

 THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST



Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Fund

Early Years Programme

FAQs



2024/25

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Early Years Fund Programme 2024/25
FAQs**

Is there a minimum number of Service children that can be used for an application?

You must have 50% of Service children on roll, at your setting, to apply for a standalone grant.

However, if you have less than 50% of Service children on roll, there is an option in this year's guidance to form a cluster of two or more settings.

More information on cluster eligibility is available within the guidance and Early Years resources on our website.

Can childminders apply?

Childminders cannot apply to this programme. The programme guidance and supporting resources on our website, details the eligibility criteria and outcomes that the programme is hoping to achieve. We strongly encourage you to read the programme guidance and supporting resources which should help you to decide if the programme is suitable for you to apply to. The guidance also details who is ineligible under this programme:

- Commercial organisations aiming to charge for services to childcare providers - for example, an organisation could not be awarded a grant to develop a training course which it then charges schools to attend.
- Sole traders or partnerships.
- Organisations delivering childcare that do not hold a valid OFSTED or equivalent regulatory registration.
- Unincorporated or voluntary community groups.
- Schools, universities, or colleges (whether private or publicly operated), unless operating nursery education that meets the definition above.

A local authority applying to offer training across multiple settings, would they only be able to offer this training to settings with 50% of Service families?

No. Local authorities can apply to supply specific training to early childhood education and childcare providers supporting Service children aged 0-5 years. You can apply as a cohort across multiple settings, under your application, and should include information on the delivery, outcomes and what the long-term benefits of your project would be.

Can you give us an example of how we might improve Service children's learning environment, without incurring capital cost?

Investment in play and active play facilities does not align with the Trusts definition of capital expenditure. That is, we don't consider play equipment and similar items to be capital expenditure. Capital costs typically entail big enhancements and changes to your building (i.e. a new roof) that would not be eligible under this grant. There is a section in our guidance that refers to capital costs.

Your application should be targeted to the needs of Service children. It is important to look at the outcomes that are provided within the guidance.

We are a Charity organisation that does not operate as an Early Year setting, but we work with Service families and their children aged 0-5 years. Are we eligible to apply?

As per the programme guidance, to be eligible under this programme you must be one of the following:

An early childhood education and childcare provider operating where Armed Forces families live or work. Your setting must offer group-based childcare, and have 50% of Service children (unless applying as a cluster) on roll as a minimum and be registered with, and inspected by, one of the following:

- Ofsted (England),
- Care Inspectorate (Scotland),
- Care Inspectorate (Wales)
- Early Years Teams within Health and Social Care Trusts (Northern Ireland)

A local authority that wishes to supply specific training to early childhood education and childcare providers supporting Service children aged 0-5 years.

An appropriately constituted organisation (see the guidance for full details) which provides training for setting staff to support Service children.

Please do refer to the eligibility criteria within the programme guidance.

Will the Trust share information about the projects they fund under this programme?

Yes, we will. We do this by featuring case studies from projects within the programme, in conjunction with publishing award announcements and articles on our website which will be available within our news section on Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust website. We also have a dedicated newsletter for AF3 projects, where you will find more information on the above alongside our Trust newsletter. [You can sign up by following the link](#)

What do you mean by 'better learning environment'?

When we award grants, we value your perspective and insights. While not explicitly outlined, this allows you to articulate why your idea will lead to improvement. Your application should provide the evidence supporting how your idea will enhance the current situation.

How does the Trust give feedback?

If you are unsuccessful in a round, we will email you with the assessment of your application that was shown to the Trustees. This often includes what would have made your application a better fit to the programme guidance, aims and outcomes.

If you apply in the first round and you're successful in the first round, can you also apply in the second round?

Yes, you can; however, priority will be given to those not awarded in round one. Unless you have identified an emerging need.

Is the Trust going to be running this programme again, next year?

We are guided by the priorities of the Armed Forces Families Team and the Families Strategy. We do not know at this time what that will look like for 2025/26.

Can we send our applications to the Trust for feedback prior to the deadline?

We can't comment on proposals, or elements of proposals, ahead of receiving an application. It wouldn't be fair on the applicant as we don't have the whole picture, or on the other applicants as this is a competitive funding programme. We must ensure it remains fair and equitable for all.

If we are looking at improving outside space, can we apply using the better learning outcome if we rent from DIO (Defence Infrastructure Organisation)?

Yes. However, DIO should not need to be involved at all in your project, either for permissions or undertaking work - you should seek external suppliers. Please refer to the programme guidance for full eligibility criteria.

If you received a grant last year for something that is a good fit, are you eligible to apply again?

Yes; however, we may prioritise organisations which have not previously received a grant under the Early Years programme. Please ensure you read the 24/25 programme guidance before applying to ensure your project meets the programme outcomes.

The application asks for permissions, would this still include endorsement from establishments, if so, can providers allow sufficient time for establishments to support applications?

Permissions look slightly different from 23/24. We do not need a CO (Commanding Officer) endorsement for your project. We do, however, expect you to ensure you are compliant with your tenancy and any landlord restrictions.

Watch the Early Years webinar by clicking on the following link –

[Key insights from our Early Years webinar : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust](#)