

What do you do if you have a dependant with a special need or disability whilst serving in the Army

A 'dependant' is (i) any adult who is a spouse or civil partner in a legal relationship with a serving soldier, and (ii) any children, including stepchildren and adopted children of either of the spouses. The upper age limit for a dependant child¹ does not apply to any child who is physically or mentally incapable of supporting itself.

The definition of a special need or disability with regard to the Army is someone who requires any form of additional support, be that educational, physical, mental, health or emotional, for either the long or short term.

Under the Army General Administrative Instruction (AGAI) 108 it is compulsory for a Service person to register a dependant with a special need. This notifies the chain of command of the requirement for additional support through unit administrative procedures, and this information will be included in the Service person's record of service. Service personnel are also encouraged to voluntarily notify the chain of command of dependants who are awaiting professional diagnosis or clarification of a disability.

The career of the soldier, wherever possible, should not be adversely affected by having a dependant with a special need. However, Queen's Regulations state that a soldier must still be able to meet the requirements of the Army; they must be available for worldwide deployment or posting at any time.

Service personnel with special needs dependants and who are considering an overseas posting (including Northern Ireland) need to consult G1 branches in the overseas command. In order to establish whether the additional needs can be met on a foreign posting, an assessment of the family's need must be conducted. If the service person does not inform the overseas command of additional family needs and adequate support is not available, the family could be returned to the UK on arrival and at their own expense.

Service personnel with special needs dependants should still be considered for promotion, career courses and advancement in the same way as other service personnel.

Additionally, the fact that a Service person has a special needs dependant should not be reflected in their individual confidential report, and they ought to be counselled annually by their Commanding Officer.

If your child has a special educational need, it is best practice to register them with CEAS (Children's Education Advisory Service) 01980 618244 as they will be able to liaise with the appropriate Manning and Career Management (MCM) Division - postings - to ensure that the child's educational needs can be met in future postings.

¹ A child is classed as dependant up to the age of 18 or until they have completed full time education.