

Two forces bursaries awarded



ForceSelect, the UK's leading military service leaver recruitment consultancy, has awarded the first two beneficiaries of a bursary scheme for the children of military families Mill Hill School. The awarding of the bursaries comes as Prime Minister David Cameron made a commitment to make the military covenant legally binding, and it underlines the determination of ForceSelect to help service personnel, service leavers and their families in as many ways as possible.

Ellie King and Megan O'Kane, both 13, have family serving in the forces and undertook a rigorous exam and interview process to win the prestigious bursaries. In order to be eligible, families must also meet certain specified financial criteria. Ellie's father, Sgt Julian King, served for 22 years before leaving the armed forces in October 2009 while her mother, Sgt Sharon King, who has undertaken tours of Croatia, Iraq and Northern Ireland, is set to complete the same length of service in April 2012 when she is also planning on concluding her commission.

Sgt Sharon King said: "The process via ForceSelect was simple and seamless and we will be recommending the scheme to other families. Ellie has been telling family and friends how excited she is, particularly about the science and music facilities. She's a headstrong girl and the discipline and academic opportunities at Mill Hill will be the making of her. Peter McDonough (Deputy Head of Mill Hill) has been wonderfully positive and helpful and we're thankful to 1PWRR – particularly the Colonel and Families' Officer – for their support. We are chuffed to bits."

Megan O'Kane's father Corporal Michael Shepley, who has served for 12 years, will be in Afghanistan next year and her mother Roisin Shepley explained that this was a once in a lifetime opportunity: "She's a smart girl and recognised the opportunity. She's repeating what she's learnt at one school after another and is losing heart – she's been to 7 schools already and this move will give her the stability she needs. The facilities at the school are out of this world and Megan keeps asking if it's really happening. ForceSelect has been really helpful and went out of their way to make it happen – we're so thankful and can't quite believe it."

Megan O'Kane added that she is looking forward to taking advantage of the wide range of facilities at Mill Hill. She said: "I'm very very excited to be getting a head start in life that other schools wouldn't offer – and very excited about the swimming pool too. The music rooms are huge and they have an art programme which will be great."

Ellie and Megan are part of a pilot scheme to identify children of service families eligible for bursary places and will start at Mill Hill School in the autumn term this year. The bursaries are for up to 100% of annual fees which are currently £25,500 per annum for boarders, who attend the school from the ages of 13-18, and from £14,000 per annum for day pupils, who attend the school from the ages of 11-18. In addition, Mill Hill offers a discount of 20% on fees to children of service leavers, as well as currently serving Forces personnel who do not qualify for the bursaries. The scheme is also open to the children of service widows and those who have been medically discharged.
