

**“Service Children’s Champion”:  
An Evaluation at North Yorkshire Council**



Working in partnership with



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# **“Service Children’s Champion”**

## **An Evaluation at North Yorkshire Council**

### **Introduction**

This report presents the findings of Brunel University of London’s evaluation of the Service Children’s Champion role at North Yorkshire Council conducted between September 2024 and March 2025. The Brunel project team collaborated closely with the current Service Children’s Champion for North Yorkshire Council, Angela Campbell, to evaluate the unique programme of activities designed and implemented to support children from Armed Forces families, as well as the practitioners and others working with them.

### **Context**

The Service Children’s Progression Alliance (SCiP) defines a child from an Armed Forces family as:

*a person whose parent or carer serves in the Regular Armed Forces or as a Reservist, or has done at any point during the 25 years of that person’s life” (SCiP, 2017: para 2).*

Based on our more recent research, we have suggested that:

*the definition of a child from an armed forces family is broadened, adopted at government level across the four nations, and used consistently in the UK to include ‘any individual with a parent(s)/guardian(s) who has been a member of the armed forces at any point during their life’ (Chappell, McHugh, Ince and Bhuyan, 2025: 45).*

It is estimated that there are approximately 78,000 recorded current and former ‘Service Children’ in state funded schools in England, and this group of children is geographically dispersed across England and in nearly every local authority (MOD, 2025a). A growing body of research (Walker, Selous and Misca 2020; Ince *et al.*, 2021; Chappell *et al.*, 2025) shows that children from Armed Forces families often experience high levels of mobility, with some moving frequently and changing schools as many as eight times. As a consequence of this high mobility, this group of children are more likely to experience increased levels of family separation, social disruption, and significant challenges to their education.

In 2021, the Department for Education (DfE) in England introduced the Service Pupil Premium (SPP) “in recognition of the specific challenges children from service families face”, and as part of the commitment to delivering the Armed Forces Covenant (MOD, 2025b). SPP funding is allocated to state-funded schools in England if a pupil on roll meets the criteria of having one or more parents/guardians serving in the regular

Armed Forces or who is on full commitment as a reservist, they have been registered as a 'service child' in the past 6 years, one of their parents/guardians died while serving and they receive a pension, or one of their parents/guardians is in the Armed Forces of another nation and based in England (MOD, 2025b).

While the SPP is primarily designed to provide pastoral support, it can also be used to "help mitigate the negative impact of high mobility on a service pupil's education" (MOD, 2025b). In April 2025, the Department for Education (DfE) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) published non-statutory guidance to help state-funded schools and local authorities in England to understand and address the needs of children from Armed Forces families in schools (reception to year 11) (MOD, 2025a). The guidance explains how schools and local authorities can help support students' learning and well-being. In addition, the guidance recommends that local authorities should consider nominating a member of staff to be a 'Service Pupil Champion' with a description of the role and responsibilities provided by the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) (Appendix 1). It is also noted that the role holder should "hold a position with the necessary ability to influence local authority policy, strategy and practice" (MOD, 2025a). It is worth noting that the Living in Our Shoes report in 2020 (Walker *et al.*, 2020: 89) included a recommendation for the "Department of Education and the devolved governments to encourage all local authorities to appoint a Service Pupils' Champion". This is important given the need to 'understand the pressures' (RNRMCf, 2009:4), the 'very specific and complex barriers' (OfS, 2020) and the opportunities (Chappell *et al.* 2025) children from Armed Forces Families experience.

### **Service Children's Champion at North Yorkshire Council**

In the 2023 'Service Children's Champion Annual Report', it was noted that in North Yorkshire:

- There were 10,770 Armed Forces personnel.
- The Army accounted for 84% of the total (9080) and the Royal Air Force accounted for 15.7% (1,690). There was no figure included for Naval personnel.
- There were 3,707 children from Armed Forces families attending schools in North Yorkshire.

In 2012, the Service Children's Champion for North Yorkshire Council was established to support children from Armed Forces families and the professionals responsible for their care (Service Children Champion, 2025).

The role description below for the Service Children's Champion in North Yorkshire outlines their purpose and responsibilities (North Yorkshire Council, 2022):

#### **"Job Purpose:**

Work with partners and colleagues across Children and Families Service, to provide support to Service children and their families. This will involve the provision of direct

support to children on a one-to-one basis or in groups, as well as raising awareness amongst schools and other agencies of the issues faced by Service families.

### **Children and Young Person Development:**

- Supporting individual Service Children by liaising with schools and signposting their parents to external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is offered.
- Taking individual referrals for children as required and providing appropriate support.
- Acting as a key contact and point of reference for Service families both during and outside of usual school hours.
- Providing drop-ins, individual support for parents and a confidential support network, as necessary, which is one step removed from both the chain of command and the schools.
- Signposting families to the most appropriate support, if required.

### **Communications & Engagement:**

- Acting as a strong advocate of the Service child, raising awareness of the needs of Service Children.
- Strengthening the voice of Service Children, for example by promoting and developing the work of Military Kids Club (MKC) Heroes.
- Contributing to the monthly Service Pupil Champion blog, the Service Pupil Champion Facebook page and website.

### **Partnership / corporate working:**

- Liaising with school staff and the military welfare teams / local units, particularly when wider concerns are identified.
- Being an active member of the LA's Service Families Strategy Group (SFSG), including supporting the administration of meetings.
- Raising the awareness of the general issues facing Service Children amongst school staff, particularly in schools with low numbers of Service Children on roll.
- Helping schools plan for effective transition.
- Encouraging schools to have protocols, policies and associated documentation in place to support mobility, deployment and bereavement / loss.
- Provide professional development opportunities for staff to develop their understanding of the challenges of Service lifestyle and to share good practice.
- Supporting Military Kids Club (MKC) Heroes' school meetings.
- Contributing to conferences, including out of area when available, and other local events (e.g. Armed Forces Day).

### **Resource management:**

- Project-managing the annual MKC Heroes Remembrance Service at Ripon Cathedral and Armed Forces Day for Children.
- Be aware of and implement your health and safety responsibilities as an employee and where appropriate any additional specialist or managerial health and safety responsibility as defined in the Health and Safety policy and procedure.

- Work with colleagues and others to maintain health, safety and welfare within the working environment.

#### **Systems and information:**

- Keeping the Facebook page and blog/website up to date.
- Understand the importance of consent and comply with the procedures for obtaining consent from children, young people and their families.

#### **Support Transitions:**

- Supporting Service Children and their families especially during periods of active deployment and exercise and at times of transition – liaising with them and their teachers to ensure that key information is available to all who need it.
- Ensuring that families are supported and informed about the admissions process, including information for families with children with SEND.

#### **Safeguarding:**

- To be committed to safeguarding and promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, raising concerns as appropriate.
- Understand and comply with referral processes within the Service and to access additional support for young people.”

The current Service Children’s Champion for North Yorkshire Council, Angela Campbell, was appointed to the role in January 2023.



## **Aims of the Service Children's Champion Evaluation**

The aim of this project was to work in collaboration with the current Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell, and North Yorkshire Council, to evaluate their unique programme of activities designed and implemented to support children from Armed Forces families and those working with them. In particular the project aimed to:

- Support a business case for future funding through the council to make the Service Children's Champion a sustainable and permanent role at North Yorkshire Council.
- Offer other local authorities and councils ideas to support the work they are mandated to undertake for children from Armed Forces families.
- Provide strategic recommendations for nationwide adoption and implementation of the Service Children's Champion role by local authorities.

The project aims have been achieved through a three-stage approach:

- An exploration and review of the current Service Children's Champion role and its programme of activities
- An analysis of participation and evaluation data collected by North Yorkshire Council, including that from various stakeholders who have participated in these programmes of activities.
- An analysis of primary data collected and analysed by the Brunel research team in January 2025, including an interview with the current Service Children's Champion for North Yorkshire Council and an online questionnaire with stakeholders to explore their experiences of engagement with the Service Children's Champion and current programme of activities.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

This report draws on two distinct data sets to examine the impact and significance of the Service Children's Champion role, and the unique programme of activities designed and implemented to support children from Armed Forces families and those working with them.

### **North Yorkshire Council Data Set**

North Yorkshire Council currently collects a range of qualitative and quantitative evaluation data on its programme of activities undertaken by the Service Children's Champion. This data set was provided to the Brunel research team to assist them with their review and evaluation of the current programme of activities led and run by the Service Children's Champion. Data supplied to the Brunel team included the following:

- Newsletters written by the current Service Children's Champion;
- Event feedback forms;
- Stakeholder surveys with parents/guardians, teachers, head teachers, Local Authority representatives, charity sector workers and welfare officers;
- Strategic framework documents.

In addition, the Service Children's Champion role was reviewed through an analysis of relevant programme activities and a questionnaire with stakeholders, to gain a deeper understanding of how it is designed to deliver the programme of activities, thereby offering insights into the impact for children and families from the Armed Forces, and those working with them.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data set provided by North Yorkshire Council, ensuring a consistent approach to exploring the following areas of inquiry:

- Exploration of the Service Children's Champion role, including its scope, responsibilities, and key functions;
- Identification and summary of the key activities designed to support children and the stakeholders involved with them, along with the rationale for these activities and initiatives, focusing on their objectives and underlying purposes;
- Assessment of the impact of these activities on children, families, schools and other key stakeholders;
- Assessment of the evidence supporting the continuation of the Service Children's Champion role and its programme of activities designed to support children and families of the Armed Forces.

### **Brunel University Research Team Data Set**

To complement the data from North Yorkshire Council, the Brunel research team collected primary data through an online questionnaire with stakeholders and an in-depth interview with the current Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell.

### **Questionnaire Data**

An online questionnaire (Appendix 2) was designed and distributed by the Brunel research team to stakeholders who work closely with the Service Children's Champion. Eleven stakeholders were invited to contribute, and seven participants completed the questionnaire, providing feedback on their engagement with the programme of activities and initiatives run by the Service Children's Champion, their perceptions of its impact on children and families, school staff and the wider community, as well as their familiarity with the role.

### **Interview with the Current Service Children's Champion**

An in-depth interview was also conducted with the current Service Children's Champion for North Yorkshire Council to explore her experiences of the role and running the programme of activities.

The questionnaire responses and interview data were analysed using a thematic analysis, following the same structured protocol employed for the North Yorkshire data set. This ensured consistency across all data sources and facilitated the synthesis of findings into organised themes.

## Findings

This report draws on data provided by North Yorkshire Council, supplemented by the responses from the stakeholders' questionnaire and one in-depth interview with the current Service Children's Champion. The findings from our analysis of both data sets are presented in five sections:

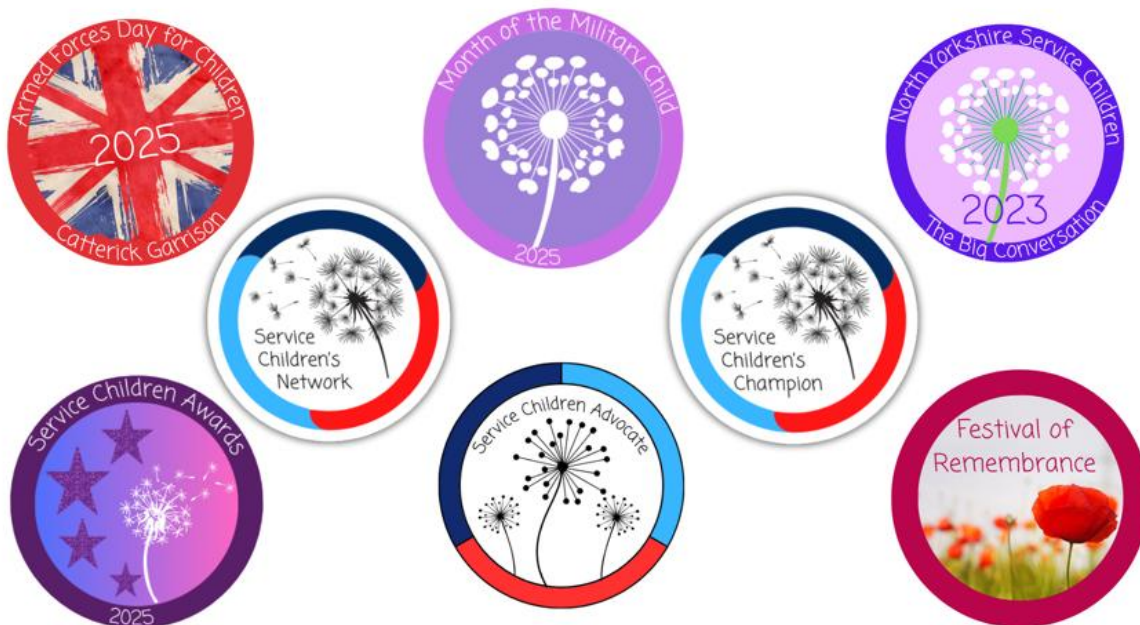
1. The Service Children's Champion Role;
2. Activities Supporting Service Children and Stakeholders;
3. Impact and Reach;
4. Why Maintain the Service Children's Champion role?;
5. Recommendations for the Service Children Champion Role for Local Authorities and Councils.

### Section 1: The Service Children's Champion Role

The Service Children's Champion plays a crucial role in designing and implementing a portfolio of activities that encourage active engagement from all stakeholders. Based on our analysis, we have categorised the impact of these activities into five distinct core areas:

1. Awareness and Advocacy;
2. Community Engagement and Support;
3. Event Coordination;
4. Educational and Professional Support;
5. Strategic Leadership, Planning and Continuous Improvement.





## 1. Awareness and Advocacy

The Service Children's Champion plays a critical role in advocating for the well-being, education, and inclusion of children from Armed Forces families, by raising awareness of the challenges they face and the ways in which they can be supported during their time in North Yorkshire. The Service Children's Champion plays an important role in ensuring that these children's voices are heard, and their unique experiences are understood, including creating opportunities for them to feel proud of their serving parents/guardians.

Angela Campbell, the current North Yorkshire Council Service Children's Champion, outlines her primary focus as being an advocate for these children:

*I always say the main bit to my job is: one to raise awareness; two, we advocate; and three, we celebrate.*

The Service Children's Champion is also responsible for raising awareness among school staff, peers, and the wider community about the challenges faced by Service children which include frequent relocations, parental deployment, and disruptions to their education. The Service Children's Champion also ensures that all relevant local authority teams and services, are informed and equipped to respond to the specific needs of children from Armed Forces families.

## 2. Community Engagement and Support

Community engagement is central to the role, as it seeks to provide children with opportunities to feel connected and supported. The Service Children's Champion works closely with families from the local Armed Forces community and units to

address challenges, such as deployment related stress, by offering emotional and practical support. Moreover, the Service Children's Champion ensures that they are the main point of contact between Armed Forces units, local Armed Forces families and the local authority. The Service Children's Champion also engages with neighbouring local authorities and councils to share knowledge and build a network of local and national support, thereby contributing to a growing evidence base of best practices in supporting children from Armed Forces families.

The current Service Children's Champion highlights the importance of these community connections:

*It's about working with children and families and schools and organisations, so it's that not being a separate entity, it's about getting in there and being in the mix and trying to pull various aspects of the communities together, if that makes sense. So, I'll pull together the Council, but also the schools, also the families, wider organisations like the Army Welfare Service (AWS), for example, or try to reach out to other councils to create a network of support that reinforces a sense of belonging for these children (Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell).*

The Service Children's Champion is responsible for developing and maintaining a website containing useful information which can be accessed by families, schools and more broadly. In addition, they are responsible for signposting families, schools and colleagues to information and organisations that can support them, particularly during critical times, such as parental deployment or transitions to new schools:

*It's about being there when families need someone to turn to (Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell).*

### **3. Event Coordination**

The Service Children's Champion is responsible for organising and coordinating annual events such as the Festival of Remembrance and Armed Forces Day for children, the Service Children Awards, Armed Forces and the Month of the Military Child. These events create opportunities for children to contribute to their communities, while strengthening their identities and sense of belonging:

*Every event we do, every workshop, the emphasis is always on celebration and on making people proud of who they are (Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell)*

Through event coordination, the Service Children's Champion promotes moments of celebration to foster pride while also bridging gaps between Armed Forces and civilian communities.



#### **4. Educational and Professional Support**

Supporting schools and educators is a key responsibility of the Service Children's Champion's role. They are responsible for helping schools establish appropriate pastoral support for children and support for staff to deliver a range of workshops for the children. Through professional development sessions, they provide school staff with the knowledge, tools and resources to support the specific needs of Armed Forces children from primary to secondary level on topics such as the emotional impact of deployment, transitions between schools, and strategies for promoting well-being. In addition to providing resources for creating tailored programmes, the Service Children's Champion supports schools in appointing Service Children Advocates (SCAs), ensuring sustainable and effective support for Armed Forces children over time.

The Service Children's Champion provides high-quality, tailored CPD in-person for schools and external organisations working with Armed Forces families to help them understand and address the needs of children from Armed Forces backgrounds:

*We changed the workshops from doing a series of them to actually developing the course material and making that freely available and instead of me coming to deliver it, I'll come and train you [the staff] so that it can be become more sustainable in school (Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell).*

The Service Children's Champion also delivers workshops for parents/guardians of children from Armed Forces families.

#### **5. Strategic Leadership, Planning and Continuous Improvement**

The Service Children's Champion is responsible for strengthening links between the Armed Forces community, schools, and the Local Authority to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant and Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MODLAP) principles are upheld by colleagues working with North Yorkshire Council. The Service Children's Champion leads on the authority's strategic planning for children from Armed Forces families and carries out ongoing evaluation of the programme of activities designed to support them from their early years through to the end of secondary education. The Service Children's Champion is responsible for gathering, collating, and reporting on data collected through stakeholder surveys which evaluates the success of programmes and identifies areas for improvement. This reporting aims to create a comprehensive framework that meets the needs of Armed Forces families across schools and communities.

The Service Children's Champion prioritises sustainability and continuous improvement in her strategies to improve the experiences and outcomes of Service Children in North Yorkshire:

*Every day is a learning day. I look for ways to develop activities or make them self-sustainable in the future (Service Children's Champion, Angela Campbell).*

The Service Children's Champion also chairs and co-ordinates termly Service Children Network (SCN) briefing meetings to facilitate the communication of MOD, national and local updates. They provide updates to stakeholders, share best practices, and foster connections between schools, Armed Forces representatives, and local authorities, organising regular SCN meetings and publishing a monthly SCN newsletter highlighting local and national updates. SCN Surgeries, which are one-on-one consultation sessions, allow the Service Children's Champion to address specific challenges faced by Armed Forces children and their families. These coordinated efforts ensure that resources and support are consistently aligned with the needs of Armed Forces children across communities.

## Section 2: Activities Supporting Service Children and Stakeholders

The wide-ranging programme of activities coordinated by the Service Children's Champion aims to provide holistic support for Armed Forces children and those who advocate on their behalf. From commemorative events to creative workshops, these initiatives address emotional, social, and educational needs while fostering community engagement and celebrating the unique experiences of children from Armed Forces families. The Service Children's Champion has also developed a programme of activities to support stakeholders who engage with these children.

### Activities Supporting Children

Below is a comprehensive list of the activities coordinated by the Service Children's Champion to support children.

| Activity/Programme                                                                                                                      | Objective                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Engagement/Reach                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Armed Forces Day (AFD)</b><br>                    | Armed Forces Day for Children at Catterick Garrison has become a flagship event, engaging nearly 1,000 pupils from primary and secondary schools. The day features interactive displays, hands-on activities, and entertainment designed to provide insight into Armed Forces life and celebrate service families.                    | 2023-2025<br>2512 attendees<br>7-16 years old<br>25-30 schools each year from across the county                        |
| <b>Festival of Remembrance and Art Workshops</b><br> | The Festival of Remembrance, held at venues like Ripon Cathedral, combines solemn reflection with artistic expression. Schools and VIPs, including Armed Forces representatives, participate in choir performances, wreath-laying ceremonies, and poppy-themed art displays. These activities connect service children to the broader | Festival of Remembrance<br>2022-2025<br>2845 attendees<br><br>Remembrance art workshops<br>2023-24<br>776 participants |



|                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                  | community while honouring their unique contributions. Complementary art workshops encourage children to channel their experiences creatively, fostering pride and emotional well-being. Projects such as "All Together Now" showcase the collective creativity of children from Armed Forces families, culminating in symbolic artworks displayed at public events.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Month of the Military Child (MOTMC)</b><br> | <p>The MOTMC is a vibrant celebration of these children's identities. Schools participate in themed activities across subjects like English, Art, PSHE, and Geography, alongside events such as "Purple Up Day" and virtual assemblies. Creative projects, including photo challenges and collaborative art workshops, provide children with opportunities to express their experiences and build confidence.</p> <p>In 2024 Lucy Pittaway worked with the Service Children's Champion on a special art project which involved 100 children creating squares for a collaborative artwork. In 2025 renowned artist Mackenzie Thorpe visited Catterick Garrison to work with 85 children to begin work on a collaborative large-scale sculpture called 'The Seeds of Love' that will be on display in the centre of the Catterick Garrison.</p> | <p>Art workshops<br/>24-25<br/>191 participants<br/>6-16 years old</p> <p>Assemblies<br/>934 pupils</p> <p>Virtual assemblies shared with 230 schools in 2024-25</p> |
| <b>Service Children Awards</b>                                                                                                   | The Service Children Awards recognise the resilience, creativity, and contributions of these children, as well as the efforts of schools and advocates who support them. These ceremonies highlight                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <p>Nominations received 2024-25<br/>407</p> <p>Attendees<br/>150</p>                                                                                                 |

|                                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                     | <p>inspirational stories, such as that of Lyla O'Donovan, who overcame health challenges to help others, and celebrate schools that excel in fostering welcoming environments.</p>                                                                                                      |                                                                   |
| <p><b>The Big Conversation</b></p>  | <p>The Big Conversation empowers service children to share their experiences through workshops, shaping policies like the "Service Children's Promise." This participatory approach ensures that support initiatives align with the needs and aspirations of Armed Forces families.</p> | <p>28 Schools<br/>75 Participants (63 children and 12 adults)</p> |

### Feedback from Children, Families and Schools

Stakeholders praised the Service Children's Champion for raising awareness of this group of children's unique needs and celebrating their contributions through events like The Big Conversation and Armed Forces Day. Below are some comments and feedback from children, families and school stakeholders who participated in these events:

*I had a really good day. The Big Conversation was really interesting, and we talked a lot about what it was like to be a Service Pupil and what that meant to us. I particularly enjoyed the group project, where we worked together to create a banner representing our different experiences as Service Children (Questionnaire Child A).*

*It was wonderful seeing the children being able to engage in meaningful conversation around their lived experiences. All of the workshops were well received! (Questionnaire School Teacher A).*

*It was a truly wholesome day filled with exciting activities. It was lovely to see the pupils expressing their feelings about being a military child and getting to know one another. We extend our gratitude to the Service Children's Champion, North Yorkshire Youth Voice, and Children's and Families Services for organising such a fantastic event. We eagerly anticipate the next one (Questionnaire School Teacher B).*

*Being able to participate as a school in the Annual Service of Remembrance in Ripon Cathedral with the opportunity for live streaming so that parents of service pupils taking part, even those posted, can see their children. Also*

*have an opportunity to involve the whole school through Artwork displayed in the Cathedral. Thank you so much (Questionnaire School 8).*

*The work of the Service Pupils Champion has had a significant impact for the pupils, staff and families of X Primary School (Questionnaire School A).*

*She [Service Children's Champion] has provided them with one-to-one support through her weekly check-ins. This has been essential in ensuring that pupils' emotional and mental well-being is well supported and that their behaviour at school and at home has been good (Questionnaire School B).*

*I mostly value her expertise, time, organisation. She [Service Children's Champion] has provided support and advice for our own projects and has been hugely helpful in connecting us to school contacts and military contacts. The only thing that could make it better is to know that this role is embedded within North Yorkshire on a more sustained funding model (Questionnaire School 13).*

Online questionnaire data (Appendix 2) collected by the Brunel research team from stakeholders who work closely with the Service Children's Champion further supported how well received these programmes of activities are. The 7 stakeholders who participated in the online questionnaire (Appendix 2), which was designed and distributed by the Brunel University team, indicated that:

- 1) the Service Children's Champion activities had a significant impact on children from Armed Forces families (n=6);
- 2) the activities organised by the Service Children's Champion had been very impactful on Armed Forces Families: (n=5);
- 3) the activities organised by the Service Children's Champion activities had been very impactful on Armed Forces stakeholders: (n=4);
- 4) maintaining the Service Children's Champion Role in their area is very important (n=7).

### **Activities Supporting Stakeholders Working with Children from Armed Forces Families**

Below is a comprehensive list of the activities coordinated by the Service Children's Champion to support stakeholders working with children from Armed Forces families.

| <b>Activity/Programme</b>   | <b>Objective</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Engagement/Reach</b>                                    |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Community Engagement</b> | Public events like Armed Forces Day and the Festival of Remembrance foster understanding and appreciation of families within the broader community. Collaborations with local artists, museums, and organisations such as Little Troopers and Reading Force provide enriching opportunities for the children to | 2022-25 total engagements – 7,890 individuals; 230 schools |

|                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                     | express themselves and connect with their heritage.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and School Support</b> | <p>The Service Children's Champion provides professional development for educators to enhance their understanding of the impact of Armed Forces life on this group of children. CPD sessions focus on topics such as mental health, the effective use of the Service Pupil Premium (SPP), and transition support. Resources like the Thriving Lives Toolkit guide schools in implementing evidence-based practices to support children effectively. Regular Service Children Network (SCN) meetings serve as forums for sharing best practices, receiving updates from Armed Forces representatives, and planning future initiatives.</p> <p>In 2024 the SCC collaborated with Inspiring Choices to host a co-working day for Service Children Advocates.</p> | <p>SCN meetings - Average attendance 30 per meeting, 3 meetings per year</p> <p>Service Children Advocate Training November 2024 - 11 school representatives</p>                                    |
| <b>Digital Engagement and Resources</b>                             | The Service Children's Champion leverages digital platforms to expand its reach and impact. Social media and newsletters share well-being tips, event highlights, and practical resources, fostering engagement among families and educators. The dedicated Service Children's Champion website centralises resources, offering guidance on managing transitions, deployments, and emotional challenges. This digital presence ensures that support is accessible and continuously evolving to meet the needs of the children and their advocates.                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <p>Digital monthly newsletter shared with all 114 members of the Service Children's Network</p> <p>Facebook – 498 followers since 2022</p> <p>Instagram – 185 followers</p> <p>X – 98 followers</p> |

### **Rationale Behind the Activities**

The various activities undertaken by the Service Children's Champion are built on a robust rationale that aligns with the broader goals of supporting, celebrating, and advocating for children from Armed Forces families. Each activity addresses specific

aspects of the challenges and opportunities inherent in Armed Forces family life, ensuring that the emotional, social, and educational needs of the children met. Furthermore, these events serve to raise public awareness about the challenges faced by the families, inviting wider community involvement to build understanding and support.

The activities coordinated by the Service Children's Champion reflect a deep commitment to improving the lives of the children. Whether through events that celebrate their contributions, workshops that foster creativity and community, or initiatives that build awareness and understanding, each effort addresses specific challenges while reinforcing the value of these children within their communities. Collectively, these activities create a supportive framework that enhances the well-being, education, and social inclusion this group of children, ensuring they continue to thrive despite the unique challenges they face.

### **Section 3: Engagement and Reach**

The programme of activities organised by the Service Children's Champion have had a profound and wide-reaching impact. In the period 2022-2025, the programme of activities organised by the Service Children's Champion, engaged with over 230 schools and over 7,890 individuals.

#### **Event Attendance – Engagement and Reach**

The detail of the event attendance and reach is as follows:

- Armed Forces Day (AFD) 2023-2025: 2,512 participants.
- Festival of Remembrance 2022-2025: 2,845 participants.
- Remembrance Workshops 2023-2025: 776 participants.
- Month of the Military Child (MOTMC) 2024-2025: 1,125 participants in total, Art workshops with 191 participants including Assemblies with 934 participants and Virtual Assemblies with 230 schools.
- Service Children Awards 2024-2025: 40 nominees and 150 participants.
- The Big Conversation: 75 participants

#### **Activities Supporting Stakeholders working with Service Children**

The programme of activities coordinated by the Service Children's Champion to support stakeholders working with the children, engaged with 101 participants:

- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and School Support: 90 participants attended SNC meetings;
- Service Children Advocate Training: 11 school representatives.

#### **Digital Engagement and Communication**

The Service Children's Champion uses digital platforms to expand its reach:

- A monthly digital newsletter is shared with all 114 members of the Service Children's Network (SNC)
- Facebook – 498 followers
- Instagram – 185 followers

- X – 98 followers

## **Section 4: Why Maintain the Service Children's Champion role?**

The Service Children's Champion role plays a critical role in addressing and supporting the unique challenges faced by the children and their families. Its continuation is essential for fostering resilience, improving outcomes, and providing targeted support for children from Armed Forces families across North Yorkshire.

### **Strategic Alignment with National Priorities**

The Service Children's Champion aligns with the goals of the Armed Forces Covenant, addressing the education, mobility, and well-being challenges faced by Armed Forces families. This strategic alignment ensures that these children receive the support they need in line with national and local priorities.

### **Cost-Effective and Sustainable Impact**

The Service Children's Champion is a cost-effective solution that leverages partnerships to maximise impact without duplicating efforts. By strategically collaborating with schools, Armed Forces organisations, and charities, the Service Children's Champion ensures efficient resource utilisation through collaboration. The role has a commitment to long-term benefits that positively influence educational and emotional outcomes and reduce future inequalities for this group of children.

### **Fostering Community and a Sense of Belonging**

The Service Children's Champion plays a vital role in fostering a sense of belonging among children from Armed Forces families. Initiatives like the "Festival of Friends" and art workshops help children build peer relationships and feel pride in their identity. These programmes promote community bonds, even for children who experience frequent relocations. Additionally, the Service Children's Champion strengthens ties between families and schools, increasing parental participation in events and creating a more supportive environment for the families.

### **Positive Feedback from Stakeholders**

Stakeholders consistently emphasise the importance of the Service Children's Champion role. Schools note its vital contribution to improving relationships, behaviour, and school attendance:

*The impact of our and the SCCs role can be seen qualitatively in the relationships, attendance, and excellent behaviour of our service pupils and their parents' attendance at school events including open evenings and parents' consultation meetings (Head Teacher A).*

*Raising awareness of the unique challenges that SC may face that have the potential to impact their educational potential/well-being. They have given service children an opportunity to have their voices heard and be part of decision-making in terms of how and what support is needed. It has raised the identity of Service children (Stakeholder Brunel Questionnaire 7).*



*Sense of belonging, building knowledge and awareness of lived experiences, support with wellbeing in and out of school, teacher CPD leading to better in school support (Stakeholder Brunel Questionnaire 2).*

Below are some comments and feedback from senior school leaders who have participated in the programme of activities and CPD sessions coordinated by the Service Children's Champion:

*The SCC is an excellent source of reference for the school in terms of helping us understand the needs of individuals, families, and our military community...the work our SCC does with groups of children and their parents is highly regarded by us all at school as it strengthens relationships and helps children and parents know they are not on their own (Head Teacher A).*

*As a school that experiences exceptional mobility and high levels of deployment, the pastoral challenges presented to our pupils and families are immense...thanks to the grant, the SCC has been able to regularly come in and work with children struggling emotionally around military issues – offering bespoke, 1:1 support to both pupils and their families. This has been vital in mitigating the challenges faced by the school, and, more importantly, the children. We are very grateful for such support, and the resourcing which has facilitated this (Head Teacher B).*

*The SCC role acts as a bridge between the LA, military and schools. The SCC can effectively champion on behalf of military families and in particular Service children (Stakeholder Questionnaire 4).*

## **Summary**

The findings of Brunel University of London's evaluation of the Service Children's Champion role at North Yorkshire Council demonstrates the important contribution it makes in supporting children and Armed Forces families, and schools across the county.

To sustain and expand the Service Children's Champion's success, it is vital to secure sustainable funding and ensure that the pay is commensurate with the range of activities and tasks required to fulfil all aspects of the role profile.

As a result of this evaluation and discussions that took place with and within North Yorkshire Council, the role title and profile were revised in the summer of 2025, and the updated version for the North Yorkshire Council Service Children's Coordinator is included in Appendix 3.

In the final section of this evaluation report, we offer five recommendations regarding a Service Children's Champion role profile that can be adopted by other local authorities to support children from Armed Forces families.

## **Section 5: Recommendations for the Service Children Champion Role Profile for Local Authorities and Councils.**

To establish a standardised and effective Service Children's Champion nationwide, we offer the following recommendations based on the data analysed in this evaluation. The proposed role profile framework, expanded on the next page, is structured around five distinct areas:

1. Awareness and Advocacy
2. Community Engagement and Support
3. Event Coordination and Networking
4. Educational and Professional Support
5. Strategic Planning and Continuous Improvement

This framework aims to provide a consistent and effective approach to addressing the unique challenges faced by children from Armed Forces families, while promoting their academic, emotional, and social development. While we recognise that individual local authorities and councils may choose to include or omit certain elements based on their contextual needs, this serves as a flexible framework that can be adapted accordingly.

### **Recommendation 1: Awareness and Advocacy**

Serve as a dedicated advocate for children from Armed Forces families by raising awareness of their needs, influencing policy, and ensuring their voices are represented in decision-making at all forums.

### **Recommendation 2: Community Engagement and Support**

Foster strong partnerships with schools, families, local authorities, and third-sector organisations to create a cohesive support network for children from Armed Forces families.

### **Recommendation 3: Event Coordination**

Organise, coordinate, and deliver a range of activities to support children from Armed Forces families.

### **Recommendation 4: Education and Professional Support**

Identify and coordinate evidence-based interventions tailored to the specific needs of these children, with a focus on improving educational attainment, emotional well-being, and school engagement. The Service Children's Champion should also provide tailored online and one-to-one CPD for schools to help them understand and support the needs of children from Armed Forces families.

### **Recommendation 5: Strategic Leadership, Planning and Continuous Support**

Provide strategic leadership by developing and implementing a comprehensive plan aligned with local and national policies, including the Armed Forces Covenant and the UK Armed Forces Families Strategy. This strategy should include measurable objectives across all educational stages and be embedded within local authority and council structures, supported by sustainable funding.



## The Service Children's Champion Role Profile Framework

In addition to the five recommendations outlined above, the following framework table is organised into five distinct areas of the Service Children's Champion role. This structure helps distinguish between what is considered 'Core' to the role and what may be viewed as an 'Optional Component'. It is designed to help local authorities and councils select and adapt components when developing a bespoke Service Children's Champion role profile to meet local and national needs.

|             | <b>Awareness and Advocacy</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Community Engagement and Support</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>Event Coordination</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>Education and Professional Support</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Strategic Leadership, Planning and Continuous Support</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Core</b> | <p>Advocate and raise awareness of the children's needs underpinned by a commitment to their well-being and appropriate safeguarding.</p> <p>Provide opportunities for children's voices to be heard and help foster a sense of belonging to the community.</p> <p>Promote recognition of the challenges and</p> | <p>Build partnerships with schools, families, third-sector organisations and other local authorities and councils to share best practices through effective communication.</p> <p>Serve as liaison between the Armed Forces, schools, the local authority and trusts to ensure the Armed Forces Covenant and</p> | <p>Organise and communicate a calendar of events, including key annual ones such as Armed Forces Day for Children, the Month of the Military Child, and Service Children's Awards.</p> <p>Create opportunities for the children to collaborate and contribute to activities that will help them build a stronger</p> | <p>Coordinate tailored interventions for the children.</p> <p>Identify and respond to specific challenges related to being a child in an Armed Forces family.</p> <p>Support educational attainment and emotional well-being.</p> <p>Provide schools in the LA with resources to be used to support the children.</p> | <p>Develop and implement a strategic plan aligned with national and local policies within a clear budget</p> <p>Contribute to policy-making decisions within the local authority and council, academies and trusts to improve the experiences and outcomes of the children.</p> |

|  |                                                 |                                                                                                                                                       |                                  |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | needs of children through campaigns and awards. | <p>MODLAP principles are upheld.</p> <p>Signpost families, schools and key stakeholders to vital information or organisations that can help them.</p> | sense of identity and community. |  | <p>Undertake regular evaluation of the SCC role and impact.</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate programme effectiveness.</p> <p>Develop and deliver regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and support for schools, teachers and leaders.</p> <p>Establish a Service Children's Network (SNC), and chair and coordinate termly briefing meetings.</p> <p>Provide SCN CPD sessions to support 'Service Children Advocates' from schools and other external organisations.</p> |
|--|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                           |                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                       |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Optional Component</b> | Work collaboratively with media to raise awareness of challenges, needs and opportunities experienced by the children. | <p>Publish a monthly newsletter to be sent to all schools with local and national updates</p> <p>Develop a Service Children's Champion Website.</p> <p>Use social media effectively to engage with the local Armed Forces community.</p> | Collect evaluation data and stakeholder feedback on event attendance and engagement with activities. | <p>Support children and families with transition and deployment.</p> <p>Facilitate access to specialist services.</p> | Coordinate and support volunteers. |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Local Authority Service Pupil Champion Role Description

Annex C (MOD/DFE, 2025a) Taken from 'Service Pupils in Schools: Non-statutory guidance' ([Service Pupils in Schools: Non-statutory guidance - GOV.UK](#))

Key responsibilities of the role:

- To act as the authority's strategic lead for children from Armed Forces families, focusing on maintaining an overview of Children's Services activities for Armed Forces children in their early years up until the conclusion of their secondary phase schooling.
- To coordinate activities of the authority that support Armed Forces children to achieve positive outcome and destinations.
- To coordinate the delivery and implementation of a Children's Services-wide strategic plan for Armed Forces children, which influences and informs the policies and practices of local schools.
- To champion and advocate for the needs of Armed Forces children, ensuring all relevant local authority teams and services have sufficient understanding of the needs and context of local Armed Forces children in their area.
- To work with local academies and free schools to ensure a consistency of offer for Armed Forces children.
- To gather, collate and report on relevant cross-discipline data that tracks the outcomes of Armed Forces children within the local authority area, ensuring that the reporting of progress and outcomes data has exposure to the appropriate level of strategic and political scrutiny.
- To engage with regional and national networks of other local authority Service Child Champions, to share knowledge and contribute to a deepening national evidence base of how local authority services can get it tight for Armed Forces children.
- To be the main point of contact between local military commands and the local authority, ensuring the local authority is able to plan proactively for deployments affecting local Armed Forces families and for major military mobility requiring the strategic management of transition.
- To work collegiately with families from local Armed Forces Community to establish and deliver upon a Services child promise charter/local offer.

## Appendix 2: Online Stakeholder Questionnaire

Evaluation of North Yorkshire County Council's 'Service Children's Champion' Role - Stakeholder Questionnaire designed by the Brunel Research Team

1. What is your role in relation to the Service Children's Champion (SCC) activities? (Select all that apply)
2. What is your job title?
3. How frequently do you interact with the SCC or participate in SCC-led activities?
4. How familiar are you with the SCC role?
5. Which of the following SCC activities or initiatives are you aware of? (Select all that apply)
6. How impactful do you think the SCC activities are on the following groups?
7. Please share examples of how SCC activities have positively affected children from Armed Forces families, their schools, or families?
8. Are there specific activities or initiatives that you feel should be prioritised (Select all that apply)?
9. How effective do you think the SCC role is in addressing the needs of children from Armed Forces families and their families?
10. Are there any challenges or gaps you've observed in SCC activities or support?
11. In your opinion, what could be improved or added to SCC activities to better support children from Armed Forces families and their families?
12. How effective is the SCC in communicating with stakeholders about upcoming events, resources, or initiatives?
13. What are the best ways for the SCC to communicate with you or your organisation (Select all that apply)
14. Do you feel that there are sufficient opportunities to provide feedback to the SCC?
15. How important do you think it is to maintain the SCC role in your area?
16. What long-term goals or activities would you like to see included in a national blueprint for the SCC role?
17. If the SCC role were to be expanded or replicated in other areas, what advice you offer to ensure its success?
18. Do you have any additional comments or suggestions regarding the SCC role, its activities, or its impact?

## **Appendix 3: Revised North Yorkshire Council Service Children's Coordinator Role Description June 2025**

**Job Purpose: To lead and manage on the coordination of support for Service Children**

### **Operational management:**

- Develop a programme plan for supporting Service Children in line with current funding terms and conditions.
- Organise and coordinate key events and activities to celebrate and raise awareness of our Armed Forces families.
- To coordinate and oversee volunteers who are supporting the role of the Service Children's Coordinator.
- To be involved with the induction and training of North Yorkshire Council volunteers.
- To provide emotional and practical support for Service Children's Advocates in relation to supporting children and their families whilst a parent is deployed elsewhere.
- To provide emotional and practical support for Service Children's Advocates who are supporting children and families who are dealing with trauma and loss
- Where relevant, support individual children who are facing trauma and loss due to parental deployment, mobility or trauma.
- To promote the Service Children's Promise across schools and early years settings. Encourage schools and early years settings to engage with the promise and commit to delivering best practice for Service children and families within their establishments.
- Regular consultation with partners to ensure that we are reviewing the offer as required.
- Ensure that Service Children's Advocates within schools are offered support, signposting and opportunities for professional development with regards to supporting Service children.
- Providing regular virtual drop-in clinics for schools, early years providers and North Yorkshire Council colleagues who need advice or guidance with regards to supporting Service Children.
- Providing professional development training for schools, early years providers and CYPS colleagues with regards to best practice for Service Children.
- Ensuring that families are supported and informed about the admissions process, including providing information for families with children with SEND.
- To be aware of the Private Fostering regulations and our duty with regards to this. Ensure that Service Children's Advocates are aware of the regulations and their responsibilities.



**Resource management:**

- Manage the programme budget and provide financial updates.
- Project manage annual events such as the Festival of Remembrance, Month of the Military Child and the Service Children's Awards.
- Work with the Armed Forces and local community to support the planning and delivery of the Armed Forces Day for children and other local events as appropriate.
- Be aware of and implement your health and safety responsibilities as an employee and where appropriate any additional specialist or managerial health and safety responsibility as defined in the Health and Safety policy and procedure.

**Partnerships:**

- Take a lead responsibility for implementing and coordinating partnerships / collaborations to deliver the programme.
- Liaising with school staff and the military welfare teams / local units, particularly when wider concerns are identified.
- Coordinate and lead on regular Service Children's Network meetings, ensuring that they include information sharing and opportunity for professional development.
- Build relationships and engage regional and national networks and other Local Authorities, to share knowledge and best practice.
- Raising the awareness of the general issues facing Service children amongst school staff, particularly in schools with low numbers of Service children on roll.
- Working with schools and local authority colleagues to support plans for effective transitions. Liaise with schools and signposting their parents to external agencies to ensure that appropriate support is offered.
- Encouraging schools to have protocols, policies and associated documentation in place to support mobility, deployment and bereavement / loss.
- Provide professional development training opportunities for partners to develop their understanding of the challenges of Service lifestyle and to share good practice.

**Strategic management:**

- Be responsible for the leadership of projects and in evidencing outcomes.
- Produce progress reports and evaluations for Senior Management, external funding providers and others as required.
- Monitor and review the outputs and outcomes across the programme.
- To ensure that the programme links effectively with other Council initiatives.
- Stay informed about national initiatives that are relevant to Service children and their families.

**Communications:**

- Develop a communication plan to ensure activities and events are promoted and advertised to encourage participation.
- Acting as a strong advocate of the Service child, raising Countywide awareness of the needs of Service children and families.
- Ensure the views of Service children and their families are regularly captured and embed in all work undertaken.
- Ensuring that information shared through social media and the Service Children's website is kept up to date and relevant.
- Develop and share monthly newsletters for schools, stakeholders and colleagues.

**Systems and information:**

- Ensure that the Service Children's Champion website and social media are kept up to date.
- Understand the importance of consent and comply with the procedures for obtaining consent from children and their families.

**Safeguarding:**

- Be responsible for promoting and safeguarding the welfare of children that you are responsible for and come into contact with.
- Understand and comply with referral processes within the Service and to access additional support for young people.



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