

Children of British military personnel to get free childcare^[1]

The scheme will be rolled out across the country next year at a cost of up to £150m annually and benefiting up to 44,000 children.

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Source: Sky News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 7 Jul 2020

AVAILABILITY

Access online^[2]

EXCERPTS

The children of British military personnel will receive free childcare, the defence secretary has announced, in an attempt to modernise working conditions after recent criticism that the armed forces are not inclusive.

From September, breakfast and after-school clubs will be offered to service children between four and 11 years old.

The first pilots will begin at RAF High Wycombe and RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire, before the scheme is rolled out across the country through 2021.

It will cost up to £150m a year and benefit up to 44,000 children - it fulfils an election manifesto pledge made by the Conservative Party.

It is hoped that it will make the armed forces a more attractive career and easier for those serving on operations abroad.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace told Sky News: "We think it's a really important commitment to our workforce because at the heart of our armed forces are the people and so we recognise what they've done in COVID, we recognise what they do around the world to keep us safe and looking after their families while they're doing it is something that I think is really important.

"I am determined to make the armed forces a more modern, inclusive and family-friendly employer, in order to improve the working environment for retention of all personnel but also to encourage more talented women to pursue long and fulfilling careers in uniform."

Veterans minister Johnny Mercer, who has just become a father for the third time, said: "I know from first-hand experience that, while service life is hugely rewarding, it isn't without its challenges when it comes to juggling the demands of family life.

"It is only right that those who continue to do extraordinary work on behalf of the country are recognised and rewarded, and I'm pleased we're continuing to honour our commitment to our hard-working personnel so they receive the right support to care for loved ones."

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