

Chief Executive Officer

Appointment Brief

November 2026

Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation (AFF), an independent charity that provides trusted advice, champions Army families, and influences policy to improve their lives here in the UK and overseas.

Army life brings pride, belonging, and opportunity, alongside frequent moves, separation, and uncertainty. Service can affect housing, education, employment, healthcare, and financial wellbeing. There is no typical Army family. Our community includes people from varied and diverse backgrounds and circumstances, living across the UK and overseas.

Our legitimacy stems from the trust Army families place in us. We combine specialist advice with evidence-informed advocacy, helping families address immediate difficulties, while collaborating with the Army, the Ministry of Defence and other partners to secure wider change. Protecting that trust and independence will be central to this role.

We are seeking a Chief Executive who can help us answer a practical question: how can AFF best serve the Army family of the future? Working with our Trustees and staff, you will be tasked with developing our strategic direction, making clear choices about priorities and investment, and enabling our team to deliver them.

You will be a credible and influential ambassador, able to navigate complex relationships and champion the interests of Army families. Internally, you will lead with empathy and integrity, empower colleagues, and draw on their specialist expertise.

Above all, you will put Army families at the heart of every decision, combining strategic ambition with the courage to lead change while protecting AFF's independence, trust and values.

Abigail Boyle, Chair



Army Families Federation



About AFF

Founded in 1982, we work to ensure all Army personnel and their families are valued and can live well.

We occupy a distinctive position between the families we support and the organisations whose decisions affect them. Families come to us for information, advice and understanding. The Army, the Ministry of Defence, the government and other stakeholders look to us for evidence on the realities of family life and the changes that would make a positive difference.

Our independence is essential. It enables us to raise difficult issues, represent experiences that might otherwise go unheard, and act as a constructive critical friend. We work through relationships and informed challenges, always keeping the interests of Army personnel and their families at the centre of our approach.

Army families have varied structures, circumstances and needs, whether based in the UK or overseas. Our support must reflect the different ways that mobility, deployment and service affect family life.

Our organisational model brings together specialist advice, engagement, communications, policy influence and operational support, underpinned by colleagues whose professional expertise and understanding of Army life are central to our effectiveness. Their knowledge helps us recognise how challenges related to housing, education, employment, healthcare, immigration, and family circumstances intersect across jurisdictions and policy environments. This expertise allows us to respond to individual needs, identify wider issues and influence meaningful change. Combined with the trust of Army families, it gives AFF its distinctive voice and credibility.

In recent years, we have also invested in systems, accessibility, impact measurement, and ways of engaging families. These foundations give us the scope to strengthen our services, deepen our understanding of unmet need, and communicate our contribution more convincingly.

Support and Services

Army service shapes the lives of whole families. At the Army Families Federation, we help them navigate challenges and ensure their voices reach those with the power to make life better.

We combine trusted specialist advice with independent advocacy, linking the problems families face today to opportunities for lasting change. Whether an issue affects a single household or our wider community, we listen, provide guidance and make the case for improvement.

Our expertise spans the broad range of issues affecting Army families - housing, money and allowances, health and additional needs, education and childcare, employment and training, family life, and Foreign and Commonwealth matters. These challenges rarely occur in isolation: one posting can disrupt a partner's career, a child's schooling, healthcare, and household finances.

Our enquiry service connects families with people who understand these complexities. We explain options, help families navigate often complex and unfamiliar systems, and, where appropriate, direct them to other organisations. For non-UK personnel and families, our immigration expertise, self-help videos, and translated resources make complex requirements more accessible.

Through our website, telephone support, digital channels and Army&You magazine, we make reliable information accessible. Roadshows and AFF&You activities take us directly into communities, creating opportunities to hear concerns and connect families with support.

We also help families navigate overseas assignments, from preparation to returning home, working with partners across the Armed Forces community.

Crucially, every enquiry can contribute to something bigger. Alongside surveys and engagement, families' experiences reveal recurring barriers and emerging pressures. We bring that evidence to the Army, the Ministry of Defence, policymakers and service providers, informing consultations, parliamentary scrutiny and practical improvements.

Housing



Employment and Training



Our Impact

We help people navigate immediate challenges while ensuring their voices and experience inform and influence the policies and services affecting the wider Army community.

During 2024/25, we answered more than 6,700 enquiries, providing specialist guidance on issues that can affect a family's security, stability and wellbeing. From immigration uncertainty and housing difficulties to financial pressures, our expertise helps families understand their options and take informed next steps.

Foreign and Commonwealth matters accounted for 53 per cent of enquiries, housing for 16 per cent, and money and allowances for 12 per cent. Behind each enquiry is a family facing decisions that matter and an opportunity to identify where better support or clearer policy is needed.

Our influence extends beyond those who contact us directly. Our website receives nearly 400,000 views per year, with each edition of Army&You magazine reaching an average of 35,000 families. These channels put trusted information within reach, helping families navigate Army life wherever they are based.

We also bring their experiences into conversations where change becomes possible. Our evidence informed parliamentary committee submissions and government consultations, covering issues including partner employment, Army pay, childcare and school fees.

By connecting individual experiences with wider patterns, we bring visibility to the impact on families of policy and, where required, strengthen the case for improvement. Our independence enables us to ask difficult questions while maintaining constructive relationships with those responsible for delivering change.

We are continuing to strengthen how we measure outcomes so we can more clearly show what improves for families and where further action is needed.

army families federation

Financial Strength and Sustainability

AFF enters its next phase with established funding relationships and a foundation of financial resilience, but faces an increasingly challenging funding environment that demands careful stewardship, strategic investment and new approaches to securing sustainable resources.

Support from the Ministry of Defence and Army Central Fund underpins our work, complemented by project funding from respected Armed Forces charities and other partners. These relationships reflect confidence in our expertise and our ability to respond to families' needs.

We are investing in systems, evidence gathering and impact measurement to strengthen delivery and demonstrate the difference we make. Our success in securing funding for collaborative overseas support also shows the potential to attract investment through compelling, evidence-led proposals.

We want to strengthen financial sustainability by developing new sources of strategic funding. With core funding under sustained pressure, there is an opportunity to build relationships with charitable trusts, foundations and institutional partners capable of supporting programmes, innovation and organisational development.

Working with Trustees and senior colleagues, our next Chief Executive will be tasked with connecting financial stewardship with purposeful growth, building a persuasive case for strategic investment and directing resources towards measurable benefits for Army families. This will require a clear understanding of financial performance, long-term sustainability, organisational capacity and the balance between current services and future investment.



Health



Our Future Ambitions

We want to remain a trusted and influential voice for Army families, responding to their changing needs and circumstances.

Strategy
Working with Trustees and colleagues, our Chief Executive will set investment priorities, develop services and adapt activities, guided by families' needs, evidence of impact and available resources.

Reach
We want to engage more Army families, particularly those harder to reach, including Reservist, unmarried and geographically dispersed families, and enjoy a closer engagement with units.

Modernisation
We will harness technology, data, and artificial intelligence to improve efficiency, accessibility, and effectiveness, complementing, but not replacing, the personal engagement families value.

People
We will strengthen collaboration across our dispersed organisation by valuing expertise, empowering colleagues, and establishing shared priorities.

Influence
We want to anticipate challenges rather than respond to them. Combining research, specialist knowledge and policy expertise will help us identify emerging issues, develop coordinated responses and strengthen our influence through wider collaboration.

Financial
We will maintain core funders' confidence while diversifying income. Demonstrating impact, securing sustainable funding and investing responsibly will support our long-term ambitions.

Chief Executive Officer

Reporting to: The Board of Trustees, working closely with the Chair
Salary: £80,000 to £90,000 per annum
Benefits: Competitive, including a generous holiday entitlement and pension
Contract: Permanent, Full-Time, Hybrid

This is an opportunity to lead a trusted voice for Army personnel and their families through a period of strategic development. You will bring together independent advocacy, organisational leadership and financial stewardship, ensuring that AFF remains close to Army families while influencing the systems that shape their lives.

You will work closely with the Chair and Trustees to develop strategy and provide clear, honest advice. The Board will retain responsibility for governance and strategic oversight; you and your senior team will lead management and delivery. A strong Chair-Chief Executive relationship, with appropriate challenge and clear boundaries, will be essential.

As AFF's public face and voice, you will engage the Army and Ministry of Defence, government and parliamentarians, charities and partners, funders and donors, the media and the Royal Household and patronage environment. You must be able to move confidently between discussions with senior military leaders and conversations with a family facing a difficult situation, recognising the value of both. Internally, you will build an effective, inclusive senior team, ensuring specialist expertise informs decision-making and colleagues have the authority and support to succeed.

We welcome candidates from the broadest possible backgrounds, including those with experience from housing, immigration, advice services, health, education, government, charities and the commercial sector. Previous military service or defence-sector experience is not required. What matters is your transferable expertise, leadership capability and willingness to understand Army family life.


Image: AFF website

Responsibilities

Strategic

- Lead the development and delivery of AFF's strategy, responding to the changing needs of Army families.
- Advise the Board on priorities, investment and organisational development, translating ambition into measurable outcomes.
- Ensure families' experiences, specialist expertise and research inform decisions and proactive responses to emerging needs.

External

- Represent AFF with senior military leaders, government, parliamentarians, funders, partners, the media and the Royal Household.
- Champion evidence-led policy change, navigating complex relationships while protecting AFF's independence.
- Build strategic partnerships across the Armed Forces community, including other Families Federations, and wider sectors.
- Strengthen funder relationships, secure strategic investment and diversify income.

Operational

- Lead with empathy and integrity, establishing clear priorities, accountability and high standards.
- Empower an inclusive senior team, valuing specialist expertise, effective delegation and collaboration.
- Ensure effective operations, high-quality services and a cohesive culture across dispersed teams.
- Address organisational and people challenges decisively, fairly and sensitively.

Governance

- Maintain a constructive, accountable relationship with the Chair and Trustees.
- Support effective Board decisions through clear reporting, analysis and transparent assessment of risks.
- Uphold governance boundaries, implement Board decisions and escalate significant concerns.

Financial

- Oversee financial performance, budgets, controls and long-term sustainability alongside the Finance Director.
- Align investment, staffing and resources with strategic priorities, affordability and measurable outcomes.
- Anticipate financial risks and funding pressures, advising Trustees on sustainable solutions.

Compliance

- Ensure robust legal compliance, safeguarding, data protection, information security and risk management.
- Promote ethical leadership, proportionate controls and a culture of transparency and accountability.

Change

- Lead evidence-informed organisational change, engaging colleagues and improving effectiveness.
- Harness technology, data and AI to improve services and efficiency.
- Balance innovation with accessibility, affordability, safeguarding and security.

Education and Childcare



Person Specification

Experience and Expertise

- Proven senior leadership experience, delivering strategy, managing resources and achieving measurable results.
- Understanding of Army family life, military policy, parliamentary processes and the wider defence environment.
- Experience influencing senior stakeholders, navigating complex relationships and securing change.
- Ability to build inclusive, collaborative teams, empower colleagues and lead dispersed organisations.
- Strong financial judgement, including budgeting, risk management, funding relationships and income development.
- Understanding of charity governance and effective Chair, Board and executive relationships.
- Experience leading organisational change, using data, technology and evaluation to improve performance.

Personal Attributes

- Commitment: Genuine determination to improve life for Army families.
- Communication: Confidence engaging senior decision-makers, colleagues and families.
- Empathy: Emotional intelligence, active listening and sensitivity to different perspectives.
- Leadership: Humility, integrity and the ability to empower and inspire colleagues.
- Judgement: Diplomacy, courage and resilience in navigating complex relationships and decisions.
- Initiative: Strategic curiosity, self-motivation and a focus on achievable outcomes.
- Inclusion: Commitment to diversity, accessibility and collaborative working.

Desirable

- Fundraising, income diversification or partnership development experience.
- Media engagement, public affairs or campaigning experience.
- Experience of digital transformation, service improvement or impact measurement.

How to Apply

To apply to become the next Chief Executive of the AFF, please forward:

- A CV outlining your appointments, achievements and relevant professional or academic qualifications.
- A supporting statement of no more than two A4 pages explaining your motivation, relevant achievements and approach to leading AFF through its next phase of development. Drawing on examples that demonstrate your leadership and stakeholder engagement skills and your ability to deliver meaningful organisational change.

Your application should be emailed to our adviser, Philip Nelson, at philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com.

Please also make us aware of any adjustments or accessible arrangements that would help you participate fully in the recruitment process.

Closing date: Monday 4th January 2027
First Round Preliminary Interviews: Monday 11th January 2027
Final Panel Assessment: Thursday 21st January 2027

This appointment will be subject to satisfactory references and appropriate pre-employment checks.

For an informal and confidential discussion, or questions about the role or appointment process, please contact Philip Nelson on 020 3590 9978 or at philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com.

AFF is committed to equality, diversity and inclusion, recognising the rich diversity of Army families and the importance of ensuring that everyone feels heard, respected and valued. We welcome applications from all suitably qualified candidates and particularly encourage applications from people who are underrepresented in charity leadership, including those from ethnic minority backgrounds, disabled people and members of the LGBTQ+ community.





Help shape AFF’s next chapter

PhilipNelson | TheHiringDept

philip.nelson@thehiringdept.com | 020 3590 9978

www.aff.org.uk