

CHILDCARE REPORT

2016

Naval Families
F E D E R A T I O N

Speaking up for Naval Service families

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WHO RESPONDED?

1. 817 people in total took part in our survey.
 - 47.5 % Regular serving members of the Royal Navy or Royal Marines
 - 51.5% Civilian spouses or partners
 - 1% Reservists with a Full Commitment on Full Time Reserve Service

DUAL SERVING COUPLES

2. 104 people who are part of a dual serving Regular Naval Service couple responded to the survey.

SERVING LONE PARENTS

3. 3% of respondents were serving lone parents (21 in total).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS OF CIVILIAN SPOUSES OR PARTNERS

4. Of the civilian spouses or partners who responded, 64% were in paid employment, 7% were self-employed, and the remaining 29% were not in paid employment.

RANK/ RATE OF SERVING RESPONDENTS OR THEIR SERVING SPOUSE/PARTNER (FIGURES HAVE BEEN ROUNDED)

5. 7% Able Rate/Marine
 - 1% Lance Corporal
 - 16% Leading Hand/Corporal
 - 19% Petty Officer/Sergeant
 - 14% Warrant Officer 2/Chief Petty Officer/Colour Sergeant
 - 4% Warrant Officer 1
 - 1% Midshipman/Sub Lieutenant
 - 11% Lieutenant/Captain
 - 21% Lieutenant Commander/Major
 - 4% Commander/Lieutenant Colonel
 - 1% Captain/Colonel
 - 0% Commodore/Brigadier

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LOCATIONS OF FAMILY HOMES OF RESPONDENTS (FIGURES HAVE BEEN ROUNDED)

6. 2% Bath/Bristol
- 0.3% Chivenor
- 9% Culdrose
- 7% Faslane
- 1% London
- 1.5% Lympstone
- 1% Northwood
- 15% Plymouth
- 1% Poole
- 33% Portsmouth
- 1% Rosyth
- 1% Taunton
- 0.5% Wittering
- 7% Yeovilton
- 13% England but none of the above
- 0.15% Northern Ireland
- 4% Scotland but none of the above
- 1% Wales
- 2% Outside of the UK

NUMBER OF CHILDREN NEEDING CHILDCARE IN THE FAMILY

7. One 41%
- Two 46%
- Three 10%
- Four 2.5%
- Five 0.5%

AGES OF ALL CHILDREN IN THE FAMILY NEEDING CHILDCARE

8. Over half (54%) needed childcare for the under 2s.
- 0-2 54%
- 3-4 34%
- 5-7 31%
- 8-11 24%
- 11-16 12%
- 16+ in need of continuing care 1%

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MOST CHALLENGING ISSUES IN ACCESSING CHILDCARE

9. 83% of respondents said that cost was the most challenging issue.
10. Over half of respondents said that accessing out of hours cover (early starts, evenings, weekends and nights) was a major challenge, and this is particularly the case for dual serving couples and couples in which the civilian partner works shifts or irregular hours. Living too far from extended family was also highlighted by a similar number of respondents. Family members provide a flexible option for out-of-hours childcare cover for many people. Some respondents in dual serving couples felt that they were a burden to grandparents who were providing childcare. The inability of many serving families to draw upon family support for childcare is a factor in respondents' view that cost is the most challenging issue. Paid-for out-of-hours care is significantly more expensive than childcare accessed during a 'standard' working day, and it can be very difficult to access.
11. 60% of respondents said that they did not have access to extended family members for childcare support. Only 8% said that they have access to extended family for frequent childcare arrangements.

DEPLOYMENT

12. 30% of respondents said that operational deployment commitments caused challenges in accessing suitable childcare.
13. During deployment, 37% of respondents said that their child or children were cared for solely by the child or children's other parent. 21% relied on extended family members and other informal arrangements to provide childcare at no cost. 51% paid for additional childcare.
14. 25% of respondents said that they had to change their working arrangements or patterns during their partner's deployment. A further 11% of respondents stated that they had to leave their employment because of difficulties with childcare arrangements when their partner deployed.
15. During deployment, or when serving away from home, 49% of serving lone parents relied on family and friends for childcare. 14% had to pay for additional childcare.

DUAL SERVING COUPLES AND DEPLOYMENT

16. It was highlighted that dual serving couples with a deployment or sea-going liability, who have joint responsibility for a dependent child or children, are currently only able to have Service Couple With Dependent

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Children (SWDC) status until a dependent child reaches the age of 11. After a child reaches the age of 11, there is no assurance that a situation whereby both parents are deployed at the same time would be avoided. While it is appreciated that Career Managers would endeavour to accommodate the needs of the family, this appears to be a potential barrier to retention. This is particularly the case for women, who are under-represented in the Naval Service at all levels, and who, in the current social climate, still experience considerable pressure to prioritise their children's needs over a career in the Armed Forces. Several respondents from dual serving couples expressed their intention to leave the Naval Service because of: concerns about SWDC status after age 11 (particularly given perceived uncertainty about the future of CEA); dissatisfaction with nine month deployments and the impact on children; and perceived resistance by the Chain of Command in some areas to implement flexible working arrangements. It was felt by some respondents that a change in working culture in some areas still needs to occur, and that there was still an expectation that serving parents would be supported at home by a 'wife' who would take care of the childcare.

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TRAVEL TO ACCESS CHILDCARE (FIGURES HAVE BEEN ROUNDED)

17. 64% of families who responded to the survey use childcare located within 5 miles of their home address. A further 14% travel between 6 and 10 miles from home for childcare. 7 % of respondents travel between 10 and 20 miles from home to access childcare, and 2% of respondents travel over 20 miles from home. 12% of children are cared for within their own home.
18. 37% of respondents stated that their requirement for childcare has meant that they have had to purchase a car/an additional car.

QUALITY OF CHILDCARE

19. 43% of respondents said that they have good or excellent childcare facilities within a five mile radius of their home or unit. 32% said that there was acceptable childcare within that distance. 11% said that the childcare provision within five miles of their home or unit was either poor or non-existent.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT CHILDCARE

20. The majority of respondents (43%) relied on their own private research to find out about local childcare when moving to a new area. 19% did not source any information about childcare before moving. Friends already living in the new location were a significant source of information (17%). Social media (8%) and local authorities (5%) were also used as sources of information. 2% of respondents used RNRM Welfare's Information Offices to find out about childcare in their new area.

EFFECTS OF CHILDCARE PROVISION ON EMPLOYMENT FOR NON-SERVING PARENTS

21. 81% of respondents thought that childcare was a barrier to employment for a non-serving parent in their family.
22. 56% of respondents said that childcare is a barrier to employment for a non-serving parent in their family because the costs of childcare outweigh any potential income.
23. One of the key themes emerging strongly from the comments made by respondents was the perception that civilian partners' career prospects were seriously negatively affected by the need to undertake the lion's share of childcare responsibilities around deployment and the unpredictable working patterns, and mobility, of the serving person.
24. It is common for non-serving parents who are spouses or partners of service people to be *under-employed* (either in terms of hours worked, or in terms of working at their full potential, utilising their skills and qualifications). This situation is caused by the need to factor in a degree of flexibility, or a 'buffer' of capacity, to allow for changes in the level of support offered by the serving person as a result of the exigencies of the Service. This can limit the earning potential of a non-serving parent, who may frequently occupy a position of being the 'watch on, stop on' parent. For non-serving parents whose earning potential is limited in this way, giving up paid employment often appears to make sense if most of their pay is spent on childcare. While in the short term this may appear to be a pragmatic solution to a problem, in the long term the non-serving person's career prospects suffer as a result of gaps in their employment history and difficulties in re-starting their career at a level commensurate with their skills and experience. Over time their earning potential is often seriously damaged.
25. The findings of this survey about the impact of childcare responsibilities for non-serving parents are consistent with other research that has been carried out in this area. The Centre for Social Justice Report 'Military Families and Transition' (2016, p. 45) states that, "...being able to get adequate childcare is one of the key factors preventing military spouses from working and taking training. Moving and relocation can lead to the loss of the network of family, friends and neighbours that most mothers and fathers occasionally rely on for childcare arrangements. Spouses have frequently complained that the lack of this network of support and lack of flexibility means that there is no one to rely on in an emergency – for example, if a child is taken ill – and thus, the spouse is unable to take on work in case such situations were to arise." While changes to

accommodation arrangements under the Future Accommodation Model may ameliorate the extent of this issue in the long term, the likelihood is that many Naval Service families will continue to settle near units and base ports away from extended family support, in order to maximise opportunities to live together as a family unit.

26. Only 3% of respondents said that employment was not the current intention of a non-serving parent in their family.
27. 61% of respondents had changed their working hours or employment status since having children. 32% of respondents had left paid employment, and a further 50% had reduced their working hours. 27% had changed their job to move to a less demanding role. A smaller number had switched to flexi-time (14%) and a further 8% were working compressed hours. The main reasons cited for making these changes were the serving partner's deployment and the demands of the serving partner's job, and difficulties organising childcare.
28. Only 16% said that childcare was not a barrier to employment for a non-serving parent in their family. Civilian Naval Service spouses and partners have an expectation of being able to fulfil their own potential in the workplace, and a second income is essential to families who are home-owners. This creates a tension between the needs of the Service and those of civilian spouses and partners which may negatively affect Service retention.

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CHILDCARE PREFERENCES

29. Our survey asked what childcare arrangements parents would ideally choose if they could afford it.
30. 33% of respondents would prefer for the parents to provide all childcare. The fact that only 3% of respondents were not intending for the non-serving parent to work suggests that there is a financial imperative for a significant number of non-serving parents to return to work whilst their children are young.
31. Family members, nursery settings and childminders were the top childcare preferences outside the home for younger children. Before and after school 'wraparound' care was highlighted as a preferred choice for school-aged children, with holiday clubs outside of term-time.

CHILDCARE REQUIREMENTS

32. The majority of respondents (47%) needed all-day childcare for standard working hours. 11% needed childcare for more than 10 hours each day. 35% of respondents needed childcare for school-aged children during the school holidays, and 32% needed childcare both before and after school.

REASONS FOR CHOOSING CURRENT CHILDCARE

33. The top 3 considerations when choosing childcare were: perceived quality of care; opening hours; and affordability. Other significant factors were: the suitability of the childcare for a particular child's needs; flexibility; availability of spaces; and understanding of the Armed Forces lifestyle.

SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT CHILDCARE

34. 75% of respondents were satisfied with their current childcare choices. 19% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. 7% were dissatisfied.

USE OF MILITARY/MOD SPONSORED CHILDCARE SETTINGS

35. The overwhelming majority (86%) of respondents use childcare settings within the civilian community rather than military/MOD sponsored settings. The remaining 14% used a range of MOD sponsored childcare, mainly within the naval or tri-service arena. Of the respondents who had sought a place in a military/MOD sponsored setting, 87% had been able to access a place when they needed it. 8% had not been able to access a place when they needed it, and the remainder had been put on a waiting list (with up to a nine month wait).
36. The most positive attributes of military/MOD sponsored childcare identified by respondents were: physical accessibility; staff understanding of the Armed Forces lifestyle and its impact on children; the qualifications and skills of staff; and the opening hours. The areas where there was most scope for improvement were considered to be: cost/value for money; length of waiting lists; transparency of the charging structure; and the quality of both outdoor and indoor spaces and facilities.
37. Respondents commented that there are understandable differences in childcare costs between geographical areas, but because a Service person does not choose the location in which they are serving, they may find themselves in a situation where their childcare costs increase significantly on assignment to a new unit. This was a particular issue for serving people moving to the London area.

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AVERAGE WEEKLY SPEND ON CHILDCARE

38. Respondents' average weekly spend on childcare is as follows:

<£50	18.62%
£51-£100	16.78%
£101-£150	14.93%
£151-£250	17.95%
£251-£300	12.42%
>£300	10.07%
Prefer not to say	9.23%

39. The average price in Britain of full-time (50 hours) childcare per week for a child under two in 2016 is £217.57 for a nursery and £202.22 for a childminder. Part-time (25 hours) childcare per week for a child under two costs on average £116.77 for a nursery and £104.27 for a childminder (Family and Childcare Trust, 2016, pp. 3-15).

40. A family with one child under two in full-time childcare and one child at an after-school club/holiday club can expect to pay an average of £12,717 per year for childcare in the civilian community, assuming the children are not in childcare during the serving person's leave and that no retainer is payable for the nursery place during leave (calculated from figures from the Family and Childcare Trust's 2016 reports on Childcare Costs and Holiday Childcare). The majority of respondents to the survey (86%) use childcare based in the civilian community, rather than military/MOD sponsored childcare settings.

PROPORTION OF FAMILY'S TOTAL INCOME SPEND ON CHILDCARE PER CHILD

41. The figures for respondents' average weekly spend on childcare is as follows:

10%	23.44%
10-20%	30.69%
21-40%	21.25%
>50%	5.23%
Prefer not to say	11.8%

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42. In the comments on this question, a significant number of respondents indicated that the cost of childcare had prevented a non-serving spouse/partner in their family from working.
43. Using the figures calculated from the Family and Childcare Trust's 2016 reports on Childcare Costs and Holiday Childcare, the proportions of income spent on childcare for one child under the age of 2 and one five year old per annum for a range of rates and rates are shown below (based on mid seniority salary in each rate/rank, and average childcare costs for Britain):

<u>Rate/rank</u>	<u>% of salary</u>
Leading Rating/RM Corporal	40%
Chief Petty Officer/RM Colour Sergeant	30%
Lieutenant Commander	23%

44. To give an indication of how this compares to the civilian population, the provisional value of median income for non-retired households in the UK in 2015/16 is £29,200 (ONS, 2016). The same family (one child under two, one five year old) on this income would be spending 44% of their income on the same level of childcare.

ADDITIONAL CHILDCARE COSTS DURING SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

45. None, parents or family members provide the childcare	36%
<£50 per week	12%
<£100 per week	13%
<£150 per week	11%
<£200 per week	6%
<£250 per week	5%
> £250 per week	4%
Prefer not to say	13%

MOD CHILDCARE VOUCHERS OR OTHER GOVERNMENT VOUCHER SCHEMES

46. Only 52% of respondents use MOD Childcare Vouchers or another Government Voucher Scheme. Of those who do use vouchers, 85% were satisfied with them, and a further 13% were neutral.

47. There appears to be a lack of awareness of the MOD Childcare Voucher scheme. Not all childcare providers accept the vouchers, particularly in areas that are not near base ports or military establishments.

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