

MAX'S BIG MOVE: EARLY YEARS GUIDANCE FOR PROFESSIONALS

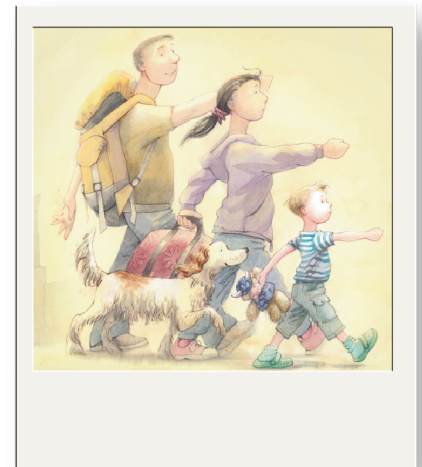


Transitioning from Armed Forces to civilian life can be a significant change for families. Babies and very young children may experience these transitions through changes in relationships, routines, environments and the emotional wellbeing of the adults around them.

The storybook **Max's Big Move** has been developed to support conversations with young children around change, transition, belonging and moving from armed forces to civilian life.

The story provides context for young children, families and practitioners to explore:

- Moving home and community
- Feelings linked to change and uncertainty
- Belonging and identity
- Relationships and emotional security



How you can use Max's Big Move in practice:

- Read the story with small groups or individual children experiencing transition
- Use the illustrations and narrative to support conversations around feelings and belonging
- Extend learning through play experiences linked to moving, home and family
- Use drawing, storytelling and role play to help children express experiences safely
- Share the book with families to support continuity between home and setting
- Revisit the story during periods of transition or change in routine

The following top tips build on these approaches and offer practical ways early years professionals can support babies and young children from Armed Forces families as they transition to civilian life.



Further resources

www.forceschildrenscotland.org.uk

Forces Children Scotland (Operating name of the Royal Caledonian Education Trust) is a Scottish Charity, SC038722.

TOP TIPS

1 RECOGNISE THAT TRANSITION AFFECTS THE WHOLE FAMILY

- Transition to civilian life can involve changes to home, routines, relationships and identity.
- Families may also be adjusting to new communities, work patterns and support networks
- Approach families with curiosity, empathy and openness. Avoid assumptions about what transition may look like for each family.



2 SUPPORT RELATIONSHIPS

- Babies and young children rely on consistent relationships and predictable routines to feel secure. During periods of change, children may communicate uncertainty through behaviour, emotional regulation or increased need for reassurance.
- Maintain warm, responsive interactions and consistent caregiving. Familiar routines and emotionally available adults help children feel safe.

3 WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FAMILIES

- Parents and carers understand their child's experiences, routines and responses to change. Strong partnerships help practitioners better understand the child's wider context.
- Create space for open conversations and listen to family experiences. Supportive conversations can help families feel understood and valued.
- It's important to recognise that parents and carers may need support too. Transition from armed forces to civilian life can be a significant change for the whole family, and adults may be navigating their own feelings of uncertainty, loss, and adjustment while supporting their child through change.
- Building trusting relationships and acknowledging family experiences can make a meaningful difference for both children and adults during transition.

4 USE PLAY AND STORYTELLING

- Young children often process experiences through play, stories and creative expression. Storytelling can help children explore feelings linked to change, belonging and transition.
- Use books like Max's Big Move, role play and creative activities to explore change and belonging. Drawing, imaginative play and storytelling can help children express experiences safely.



5

RECOGNISE FAMILY STRENGTHS

- Armed Forces families often develop adaptability and strong relationships through their experiences. Children may bring many positive qualities into the setting.
- Focus on strengths as well as challenges. A strengths-based approach helps build confidence and wellbeing.



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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.