



CASE STUDY: Nursery Services

RAF Northolt

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**Vee Howe SQN LDR,
OC PMS, RAF Northolt**

RAF Northolt

The Royal Air Force is the air force of the UK and the oldest independent air force in the world. Currently employing over 40,000 regular service personnel, the RAF has a vision to be an agile, adaptable and capable Air Force that, person for person, is second to none, and that makes a decisive air power contribution in support of the UK Defence Mission.

RAF Northolt has been identified as a ‘Core Defence Site’ and is home to over 2,000 personnel and units such as the Queen’s Colour Squadron and the Central Band of the Royal Air Force as well as the British Forces Post Office.

Challenge

Organisational changes within the RAF, (specifically a consolidation of units following the closure of RAF Uxbridge and RAF Bentley Priory), resulted in a significant increase in the number of service personnel stationed at RAF Northolt. An assessment of the current nursery capabilities concluded that the existing nursery would not fulfil the future needs of the station. With the generous support of the RAF Benevolent Fund a new nursery facility was commissioned and the contract for the management of the nursery was put out to tender.

The mandatory requirement was to demonstrate a commitment to providing high-quality early years care and education whilst maintaining an affordable fee structure. The RAF and MoD Defence Estates were also desirous to find a provider with a nationwide presence and one that could bear the financial risk associated with the nursery operation.

Solution

Bright Horizons was selected as the nursery provider for the new, 72 place nursery for an initial 5 year period, proposing to:

- meet all the key operating requirements relating to opening hours/dates, meal provision, admissions policy, staff management, variable fee structures, customer satisfaction and key appointment approvals.
- offer a return on the investment in the new building in the form of a lease contract and rental payment.
- operate the nursery as a commercial venture and to own all associated financial risks.
- provide the nursery with strong levels of local and national support, including peer nurseries in the region and access to specialist teams such as HR, IT, Early Years, Finance, Health and Safety and Operational Risk, who are based in the central support office in Northamptonshire.

Bright Horizons was able to demonstrate a clear understanding of the specific security needs at RAF Northolt informed by the experience of operating 6 other nurseries based on MoD sites. This was further evidenced by the company’s ‘Ready to Respond’ plan which has been developed to address the specific risks associated with operating a nursery used by service personnel.

Additionally, Bright Horizons’ commitment to its own employee development and welfare was clearly demonstrated by a consistent record of recognition as one of the UK’s 50 Best Workplaces as defined by the Great Places to Work Institute.





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Contact Us

Contact us today to learn more about how Bright Horizons can help your organisation.

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Implementation

On award of the contract Bright Horizons created a Transition Project Team which included representatives from IT, Early Years, Operations, Finance, HR, and Parent Marketing. The team’s key objective was to work with the existing nursery operation and Station personnel to ensure a timely and smooth transition to Bright Horizons management with minimal disruption to children and their families, and to nursery staff transferring under TUPE regulations.

A marketing campaign was launched to ensure all personnel and community parents were aware of the newer, larger nursery facility. This included advertising in RAF Northolt’s on-site weekly newsletter and holding open sessions for current and new RAF service personnel, with flyers distributed to promote these sessions. To ensure maximum visibility to the local community, adverts ran in the local press and with parent and child centred organisations such as NCT, Bounty, netmums and mumsnet. The nursery held open days when community parents were welcome to visit the new facility. Additionally, the nursery was advertised via other Bright Horizons nurseries in the region.

Project Timeline

August 2010	Bright Horizons submits Tender Proposal to RAF Northolt
September 2010	Contract awarded to Bright Horizons
December 2010	New building completed and occupancy granted
January 2011	Nursery opened to children and parents

What does our client say about Bright Horizons?

The Nursery is essential for the operational effectiveness of our personnel. Day to day we need people to be able to concentrate on their work without having to stress about childcare. While they’re on ops we need them to know that they’ve got a childcare solution in place and that the person looking after their child is aware of the extra pressures of Service life, paying particular attention to their child, still communicating with them even though they’re deployed and engaging with the Station to make sure the Service /Community/ Welfare loop is closed off.

Bright Horizons was selected from the tender process because they were perceived to offer an all-round, well-practised package with an ethos and identity that was very much aligned to that of the Service. The team are very keen to integrate with the Station and become part of the Community Support and Welfare Team which means we can increasingly work together on issues such as observing children and parents while their Service person is deployed and highlighting concerns to the chain of command, engaging with deployed parents to maintain the parent/child link and working with parents and the chain of command to manage the childcare complexities that Service life brings.”

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