

## THE RESIDENTIAL SUPPORT SCHEME OFFERS HELP WITH THE COSTS OF STUDYING AWAY FROM HOME – THIS NOTE HIGHLIGHTS AN EXEMPTION TO THE NORMAL APPLICATION CRITERIA FOR ARMED FORCES FAMILIES

The Residential Support Scheme helps pay the costs of studying away from home. An amendment has been made to overcome disadvantage to Service families

If you are Serving Overseas or recently returned from an overseas location, the eligibility criteria for a Government scheme that could help with the costs of studying away from home have been changed to prevent disadvantage to Service dependents.

Using the Armed Forces Covenant principles of 'no disadvantage' compared to other citizens the MOD has successfully worked together with Department for Education (DfE) and the Department for Business Innovations and Skills (BIS) to agree a policy change to the Residential Support Scheme.

The scheme, which is owned by the Department for Education (16-18 year olds) and Business Innovation Skills (19+ year olds) and managed by the Young People Learning Agency, provides help with the accommodation costs of learners aged 16 and over, who need to live away from home to study because their course is not available locally.

One of the normal conditions of the Scheme is that applicants must ordinarily be resident in England and have lived in England for the three years preceding the start of the course. This was a particular problem for Armed Forces family members living overseas as they are more likely to need to access the Scheme because they are less likely to find their chosen course available to them locally in the overseas location.

The Scheme's eligibility criteria has now been amended so that dependents of Armed Forces Personnel serving abroad will now be exempt from this residency requirement. This new Armed Forces Residency exemption criteria for Residential Support Scheme will apply to new applications being made for RSS from January 12.

We are very pleased that the Department for Education and the Department of Business Innovation Skills, who fund this scheme, have taken account of the Armed Forces Covenant and have agreed to add an exemption to the requirement for residency in England for members of Service families who are or have lived overseas because of their Service connection.

Over 20,000 personnel are currently serving overseas, many of whom will have dependants considering undertaking training in England and so this is an important change in policy. The Residential Support Scheme can provide help towards residential living costs of up to £3,458 per year (£4,079 in the London area).

The future of the scheme beyond 2012/13 is subject to review by DfE and BIS who are currently reviewing learner support arrangements to deliver residential support in the future, however the principal of no disadvantage for Service families overseas has now been accepted and MOD will continue to seek measures to avoid disadvantage should the scheme be replaced in future.

## **Eligibility**

The policy change will exempt students whose parent(s), or spouse or civil partner are serving in the Armed Forces from the current RSS residency criteria which requires students to be an ordinary resident in England and to have lived in England for the three years preceding the start of the course. For the other criteria and further details about the Scheme, please see the *direct.gov* website at the link at the bottom of this page.

## **How to Apply**

Details on how to apply to the Scheme can be found at the *direct.gov* website at the link at the bottom of this page or by calling the Learner Support helpline on 0800 121 8989 to ask for an Application Pack.

Students to whom the new Armed Forces Residential Support Scheme exemption will apply, should include a letter from the Service person's unit with their application, to confirm that their parent, spouse or civil partner is in the Armed Forces and is serving abroad, or has served abroad in the last 3 years. The Learner Support Service, who administers Scheme, will request this from the student if it is not initially supplied. In order to access Scheme students must be undertaking provision which is not available locally and this will be checked by the Learner Support Service before the application is approved.

For further information of the Residential Support Scheme follow the following link:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/14To19/MoneyToLearn/ExtraHelp/DG066986>