

 THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST


Ministry
of Defence

Armed Forces Families Fund

Early Years Programme

Lunch & Learn webinar

Monday 17 March 2025



Under the Early Years programme we want to help **armed forces families access good quality early childhood education and childcare provision** close to where they are living or serving.

We'll award grants on behalf of the **MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund**



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Need to know...

- ➔ Your project must support service children **aged birth to five** and not yet in primary school education
- ➔ Grants of between £5,000 and £80,000 are available for projects up to 2 years
- ➔ R1 application deadline: 12 noon 4 June 2025
R2 application deadline 12 noon 8 October 2025
- ➔ We'll expect the benefits from your project to be focused on meeting the needs of children from **armed forces families**. Benefits to other children should be **incidental**

Please read the Programme Guidance
before applying



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Who can apply?

1 Early childhood education and childcare providers operating where armed forces families live or work.

Your setting must offer group-based childcare and have 50% service children (unless applying as a cluster) on roll as a minimum.

You must 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).

2 Local authorities



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There are four routes to apply:



1

Settings with
**less than 50%
service children**
on roll applying
as a cluster

2

Settings with
**more than 50%
service children**
on roll applying
as a cluster

3

Settings with
more than 50%
service children
on roll applying
as a **single
setting**

4

Applying as a
local authority



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Application routes:

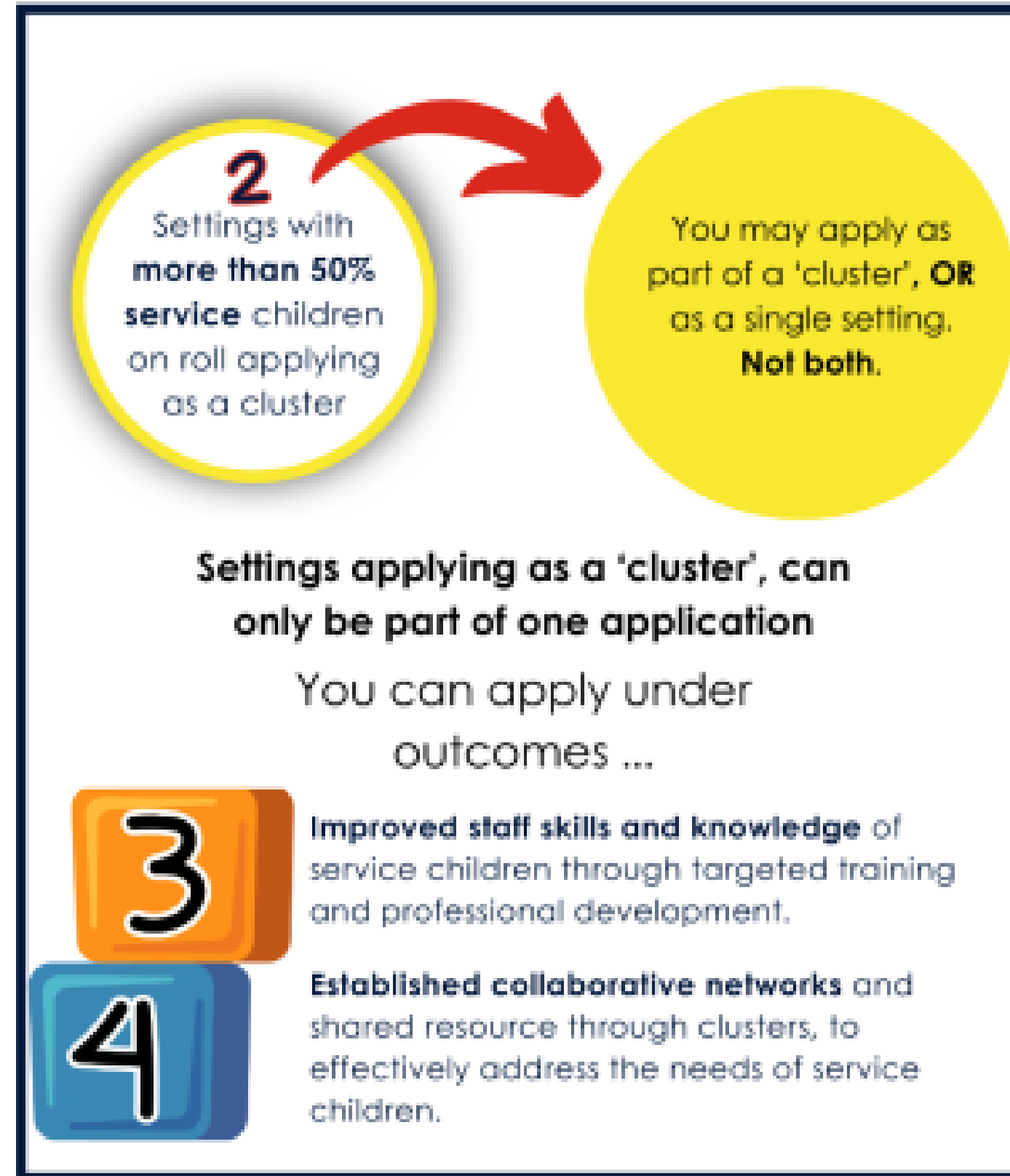


For cluster applications one childcare setting will need to be the lead applicant; you can find more detail in the programme guidance

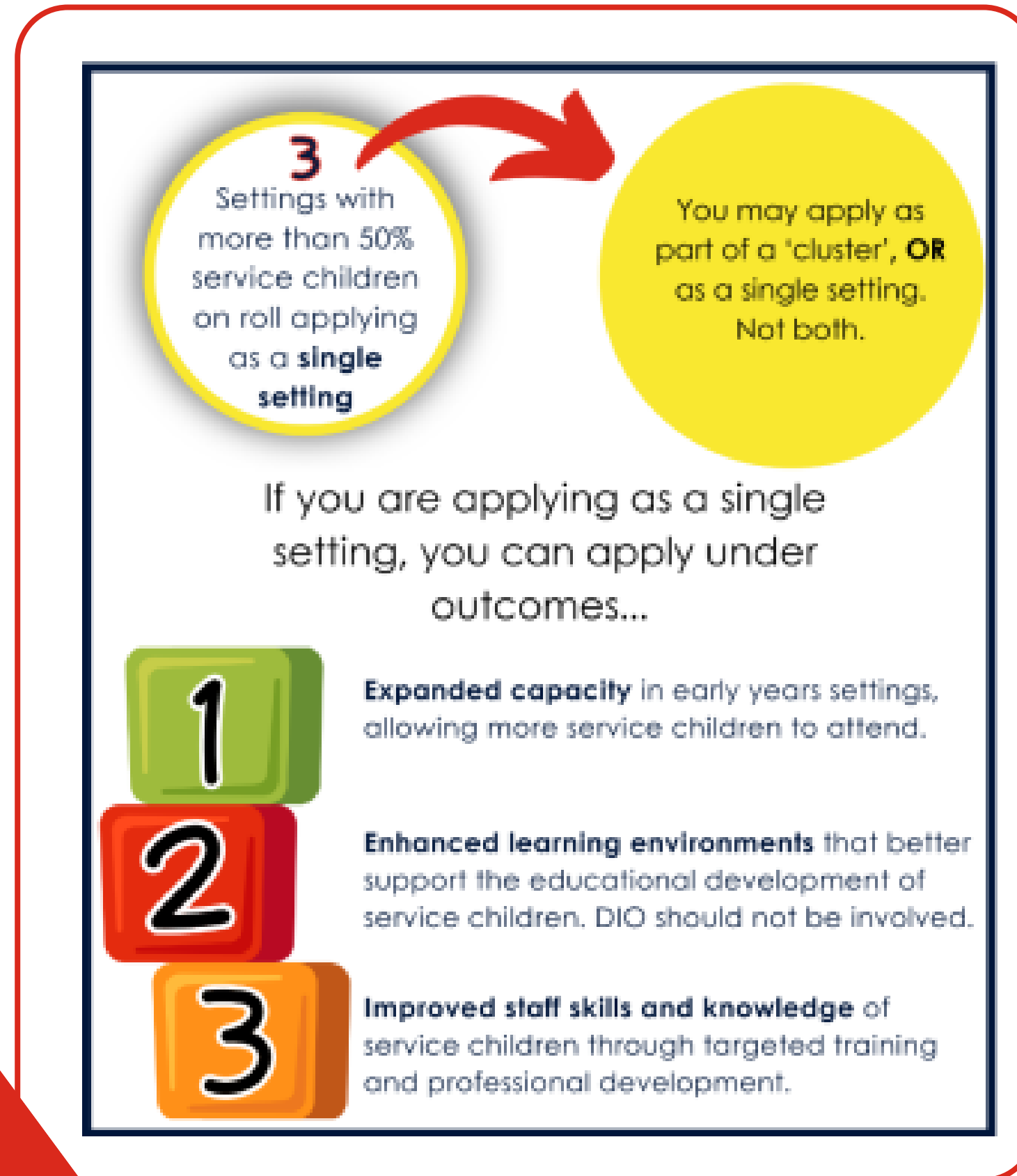


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Application routes:



Application routes:



DIO should **not** need to be involved at all in your project, either for permissions or undertaking work.



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Application routes:



4

Applying as a
local authority

If you are applying as a local authority, you can apply under outcomes...

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.

4

Established collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.



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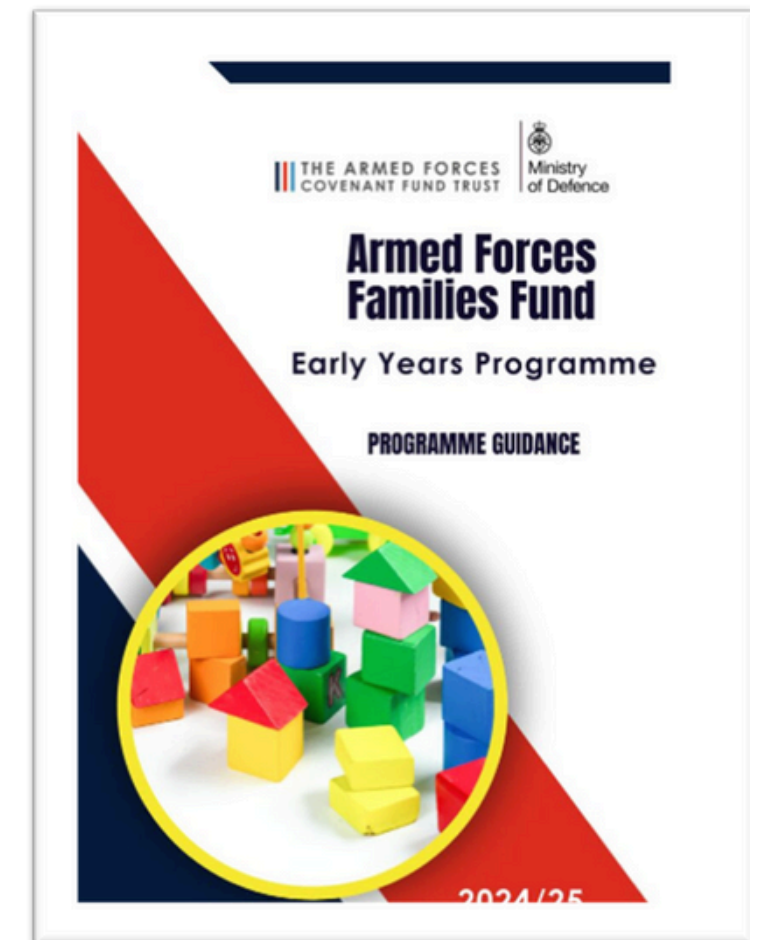
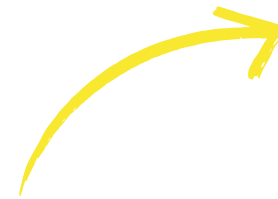
Application Deadlines

There are two application deadlines:

If you apply by **midday on 4 June 2025**, you'll receive a **decision** before the end of **August 2025**

If you apply by **midday 8 October 2025**, you'll receive a **decision** before the end of **December 2025**

The Trust reserves the right to reject any late applications more detail at :
covenantfund.org.uk/late-application-policy/



Please refer to the programme guidance for full details:
covenantfund.org.uk



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Depending on your application route, you can apply for projects meeting different **outcomes**.



- 1** **Expanded capacity** in early years settings, allowing more service children to attend.
- 2** **Enhanced learning environments** that better support the educational development of service children. DIO should not be involved.
- 3** **Improved staff skills and knowledge** of service children through targeted training and professional development.
- 4** **Established collaborative networks** and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.



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What do we mean by outcomes?

Programme outcomes refer to the specific, measurable improvements that projects should address to enable the programme meet its aims.

Your project will need to meet at least one of these four outcomes:

1

Expanded capacity in early years settings, allowing more service children to attend.

2

Enhanced learning environments that better support the educational development of service children. DIO should not be involved.

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.

4

Established collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.



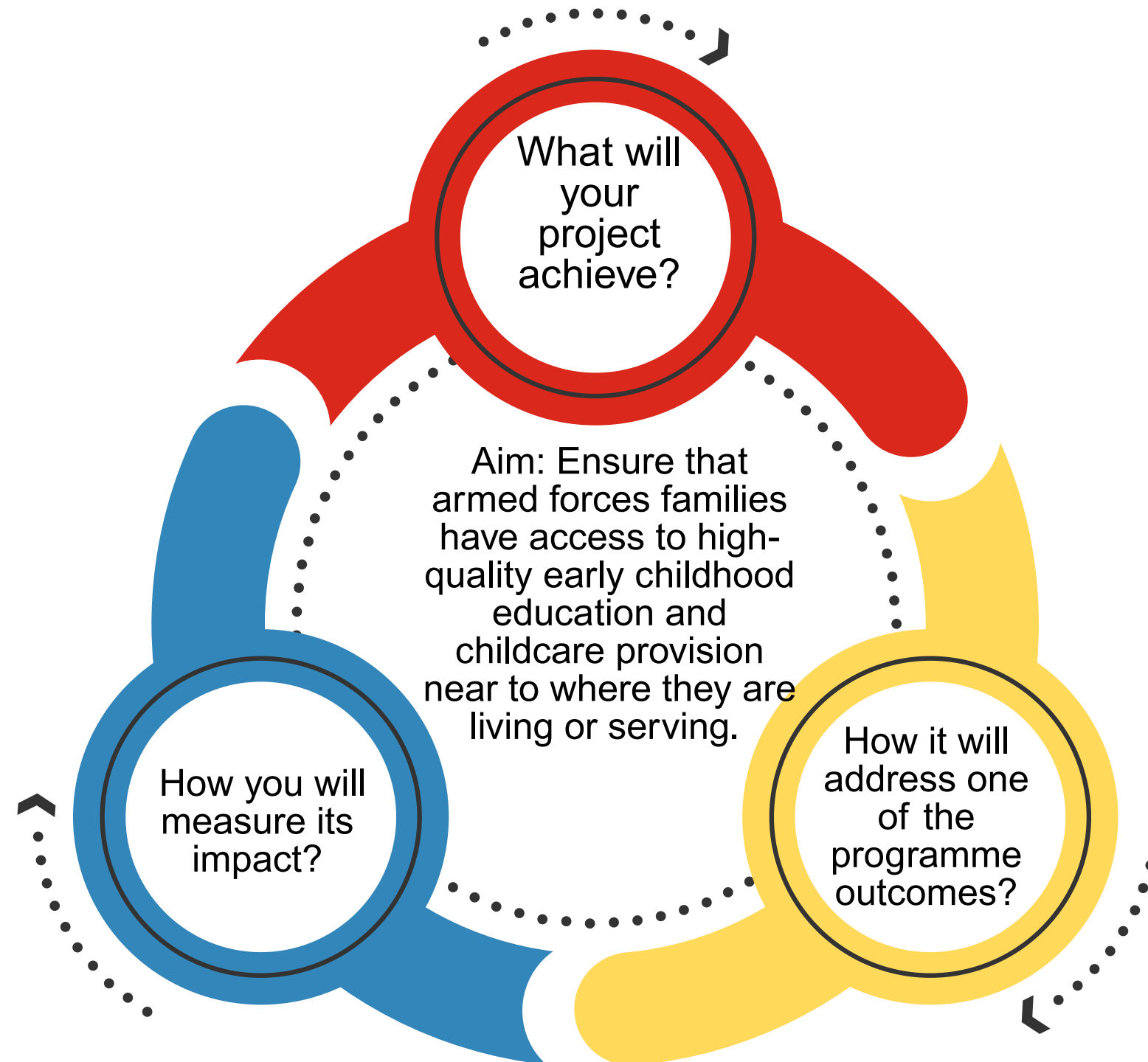
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What do we mean by outcomes?

Programme outcomes refer to the specific, measurable improvements that projects should address to enable the programme to meet its aims.



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1
Settings with
**less than 50%
service children**
on roll applying
as a cluster

You may **only apply
as part of a 'cluster'**,
working with two or
more settings in your
area, who also have
small numbers of
service children.

Settings applying as a 'cluster', can only be part of one application

You can apply under outcomes:

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children
through targeted training and professional development.

4

Established collaborative networks and
shared resource through clusters, to
effectively address the needs of service
children.



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1

Settings with
less than 50%
service children
on roll applying
as a cluster



Example: Three nurseries, each with fewer than 50% of children from service families on roll, will collaborate on a project aimed at **enhancing early literacy and numeracy skills while also supporting the personal, social, and emotional development of service children.**

The project will prioritise specialist staff training to **deepen understanding of the unique needs of young service children.** A peripatetic Armed Forces Early Years Support Worker will oversee the implementation of the project across all three nurseries, **ensuring consistent support and tailored learning experiences.**

Project Examples

(these are for illustrative purposes only and contained in the programme guidance)



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2

Settings with
more than 50%
service children
on roll **applying**
as a cluster

You may apply as
part of a 'cluster', **OR**
as a single setting.
Not both.

Settings applying as a 'cluster', can only be part of one application

You can apply under outcomes:

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children
through targeted training and professional development.

4

Established collaborative networks and
shared resource through clusters, to
effectively address the needs of service
children.



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2

Settings with
more than 50%
service children
on roll **applying**
as a cluster

Example: Four nurseries, each with more than 50% of children from service families, will collaborate on a project aimed at **enhancing the personal, social, and emotional development of service children.**

The project will include **specialist staff training** to deepen understanding of the unique needs of young service children. A peripatetic Armed Forces Early Years Support Navigator will oversee the implementation of the project, across all four nurseries, **ensuring consistent support, tailored learning experiences, and emotional well-being initiatives.**

Regular networking meetings between the settings will encourage collaboration, share best practices, and ensure the project is effective in supporting the needs of young service children.

Project Examples

(these are for illustrative purposes only and contained in the programme guidance)



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3

Settings with **more than 50%** service children on roll applying as a **single setting**

You may apply as part of a 'cluster', **OR** as a single setting.
Not both.

You can apply under outcomes:

1

Expanded capacity in early years settings, allowing more service children to attend.

2

Enhanced learning environments that better support the educational development of service children. DIO should not be involved.

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.



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3

Settings with
more than 50%
service children
on roll applying
as a **single
setting**



Example: A nursery located near an armed forces base has a high proportion (70%) of children from service families, where parents frequently experience deployments. Based on parental feedback and informal assessments, the nursery has identified that some children would benefit from **additional support to promote their personal, social, and emotional development in response to recent parental deployments.**

To enhance staff knowledge and understanding of the unique needs of young children from armed forces families, the nursery is applying for funding to provide **specialist training**. This training will enable the development of a service-child-centred support programme, fostering **emotional resilience, confidence, and secure relationships**. As part of this initiative, the nursery will introduce a deployment role-play area, allowing children to explore and process their experiences through imaginative and collaborative play.

Project Examples

(these are for illustrative purposes only and contained in the programme guidance)



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You can apply under outcomes:

4

Applying as a
local authority

3

Improved staff skills and knowledge of service children through targeted training and professional development.

4

Established collaborative networks and shared resource through clusters, to effectively address the needs of service children.

Example: A local authority applies for a project which aims to enhance early years support for service children across **multiple settings** by improving **staff training and introducing a dedicated early years support worker**.

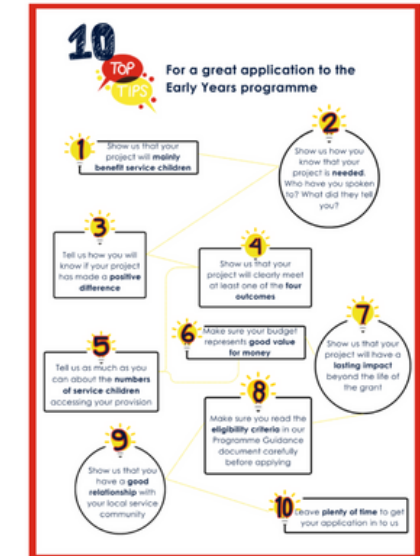
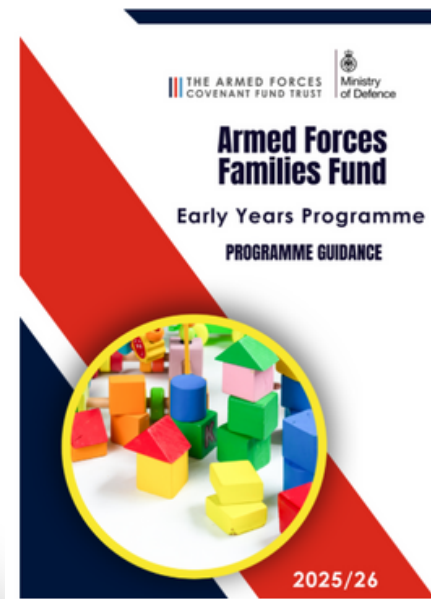
The project will **strengthen provision** for young children from armed forces families, particularly in personal, social, and emotional development, early literacy, and numeracy.



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Guidance and resources

Before making your application to this programme, we strongly recommend you use the helpful resources below to ensure you make the best application you can.



Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme 2025-26 : Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust



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[SUBSCRIBE](#)



Making a great application to Early Years 2025

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The Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years programme 2025/26

Completing your application

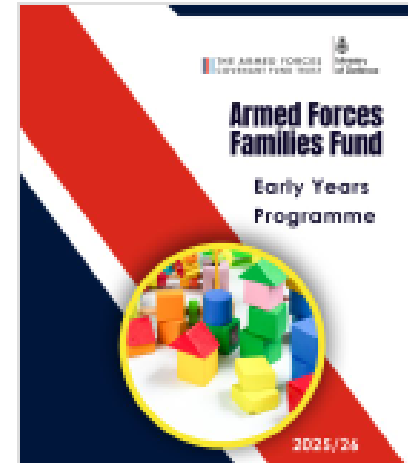
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Resources

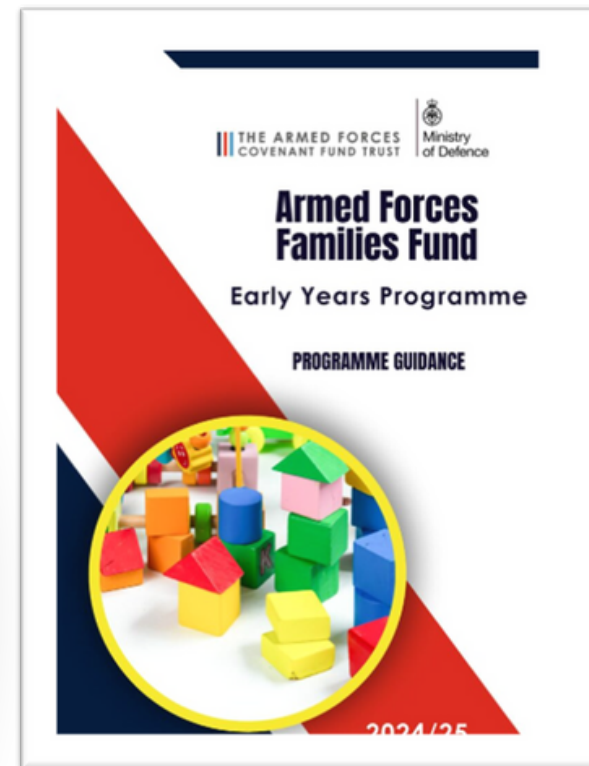


Armed Forces Families Fund: Early Years programme 2025-26

Grants between £5,000 and £80,000 on behalf of the MOD's Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years...

Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust /

<https://covenantfund.org.uk/programme/armed-forces-families-fund-early-years-programme-2024-25/>



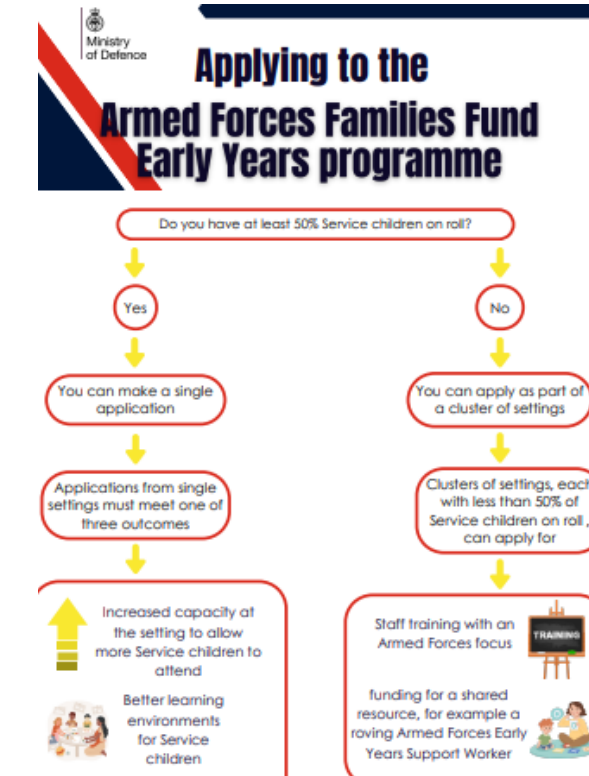
Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years Programme

PROGRAMME GUIDANCE



Armed Forces Families Fund Early Years Programme

FAQs



Top Tips for a good application

10



For a great application to the
Early Years programme



Show us that your project will **mainly benefit service children**



Show us how you know that your project is **needed**. Who have you spoken to? What did they tell you?



Tell us how you will know if your project has made a **positive difference**



Show us that your project will clearly meet at least one of the **four outcomes**



Tell us as much as you can about the **numbers of service children** accessing your provision



Make sure your budget represents **good value for money**



Show us that your project will have a **lasting impact** beyond the life of the grant



Make sure you read the **eligibility criteria** in our Programme Guidance document carefully before applying



Show us that you have a **good relationship** with your local service community



Leave **plenty of time** to get your application in to us



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Top Tips for a good application

Please do:

- ➔ Read the programme guidance and supporting resources
- ➔ Leave plenty of time to submit your application
- ➔ Ensure that you tell us clearly what is needed, why and how you will ensure that the project will be successful.



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Any Questions?



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