensure they feel confident and prepared for their role.

Ruby Boots also helps identify the key challenges families face during this transition and contributes to addressing them at both local and national levels through our policy work.

By gathering insights directly from children and young people, Ruby Boots strengthens our evidence base on how this transition affects families and supports the development of meaningful solutions during this critical time.

To contact our project coordinator, email rubyboots@forceschildrenscotland.org.uk

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION:



» PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

To support understanding of what the transition to civilian life can be like for the children and young people we work with, we invite you to engage with our 'In Conversation' webinar.

This CPD session centers on the lived experience of children and young people, exploring how identity, belonging, relationships, and emotional wellbeing may be affected during this period of change.

If you are looking to further inform your existing practice and gain additional insight into how this transition can impact pupils, this webinar offers a valuable opportunity to listen, reflect, and build on the knowledge you already bring to your role.

Alternatively, if you would prefer an in-person session delivered in your setting on this topic, we would be very happy to arrange a visit. Please get in touch at learning@forceschildrenscotland.org to discuss availability and options.

SCAN FOR ONLINE CPD:



www.forceschildrenscotland.org.uk

Children and young people whose parents are leaving or have left the Armed Forces face specific challenges. Professionals can make a real difference by understanding their experiences and tailoring support to their needs. Here are practical tips to guide your approach.



1 BUILD AWARENESS AND CREATE SAFE SPACES

- Acknowledge openly that transitioning to civilian life is a major change and may feel unsettling.
- Facilitate conversations or assemblies that help classmates understand this experience.
- Use reflective tools (journals, drawing, check-ins) to help children express feelings safely.

2 FOSTER PEER CONNECTIONS

- Encourage participation in peer-support or buddy schemes like Ruby Boots.
- Identify students who have been through similar transitions to act as role models or informal mentors.
- Create opportunities for young people to share experiences and build friendships.

3 SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES' WELLBEING

- Notice signs of worry, loss, or identity confusion as children navigate change.
- Offer regular pastoral check-ins where thoughts and feelings can be explored.
- Reassure children that mixed emotions, including excitement and grief, are normal.

4 DEVELOP SKILLS TO MANAGE CHANGE

- Include activities that help pupils adapt to change.
- Use creative approaches (art, storytelling, movement) to support pupils in expressing and understanding their experiences.
- Encourage pupils to draw on peer and adult support networks as part of their personal toolkit for managing change.



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SUPPORT STABILITY AND STRENGTHEN BELONGING

- Provide a consistent adult point of contact for pupils whose families have transitioned out of the Armed Forces.
- Actively involve them in school clubs, groups, leadership roles, or wellbeing teams.
- Recognise and celebrate the positive qualities that may come from forces-family life—like adaptability, community, and resourcefulness—while being sensitive to how each child sees their own identity.



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ACCESS RELEVANT TRAINING AND RESOURCES

- Engage in CPD opportunities focused on understanding Armed Forces and veteran children's needs.
- Share learning with colleagues to ensure a whole-setting approach.
- Integrate new knowledge into pastoral care plans and transition procedures.

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ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIPS

- Feed insights from practice into school policies or local support frameworks.
- Collaborate with specialist organisations to improve understanding and provision.
- Use resources, storybooks, or awareness materials developed through projects like Ruby Boots.



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PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT BEYOND THE INITIAL TRANSITION

- Remember that the impact of this change can unfold over months or years.
- Continue check-ins and adapt support as children settle into civilian life.
- Create opportunities for former participants to remain involved or become mentors.