

UP & CLOSE PERSONNEL



The RAF Families Federation's Dawn McCafferty shares some of their casework

Dear Families Federation...

I HAVE just moved, yet again, as a result of my husband's posting and have been asked to listen to my son's class read for half an hour each week. I gladly said yes. I expected to fill in yet another Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) form, but did not expect what happened next.

Because we had been living in America for three years on a posting, I have to have an extended check with the USA. I now have to obtain a "certificate of good conduct" from the FBI and have my fingerprints taken at a local police station or Scotland Yard so they can check my criminal record with the USA.

I find this yet another hurdle to overcome for Forces Families; I'm not even applying for a paid job. While I can understand that the safety of the children is paramount, I find it unbelievably frustrating and a complete waste of resources and time. The certificate is going to take about 10 weeks to come through. By this time, my family could well be posted again, and I will have to go through all this yet again, if I decide to help out at the next school. I have a previous CRB certificate obtained before I moved here from our last RAF station and did not have to have the extended check for the USA.

Rant and rave over, but still a little hacked off.
An exasperated wife

Dear Mrs A....

HAVING read your comments, we are concerned that the information you have been given regarding 'extended checks' following an overseas posting is not quite accurate and seek your permission to elevate your concerns to the Service Personnel Command Paper (SPCP) team and ask them to investigate.

This type of issue, and the impact that it has on Service family life, forms a key part of our ongoing work with the SPCP which seeks to ensure that Service personnel and their families are not disadvantaged by

virtue of the fact that they are part of the Armed Forces.

The outcome

The SPCP team has been in discussions with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and the county council concerned, regarding this case on our behalf.

It seems there is existing policy for Service personnel and their families who have served overseas and need Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks when they return to the UK.

An extract from the *Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in*



READING TIME: Photograph: With kind permission of the Children's Education Advisory Service

Education Statutory Guidance states:

"Forces Staff and their Families - All Service Personnel are subject at all times to the Service Discipline Acts (SDA) as are their families and UK-based civilians (UKBC) when based or employed overseas.

All convictions under the Military Criminal Justice System for recordable offences committed by Service personnel (in the UK and overseas) or civilians subject to the Service Discipline Acts (overseas only) are recorded on the UK Civilian Police National Computer. They are available to CRB as part of their routine checks.

In addition, CRB has access to information held at the Service Police Crime Bureau (SPCB) in relation to serving or former members of the Armed Forces".

So what does this mean for Service Families?

If you are applying for a CRB check and

have lived overseas because of a Service posting, make sure you let the relevant school or organisation know that you are part of a military family and are therefore exempt from the extended CRB checks.

Chairman's Note

Although this is a positive outcome for families who have lived overseas, it still does not address the issue of the portability of CRB checks within the UK.

The current policy states that you need to apply for a new CRB check every time you move location and are working with, or volunteer to support, children or vulnerable adults.

Organisations are able to accept a previous CRB check but rarely do. The MoD and Home Office are looking at the issue of CRB portability and we will keep you informed of any developments.

● If you have been affected by this issue, or find yourself in a similar situation, please speak to one of the Families Federation team on 01780 781650 or go to the website at www.raf-ff.org.uk