Lat month, Remembrance Day provided an opportunity to pay tribute to the armed forces and their families. The British military comprises of 1458,500 personnel distributed within the Navy, Armed and Air Force (Ministry of Defence 2020). Approximately 54% of service personnel are married or in a civil partnership and 79% of service families have children (Ministry of Defense 2019).

Families can offer considerable support to those serving but may experience challenges due to separation; sudden postings and unanticipated changes due to national and international developments (Baverstock 2016). This can cause feelings of social isolation, additional caring responsibilities, stress and anxiety (NHS 2018).

The Armed Force Covenant (Ministry of Defense 2014) identifies the obligations from the Government, Nation and Armed Forces to ensure those within the Armed Forces community including their families are not disadvantaged due to their service.

Healthcare services for military families are available via the NHS and each Armed force possess their own support services. These include federation support services which can offer confidential advice in relation to housing, spouse employment, education and childcare, financial and family matters (AFF 2020, NFF 2020, RAF-FF 2020). When posted abroad the availability of health and support services can vary according to the location, the Ministry of Defense possess a system for assessing the support of family members prior to the move being confirmed (Public Health England 2015).

Service Personnel are required to inform their chain of command if they have a family member with additional needs (NHS 218). Service children with additional needs are required to register with the Children’s Education Advisory Service who can assist when relocating. If moving overseas a Ministry of Defense Assessment of Supportability Overseas will be undertaken to ensure all needs can be met (Ministry of Defense 2015).

When relocating the family will be responsible for informing and registering with local GP’s, dentist, opticians, schools and any other individual service needs. This will subsequently provide referrals to health visiting and school nursing as required. The Armed Force Covenant (Ministry of Defense 2014) identifies that positions on healthcare waiting lists should be maintained when relocating due to service postings.

Health visitors have a crucial role in identifying children of military families, assisting to improve health outcomes, particularly health and emotional wellbeing (Public Health England 2015). It is important that health visitors work together with military and welfare services to breakdown any barriers and ensure that service personnel’s families are not at a disadvantage.

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