



Single Parents in the Royal Navy

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THERE IS NO OFFICIAL AGREED DEFINITION ON A SINGLE (OR LONE) PARENT: HOWEVER, FOR THE PURPOSE OF SERVICE POLICY, A SINGLE (OR LONE) PARENT IS DEFINED AS: A SERVICE PERSON IN PERSONAL STATUS CATEGORY 2 (PSTAT CAT 2), WHO HAS SOLE PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR DEPENDENT CHILDREN AGED 18 OR UNDER.

Being a single parent whilst serving in the Royal Navy comes with its own unique set of challenges — some you may never have imagined. Suddenly you find yourself asking things like:

- How do I manage a career in the Royal Navy and be a parent at the same time?
- How do I juggle childcare, when I need to do overnight or weekend duties?
- Who will look after my children if I need to deploy, or attend career training courses away from my home?

If these questions sound familiar, you're in the right place. This article is here to help you navigate the realities of single parenthood in the RN, highlight the support available to you, and show you how you can build a long, successful career **and** raise happy, thriving children at the same time!

In 2024 the Royal Navy introduced the **RN Single Parents Policy** (RNTM 01-071/24). This policy was introduced as part of their commitment to modernise, to better meet the needs and improve the lived experience of the diverse personnel currently serving in the Royal Navy. In 2025 it became part of enduring policy and was incorporated into BR3 (BR3 Chapter 58 Paragraph 5809).

The policy was designed to **assist single parents to adequately plan and balance childcare & parenting with the needs of the service** – it lays out what service personnel can expect from their Chain of Command (CoC)/Divisional Officers/line managers, and what is expected of them, to manage their careers.



that they look after at the same time. They can be flexible with working hours, but may not offer overnight or weekend care.

3. Nurseries & Wrap around care for school children

These settings are often only Monday to Friday, and are usually open from early morning till late afternoon. These settings are great if you have a set schedule during the working week, but can be difficult if you have children of different ages, and therefore require different settings.

4. Extended Family – If you're lucky enough to have family nearby, this can be a flexible and cost-effective option.

All options of 'paid for' childcare can be costly, but luckily there are **schemes to help with these expenses, like funded early years childcare, tax-free childcare accounts and the MOD wrap around childcare scheme**. Information on these can be found on our website: nff.org.uk/advice/childcare/

Another option families may wish to consider as their children get older is boarding school. Boarding schools provide a well-rounded education along with consistent pastoral support, and eligible families can access funding through the MOD: gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas#boarding-education. We recognise that this pathway isn't right for everyone, but for some it can offer a **stable and supportive environment for children from the age of eight**.

All single parents are encouraged to keep their employment and family contact details up to date on JPA, and they can request a career interview to discuss potential job roles, career progression and training opportunities.

These interviews aim to agree on an employment and training plan that balances the needs of both the family and the Service. You can also explore alternative working arrangements that may be available to you - such as remote working, compressed hours or flexible service. More information on these can be found on Discover My Benefits: discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk/royal-navy/flexible-working/

There is also support available from the **Parent Support and Information Teams (PSITs)** which can be found in the three main Naval Bases in

Portsmouth, Plymouth & Faslane. These teams can offer information and support all the way through your parenting journey. More information can be found through your CoC, or through the Royal Navy Parents Network (RNPN) through the RN Forum: forum.royalnavy.mod.uk/groups/networks/

Being a single parent in the Royal Navy doesn't mean you have to choose between your family and your career. With the right information, proactive planning, and the support available, you absolutely can do both — **and do them well!**

One main element of the policy is focussed on childcare and ensuring that each single serving parent has adequate and robust arrangements. This includes provision for:

- Career training.
- Overnight or weekend duties.
- Deployments, both long and short.
- Required sea time for the job role.

Start by having an early, honest chat with your Chain of Command. Get clarity on what your role will entail, what duties you will be expected to hold and if there is any time away from home.

Once you know this you will need to then consider your options for childcare. These will be different for everyone, but a few worth considering are:

1. **Nannies** – they can be either live in or live out, and they provide care within your home. Nannies can work to a more flexible schedule and can cover overnights and weekends.
2. **Childminders** – Childminders offer childcare in their own homes and usually have children from other families

