

UP & CLOSE PERSONNEL



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

Dear Families Federation...

I WOULD like to draw other families' attention to the fact that my family and I went through a dreadfully stressful period owing to a simple misunderstanding of the rules governing Children's Education Allowance (Board).

Having made the difficult decision to place our two children in boarding school to provide them with a stable education, we were well aware that we were required to be mobile to qualify for the allowance.

We applied for Service Families Accommodation (SFA) at my new duty unit but were put on a waiting list as there was no SFA available. We were subsequently offered Substitute SFA (SSFA) but decided to hold out for SFA as we'd had a very bad experience in SSFA in a previous tour.

When we turned down the SSFA, we didn't realise that this was viewed the same as turning down SFA and our continuing entitlement to CEA (Board) would be reviewed as we were now considered to be 'voluntarily separated'.

Having reviewed our entitlement, we were advised that we would have to repay the CEA (Board) for the two children for the previous term and, because by now we were into another term, that payment was also due, plus we faced potentially giving a term's notice to the school. In total, we faced a petrifying potential bill in excess of £30,000, an amount that caused many sleepless nights.

Having discovered our mistake in not accepting the SSFA, we immediately agreed to accept SSFA to ensure mobility but, as (bad) luck would have it, in the interim period I had been re-assigned and now had less than six months to serve at my current unit, meaning I was no longer eligible for SFA or SSFA at that unit.

I appealed against the recovery of the CEA (Board) and sought continuing entitlement but my case was rejected.

I then came to the RAF Families Federation for advice. I cannot thank you enough for your support and guidance throughout. I received a call this afternoon from WO PSF informing me that my second appeal had been successful and that the RAF would honour CEA funding.

So my children remain in their school and my wife and I remain committed to 'following the flag' for this and all subsequent tours. I cannot help but feel that without your support, the outcome would have been very different. Saying 'thank you' doesn't quite do justice to the situation.

Sqn Ldr X

'A simple misunderstanding of the rules and I nearly lost my Children's Education Allowance (Board)'...

BOARDING:
Strict rules apply to allowances



Dear Sqn Ldr X...

THANK you for bringing your case to our attention and for allowing us to share your story with other families. We were pleased to be able to support you and your family during this very worrying time and to see your case resolved satisfactorily.

We have received several other cases from serving personnel caught up in the complex regulations determining entitlement to CEA (Board) and, given the sums involved, any appeal involves

a great deal of personal stress for those concerned.

While we appreciate that the allowance is an extremely expensive one and must therefore be subject to very close scrutiny, we believe that there is room for a flexible interpretation of the rules when there is clearly a genuine case of misunderstanding on the part of a claimant, particularly if others in authority failed to identify errors at the time, and there is no evidence of any deliberate intent to claim an allowance to which the individual was not entitled.

● 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