



**A CAREER
IN THE RAF**

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS
AND GUARDIANS

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Royal Air Force protects our nation's interests 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Whether in the skies above Britain, or in airspaces around the world, it is our job to protect the United Kingdom against any form of threat. We also act as a force for good in the world by working to strengthen international peace and security. The professionalism, commitment and integrity of the RAF's men and women are second to none.

If a family member is contemplating joining the RAF this guide will show you what's involved and what to expect. You'll meet the men and women who make up the backbone of this force. You'll see the journey from the first day of basic training,

to the hard-fought heights of the passing-out parade and beyond to the various challenging and inspiring roles they can play in the RAF. You'll also learn about the benefits on offer, the qualifications that can be gained, and the network in place to ensure your family member is supported. To fulfil this vital role, we need highly trained people throughout our organisation. There is something for everyone, and each job would see your family member play a key role in one of the world's most advanced military forces.

This guide aims to answer all your questions, but you can find out more on our website, at an Armed Forces Careers Office (AFCO) or by calling 0345 605 5555.

“SUSTAINED BY STRONG LEADERSHIP, HIGH PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL STANDARDS, WE ARE BOUND BY A STRONG SENSE OF TRADITION AND BELONGING TO AN ORGANISATION OF WHICH WE ARE IMMENSELY PROUD”



FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/RECRUITMENT

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TOP FLIGHT WHY JOIN THE RAF?

When it comes to recruitment, our focus is our personnel. We're always there to provide support and make sure your family member is well taken care of in the RAF

Forget the stereotype. In the Royal Air Force, you'll find people from every background and with different outlooks and interests. There are people who want to excel in their careers and others who enjoy sport at every level, from beginner to Olympic standard.

As a member of the RAF, your family member will become a skilled professional, a leader and a manager – and we'll give them the opportunity to prove themselves sooner than their contemporaries in civilian jobs. In short, they will join the ranks of the best and brightest.

Joining the RAF entitles your family member to a highly competitive benefits package, including:

- Competitive pay and pension
- Training and life-long learning
- Six weeks' paid leave
- Free medical and dental care
- Subsidised food and accommodation and
- Sport and adventure training.

When your family member first joins the Royal Air Force, they'll live on base. It's a chance to meet new friends and find out about what's on offer. Every base is a social centre as well as a workplace. There



are formal and informal events to keep people busy every night of the week – from ten-pin bowling to formal dinners.

But staying on base isn't mandatory. When off duty, RAF personnel can leave the base any time they want.

Weekends and holidays are free but there are opportunities to do so much more. There are over 100 adventurous training activities available, from mountaineering to skiing and scuba diving to sailing. And we will support your family member while they do them, both financially and with training.

OUR ROLE

The primary role of the RAF is air defence of the United Kingdom.

Today's modern RAF is the UK's aerial, peacekeeping and fighting force. It's made



up of impressive full-time Regulars and spare-time Reserves who come from diverse backgrounds and work side-by-side to make a difference at home and abroad.

In trouble spots around the globe, we help police the skies and maintain the UK's role in the international arena. Overseas, we enforce international law, while bringing aid and protection to the victims of disaster and war. At home we're the defenders of UK airspace, while in our mountains and around our coastlines we provide a lifeline to



the many who count on us in times of emergency.

We have a long and distinguished heritage, of which we are rightly proud, but our focus is on the future rather than the past. We work at the cutting edge every single day and the technology we use is some of the most advanced in the world. Our reputation in combat and peacekeeping operations is second to none – whether providing air support for British troops in action or flying missions alongside our many international allies.

The work we do is vital; it demands the highest standards and brings the greatest rewards.

OUR ROLE AT HOME

Our primary role at home is to defend UK airspace. We do this through reconnaissance, intelligence gathering, surveillance and cutting-edge technology that enables rapid responses.

Equally important is the work we do in communities across the UK and beyond. We're actively involved in raising money for a range of charities, hosting youth leadership courses, getting our hands dirty to protect the environment, helping sea turtles threatened with extinction and taking part in community projects. This is in addition to the world-famous aerobatics displays and ceremonial events that form an integral part of life in the RAF.

OUR ROLE ABROAD

We may be a fighting force that provides flexible and specialised air power, but our role abroad includes more than that. In trouble spots around the globe, we help police the skies and support peacekeeping and reconstruction initiatives. We do this through temporary deployments and permanent commitments.

It's not always about our interests though. We provide humanitarian aid to victims of war and natural disasters, deliver life-saving shelters and food supplies, and even airlift people to safety. Our RAF personnel have worked in disaster zones such as Tsunami-stricken Indonesia and earthquake-affected Pakistan. Whether they're preventing a civil war, providing relief and aid to countries that need it most or thwarting terrorist actions, being a force for good is what our work is really about.

FIND OUT MORE AT WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/ROLE



THE OPPORTUNITIES

We offer 50-plus roles ranging from logistics and catering to engineering and nursing, but the opportunities and lifestyle that come with joining the RAF are bigger than that. Regardless of role, gender, age, background or qualifications, we offer:

- World-class training and ongoing development
- A highly competitive benefits package
- A culture of camaraderie
- Individual responsibility within a wider team of exceptional individuals
- Full-time Regular and spare-time Reserve commitment levels
- The ability to see and stay in touch with friends and family, while also forging new friendships
- Sporting opportunities and facilities
- Top-of-the-line kit
- The chance to be part of an equal opportunity organisation listed as one of the Times Top 50 Employers for Women.





ON THE JOB
RAF ENGINEER
CPL SIAN GALVIN

Why did you decide to join the RAF as an apprentice?

As I was 23 and the RAF was my second full-time job I liked the idea of earning money as I learned a whole new skill.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

The diversity, as every day is different.

“RAF HALTON WAS SUCH A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE: NINE WEEKS OF NON-STOP EARLY STARTS, LATE NIGHTS, HARD WORK BUT, MOST OF ALL, LAUGHS”

What would you say the lifestyle is like in the RAF?

Very social. Working, living and socialising with colleagues often leads to very close friendships.

What is the best experience you’ve had with the RAF?

My best detachment was four brilliant weeks in Oman as part of exercise Magic Carpet 2011. I was lucky enough to spend my 30th birthday by the pool of a four-star hotel drinking cocktails, in the sun, on my day off!

Have you done any Adventurous Training?

Early on in my RAF career I had the fantastic opportunity of spending 10 days in Pennsylvania, white water rafting, mountain biking and high-level walking concluding with the final day in New York. I recently completed a five-day trip to Grantown-on-Spey in Scotland where I took part in kayaking, gorge walking and mountain biking.



What sports do you play?

I have competed for the RAF Athletics Team for several years now in short- to middle-distance events. Due to the help of the training received from the RAF I was able to achieve RAF champion awards in both 100m and 200m events.

What educational opportunities have you had?

Educational opportunities in the RAF are excellent. Due to them I have successfully completed NVQ Level 3 City & Guilds in Mechanical Engineering.

What has your overall experience in the RAF been like?

It has had its ups and downs just like any job but overall it’s been an amazing chapter in my life.

Did you have any concerns?

Before Basic Training I was worried that I was going to feel homesick. However, Halton was such a fantastic experience: nine weeks of non-stop early starts, late nights, hard work but, most of all, laughs.

How does RAF life fit in with seeing family and friends?

It means that weekends and leave are centred around catching up with them. This makes time with them more special as you appreciate them more.

Would you recommend the RAF life?

If you’ve given it a lot of thought, discussed it with your family and done all the right research, then absolutely.

How has signing up for the RAF changed your life?

I would say the RAF has made me far more independent and I now have friends all over the world.

FULL FORCE THE RAF JOURNEY

Members of the RAF are stretched every day and get the very best training to take on any challenge

Whatever job your family member does, trainees gain professional skills and qualifications. Many trades offer the opportunity to gain an apprenticeship, which is a leading civilian-recognised qualification. We want our personnel to be as well qualified as – if not better than – people doing the equivalent job outside the RAF. That's because these skills will equip your family member to both work in the UK and represent their country overseas.

There are frequent operational detachments in the Middle East and elsewhere – with exercises in places like North America, Africa and Europe.

Does it sound like hard work? It can be. But your family member will get all the training and support they need.

APPRENTICESHIPS

An apprenticeship in the RAF offers the chance to gain a UK-recognised trade qualification as part of a

challenging and unique career. Not only will your family member gain a civilian-recognised professional qualification, but upon completion they'll also have a guaranteed job in their chosen field.

We offer all kinds of apprenticeships in a broad and diverse range of careers including Aviation Operations, Engineering, Hospitality and Catering, and IT. Your family member will receive the very best training and accelerated pay, and, as well as getting paid to learn, they'll get the chance to travel the world, play sport and perform an important role in the RAF.

“YOUR FAMILY MEMBER WILL RECEIVE THE VERY BEST TRAINING AND ACCELERATED PAY, AS WELL AS GETTING PAID TO LEARN”

EDUCATION

Quality education is one of many benefits of the RAF. All of our personnel stay at the forefront of their field through continuous learning, hands-on experience and training.

Reserves have access to our Learning Portal and a range of other opportunities for self-study. This education will support both the Reservist role and their civilian job.

Regulars receive an annual allowance for new qualifications. As part of the Standard Learning Credit Scheme they also receive up to 80% off fees from day-release courses and vocational training through to a bachelor's or master's degree.

RECRUIT TRAINING

Recruit training at RAF Halton lasts nine weeks and each day is different. Your family member will learn new skills and face new challenges every day.

You'll see a big change in your family member as they develop their skills and become an important part of a professional team.

INITIAL OFFICER TRAINING

Our philosophy is that there's no such thing as a born leader – just those with leadership potential. If a family member has passed the selection process to attend Initial Officer Training it means they have the potential. If they supply the commitment and determination, we will supply training that is recognised as the best in the world.

During their time at RAF College Cranwell, their progress will be assessed continuously, with advice and feedback at every stage. We expect self-sufficiency and self-discipline but provide all the support needed. It is a demanding course but one that offers great rewards.





PARENTS' DAY

If a family member has been successful in his/her application to join the RAF, you will get an acceptance letter from the local AFCO, and shortly after you will receive an invitation to attend the Parents' Day at RAF Halton or Cranwell. This runs in conjunction with the first day of the course and aims to give parents an insight into what the recruits will be going through over the next 10 weeks, answering all your questions. The day also includes a talk with the Squadron Commander or Deputy Squadron Commander, as well as a tour of the facilities available on site.



RECRUIT TRAINING

Basic recruit training takes place over 10 weeks at RAF Halton in Buckinghamshire. This phase of training is designed to show what the RAF is all about. It will make your family member fitter and more confident and prepare them to carry out their role in the RAF.

It will also challenge them mentally and physically, and there are experienced instructors on hand to guide them through it.

Basic recruit training consists of six phases:

ARRIVAL

DAY 1

After the recruit arrives they are sworn into the RAF and given a service number, which will remain theirs throughout their career, and separated into groups.

GENERAL SERVICE TRAINING

DAYS 1-24

During this initial phase fitness will become part of the recruit's daily routine. There will also be regular inspections of dress and living quarters, and they will receive lessons in marching, drills, core values, code of conduct and RAF history.

FORCE DEVELOPMENT TRAINING

DAYS 25-30

Force Development



EXERCISE BLUE WARRIOR

DAYS 55-58

By this stage, the recruit's skills will be ready to be tested over four days in the field. During these four days they'll experience real battle conditions with controlled explosions and small arms blanks fire.

GRADUATION

DAYS 59-70

This final phase of training will prepare the recruit for life in the RAF, teach them what's required in their first post. It will end with the recruit's graduation, where they show off their new skills and experience one of the proudest moments in any recruit's life – and a great day out for family and friends.

WHAT NEXT?

After basic recruit training, your family member will receive role-specific training and be a member of the RAF.

Training allows the recruit to apply and test their skills in new environments. It includes adventurous training activities such as a two-day mountain walking expedition.

INITIAL FORCE PROTECTION TRAINING

DAYS 33-54

As part of Force Protection Training the recruit learns to survive and fight in a military environment. They'll practise weapon fire, camouflage, concealment skills, first aid, and nuclear, biological and chemical drills.

INITIAL OFFICER TRAINING

Basic recruit training for officers is designed to prepare your family member for life as a leader. It is made up of three 10-week terms delivered by experienced RAF personnel who will challenge them both intellectually and physically. Once completed it will earn them a valuable Level 5 Diploma from the Institute of Leadership and Management.

TERM ONE BASIC PHASE

WEEKS 1-4

A four-week introduction to military life. During this time fitness will become part of the daily routine. There will also be regular inspections of dress and living quarters, and there will be lessons in marching, drills and the role of the RAF.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

WEEKS 5-10

As part of Leadership Development the recruit learns a range of leadership principles and strategies. Leadership exercises will take the recruit from the classroom to the field, and they will fire a weapon for the first time and spend a week at one of our Adventurous Training centres.

“THE RECRUIT LEARNS ABOUT THE RAF’S ETHOS, HISTORY AND CULTURE, AS WELL AS HOW WE EXPECT OUR OFFICERS TO PRESENT THEMSELVES”

TERM TWO FOUNDATION PHASE

WEEK 1

Learning how to gain a team’s trust as a leader takes practise and is the focus of this phase. It consolidates the leadership skills already learnt.

MILITARY AID LEADERSHIP CAMP

WEEK 2

The recruit spends up to seven days in a military training area completing a series of time-sensitive exercises in full military gear, guiding their team through a variety of challenges.

RAF ETHOS AND CULTURE/ AIR POWER STUDIES

WEEKS 3-6

The recruit learns about the RAF’s ethos, history and culture, as well as how we expect our officers to present themselves and communicate. They will also sit in academic lectures on the concept and strategies behind Air Power.

MILITARY SIMULATION

WEEKS 7-8

This high-pressure operational environment is as close to the real thing as possible.

RECOMMENDATION TO PROGRESS TO THE FINAL TERM

WEEKS 9-10

If the recruit excels during the Military Simulation, their Flight Commander will recommend them for the final term. Otherwise the recruit will undergo further training and have a second chance to prove themselves.

TERM THREE LEADERSHIP ACADEMICS/CAROUSEL

WEEKS 1-5

This final term starts with a week of academic study that teaches recruits what to expect on their first posting. Next, their leadership skills are put to the test over four weeks of exercises in various operational settings, including one at our Adventurous Training centre in Scotland.

MILITARY SIMULATION (EXERCISE COMBAT OPERATIONS CENTRE)

WEEKS 6-8

This second simulated exercise is based around a combat operations centre, enabling the recruit to gain more experience of life in an operational environment.

GRADUATION

WEEKS 9-10

After 30 weeks of training the recruit is ready for the graduation parade where they will show off their new skills and receive their official commission as an officer in the RAF. It’s one of the proudest moments in an officer’s career—and a great day out for family and friends.

WHAT NEXT?

After basic recruit training, your family member will go on to receive role-specific training and be a member of the RAF.





ON THE JOB
ICT TECHNICIAN
SAC STEVEN BARNETT



“THE WEEKENDS ARE STILL GREAT OPPORTUNITIES TO SEE THE PEOPLE YOU CARE ABOUT. NOT TO MENTION THE ABILITY TO TAKE LEAVE FOR TIME AWAY FROM BASE”



What is your role?

My current job role as an ICT Technician is an Administrator for Ground Support Systems. This involves maintaining the network for the Engineering Support System for the Typhoon aircraft.

What apprenticeship are you undertaking in the RAF?

I am studying an NVQ Level 3 Advanced Apprenticeship for IT software, web and telecoms professionals.

Why did you decide to join the RAF as an apprentice?

It gave me an opportunity to both acquire a skill set and trade as well as being able to apply it practically as I learnt it. Getting paid to learn also worked well for me.

What do you enjoy most about your role in the RAF?

The potential to travel is exciting about this role, as anywhere Engineering support is required for the EuroFighter Typhoons, a Ground Support System server and administration team are also required.

What type of training have you had to undertake in the RAF?

I completed 13 months of apprenticeship training at RAF Cosford, this covered a wide variety of subjects, with server, networking and IT essentials being particularly useful for this role. Further role-specific training was taken upon arriving at RAF Coningsby.

What is the work-life balance at the RAF like?

My work and life are fairly well balanced, working both early and late shifts gives me time to do things on and off station in my spare time as well as travel home regularly.

Have you done any Adventurous Training?

During apprenticeship training at RAF Cosford I went for a week to FDTC Crickhowell with my course. We took part in mountain biking, caving and walking around the Welsh countryside.

What have you learnt in your time in the RAF?

I have learnt that there are opportunities to take but you have to stay motivated towards your goals and change them as necessary.

What has been the greatest challenge so far?

During apprenticeship training I had to learn a lot of new information for subjects I had never worked towards before, so processing some things I had never considered before was challenging.

Did you have any concerns?

I had a few minor concerns about moving away from home, but during training everyone is in the same position and you all get through it together. Any real friends and family are only a text or phone call away so you soon learn it's not so bad.

How does RAF life fit in with seeing your family and friends?

RAF life fits well with seeing my friends and family as I'm not really too far away from them. The weekends are still great opportunities to see the people you care about. Not to mention the ability to take leave for time away from base.

Why would you recommend a career in the RAF?

For the prospects of being paid to learn a trade, have a secure job and have opportunities to travel.



UP IN THE AIR

Great people and an array of events and activities mean RAF personnel can balance work and play perfectly

The RAF is full of people who come from all walks of life but are on the same wavelength. That's a great platform on which to build strong bonds and friendships.

Regulars are never far from a familiar face and Reserves tell us it's the people who make their time here so special. As well as forging new friendships, friends from outside the RAF are always welcome on base.

The RAF attracts people who want the most out of life, so there's always something going on. There are social events held every night in the bars and clubs on base. Additionally, most bases are close to major towns, making it easy to hang out there outside regular working hours.

Social events, including barbecues and formal dinners, are also put on for Reserves and their friends and family.

GOOD SPORTS

RAF personnel are expected to stay at the top of their game, both mentally and physically, so we provide a lot of opportunities to stay fit, get into sports and take part in Adventurous Training.

RAF personnel can join a club for just about any sport – from skydiving and scuba diving to tennis and sailing. There are more than 45 available sports including football, netball, rugby, hockey and athletics. We also offer some less common sports such as fencing, bobsleigh, power-kiting, power-lifting and gliding.

Every sport has teams and training facilities as well as support and sponsorship. Our RAF personnel perform at every level from marathon fun runs to the Olympics.

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

Centres of Excellence have cutting-edge facilities for RAF personnel to hone particular skills on. The RAF Halton Centre of Excellence has an impressive tennis centre with 13 outdoor and six indoor courts, a gymnasium, and a bar and dining area.





There is also a Centre of Excellence for rowing, canoeing, cruising, sailing and a wide range of waterborne activities at The Royal Air Force Watersports Centre in Danesfield.

CREATING CHAMPIONS

We sponsor elite athletes across a range of sports by giving them the

LIVE THE LIFE

- The RAF encourages and nurtures excellence in sport
- There are great opportunities to see the world
- Every day brings a new challenge

time, equipment and financial support they need to develop their talents to the full. What's more, if RAF personnel are participating in an authorised sporting event, they're considered 'on duty', so they don't have to use up any of their annual leave.

We have helped the UK produce national and international champions in boxing, sub-aqua, rally driving, rugby, sprinting, hammer, cycling, sea angling, canoeing, triathlon, skeleton bobs, shotokan karate, motorcycling, microlight, javelin, athletics, snowboarding and slalom skiing.

ADVENTUROUS TRAINING

Adventurous Training is a way of life in the RAF. It's challenging, enjoyable and

encourages teamwork. The RAF and RAF personnel organise expeditions and adventures at home and around the world in over 100 activities. These could see your family member scuba diving in the Red Sea, climbing peaks in the Himalayas and kayaking the rivers of Canada, all while getting paid.

KEEPING FIT

Physical fitness helps our personnel carry out physical tasks – like setting up a field kitchen or loading kit into a helicopter. Most RAF bases have a gymnasium and hold regular fitness classes. There is usually a sports field to work up a sweat on, and some of the larger bases even have swimming pools and specialist training facilities.

SPORTING CHANCE

SAC Josh McNally reveals how the RAF has helped propel him to greater sporting heights

"I am a Weapons Technician at Royal Air Force Brize Norton, working on C17 and C130 aircraft, but have recently been awarded Elite Athlete status to play for Aviva Premier League Rugby team, London Welsh.

Growing up in a military family, I was always fully aware of what the services had to offer. Playing sport to the highest level was something I knew the RAF could offer, resulting in me joining the RAF in 2009. The best part of my job is working on the aircraft in an environment where each day brings me a new challenge.

"THE BEST PART OF MY JOB IS WORKING ON THE AIRCRAFT IN AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE EACH DAY BRINGS ME A NEW CHALLENGE"

The fact that I was able to start playing more rugby after joining the RAF has always been an added bonus. I quickly began to progress through the represented levels, resulting in being specifically posted to RAF Brize Norton, the RAF Rugby Union

Centre of Excellence. This gave me exposure to the civilian rugby leagues, which ultimately led to interest from professional side London Welsh RFC."

The best game in town

"I have never played full-time rugby before. Twelve months ago, if someone had told me I would be signing for a Premiership club, I would have thought it was a joke. It has definitely been the highlight of my rugby career so far.

Away from my job role my lifestyle in the RAF has always been sport- and rugby-oriented. Being a professional

rugby player requires me to train twice a day, which is something that the Air Force has always allowed me to do. I have also had many opportunities for courses and qualifications, which are often readily available, whether they are work related or linked to coaching with the Rugby Football Union.

If I could give any advice to someone looking to join the RAF I would say just be yourself and make sure the RAF know what you have to offer. Once you have joined up, try and find a hobby or sport to take part in as it could potentially take you all over the world."



ON THE JOB

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER
SGT CHRISTOPHER HOWSON

What attracted you to joining the RAF?

I was always interested in having a job that involved a high degree of responsibility, and was also challenging and interesting every day. When SNCO Air Traffic Controller became available I applied as soon as I could. This involved several interviews and aptitude tests at the local Armed Forces Careers Office as well as a challenging four days at the Officer and Aircrew Selection Course before being accepted for the job.

What does a typical day involve?

Setting up the consoles in the radar room in the early morning to ensure that all of the frequencies that the aircrew and pilots would speak to us on are available and functioning properly, receiving a morning brief on what was expected to happen that day (what runway we are using, weather, planned aircraft movements, any airspace restrictions), controlling aircraft on either radar or the visual control room, and also on-the-job training required.

What kind of qualities and qualifications do you need?

You don't need any specific qualifications as such, just three GCSEs that include at least a C grade in both English and Mathematics. You must be able to divide your attention, communicate effectively, have a sense of urgency and overall have a high level of personal bearing and standards. As you will be awarded the Sgt rank straight after training, you will be expected to be a role model for the junior airmen/airwomen and as such behave appropriately.

What are the best things about the job?

The best thing about the job is the satisfaction you get when an aircraft lands on the runway after a sortie, knowing that without your help it could not have been done.

"THE BEST THING ABOUT THE JOB IS THE SATISFACTION YOU GET WHEN AN AIRCRAFT LANDS ON THE RUNWAY AFTER A SORTIE"

And the most challenging?

Most definitely the complications of mixed aircraft working in small airspace and trying to do your job safely and expeditiously to ensure that the aircrew get from A to B as quickly and as safely as possible.

Who would get the most out of joining the world of air traffic?

I would recommend the job of a SNCO Air Traffic Controller in the Royal Air Force to anyone who has the ambition, determination and motivation to test themselves to the limit.

What advice do you have for those looking to follow in your footsteps?

I would advise people who are serious about joining as an Air Traffic Controller to have a positive attitude towards criticism, because during training you will make many mistakes in the simulators and the only way to learn from them is to be critiqued by qualified instructors who have been controlling aircraft themselves for many years. I would also advise them to be physically fit and also to be determined and driven because from the point where you start applying for the job to the point where you actually speak to a real pilot at your first air traffic control tower can take around 24 months.

What kind of pay and benefits can you make?

The pay is not as great as a civilian air traffic controller, but you get qualified much quicker and a healthy £33,000 per year after training is not too bad.

DID YOU KNOW?

RAF REGULARS

RAF Regulars are our full-time personnel that form the foundation of the RAF, playing a critical role in defence and peacekeeping operations. Regulars serve all over the UK and wherever in the world they're called upon. They live an exciting life while developing vital skills that will serve them throughout their careers.

RAF RESERVES

RAF Reserves train and work alongside Regulars in their spare time. Reserves train to the same high standards as Regular personnel and perform a crucial role within the organisation. Working around their day job, using their weekends, they gain transferable skills and a rewarding lifestyle that offers the best of both worlds.





ON THE JOB
AVIONIC TECHNICIAN
SAC (T) POLLY MCKINLAY

What is your current role?

I am Avionics Technician on a busy Typhoon Squadron.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

No two days are the same; there are always new things to learn as technology is always improving. We are able to move postings every three to five years or on promotion, so the job is constantly changing and very rarely gets boring.

What opportunities has the RAF given you as an apprentice?

I got my NVQ Level 3 in aeronautical engineering. My first year I got four travel warrants for the year paying for four trips home. I have been given the opportunity to go on the Typhoon display team as ground crew travelling around the country performing at different air shows.

What is your work-life balance like?

I live in the block during the week and

travel home every weekend. During the week I have plenty of time to go to the gym after work and socialise with my friends.

What would you say the RAF lifestyle is like?

It is a great opportunity to meet and make life-long friends. Social events happen all the time getting different sections together. Each camp has lots of gym facilities that you can use any time of the day.

What are the best experiences you have had?

Serving in Afghanistan when I was on Chinooks. It shows you what all your training is for and how we can make a difference around the world helping our troops on the ground and the civilians living there.

Have you done any Adventurous Training?

On apprenticeship training I went to Granton-on-Spey for a week,

mountain biking, hiking and rock climbing. I am about to go on snow eagle with the squadron, skiing in Bavaria, Germany for a week.

What sports do you play?

I played five-a-side football while I was at RAF Odiham. At RAF Cosford I started up a five-a-side female mini tournament.

What educational opportunities have you had?

Avionic NVQ Level 3 in aeronautical engineering. Microsoft Office training. Further education like GCSEs, A levels, degrees and vocational training.

What are your top tips for joining the RAF as an apprentice?

For Avionics, study maths and physics and keep up with new technology being developed. Know what type of aircraft you want to work on as there are differences between each aircraft type and learn as much about the RAF as you can.

What are your hobbies?

Going to the gym four or five times a week, swimming, snowboarding, mountain biking and road biking.

What have you learnt in your time in the RAF?

The importance of team work, leadership and the rank structure. As an engineer, the ability to articulate yourself, to describe problems, and not being afraid of asking for help when you don't know something.

What has been the greatest challenge so far?

Going on operations in Afghanistan,

as it was my first tour away and a war zone. But the pre-operational training and knowing the people I was going with made it a lot easier. Being away from my family and partner for three months at one time was hard, especially in the extreme heat, but knowing it was for a good cause and that you will go home made it a lot easier.

How did your parents feel about you signing up?

They were and are very proud of me

get better. We are at the forefront of aviation technology and have some of the best aircraft in the world which have proven to be able to go toe-to-toe with other nations in the world. There are also lots of opportunities to better yourself physically and mentally.

How has signing up for the RAF changed your life?

It has made me a much more confident person and made me believe in my capabilities more as a technician. The training is brilliant as

“THE RAF HAS MADE ME A MUCH MORE CONFIDENT PERSON AND MADE ME BELIEVE IN MY CAPABILITIES MORE AS A TECHNICIAN. THE TRAINING IS BRILLIANT”

and have encouraged me at every opportunity. With technology so good now I can talk to them or Skype them whenever I want.

Did you have any concerns?

Knowing you have the possibility of going to war zones – but having all the information by various experts and speaking to people who have been before alleviated any concerns.

How does RAF life fit in with seeing your family and friends?

I get to see my family and boyfriend every weekend unless I'm on detachment; then you get phone cards and internet access so you can contact them.

Would you recommend life in the RAF?

Yes, as technology is advancing, being an engineer in the RAF will only

you get general training at Cosford and specialised on-aircraft training once you're at your unit. Living in the block has given me a brilliant chance to save money and I am now in the position to be able to buy my own house.

What would you say to someone contemplating joining the RAF?

Joining as an apprentice is a great way to get qualifications while working on some of the best aircraft in the world. There are plenty of opportunities to go on Adventurous Training and to get different qualifications while you do your day-to-day tasks with money help from the RAF to do courses.

What's next for you?

Once my NVQ certificates come through I plan on doing higher education to enable me in becoming a better technician.

What has your experience in the RAF been like?

Joining the RAF has given me the ability to go to places that I would never have been able to go to and I have had the opportunity to do adventure training and sports that I wouldn't have been able to do if I wasn't in the RAF. I have met and made so many good friends throughout my career and no matter what camp I go to I know people across the RAF. I have made several life-long friends as what we experience together in the RAF makes our friendships stronger. Pushing myself to be the best I can be, but having people who believe in my abilities, helps a lot.

AIR SUPPORT

DAY-TO-DAY WITH THE RAF

When a son, daughter or loved one is interested in joining the RAF full-time or spare-time, parents may wonder what to expect...

LIFE AS A REGULAR

RAF Regulars are full-time personnel that can be posted in the UK and all over the world. Most Regulars work normal five-day weeks and have evenings and weekends to themselves. That said, they're not nine-to-fivers; they do what's needed to get the job done, which could mean working round the clock, going on a mission at a moment's notice, or transferring to a new location.

LIFE IN THE UK

All RAF Regulars live on base during their initial training so they can get to know others and see what life in the RAF is like. This helps integrate them into the RAF community whether they choose to live on-base or off-base afterwards.

BASES

The RAF has many bases across the UK. Each base has its own role, from frontline operations to training establishments. Most bases are like small, self-contained towns with shops, gyms, playing fields, crèches, post offices, cinemas, and even bowling alleys. Some are close to large

cities while others are more remote because things like night flying need to be conducted in less populated areas.

ACCOMMODATION

Recruits live in on-base accommodation during their initial training, 10 weeks for airmen/airwomen and 32 weeks for officers. This gives them the opportunity to get to know their new colleagues, work as a team and learn about the RAF. After training, RAF Regulars can live in the 'Mess', commute from home, or rent nearby. On base the RAF provides subsidised accommodation and food, great leisure and sports facilities, and a real sense of community.

MORE INFORMATION

Our website will tell you a great deal about life in the RAF, but as a parent you'll naturally want to be sure a family member is making the right decision. We're here to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

FOR DETAILS ABOUT GETTING IN TOUCH VISIT WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/RECRUITMENT/CONTACT

FOOD

Food on base is subsidised and costs around £28 per week for three meals a day. There is good-quality food that caters for all dietary requirements, including religious and vegetarian preferences.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Most RAF personnel work normal hours and have evenings and weekends free to spend with family and friends. If your family member is not on duty they can leave to visit you whenever they wish after initial training. They also get six weeks of paid holiday every year. It's important for RAF personnel to have time to spend with their loved ones on a regular basis.

A recruit's family members are also always welcome to visit the base.

SOCIAL LIFE

RAF personnel develop a great deal of trust and confidence in each other because of how much they come to rely upon one another. These bonds extend beyond work, with plenty of opportunities to socialise with both new and old friends, on and off base.

RELIGION

We do everything we can to cater to people's personal requirements, including religion. Chaplains are





THE HIGH FLYERS

WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY MEMBER SIGNING UP TO?

Today's modern RAF is a highly respected, inclusive organisation made up of full-time Regulars and spare-time Reserves working side-by-side to make a difference. As a force for good the RAF gets involved in everything from preventing civil war to delivering humanitarian aid, aiding communities in the UK and hosting ceremonial events.

When it comes to recruitment, our focus is our personnel. We're always there to provide support and make sure your family member is

well taken care of during and after their service in the RAF.

The RAF has over 50 available roles and multiple career development opportunities. We employ everyone from Chefs and Photographers, to ICT Technicians and Pilots. Regardless of role, the RAF believes in life-long learning so our personnel are trained to the highest standards. As well as having the opportunity to gain professional qualifications that will equip them for a great career after the RAF, they can look forward to having their talents recognised, developed and rewarded.

VISIT WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/RECRUITMENT

"WE'RE THERE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT AND MAKE SURE YOUR FAMILY MEMBER IS WELL TAKEN CARE OF DURING THEIR SERVICE IN THE RAF"



LIFE IN THE RESERVES

RAF Reserves serve alongside Regulars in the UK and overseas. They get to balance their own careers and home life, with the challenge and adventure of the RAF.

Reserves commit a minimum of 27 days per year on a renewable 12-year basis. Each year includes a two-week (15 days) block for general RAF training, and at

least 12 weekend or holiday days for additional training, trade training, or training exercises.

Reserves can be mobilised on expeditionary operations at some time during each 12-year contract. They can be deployed to a UK, overseas or temporary base for up to six months, plus another six months for pre-deployment training and post-deployment relaxation with loved ones.

on hand, along with other religious counsellors. Prayer facilities are usually available and we adapt uniforms, catering and duty rosters to meet religious requirements where possible.

SUPPORT

In the RAF your family member will be part of a large community. Advice and support services will be available to help with everything from settling in to planning a foreign posting for them and their family.

“ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES WILL BE AVAILABLE TO HELP WITH EVERYTHING FROM SETTLING IN TO PLANNING A FOREIGN POSTING FOR THEM AND THEIR FAMILY”

LIFE ON DUTY ABROAD

Although your family member will probably spend much of their working life in the UK, most Regular roles involve at least some overseas travel. Typically around 10% of RAF personnel are overseas on long- or short-term posts at any one time.

SHORT-TERM POST

The RAF takes on challenges and is ready for anything at any time. For RAF Regulars this means they could be sent on short-term overseas duty to use their skills to help with specific, temporary projects. Overseas duty can vary in length from a few days to a few months, depending on the job.

Past duties have included airlifting supplies to a snow-bound mountain village, rescuing stranded crew from enemy territory, evacuating casualties from abroad to the UK, and providing relief to victims of natural disasters.

As part of a short-term post your family member could see people and places they'd never normally see, and find themselves stretched and



DUTY & CARE

For Royal Air Force personnel to be fully effective in their duties, it is essential that their wellbeing and that of their dependants is properly cared for. The Community Support section of our website is aimed at keeping your family member informed of their entitlements and policy matters that affect them while providing an opportunity to keep in touch with each other through the provision of our forums and chat facilities.

WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/COMMUNITY

challenged in ways an average civilian job could never offer.

LONG-TERM POST

The RAF polices the skies and supports peacekeeping and reconstruction initiatives around the globe. We do this through permanent bases, temporary bases, embassies, NATO and exchange posts.

RAF Regulars can be posted at these locations for two to three years, sometimes getting the opportunity to work alongside our coalition partners. Life on a long-term post tends to be similar to living on a base in the UK:

typical amenities, well-maintained accommodation and the same high-quality food. Beyond that, your family member will get to experience a place they normally wouldn't and have the opportunity to travel during peacetime posts.

We also provide a network of support for their partners and children while away from home, but most personnel have the opportunity to take their dependant family with them.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/RECRUITMENT**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG WILL MY FAMILY MEMBER BE AWAY FROM HOME FOR DURING TRAINING?

Recruit training at RAF Halton lasts for 70 days and is split into six sections. To find out more about these please visit www.raf.mod.uk/rafhilton/recruits/trainingprogramme.cfm. For an Officer in the RAF, Initial Officer Training takes place at the RAF College Cranwell in Lincolnshire. This involves a challenging 30-week course designed to develop leadership and management skills.

WILL I BE ABLE TO CONTACT OR VISIT A FAMILY MEMBER DURING THEIR TIME AWAY?

Throughout training there will be the opportunity to call home during evenings. Recruits are allowed to bring a mobile phone for use in free time.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A TRAINEE FALLS ILL OR IS INJURED DURING TRAINING?

All recruits are looked after by station medical and dental teams. If too ill to train, recruits will be excused from duty until well enough to return.

ARE THERE BREAKS FOR MY FAMILY MEMBER TO RETURN HOME AT WEEKENDS OR DURING HOLIDAYS?

There may be occasions when trainees can return home during Initial Training, but this is very much dependent on the training schedule.

WHAT IS THE STANCE ON BULLYING AND HARASSMENT?

The RAF has a zero-tolerance policy on bullying and harassment both during and post training. We have dedicated Welfare and Support Personnel on all of our stations who are there to assist with any problems a trainee may have.

WILL I BE ABLE TO VISIT MY FAMILY MEMBER DURING TRAINING?

Part of recruit training at RAF Halton includes Parents' Day, which is part of the first day of the course. This is to give parents an insight into what the recruits will be going through over the next 70 days. Parents are given the chance to ask questions and also speak with the Squadron Commander or Deputy Commander. There is a tour of the facilities and parents can witness the formal attestation. Other guardians or partners are welcome to come along.

ONCE TRAINING IS COMPLETE WHERE DO PERSONNEL LIVE?

Post training, personnel in the RAF may be required to live on one of our many stations either in the UK or overseas. To see a list of stations visit www.raf.mod.uk/organisation/stations.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS WILL RECRUITS GAIN AND ARE THEY RECOGNISED BY CIVILIAN EMPLOYERS?

RAF Accreditation provides opportunities to gain nationally recognised civilian qualifications through the accreditation of education, training and experience to maximise recruitment, retention, career development and resettlement benefits.

RATHER THAN START AN RAF APPRENTICESHIP, SURELY MY SON OR DAUGHTER MUST START COLLEGE OR SIXTH-FORM IN SEPTEMBER IN LINE WITH GOVERNMENT POLICY?

RAF apprenticeships are on an equal par with other educational programmes. Serving in the RAF provides relevant training for young people and is a valid and valuable career route. Not all

"THE RAF HAS BEEN AWARDED THE LEVEL OF 'OUTSTANDING' FOR ITS APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING SCHEMES – A RARITY IN BOTH THE DEFENCE AND CIVILIAN WORLDS."

young people will be able to join immediately after the end of the year and may be concerned about having to start a further education course in line with Government policy. Young people who have been recruited to serve in the armed forces may, on occasion, have to wait for a training place and the gap could be as much as five to six months. Where this is the case, your son or daughter should consider how they might use their time constructively, for example by improving their academic skills or seeking temporary employment.

ARE RAF APPRENTICESHIPS AS GOOD AS THOSE OF OTHER EMPLOYERS?

No, they are better! The RAF has been awarded the level of 'Outstanding' for its apprenticeship training schemes – a rarity in both the defence and civilian worlds.



ROYAL AIR FORCE

JOIN THE TEAM

RECRUITING NOW

- More than 50 different careers to choose from
- Competitive pay and pension
- Training and life-long learning
- Six weeks' paid leave
- Free medical and dental care
- Subsidised food and accommodation
- Sport and adventure training

[WWW.RAF.MOD.UK/RECRUITMENT](http://www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment)

 [RAFRECRUITMENT](https://www.facebook.com/RAFRECRUITMENT)

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Visit our website to find out more about each individual role and life in the RAF and eligibility.

www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/how-to-apply/eligibility-check

Make an appointment at one of our Armed Forces Careers Offices (AFCOs) and we can talk to you in depth about your family member's career options.

www.raf.mod.uk/recruitment/contact/recruitment-centres

Or call 0345 605 5555