Military, movement, and (mis)understanding: service families navigating 'inclusive' education systems

Gemma Lesley Carr

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Leeds
Sociology and Social Policy

May 2023

Intellectual Property Rights Statement

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

The right of Gemma Lesley Carr to be identified as Author of this work has been asserted by her in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to thank my supervisors Dr Lisa Buckner and Professor Angharad Beckett for your support over the last four years. You both had faith in me even when I didn't. Thank you.

Completing a PhD during a global pandemic has been challenging to say the least. Given the nature of this thesis, accessing participants, namely working with schools, posed several other challenges. In this regard I am forever grateful to the schools who agreed to take part and support this research. Likewise, I would like to thank all the participants who completed questionnaires, and those who attended face to face interviews online. Many of the participants I spoke to spoke with a sense of pride about the Military Community. I am lucky to have been able to hear your stories. Thank you.

To my friends Charlotte and Karen, thank you both for being pillars of support. Charlotte, you have put up with my moaning for 10 years, who knew on the first day of Foundation Year we would end up completing a PhD and become best friends!! Karen, thank you for instilling confidence in me and pushing me to do more even when I really didn't want to, you are a great friend.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband Paul who has supported me without question since the day I said, 'I'm going to uni.' I love you more.

To my children, Taylor, Morgan, and Honey, I dedicate this Thesis to you. You are my inspiration, my pride, and my glory. This was all for you.

Abstract

This research explores Service Families' experiences of navigating inclusive education systems and investigates the range of factors which shape these experiences. It also investigates the particular experiences of Service Families who have a child or children with a Special Educational Need or Disability (SEND) and demonstrates how the itinerant nature of the *Military lifestyle* impacts Service Families with children.

Using a mixed methods approach, this research builds on the limited empirical evidence within the UK on Service Families. Further, it has explored how education systems intersect with the moral obligations of the Armed Forces Covenant, how the Covenant is (mis)understood by Service Parents and Key Stakeholders, and whether the rights of Service Families and Children, to quality inclusive education have been assured. Overall, this research examined what measures should be in place to ensure Service Families and their children are being supported adequately.

The findings show that Service Families cycle in and out of periods of (in)stability, which has a direct impact on the education of their children. This is additionally exacerbated when a child has a SEND. Whilst the majority of Key Stakeholders who work with Service Families and children are highly experienced, Service Parents reported a general lack of understanding from Local Authorities. Perceptions of Service Families are further bound up in assumptions of resilience which often affects the levels of support which they receive. Overall, the expectations of Service Families with children are clear, in that they expect the moral obligations underpinned in the Armed Forces Covenant to be upheld.

This thesis highlights and demonstrates the unique challenges experienced by Service Families and their children when navigating inclusive education systems and provides recommendations and best practice examples for policy makers, Local Authorities, and schools. Additionally, this research has highlighted and recommended the requirement for further in-depth investigation of Service Children with a SEND.

Table of contents

List of figures

List of tables

Abbreviations

AFF	Army Families Federation
AGAI	Army General and Administrative Instructions
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BAME	Black Asian and Minority Ethnicity
BSP	Boarding School Parent
BSQ	Boarding School Questionnaire
CEA	Continuity of Education Allowance
DBS	Defence Business Service
DfE	Department for Education
EAT	Education Advisory Team
EHCP	Educational Health and Care Plan
JPA	Joint Personnel Administration
KS	Key Stakeholder
LA	Local Authority
LA A	Local Authority A
LA B	Local Authority B
LASQ	Local Authorities School Questionnaires
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoDLAP	Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership
PACC	Pay and Allowances Casework and Complaints Cell
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RAF	Royal Air Force
RN	Royal Navy
SCiP	Service Children's Progression Alliance
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENA	Special Educational Needs Addition
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SFA	Service Families Accommodation
SP	Service Parent
SPP	Service Pupil Premium
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
US	United States

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Attesting to the Crown, and country – an introduction to the research

In 2011 the Armed Forces Covenant was introduced in the United Kingdom (UK). It represents a promise between the nation and the Armed Forces community, which was enshrined by law as part of the Armed Forces Act 2011 (Brooke-Holland and Mills, 2020, p.2). The Covenant sets out the following (Ministry of Defence, 2015a, p.1):

An Enduring Covenant Between

The People of the United Kingdom
His Majesty's Government
– and –

All those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the Crown

And their Families

The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty. Families also play a vital role in supporting the operational effectiveness of our Armed Forces. In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.

Those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

This obligation involves the whole of society: it includes voluntary and charitable bodies, private organisations, and the actions of individuals in supporting the Armed Forces. Recognising those who have performed military duty unites the country and demonstrates the value of their contribution. This has no greater expression than in upholding this Covenant.

The Armed Forces community is defined as any person who serves, or has previously served, and their families, including any immediate family members of the deceased (Brooke-Holland and Mills, 2020; Ministry of Defence, 2015a). Armed Forces personnel are bound by attesting to the crown and country to fulfil the requirements of their obligations, which they must meet at any given time. Personnel must live up to the obligations and responsibilities associated

with their day-to-day roles including frequent deployments and other periods of absence. They must also relocate to any location which fulfils the requirements of the Services with zero autonomy (Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a).

In this regard, when the Serving person's family accompany them on postings[1], Military Families are subject to, and experience, a wide range of challenges influenced by mobility, which penetrate their daily lives. For some, the itinerant nature of the Military can cause too much disruption and instability, which may result in Service Families choosing to live separately from their partners[2]. This can, however, place additional stressors upon the Military family unit, as periods of absence can occur more frequently. In effect, Military families are faced with making complex decisions which may not, or are seldom, experienced by civilian families[3] (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020).

Military spouses are expected to *perform* their roles which includes dutifully following their Service spouse to new postings and are expected to adapt or conform to the demands of their Serving spouse's needs so that they are fully supported in their role Serving the Crown and country (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020; Venning, 2005). Moving to new locations affects the military family unit in many ways with new schools, new health care providers, and new jobs being some of the challenges experienced. Often, these responsibilities lie solely with the Spouse and thus they experience frequent stressors whilst organising new school places, new healthcare providers and seeking employment (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020).

It is these unique processes experienced by Military Families that underpin the foundations of this research. In particular, this research focuses on the experiences of Service Parents accessing school places for their children when a new posting occurs. These experiences are further exacerbated when Service Parents have a child with a Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) and have to navigate the complex systems of support. Whilst children

---

[1] Posting: the location/unit in which Service Personnel are assigned to
[2] These families are often referred to as unaccompanied or dispersed families.
[3] Civilian family refers to families who are not Military connected.

should be at the centre of research regarding their education, this research acknowledges that it is the Service Parents who primarily navigate these issues of accessing school places and Special Educational Needs support for their children. Investigation into the experiences of Service Children in new schools is worthy, and rightfully so, of its own investigation. Therefore, this research focused on the experiences of Service Parents when navigating choosing a school place for their child(ren). Whilst the experiences of children are valuable, this research was concerned with the stressors and dilemmas Service Parents encounter and how the moral obligations of the State are being upheld in this regard. This research therefore provides a foundation into future research with Service Children.

1.1.1 Where's home?

As a result of the itinerant nature of Military Families, some choices can be limited when everyday norms, such as deciding on where to live, are complex. It is important to note here, that not all Military Families will share the same experiences of mobility, as each Service (Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy) varies in terms of the requirements to move and the support it provides to families (cf. Army Families Federation et al., 2014). Personnel who serve with the Army, for instance, are more likely to live in Service Families Accommodation (SFA), compared to Naval Families, as Naval Families are more likely to live unaccompanied, and/or own their own home (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p.20).

With regard to decisions about choosing where to live, for some families this will include selecting a location that is within the proximity of a *good* school (David et al., 1994; Jackson and Bisset, 2005). Policy changes introduced in the 1980s have influenced the ways in which parents can now make informed choices regarding their children's education (Burgess et al., 2015; Reay, 2002). Whilst research indicates that parents are likely to select schools that are within a close proximity to their home, parents are able to select schools, freely, which fall outside of the catchment area[4] (Burgess et al., 2015, p.1263). Burgess et al. (2015, p.1263) also observed that parents tend to prefer to send their

---

[4] Catchment area is a geographical area in which a school falls under

children to schools that do not have higher figures of children living in low-income households on roll. This further resonates with discussions surrounding parents attempting to *beat the system* of admissions, to secure sought after places at top schools, and securing a place at their desired school (Woolcock, 2019; Weale, 2018).

On the other hand, Service Families who experience mobility are often impeded when making informed choices regarding their child's school. Not every experience across Military Families will be the same however, and this is in part due to the complex mechanisms of the military, in which each arm varies in Service needs. For the majority however, making informed choices, in everyday life, includes a variety of varied factors which many civilian families may take for granted. To put it one way, an *average* family makes a decision, a choice, on which school their first child will attend. It is likely the family have had the opportunity to research schools in the area, they may have had informal conversation or attended open information events on schools, they have most likely had the opportunity to visit a selection of schools prior to making a preference on the admissions form and spoken with various school and Local Authority staff. All of these stages, which facilitate decision making for other families are missing or difficult to achieve for many Service Families, form the very core of making an informed decision regarding what school a child will attend, these choices are hindered or removed all together for many Service Families.

1.2 Why is this research important?

The context of this research considers the wide range of factors which influence and shape the life courses of Service Families. In this regard it is pivotal that the obligations of Service Personnel to the state are acknowledged and further, how these obligations impact those who have not attested to the Crown. Service Families, therefore, are obligated by implication insofar as, decisions which are made regarding the family, are often influenced by the Service Person's career (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). Moreover, discourse surrounding Service Personnel and their obligations to the state often omit discussion of the State's obligations to Service Personnel. Whilst the Armed Forces Covenant sets out a *promise* between the state and

the Armed Forces community, research into how the Covenant is understood and is upheld is still in its infancy.

Policy which directly effects Service Families can significantly impact the challenges experienced. This is particularly evident in policies such as the Schools Admission Code, and the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Code of Practice, which work at a national level, yet can cause significant barriers locally. The *Living in Our Shoes* report commissioned by the Ministry of Defence to independently review and consider 'the diverse needs of Service families [and] assess whether the current support' (Walker et al., 2020, p.3) meets their needs, made 110 recommendations, with 31 of these pertaining to Service Children and education (Walker et al., 2020). Many of the families who provided evidence to the review highlighted the barriers which are caused when policy does not meet the practical requirements of Service life (a review of relevant policies can be found in Chapter 2). Most alarming, the report states that many children with Special Educational Needs miss a significant amount of time away from school when a suitable school place has not been allocated prior to relocation (Walker et al., 2020, p.73). Whilst this report will not have captured all the Service Families affected in this regard, it illustrates the wider structural issues which demonstrate Service Children's rights are not being met; and this is of a particular prominence for those with Special Educational Needs.

1.2.1 Motivations for this research

The idea for this research emerged from my lived experiences as a military spouse and parent. Thirteen years into my marriage my husband joined the Armed Forces. Being a Service Child himself, the military lifestyle was embedded into his norms and values. Moving into the military community with no prior experiences of Service Life, placed me in a unique position that influenced my interest in researching the sociological perspectives and lived experiences of the military community, and enabled me to identify and investigate areas which lacked academic analysis. Being part of a military community also meant that I began to observe accounts of difficulties relating to Service Children's education being experienced by other military families. It is from this personal standpoint, and having the ability to observe others' experiences, which facilitated me in identifying areas worthy of investigation.

Therefore, my positionality provided several advantages which assisted the process of this research and are outlined further in Chapter 3.

1.2.2 Research aims and questions

The aims of this research are to explore Service Families' experiences of choosing and accessing suitable schools for their children, and to investigate the range of factors shaping these experiences of Service Families in this regard. It also investigates the particular experiences of Service Families who have a child or children with a Special Educational Need or Disability, to understand how the *military lifestyle* (for example, higher rates of family mobility) impacts these families. Further, it considers, in the light of the research findings, whether the obligations to Service Children and Families are being met, as set forth in the Armed Forces Covenant. Finally, it examines whether the rights of Service Children and Service Children with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities, to quality, inclusive education are being assured.

Overall, this research aims to examine what measures must be in place to ensure Service Families and their children are supported adequately. To meet these aims, this research addresses the following questions:

1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places?

    1.1) How do Service Parents navigate these issues?

2) To what extent do Key Stakeholders understand the challenges faced by families associated with Service mobility?

    2.1) What challenges do Key Stakeholders encounter when endeavouring to meet the needs of Service Children?

    2.2) To what extent are Service Families experiencing support being 'routinely put in place quickly,' as set out by the SEND code of practice?

    2.3) How do Key Stakeholders perceive parental expectations and what barriers do they encounter in terms of available resources in providing required support for Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability?

3) How does the Armed Forces Covenant contribute to society fulfilling its moral obligation to Service Families in respect of accessing suitable schools?

3.1) What are Service Parents and Key Stakeholders understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant?

3.2) Does the Armed Forces Covenant uphold Service Children's rights to inclusive education? And in what ways is this, if at all, assured?

1.3 The education of Service Children

In 2016 the Secretary of State for Education announced her vision to deliver a *world-class* education for every child irrespective of their background, as part of a new Department for Education strategy (DfE) (Department for Education, 2016, p.3). The DfE 2015-2020 strategy incorporates three system goals, twelve reform policies, and five key principles, designed as a framework to assist every member of the teaching community, and practitioners working in education, to deliver excellence (Department for Education, 2016, p.3-4). The Educational Excellence Everywhere goal stated, 'every child and young person can access high-quality provision, achieving to the best of [their] ability regardless of location, prior attainment and background' (Department for Education, 2016, p.7). This means every child should have equal access to education, irrespective of their educational history, and family circumstances. Evidence shows that since 2009, the number of Service Personal with children has increased by 31% (Godier-McBard et al., 2021, p.11; Ministry of Defence, 2020). Identifying Service Children in schools is complex with census data[5] being reliant on parents self-identifying at the time of data collection (Department for Education, 2021a). In 2009, Service Children in schools accounted for just 5% of the total pupil population (Department for Education, 2010a, p.6), but this is now suspected to be around 10% of the total pupil population (McCulloch and Hall, 2016, p.30; Ministry of Defence, 2016b). Furthermore, data additionally highlights the mobility rates of Service Personal have increased by 3% since 2020 which has been largely influenced by the extensive drawdown of Personnel from Germany (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p.1). In this regard, it is evident that Service Children as a cohort are

---

[5] The School Census collects data for all schools 3 times per year for the following schools: maintained nursery, primary, middle primary and secondary, secondary, all through schools, special schools, pupil referral unit's and alterative provisions, academies and free schools, University, and city technical colleges. It does not include any MoD schools or independent schools (Department for Education, 2021a, no pagination).

increasing, and with increased rates of mobility across the Tri-Services, Service Families are more likely to need to source new schools for their children.

Recent figures, however, suggest Service Parents continue to experience challenges with their children's education (Ministry of Defence, 2020); ranging from sourcing new school places on a move, renegotiating Special Educational Needs support at a new school, and issues with children repeating parts of the curriculum (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Rose and Rose, 2021; Ministry of Defence, 2020). Rose and Rose (2021) illustrate particular challenges that occur when Service Children begin a new school with often no information regarding the children being transferred ahead of their start date. This can be particularly problematic when a child has a Special Educational Need or Disability, resulting in significant delays in the child receiving appropriate support.

A significant proportion of research into Service Personnel has been undertaken since the events of Iraq and Afghanistan which drew attention to Service Families and the challenges they experience during times of conflict (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Rose and Rose, 2021; Longfield, 2018; Knobloch et al., 2017; Hines et al., 2015; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Chandra et al., 2010a; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). Yet, as a cohort, Service Families are at risk of being forgotten when they are not at the forefront of public consciousness. Personnel have not been engaged in combat in Afghanistan for twenty years, and research shows despite the plethora of work undertaken in respect of the Armed Force Covenant, 30% of Service Spouses are not aware of the nature or content of the Covenant (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p.8). To the author's knowledge, there is no research available which solely focuses on the civilian population and their awareness and understanding of the Covenant. However, Hines et al. (2015) state the overall opinion of the Armed Forces is high, but this is largely from the older generations of society. Significantly, this could imply that there is a general lack of understanding from some members of the Military Community, and the civilian population regarding the Covenant and its principles, and how these are implemented.

1.3.1 Considering the wider picture

The process of choosing a school for any family is regarded as a particularly stressful time, which can often become bureaucratic (McNerney et al., 2015; Tissot, 2011). For families where a child is identified as having a Special Educational Need or Disability, the process of school preferences can become additionally complex (McNerney et al., 2015). McNerney et al. (2015, p.1097) illustrate how policy changes that have enabled parents to make informed choices and express their preferences for schools which they consider the right fit for their child, have proved to be problematic. They argue, since the publication of the Warnock Report (1978), inclusive education for all children with a Special Education Need or Disability has been key within educational policy. That said, specialist provision schools remain for those children who are considered, by a Local Authority, unable to be supported in a mainstream school (McNerney et al., 2015).

In addition, research evidence reveals that supporting children with a Special Educational Need or Disability cannot be a one-size-fits all process and is not a straight-forward process. What works for one child will not necessarily work for another (Tissot, 2011; Rogers, 2007). Considering this, parents are at risk of placing their child in a setting which cannot adequately meet the needs of their child, and often staff cannot adequately support them due to lack of training and resources (McNerney et al., 2015, p.1098). Therefore, the umbrella term of being educated 'inclusively' masks a variety of issues. The Alliance for Inclusive Education (2023) (ALLFIE) argues that 'inclusive communities can only be achieved if disabled and non-disabled people have shared lives, beginning with their educational experiences' (no, pagination). However, evidence shows the UK is failing in its duty to support all children with Special Educational Needs with cuts to funding forcing schools to remove or reduce support in some instances (ITV News, 2023; Hall, 2021).

The UN CRPD Article 24 very clearly states all children with disabilities have the right to an inclusive education which is free from discrimination. Nevertheless, the proposed changes highlighted in the recent Special Educational Needs and Disability Green paper, are reported as being focused on funding, and places

children at risk of not having inclusive access to mainstream schooling (The Alliance for Inclusive Education, 2023; HM Government, 2022).

For Service Families, having a child with a Special Educational Need or Disability is an additional stressor, as the stability which a school environment can provide is not guaranteed for the child's school life course (Hall, 2018; Aronson et al., 2016). Research within this area in the UK is sparse, which is further exacerbated by a sheer lack of data and information available on Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability. In 2006, the Defence Committee acknowledged and reported that this group of Service Children were doubly disadvantaged through: a lack of incoherent and inconsistent data collection and experiencing inconstancy in support where an Educational Health and Care Plan is in place (EHCP) (The Defence Committee, 2006, p.3). It has been some 17 years since this discussion took place, and yet, Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability continue to be inadequately supported, or their support needs specifically addressed in education or military policy.

1.3.2 Inside the classroom

Evidence suggests Service Children are less likely to attend schools which are rated by Ofsted as being 'outstanding', when compared to non-Service Children (Ministry of Defence, 2016b, p.4). Given that Service Children only represent a small proportion of the student cohort this is to be expected. That said, not all Service Children are subjected to the same levels of mobility and these children are less likely to experience distribution or different standards of education; but are still affected by the military lifestyle. However, mobile Service Children are at risk of missing or repeating parts of the curricular, and changes to curriculum when school exam boards differ from previous schools (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Noret et al., 2015). These challenges are additionally exacerbated when Service Parents are faced with a lack of school places in their new posting area causing significant stress on the family unit, in particular when moves occur during public examination periods (Walker et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, research postulates, that, Service Children perform academically at a similar level to non-Service Children, and there are some implicit suggestions that this could be a result of the resilience they develop (Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015). However, assuming

resilience in Service Children is presumptuous (Baverstock, 2018) and this is discussed further in Chapter 2. Coupled with the anxieties of friendships and settling into new environments, the social and emotional needs of Service Children are just as important as *bringing them up to speed* with their learning. Adapting to new routines further places a greater risk on the social and emotional needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs. The issues that influence Service Children's lives are exacerbated during times of parental absenteeism (Gribble and Fear, 2019; Longfield, 2018), when often routines and coping mechanisms must be adapted. In this regard, Key Stakeholders working with Service Children face their own challenges, as there is an implicit expectation for them to nurture, encourage and support Service Children. It is therefore imperative to understand the experiences of both Service Parents and Key Stakeholders working with Service Children.

1.4 History of the Military family

The itinerant nature of the military and their families stems back to the 1600s, if not further. Senior military men who married would be sent to war regularly with their wives and children accompanying them often living in squalid conditions. It was not until the end of the Crimean War that women and children began *quartering* in military housing, homes which were separated into four quarters (Venning, 2005). The mobility of military families persists today, although the landscape has changed somewhat, with some military families choosing to live unaccompanied with the Serving person returning home either weekly, or when possible (Gribble and Fear, 2019). Whilst the mobility rates for military families are approximately 70% per year (Centre for Social Justice, 2016, p.59), it is estimated that 24% of military families are considered as dispersed (Ministry of Defence, 2019d; Osbourbe, 2018; Army Families Federation et al., 2014).

As an institution, the military has historically been, and in some cases still is, viewed as *closed off*, providing little information to the outside civilian world. In contrast to civilian life, the Military Community can have a very fine boundary between the public and private divide which is generally experienced by others. For those who do live in military housing, commonly known as "the patch," they are housed within the close proximity of barracks, and in some instances,

houses can be situated "behind the wire"[6], separated and secured away from local surroundings. In this regard the Military Community live and work often in close proximity of each other, suggesting that separation of the privacy in the home is complex due to the limited separation of colleague to neighbour. As a close-knit community, it is perhaps not surprising that historical exploration of this group has been limited, as members of the Military Community may have been hesitant to participate in research, or outside interest has been lacking.

1.5 Researching the Military family

It is frequently noted that research in the UK into the lives of Military Personnel and their families was scarce until the occurrence of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq twenty years ago (Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015; White et al., 2011). As such, research in the UK is regularly discussed in comparison to the amount of research which has been completed in the United States (US) (cf. Knobloch et al., 2017; Rowe et al., 2014; Esqueda et al., 2012; Mmari et al., 2009). Whilst a large body of work conducted has investigated mental health, conflict and war, peacetime, and gendering, which positioned the serving person at the centre, research has now advanced to encapsulate the wider picture, such as factors which influence the lives of Service Families, Serving female veterans, and experiences of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Military Personnel.

There is some suggestion that conflict and war increase public awareness of the Military and thus attitudes and opinions are strengthened, discussion is increased, and support is demonstrated via charitable giving (Hines et al., 2015; Gribble et al., 2012). Yet there is some debate regarding public attitudes towards Military Personnel, with evidence suggesting the public do support Personnel despite Personnel themselves expressing they do not feel public opinions of them are high (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p. 21; Gribble et al., 2012). Hines et al. (2015, p.698) observe when there is a disconnection between civilians[7] and the Armed Forces, a 'civil-military gap' is created. This

---

[6] Behind the wire refers to military houses which are located on the military barracks themselves and not in a separate housing area in the proximity of the barracks.

[7] The use of the word civilians will be used throughout this thesis in reference to members of society who are not part of the Armed Forces community.

"gap" could provide an explanation into society's lack of understanding of the military lifestyle. Despite the introduction of the Armed Forces Covenant, which may have strengthened awareness of Service life and influenced wider interest in research, little is known regarding the true picture of civilians' understanding the military lifestyle.

Nevertheless, although still in its infancy in the UK, research into the lives of Service Families and the challenges encountered has significantly contributed to the area of understanding and awareness, and continues to grow (cf. Gribble and Fear, 2019; Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015; The Defence Committee, 2013a; Brady et al., 2013a; Ofsted, 2011; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund (2009) commissioned a piece of research which was the first of its kind to incorporate research which included Service Children. At this time, Service Personnel were still being deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan with 2009 being termed by the BBC as the 'bloodiest year' (BBC News, 2015, no pagination). Until this point research primarily explored Serving Personnel, followed by *the wife*, and the effects of war on the family unit who were left behind (cf. Dandeker et al., 2006).

With Service Families now at the centre of research, these early accounts have enabled a clearer understanding of what factors influence and penetrate the lives of Service families. As such, The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund (2009) observed there are ten stressors which are experienced and embedded into the daily lives of Service Children. These include: anxieties regarding Serving Parents being away for long periods of time and dealing with uncertainty, switching in and out of temporally living with a pseudo-single parent, dealing with the impact of news and media reports, having to adjust when the Serving Parent returns, the impact of mobility, stigmatisation from peers who do not understand the challenges of military families, grief, coping with parental illness and injuries, coping and adjusting to parents divorcing, and being a Service Child with a Special Educational Need and Disability (The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009, p.5). As noted by (The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009, p.5):

> Some of these challenges are the unavoidable consequences of having a parent in the Armed Forces (such as bereavement), whilst others simply should not exist in the first place (such as the bureaucratic restrictions on special needs provision when children move schools)

Whilst such challenges are undoubtedly difficult for any children to deal with, it is suggested that Service Children develop coping strategies which facilitate managing such challenging circumstances (Gribble and Fear, 2019; Longfield, 2018). That said, this is heavily connected with the view of Service Families being resilient (Baverstock, 2018), and the pseudo-single parent coping mechanisms which are adopted upon spousal deployment (Gribble and Fear, 2019; Mmari et al., 2009; Jensen et al., 1996; Jensen et al., 1986). The experiences of Service Children and how they build resilience will also vary according to age (Mmari et al., 2009, p.456). Older Service Children for instance are likely to be more intuitive if a parent is finding the circumstances of parental absence challenging. In this regard older Service Children may assume additional responsibilities such as providing informal childcare, assisting with household chores, and supporting the pseudo-single parent emotionally (Gribble and Fear, 2019, p.38). What is of great importance here, is to not only acknowledge, but to understand that whilst some of the challenges experienced by Service Children may be generic, they are in no way similar from one Service Child to the next, as each Service Child will have a different experience. Thus, the ways in which Service Parents support their children will also vary.

1.6 The Service Child

Service Children have accompanied their mothers and militant fathers, often living in inappropriate conditions, on tours of duty across the globe since the 1800s (Venning, 2005, p.83-84). Early accounts of Military families illustrate Service Children being educated at military schools on the barracks from around 1811 and were taught by educated soldiers and their wives (Venning, 2005, p.84). Venning (2005, p.84) claims that being educated in England was paramount for Service Children who were *destined to achieve successful careers*, with their mothers having to make the sacrifice of sending their child(ren) to a boarding school in England. Hence, many Service Parents would not see their children for years, in some cases until adulthood, with these

Service Children living with relatives or remaining at school during holidays in England (Gibson, 2012; Venning, 2005).

Whilst the landscape of Military postings[8] has changed significantly due to the reduction of Military bases and Personnel, overseas postings are still commonplace for many Military Families (Gibson, 2012). In this regard Service Children are often educated in Ministry of Defence Schools where available. In early 2021 the Ministry of Defence (MoD) educated Service Children in 14 schools across eight countries[9] and provide specialist guidance and support for Personnel posted to locations where no MoD provision is available (Ministry of Defence, 2018d). In general Service Children will attend a school which is within their current location, although the tradition of sending Service Children to boarding school remains, with the MoD providing Continuity of Educational Allowance (CEA) to Personnel who meet the strict criteria (Children's Education Advisory Service, 2020). The allowance enables Personnel to receive up to 90% of the school fees, irrespective of rank, but all Personnel are assessed on future mobility (Ministry of Defence, 2021d).

1.6.1 The definition of a Service Child
Whilst the overall definition of a Service Child is a child whose parents or guardians serve in the Armed Forces, there are several variations of definitions across various organisations. The Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) organisation defines the Service Child as: 'a person whose parent, or carer, serves in the regular armed forces, or as a reservist, or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life' (SCISS, 2021, cited in, Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2021, no pagination).

The UK Government webpages do not provide a formal definition of Service Children; however, they do outline criteria relating to the Service Pupil

---

[8] A posting is terminology used to refer to a Personnel's post. When Personnel are required to move to a new posting they receive an Assignment Order, also referred to as a Posting/Posting Order.

[9] This information pertains to MoD schools which cater for children aged 3-19 and does include early years' provision settings.

Premium[10] (SPP) which sets out the following (Ministry of Defence, 2021f, no pagination):

> one of their parents is serving in the regular armed forces (including pupils with a parent who is on full commitment as part of the full-time reserve service)
> they have been registered as a 'service child' on a school census since 2016
> one of their parents died whilst serving in the armed forces and the pupil receives a pension under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme or the War Pensions Scheme

Service Child definitions are much more in-depth according to MoD administrative guidelines which provides the following information, and again is often referred to throughout Joint Service Personnel (JPA) guidance in respect of monetary allowances (Ministry of Defence, 2019b, no pagination):

> A child is defined as a legitimate or legitimated child or step-child of either or both of the spouses/civil partners; a child statutorily adopted by either or both of the spouses/civil partners; a child of the family (a legal term meaning any other child who is being brought up in the household of the husband/wife/civil partners at their expense or was so being brought up immediately before the spouses/civil partners were estranged, separated by legal order, divorced or the civil partnership was dissolved or before the death of the husband, wife or civil partner). A child is deemed to be below the age of majority (18 years). If over that age, a son or daughter must be 24 years or under, unmarried or not in a civil partnership and in receipt of full-time education at a school, college or university (studying for a first degree only) or be out of full-time education for up to one year between secondary education and further education. The age limits do not apply to a son or daughter who is physically or mentally incapable of contributing to their own support … where the term Service Child is used, it is defined as a child of at least one parent/carer who is a regular serving member of the Armed Forces.

The Armed Forces Covenant does not provide a formal definition of Service Child other than stipulating that a Service Child is part of the Armed Forces Community if either parent/guardian is a Regular or Reservist soldier, or a veteran (Ministry of Defence, 2015a). Overall, whilst the main characteristics of a Service Child are similar, official definitions vary depending on source.

1.6.2 Identifying and locating Service Children

There is a considerable amount of debate regarding identifying Service Children within schools (Foster and Long, 2018, p.7; Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and

---

[10] State schools are eligible for Service Pupil Premium when a Service Child is recorded on the school census each year

Hall, 2016, p.22; The Defence Committee, 2013a; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009, p.13). Discussions conclude that the current methods for collecting data on Service Children present several challenges which hinder the process of identifying and locating Service Children across the UK (Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2020).

The most common form for collecting data on Service Children in education is through the School Census each year (Longfield, 2018, p.18; Ofsted, 2011). The School Census collects data from schools in England[11] at three different times during the academic year (Department for Education, 2021c). A marker to identify Service Children in England was introduced in 2008, which is collected via the School Census each year. However, this is a self-reported form of identification and parents must inform their child's school if they are a Service Child (Department for Education, 2021a). Problematically using data from the School Census for England does not provide a comprehensive review of figures of Service Children, because it does not include Service Children being educated in devolved nations, Service Children in MoD schools or in overseas schools, those educated in Independent schools, or whose parents have not informed the school, or who have been missed on the Census due to their start date being after the collection deadline.

Similarly, data collection on Service Children who attract Service Pupil Premium (SPP) presents the same challenges. According to SPP figures 80,110 eligible Service Children attracted SPP in 2022-2023 (Roberts, 2022, p.12). Yet these data only pertain to Service Children educated in England who are eligible for SPP. Further, issues such as parents being unaware of the procedure, missing the deadline for notification, the child not being on roll at the time of Census data collection, can prevent schools from receiving Service Pupil Premium for some children for a period time, meaning they are not receiving SPP for all Service Children on roll (McCulloch and Hall, 2016; The Defence Committee, 2013a).

---

[11] Data is collected from maintained nurseries, all State maintained primary and secondary schools, specialist schools, pupil referral units, academy schools, and city technology collages (Department for Education, 2021c, p.5)

Whilst both methods of data collection on Service Children do not account for all Service Children in the education system, they do go some way to identify and locate this particular cohort of students. That said there is much debate regarding relying on these figures as there is a danger that some Service Children will fall under the radar when incorrect information or inaccurate data are collected. As a result, *unaccounted* Service Children are at risk of not receiving vital support that they are rightly entitled to, and this is additionally exacerbated if the Service Child has a Special Educational Need or Disability (McCulloch and Hall, 2016).

1.7 Service Parents navigating access to children's education

To understand how Service Parents manage the challenges of military life, it is first important to consider the military as an institution and how this influences other institutions such as the family, school, and Local Authority.

1.7.1 Competing institutions: theoretical approaches to this research

Segal (1986) and Coser (1974) argue the military is a greedy institution which demands loyalty, commitment, and time from its members. The consequences being that the military takes priority over any other institution. The military family unit is always expected to give way to the obligations that the Serving Person has attested too. For the majority of Service Personnel mobility forms a part of their role, moving around to various postings. Each Service[12] however, does not experience mobility as an umbrella aspect of Service life. Naval Families for instance are the most static of the Services, often living within their own homes as opposed to living in Service Families Accommodation (SFA), and similarly approximately 65% of RAF families reside in their own properties (Army Families Federation et al., 2014, p.3). In contrast, Army families are likely to move to a new posting on average every three years[13] (Army Families Federation et al., 2014).

---

[12] Service arm such as Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy.
[13] According to rank, Corps, and job role

It is important to note, however, that whilst mobility differs across the Services, so too do the deployments of Personnel. Army Personnel for instance are likely to be deployed on a tour of operation for a period of six to nine months whilst Naval Personnel can be away from their family home for up to '660 days over a three year period' (Army Families Federation et al., 2014, p.1). In light of this, Service Children who experience increased stability through not having to move home and schools, still experience social and emotional stressors in respect of parental absenteeism (Longfield, 2018; White et al., 2011; Huebner et al., 2007; Chandra et al., 2010a). DeVoe and Ross (2012, p.187) observe however, that the challenges of deployment go beyond the period of parental absenteeism and encompass a wider range of factors, such as reintegration.

As the family institution similarly requires the same loyalty, commitment, and time from its members (Vuga and Juvan, 2013) as the military family the challenges of parental absenteeism and reintegration can form conflicts as a direct effect of the competing demands of these. Both equally important institutions, military families are obligated to appease the other (Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974) and this is particularly prevalent when Personnel return home. Vuga and Juvan (2013, p.1058) suggest however, that during times of military deployments the obligations of the military institute supersede that of the family. To put it another way, it is not uncommon or unheard of that military spouses, and in some cases Personnel themselves, iterate the saying "soldier first, family second" during such times. It is, therefore, not surprising that upon the Service parents' return, both parents experience challenges when parenting roles change within a short period of time (DeVoe and Ross, 2012, p.187). Changes to structure and routine, for instance, which the home parent has established in the other parents' absence, can quickly become eradicated when the returning parent does not reinforce or support the changes on their return, as they are (re)negotiating and adapting their own positions within the household hierarchy (DeVoe and Ross, 2012).

As the military is considered to be *greedy* this poses some interesting thoughts on the ways in which service families' navigate their daily lives. On the one hand Personnel are obligated to the State and *must* adhere to orders as set out in their terms of service. Yet their families are not. However, Service Families

are implicitly bound by the terms of military life, respective of whether they move with their spouse, they are essentially at the whim of the military. The theoretical framework for this research therefore draws on the arguments of the military as a greedy institution and explores how this impinges of Service Parents' accessing 'inclusive' education systems.

1.7.2 Understanding the complexities of the Service Child's life course

Given the extent to which both the institutions of Military and family are positioned against one another, literature suggests, that Service Parents must consider the social and emotional aspects which underpin Service Children's experiences of education (McCulloch et al., 2018; Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). Research illustrates that such aspects of cycling in and out of routines are embedded within the everyday lived norms of a Service Child's life (McCulloch et al., 2018, p.14). As a result, Service Children rationalise situations which arise as result of the complex nature of the Military family and form an acceptance that is often associated with resilience (Carrell, 2019; Baverstock, 2018; McCulloch et al., 2018).

Much of the research conducted on the Military family does however discuss parental absenteeism from the perspective of one parental absence (Army, 2014; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Chandra et al., 2010a; Mmari et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Dandeker et al., 2006; Bey and Lange, 1974). Dual Serving couples, whilst mentioned to some extent are vastly overlooked within research. Service Children who live in a house where both parents serve are to some extent, doubly disadvantaged when deployment occurs simultaneously for both parents. Longfield (2018) reports Service Children from dual Service homes are likely to live with grandparents or other family members during dual deployments, which can present an additional range of challenges for this group of Service Children. In addition, there is a lack, or complete absence of research on single parent Serving Personnel investigating the complex and unique challenges of being a single parent in the Armed Forces.

1.7.3 Finding the 'right' school

Jackson and Bisset (2005) illustrate parents usually select schools within a close proximity to their home. The Educational Reform Act 1998 however,

empowered consumer choice through the marketization of education for some (David et al., 1994, p.14). For Military parents however, there is a clear lack of choice for the majority when selecting areas to reside in which can restrict their choice of a suitable school for their children. The Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey 2020 demonstrated that 25% of Service Personnel felt disadvantaged in respect of family life and their children's education (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p.22).

The feeling of being safe and secure in a school setting, which understands the unique challenges of Service life will undoubtedly be of key importance to Service Parents (Walker et al., 2020). Brady et al. (2013a, p.5) state 63% of Service Parents reported difficulties when arranging school places for their children, with a further 73% reporting they had experienced difficulties related to their child's Special Educational Needs. More recent research demonstrates Service Children are at risk of missing periods from school or parts of the curricular as a direct result of relocation (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). In particular, Service Families have expressed their frustrations when new posting orders require a family to move during the school year (Walker et al., 2020). When this occurs Service Parents must source a school place in their new location via a mid-year application.

However, it is suspected that the majority of Service Parents are unable to source schools which adequately meet their child's needs for support, particularly when a child has a Special Educational Need or Disability (Walker et al., 2020). Evidence shows Service Children experience a wide range of challenges (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Longfield, 2018; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). Whilst some of these are similar to civilian children some are unique to Service Children (Walker et al., 2020). Although Walker et al. (2020) highlight support for Service Children will vary across schools, it is suggested those with higher proportions with Service Children are more adequately equipped to support them; in part this relates to funding provided for schools with Service Children on roll (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020).

As a result of children's educational stability being disrupted, some Service Parents navigate the challenge of stability by sending their children to a boarding school (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Carrell, 2019). Often considered a perk by the civilian community (Rayment, 2021; Gye, 2015; Martin, 2013), boarding school can mitigate disruption to education providing Service Children with stable friendships and undisturbed support. However, despite Service Parents finding a suitable school for their children via this option, many report the wider consequences of this avenue. Long periods of separation and meeting the strict criteria of the Continuity of Education Allowance is reported as an extremely stressful process (Walker et al., 2020) (a discussion on boarding school can be found in Chapter 2).

Thus, Service Parents either continually must navigate the challenges of mobility and moving children to new schools, live as a dispersed family, or effectively live separately from their children for significant proportions of the school year. This demonstrates that finding the right school for Service Children can be, and in many cases is, highly problematic and lacking in freedom of choice regarding decisions Service Parents make for their children.

1.8 Overview of the thesis

This section will outline the structure of the thesis by providing an account of what each Chapter will cover.

Chapter 2 begins by providing a review of the existing literature and research which is relevant to this research. To begin, the Chapter discusses the Armed Forces Covenant and describes its intended purpose and critiques how the Covenant applies to Service Children's education. Service Personnel are obligated via their attestment to the Crown, to serve their country. This Chapter then explores theories of moral commitment and social responsibility (Bowen et al., 2016; Miller et al., 1990; Wolfe, 1989; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). Over time, families have become more diverse, moving away from the heteronormative assumptions of the family unit and this also applies to military families. Section 2.4 examines the unique challenges experienced by Service Families and their children focusing on mobility, stability and understanding.

Chapter 2 then moves on to discuss some of the challenges and barriers of access to Service Children's education. Service Children experience a variety of stressors which are embedded within their daily lives (Longfield, 2018; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). Section 2.6 and 2.7 explores the School Admissions Code and the SEND Code of Practice and discusses some of the issues for Service Families when applying for school places. The final sections of Chapter 2 conclude with a review of Service Children and inclusive education, before focusing on Service Children who attend a boarding school.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used for this research and the rationale for using mixed methods. Due to this research taking part during a pandemic, several changes have reshaped the methodological process, which include changes to sampling strategy, recruitment, and adopting the use of online methods for qualitative interviews. Such challenges have been outlined within Chapter 3 as well and providing a justification for the methods used.

Chapter 4 is the first analysis Chapter which explores the experiences of Service Parents applying for school places, and how they navigate the challenges of finding a school place. This Chapter addresses research questions: 1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places? And 1.1) How do Service Parents navigate these issues?

As mentioned previously, the mobility rates of Personnel are estimated at 70% (Centre for Social Justice, 2016), 80% of Personnel have children (Ministry of Defence, 2022g), which could potentially suggest, those who experience mobility, are likely to need to source a school place. Mobility was connected with lack of stability throughout this research. This first analysis Chapter therefore discusses the theme of (in)stability and how this affects the lives of Service Families; taking an in-depth look at how this transfers to school applications. The Service Family lifecycle is not homogenous, and whilst there may be common denominators in the challenges they experience, Chapter 4 explores these challenges on a much deeper, and personal level.

Chapter 5 discusses the experiences of Key Stakeholders, and how they understand the pressures of Service life. It also explores how Key Stakeholder expertise enables them to meet the needs of Service Children. It additionally examines the relationship between Service Parent's and Key stakeholders, in addition to discussing Key Stakeholders feeling supported in their roles. The Chapter therefore focuses on the theme of 'understanding' exploring research questions: 2) To what extent do Key Stakeholders understand the challenges faced by families associated with Service mobility? and 2.1) What challenges do Key Stakeholders encounter when endeavouring to meet the needs of Service Children?

Chapter 6 investigates the support mechanisms experienced by Service Parents. This Chapter explores Service Parents with Children with a Special Educational Need. Research on Service Children with a Special Educational Need in the UK is limited. However, Service Children with a Special Educational Need have been found to be doubly disadvantaged in respect of support routinely being put into place (Bradley and Almond, 2022). Chapter 6 therefore examines experiences of support for Service Families with children with Special Educational Needs and explores how the needs of Service Children are being met.

This Chapter explores research questions: 1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places? 2.2) To what extent are Service Families experiencing support being 'routinely put in place quickly,' as set out by the SEND code of practice? and 2.3) How do Key Stakeholders perceive parental expectations and what barriers do they encounter in terms of available resources in providing required support for Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability?

Chapter 7 explores the final theme of 'expectations' and addresses research questions: 1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places? 2.3) How do Key Stakeholders perceive parental expectations and what barriers do they encounter in terms of available resources in providing required support for Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability? 3) How does

the Armed Forces Covenant contribute to society fulfilling its moral obligation to Service Families in respect of accessing suitable schools? 3.1) What are Service Parents and Key Stakeholders understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant? and 3.2) Does the Armed Forces Covenant uphold Service Children's rights to inclusive education? And in what ways is this, if at all, assured?. Expectations were found to be interlinked with policy and practice, insomuch as, findings show Service Parents have certain expectations regarding allocation of school places, the right for support for children with Special Educational Needs, and the quality of education available. Chapter 7 therefore examines the School Admissions Code, the Armed Forces Covenant, the SEND Code of Practice, and inclusive education, and how these meet Service Parents expectations.

The final Chapter of this thesis draws on the findings of this research and demonstrates how the key findings answer the research questions. This Chapter will also provide some key recommendations for any further research within this field.

1.9 Conclusion

This Chapter has introduced and provided a brief background of the complex nature of Service life. To begin this Chapter discussed the Armed Forces Covenant which states no member of the Armed Forces community should experience any disadvantages due to Service life. However, as this Chapter has illustrated, the mobility requirements of Service life can present many challenges, which are not fully addressed within policy. This is particularly evident in respect of Service Children's access to education. The Chapter then framed the research problem by illustrating the importance of this research before moving on to outline the aims of this research.

The history of the military family was discussed before briefly drawing on research on military families. The following sections detailed Service Children, the definitions used, and the issues of data collection. The Chapter then moved forward to draw on theoretical debates of the military as an institution and how this can frame understanding and thinking of Service Families. Finally, this Chapter drew on these concepts to demonstrate how this pertains to Service

Children's education. An overview of the thesis was also provided. The following Chapter will explain the methodology of this research, which will draw on the contextual challenges of redesigning methods within a pandemic.

Chapter 2 Understanding the situation when "it's out of your control"

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 introduced the military family and outlined some of the key factors which shape the unique nature of the military lifestyle. This Chapter considers existing literature, and theoretical perspectives which have underpinned this research. The Armed Forces are embedded within the culture of the UK, with Serving Personnel and Veterans being regarded highly by some (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Hines et al., 2015). A new Armed Forces Family Strategy was introduced in 2022 with Leo Docherty MP stating, 'the strategy seeks to offer choice and flexibility to personnel to serve their nation and raise a family at the same time' (cited in, Ministry of Defence, 2022e, p.2). Similarly, the release of the *Living in Our Shoes* report commissioned by Gavin Williamson MP, investigated the needs of Service Families and the adequacy of these being met (Walker et al., 2020). As Lieutenant General James Swift articulated in the opening pages of the *Living in Our Shoes* report 'our Armed Forces personnel must be confident that not only are they valued and will be treated fairly, but also that their families will be supported and treated properly in line with modern-day life' (cited in, Walker et al., 2020, p.2).

Significantly there has been a clear shift from the traditional *soldier first, family, second* attitude which has been embedded within this institution for some time. The current focus in respect of supporting Service Families has moved to a more inclusive approach: *recruit the solider, retain the family* (Walker et al., 2020; Army&You, 2013). Chapter 1 illustrated the obligations of Service Personnel to the state and how this implicitly affects the family, and, how this relates to mobility. This Chapter will explore the issues of mobility and how this affects Service Parents navigating 'inclusive' education systems.

Chapter 1 also discussed the Armed Forces Covenant and its principles of mitigating disadvantage to Service Families. The Covenant is thus underpinned by a moral obligation to the Military Community, and implicitly acts as a contract of social responsibility (of society to its military). Service Personnel are obligated to the state once they have voluntary attested to the Crown. As outlined in Chapter 1 this idea for Coser (1974) sets them apart from Goffman's

theory of total institutions (Goffman, 1991), because greedy institutions require voluntary subscription (Meyer, 1975). The first section of this Chapter therefore discusses the Armed Forces Covenant describing what the Covenant is and how this applies to Service Families.

Greenberg and Turksma (2015) state 'awareness, empathy, and compassion contribute to personal well-being and interpersonal experiences that nurture secure, authentic, and life-enhancing relationships' (p.280). The following sections therefore move forward to discuss the theoretical debates of obligations, morality, and social responsibility, before reviewing the current literature on Service Families. The Centre for Social Justice (2016) states 'the average mobility for Service Children in primary school is around 70 per cent each year' (p.59). Mobility therefore forms a large factor in Service Families' lives. Mobility, is said to be the resounding issue for Service Families which inhibits them to carry out *normal* family activities, restricts them from accessing services quickly (Bradley and Almond, 2022), and has a profound effect on stability within the family unit. Stability can mean a variety of different things to different families. For Service Families however, stability can be defined as the ability to be stable, to have constant connection with family and friends, to have undisrupted access to health services, and to have a stable (ideally undisrupted) education for their children (Walker et al., 2020; Children's Commissioner, 2022). Stability is therefore the first of the four themes which will be explored within this Chapter.

Understanding the military lifestyle can be complex. As a report by Walker et al. (2020) demonstrates, Services Families want to be understood, and this is of particular importance to them in respect of their children's education. Being understood is often a direct influence of the variety of support systems available to Service Families. Further, being understood assists in building relationships and providing moral support, and guidance. Understanding Service Families can often lead to how they experience and receive support. As the Covenant explicitly sets out, Service Personnel and their Families should be supported, and should not be disadvantaged on the basis of being a member of the Military Community. Literature on understanding and support are therefore examined in the subsequent sections of this Chapter.

The final theme explored in this Chapter is the theme of expectations. Expectations form a large part of everyday life, humans expect certain things will happen in their lives for instance, or they may expect an incident to be dealt with in a certain manner. Expectations for Service Families are perhaps more complex. Given they are likely to relocate at any given time, to any given location, expectations are likely to turn into apprehensions. In terms of education, expectations will undoubtedly vary from parent to parent. This Chapter explores expectations in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant, the School Admissions Code, and the SEND Code of Practice. Therefore, the second part of this Chapter examines policies which directly affect Service Parents accessing school places for their children. Primarily, this includes the School Admissions Code, which sets out how school places should be allocated to all children (Department for Education, 2021b; 2014). Since this research began, a new Code was introduced in 2021, these changes will be examined in Section 2.6.

In addition, current literature on Service Children with Special Educational Needs is limited. This issue is outlined further in Section 2.7 in addition to a discussion of the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015). The following section focuses on DfE education strategy and inclusive education before moving onto the final two sections which examine the options for Service Parents to send their children to a boarding school.

2.2 What is the Armed Forces Covenant?

Chapter 1 introduced the Covenant and outlined the promise which is set out between the State and members of the Military Community. The Covenant is underpinned by its moral obligations to Service Personal, Veterans, and Service Families. The Covenant is guided by its core principle that no members of the Military Community should experience disadvantage as a result of serving the Crown (Ministry of Defence, 2015a). The Covenant is enshrined into law as part of the Armed Forces Act 2021 (Local Government Association, 2022) and works in various ways to support Service Personnel, Veterans and their families. Organisations can sign the Covenant which demonstrates their pledge to the Military Community, this ranges from business to charities, and Local

Authorities. All 407 Local Authorities in mainland UK have signed the Covenant in addition to many businesses and charities (Armed Forces Covenant, 2022).

Local Authorities are encouraged to work with, support, and engage with the Armed Forces community in their area by signing up to the Covenant, and upholding its principles. The Covenant stipulates in some instances members of the Armed Forces community should receive special considerations where appropriate (Forces in Mind Trust, 2016). Despite this, there is some suggestion some members of the Armed Forces Community do not wish to be considered *advantaged* as a direct result of their Service (The Defence Committee, 2013a), and do not wish to appear to be 'jumping the queue' (Bradley and Almond, 2022, p.8). To ensure the Covenant works in practice central government assists Local Authorities, providing them with guidelines, best practice exemplars, and various forms of funding (Ministry of Defence, 2015a).

Signing the Covenant is not compulsory and further, businesses and Local Authorities who sign the Covenant are able to tailor their pledge according to their circumstances (Local Government Association, 2022, no pagination). Local Government Association (2022, no pagination) states:

> you are free to specify – with as much or as little detail as you think
> necessary – how exactly you plan to support and uphold the Covenant.
> Specific pledges can be adapted to make them appropriate to your
> organisation

Once businesses and Local Authorities have signed the Covenant, they can then decide which parts of the Covenant they wish to uphold. Local Government Association (2022) provides many examples on their website which are listed under themes such as: employment, health and healthcare, housing, and education. The following examples feature under the theme of education (Local Government Association, 2022, no pagination):

- promote and/or make use of the provisions for Armed Forces families in the School Admissions Code (England), for example by allocating school places in advance of a family arriving in a local area. Promote and/or use resources such as the Service Children Progression Alliance's Thriving Lives Toolkit.
- [For schools with Service Children among their pupils] Develop a clear strategy for the effective use of any dedicated funding (for

example the Service Pupil Premium in England) in support of
Service pupils.

- Support and promote the wellbeing of Service Children, recognising
the particular experiences and challenges they may face.

- Promote training and further/higher education opportunities for
Service leavers, ex-Service personnel and their families.

Signing the Covenant therefore indicates that an organisation supports the
Military Community and is committed to alleviating any disadvantages they may
encounter. Although this goes someway to demonstrate a social commitment,
this also comes with the caveat that it is likely not all individuals within an
organisation will fully understand what the Covenant is, and further, that they
have received sufficient training and guidance on how it should be utilised
(Walker et al., 2020).

2.2.1 What is a community Covenant?: a brief explanation

Guidance from the Government Website states that 'community Covenants
complement, at local level, the Armed Forces Covenant' (Ministry of Defence,
2019a, no pagination). A community Covenant, therefore, encourages support
for the Armed Forces Community at a local level. In this regard community
Covenants will vary according to the Local Authority. Within a community
Covenant Local Authorities can therefore decide which parts of the Covenant
they wish to support and focus on, and this may be determined on the number
of Personnel, their families, and veterans living with the Local Authority. For
instance, some Local Authorities may decide to support housing for veterans,
with others employing 'Champions'; dedicated Stakeholders who support the
Armed Forces Community in the Local Authority. 'Champions' are responsible
for ensuring that the Local Authority upholds their pledge to the Armed Forces
Community, and is to ensure that, as the Covenant states, that there are no
disadvantages as a result of Service life (Ministry of Defence, 2019a).

2.2.2 What does the Covenant say about Service Children, and their education?

Guidance on the Covenant states (Ministry of Defence, 2015a, p.7):

> Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard
> of, and access to, education (including early years' services) as any other
> UK citizen in the area in which they live. The Services should aim to
> facilitate this in the way they manage personnel, but there should also be
> special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required
> part through an academic year as a consequence of posting ... in certain

cases, assistance will be available to support children's continuity of education, given the requirement for mobility.

Moreover, the annual *Armed Forces Covenant annual report* highlights each year work which has been undertaken to mitigate the impact of mobility on Service Children's education (Ministry of Defence, 2021a). This includes various funding available to schools, third party organisation work, research, and work undertaken by and/or with Government departments.

To date there has been some significant work undertaken in respect of Service Children's education. The most pivotal work is that which has been undertaken by the Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP). SCiP works in partnership with various organisations and is supported by the MoD (Ministry of Defence, 2021a, p.11; Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2022a). Some of its work includes '12 hubs across the UK, ensuring UK-wide collaboration for all those supporting Service Children's education' (Ministry of Defence, 2021a, p.54). SCiP has recently also been central to the *Thriving Lives Toolkit* which is now available to all schools with Service Children. The Toolkit is a self-audit tool, underpinned by research, and guided by 7 key principles which include a clear approach, supporting wellbeing, maximising achievement, effective transitions, children being heard, parents being engaged, and staff being well-informed (Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2022c, p.5).

Other significant examples of the work undertaken in respect of Service Children's education is the work of the Ministry of Defence Local Authority Partnership (MoDLAP). At present the partnership includes 16 Local Authorities (with the highest proportions of Service Children) who have agreed to a specific set of principles covering transitions for Service Children with Special Educational Needs (Ministry of Defence, 2021e). As they state (Ministry of Defence, 2021e, no pagination):

> The Principles … are drafted in response to the recognition that Service Children with SEND may relocate more often than the rest of the population and, sometimes at short notice. The … Principles have been drafted to provide a framework for the effective management of such transitions, in order to avoid service children with SEND experiencing delays in having their needs assessed and met.

The principles set out that Service Children with Special Educational Needs are out of education for the minimal time possible during relocation, and further addresses the requirements of the SEND Code of Practice (further discussion

on the SEND Code of Practice can be found in Section 2.7). The principles additionally set out clear time scales for MoDLAP Local Authorities to work to when a move occurs for Service Children with Special Educational Needs. MoDLAP's work is a move most welcome, as it has been a significant amount of time since the Defence Committee highlighted Service Children with Special Educational Needs experience unacceptable levels of delays in respect of their education (The Defence Committee, 2013a; 2006). The Defence Committee highlighted over 17 years ago that Service Children with Special Educational Needs should have a transferable document across all Local Authorities, enabling a smoother transition, but most importantly minimising the disruptions to support routinely being put in place (The Defence Committee, 2006). Whilst no such document currently exists, MoDLAP's set of principles do address these issues, to some extent. Arguably however, Service Children with Special Educational Needs are still likely to be at risk, and this is particularly evident if a Service Child with Special Educational Needs moves into a Local Authority who is not currently a member of MoDLAP.

Overall, whilst the Covenant sets out clear guidance on Service Children's education and the Annual Reports highlight some exceptional work, there is still a long way to go in minimising disadvantages across this group of children. Issues such as the School Admissions Code, and the SEND Code of Practice, will be discussed later in Sections 2.6 and 2.7.

2.3 Morally obligated, socially responsible

> The amount of time that an individual legitimately owes his employer is normatively and even legally established; this makes it possible for him to have time for his family (Coser, 1974, p.2)

Throughout literature, the institution of the military is often referred to by the original works of Coser (1974). Coser (1974) building on the work of Goffman's institutions, posits that unlike Goffman's *theory of physical separation* (such as prisoners being incarcerated), the military institution has intangible boundaries that separate its members from others (Goffman, 1991; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). This separation, in part, assists the institution in their demands of loyalty and time, yet its members and their families are compensated implicitly through job security, subsided housing, access to free healthcare, and organised recreational events (Segal, 1986, p.12). Whilst these theories maybe be

considered outdated, the foundations of the military as an institution still exist to some extent in modern times.

Over the decades, changes have occurred within both the family unit and the military institution. Unlike the traditional make-up of the military family unit, with wives following their Serving husbands (Venning, 2005), not all Military Families nowadays live as a whole family during the working week (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Gribble and Fear, 2019). Further, the landscape of spousal employment has changed significantly with more spouses entering the labour market (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020; Gribble et al., 2019b; Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Abbott, 2000; Segal, 1986).   Although these changes are now present, demands placed on Personnel still exist, and such demands permeate the lives of Service Families. Vuga and Juvan (2013) argue 'nowadays employers expect individuals to interweave their personal and professional lives – to balance work, family, and free time, which is possible in the majority of cases' (p.1059). The MoD (2022f, p.13) recently reported only 45% of Personnel indicated in 2022 that they can maintain a work life balance. Figures further showed that during a period of Covid-19, September 2021 to February 2022, this figure had declined slightly (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.13). In addition, 67% of Personnel stipulated they had not been able to take all their annual leave, with 44% citing workload as the reason (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.14).

It is important to acknowledge that the military as an institution is not exclusive in the demands which its employer makes. As Vuga and Juvan (2013, p.1060) put it:

> There are other professions that place demands similar to those placed on an individual by the military, but the specific requirement to sacrifice one's life is the factor that makes the military profession one of the greediest of all

The requirement to sacrifice one's life is not a singular factor in the uniqueness of the role of the military. In a sense, Service Personnel forgo certain parts of their identity as basic training teaches them to conform to a set of values and standards. On swearing their allegiance this niche group of individuals lose their rights to employment laws, and become exempt from equal opportunities

legislation including age and disability discrimination, employment tribunals[14], National Insurance wage regulations; the right to join a union and striking, and loss of human rights on the battlefield; although this is not an exhaustive list (The Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011, p.12; Cobseo, 2009). Furthermore, the military is the only job role in the UK in which individuals are at risk of being sent to prison as a result of being absent without leave (AWOL) (ForcesWatch, 2011; Cobseo, 2009).

As a consequence, families of those who Serve also implicitly join the institution of the military, as they are required to abide by the lifestyle which comes with it (Segal, 1986; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974). As such Service Families experience constant changes to their everyday lives which impinges on access to health, employment, education, and the right to a family life. Arguably, all individuals in society should have access to all of the aforementioned, yet Service Families experience barriers which are unique to them, and it is these barriers which hinder access to some services (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Walker et al., 2020).

It is suggested that families' ability to cope with Service life, such as the effects of periods of separation, are essential to the performance of soldiers (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Dandeker et al., 2006; Pincus et al., 2001), and can influence a soldier's decision to remain in the military (Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Segal and Segal, 2003). Whilst the military is involved in countless roles and operations, first and foremost is its duty to defend the realm (Army, 2022). In this regard, their attestation to the Crown and the realm sets them apart from any other occupation. These unique job characteristics, and the influences which they have on the family unit contribute towards and underpin the moral obligations of the state and inspire a social responsibility towards the Military Community.

Bowen et al. (2016) state 'social responsibility is an … active form of social integration, which rests on the foundation of generalized reciprocity' (p.205).

---

[14] Personnel are able to make a Service Complaint under the regulations of JSP 831 (Ministry of Defence, 2015b)

Whilst Segal (2011) links social responsibility to social empathy in which 'empathy promotes positive social interaction through prosocial behaviours' (p.269). Segal (2011, p.274) argues that social responsibility is a learnt behaviour, usually learnt from parents who show care towards others. Social empathy is further influenced by understanding *others*, and their socioeconomic conditions. Therefore, social responsibility has many facets (Segal, 2011). Furthermore, Miller et al. (1990) claim 'social responsibilities obtain full moral force only when they are linked to the preservation of justice or of individual rights' (p.33). They argue that social responsibility is something which is performed or observed in circumstances which require fairness and righteousness (Miller et al., 1990, p.33).

Wolfe (1989) argues society has a moral obligation to support those who are considered the most vulnerable. Vulnerable members of society are discussed in every manor which addresses inequality, low socioeconomic circumstances, old age, health, financial and material poverty, lack of access to resources, and most recently heat poverty and time poverty (Bishop, 2022; Hinson and Bolton, 2022). Being vulnerable is therefore often determined by many varied factors. This causes some debates around Service Families and poses questions of vulnerability. However, vulnerability can be determined by other issues such as risk (Bishop, 2022; Hinson and Bolton, 2022), and this is no truer than when it relates to a specific community. The Military Community on the surface is not considered vulnerable, yet its members are required to be loyal to the Institution, give up their time voluntarily and freely, and most importantly surrender many (if not all) of their human rights (Segal, 1986; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974).

It could be argued that to some extent members of the Military Community experience periods of vulnerability when there are issues with health and education access. As Wolfe (1989) states members of society should be morally obligated to support the most vulnerable, and in this respect the Covenant acknowledges this. Further, society should, in theory, express empathy towards vulnerable members of society, and with empathy comes social responsibility (Bowen et al., 2016; Segal, 2011; Miller et al., 1990). Morality, empathy, and social responsibility, all indirectly underpin the

Covenant, and in turn this *promise* between the State and the Military
Community, protects the vulnerable, acknowledges the challenges, and
attempts to eliminate barriers. Yet, disadvantage still persists to some extent
amongst the Military Community.

Debatably, not all members of society are going to feel morally obligated or
socially responsible towards the Military Community, with some being opposed
to conflict, and others arguing that those in the military *chose to do the job*
(Segal, 1986; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974). That said, there are many elements
of the institution which remove some choice, such as the location of where they
live, the house they live in, and the schools to which they send their children.
This is in addition to the sacrifice of life and loss of rights (Vuga and Juvan,
2013; The Howard League for Penal Reform, 2011; Cobseo, 2009). In this
regard, their service to Crown and country reduces many of the everyday
choices that civilian families make. This is not to suggest that there should be
an innate empathy, rather that the performance of moral obligations and social
responsibility should enable society to recognise and acknowledge the unique
barriers and challenges that these families face (Bowen et al., 2016; Segal,
2011; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974; Wolfe, 1989).

2.4 The unique challenges of Service life

The occupation of Service Personnel is unique. In the UK, it is the only
occupation in which a person voluntary pledges to sacrifice one's life, agrees to
forgo many human based rights, and is at risk of military incarceration for not
turning up to work (Burrell et al., 2006; Segal, 1986; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974).
Segal (1986) argues the demands placed on Service Personnel can lead to
adverse consequences within Service Families. The possibility of losing a loved
one, absence from the home, and relocating across the world, all play a key role
in the pressures Service Families may face (Burrell et al., 2006; Segal, 1986).
Park (2011) suggests Service Families are often discussed within the
background of the military, yet the success of the family unit plays a key part in
a soldier's career. As she states 'when one person joins, the whole family
serves' (Park, 2011, p.65) as they too are implicitly bound by the terms.

The challenges of Service life however are not homogenous, and each family will experience many of these challenges differently (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Park, 2011; Burrell et al., 2006). Not all service families live together, some may choose to live separately for the entirety of the Serving Person's career, and some may cycle in and out of living as a whole unit dependant on circumstances (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Gribble and Fear, 2019; Osbourbe, 2018). However, this does not mean that Service Families who live apart evade such challenges as outlined earlier (Burrell et al., 2006; Segal, 1986). Mobility is perhaps the most significant challenge within Service life as Personnel are obligated to engage in many worldwide operations.

Figures show 73% of Personnel are either married or in a civil partnership or are in a long-term relationship. Just over half of Personnel have children, and 3% of Personnel are single parents (Ministry of Defence, 2022e, p.7). In recent years, the MoD has begun to recognise and acknowledge the changes away from the traditional family unit and has moved away from recognising families as heteronormative. Changes to housing policy for example now recognise long term relationships and same sex couples, enabling all Personnel with families to live in SFA[15] (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Walker et al., 2020). Despite these changes there is much debate surrounding how the public perceive the role of the military and the military family unit.

Literature posits awareness, understanding, empathy, and support are all increased when the military are engaged in combat (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Hines et al., 2015; Gribble et al., 2012). Problematically there is a lack of understanding regarding ongoing operations and the day to day lives of the occupation outside of combat (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Walker et al., 2020; Gribble and Fear, 2019). The MoD state understanding the nature of the military is key for Local Authorities and organisations to provide adequate support mechanisms, and further to incorporate the Armed Forces Covenant to removing disadvantages for Personnel and their families (Ministry of Defence, 2022e). As such understanding and getting the support right can remove barriers for Service Families such as for children, accessing education equally.

---

[15] Couples may occupy houses classed as surplus housing where available.

2.4.1 Mobility and stability in Service Children's education

Being part of a nomadic community has perhaps the most significant impact on Service Children, and this includes having to change schools more than once (Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015). Although some Service Children will be required to move more than others, it does not detract from the challenges they encounter through mobility. Moving schools creates a plethora of additional stressors which go beyond a Service Child's disruption to academic attainment (Centre for Social Justice, 2016; Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). Not all Service Children experience mobility in the same way; this will depend on which arm of the Forces their parent(s) belongs to[16] (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Longfield, 2018). Service Children from Naval families for instance are the least likely to move across all three of the services, though some may be required to move at least once (Longfield, 2018). However, this does not mean Naval Service Children are less disadvantaged, as Naval Personnel are often deployed for extended periods of time (Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009).

Whilst mobility plays a key part to how Service Children experience education, and how Service Parents navigate sourcing suitable school places, Service Children also encounter emotional challenges during times of parental absence (Longfield, 2018; Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). Such challenges can impact their daily lives and as a result adapting to new routines and building new relationships with teachers and friends can cause social and emotional challenges (Centre for Social Justice, 2016). As such it is suggested that Service Children develop coping mechanisms which enable them to adapt to new surroundings and challenges (Longfield, 2018, p.3).

However, many of these ingrained mechanisms are assumed on the basis of resilience. Baverstock (2018) argues resilience should not be assumed in Service Children, as resilience is said to be something which is learnt. Literature on resilience varies with much discussion centering around situational circumstances (Hunt and Laffan, 2019; Masten, 2015; Hoffman, 2010; Mancini and Bowen, 2009). Hall (2019) states 'to speak of resilience purely as a

---

[16] Army, Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Navy (RN), Royal Marines (RM)

personal quality is to potentially ignore the role of systemic environment experienced by young people in fostering their ability to respond positively in challenging situations' (p.2). Resilience in Service Children is therefore additionally complex as each Service Child experiences Service life differently (Baverstock, 2018). Furthermore, assuming resilience in Service Children is risky as this has not been investigated enough within the UK. Assumptions of resilience in Service Children further disregards those children who have Special Educational Needs as it is likely they build resilience differently (Gardynik and McDonald, 2005).

Walker et al. (2020, p.48) illustrates many Service Parents report the negative impacts of Service life as a main cause of concern regarding their children's education. Service Parents have expressed moving around impacts schooling significantly, and this is additionally stressful when applying for school places is not always straightforward (Ministry of Defence, 2019e). The AFF reported 23% of education enquiries were related to school admissions and appeals, and this continues to be a growing concern (Army Families Federation, 2020a, p.7). In addition, they highlight the need for further exploration of Service Children with Special Educational Needs with families reporting a lack of suitable school places and having to home-school children as a direct result of this (Army Families Federation, 2022c; 2020b).

2.4.2 Understanding Service life and supporting Service Families

Literature suggests over the last five years there has been an increase in interest on Service Families which recognises the changing landscape of the traditional family unit (Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Walker et al., 2020). As such, the Armed Forces Family Strategy 2022-32 acknowledges the diversity of families and states that family dynamics must be understood in order to provide the correct support (Ministry of Defence, 2022e). Nevertheless, this does not deter from the strain which is experienced during times of separation. Mental health, physical health and well-being, employment, family support, and changes to daily routines have all been reported as significantly affecting military family units (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Ministry of Defence, 2022e; Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Gribble et al., 2019a; Gribble et al., 2019b; Gribble and Fear, 2019).

Much of the research surrounding Service Families in the UK is undertaken by those who have a direct interest in Service Families (such as MoD, MPs, third party organisations, and Families' Federations), and often, the US is used as a marker when investigating research on Service Families (Walker et al., 2020; Godier-McBard et al., 2021). Academic literature in the UK for example, does not compare to the vast amount conducted in other countries (Knobloch et al., 2017; Aronson et al., 2016; Davis and Finke, 2015; Gewirtz et al., 2014; Clever and Segal, 2013; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Esqueda et al., 2012; Waliski et al., 2012; Beardslee et al., 2011; Chandra et al., 2010a; Mmari et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Burrell et al., 2006; Pincus et al., 2001).

Academic literature from other countries however, centres around combat deployments and family reintegration post combat, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and family mental health (Knobloch et al., 2017; Aronson et al., 2016; Davis and Finke, 2015; Gewirtz et al., 2014; Clever and Segal, 2013; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Esqueda et al., 2012; Waliski et al., 2012; Beardslee et al., 2011; Chandra et al., 2010a; Mmari et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Burrell et al., 2006; Pincus et al., 2001). Problematically, combat deployments are not the only factor which influences the military family unit. Personnel are often engaged in other tasks which requires periods of separation from the family home. An important factor here is the recent events of the war in the Ukraine. A caveat to consider is despite Personnel being deployed to assist in non-combatant roles, there has been little discussion on how this has affected Service Children whose parents may have been asked to deploy at short notice (MacSwan, 2022; Sky News, 2022).

Gribble and Fear (2019) highlight the additional stressors experienced by spouses and partners during times of Personnel absenteeism from the home outside of combat. As they state 'with an increasing trend towards a greater number of military families settling in civilian communities, it is possible that non-operational separations may increase across all three services' (Gribble and Fear, 2019, p.2). Although their research focuses on non-mobile families some of their findings apply to mobile families in respect of parental absence from the home such as changes to household responsibilities during Personnel absence, older children assuming extra responsibilities, difficulties experienced

by Service Children when the absent parent returns home, and changes to working patterns at short notice (Gribble and Fear, 2019, p.1-2).

Parental absence, however, is not exclusive to military homes, with people in other occupations working away at various times. Further, pseudo-single parenting may also occur in civilian families when there is a parent whose occupation requires them to work away from home. However, it is extremely important that Key Stakeholders working with Service Families recognise that periods of instability as well as instability in military family units, can cause significant pressures (Ministry of Defence, 2022e). Rowe et al. (2014) illustrate the ability for partners to cope successfully during Personnel deployments has a direct influence on Personnel themselves during their time away. As such Personnel have reported higher levels of satisfaction during a deployment when there are no issues or worries at home (Rowe et al., 2014, p.490).

There is some suggestion that spouses and partners who are supported during Personnel absence are more likely to have better well-being and cope well, compared to those who are not (Walker et al., 2020; Gribble and Fear, 2019; Rowe et al., 2014). Rowe et al. (2014, p.494) illustrate longer periods of separation can cause poor mental health and well-being due to challenges with childcare, employment, money worries, and lack of access to support. Evidence from the Armed Forces Continuous Attitude survey (AFCAS) and the Armed Forces Families Continues Survey (FAMCAS) show 82% of Personnel feel supported by their family, however, only 28% believe their family benefits from being part of a Service Family (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.2). Furthermore, 29% of spouses/partners indicated they would be happier if their spouse or partner left the services (Ministry of Defence, 2022e, p.7). Although AFCAS and FAMCAS are great indicators of attitudes across the Services they do not capture all Personnel or spouses and partners. Further, the FAMCAS survey is reliant on Personnel passing the details to their spouse or partner, and therefore figures from both surveys should warrant caution in terms of representation of attitudes.

Nevertheless, the Armed Forces Family Strategy makes clear that spouses and partners should be fully supported during times of Personnel absence (Ministry of Defence, 2022e). As they put it (Ministry of Defence, 2022e, p.11):

> The implications of mobility, deployment and separation are unique to each family. The combined effect can place significant strain on relationships, which makes important that, with the consent of the serviceperson, their families' individual circumstances are accurately captured, so that they can be supported in understanding and coping with the stress points

Whilst this acknowledgement does go some way in recognising the requirement for supporting spouses and partners there are some issues to consider. The Strategy clearly states that consent is required from the Service Person to disclose information regarding the family unit and any support they may require. However, this presents as a much less personal approach to spouses and partners being supported via welfare units during Personnel absence, as the Serving Person is considered the gatekeeper. Further, placing the onus on the Serving Person to disclose family circumstances is an added layer of responsibility in what is already a demanding career. Support and contact is considered as something which should come directly from the unit Welfare team to the spouse or partner (Walker et al., 2020), and this is particularly important when/if the spouse or partner may not wish to burden their deployed spouse or partner.

Walker et al. (2020, p.181) additionally point out there is an onus of responsibility on the Service Person to inform their families how to seek help and support. The Tri-Service Welfare Policy outlines the responsibility of Service Personnel to communicate effectively with their family regarding where to seek support (Walker et al., 2020, p.181). As such Walker et al. (2020) argue that this is a clear failure in expectations on the Serving Person as they are expected to take on the responsibility of ensuring their family are informed regarding access to support. As a result, they argue Service Families often feel neglected and unsupported (Walker et al., 2020, p.181).

What is important to note here are the types of support available to Service Families. Welfare support varies across the three services with the Army welfare system operating in house. Unit Welfare officers are assigned to these posts and are Serving Personnel. Walker et al. (2020, p.183-184) note that they are provided with minimal training and where issues cannot be directly

supported by them, families are signposted, or the request moves up the chain of command. In comparison Naval families can access welfare support via a welfare portal, with access to trained, multi-disciplinary staff, whilst RAF welfare is provided using a two-tier support system. RAF Serving Personnel should seek informal support from their colleagues, line managers, or Human Resource staff as a first point of contact. If required 'second tier specialist support' (Walker et al., 2020, p.181-182) is available via referral from a line manager. Second tier support is provided independently and is contracted out to SSAFA (Walker et al., pp.181-183). Arguably this demonstrates a lack of consistency across the Services in terms of welfare support. To this extent, it is clear that despite welfare support being available there are issues with support for Service Families which require improvement.

It is possible to suggest that support systems across the Services may be founded based on traditional notions of resilience. As such, traditionally Personnel may have been expected to demonstrate resilient coping strategies in the family home which may then be learnt by their families' members. This could account for the idea that Service Children are resilient as children are said to learn their behaviours from their parents (Riley and Masten, 2005). Therefore, the onus of the Service Person still being responsible for supporting the family unit through their resilience still persists today.

2.5 Resilience: a problematic assumption

Masten (2013) states 'resilience refers to the capacity of a system to withstand or recover from significant disturbances and continue to function effectively' (p.280). Whilst Herrman et al. (2011) state 'resilience is understood as referring to positive adaption, or the ability to maintain or regain mental health, despite experiencing adversity' (p.258). Resilience is not something which is innate and is said to be developed dependant on the situational circumstances, such as a community, that an individual belongs too (Houston, 2018; Masten, 2015; Mancini and Bowen, 2009). Although research which discusses resilience in Service Families exists, there has been an increased debate which centres resilience as problematic; in particular in Service Children (Godier-McBard et al., 2021). Baverstock (2018) for instance argues that resilience should not be

assumed in Service Children as their circumstances, in the adversity that they experience, is 'relentless and unpredictable' (no pagination).

Resilience is therefore a problematic assumption in Service Families because of the challenges they experience which are unique to them. Some of these challenges, whilst not exclusive to Service Families, such as separation due to parents' work, compound issues such as resilience. In part this is because Service Families can, and do, experience a wide variety of challenges at any given time, and can experience more than one challenge at the same time.

Resilience in Service Children is, however, complex, as resilience is understood to develop in children based on their experiences of how their parents cope and react to situations (Easterbrooks et al., 2013; Riley and Masten, 2005). Easterbrooks et al. (2013) posit 'resilience is not a personal trait but a product of the relationships between children and the people and resources around them' (p.99). In particular, belonging to a community which has a 'strong sense of belonging' (Easterbrooks et al., 2013, p.99) is considered to facilitate building resilience in Service Children. Research does show having a strong sense of belonging and pride has been expressed amongst Service Families, however this does deter from the issues which cause significant emotional and practical challenges (Children's Commissioner, 2022, p.8; Longfield, 2018).

Research by the Children's Commissioner (2022, p.4) posits that because of notions of resilience in Service Children, this contributes to a lack of understanding regarding how to support Service Children. Service Children are reported as using positivity as a coping mechanism when they are required to move to a new home and a new school, and this is often assumed as being developed through their resilience (Children's Commissioner, 2022; Longfield, 2018). As a consequence, however, this means, compared to their non-Service peers, there is a lack of understanding in the types of support Service Children require throughout public services (Children's Commissioner, 2022, p.4). An important consideration however is to understand that despite being positive through resilience, mobility is only one aspect of the many challenges experienced from being part of a Service Family (Walker et al., 2020). Parental absence for instance may also occur at the same time as a move to a new

location, or shortly after, causing additional stress for Service Parents and their children. This means that Service Families experience multiple challenges at any time. As such there may be more than one anxiety around Service Children settling into their new environments and this may be further intensified when Serving Personnel are away from the family home, leaving the spouse or partner to navigate these anxieties.

In terms of resilience, this raises some questions about how resilience is built in Service Families, and how resilient Service Families are *expected* to be. Resilience is discussed in terms of how individuals and communities build resilience, and how they deal with adversity (Houston, 2018; Mancini and Bowen, 2009). However, this is usually discussed from a singular approach such as coping with one event at one moment in time and is limited in its discussion of coping with more than one event at the same time. Further, literature suggests communities who are resilient have the resources to counteract any challenges and plan ahead (Houston, 2018; Hoffman, 2010), however this is particularly difficult for Military Communities as events can often change at short notice, and often occur at the last minute (Walker et al., 2020). Resilience is therefore a problematic assumption in Service Families and is additionally *risky* when applying this label to Service Children.

2.6 Paragraph 2.21: a new code

Throughout this Chapter it has been highlighted that Service life brings with it many challenges. For Service Families with children these particular challenges are long periods of separation, changes to daily routines, periods of instability, pseudo-single parenting, financial worries during separation, and the potential loss of a loved one. However, this is not an exhaustive list, as Service life is unique each Service Family experiences Service life differently. Moreover, Service Families may experience many challenges singularly or experience multiple challenges at the same time (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). As previously outlined, the traditional military family unit has now changed, with same sex relationships, single parents, and dual serving couples being acknowledged and addressed in policy and literature, therefore the historical view of wives following husbands around is outdated (Walker et al., 2020; Venning, 2005).

Research shows 76% of Service couples live together during the working week, with 41% of families relocating at least twice over the last five years (Ministry of Defence, 2022h, p.5). This illustrates that despite the changing landscape to more diverse family units, Service Families still tend to cohabit with the Serving person and are still highly mobile. Walker et al. (2020, p.237) state however, there should be no expectations for families to be accompanied in the modern era. Those that do, however, should be supported adequately, and the Armed Forces Covenant should mitigate any disadvantages which are a result of living unaccompanied from the Serving person. Nevertheless, there are some misconceptions regarding the Covenant and its intentions, this is evident in respect of Service Children's education.

Current research suggests there are certain expectations from Service Parents when they move and require new school places for their children (Walker et al., 2020). In some instances, these expectations relate to Service Children with Special Educational Needs, and the right to accessing/transferring healthcare (Bradley and Almond, 2022). Furthermore, in 2013 the Defence Committee highlighted that the contextual factors of Service life were not being addressed within the School Admissions Code (Scott, 2013; The Defence Committee, 2013a). The Schools Admission Code is 'statutory guidance that schools must follow when carrying out duties relating to school admission', and applies to all Local Authority maintained schools, academies, and free schools (Department for Education, 2022b, no pagination). The Code sets out guidance and legislation on the allocation of school places, and timelines (Department for Education, 2022b). The Code applies to schools in England with the devolved nations having their own procedures.

For Service Families applications are not always in line with the usual periods of applications. As a result, the Code sets out specific guidance and criteria when a Service Parent is making an application for a school place (Department for Education, 2021b). Whilst academy schools have their own admission criteria they must be guided by the Code (Department for Education, 2021b; Simpson, 2013, p.3). Consequently, the Code is the authoritative rule in respect of legislation and must be adhered to when there is any application for a school place (Department for Education, 2021b; Ministry of Defence, 2018a, p.2).

Most recently there has been some updates to the Code, and this includes changes to the guidance and criteria for the allocation of Service Children's school places. However, these changes must be examined closely. Changes to the School Admissions Code are not unusual with concerns regarding admissions for Service Children stemming back to the 2011 Code (Scott, 2013; Simpson, 2013). Concerns such as not being allocated the same school for siblings, and Local Authorities interpreting the Code to their own understanding have been raised (Scott, 2013; Simpson, 2013).

Essentially, the Code only sets out that *a* school place must be provided. If a Service Family has more than one child, it does not necessarily mean all children will be provided a place within the same school. Once a place has been allocated, the Local Authority or school has therefore fulfilled their obligation to place a child in school. Issues can arise when Service Parents use the Serving Person's unit address, as set out in the Code. In some areas, military units can span a very wide geographical area. In this instance, a parent may be allocated a school place for their child based on the unit address, but ultimately once an SFA address has been confirmed the allocated school place could be over 20 miles away from the unit (Walker et al., 2020; Scott, 2013; Simpson, 2013). When this occurs Service Parents are likely to have to reapply for another school place which is closer to their address or face the prospect of travelling further to the school which has already been allocated.

Under the School Admissions Code 2014, paragraph 2.18 sets out the following criteria for Service Families (Department for Education, 2014, pp.25-26):

> For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting to their area, or crown servants returning from overseas to live in that area, admission authorities **must**:
>
> a) allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date and a Unit postal address or quartering area address
>
> when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria. This **must** include accepting a Unit postal address or quartering area address for a service child. Admission authorities **must not** refuse a service child a place because the family does not currently live in the area, or reserve blocks of places for these children;
>
> b) ensure that arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for Service Children. Arrangements **must** be appropriate for the area and be described in the local authority's composite prospectus.

In 2021 the Code was changed to the following (Department for Education, 2021b, p.26):

> For families of service personnel with a confirmed posting, or crown servants returning from overseas, admission authorities **must**:
>
> a) allocate a place in advance of the family arriving in the area (as long as one is available), provided the application is accompanied by an official letter that declares a relocation date. Admission authorities must not refuse to process an application and must not refuse a place solely because the family do not yet have an intended address, or do not yet live in the area.
>
> b) use the address at which the child will live when applying their oversubscription criteria, as long as the parents provide some evidence of their intended address. Admission authorities **must** use a Unit or quartering address as the child's home address when considering the application against their oversubscription criteria, where a parent requests this.
>
> c) **not** reserve blocks of places for these children.
>
> d) ensure that arrangements in their area support the Government's commitment to removing disadvantage for Service Children. Arrangements **must** be appropriate for the area and be described in the local authority's composite prospectus.

Comparatively these sections of each version of the Code appear, on the surface, to be relatively similar. However, there are various caveats to consider. Part a) in the new Code makes clear that a place can only be allocated when available, for example when there is a place available in a school. Further, it points out that official letters should declare a relocation date which is concerning. Whilst the Code supports the use of a unit address, having to provide evidence of dates can be impractical for Service Personnel and is a particular issue when the Service Personnel is not yet in receipt of their posting order (Brady et al., 2013a).

Evidence shows some Service Families are seriously impacted when events or circumstances rely on dates (Walker et al., 2020). In this regard it may be impossible for Service Families to provide evidence with an official date. Moreover, Service Families who are made aware of a move but do not receive official notice until weeks before (in some cases 3-6 weeks) are at risk of not being able to source school places until the last minute. Part b) of the new code additionally raises some concerns. Whilst the use of a unit address and SFA is encouraged as part of the oversubscription criteria this section further states 'where a parent requests this' (Department for Education, 2021b, p.26). It is unclear how many Service Parents are aware and understand the criteria for Service Families. Considering this, some parents may be unaware of the

provisions set out, and further may be at risk of being provided with a school place out of catchment area and some distance from their residence, having siblings separated, and not knowing their rights of appeal.

Moreover, as highlighted previously there is a risk that Local Authorities and schools may interpret the Code to their understanding (Scott, 2013; Simpson, 2013). Examination of the Code emphasises in part d) why Local Authorities and schools may interpret the Code in a variety of ways. As the Code states 'arrangements **must** be appropriate for the area and be described in the local authority's composite prospectus' (Department for Education, 2021b, p.26). Service Children are located across England in a variety of different Local Authorities. Evidence shows in some areas there are significantly smaller numbers of Service Children; in some cases, this can be just one Service Child in a school (Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2022b, no pagination). Areas which therefore have a smaller turnover of Service Children are likely to be less familiar with the allocation of school places for Service Children. This could cause issues when a Service Parent requires a particular school ahead of a move, but the admissions staff are not fully aware of the process due to the ambiguity of part d). The ambiguity of part d) therefore is a cause for concern as there are no set parameters for what is considered *appropriate* in respect of the area.

The Code further lacks clarification for Service Families who are dispersed, leaving the services, or living in their own home. As the Code currently stands, the criteria are founded upon mobile Service Families who are in receipt of or will be in receipt of a posting order. Consequently, those transitioning from the Services may still require a school place in a new area, as not all families will remain in the location of their final posting (Cambridgeshire County Council and Council, 2020, p.7; Scott, 2013). Whilst the Code clearly indicates that no Service Family should be disadvantaged, the current Code implicitly creates disadvantage to Service Families leaving the Services, whilst the Covenant covers all Service Families, even those of veterans. Although, the new Code has attempted to make the criteria clearer for Service Families, and implicitly suggests it upholds the principles of the Covenant by not disadvantaging

Service Children, there are many elements which require significant reworking to fully ensure Service Families are not disadvantaged in their applications.

2.7 The SEND Code of Practice

Historically as part of the 1944 Education Act children with Special Educational Needs were educated in special schools, where permitted. Reforms to the ways in which Children with Special Educational Needs were educated and supported began to develop after the Warnock Report was published in 1978. The Warnock Report changed much of the discourse and practices which are now embedded into Special Educational Needs provisions, and ultimately led to changes in the 1981 Education Act, which stated that, wherever possible, children were to be educated in mainstream schools (The Open University, 2022, no pagination; Tirraoro, 2020). Twenty years after the Warnock Report, the SEND Code of Practice 2001 was introduced. The Code of Practice makes clear that children with Special Educational Needs must be provided with reasonable adjustments to promote their equality and inclusion. The Code has been developed since its implementation and now supports and aligns with the Equality Act 2010, and the Children and Families Act 2014 (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015). The SEND Code of Practice states that 'special educational needs and disabilities will be picked up at the earliest point with support routinely put in place quickly' (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015, p.11).

Recent evidence shows in the period 2020-2021 1.4 million school children were identified with Special Educational Needs, with 12.2% requiring support (HM Government, 2022, p.7). HM Government (2022) reports that there has been a slight increase in children requiring Special Educational Needs support within the period of 2020-2021, with previous figures showing a decrease. In addition, the percentage of pupils who require an EHCP has also increased from 2.8% in 2016, to 3.7% in 2020-2021 (HM Government, 2022, p.7). The most common Special Educational Need in 2021 for pupils with an EHCP was Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), and half of pupils with an EHCP were in mainstream state funded schools (HM Government, 2022, p.7). Support for children with Special Educational Needs has changed dramatically over the last two decades, nevertheless there is little evidence to explain why more children

have been diagnosed with Special Educational Needs (Centre for Educational Neuroscience, 2022). However, the Centre for Educational Neuroscience (2022, no pagination) suggests that increased awareness, and transformations in criteria and assessments as significant factors in larger numbers of children with Special Educational Needs being identified.

Aronson et al. (2016) state 'one of the most challenging life events in families is having a child … with special health care and/or educational needs' (p.423). For military parents this is additionally challenging, as frequent relocations can result in having to continuously source support on each move (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Hall, 2018). The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities (UN CRPD) Article 24 states clearly that children with disabilities have the right to access inclusive education, which should be accommodated with reasonable adjustments, and should be provided with any support which is required to assist their education (United Nations, 2006). Research shows however, that Service Children with Special Educational Needs are less likely to be supported due to the inconsistent transfer of documentation on moves (Noret et al., 2015, p.6). This is despite the SEND Code of Practice setting clear rules for documentation to be shared (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015).

Previous literature suggests that Service Children are less likely to have Special Educational Needs compared to non-Service Children (Noret et al., 2015, p.6; Department for Education, 2010a, p.20). However, data on Service Children with Special Educational Needs is often outdated or incomplete, in part this is due to disparities in data collection and publication in relation to Service Children (Ministry of Defence. and Education., 2020; Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016, p.22; The Defence Committee, 2013a; Ofsted, 2011, p.4). Personnel with Children with Special Educational Needs are advised by the MoD to register their details with the Educational Advisory Team (EAT), however, while for Army Personnel, AGAI 81 part 8, sets out compulsory reporting with the Army Personnel Centre, this is not a mandatory requirement for Personnel of other services (Army Families Federation, 2022d; Claridge, 2020). Worryingly, this causes significant issues in identifying Service Children with Special Educational Needs across the services and this is in addition to

parents self-reporting to schools that they are part of a Service Family (cf. Chapter 1).

2.7.1 Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

The SEND Code of Practice sets out that some children with Special Educational Needs may require an EHCP, which should set out the types of support and adjustments required (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015). A request for an EHCP can be made to the Local Authority from parents, teachers, doctors and health visitors, and family and friends for children under the age of 16. Once a request has been made the Local Authority has 16 weeks to inform parents if an EHCP will be undertaken and to develop a draft. After this time, parents have 15 days to raise any comments and concerns. EHCPs must be completed by 20 weeks from the initial assessment (Gov.UK, 2022a). In 2021, data shows 93,302 initial requests for an EHCP were made, with 62,180 new EHCP completed; only 60% of EHCPs were completed in the 20-week time frame (Gov.UK, 2022b, no pagination). Figures further show that numbers of children with EHCPs have increased by 10% from 2021-2022, and requests for an EHCP have risen by 23% (Gov.UK, 2022b, no pagination).

In 2013, it was reported that 1.6% of Service Children had an EHCP, however this information is outdated (The Defence Committee, 2013a). Godier-McBard et al. (2021) recently confirmed that 'the number of Service Children with SEND is unknown' (p.90) and further argue evidence on this cohort of children is conflicting. As previously discussed, it has been suggested that Service Children are not more likely to have Special Educational Needs, however Noret et al. (2015) reported Service Children were more likely to have Special Educational Needs compared to non-Service Children (Godier-McBard et al., 2021, p.91). Although their sample size only includes Army families it does suggest and highlights there may be higher proportions of Service Children with Special Educational Needs than previously reported. It is likely that Service Children with Special Educational Needs are being missed either as a result of the mobility they experience, or that Key Stakeholders assume their behaviours or difficulties are the result of their parents' careers (Brady et al., 2013a; Godier- McBard et al., 2021).

In addition, research has demonstrated Service Children are at risk of moving to another Local Authority, or other devolved nations and overseas, prior to an EHCP being completed (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Noret et al., 2015; Ofsted, 2011). Where an EHCP has been completed, this does not ensure continuity of support as budgets and available resources very across different Local Authorities. This is further exacerbated when a Service Child moves to a devolved nation and/or overseas, where other systems and provisions are in place (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). Godier-McBard et al. (2021, p.92) highlight that there is some suggestion that early diagnoses and support being put into place are delayed because of the frequency of moves. Whilst this has not been explored in any significant depth it is a crucial factor to consider in respect of Service Children with Special Educational Needs.

2.8 Inclusive education: no one is left behind?

Much of the literature written in respect of inclusive education points towards children being excluded based on a set of characteristics such as race, class, gender, religion, culture, and disability. For the most part, this is an accurate reflection on what inclusion, or exclusion means in education. However, exploration in the UK academic sphere rarely focuses on the exclusion of Service Children in education. Whilst Service Children are not explicitly excluded from education based on their characteristics, implicitly there are some exclusions which permeate their educational journeys, such as support not being put into place in a timely manner for those with Special Educational Needs, missing parts of the curriculum, and experiencing geographical changes in curriculum. Within this section the inclusion and exclusion of Service Children in education will be discussed, including Service Children with Special Educational Needs.

In 2015 the DfE announced their new education strategy which was to deliver a world class education for every child irrespective of their background (Department for Education, 2016, p.3). This Strategy stated that (Department for Education, 2016, p.7):

> Every child and young person can access high-quality provision, achieving to the best of his or her ability regardless of location, prior attainment and background.

This means that every child should have equal access to education irrespective of their educational history and family circumstances. As mentioned previously in Chapter 1, data on Service Children are unreliable, however using data which pertains to the Service Pupil Premium (SPP), Service Children account for a mere 1% of the pupil population (Gov.UK, 2022c, no pagination; Roberts et al., 2021, p.8). In 2019 evidence estimated 6 out of 30 children in a classroom 'are growing up at risk due to family circumstances' (Children's Commissioner, 2019, p.2). Given that the numbers of Service Children on roll are exceptionally low, it is unlikely that this group of children are considered a priority for the DfE, in comparison to other groups such as those who are termed vulnerable.

Data further shows Service Children are underrepresented in schools which are rated as outstanding by Ofsted, compared to non-Service Children (17.6% compared with 21.5%) (Ministry of Defence, 2016a, p.4). To this extent there are several issues surrounding children and young people accessing high quality education as suggested in the DfE strategy. Service Families are less able to plan ahead in comparison to civilian families as they cannot choose the location they live in. In this respect, Service Parents are at risk of not being able to access *top* ranking schools (The Defence Committee, 2013a, p.19). The majority of Service Children are highly mobile, as a result they are more likely to attend more schools than their non-Service peers (Centre for Social Justice, 2016; Ministry of Defence, 2016a). Rose and Rose (2018) additionally argue that Service Children are also more likely to experience different standards of education as they cycle in and out of different schools.

Service Children experience a wide variety of stressors as a direct result of Service life (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Longfield, 2018; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009), and whilst it is of high importance to recognise and support the challenges they experience, Service Children should not be compared to other peers who may be classed as vulnerable. Literature suggests evidence pertaining to the academic performance of Service Children is varied, this is despite the DfE and Ofsted previously suggesting otherwise (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Ofsted, 2011; Department for Education, 2010b). Research by Noret et al. (2015) recommended:

> When making comparisons, it is … necessary to compare Service Children not to the national average but to children who are similar … this has the potential to provide a clearer picture in the possible impact of factors such as mobility.

Comparing Service Children as a group could highlight a more accurate reflection of Service Children's academic outcomes, as their experiences of mobility in particular, are unique to them.

Prior to Covid-19 evidence highlights one of the most common difficulties reported by Service Parents is unsuitable educational standards in local schools, this is in addition to difficulties in gaining their first-choice place[17] (Ministry of Defence, 2019e, p.13). Claridge (2020, p.19) reports these issues are further compound when a Service Child has Special Educational Needs. Service Parents have reported sourcing a school for a neuro-typical child is potentially easier as they can be offered a place prior to a move. However, sourcing a school for a child with Special Educational Needs is likely to be more complex, dependant on their support needs (Claridge, 2020; Tissot, 2011). As Tissot (2011) argues working with Local Authorities to source a suitable school for children with Special Educational Needs can cause a considerable amount of stress for parents. It is likely that sourcing a school place for a Service Child with Special Educational Needs due to relocating adds an additional layer of stress for Service Parents. As a result, some Service Parents have reported home schooling children with Special Educational Needs after a move as a direct result of lack of suitable school places that can adequately support their child's needs (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Claridge, 2020).

Thus, there are some issues when discussing inclusion and Service Children. Although evidence on Service Children's academic attainment is varied, Service Children are more likely to be implicitly excluded from Ofsted rated outstanding schools. Further, Service Children with Special Educational Needs are at risk of not receiving the correct support due to red tape issues, such as differences in support and resources in each Local Authority, and/or moving outside of England. On the surface it is perhaps difficult to posit Service Children as not

---

[17] data has been used prior to Covid-19 to provide a truer reflection of mobility and Service life

being included. However, implicitly there are many factors which exclude Service Children from the DfE's vision.

2.9 Opting for boarding school

In some cases, Service Parents are faced with the decision to send their children to a boarding school. This may be in the event they are posted to a location overseas where there is no provision, or there are no schools who provide the UK curriculum. Figures pertaining to Service Children being educated overseas are sparse and where available are again, outdated. It is suggested approximately 8,000 – 13,000[18] Service Children are educated overseas; however, this figure is likely to be less given the most recent reduction of troops from Germany (Army Families Federation, 2022e; Ofsted, 2011; The Defence Committee, 2006). At present there are 21 Service Children's Education (SCE) schools (these are MoD schools) overseas with only two, in Cyprus, catering for ages 11-19. Any Personnel who are posted overseas must receive educational clearance prior to moving. For locations which do not have SCE schools, guidance can be sought from the EAT (Ministry of Defence, 2021b).

Nevertheless, literature shows that some Service Parents opt to send their children to a boarding school to create stability within their education, by minimising disruption caused by moving (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a). As a result, The Continuity of Education Allowance (CEA) is available to Service Families to assist with fees towards State or Independent boarding schools (approved by the MoD accredited school's database) (Army Families Federation, 2022b; Children's Education Advisory Service, 2020). The allowance, which is not restricted by rank, is available to any Serving Personnel who meet the eligibly criteria, and can be claimed from the academic year in which their children turn 8 years old (Ministry of Defence, 2022c). Allowance rates for CEA are reviewed each August and it is paid directly to the Serving Person each term. As part of the allowance parents must make a minimum contribution of 10% towards the fees for Independent boarding schools, or 8% if they attend a State boarding school (Walker et al., 2020, p.79).

---

[18] figures are an estimate based on the available literature

In the financial year 2020-2021 approximately 4,800 Service Children (Docherty, 2021, no pagination) received CEA, totalling a cost of £81.5 million (Docherty, 2021, no pagination). Since 2018, figures show Service Children in boarding schools has increased by approximately 600 children (Walker et al., 2020, p.79) In the financial year 2022-2023 CEA rates were set at £8,047 senior allowance, and £6,380 junior allowance per term (Army Families Federation, 2022b, no pagination). The cost of boarding school can be a significant financial burden on Serving families, despite the MoD heavily subsidizing the cost (Walker et al., 2020). However, it is reported that boarding school provides many advantages for Service Children such as parents stating there is more opportunity to reach their potential, continuity of education, minimising 'poor educational standards', increased social and emotional support, smaller class sizes, and minimising upset of parental absence during deployments (Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a). That said, Service Parents have previously reported that this decision is not one they have taken lightly, and further have expressed concerns regarding Service Children needing to board at young ages (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Brady et al., 2013a).

Claimants of CEA must adhere to the strict eligibility criteria which includes moving more than 50 miles on each new assignment order, and every four years or less. The rules of CEA must be adhered to strictly and any failure to do so may result in the removal of eligibility (Ministry of Defence, 2022c). Literature demonstrates the huge undertaking of deciding to send Service Children to boarding school (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Brady et al., 2013a). Despite being open to all ranks, many personnel are financially excluded from its benefits (Centre for Social Justice, 2016, p.64). A private soldier for example on an average salary of £21,424[19], could be expected to contribute anything from £5000 per annum towards school fees[20] for an Independent boarding school. This does not take into consideration any additional extras such as pocket money and recreational activities (Walker et al., 2020; Centre for Social Justice, 2016).

---

[19] this figured is based on a Private soldier in the Army after basic training
[20] figures estimated based on popular Independent schools

In recent years, CEA has come under much scrutiny from tabloid newspapers, and has often been referred to as a perk, enabling Personnel to educate their children privately *on the cheap* (Walker et al., 2020; Rayment, 2021; Gye, 2015; Martin, 2013). However, research shows there are several factors contributing towards Service Parents choosing Independent boarding over State boarding (Centre for Social Justice, 2016; Army Families Federation, 2015). In 2015 the AFF found approximately 11% of State boarding school places were allocated to Service Children (Army Families Federation, 2015, p.1).

Research further shows there are less than 35 State boarding schools in the UK, with all of these offering boarding from age 11 upwards (Metropolis Education, 2022; Which School, 2022). Significantly the AFF found Service Parents who chose an Independent boarding school cited the ability to send them from age 8 as a top five reason (Army Families Federation, 2015, p.6). Therefore, this supports the notion that State boarding schools can potentially exclude Service Parents from choosing the State boarding option, and this is despite the parental contribution being lower for State boarding CEA claimants (Ministry of Defence, 2022c; Walker et al., 2020; Army Families Federation, 2015, p.3).

2.9.1 Special Educational Needs Allowance (SENA)

Service Parents who have a child with Special Educational Needs and choose boarding school as an option, may be entitled to claim the Special Educational Needs Allowance (SENA), in addition to CEA (Ministry of Defence, 2022a). It has been previously suggested that Service Children with Special Educational Needs can be provided with greater stability in education when they attend a boarding school (Brady et al., 2013a). The aim of SENA is (Ministry of Defence, 2022a, no pagination):

> to contribute towards the additional costs associated with a specific support plan for an individual service child who has a level of Special Educational Needs (SEN) which cannot reasonably be met within the expected resources of a school

SENA is categorised according to what type of independent boarding provisions the Service Child attends. These are: SENA/SP which is awarded to those attending a Specialist Provisions school, SENA/NSI which is awarded to those attending a Non-Specialist Independent school, and SENA/DAY, which is

awarded for those attending as a day pupil[21]. Parents whose children attend a Specialist Provisions school are not required to make a parental contribution as previously outlined (Ministry of Defence, 2022c).

Whilst SENA facilitates Service Children with Special Educational Needs being able to attend an Independent boarding school there are some caveats which must be addressed. Problematically, if a Service Child begins their boarding journey in a school which does not cater for SEND, and the child is identified with additional needs later, this could require the child to move to a school which can support them. Whilst the SEND Code of Practice must be adhered to in State schools, Independent schools are not required to do so. However, under the Equality Act 2010 Independent schools must consider and make reasonable adjustments where possible (Ministry of Defence, 2018b). Navigating the rules of CEA in respect of moving schools is extremely complex. Parents must liaise with specialist staff which can be a long and drawn-out process, with parents submitting casework for consideration (Ministry of Defence, 2022c; The Defence Committee, 2013a). This could result in a considerable delay in Service Children with Special Educational Needs receiving the correct support. Research into Service Children with Special Educational Needs is sparse in the UK and is largely absent from academic literature. However, this has been acknowledged as an area of concern with recommendations being made for further investigation (Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a; The Defence Committee, 2013a; 2006).

2.10 Conclusion

This Chapter has discussed and explained the Armed Forces Covenant, outlining the key principles. The Covenant serves as a promise to Service Personnel, their families, and veterans, and sets out clear and concise guidance on mitigating disadvantage for the Military Community. However, despite the Covenant being noticeably clear in its values there is much debate regarding what the Covenant is, and how it can be utilised. Education is a key area within the Covenant yet, there is little knowledge and much misunderstanding,

---

[21] certain criteria must be met for Service Children to be eligible as Independent day pupils.

regarding how it works in practice, and to what extent it alleviates disadvantage in respect of Service Children's education.

The following sections then introduced ideas around the military as a greedy institution, and further how this permeates family life (Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). The morality and social obligations of the state were also explored (Bowen et al., 2016; Miller et al., 1990; Wolfe, 1989). Whilst Personnel voluntarily join the Military, they forgo many rights and are bound by their terms of Service. The military family is therefore implicitly bound even though they do not serve, as the nomadic nature of the military impedes on their everyday lived experiences. Mobility is experienced differently across the Services; therefore, this makes Service life not only unique from the experiences of the whole Military Community, but also on an individual level (Walker et al., 2020). It is imperative that this is understood when researching Military Families.

Mobility can also influence support for Service Families, as this varies across the three services. Whilst support systems are in place, in the Army, the onus of information transfer to spouses and partners is placed heavily on the Serving Person (Walker et al., 2020). This places Service Families at risk of not receiving support. The complex nature of Service life also brings with it some expectations. In terms of Service Children's education, the expectation is they will be provided with an adequate school place which Service Parents deemed suitable; particularly when the child has Special Educational Needs. Some of these expectations may be linked to the Covenant, however it is important to note that not all Personnel, Families and Key Stakeholders fully understand the principles.

Resilience is often assumed in Service Children, yet it is argued that Service Children should not be assumed as being resilient (Baverstock, 2018). Despite this much of the literature which circulates on Service Children uses the label of resilience (Children's Commissioner, 2022; Walker et al., 2020; Longfield, 2018). Scholars claim that resilience in communities enables them to deal with difficult situations and assists them in planning ahead (Houston, 2018; Hoffman, 2010), yet this poses some questions in terms of Service families because if the unique challenges they experience.

The second part of this Chapter focused on two key policies: the School Admissions Code, and the SEND Code of Practice. Although changes have recently been made to the School Admissions Code it remains ambiguous in parts in respect of Service Families. Similarly, the SEND Code of Practice sets out very clear guidance on children with Special Educational Needs. However, this can cause issues for Service Families, as support can vary across Local Authorities. Service Children are also less likely to attend an Ofsted excellent rated school and are at risk of repeating parts of the curriculum. Nevertheless, evidence shows Service Children's academic attainment is good, although Service Children should be compared within their own cohort rather than with civilian children (Noret et al., 2015).

The final two sections of this Chapter reviewed Service Parents who choose to send their children to a boarding school. These sections also outlined the criteria of CEA and SENA funding and discussed the challenges of eligibility. Chapter 3 now moves forward discus the methodology used in this research. This Chapter also outlines undertaking research during a pandemic.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The introduction Chapter introduced the research problem which investigates the challenges and barriers to Service Parents accessing school places for their children. Initial consideration was given to qualitative data collection as this would enable participants to communicate their lived experiences, providing a richer source of data collection (Mason, 2018; Ormston et al., 2014; Mason, 2006). However, utilising quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires further enhances the research process, in which Creswell et al. (2003, p.210) illustrate as enabling any emerging themes to be recognised during the initial fieldwork process; which can then be explored in further detail using qualitative interviews.

The research questions were framed to explore how Service Families navigate the process of sourcing a school place for their children, how and if this is impacted by the mobility requirements of Service Families, and to investigate possible issues when a Service Family has a child who has a Special Educational Need or Disability. In order to establish how Service Families, circumnavigate these issues, the research design additionally included exploration of Key Stakeholders working in schools and Local Authority departments; to establish what challenges they may encounter, support mechanisms they may draw upon, and to establish any best practice examples.

Investigation of this research problem therefore employed a mixed methods approach (cf. section 3.2) and was conducted as a case study (cf. section 3.4). Using mixed methods to examine the experiences and expectations of parents from the Military Community across different Local Authorities redressed any disadvantages posed by using a singular methodological approach (cf. section 3.2) (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007). In addition, case studies provide many advantages to researchers who are conducting research alone, within a limited time scale, and with a limited, or no budget, and are said to enable researchers to use a variety of methods which include: analysis of documentation, qualitative interviews, and quantitative questionnaires (Blaikie, 2000, p.213-214).

However, there is some discussion regarding the disadvantages of case studies such as the potential for researcher bias to influence data collection resulting in a lack of academic rigour (Harding, 2013, p.17; Zainal, 2007, p.5; Yin, 1994). This is a particular issue when the researcher is undertaking research in a field or group of which they are a member or have personal experience (Simons, 2009). The final sections of this Chapter will therefore discuss the ethical considerations (cf. section 3.11) which includes in-depth discussions on my positionality and researcher bias (cf. section 3.11.1 and 3.11.2).

3.2 Methodological approach: using mixed methods

> Mixing methods helps us to think creatively and 'outside the box', to theorise beyond the micro-macro divide, and to enhance and extend the logic of qualitative explanation (Mason, 2006, p.9).

Mixed methods approaches to research have developed considerably over the last ten years and have been argued by many as an esteemed approach to investigating and interpreting the wider issues of phenomenons (cf. Denscombe, 2008, p.270; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Mason, 2006, p.10). Quantitative and qualitative research both entail strengths and weaknesses when they are deployed as a singular methodological approach (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.9). Mason (2018; 2006) explains qualitative research as enabling the exploration and explanation of why and how social processes, experiences, relationships, and social change, occur and in what ways they are significant. In contrast, quantitative research is 'generally concerned with counting and measuring aspects of social life' (Blaikie, 2000, p.232) and the analytical significance of the relationship between variables (factors) (Pluye and Hong, 2013, p.31)

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p.7) ascertain that using mixed methods must go beyond collecting two sources of data, insofar as, the data collected must be mixed in a way which enables the whole data to provide the whole picture of the research problem. In order to capture the wider extent of the research problem Mason (2006) explains that 'the multi-dimensional reality – of what is taking place' (p.12) contributes to the wider context of lived experiences and provides enunciated accounts of the situational circumstances being explored. In essence, this enables the factors which are often overlooked in research methodologies, such as feelings, memories, and sensations to be captured and

understood in how they contribute to the research being explored. Using a mixed methods approach therefore meshes the data together to explore what is seen and what is unseen (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Mason, 2006; Blaikie, 2000).

Within this research the quantitative data was used to inform the qualitative interviews. Responses from the online questionnaire were reviewed prior to one-to-one interviews, and any changes to the interview schedule were made accordingly (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019; King and Horrocks, 2010). This facilitated two things within the mixed method design which were: the ability to capture initial response data, and the ability for the researcher to expand on questionnaires. Therefore, using the quantitative data to inform the qualitative interview process enabled the contextual lived accounts of participants to be explored much further (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019).

3.2.1 The epistemological conundrum in mixed methods

> How you explicitly or implicitly define and generate knowledge and how you define the relationship between the knower … and the known … will direct your entire research effort, from framing your research question or query to reporting your findings (DePoy and Gitlin, 2011, p.26-27).

Mixing methods is not without its problems. One dilemma is the identification of an epistemological and ontological viewpoint (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019; DePoy and Gitlin, 2011; Denscombe, 2008; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Mason, 2006). DePoy and Gitlin (2011) ascertain researchers are most likely to shape their research strategies based on what they feel comfortable with, because knowledge is shaped from individual experiences and perceptions. Whilst McChesney and Aldridge (2019) illustrate 'researchers … seldom make explicit their paradigmatic position or how this influenced the[ir] research' (p.234). In terms of mixed methods, this can be problematic as traditionally quantitative and qualitative methods have often been discussed as two opposing methods. Quantitative providing a more scientific approach with facts and figures, and qualitative providing narrative accounts which goes beyond statistical information. McChesney and Aldridge (2019, p.228) therefore, argue some scholars have adopted a dualistic paradigm to presenting quantitative and qualitative paradigms within mixed methods. However, they illustrate that a singular paradigm can be adopted within mixed methods, providing that the researcher considers three important factors; the researcher explicitly states the

approach which underpins their research, the aims and objectives of the research can be met by both the methods and paradigm used, and the researcher is explicit and justifies their decisions (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019, p.235).

In the case of this research, the aims and objectives were to: explore, consider, acknowledge, investigate, and understand the experiences of Service Parents, through narrative accounts of their lived experiences. In this regard this research is underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm as it explores and examines the contextual situated lived experiences of its participants (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019, p.227). Furthermore, as I conducted the research as an insider researcher, my pre-existing insider knowledge and experience of the Military Community facilitated the wider contextual issues to be explored; which have been observed outside of a constructed reality. Mixed methods research which is underpinned by a constructivist/interpretivist paradigm further facilitates both quantitative and qualitative inquiry to inform each other, and therefore enables the data to be mixed; encapsulating the whole picture of the research problem (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Mason, 2006; Blaikie, 2000).

3.3 Covid-19 (re)shaping approaches to research

Ethical approval for this research was originally granted prior to the global pandemic of Covid-19[22]. As a result, the research design was reshaped which involved a variety of new considerations. The pandemic changed the ways in which fieldwork was conducted during the pandemic with researchers being positioned within a new form of qualitative distance methodologies. This influenced the inability to access resources and the incapability to *go out* into the field. As this research design included recruiting participants from schools, this further exacerbated the research design, with many participants being inaccessible and schools being closed (Howlett, 2021, p.2; BBC News, 2020).

Online research and distance research methods are not a new concept however (Carr and Tatham, 2021; Irani, 2019; Burnard, 1994). Yet the external

---

[22] Covid-19 is a new infectious disease which was identified and classified as a Coronavirus disease in late 2019 (World Health Organisation, 2021).

parameters which a global pandemic entails, has contributed to the wider issues of conducting research virtually (Carr and Tatham, 2021). Further, graduates who undertake Doctoral studies are prepared and trained for more traditional practices of qualitative research such as, the in-person interactions of face-to-face interviewing. Whilst in person interviewing techniques are generally well rehearsed and developed, transferring these skills into the virtual world can become complex in the *work from home* era of researching (Howlett, 2021, p.2).

The revised research design therefore had to encapsulate the wider context that my potential participants and I were not able to travel and be co-present. Moreover, as Covid-19 became an all-encompassing part of daily lives, it was also important to acknowledge and consider the ways in which participant responses may or would change based on their most recent experiences. In addition to changing the method which required ethical approval, the research questions were also redesigned to include questions which centred on Covid-19 in relation to the topic (Howlett, 2021, p.6).

It was additionally important to consider the aspects and changing dynamics of confidentiality during online interviews. Embedded practices of qualitative interviewing enable the researcher to *control* space and place to some degree. Thus, the researcher is aware of others when an interview is conducted in a public place and can manipulate the topic guide to limit questions being asked when confidentially cannot be maintained (Howlett, 2021; King and Horrocks, 2010; Arksey and Knight, 1999). Conducting interviews via teams or zoom whilst participants were at home or in an office (where Covid guidelines permitted them to be at work) presented some ethical challenges when I was unable to visually see the background environment. As Howlett (2021, p.12) puts it:

> some participants may not feel comfortable discussing certain topics with other people present in their own homes or for fear of coercion. Others may feel uncomfortable not knowing if anyone will overhear the conversation on the researcher's end.

Accessing space for qualitative interviews is often overlooked within research methods discussion yet forms significant context within the research paradigm (Elwood and Martin, 2000). The space in which an interview takes place often

shapes the power dynamics between the interviewer and the participant, with one or the other appearing as the 'expert' (Elwood and Martin, 2000, p.649). In a shared space (for instance a neutral interviewing location where neither is expert) the interviewer has the ability to change the flow of questions when they can visually see and interpret that the participant is not comfortable (Howlett, 2021; Elwood and Martin, 2000; King and Horrocks, 2010; Arksey and Knight, 1999). Interviewing in spaces where both are the expert, (for example if the interviewer and participant are both in their own homes, they both likely to experience some form of power because they are both likely to be more at ease) can create issues when barriers such as computer screens and telephones inhibit the interviewer from changing the flow of the questions (Howlett, 2021; Hanna, 2012; Irvine et al., 2012, p.89; King and Horrocks, 2010; Novick, 2008, p.395; Arksey and Knight, 1999). Essentially this can influence participants to change their responses, resulting in data bias (Howlett, 2021; Moore, 2012). In this regard although the participant being interviewed in their own home or office may diminish the dynamics of power, the issue of confidentiality can potentially hinder the data collection process further. However, confidentiality and anonymity pose several other issues in terms of researcher and participant relationships (Saunders et al., 2015; Wiles et al., 2012; Wiles et al., 2006). A further in-depth discussion on this can be found in Section 3.11.2.

The pandemic affected this research on many levels. Researching within the realm of education meant that access to schools was extremely difficult. School staff and parents were both facing one of the most challenging situations of their time, meaning asking participants to help in this research was exceptionally difficult. As schools were closed, contacting head teachers to ask them for support posed significant delays, and once contact was made, the world had not yet returned to *normal*. In this regard, both parents and Key Stakeholders were overwhelmed, and this was particularly true when asking participants to participate in an online activity (Howlett, 2021). Careful consideration was given to redesign some aspects of the methodology.

The original design of this research was to compare two Local Authorities with the Local Authority School Questionnaire (LASQ) being disseminated across

secondary schools in these areas. Participants of the LASQ would then be invited to a one-to-one interview if they had expressed an interest to take part at the end of the LASQ. Data from the LASQ would then inform the one-to-one interviews where a participant had expressed an interest to take part. The LASQ data and qualitative interview data from parents and Key Stakeholders would then be analysed to explore Local Policy implementation across the Local Authorities, to identify any similarities, differences, and best practice examples across the case study of Service Families.

Although some changes had been made to the LASQ this did not necessarily remove the barriers of accessing participants and the challenges of online interviewing for participants of the LASQ. Many people who expressed an interest in participating in the research did not take part, and this was despite providing informed consent and interview appointments being scheduled. It is likely that during the pandemic individuals had become consumed by "zoom fatigue" resulting in lower levels of participation (Howlett, 2021). It was therefore decided that the responses from both Local Authorities would be combined as participation for this group of parents was lower than expected.

Interview topic guides additionally had to be altered to account for the challenges of participation rates from the LASQ. The LASQ was designed with the questions required for the first stage of this research. Interview topic guides were therefore originally designed to expand on the participants individual responses. Given that the recruitment process was changed, the interview topic guides were again adjusted for those participants who had not completed an online questionnaire. From the 71 responses of LASQ participants, only two of these parents completed a one-to-one interview. This was despite over 30 participants expressing an interest to take part at the end of the LASQ. It is suspected as outlined above, that this was influenced by the daily changes and significant challenges caused by Covid-19. As a result, 9 parents who attended a one-to-one interview had not completed an online questionnaire. Recruitment of these participants is outlined in Section 3.7.

Both the LASQ and Boarding School questionnaire (BSQ) were designed prior to the pandemic, with the BSQ being disseminated to parents weeks before

school closures and ultimately 'lockdown.' Responses to the BSQ had already been gathered prior to the Government announcement that schools were to close. Therefore, questions in the BSQ could not be altered any further to reflect the current circumstances being experienced by parents. The original design of this research did not incorporate one-to-one interviews with Boarding School Parents (BSP) due to the vast geographical differences in locations. However, during the new recruitment process of online recruitment, two parents who took part in a one-to-one interview either had a child at boarding school or had previously had a child at boarding school. These participants were accepted to take part as they met the criteria of having a child in a secondary school, were part of a Service Family, and had previously had to move their children to a new school due to mobility. Recruitment of the BSQ is outlined in Section 3.6.

3.4 Case study selection

There is some debate which frames case studies as having the inability to generalise results which are not representative of a whole community (cf. Harding, 2013, p.16). However, Yin (2003) rebuts this idea suggesting that case studies contribute to the theoretical aspects of the research and should not be used to generalise. To this effect case studies enable the researcher to account for phenomenon and highlight future implications and applications (Harding, 2013, p.16; Yin, 1994). In terms of this research, the findings could not be applied to all parents in the Military Community as experiences are likely to vary across locations and different services (Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Navy). To address this issue, all parents across each of the Service arms were included, with no parents being excluded.

As Service Children and their families are located across the UK and overseas, several considerations were addressed in relation to participant recruitment. Firstly, it was acknowledged that educational policies differ across the different parts of the UK and in MoD schools. Therefore, due to limited time and resources this research recruited parent participants whose children currently attended schools in England. However, due to the mobility requirements of Service Families, data was captured from Service Families whose children had previously attended a school outside of England, and some participants had

other children who were in a primary school. Secondly, it was further acknowledged some Service Families choose to educate their children in Independent or State boarding schools (Noret et al., 2015). Two of the parent participants who took part had either one child currently at a boarding school or had had a child who had previously attended a boarding school, these accounts were also included to capture the unique experiences of Service Parents accessing school places.

Additionally, there is some suggestion that Service Families whose children have Special Educational Needs may opt to board children to maintain a level of stability; which does not require having to navigate the Special Educational Needs process repeatedly (Noret et al., 2015, p.30). Therefore, this research also included Service Parents whose children attend a boarding school and expressed an interest to take part. These participants completed an online questionnaire.

To identify Service Families who are clustered near to Armed Forces bases, data from the Census for England and Wales 2011 was used (Office for National Statistics, 2014). This was the most up-to-date data pertaining to households with Serving members of the Armed Forces available for small geographical levels. Whilst there may be some limitations to the data such as data on children living in these households categorised from the ages of 0-15, it was considered the most reliable. It is important to note however, not all of the children identified in these areas are of school age, as the Census data includes children from 0-15 (Office for National Statistics, 2014, no pagination). The Census identified two Local Authority areas, labelled in this research as LA A and LA B, with approximately 6,000 Service Children residing in each (Office for National Statistics, 2014, no pagination) and these were chosen as the case study areas.

Two schools in Local Authority A (LA A), and one school in Local Authority B (LA B) agreed to take part. A second school in Local Authority B did respond to a letter asking for support, however, no further communication was received from this school. It is likely that this was a reflection of conducting research in a pandemic.

3.4.1 Changes to the case study as a result of Covid-19

The initial design of this research as a case study was to explore and identify if there were any differences between Local Authorities A and B. In addition, the BSQ was designed to investigate why Service Parents choose boarding school for their children. However, the effects of Covid-19 influenced the data collection stages which resulted in lower participation rates than expected. Therefore, data from both the LASQ and the BSQ have been combined in some cases. Due to the differences in questions in the BSQ, data collected from these parents may appear separately due to the types of questions being answered, and the variables which were explored.

Nevertheless, case study design has been subject to much scrutiny over the years in terms of what is defined as a case study and the variety of methods employed (Blaikie, 2000). Cosey and Lury (1987, cited in Blaikie, 2000, p.214-215) suggest for instance that a case study is a combination of observation, participation, secondary data analysis, interviewing, and reviewing of official documents. Whereas Goode and Hart (1952, p.331, citied in, Blaikie, 2000, p.215) describes a case study as:

> A way of organising social data as to preserve the unitary character of the social object being studied … it is an approach which views any social unit as a whole … this means of approach included the development of that unit, which may be a person, a family, or other social group, a set of relationships or process

As this research is a study of a community and the processes and relationships with the State, this research remained as a case study despite changes to the original research design.

3.5 Quantitative data collection

Initial data collection was gathered through questionnaires being distributed to parents. Two questionnaires were designed and disseminated; a questionnaire for parents whose children attended one of the participating secondary schools in the Local Authorities, and a questionnaire for parents whose children attended a boarding school. The LASQ was disseminated by a point of contact in the schools who took part and the BSQ was disseminated by myself and is discussed further in section 3.5.1.

Peterson (2000, p.3) observes that asking questions is the fundamental principle to research which forms a process of communication between the research and the participant. Designing a questionnaire for initial data collection facilitated the research process, providing a structure and a foundation for enabling direct lines of enquiry (Peterson, 2000, p.4). The LASQ was therefore designed to create a sample of parents from which I could contact to take part in a one-to- one interview where they had expressed an interest to take part.

The overall objectives of the research were outlined at the start of the questionnaire in the participant information section. Participants were also required to consent to the research via a compulsory question, answering yes or no. Participation in research is likely to gather more responses when there is a shared interest in the research problem (Groves et al., 1992; Steeh, 1981). However, conducting research in the height of a pandemic caused significant delays due to the difficulties in accessing the sample population. As this research required working with schools to access parents, which at the time of data collection were closed with children being home-schooled (Adams and Stewart, 2020), this constrained the research problem from being at the forefront of parents' concerns.

3.5.1 Questionnaire design

To achieve the expected return rates several considerations were made within the questionnaire design. Discussion regarding questionnaire participation provides numerous arguments as to why participants participate (Saleh and Bista, 2017). Scholars suggest (cf. Liu and Wronski, 2018; Saleh and Bista, 2017; Aerny-Perrenton et al., 2015; McPeake et al., 2014; Porter, 2004; Peterson, 2000) factors such as incentive, time to complete, shared interest, being part of a select group, being invited to take part by someone of authority, and the method of paper or online, all contribute to individuals consenting to take part. Questionnaires were designed using JISC with questions which consisted of multiple and single choice, Likert scale, and open and closed questions (Peterson, 2000). Questions were designed in sections according to themes. The LASQ was as follows: background questions, Special Educational Needs and Disability, applying for school places and appeals, communicating with schools, quality of education, Service Families, Covid-19. The BSQ was as follows: background questions, boarding school questions, applying for a

boarding school place, Special Educational Needs and Disability, communicating with schools, schools understanding Military life, Covid-19. An example of the questionnaire questions can be found in Appendix i.

To account for two different populations of school types (boarding and non-boarding schools), two separate questionnaires were designed. The designs of the questionnaires were broadly similar; however, some questions were developed to account for the differences between the two populations. Both questionnaires were designed prior to Covid-19 and were redesigned to account for new Covid-19 challenges prior to lockdown. However, the continual changes of Covid-19 with lockdown guidance changes could not be foreseen and this posed some challenges in the data collection process. Some questions within the questionnaires for instance were designed to enable further elaboration at one-to-one interviews, whilst others were not included because they were part of the one-to-one interview schedule. Further the original design was based upon the pre covid-19 world. The BSQ was designed not to include boarding parents in one-to-one interviews due to the vast geographical residency of parents. Therefore, this questionnaire gathered different data than the LASQ because at the time of design Covid-19 could not be foreseen. Boarding school parents were not invited to take part in a one-to-one interview.

The LASQ was disseminated to parents via an invitation from their child's school; with each school being provided with an individual link for their school. Parents whose children attended a boarding school, however, were provided with details of the questionnaire and link via social media. As participation was voluntary, participants were provided with information regarding the background to the research and aims through a participant information section at the start of the questionnaire (Blaikie, 2000; Peterson, 2000). Questionnaires which take under thirteen minutes to complete are said to gather higher response rates (Saleh and Bista, 2017, p.65), the questionnaires were tested and piloted prior to being disseminated to participants. Individuals who took part in these stages were asked to provide feedback on the time it took to complete the questionnaires and the questions asked (Peterson, 2000, p.17). All individuals responded that the questionnaires took under ten minutes to complete (cf. section 3.5.2 for further details on testing and piloting). Therefore, participants

were additionally informed of the time frame expected for completion (Wright, 2017; Blaikie, 2000).

Participants were additionally asked to provide informed consent through a required question. Any participants who did not provide consent were directed to the end of the questionnaire; this consisted of a thank you page. All participants were provided with my contact details and with my supervisors contact details (Blaikie, 2000; Peterson, 2000). Accessible and paper versions of the questionnaires were available on request.

3.5.2 Testing and piloting

Testing and piloting research facilitates the researcher in identifying any issues or gaps in the design prior to mainstage data collection (Johanson and Brooks, 2009; Peterson, 2000, p.118). There are several factors which should be considered when determining a pilot sample size such as, available time to conduct the pilot, the type of research, if the research is using comparable methods, and whether the pilot intends to compile preliminary information (Johanson and Brooks, 2009; Hertzog, 2008, p.190; Peterson, 2000). Johanson and Brooks (2009, p.395) ascertain the question of how many pilot participants are required is a difficult to establish, whilst Hertzog (2008, p.180) observes literature posits researchers should aim for ten percent of the sample population. Therefore, questionnaires were tested using a small group of parents before being piloted; with four to six test participants for each questionnaire and six to thirty-four pilot participants for each questionnaire.

Test participants were asked to complete a feedback form on completing of each questionnaire. Any adjustments to questions were made where necessarily, which included the removal of some questions which did not generate adequate data. Each questionnaire was additionally evaluated at the end of the pilot stages with any adjustments being made. Details regarding sampling strategy can be found in Section 3.6, data analysis is discussed in section 3.7, and data protection and storage in Section 3.11.3.

3.6 Quantitative sampling strategy

> To address a research question or hypothesis, the researcher decides which people and research sites can best provide information, puts a sampling procedure in place and determines the number of individuals that will be needed to provide data (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007, p.112)

Deciding on a sample size within research can be a complex and laborious task which generally must be decided upon at the start of the research design (Hammersley, 2015, p.687). Hammersley (2015) argues deciding on a sample population can be determined by the need to satisfy relevant committees that the data being collected is ethically sound and fulfils a viable and meaningful piece of research. In this regard, decisions on who, what, where, and why a sampling strategy has been determined is not a simple consideration. In essence, it is simply not a matter of calculating a distinct number of participants to satisfy a rich source of data (March et al., 2003).

Further to this, literature posits there is no simple formula or justification in determining what sample size will generate good quality in-depth data (Fugard and Potts, 2015, p.671; Emmel, 2013, p.147; Guest et al., 2006). As such Fugard and Potts (2015) illustrate sample size goes hand in hand with the researcher's chosen analysis. Sample population whilst important, can be overly deliberated over, in terms of the quantity and quality of data, yet does not need to be in each instance (Fugard and Potts, 2015; March et al., 2003). Therefore, whilst the sample population of this research was originally set to gather larger responses of quantitative data, this was reviewed in line with the ongoing pandemic, and the wider context of participants being overloaded with 'Zoom Fatigue' (Lobe et al., 2020).

Using a case study design, this research set out a sampling framework which assisted in establishing and developing thematic accounts, which reflected realistic and theoretical debates from within the community the research questions pertained to (Mason, 2018, p.123). Two questionnaires were designed to account for two different populations of parents. These consisted of parents whose children attend a school in one of the Local Authorities, and Service Parents of children who attended a boarding school.

The LASQ was disseminated via the school contact to all school parents. Any parents who met the criteria were able to take part. The criteria for parents to take part were as follows: a parent from the Armed Forces Community, a parent who had previously served in the Armed Forces, a parent whose child had required a school place outside of the usual entry points and/or had experienced mobility, parents of children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Questionnaires in Local Authority A received 21 completed questionnaires, all of which were valid, and Local Authority B received 62 completed questionnaires, 60 of these were valid (cf. Appendix ii for participant characteristics).

The BSQ was disseminated by myself through social media and community groups in which I was already a member. For my safety and security, the administrator of such community groups (where I was a member through a personal profile) was contacted and a request for an anonymised post was made (cf. Section 3.11.2 for discussion on anonymity). Parents who met the criteria of being an Armed Forces parent with a child at a boarding school were able to take part. The BSQ received 169 completed questionnaires, 164 of these were valid (Appendix ii for participant characteristics). A description of the data analysis for the questionnaires can be found in Section 3.7.

The purpose of the questionnaire research was to provide statistical data on the factors affecting Service Parents accessing suitable school places and, in the case of the LASQ, to identify potential interview participants as part of the case study design (cf. Section 3.4). Parents who completed the LASQ were asked if they would be interested in taking part in a one-to-one interview at the end of the questionnaire. This facilitated purposive sampling used for the qualitative design which assisted in identifying realistic narrative through the emergence of dominant themes constructed from the research questions (Mason, 2018; Harding, 2013, p.16-17; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007; Patton, 2002).

3.7 Quantitative data analysis

All data from completed questionnaires were transferred into an SPSS datafile. Field (2013) states using programs such as SPSS enables the researcher not to become too overwhelmed when they do not have a good grasp of statistics.

SPSS therefore provides many advantages to quantitative analysis as it provides standard statistical information in addition to more complex quantitative analysis. Prior to any analysis all completed questionnaires responses were checked to identify any errors in responses, this included manually cleaning the data (Toepoel, 2016, p.175). Toepoel (2016) states 'it is of crucial importance that you take time to carefully process the data and impose cleaning strategies' (p.176). Further, she argues failure to remove outliers can result in incorrect data analysis resulting in significant errors in reporting the data (Toepoel, 2016). The design of the questionnaires enabled participants to answer questions based on each of their children, therefore variables relating to child 1, child 2, child 3, child 4, child 5, and child 6+ were applicable to most of the questions. In some cases, participants had incorrectly answered a question by using the variable child 4 for instance, rather than child 1. These errors were manually corrected to ensure that the data being analysed was accurate (Toepoel, 2016).

Questionnaires which had been completed but did not meet the sampling criteria or were incomplete were removed. Overall, 7 questionnaires were removed, 2 from the LASQ, and 5 from the BSQ responses. In some instances, some participants reported on children who were either educated outside of the Local Authority, educated at a different school, or were not educated at a boarding school. Therefore, responses for participants who had reported on children educated outside of the Local Authority were removed for Local Authority based questions, and participants who reported on non-boarding children were removed for boarding school related questions. As this research was additionally investigating the Special Educational Needs Provisions for Service Children, participants who reported on other children with Special Educational Needs who were not boarding or were outside of the Local Authority were kept as these responses were considered an important part of the research. These responses were only used for questions which did not pertain to the Local Authority, the school, or boarding school specific questions, and this has been indicated clearly within the analysis Chapters.

All of the participant responses in Local Authority A were from Service Families, however 7 participants in Local Authority B were not from a Service Family. As

the LASQ was open to all families who met the criteria these responses were not removed. Analysis which includes non-Service Families has been clearly indicated throughout the analysis Chapters where used.

Each questionnaire response was numbered in order to identify any qualitative quotes which have been used in the analysis Chapters. Quotes which have been used from the quantitative analysis are proceeded by either LA (A or B) and an assigned number, or BSP and an assigned number. The number of respondents for the surveys and descriptive statistics on their key characteristics are available in Appendix ii.

Due to lower participation rates than expected careful consideration was given to the type of quantitative analysis used. Exploring statistical significance for instance such as using a Chi Square test of analysis or T-Test analysis, was problematic. The original design of this research allowed for comparisons to be explored through Local Authority A and Local Authority B using inferential testing. Further it was anticipated that more non-Service Families would take part in the questionnaires which again could have provided useful insights in any differences between the cohort of parents. In both cases, data from Local Authority A, and data from non-Service families was too small to make such comparisons. Data from the LASQ was therefore combined and analysed using univariate and bivariate analysis such as frequencies, descriptives, and cross tabulation of variables (Field, 2013). As the questions in the BSQ differed from the LASQ this dataset was not combined and was analysed independently.

Data analysis which does not use inferential testing is described as exploratory data analysis (Field, 2013; Seltman, 2012). Cross tabulation is considered an appropriate way to explore exploratory variables which can ascertain relationships and themes within the data (Field, 2013, Seltman, 2012). Therefore, data analysis of both the LASQ and BSQ utilised cross tabulation to examine and determine relationships and themes between variables. Once the variables had been analysed in SPSS, data was then extracted into excel to generate graphs and charts which are presented in the findings Chapters.

3.8 Qualitative data collection

Choosing qualitative methods according to Mason (2018) and Rose (1997) is said to be influenced by researcher positionality and epistemological position. Researchers therefore often choose to use qualitative methods without considering why it is an important approach to their research, and how it will collect the most relevant data for their research questions (Mason, 2018).

As Mason (2018) illustrates 'qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual' (p.110) which is advantageous to the researcher when their research includes more than one issue. Asking questions in a qualitative interview, assists in learning and understanding individual lived experiences (Kvale, 2007, p.2). Whilst situated knowledges can be advantageous to the research and the data collected, there is one caveat which must be considered. Moore (2012, p.12) argues that being positioned within a research group as an insider researcher, can provide challenges which puts the researcher at risk of being too emerged with the participants. In essence, researchers can find it challenging to separate their own shared lived experiences of the group and this can heavily influence the design of research questions (Moore, 2012). A discussion of insider research and reflexivity can be found in Section 3.11.1.

Engaging in one-to-one conversations with people to collect data provides a more secure setting, compared to focus groups (Kvale, 2007; Bloor et al., 2001; Morgan, 1997). There are some subjects which individuals may not wish to disclose during a focus group in the presence of others, and of course there are some ethical limitations to focus groups (Arksey and Knight, 1999; Morgan, 1997). Anonymity and confidentially may not always be upheld by the members of the focus groups, thus limiting some discussion if participants feel uncomfortable doing so (Bloor et al., 2001; Arksey and Knight, 1999; Morgan, 1997). One-to-one interviews, however, enable the participants to discuss and disclose details they feel comfortable with, and this can be facilitated via a good rapport with the researcher. As this research asked questions regarding Service Parents accessing school places for their children and Special Educational Needs, it was recognised that this was potentially an emotive subject, and

therefore, one-to-one interviews were considered most appropriate. Table 1 shows the breakdown of interview participants.

Table 1. Table of interview participants

	Parents	Key Stakeholders	Total
School	11	5	
Local Authority	0	2	
Total	**11**	**7**	**18**

Interview schedules were designed according to the participant status either parent or Key Stakeholder (an example of interview questions for Key Stakeholders and parents can be found in Appendix iii and Appendix iv) (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.35). Further information can be found in Sections 3.8.1 and 3.8.2.

The traditional secure settings of one-to-one interviews, however, have changed due to the pandemic. As a direct result of the pandemic, questions surrounding the *security* of one-to-one interviews have changed and have been reshaped (Carr and Tatham, 2021). Moving interviews to remote online methods now poses new challenges, insofar as, there is some debate whether participants being interviewed in their own homes changes the data being collected (cf. Howlett, 2021; Lobe et al., 2020). Further, it is too simplistic to assume that both the participants and the researcher will be in an environment which provides full anonymity and privacy. As such, there is a great potential for both to have an *invisible* participant present during the interview process (Carr and Tatham, 2021). A further in-depth discussion on anonymity and confidentiality can be found in Section 3.11.2.

3.8.1 Interviews with parents

Parents who expressed an interest to take part in the research further at the end of the LASQ, were invited to attend a one-to-one interview. Participants were contacted via email with further details of the research such as a participant information sheet (cf. Appendix v), an informed consent form (Appendix vi), and a pre interview question sheet. Informed consent is described as an ongoing process, which is obtained prior to the start of

interviews: once the participant has had the opportunity to make an informed decision (Alderson and Morrow, 2011; DePoy and Gitlin, 2011, p.155). Therefore, participants who completed an online questionnaire and agreed to take part in a one-to-one interview were provided with a second participant information sheet and were asked to provide informed consent again prior to interview.

Due to delays as a result of the pandemic, the recruitment process for interview participants was modified to obtain more participants. This required an ethical amendment which is discussed in Section 3.11. Recruitment of participants took place via social media through an academic account. Participants who responded to the recruitment posts were provided with a participant information sheet, an informed consent form, and a pre interview question sheet. These participants did not complete a questionnaire prior to interview. Therefore, a pre interview question sheet was designed to gather generic data. Interview schedules were also modified where required.

Interviews lasted for no longer than one hour and were held at a time convenient to both the participant and myself (Burnard, 1994, p.69). All interviews were conducted online via either Microsoft Teams or Zoom and abided to the University of Leeds guidelines. All interviews were conducted with the use of an interview schedule (cf. Appendix iii and iv) (King and Horrocks, 2010). Interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Details on interview data storage can be found in Section 3.11.3, and data analysis in Section 3.7.

3.8.2 Interviews with Key Stakeholders

Key Stakeholders were invited to take part in a one-to-one interview either directly by myself or via a nominated point of contact at school. Formal letters were sent to schools which had been identified asking them if they could support the research. The nominated school contact disseminated the relevant information to school staff which included a participant information sheet (cf. Appendix v), and informed consent form (cf. Appendix vi), and a pre interview question sheet. Key Stakeholders working outside of schools, such as in Local Authority departments, were approached via a formal letter and subsequently were provided with a participant information sheet, an informed consent form,

and a pre interview question sheet when they expressed an interest to take part. Informed consent was obtained prior to interview from all Key Stakeholder participants. Interviews lasted for no longer than one hour and were held at a time convenient to both the participant and myself (Burnard, 1994, p.69). The recruitment process for Key Stakeholders was amended as per the details provided in Section 3.11.

Elwood and Martin (2000, p.651) observe there is little discussion on the ideal location to conduct qualitative interviews. Discussion on interviews generally centre on 'convenience for participants and researchers, suggesting that the location should ... be quiet and easy to find' (Elwood and Martin, 2000, p.650). As all interviews were conducted online this provided the advantage of not having to arrange suitable locations. That said, most of the Key Stakeholder participants took part during working hours from their workspace/office. There is some debate that conducting interviews in the participant's place of work can shift the dynamics of power to the participant. This is not to suggest I should or wished to maintain any level of power, however, it was important to acknowledge that the participant did not assume an authority voice which could potentially steer the interview in a different direction (Elwood and Martin, 2000; Krueger, 1994). To maintain a balance during the interview, all interviews were conducted with the use of an interview schedule (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.35).

All interviews were conducted online via either Microsoft Teams or Zoom and abided to the University of Leeds guidelines. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Details on interview data storage can be found in Section 3.11.3, and data analysis in Section 3.10.

3.9 Qualitative sampling strategy

As discussed in Section 3.9 making decisions on sample sizes can be problematic (Hammersley, 2015). Literature suggests sample sizes are often determined to satisfy ethics committees or grant proposals (Fugard and Potts, 2015, p.670). In essence, researchers must demonstrate that their research is worthy and often justifiable through big data (Fugard and Potts, 2015; Guest et al., 2006). Many scholars, however, posit that data saturation can be met even

with the smallest of sample sizes (cf. Fugard and Potts, 2015; Hammersley, 2015; Guest et al., 2006; March et al., 2003). To this extent it is important to acknowledge that the richer source of qualitative data, which is often discussed in qualitative methods (Mason, 2018; Ormston et al., 2014), goes beyond the physical number of a sample population.

3.9.1 Parents

Initially, participants who had completed an online questionnaire were asked at the end if they wished to take part further in the research. Those who selected yes were invited to leave their contact details. As this research focused on a particular community, a purposive sampling strategy was used (Mason, 2018, p.214). Purposive sampling is used when researchers 'purposely select individuals to represent insights into the daily routines of larger groups' (DePoy and Gitlin, 2011, p.169). As such participants are selected because they meet a set criteria which has been established in the research design (Mason, 2018; Emmel, 2013; DePoy and Gitlin, 2011). All parents who met the criteria of the questionnaire (cf. Section 3.5) were therefore additionality eligible to take part in a one-to-one interview.

The original research design aimed to recruit 7-10 parents per school, providing 15 to 20 qualitative interviews in each of the Local Authorities; 30-40 in total. However, with the closure of schools and the pressures experienced in the pandemic, reaching participants in this domain was extremely challenging. With this in mind the sampling strategy was redesigned, and the number of participants recruited was reduced. It was considered that the best course of action was to extend the geographical areas of participants. This meant that more participants could be included in the research. Participants who were outside of both Local Authorities were therefore accepted to take part. These participants were recruited via an academic social media account. In some cases, participants were made aware of the research via snowball sampling, these participants were also accepted to take part if they met the sampling criteria. Only participants over the age of eighteen were accepted to take part. In total, 11 qualitative interviews took place with parents who fit the criteria as mentioned in Section 3.9. This consisted of 1 parent in Local Authority A, 1 parent in Local Authority B, and 9 parents in other Local Authorities. Given the

nature of the Armed Forces Community, no characteristics of interview participants have been provided to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

3.9.2 Key Stakeholders

Purposive sampling was also used for the recruitment of Key Stakeholders. Participants were either working in a school which was part of the research, or working in a Local Authority department and who were directly involved in any of the following roles: school admissions and appeals, education development advisors, regional or county Special Educational Needs co-ordinator, head teachers, teaching staff, school Special Educational Needs co-coordinators, teaching assistants, and dedicated Service Children support/mentors. It is important to note, that this list is not exhaustive, and participants were recruited on the basis that they worked with or had experience with Service Families.

The original design of this research aimed for 7-10 participants in each Local Authority; 15-20 interviews across both Local Authorities. It was considered that given the timescale of each interview, the busy schedule of teaching and Local Authority staff, and the ongoing pandemic, twenty interviews in total presented a manageable sample size (Howlett, 2021; Mason, 2018). As per Section 3.9.1 the geographical location of participants was extended outside of the chosen case study Local Authorities. These participants were also recruited via an academic social media account. In total, 7 qualitative interviews took place with Key Stakeholders who worked or had previous experience of working with Service Families and children. This consisted of 4 Key Stakeholders in Local Authority A, and 3 Key Stakeholders from other Local Authorities.   No characteristics of interviews participants have been provided to protect confidentiality and anonymity.

3.10 Qualitative data analysis

On completion of each interview the recording was transcribed into a word document. Transcripts were then reviewed prior to data analysis enabling me to become familiar with the data, and further enabled the data to be continually summarised (Mason, 2018; Harding, 2013). All transcripts were then transferred into NVivo for coding using a thematic analysis (cf. Appendix vii for example of codes). There are some debates regarding the advantages of using computer assisted programs for qualitative data analysis with hand coding

themes being preferred by some researchers (Bryman, 2012). Using a computer program for qualitative analysis does not code or identify themes for the researcher, rather it simplifies the process by not being *lost* in paper transcripts (Bryman, 2012). Further, NVivo provides functions which enabled me to view participant transcripts as a whole, and provided coded sections under each theme, thus this information could easily be found by selecting a theme and seeing which parts of the transcripts had been coded under a theme.

A thematic analysis was chosen to analyse qualitative data as thematic analysis is advantageous in enabling themes which have been identified and constructed by the researcher to be recognised (Harding, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2005). Furthermore, thematic analysis can continue until all themes or new themes have been identified within the data (Nowell et al., 2017; Harding, 2013; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2005). Additionally, thematic analysis facilitates in identifying any repetition in participant responses and validates themes which have already been identified within literature (Ryan and Bernard, 2003; Boyatzis, 1998).

Themes were coded according to pre-existing themes identified through the literature and by new themes that emerged during the research (Harding, 2013). Any data which fell into a miscellaneous category was coded as other and was reviewed at the end of analysis to substantiate their relevance (Nowell et al., 2017; Harding 2013). To ensure that no themes were missed transcripts were continually reviewed which further facilitated identifying any variation in the participant responses (Nowell et al., 2017). An example of the codes used can be found in Appendix vii. The findings are presented in Chapters 4,5,6, and 7 (Mason, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017; Harding, 2013; Silverman, 2005).

3.11 Ethics

Ethical approval for this research was granted from the University of Leeds. In addition, this research upheld the ethical guidelines of the British Sociological Association ethical practice (British Sociological Association, 2017), and ethics guidelines and collated resources for digital research (British Sociological Association, 2020).

Research which is undertaken with human participants must address any ethical concerns and prospective participants must be provided with details of the research to enable them to make a decision regarding their participation (Mason, 2018; Silverman, 2005; Punch, 1994). In this regard, participants were asked to sign an informed consent form prior to taking part in the research (Silverman, 2005, p.258). Participants who took part in an online questionnaire were provided with a participant information page and were required to tick option yes to consenting to take part before they could complete the questionnaire. Any participants who did not consent were directed to the end of the questionnaire and were eliminated from participating. Participants who took part in a one-to-one interview, were provided with a second participant information sheet, and were required to consent again via a consent form. In line with the ethical approval, participants either signed the sheet electronically or signed in handwriting and provided a photograph of the complete form. At the start of each interview, all participants were asked to confirm they had read the participant information sheet and confirmed they had provided consent to take part.

All participants were made aware of the aims of the research, why it was being undertaken, its importance, any potential impact of the research, the voluntary nature of participation and right to withdraw, the advantages and disadvantages of taking part, confidentiality and dissemination of the research, data storage, and my contact details (Mason, 2018; Silverman, 2005). Further, all participants were reminded at the start of each one-to-one interview that they were not required to answer any questions they do not wish to, or may feel uncomfortable with (Lee, 1993). This research did not seek to explore any personal or sensitive details relating to personal circumstance, although it was acknowledged that speaking about Special Educational Needs and Disability could potentially invoke feelings of discomfort (Decker et al., 2011). For the purposes of anonymity, all participants were provided with a pseudonym and any data which may identify the participant has been removed. Any quotes which risks exposing the identification of participants, the schools, and the Local Authority (Wiles et al., 2006) were excluded. In light of the delays caused by the pandemic, an ethics amendment was granted to change the recruitment process for the one-to-one interviews.

3.11.1 Reflexivity, and insider verses outsider research

Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.56) state:

> The benefit to being a member of the group one is studying is acceptance. One's membership automatically provides a level of trust and openness in your participants that would likely not have been present otherwise.

The idea for this research emerged from my lived experiences and observations as a researcher who is a member of the Military Community. Being part of this community enabled me to recognise, observe, and experience *the research problem.* An advantage to the researchers insiderness was the existing connections within the community and knowledge regarding participant access. Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.55) illustrate the importance of the role of the researcher when they are an insider of the community they are exploring. They argue that being an insider can influence the relationship between the researcher and participants which could potentially facilitate wider discussion during qualitative interviews. A participant may also be more inclined to describe an incident in greater detail when the researcher has insider understanding; which can also be facilitated when the researcher has an understanding of the lifestyle and terminology (Blaikie, 2000, p.251). As a result of my positionality this eliminated any requirement for elaboration, particularly in instances where *military slang* was used.

To begin with, I did not envisage too many problems with the shared space of being part of the Military Community. Qualitative research design usually takes place in locations which are neutral to the researcher, insofar as, the researcher will agree on a location with participants which suit both but is easily accessible to the participant and one they are generally familiar with (Edwards and Holland, 2013; Burnard, 1994). Thus, the researcher traditionally goes *out* into the field to access and interview participants. Due to the changes of the research design influenced by Covid, the space which the participants and I shared crossed over into the private divide (Howlett, 2021). As I reside in military housing, this could have enabled the potential for participants to open up discussion on my surroundings; with military homes being easily identifiable through fixtures such as curtains and carpets. In this regard, blurred backgrounds were used to protect my privacy.

It is argued that *insider* researchers are perceived as being too close to the research subject as they already have a particular viewpoint of the area which may result in a lack of academic rigour (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007, p.60). Similarly, when a participant gains insight into the private sphere of a researcher, they can make pre-existing assumptions about the researcher, and this can present some bias in the data (Howlett, 2021; Chavez, 2008, p.479). In contrast, being an outsider may create some form of unwillingness to open up, a caveat here is participants answering questions with statements in the event that the researcher has demonstrated a lack of understanding in their questioning (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009; Asselin, 2003). To mitigate any potential bias, I explicitly communicated my positionality within the Military Community, but steps were taken to ensure that the private shared knowledge did not influence the data collection process. As a result, I did not select to undertake mainstage data collection in any area in which I had previously resided.

3.11.2 Anonymity, confidentiality, and insider research

Nightingale and Cromby (1999, p.228) state researchers must acknowledge reflexivity during the research process and account for any influencing factors which may affect data collection. As I am from the Military Community I communicated this to all participants involved in the study and always remained impartial by not influencing the research questions to reflect my own viewpoint (Rose, 1997, p.305; McDowell, 1992). Further, I did not disclose or discuss any personal experiences or views with any of the participants (McDowell, 1992). To further maintain anonymity and privacy, and to eliminate any potential data bias, participants were asked to confirm that I was not personally known to them via the consent form.

Anonymity and confidentially form a large part of the research process and the researcher must maintain both to protect the identity of the participants (Mason, 2018; Saunders et al., 2015; Silverman, 2005). Whilst confidentiality protects all information obtained during the research process, anonymity protects the identity of the participant (Saunders et al., 2015, p.617). In this regard, the researcher has a duty towards the participants to maintain anonymity which includes adapting a selective approach in the event material, for instance direct quotations, is to be replicated from the data (Saunders et al., 2015). Saunders et al. (2015, p.617) argue that anonymity can never fully be achieved in

qualitative research insofar as, a participant does not remain anonymous once they have met the researcher in person. Conducting research within the Military Community therefore presented some concerns regarding the anonymity of the participants, and myself.

What research involves, to its full extent, is seldom fully understood from the participant perspective (Wiles et al., 2012). Whilst participants have the ability to read all the information available to them, and consent to take part in the research, the full implications may never be fully comprehended. As Wiles et al. (2012, p.47) state:

> even with full and considered consent, unless they have taken part in similar research before it is likely that they may not fully understand how data about them may be used and displayed, and what the possible impacts of this might be. While researchers' knowledge means that they can predict some of the potential impacts of identification in the research, they are unlikely to know all the possible impacts it might have on individuals

The Military Community is large, yet in many respects it is not. Families' geographical movements influences changing friendships groups and the *knowing* of others through mutual friends. Situated insider knowledges are additionally frequently shared amongst individuals. This further exacerbated issues around maintaining confidentially and anonymity as it was possible that participants' identities, the school, and Local Authority could be identified through minor details (Saunders et al., 2015).

Further, participants can make assumptions about researchers prior to making an informed decision on whether to take part in research (Allen, 2021). Researchers are now more than ever accessible digitally which enables potential participants to *research* the researcher. With this in mind I took additional measures via private social media accounts, which included changing my name to limit the possibility of any potential participants from identifying me through any of the community groups I am part of on social media.

Some of the participants in this research disclosed locations and in-depth details regarding their personal lives. Whilst this information did not form part of the interview schedule, participants felt that this information provided context to their narratives. Therefore, extra measures have been taken to ensure

anonymity such as, not providing a participant profile, and using gender neutral pronouns when using quotes which disuses their children. Any data which placed participants, or their families, at risk of being identified has not been disclosed, and in some instances, footnotes have been provided to state no further information has been provided.

3.11.3 Data storage and accessibility

All of the interviews which took place were recorded and transcribed. After transcription, all recordings were destroyed immediately. Materials, including transcripts and participant contact details were stored in line with the University of Leeds Management Policy (University of Leeds, 2017). All materials were password protected and were only accessible by myself.

3.12 Conclusion

This Chapter has introduced and outlined, in depth, the methods used in this research. It has provided a justification for the methodological approach of mixed methods and outlined the epistemological and ontology position of the researcher. This Chapter has also addressed challenges which were experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has outlined the ways in which the pandemic reshaped the methodological design, and the wider considerations of moving research forward during such challenging times. Further it has described the research design of a case study approach and provided justification for this method. It has additionally provided the rationale of mixed methods, outlining both quantitative and qualitative designs, with data collection, sampling, and analysis.

This Chapter additionally addressed the ethical considerations which included a discussion on researcher positionality, and anonymity and confidentially in insider research, and the challenges which were encountered. The next Chapter, Chapter 4 presents analysis related to the theme of (in)stability, how this effects Service Parents sourcing a school place for their children, and the challenges of Key Stakeholders working in schools with Service Children.

Chapter 4 (In)Stability: From school application to classroom

I think most of us as human beings, it's in our nature to thrive on stability and routine. And I think that when a partner goes away, or there is a move, there's a period of instability. Now, when it's a move, the instability is around, finding everything, finding the services that you need, making friends and finding a support network, particularly for childcare. If it's the case that they're stable, but then the partner goes away on tour, then the instability is around establishing new norms, new routines, or that person's away with the added anxiety at any time that someone's going to come up on your door and tell you that that person has been killed, maimed, and their life has been changed for good. So, I think the instability, and the threat of instability is there all the time (Louise, KS)

4.1 Introduction

To have stability within a person's life can denote a variety of different things according to the situational context to whom, and what it is being applied to. For Service Families, stability can mean to be provided with a stable and consistent environment. This can be within the family home, spousal employment, and children's education (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). This is not an exhaustive list of what stability means to Service Families however, this Chapter outlines and discusses stability in relation to Service Children's education, and the ways in which Service Parents seek to ensure stability in their children's educational experiences. For Service Families, stability in education means overall, that their children have the ability to be educated without interruption, and unrestricted from any influencing factors which may cause disruption. It is of course impossible to anticipate that any child can be educated in a secure and ideal bubble, free from everyday problems. What is different for Service Children, however, is that their lives are often shaped and centred as a result of the Service milieu, influenced by their parent's careers.

This does not mean to insinuate that Serving Personnel and their career choice are the instigators of the challenges experienced in their children's educational experiences. Yet their job role does place their children into this unique category of the Service Child, whether the family accompanies the Serving

Person(s) on each posting, or if they are unaccompanied[23]. Therefore, this Chapter will explore the following research questions: 1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places?; 1.1) How do Service Parents navigate these issues?

This Chapter will additionally demonstrate how the theme of stability was evident within the findings of the data collected. The Chapter then concludes that stability can often lead to episodic periods of instability, as outlined by participant Louise above. (In)Stability is generally considered to be influenced by mobility, and further, it can mean a variety of different things and is not solely associated with stability in a Service Child's educational lifecycle. However, (in)stability is also a factor in Service Families lives within their everyday lived experiences. (In)Stability is also an undiscussed factor within the roles of Key Stakeholders, as many also experience instability through their direct relationships with Service Families and Children. In effect, both Service Families and Key Stakeholders are explicitly and implicitly effected by (in)stability to some degree.

4.2 Applying for and accessing suitable schools

Chapter 2 discussed the issues around mobility for Service Families meaning on each move a new school place needs to be sourced for children. Unlike most families choosing a school place, Service Families may be required to find a school during the school year, outside of the usual entry points. Further, they may also have to apply for a school place after the application deadline for reception and secondary years entry. When this occurs, it is likely that spaces for their preferred schools may already have been filled. It is important to note here however, that this particular issue is not exclusive to Service Families, many families may experience being offered a second or third preference school or place at a different school altogether.

In this regard there are several challenges which are encountered by Service Families of which two examples will be outlined. Often these challenges can be

---

23 An unaccompanied family does not reside with the serving person at their assigned unit. Unaccompanied families live away from Military Communities, usually in alternative accommodation to SFA. Also referred to as dispersed families.

as a result of policies and procedures, such as being assigned a new posting order, the housing allocation, and the School Admissions Code. In effect these polices do not intrinsically link with one another and consequently, can affect the school application process (cf. see Chapter 2). The time in which a posting order can be allocated varies across the Tri-Services with some Personnel receiving short notice posting orders, or not receiving official notice (their Assignment Order) in an adequate timeframe (Walker et al., 2020). Two typical examples are described below:

> Soldier A has informally been told their next assignment is in Devon. Soldier A's family then begin the process of researching the posting, this would include looking into potential schools. Soldier A however has not yet received their Assignment Order but has an idea of when they are expected to be in their new post. In accordance with the School Admissions Code, Soldier A can use their new unit address to apply for a school place for their child (cf. Chapter 2), however their new posting covers a vast radius which ultimately means Soldier A's family could potentially be housed anywhere within that radius. In this example, whilst Solider A can apply for a school place, when Soldier A has been allocated SFA this could be a forty-minute drive away. This would either see Soldier A reapply for a school place or their children having to travel further to school.

> Soldier B has already received their posting order, but they do not take up their new post until November. Soldier B's oldest child is moving into year 10 so the family would like to move earlier. Housing policy however dictates Service Personal cannot accommodate SFA earlier than four weeks before the start of their new assignment (Ministry of Defence, 2022b, p. 4-3). Whilst there are some concessions which would enable Soldier B's family to move earlier (Ministry of Defence, 2022b, chapter 4), there is no guarantee that Soldier B can be accommodated; because there may be no available properties at the time they are wanting to move (Army Families Federation, 2022a). In this case Soldier B's children will move after the beginning of term which could have an impact particularly in important school years.

Particular issues can therefore arise when Personnel are due to start at their new units in the latter half of the year, after the September school start date, and this is further exacerbated when there are no available SFA for the family. Sophie, a single parent to two children with Special Educational Needs explained:

> [Child] didn't get to start school until November because I couldn't find a school for [them], because they didn't have a house. So, I didn't have an address (Sophie, SP)

Sophie was moving into a location which had a low stock of military housing, which presented several challenges. Not being able to apply for a school place meant that Sophie's child could not attend school for two months. The School Admissions Code states that Service Families can use their unit address to apply for school place (Department for Education, 2021b). That said issues can arise when Local Authorities are not familiar with the process of applications. Sophie detailed that the application for her Local Authority included a tick box to indicate she was part of a Service Family. However, this caused significant issues when the Local Authority did not recognise this section of the application, and implicitly stated it did not change the status of her application.

When Sophie raised concerns regarding the delay in her application, she went on to utilise the Armed Forces Covenant. As Sophie puts it:

> The only reason [they] got the place was basically I had to use the Armed Forces Covenant and basically say they're a child of the Armed Forces (Sophie, SP)

Despite this there were additional issues when Sophie's Local Authority informed her they were not signed up to the Covenant (a discussion on the Covenant can be found in Chapter 2, Section 2.2). Sophie then had to resort to informing her Local Authority that she would be contacting a high-profile MP to assist her with her case. However, there were additional delays with Sophie's application as the school she chose for her children was outside of her catchment area.

Participants explicitly stressed that the application process was not linear, and most participants highlighted the difficulties of sourcing a school place. Two of the participants stated that they had sourced information on schools informally from community social media pages, friends, and on the basis that other

children from the unit attended the school. As Brian, and Joe, Service Parents, demonstrate:

> Every time we've got a posting order, we got forwarded the local schools numbers, and we just rang them … it was pretty straight forward (Brian, SP)

> Usually we do it through like, Facebook's like a really up and coming commodity now, and then generally, because … we move around all the time, we always know somebody who knows somebody, sort of thing … so it's almost like word of mouth (Joe, SP)

However, the remaining participants who were interviewed all indicated that the process was not as straight forward. Brian and Joe were the only male interview participants and compared to the female interviewees they provided different accounts of their experiences in terms of sourcing a school place. Female interviewee participants all described that the process can be more stressful than depicted by Brian and Joe. Laura, a Serving Parent suggested how the process could me made simpler for Service Parents:

> A one-page guide for military parents, from that [Local Authority] on how to apply to the school because you're moving into the area, might help, like a crib sheet, and what to say on your application (Laura, SP)

Military parents can source both formal and informal information regarding school places. However, in terms of the application process, most participants who took part in qualitative interviews, expressed that they had experienced difficulties when applying for school places:

> Even though we was military, there was no chance of us getting through the doors (Bethany, SP)

> I do worry now, this is the first time out of any schools that we have ever had a problem … it wasn't till we moved here … that it was a problem, so I do worry, depending on where we would go next, if that would happen again (Sian, SP)

> I went around in circles … I am a XX postcode, the house in front of me is XX, so I live on the boarder … when I applied for the school I went through [LA removed] website … to then be told that I couldn't apply through them I had to apply through [LA removed] and when I applied through them they turned around and said 'no, you have to apply through [LA removed]' (Sophie, SP)

> It was a long process, and it was kind of delayed, so it took longer than it should have (Carole, SP)

The problem is with the Local Authority I'm under because I live on the wrong side of the road, to be in the catchment area … so effectively I'm [area removed], so I've got that working against me … but regardless I needed the school [place] (Layla, SP)

But had they told me that they were unlikely to take [child], or had the Local Authority said, 'take a look at these schools', I might have been able to make other arrangements, but no, I literally got 'no [child's] not going to that school they are going to another one 4 miles in the other direction' (Laura, SP)

So, the main difficulty was … first choice I couldn't really go for because I wanted them both at the same school (Isobel, SP)

Although this was not explicitly stated, to some degree, parents illustrated their experiences of dealing with their Local Authority as being seen to be *choosing* to move. This was also discussed in the context of having no choice over where they live, or even which house they get to reside in:

I don't want to say that it's not really good enough and I shouldn't be entitled to better treatment just because I'm in the military … [Local Authority] was like 'you're choosing to move' and I was like 'no' … 'I have no control over this' … I got one choice of house (Laura, SP)

We don't get to choose where we live, you know, we get given houses, we don't get to choose, but we should get to choose where our kids go to school (Sian, SP)

Munton (1990) illustrates moving house which is linked to job relocation can cause significant stress within the family unit. He argues that parents experience greater levels of stress in relation to their children's loss of friendships and disruption to their education (Munton, 1990, p.403). The stress of moving house was additionally found to be more stressful when family units were moving greater distances, such as from North to South (Munton, 1990). In terms of military families, this is significant as their occupations can be highly mobile. Unlike other occupations, the precarious nature of Service life means events are likely to change at any given time, and this is coupled with anxieties of the severe danger of the role during times of operational duty. Therefore, the stress of moving and finding a school can become more challenging if timescales, or even house allocations change. These factors are likely to contribute to emotions of choice when Service Families are applying for school places. To put it another way, Service Families demonstrated they wished to remove any further stress to the moving situation by being allocated a school

which suited their child, and one which was within a reasonable distance to their home.

As discussed in Chapter 2, Some Service Parents decided to send their children to a boarding school. In comparison to the qualitative interviewees, the majority of parents in the BSQ (73%, 118 out of 162), stated they found the process of applying for a boarding school place straightforward, however 58% (88 participants out of 151) either 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the process was stressful and 30% (45 out of 151) were 'overwhelmed'. In some cases, opting to send children to boarding school is influenced by overseas postings. Whilst the MoD does provide schools overseas this is not in every overseas location. Elaine explained that sending her child to boarding school was due to a lack of choice in their overseas posting. After her child had started school overseas, it became apparent that the school was not meeting her child's needs, and fundamentality was affecting her child's social and emotional well-being:

> We had to make a very quick decision what to do because it wasn't going to work. This was year 9, a key point in [child's] education. So, we very quickly had to make the decision to put [child] in boarding school. So, I came back to the UK, we really had about a week to look at as many boarding schools as possible, and it was quite traumatic (Elaine, SP)

Elaine went on to state that even though they felt they had chosen the right boarding school that matched her child's academic ability, problems occurred when her child was unable to spend any time with her extended family at weekends, and there was a decline in her child's mental well-being. Elaine explained that they had hoped extended family would be able to see her child at weekends, but due to the distance of the child's boarding school this was not possible. As a result, it was decided that Elaine would return to the UK and her husband would remain overseas to complete his posting.

The difficulties experienced by the parent participants in this research all varied, and in some cases were dependent on their circumstances such as Elaine's experience above. Similar to Elaine, Sian had also expressed that sending their child to boarding school was not something the family had previously considered, but the lack of school places in the area, and the number of schools her eldest child had already attended influenced the family's decision:

> We were starting to look at secondary school, and we just thought we didn't know when we would have to move again, [child] had had four primary schools and we noticed that the older they got the harder it was to settle in in (Sian, SP)

Evidence shows 64% of Service Families were able to apply for a school place at the usual entry points, with 7 in 10 being allocated their first preference in 2020-21 (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.14). From 2020-21, 1 in 5 Service Families moved for Service reasons (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.23), whilst over half of these were able to apply for a school place at the usual entry points (reception and year 7), it is important to note that the MoD points out 'families with children who moved, were more likely to have a child at an Independent boarding school' (Ministry of Defence, 2020, p.26). This evidence therefore suggests Service Families who claim CEA to enable them to send their children to boarding school, are more likely to move than those who do not. However, this evidence is provided through the AFCAS and FAMCAS in which not all Personnel or their spouses will have taken part in.

Overall, 2020-21 saw a decrease across the tri-services in Service Families with children in education having to change school, yet it is vital that this is understood within the context of the Covid era (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.14). Whilst FAMCAS reports 74% of families did not need a new school with figures being similar to 2019, it does not mean that Service Families were not due to move prior to the pandemic (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.14). As previously stated, these figures are additionally problematic because they do not capture every military household. Within this research it was found that mobility influenced the difficulties experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places. Whilst Covid may have seen a decrease in mobility across the Services, mobility remains a challenge to many Service Families, and this was particularly evident within this research.

4.3 Navigating the issues of finding the right school

Although the Covenant sets out Service Families should have fair and equal access to education, research demonstrates some Service Parents do encounter difficulties in accessing school places (Ministry of Defence, 2017; Brady et al., 2013a). Further, whilst the Covenant sets out 'special arrangements' (Ministry of Defence, 2015a, p.7) should be in place to facilitate the process of mid-year applications, research posits it can become problematic

when Local Authorities and non-State maintained schools construe the(ir) School's Admission Code, via their own interpretations (Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Scott, 2013). Service Families do not always move on an individual case by case basis, with whole regimental moves not being unusual (Longfield, 2018; Ministry of Defence, 2018c). This has been a particularly prominent occurrence over the last decade with the announcement of the withdrawal of British Forces from Germany, and the process of Personnel returning to the UK (Ministry of Defence, 2018c; The Defence Committee, 2013a). Whole unit moves see a significant proportion of Service Children moving into new locations, and in 2014 it was estimated over 5,500 additional Service Children would require school places in the UK (Longfield, 2018; Ministry of Defence, 2018c). When this occurs, Local Authorities must prepare for larger numbers of school places being required. To eliminate any potential barriers and to assist Local Authorities, guidelines are circulated down to Local Authorities from Central Government, to facilitate them in adequately providing school places for Service Children (Ministry of Defence, 2015a). However, difficulties can occur when Local Authorities receive high numbers of applications at any one time, which can result in disparities between the numbers of available school places and Service Children needing places (Scott, 2013).

Only a small percentage of Service Parents who responded to the LASQ indicated that they experienced difficulties applying for their child's current school place (14%, 13 child places out of 91), and 7 of these children had a Special Educational Need (28%, 7 children out of 25). Interview parents who had children with a Special Educational Need also expressed they had experienced difficulties applying for their children's school place. Layla, a Service Parent with a child with Special Educational Needs, also experienced difficulties when the school she wished to place her child in was outside of her Local Authority boundary:

> The problem is with the Local Authority … because I live on the wrong side of the road, to be in the catchment area (Layla, SP)

Catchment area issues were also a challenge for Sophie, a Service Parent with two children with Special Educational Needs:

> Where I live, I am a XX postcode, the house directly in front of me as a YY so I live literally on the border. And when I applied for the school that they're in now I went through the [Local Authority removed] site to be told that I couldn't apply through them I had to apply through [Local Authority removed] and when I applied through [them] they turned around and said no (Sophie, SP)

Working with Local Authorities to find a school which is the right fit for a child with Special Educational Needs can cause considerable stress for parents (Tissot, 2011, p.3). Working in partnership between the child, the parent and Key Stakeholders, is underpinned within the SEND Code of Practice (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015), and further all children with Special Educational Needs have the right to be educated with equality within mainstream schools. Rogers (2007, p.56) ascertains that there has been some considerable debate regarding the intentions of inclusive education. Changes to policy over the last twenty years have supported schools enabling them to assist children with Special Educational Needs to have, the same equal access to mainstream education as any other child, where this has been possible for them to do so (Rogers, 2007, p.57). Yet as Rogers states, 'the emphasis was on 'where possible' and has been the loophole in the exclusion of children with Special Educational Needs over the past two and a half decades' (p.57).

Current data shows 2.3% of all pupils in primary school have an EHCP, and 13% have Special Educational Needs support. Furthermore, 2.2% of all pupils in secondary schools have an EHCP, and 11.9% have Special Educational Needs support (National Statistics, 2022, no pagination). Rogers (2007) argues that children with Special Educational Needs are more likely to be accommodated in a mainstream primary school, in part this could be because the transition to secondary school may include a variety of stressors for some children with Special Educational Needs. The primary school milieu for instance could be considered as a more nurturing environment, children are likely to have one or two familiar subject teachers, and remain in the same classroom (Makin et al., 2017). In contrast, in secondary school children are usually taught by a variety of different subject teachers, they must move about from classroom to classroom, and secondary schools have more pupils than primary schools, which may be stressful for some children with Special Educational Needs. Depending on the child's Special Educational Needs, some

children, in particular those on the autism spectrum, may struggle to adapt to their new environments and the varied routine (Makin et al., 2017). Kevin, a Key Stakeholder in Local Authority A, with over 20 years' experience of working in a Local Authority department, and a former serving soldier stated:

> There's a huge difference between a child with autistic tendencies and a child with autism … because unless you know where they are on the spectrum a child with autistic tendencies can be dealt with successfully in any school … a child on the spectrum will have very specific needs (Kevin, KS)

Kevin went on to discuss the challenges when parents apply for a school place but do not fully enclose all of the details regarding their child's Special Educational Needs. When this occurs, challenges can arise for the child in school. Kevin further discussed how working together, in partnership with the school and the parents is the best possible scenario for the child, as it is the child who is at the centre, and whose needs ultimately are required to be met. As Kevin expressed:

> I think people work very hard at when it's managing the expectations of Service Personnel. We have SENDIASS[24] that is independent and can give really good advice. We have a [Special Educational Needs] team who can give really good advice. But very often, all we get is an application for [a child to go to secondary school], then it all comes out (Kevin, KS)

Kevin demonstrated that in some instances parents omit details regarding their child's needs, which causes problems for the child once they have begun school. In this regard it is essential that working in partnership with the parents and other organisations as detailed above facilitates children in being adequately supported. All of the parent interviewees who had a child with Special Educational Needs did not suggest or communicate that they had not disclosed information regarding their child's Special Educational Needs when applying for a school place. On the contrary, parents who had children with Special Educational Needs expressed that they were very clear with schools and Local Authorities regarding the required support for their children.

Nevertheless, Layla's application for her child's secondary place posed many challenges, when as highlighted earlier, she was not residing in the Local Authority of the school she chose for her child. She described a process of going back and forth between the Local Authority she lived in and the Local

---

[24] Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services

Authority she had applied to. Further, Layla's decision for the right school for her child was influenced by her parents. Layla expressed she had chosen a school which was willing to take her child and fully supported their Special Educational Needs. However, Layla's parents suggested the child go to a different school which had a *better* reputation. As Layla outlines:

> [The school] were more than happy to let [child] in but my mum and dad thought it looked a little bit rougher … and the Head teacher was quite honest and open about the fact there was some troublesome children there, and they would be worried [child] would be taken advantage of which also influenced my mum and dad (Layla, SP)

This demonstrates whilst Layla had identified and selected a school which could adequately support her child, there were other factors, in this case her parent's perspective, which influenced her decision. A further in-depth discussion on support will explore Layla's experiences in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, this demonstrates a wider variety of factors influencing Service Parents' experiences of sourcing and applying for suitable schools for their children. Layla additionally detailed that the school was happy to accept her child, despite being oversubscribed, yet it was her parents influence which swayed her decision to apply for a school outside of her Local Authority, as detailed in the earlier extract. This presented further challenges for Layla when this school was named on her child's EHCP, yet the Local Authority would not offer a place because of catchment area red tape. On arrival of the new school Layla recalls:

> When we did eventually go in … the Headmaster came out and was like "oh, you're the people that wouldn't give up?" (Layla, SP)

Respondents to the school's questionnaire stipulated 88% (90 children out of 102) of children were granted their first preference on secondary school applications, and 25% of children (2 out of 8 children) with an EHCP were not granted their first preference of school[25]. McNerney et al. (2015) argue the process of parents applying for school places for children with Special Educational Needs is challenging, and they must navigate a variety of factors in their decision making. Whilst policy reforms have sought to empower both parent and child, Local Authorities are still able to reject applications (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015; McNerney et al., 2015; Department for Education, 2014). It is likely, parents of children with

---

[25] This data includes non-service families

Special Educational Needs, are doubly disadvantaged within the application process, as choosing a school for a child with Special Educational Needs requires a more complex decision-making process (McNerney et al., 2015). McNerney et al. (2015) highlight the differences between choosing a school for a neurotypical child and for a child with Special Educational Needs. Parents of a neurotypical child tend to have chosen schools because their child's friends were more likely to be at the same school, and/or the school was within close proximity to their home, whereas parents of children with Special Educational Needs were concerned with 'the quality of provision, the availability of reliable advice and the responsiveness of the relevant authorities' (p.1096).

Evidence shows since Special Educational Needs and Disability reforms were introduced, from 2013/14 to 2020/21 there has been a 111% increase in tribunal appeals (Bryant et al., 2022, p.3). A tribunal appeal is just one of the routes available to parents of children with Special Educational Needs in resolving a disagreement or disputes such as not being allocated a school place which parents feel can adequately support their children (Bryant et al., 2022). Further evidence from 2020/21 also shows there has been a decline in Local Authority decisions being upheld (17% compared with 4% in 2013/14) (Bryant et al., 2022, p.4). This shows parents of children with Special Educational Needs are doubly disadvantaged and are more likely to experience significant delays and barriers to accessing suitable and adequate school places. For Service Parents with a child with Special Educational needs these issues are exacerbated when the mobility requirements of the military require them to continually renegotiate the process of school places and support for their children. It is also likely that Service Parents face an additional disadvantage when they encounter further red tape issues, such as catchment area policies, as outlined earlier in Layla and Sophie's extracts:

> The problem is with the Local Authority … because I live on the wrong side of the road, to be in the catchment area (Layla, SP)

> Where I live, I am a XX postcode, the house directly in front of me as a YY so I live literally on the border. And when I applied for the school that they're in now I went through the [Local Authority removed] site to be told that I couldn't apply through them I had to apply through [Local Authority removed] and when I applied through [them] they turned around and said no (Sophie, SP)

4.3.1 Self-reinforcing gendered assumptions

Appealing for a school place is time consuming, and this can present an additional challenge for Service Parents when they are moving from one Local Authority to another. Laura explained how applying for a school place was particularly stressful for her on top of her already demanding job:

> I don't want to be sexist, but when the mum is serving, and it all falls on me. My husband also holds a full-time job, and I was stood up for deployment and trying to move, and trying to sort schools and childcare … and it was just not the best time for the council to say, 'you didn't tell us you were military' (Laura, SP)

Laura expressed how there is an assumption in which the dad is generally the Serving Person. For Laura this posed particular issues with the Local Authority as there was an assumption there would be *plenty* of time for her to arrange a school place, on the basis that it was likely she was a stay-at-home mum, or able to take time off from work if a school place were not found. These issues were further compounded when the Local Authority were not willing to allocate a school place until September because it was considered a school place would not be needed as the application was made towards the end of the academic year. Research on dual-serving families and female Personnel is limited and this mirrors much of the existing research on military families which positions the Serving Person as the male. Within the Military Community 'wives' are often expected to conform to be dutiful to their husband insofar as, there are expectations regarding the support they should provide to his career (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020). Ziff and Garland-Jackson (2020) argue that wives are additionally expected to attend events, sacrifice their careers, and are seen as the main caregivers to children due to the demands of the military. As Laura stated:

> There's still very much this archaic view that the men are in the military and the wives follow around (Laura, SP)

For Laura, such views created barriers and significant stressors whilst applying for her child's school place because as she implicitly demonstrated, she had been positioned as 'wife' and 'mother'.

As a result of Laura's experience, she further highlighted her family's future plans:

> I did have a pretty horrible experience to the point that now I'm going to go married unaccompanied when I move because we're not moving the kids again, I'm not, I can't go through that again (Laura, SP)

Segal (1986, p.13) illustrates there is an unspoken assumption that military families will adjust to the demands placed upon the Serving person. However, these demands and expectations to adjust have evolved within each era, mainly influenced by changes to women's participation in the labour market (Segal, 1986). Laura further illustrated there is a double disadvantage in opinions and attitudes when the Serving person is also the mum, as she described:

> Because we were moving I didn't buy [child] new uniform … [it] was stained, but clean every day … and then [the move] really hit and [child] started to withdraw (at school) because [they] didn't know which new school [they] we're going to … and so [the teacher] thought I was neglecting [them] … I explained we were moving, and she said, "does your washing machine work?" (Laura, SP)

Laura had detailed how her husband was tasked with the school run every morning, and due to her demanding role in the military, her child attended afterschool care. As a result, Laura had little interaction with school staff, as pick-ups from school were rare. However, this did not deter school staff from approaching Laura regarding their concerns, instead of approaching the child's father.

Despite changes to women's labour and household roles over the decades, the female is still perceived as the primary caregiver (Abbott, 2000). Women are not excluded from Serving in the military and account for approximately 11% of the Armed Forces Personnel; a figure which has increased in the last five years (Harding, 2021). However, the idea that the military is a male role persists within current society, as normative masculine and feminine assumptions continue to be embedded (cf. Dearden, 2018; BBC News, 2016). Within the private sphere women are therefore seen as the *natural* caregiver 'who carries responsibility for providing emotional warmth' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995, p.154). Thus, there is an embedded assumption women are responsible for nurturing children, despite having a demanding career, taking on which Duncombe and Marsden (1995) refer to as the 'double shift' (p.165).

Duncombe and Marsden (1995, p.165) ascertain that women collude in their feminist roles as they emotionally position themselves responsible as the main care giver; even when male partners undertake some responsibility. Laura had implicitly expressed that school staff felt the responsibility to care for her child was hers as the teacher's concerns had not been communicated with her

husband; and Laura discussed this in the context of her demanding career. She went on to note that she had worked in some exceptionally challenging times during the pandemic which she felt the school staff had not taken into consideration. Laura's experience of finding a suitable school shows, sourcing a school for Service Parents can additionally involve emotional labour, and this can be difficult when the parent is a Serving mother. Understanding the challenges of Service life is demonstrated in Chapter 5 and shows that some Key Stakeholders are remarkably experienced in the support they provide, and Chapter 6 discusses support in more detail.

Whilst gender was not investigated within this research, 3 of the parent interviewees who were mothers in the military, expressed that they felt either being a single parent influenced school staff's attitudes towards them, and/or they felt that they were judged because of their careers in the military:

> Being a single parent as well, they probably look down on me for that (Layla, SP)

> I think there is this attitude that the Service Person is the male, and the woman stays at home … being a serving mother, attitudes are changing slowly, but very often there will be things like 'no, I'm in, I'm in the military' … and there's been a few times I've had 'oh, you're the one who is serving?' (Laura, SP)

> I found that in the previous Head teacher case, they tried to use my career against me, my role in the Army … their argument was always that because [child] had numerous house moves that they were just a naughty child ... because [child] was not diagnosed at the time (Sophie, SP)

However, despite these experiences Key Stakeholders interviewees all acknowledged that either parent can be serving, that said at times the phrase 'dad's away' was referred to, shortly followed by 'mums too' or 'it's not just dads'. Given that the majority of Personnel are male it is likely that Key Stakeholders are used to the Serving Person being the father. However, both male interviewees did not refer to their gender, or expressed any issues in which their caring responsibilities were questioned. In particular, one single father did not mention he had experienced any judgement regarding his career, nor that he felt judged for being a single father. This area requires further exploration outside of the remit of this research.

4.3.2 Choosing boarding school

Research into UK Service Children attending boarding schools is extremely limited. Therefore, it is important to understand the wider mechanisms of why some Service Parents choose this option. The FAMCAS 2021 highlights some noteworthy statistics on Service Families stating that '80% of Service Families have children of school age' (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.2). Of this 11% access CEA enabling their children to attend a boarding school (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.13). As mentioned in Chapter 2, it is suggested that Service Families choose boarding school because it offers stability in their children's education. The BSQ explored the reason of choosing to send children to a boarding school and found that 74% of parents (119 out of 160 parents) stated 'stability' as a main reason. However, 3% of parents (3 out of 106 parents) also indicated that not all of their children wanted to board despite their siblings attending a boarding school, and six stated other additional children would board at a later date, only one participant expressed that they could not afford to send all of their children to boarding school:

Will attend from p7 so another year to go (BSP 11)

Child 2 not old enough (BSP 16)

Did not want to board so at local school (BSP 47)

Child did not want to board (BSP 52)

One is at boarding school, the other is at a local primary school where we are based (BSP 68)

Child 1 at boarding secondary, child 2 at State primary (BSP 84)

Too expensive to send both children (BSP 100)

Other child will be joining same school in September (BSP 125)

One is in primary and only one year to go (BSP 131)

In this regard it is vital to explore the possibility that Service Parents are making certain choices regarding their children's education and in some small cases

these are influenced by ages of the children, the child's autonomy in wishing to board, and financial implications.

Nevertheless, the financial implications of sending a child to a boarding school are not to be taken lightly, despite CEA being available to all eligible Personnel. As one participant in the BSQ expressed different salary levels can affect Service Parents' ability to send their children to boarding school:

> Regardless of income we all pay 10%. £3000 x3 children is one yearly income which Officers can afford but lower ranking soldiers can't. The rank system and wages entitlement make it so much harder for soldiers to get a stable education for their children and it needs changing. Either fund boarding school completely for all or remove the 10% policy so schools can accept CEA without it (BSP 28)

This raises some interesting questions regarding CEA and its inclusive nature. As mentioned in Chapter 2, policy states all Personnel must contribute a minimum of 10% of the school fees per child for Independent schools and 8% for State schools (Walker et al., 2020). Despite this CEA is often discussed in the media as a perk enabling Personnel to send their children to top league Independent schools (Martin, 2013). What is important to consider here is that, to date, *newsworthy* reports on Personnel claiming CEA have been focused on high ranking Personnel breaking the rules for claiming CEA (Rayment, 2021; Gye, 2015; Martin, 2013). Often referred to as taxpayers' money, CEA, is more often than not seen as a negative and unnecessary perk for Personnel (Rayment, 2021; Gye, 2015). Other issues pertaining to costs and boarding school are discussed in Chapter 7, which focusses on the challenges of Covid-19 and the additional challenges this caused.

CEA is subject to strict criteria with one component being the family must maintain a level of mobility. Chapter 2 highlighted Service Personnel must move over 50 miles on each assignment. When an assignment occurs less than 50 miles away, entitlement to CEA can be removed, and this is also the case when Service Personal do not move 'more than 50 miles from their current duty station within … four years' (Ministry of Defence, 2022d, 14-1-3). In this regard this could account for the findings of FAMCAS indicating families who moved did so because it could have affected their entitlement to CEA (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.26). Not moving to a new assignment would jeopardise

the education of those who board, and any potential for additional children to board in the future.

Most participants of the BSQ indicated they had two children between the ages of 4-18 in full time education (58% of 164 participants), 84% of the children (275 out of 329 children) mentioned in the questionnaire attended a boarding school. Participants of the BSQ showed that of those children who boarded, 91% of children attended an Independent boarding school compared with 9% attending a State school (242 children compared with 25 children). Further participants expressed that they chose boarding school for several reasons. Parents stated they choose either a State or Independent boarding school because it was a good fit for their child (74%, 122 out of 164 parents). Location of the school was also a main reason for choosing a boarding school (55%, 90 parents out of 164), and this was followed by schools understanding the needs of military families (53%, 87 out of 164 parents).

In addition, 29% (46 out of 160 parents) stated not all of their children attended the same boarding school. The main reason for children from the same family not attending the same boarding school was various stages of education such as children attending either a preparatory school, or a secondary school (49%, 40 children out of 82). In some cases, children attended different boarding schools due to Special Educational Needs provisions (12%, 10 children out of 82).

In recent years there has been some misconception within the media that Service Parents who send their children to an Independent boarding school are privileged via the public purse (cf. Rayment, 2021; Gye, 2015; Martin, 2013). Recent changes to CEA have seen a decrease in parental fee contribution for those whose children attend a State boarding school; paying a minimum contribution of 8% compared with 10% for those who choose an Independent school (Ministry of Defence, 2022d, 14-1-8). The BSQ explored the reasons why parents did not choose a State boarding school and found 42% of participants (69 out of 164 parents) expressed location as a main concern. As discussed in Chapter 2, State boarding schools are limited within the UK, as one participant expressed:

> One factor affecting school choice was proximity to family members should
> I be posted overseas. I visited the nearest State boarding school to those
> family members, [I] was not convince[d] that the school I visited was
> suitable for my children (BSP 1)

The location of State boarding schools also posed additional challenges and

concerns for parents:

> The only State boarding school in (area) we did not want our children to be
> in a boarding school which was predominantly military (BSP 13)

> The only State boarding school in the area we needed was selective
> …child was already behind in terms of academic attainment due to
> attending four different primary schools (BSP 38)

> The only State boarding school that was in the right location only offered
> boarding from 11+ and we needed it from a younger age (BSP 129)

The data from the BSQ therefore shows that reasons for choosing a boarding

school covers a wide range of factors. Although Service Parents are now

implicitly being encouraged to choose a State boarding school, with the lower

contribution rate, this does not mean that State boarding is a viable option for all

Service Families who choose boarding school as an option. Service Parents

are therefore choosing and accessing boarding school places based on a

variety of considerations. These data show that there is not a one size fits all

approach, which is often presented as Service Parents may/can chose a

boarding school to promote stability (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al.,

2020; McCulloch and Hall, 2016).

From the participants who responded to the BSQ, 32% (52 participants) stated

that at least one of their children had a Special Educational Need (60 children in

total, 7 of these children however did not attend a boarding school; 12% of 60

children with Special Educational Needs). Further, 20% of all children with

Special Educational Needs had an EHCP (12 children), 10% of parents (16

parents) indicated at least one of their children had had to move schools before

an EHCP had been completed, and 19% of children (10 children out of 53 with

Special Educational Needs who board) were identified as having a Special

Educational Need after starting boarding school. Overall, 41% of parents who

responded to the BSQ (22 out of 54 respondents) indicated their child having

Special Educational Needs was the main reason for choosing boarding school.

4.4 Providing stability in education

Stability in the context of Service Children is generally spoken in reference to academic attainment (Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a; Ofsted, 2011; Clifton, 2004). Service Children are more likely to be at risk of missing or repeating parts of the curricula due to changing schools. Analysis of the BSQ responses showed Service Children who boarded had attended more primary schools than secondary schools before starting a boarding school (cf. Figure 1). This was to be expected given that parents expressed 'stability' as a main reason for choosing boarding school. Similarly, the LASQ data showed that 119 children had attended 140 secondary schools (cf. Figure. 2). In addition, 78% of parents (63 out of 81 parents) stated their children had had to move schools during the school year.

Figure 1. Schools attended before boarding school
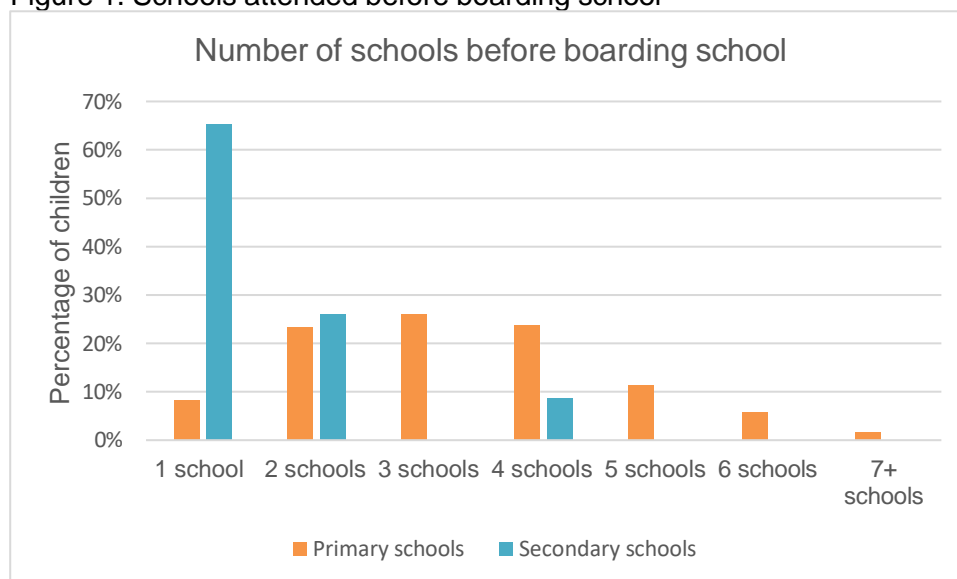
Source: BSQ

Figure 2. Number of schools attended

Number of schools attended

[Bar chart: Percentage of children (y-axis, 0% to 50%) by number of schools attended (x-axis). Two series: Primary schools (orange) and Secondary schools (blue).]

Number of schools	Primary schools	Secondary schools
1 school	~17%	~46%
2 schools	~26%	~29%
3 schools	~17%	~21%
4 schools	~15%	~4%
5 schools	~9%	
6 schools	~8%	
7+ schools	~8%	
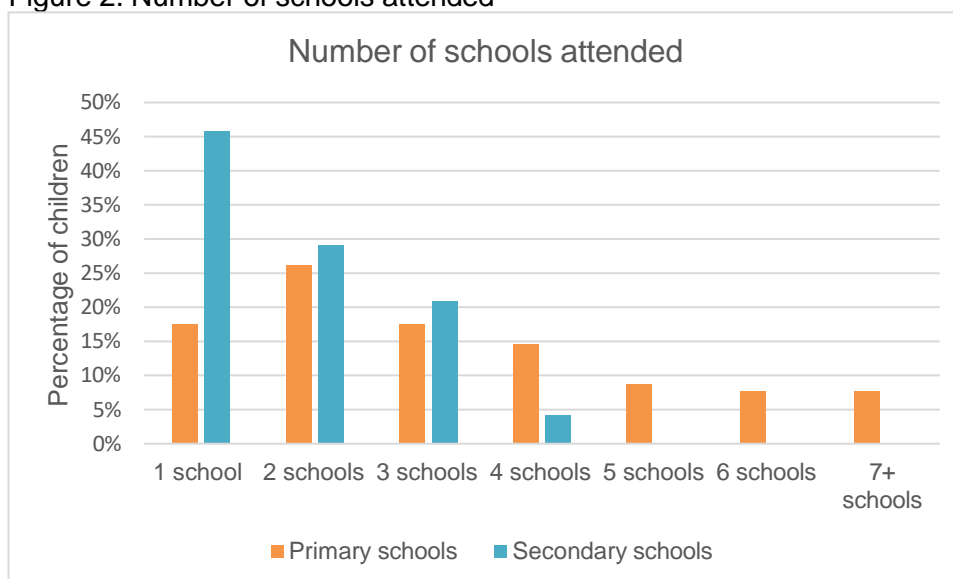
Source: LASQ

Issues with different curriculum also demonstrated the wider concepts of lack of stability in Service Children's education as explained by Sue; a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A:

> Key Stage 3 isn't such a problem, because obviously you know the subjects that are taught are pretty similar. We have major issues with Key Stage 4. We used to have a lot of issues with them coming in post midterm (Sue, KS)

Sue then went on to discuss the challenges with one-to-one support when students have gaps in learning. This is sometimes a result of students repeating the same parts of the curricular:

> We identif[y] the gaps in their education … from discussion. Sometimes obviously we are mindful that they've done algebra five times in five different schools but not progressed on to fractions … And we ha[ve] issues obviously when they're posted in … so they [have] to catch up on however many months to get them up to speed. Or alternatively [we] put them in for the separate exam, which means that another member of staff is going to have to do one to one tutoring for the rest of the time that they are here…. SEND is a big issue (Sue, KS)

What Sue highlights here are the additional issues with support mechanisms in place for Service Children and staff. Sue implicitly demonstrated that her wide area of expertise and knowledge of Service Children, has enabled her to navigate, and at times, negotiate support for Service Children. This further indicated that the lack of stability for Service Children further impinges onto school resources. Yet from this research Key Stakeholders indicated that the child was at the centre, insofar as, they expressed that they wished for changes

which helped Service Children and not themselves. As Liz, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, outlined:

> Promote the [soldiers] without having to move them on (Liz, KS)

Liz went on to explain that some Service Families at her school *fight* to stay in the same location when children reach critical stages of education such as GCSE's and A-Levels. However, Liz then depicted that when this occurs it is done to the detriment of the Serving Person's career. This further exemplifies that Service Families are having to make very calculated choices in relation to family and education. This was further reinforced by Layla, a Service Parent:

> It's my last posting now, thankfully,......and that was one of the reasons I wanted to move here, just so that [child] could make friends in the area, rather than, when I finish, it would have been partly in between [their] GCSEs. And I thought, well, if I stay down [there], I'm going to have to then fight you know, stay in the quarter (Layla, SP)

The Military has been labelled as a Greedy Institution in which the commitment and time demanded from its members takes precedence (Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). Coser (1974) describes how *normal* employees are legally contracted to commit to their employer within a particular set of rules and timeframes. In essence the average worker should then be able to compartmentalise their time to engage in "family time" (Coser, 1974). A caveat however is to acknowledge the time of Coser's writing, within this new epoch, there are several debates which would acknowledge and argue what constitutes a *normal* employee. Further, the increased demands expected of the average worker, new forms of working contracts such as zero hours, and the in-work poverty cycle, all contest Coser's theory (Shildrick et al., 2010). That said, this notion of the Military Institution as being Greedy is universal. Vuga and Juvan (2013) posit the institute of the family directly impacts the effectiveness of the military, insomuch as, dissatisfaction with the military lifestyle can result in desolation. When this occurs Serving Personnel are likely to be ineffective at work (Vuga and Juvan, 2013, p.1061; Segal, 1993); the opposite of what they have robustly been trained for.

Military Personnel are not bound by the regular set of rules such as employment law and equal opportunities, which civilian workers are (ForcesWatch, 2011; Cobseo, 2009). Further, it is the only job in the UK in which you are at risk of incarceration if you do not "turn up to work" or follow the correct procedures to

formally leave the Services (ForcesWatch, 2011; Cobseo, 2009). Military Personnel are bound to serve for a minimum term and where Personnel wish to terminate their career, they must provide 12 months' notice (ForcesWatch, 2011)[26]. To this extent any decisions which are made by Service Families regarding their children's education, such as leaving the Services to ensure stability, must be planned out in advance to enable the Serving Person to leave within the set timeframes. This was evident in the earlier extract from Layla.

Nonetheless, the AFCAS 2021 shows 57% or Personnel expressed the influence of Service life on the family unit was their main reason for considering leaving the Services (Ministry of Defence, 2021h, p.13). Service life is often referred to as unique (cf. Tipping, 2008) and this was discussed by Colin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, when explaining the wider consequences for Service Children with Special Educational Needs:

> The lifestyle … gives them their uniqueness as a group. That lifestyle is around, I would say three things, and the first is around high mobility in transition, the second is around separation from parents at times of operational duty, and the third is around the military family as being … a supportive mechanism, or sometimes an obstructive mechanism around the family. But it's a cultural difference, and when you've got services for children that are vulnerable with SEND you would probably be wanting to advise the parents you know the best thing you can have is stability and you know both parents around the whole time, so it compounds those issues [be]cause that's not possible within a service life (Colin, KS)

Colin describes the problematic issue of stability and how this crucial factor in a child's education is not compatible with Service life. Evidence suggests non-Service Children mainly attend one primary school and one secondary school within their educational lifetime (Ministry of Defence, 2016b). Service life, however, can disrupt the normative cycle of education and this has been evidenced in this research, as shown above in Figure 1 and Figure 2, with Service Children being more likely to attend more than one primary and secondary school during their life course.

Colin identifies three significant areas of enquiry which provides this cohort of children with a unique status. The first two, mobility and separation, are explored in the subsequent sections of this Chapter. Mobility is a common theme highlighted within the data of this research. It is important to bear in

---

[26] RAF personnel must provide 18 months' notice.

mind however, that Service Children, whilst a homogenous group, do not all share the same characters, or experience mobility in the same way. It is within this layer of characteristics which truly provides them with their uniqueness. Key Stakeholders who work directly with Service Families must therefore draw on a wide range of expertise, as noted by Sue earlier whose decades of experience have facilitated her navigating a variety of challenges and barriers. It is therefore necessary to postulate how other Key Stakeholders navigate challenges derived by mobility and how they themselves are supported within this process; a further in-depth discussion on supporting Service Children can be found in Chapters 5 & 6.

4.5 Mobility as a barrier

Issues pertaining to mobility are not limited to the physical form of moving from place to place and school to school. Research shows that Service Children struggle with mobility, which comes with negative connotations such as struggling with their 'identity and sense of belonging' (Godier-McBard et al., 2021, p.112). Whilst Service Children are likely to associate themselves through the identity connections of the military, they lose the other factors of identity which many individuals attain at birth, such as geographical roots to a fixed place where children *grow up* (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Kustatscher, 2017). Kustatscher (2017, p.76) states:

> the emotional geographies of the primary school extend to spaces and places beyond the actual setting: schools do not exist in isolation, and children's (and staff's) relationships within them are both shaped by, and contribute to, wider social relations

Research illustrates the lack of sense of belonging creates anxiety in Service Children when they move to a new school, and this is coupled with anxieties of making new friends, and learning new routines (Godier-McBard et al., 2021, p.51; Perreault et al., 2020). However, a caveat here is that friendships, and the sense of belonging, form a key role in children's everyday lives, and this is not exclusive to Service Children. This was supported from Pauline's account of her own children's struggles with friendship. Pauline a Key Stakeholder working with Service Children, was not from a Service family, however, her own children had experienced attending a school which was predominantly Service Children on roll. Whilst Pauline was extremely positive about her own children's

school experiences, she outlined that this caused some upset with one of her children in respect of making friends:

> I think people presume that the kids that stay are the ones that don't need the support. And very often, I found that with my own kids, they are the ones that needed support because their friends leave, and they're not used to having doing to do that (Pauline, KS)

> My [child] when [they were] younger said, 'mum, I just want a best friend like normal people. I want a friend that doesn't move'. And [they] said you never get a best friend because when they move, they're not interested in keeping in touch with you (Pauline, KS)

Kustatscher (2017, p.67) argues that children's sense of belonging is shaped by their identities which they *perform* within the school milieu. Gender, race, class, sexuality, and ethnicity all form important processes in which children shape, recognise, and perform their identities according to Kustatscher (2017, p.67). In terms of Service Children's identities their continued movement, along with other stressors (cf. Royal Navy Children's fund, 2009) could signifying that their identities are continually being reshaped. Identity for Service Children is likely to therefore be problematic as their relationships in schools shape their experiences of identity effecting the wider social relationships as per Kustatscher's theory (2017). It is however also important to consider how this shapes and affects non-Service Children's relationships and experiences when they are in a school with a high turnover of Service Children as evidenced in the above extracts by Pauline. This line of enquiry, whilst outside of the remit of this research, may be worthy of its own investigation.

Identifying Service Children through place was reinforced within the findings of this research whereby Sue, a Key Stakeholder in Local Authority A, acknowledged Service Children can often be easily identified when they join the school from certain areas. As Sue stated when asked about identifying Service Children:

> You just know…and obviously we can tell. Well sometimes obviously because of where they come from. You know the schools usually an indicator that they've come from the area that have come from. So, we automatically know just by area when they are posted in (Sue, KS)

McCulloch et al. (2018, p.11) ascertain Service Children's identity is generally learnt from their mothers who 'unwittingly collude' (p.11) into their gendered roles, created as a result of systematic military patriarchy. Using the work of Bandura (1997: 1982) they illustrate how identity is formed and learnt through

numerous symbolic interactions. For Service Children these symbolic interactions are made up of various characteristics, which are influenced as a direct result of Service life (cf. Chapter 2). To add an additional layer to the work of McCullouch et al. (2018), Reay (2000) conceptualises that mothers bring a 'wide range of emotions, both positive and negative' (p.569) to the parent, child, and teacher relationships that they develop within the school environment. This learnt behaviour then transfers into Service Children's outcomes in education, particularly progression into further and higher education (cf. McCulloch et al., 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016). Therefore, Service Children shape their identities based on their unique experiences of being part of the Military Community.

4.6 Service Children's outcomes and academic attainment

Educational outcomes were identified within this research as problematic. Liz, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, describes the outcomes of Service Children within her school as appearing *fixed* and founded upon the knowledge obtained from their parents:

> This sort of generational, you know, my dad did this, or I'm going to do this and it's like, okay, well, have you thought about this, or this or this? And the answers so often is, no (Liz, KS)

Liz further pointed out that many soldiers often do not have GCSE Math and English at a level C[27], and that this can influence trajectories of Service pupils outcomes. Liz stated:

> Sometimes we find that [pupils] who have done really well they go off and do A Levels but then they drop out …

> We don't send anybody away without having helped them get somewhere. But I think there's some really lost bright minds (Liz, KS)

McCulloch and Hall (2016, p.6) highlight that compared to the general population, fewer Service Children go on to attend a University, with a third of those that do, previously attending a boarding school. There is presently a paucity of research within the UK which examines the aspirations of Service Children, and it is therefore difficult to fully ascertain why fewer Service Children go on to higher or further education. This is in despite of their academic outcomes. As Liz's notes, Service Children may not explore other opportunities

---

[27] New reforms now grade GCSE's at grades 1-9 (Gov.UK, 2019).

to further education, as views regarding education and outcomes may be embedded and learnt from parents.

Two key pieces of research show that the qualifications and levels of education of Service Personnel vary (Brady et al., 2013b; The Defence Committee, 2013b). Basic level entry requirements for recruits differ according to the Service they join, and by regiments, and trades within Services, however the minimum requirements for reading and writing are set at entry level 2, which is the expected standard of 7–8-year old's (The Defence Committee, 2013b, p.17). Data collected in the period of 2012-13 showed, 39% or Army Personnel had a reading age of 11 years old, and 3.5% with a reading age of 7-8 years old. Numeracy levels of Army Personnel showed 38% were at the same level as an 11-year-old, and 1.7% at age 7-8 (The Defence Committee, 2013b, p.17). Service Personnel are offered the opportunity via learning credits[28] to undertake various qualifications whilst in Service. However, Brady et al. (2013b, p.10) found that some Personnel who had used learning credits to gain qualifications had expressed they felt there was a lack of transferability after leaving the Services. Moreover, the research undertaken by Brady et al. (2013, p.7) showed that 64% of responses to their participants were Officers, 27% Non-commissioned Officers, and just 9% of responses were from lower ranks.

Although their research is somewhat outdated this could go some way to demonstrate how Service Personnel view the opportunity to undertake qualifications given that participation was low from lower ranks, this could indicate a lack of interest in the importance of obtaining qualifications. Liz, a Key Stakeholder, stated:

> It's interesting because obviously young soldiers who don't have a C at English and Math have still got this idea that they don't need it (Liz, KS)

These ideas and trajectories of education could affect Service Children's attitudes toward education and progression as per Liz's earlier extract:

> This sort of generational, you know, my dad did this, or I'm going to do this and it's like, okay, well, have you thought about this, or this or this? And the answers so often is, no (Liz, KS)

---

[28] Learning credits are financial assistance for Personnel to undertaken recognised courses and qualifications (Brady et al., 2013b)

Nevertheless, it could be argued to some extent, that Service Children are better equipped at making the transfer to University. University presents a different environment to that of school insomuch as, students are faced with having to be more self-sufficient with a focus on self-directed learning. As Service Children already experience a variety of different challenges in terms of adapting to new environments, this could suggest that they are more adequately prepared for the challenges of University life (McCulloch and Hall, 2016). Further, the concept of resilience in Service Children could additionally benefit them to adapt to new environments and challenges, although as argued, resilience should not always be assumed (cf. Chapter 2). It should also be considered that with a third of Service Children who attend University being from a boarding school background, that the independence skills learnt from this environment could be helpful, compared to Service Children who live at home with their parents (McCulloch and Hall, 2016).

However, Joe, a parent, and Service Child himself illustrated that there are some additional factors to consider in respect of Service Children being independent and self-sufficient and this was heavily linked to mobility; whether these serve as a barrier, or contribute to positive outcomes, or both. Joe describes the positive aspects of mobility and being self-sufficient for Service Children:

> I think in some ways, it makes them a bit more self-sufficient, they kind of rely on themselves and they don't have the support structure of having to rely on their friends in one way (Joe, SP)

However, Joe goes on to outline that this also has some negative aspects:

> But that's also a really bad negative. I'm an ex-Service Child myself, and we moved around a lot, and maybe I think it's made me too self-sufficient, where it's like [I] don't want to get help (from people) (Joe, SP)

Many of the parents interviewed juxtaposed the concept of mobility in terms of weighing the positives and negatives. Elaine, a Service Parent, illustrated how mobility for her two children presented life changing opportunities.

> It's opportunities living in different countries with different cultures. You know, it's gonna open your eyes up, isn't it? for, you know, more diversity (Elaine, SP)

However, Elaine later discussed the challenges this presented for both of her children, in respective of their academic outcomes. For one of Elaine's children, moving to a school which did not provide GCSE curricular presented issues for academic attainment and progression into higher education:

> So, I then had to sort of think what we're going to do when we get back … because [they] need to complete that study … so I knew that [they] could progress and continue, and it was kind of a risky option (Elaine, SP)

In this regard, it is evident that mobility can act as a barrier to Service Children's education, in particular their future outcomes in terms of further academic progression which resonates with the work of McCulloch et al. (2018). That said, Sue, a Key Stakeholder in Local Authority A, discusses further progression in terms Service Children making informed choices based on their own desires whether they wish to pursue University:

> It depends on the cohort. This year's year 11's, after having interviews with them, more of them want to go to … college than last year. If I'm being honest about it, you know the door 'access to higher education' they're not interested, they want to do apprenticeships … they don't want the debt (University) (Sue, KS)

Attitudes towards money, in particular debt, within the Forces is likely to vary across the ranks and the Tri-Services. Without exploring this area with further in-depth research it is difficult to establish how Service Personnel view debt, especially debt which is a result of attending University. Thorne (2018, p.96) highlights that the trajectory of those who follow in their parents footsteps, for instance joining the Services, is often associated with long term job security and secure accommodation. With this in mind it is important to consider that the knowledge Service Children gain from their parents is often influenced by their parents' own ideas of stability. This resonates with Liz's earlier comments on pupil outcomes which are influenced by generational experience:

> This sort of generational, you know, my dad did this, or I'm going to do this and it's like, okay, well, have you thought about this, or this or this? And the answers so often is, no (Liz, KS).

However, it is important to note that mobility does not always act as a barrier to University. McCulloch and Hall (2016) found Service Children in their research who 'had attended more schools were less inclined to join the military' (p.28). This suggests that the instability of moving around is not something which appeals to all Service Children despite the military providing stability in employment and housing. Mobility can present some positives in that it facilitates Service Children in making informed choices, as discussed by Elaine a Service Parent:

> [Child] made the decision at age 16 not come with us, and live with my mother-in-law, and [that] was horrendous. [Child] went to college, in our hometown … and that was awful (Elaine, SP)

For Elaine's family, an impending move meant that one of her children would experience some disruption to education, which could have affected their access to University. In this respect, the child took on the decision to move away from their parents to enable them to complete the necessary qualifications, thus enabling them to progress into higher education. Whilst this was described as an extremely challenging time for Elaine's family, Elaine regarded that this was the right decision for her child.

As demonstrated by Elaine, Service Families regularly have to make calculated choices in respect of their children's education, and this was particularly evident for single parents who were also Serving soldiers as demonstrated in Sections 4.3 and 4.4 by Layla and Sophie. Further, these choices, which are made as a direct result of mobility are additionally exacerbated when a Service Child has Special Educational Needs. This issue is discussed further in Chapter 6.

As discussed in Chapter 2, research suggests Service Children are generally not disadvantaged in terms of their academic outcomes. Academic outcomes featured heavily within this research, with many of the Key Stakeholders interviewed expressing this as a primary concern:

> In terms of outcomes, our military pupils are doing better than our civilian pupils (Liz, KS)

The outcomes for Service Children however were often discussed within the same context of how they manage adversity. Liz followed on by stating:

> Which I think is a great testament to them and their families (Liz, SP)

However, within this same Local Authority, Colin, A Key Stakeholder, stated there was a high dependency of need, due to the demographics of the families stationed there. As he puts it:

> A lot of young families, inexperienced families … there's a high level of need and … academically they don't perform as well (Colin, KS)

As discussed previously, the demographics of each military family will differ across the Services. In particular, the educational outcomes of parents, and further the aspirations for their children, will vary according to their own experiences, as with every family in society. Some of the participants expressed academic performance as a cause for concern, however Key Stakeholders mainly highlighted this. Sian a parent of two children, made the decision to home-school one of her children, as a result of school allocations:

> When we applied, they offered us a school for [eldest child], and then a school over a mile away for [second child]. So, they were offering us a school space, but I couldn't be in two places at once … so then we said we will de-register [second child] for now keep [them] at home, and that ended up being 14 months (Sian, SP)

In Sian's case, the Local Authority had provided a place for both of her children and had therefore fulfilled their obligations in accordance with the School Admissions Code (Department for Education, 2022b). However, Sian considered that with the schools being over a mile apart from each other this would cause additional issues:

> It wasn't feasible, my husband's not around often enough to rely on a school run. And my job works around the fact that I don't have to pay for childcare. So, in 11 years, I've never paid childcare. So, I didn't particularly want to start now (Sian, SP)

Sian went on to state that she was concerned that her child had fallen behind and that this could potentially affect their attainment. Further Sian expressed that there is no set curricular for home schooled children and that she felt she lacked the necessary skills to teach materials at home:

> We were really concerned for [child's] learning … and obviously me not being a teacher, I don't know what I'm supposed to be looking out for or what I'm supposed to be teaching (Sian, SP)

Sian additionally stated that as a result of being home schooled when her child was allocated a school place, the school provided intervention for learning. Despite having a negative experience Sian did express that she felt her child was young enough to catch up on learning and in this regard would not affect their future outcomes.

In comparison, results from the BSQ demonstrated parents did not choose a school based on academic outcomes being a main concern for those in an Independent school. This could be a result of academic attainment being assumed as being superior at an Independent school, and as a result choosing an Independent school could mitigate any concerns regarding future academic attainment as some participants indicated:

> [The] quality of education [was] guaranteed as opposed to risk of ending up in failing schools, as had already happened to us (BSP 72)

> Quality of education in private sector is generally superior. Smaller class sizes (BSP 14)

Poor academic performance of State boarding schools for an extremely gifted [child] (BSP 78)

The [State school] we visited was not even in the same league as the Independent schools we visited, in terms of academics (BSP 111)

This could suggest that Key Stakeholder's place Service Children's attainment as a high importance, which is expected is a common theme for any Key Stakeholder working in education. This is not to suggest that Service Parent's do not place attainment as not being important and that it important to consider other factors which are unique to Service Children may be a priority. Parental attitudes towards education could also influence Service Children's attainment and their attitudes towards learning. There is some debate about whether the military recruits more heavily from low socioeconomic areas (Child Rights International Network, 2019; Morris, 2017). Poor academic attainment, or the wish to escape poor circumstances could influence someone's decision to join the Armed Forces. It is important to consider how this impacts on Service Children. The following comment from Pauline, a teacher working with Service Children for 22 years, demonstrates wider issues of Service Children's attitude to learning:

My biggest challenge, and my biggest results have been from … two [students]… they came into our school with a regiment, and they were horrendous … I just sat them down one day and said, "what is going on?" … they said, "why do you bother with us?" I said, "because I want you to walk away with something," … you need some qualifications, … and they both said, "but why would you care? Nobody's cared before" … and they said, "you're the first teacher that actually bothers [with us]" (Pauline, KS)

What Pauline describes here is the importance of understanding the trajectories of a Service Child's life course. In the school where Pauline works, the movement of Service Children is high, with Service Children joining and leaving the school at various points in the year. Therefore, Pauline additionally commented that she *missed* not always having the opportunity to know a child from Year 7 through to when they leave the school. This was also evidenced in the way the students accounted that previous experiences suggested other Key Stakeholders had not spent time to get to know them. In this regard it is sufficient to suggest some Service Children are at risk of not attaining relevant qualifications; although other research denotes this is not the case (cf. Noret et al., 2015). Overall, the effects of mobility influences periods of instability which can hinder Service Childrens academic outcomes.

4.7 Separation at times of operational duty

Whilst mobility is often discussed as the main hindrance to Service Children's lives (cf. Longfield, 2018; Centre for Social Justice, 2016; Noret et al., 2015; Ofsted, 2011; Department for Education, 2010b), McCulloch et al. (2018, p.13) explain Service Children identify deployments as significantly more challenging. This was also reinforced by Colin as discussed in Section 4.2. A key characteristic in Service Children's identity is their ability to draw on a wide range of coping mechanisms, yet separation from parents can present several additional challenges for Service Children. As each branch of the Services differs in nature, it is impossible to list all challenges experienced by all Service Children. However, there are some key factors which are shared across Service Children. These are: the stress of parental absence, adjusting to parental return, viewing images on the news and social media relating to combat, relocating and starting a new school, Service Child stigma, the loss of a loved one and dealing with parental injury or illness, coping with a family breakdown, having a Special Educational Need (The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009, p.5). None of the parent participants expressed separation through deployment as a main cause of concern and when discussed, parents illustrated how they navigate such issues. This was, however, a wider concern for those parents who have a child with Special Educational Needs.

Parents who were single parents often expressed that they drew on support from their wider family for support during times of separation. They further noted the importance of acknowledging the challenges of Service Families who reside several miles from family and are unable to draw on support. In particular, parents who were the Serving Person implicitly demonstrated how pragmatic they were in planning ahead for such events, with some mentioning how they plan to minimise separation. As Sophie describes here:

> In order for me to deploy, they'd need to be with my parents (Sophie, SP)

Sophie was currently at a location which was near her parents enabling her to minimise any potential disruption to her children's education she stated the following:

> I have made the decision with my mum and dad that basically when I post,
> I'm hoping … I can stay in this area, so they can stay in school. If they
> don't and they post me elsewhere, I have made the decision that my

> children will stay with my parents so that I can keep them in their school …
> because It would be detrimental to them both. And I'm not willing to take
> that risk (Sophie, SP)

She goes on to state how she had pre-navigated the challenges of mobility and separation, and that in order for her to fulfil her role and be deployable, certain decisions had already been made. If Sophie were to post to a location away from her parents, and her children accompanied her, this would be ineffective for the Army, as there would be no one to care for her children in her absence.

Queens regulations (Ministry of Defence, 2019c, p.9/5-1) stipulate:

> the assignment of soldiers is based on the principle that a soldier must be
> available for worldwide assignment at any time, this being one of the
> conditions of service the soldier accepted on enlistment. If circumstances
> are such that a soldier cannot comply with this condition they will normally
> be terminated or transferred to the Regular Reserve no matter how good a
> soldier they may be in other respects
>
> (This information was correct at the time of Queen Elizabeth II reign[29])

The Army provides guidance on how to mitigate such challenges for those who have children, such as, Personnel being provided with adequate notice, enabling them to make arrangements for childcare (Personnel Capability Branch, 2017). This guidance states (Personnel Capability Branch, 2017, p.3):

> If during a deployment any children are to be left in the care of someone
> who is not a close relative for a period of over 28 days, there are legal
> requirements to notify the local authorities to ensure that the child receives
> the best possible care

The possibility of having to negotiate private fostering arrangements, in order to fulfil the role of a soldier is undoubtedly daunting. This further demonstrates the types of self-negotiation Service Parents must make for their children to have a stable experience in education, and a stable home life as illustrated through the accounts of Elaine, Layla, and Sophie.

Parental separation, therefore, goes beyond Colin's earlier example of understanding and awareness of separation at times of operational duty, as the threat of permanent separation is a main cause for concern. Separation can present as a main challenge and barrier to Service Parents accessing school places for the children. Whether that be the Service Child making their own informed choices and being separated from family, or whether the parents make

---

[29] At the time of writing the new King's Regulations were not in circulation

the decision to work away during the working week and have the children living with their parents as conveyed by Sophie. These types of decisions may be, and likely are, further exacerbated where both parents are serving.

4.8 Conclusion

The way in which Service Parents apply for school places, runs much deeper than just the application process. In answering research question 1, this Chapter has shown Service Parent's must navigate a variety of different challenges, in addition to considering various aspects, enabling their children to attend school. These processes are exacerbated when their child has Special Educational Needs, and within this Chapter, it has been demonstrated that Service Parents are left to make some profoundly serious and emotionally challenging decisions, which answers research question 1.1.

This Chapter has further shown that Service Parents, must navigate some extremely complex issues, many of which are a result of red tape policy such as catchment area allocations. These issues are additionally compounded when they are attempting to source a school place for a child with Special Educational Needs. Many of the participants interviewed highlighted how time-consuming the application process was, which as a result of delays, further impacted their daily lives. Examples provided included, taking time off work, home schooling, children living with other relatives, and Service Parents choosing to live apart from their children to provide stability. Service Parent's further indicated that in some cases, assumptions around gendered roles were present, demonstrating there is a double disadvantage for female Serving Personnel.

Service Parents may choose to send their children to a boarding school as a way to circumnavigate mobility. However, the process encapsulates a variety of additional considerations. The majority of Service Parents in the BSQ indicated they had chosen an Independent boarding school for their children as opposed to a state boarding school. However, the literature and data shows that there is limited choice in State boarding schools which can hinder the process of choosing a boarding school. Participants further stipulated that location was a key factor in not choosing a State boarding school; many stating that they wished for their children to be close to family and friends. Overall, the BSQ

showed parents decided to send their children to a boarding school because they wanted stability in their education.

Moreover, this Chapter has demonstrated in respect of research question 1 and 1.1, that many of the parent participants spoke of the emotional labour of school applications, with some having to make calculated choices. The examples highlighted that there is rarely a compromise situation. For instance, in Sophie's case she could only chose to have her children live with parents, if she could not stay at her current location, for her children to have continued stability in education. This was also illustrated in Elaine's story when one of her children made their own decision to move in with grandparents. Thus, how Service Parents navigate these challenges depends on individual circumstances. It is abundantly clear that Service Families experience these challenges based on their own situational context.

Chapter 5 will go on to discuss how Key Stakeholders understand the challenges of Service life, and how they understand the needs of Service Families.

Chapter 5 (Mis)Understanding: Service life and the pressures of mobility

I think unless you've got the experience, and hands on of understanding, I think it is more difficult to appreciate and learn how to support [Service] children (Isobel, SP)

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 discussed the theme of (in)Stability in the Service Child's education journey, and how this effects Service Families. (In)Stability further affects how Key Stakeholders comprehend the challenges of Service life and how they meet the needs of Service Children and families. This Chapter will focus on the theme of understanding the pressures of Service life and how this enables Key Stakeholders to meet the needs of Service Parents and Children, and how they are supported in their own roles. Therefore, the following research question will be explored and addressed within this Chapter: 2) To what extent do Key Stakeholders understand the challenges faced by families associated with Service mobility? and 2.1) What, challenges do Key Stakeholders encounter when endeavouring to meet the needs of Service Children?

Chapter 5 initially explores the work of Mancini and Bowen (2009) on communities before discussing how the Military Community is formed on an external and internal level. As Military Communities interchange, this can pose difficulties in understanding the nuances of Service life. This then moves on to demonstrate how Service Parents interpret Key Stakeholder understanding drawing on their own experiences. The Chapter then investigates how Key Stakeholders meet the needs of Service Families, in the context of Covid-19 and investigates the ways in which Covid-19 shaped the experiences of Service Families with a child(ren) with Special Educational Needs.

Service Families are often labelled as resilient, and this can present many issues. Resilience is not something which is innate, it is said to be formed and strengthened based on situational milieu (Hunt and Laffan, 2019; Masten, 2015). Despite this, Service Children can sometimes be labelled as resilient (Baverstock, 2018). The Chapter therefore examines theories of resilience and how this can be harmful to Service Families.

5.2 Understanding the Military family as a community

Mancini and Bowen (2009) hypothesise communities arrange and categorise themselves into social factions which replicate and share the same or similar desirabilities. They argue individuals make such alliances to eliminate risk and harm amongst their cohort and to establish a shared consensus of harmony across the wider community. Risk can be externally and internally produced, threatening the dynamics and harmony of these communities, and can disrupt the balance of power which generally evolves from a natural process of social organisation (Mancini and Bowen, 2009, p.245). Literature highlights the value of communities being able to negotiate risk, and to prepare for any potential outcomes through the informal and formal networks which occur from such social organisation (Houston, 2018; Masten, 2015; Masten, 2013; Hoffman, 2010; Mancini and Bowen, 2009). Thus, these informal and formal networks are central to their understanding of community resilience, and how communities negotiate their everyday lives.

Communities, in some sense, are often determined by place insomuch as, a community is established within a geographical place with physical boundaries. Moreover, a community is also embodied through its non-physicality as a community can exist outside of its geographical place and physical boundaries (Small and Supple, 1998; Heller, 1989). Whilst communities emerge within the physical, they are not limited to the geographical place and this is particularly eminent of Military Communities (Mancini and Bowen, 2009, p.247; Small and Supple, 1998). Military Communities are neither static or fluctuating insofar as, they emerge externally and internally. The external Military Community is present and recognised on its wider nation scale, in which it is viewed as a large institution. Internally, Military Communities emerge within a place such as the geographical location of units, but at a local level. Therefore, local Military Communities emerge within their own physical parameters yet are still part of the wider, external Military Community. As a further component, individuals within the Military Community can, and will, move between different internal Military Communities. To this extent, the social organisation premise is liable to change at any given time (Mancini and Bowen, 2009).

Whilst historically Service Children attended garrison schools (Venning, 2005), within the new millennia Service Children in State schools is the norm. Yet, there still appears to be some form of unintentional *othering* with this cohort of children, and their families, which is likely to be as a result of their unique lifestyle. As a community, military parents form networks, internally and externally, as described according to Mancini and Bowen's (2009) theory. If past or current experiences of schools have been negative, this may circulate around the community and form preconceived ideas about schools before Service Parents have even applied for a place there. These preconceived ideas could be exacerbated in the event a Service Child has been allocated a school which the parents consider unsuitable. This is not to suggest that there is an *us and them* scenario between Key Stakeholders' and Service Parents, however from the situational context of Key Stakeholders understanding Service life, it was important to explore how they understood Service life and its challenges, and how Service Parents interpret Key Stakeholder understanding.

5.2.1 Transferring Military experience to everyday practices

Previous experience of being part of the Military Community was discussed throughout the face-to face interviews. Key Stakeholder interview participants were asked whether they disclosed their civilian or military background to parents, to ascertain if this impacted how parents communicate with, and trust them. As Liz stated:

> I'm not from a military family myself so the idea of having to move twelve times … in my mind … I'm completely boggled (Liz, KS)

Liz then went on to illustrate how she feels being honest with Service Parents is important, demonstrating that whilst she has over twenty years' experience of working with Service Children, it is still difficult for her to fully comprehend the challenges which Service Families experience, because she has not encountered them herself.

Most of the Key Stakeholders in this research came from a military background themselves or had a vast experience with working with Service Families, or in some cases both. Regardless of which spectrum their experience came from, all of the Key Stakeholders expressed how important it was to them that Service

Parents understood how much they empathised with the issues that they encounter, and how this affects the social and emotional needs of their children:

> I understood the difficulties, my own children were subjected to those difficulties when my ex-husband went away and came back, and everything can be distressing … and also some of the psychological and emotional, and behavioural impacts on them, as well as the academic; I've been really well informed by my experiences (Louise, KS)

> Arrangements can change, can't they? So, there can be that thing 'we think we're here for three years, but we might not be' … So, I was a military child. So, I do have an understanding … I can talk quite comfortably with military parents in terms of that (Karen, KS)

Further, it was important for the Key Stakeholders that the children understood this themselves:

> You become more of a nurturer then an educator second, and once you get them to realise that … we understand how [they] feel … then they're a lot more respectful of you (Pauline, KS)

> I think it's important that the military children in this school are aware they are a group (Karen, KS)

> I'm always convinced, what helps the most is real lived experience from ex-forces or serving forces (Kevin, KS)

Whilst the landscape of military families has changed over the years (Walker et al., 2020; Venning, 2005), the challenges which they encounter still permeate their daily lives. Public consciousness of what being part of the military involves, is generally at its highest in times of conflict (Gribble et al., 2012; Hines et al., 2015). However, when the UK is not involved in any conflicts, the lasting effects of any parental separation still persist (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). These effects can vary from Service Children encountering parental PTSD, and being young carers (Cramm et al., 2022; Godier-McBard et al., 2021, p.41), to Service Children whose parents are deployed several times throughout the year (Walker et al., 2020; Longfield, 2018). The renegotiating of finding their place in the home, and developing coping strategies during parental absenteeism, has been discussed at length in various pieces of research (Gribble and Fear, 2019, p.38; Gewirtz et al., 2014; Mmari et al., 2009; Jensen et al., 1996). Karen, a Key stakeholder, also identified that issues could arise when the Serving Parent returns home:

> One of the things is often when dad goes away and says 'right look after mum' they take it all on … then dad comes back … and we see quite unsettled phases of behaviour at transition points, but we are aware of those things (Karen, KS)

Whilst the Key Stakeholders in this research acknowledged and could recognise the unique challenges, it was felt that for some organisations such as the DfE, the focus on Service Children and families has dissipated since the reduction of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq:

> (Discussing various operations) that dissipated, then other things came in, whatever happens in the Armed Forces, for Air Force, Navy or the Army, there is always a threat coming from somewhere. And that hasn't gone away (Kevin, KS)

> They are the ones who set the rules down. They are the ones who need to understand it (DfE). Because something nasty has been happening half the time, some of the kids are upset because their dad's in a bloody war zone and they are worried sick about it (Brian, SP)

It is likely that where Key Stakeholders have personal experience of these issues, they have more capability of understanding the challenges of military life and can transfer their own lived experiences into appropriate support mechanisms. This does not suggest however that those without lived experience are not equipped to support Service Children. However, Service Parents did express that they wanted compassion, empathy, and understanding from school staff, and the wider civilian community:

> A bit more understanding … compassion around moving for children rather than this is the way it is, suck it up, you choose to do it (Laura, SP)

> I think we need a little bit of more empathy from professionals, and a bit more empathy for our kids, that, you know, if they are struggling, they are struggling (Bethany, SP)

> I think unless you've got the experience and hands on of understanding (military) I think it is more difficult to appreciate and learn how to support (Service) children (Isobel, SP)

An in-depth discussion on empathy and understanding can be found in Section 5.4.

5.3 The social and emotional needs of Service Children

Understanding the social and emotional needs of Service Children was explored throughout this research. In the BSQ 66% (105 out of 159) of parents

were 'very satisfied' and 25% (39 out of 159) were 'satisfied' in respect of their child's school understanding their social and emotional needs. Understanding the needs of military families was shown as a main reason for choosing a boarding school; 53% of participants gave this as a reason for choosing boarding school. Given that parents are more likely to have spent longer searching for a boarding school, as a result of the enormity of the decision (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Brady et al., 2013a; The Defence Committee, 2013a), this was to be suspected. Parent interviewees were asked about their experiences of their children's social and emotional needs being met:

> I would say that educationally, and socially and emotionally, they probably both have been affected for the last six or seven years in particular (Elaine, SP)

> The last school awful … [child] has become aware of the risks attached to the role, so that is a source of anxiety, and [school] didn't really understand that (Bethany, SP)

> I think they would be very good with [child] when I go away. The previous school weren't. They said all the right things, but they never happened (Laura, SP)

> I think it depends on the teachers, some teachers are more accepting, whereas you've got some that don't understand the complex needs of each child … they just look at [child] and think [child's] badly behaved … but I don't think currently [child's] not emotionally supported at all (Layla, SP)

> My youngest a lot better than my oldest. It almost seems that with my eldest, until they had that diagnosis, [they] was just a naughty child and they did the bare minimum with [child] (Sophie, SP)

Although Service Children may share some of the same characterises as looked after children, and other vulnerable groups, some of the challenges they experience are unique to them (Longfield, 2018; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). A caveat however is to consider not all Service Children, and not all Service Parents will wish to be treated differently to their civilian peers. Despite many Garrison towns having a large population of Service Children, many Service Children attend schools with less than 10 Service pupils on roll (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). This could be due to a variety of distinct factors, such as dispersed families, smaller military bases, Service Families opting for schools with less Service Children in attendance, and a lack of local and suitable military housing.

It is likely that many schools adopt a whole school ethos, meaning Service Children are not treated any differently when they access social and emotional support, and when taking part in any social and emotional learning activities. This can however cause problems within school when Service Children are provided with different opportunities to their civilian peers:

> Our service people champion, she's always on the lookout for opportunities … sometimes it's difficult, we don't like, single groups out (Liz, KS)

> Our old primary school …there was a special club for military kids … we went to join, and all the places had gone, and we looked into it and out of 25 kids, two were military … and it's like no, this club is because their partners are away and stuff (Joe, SP)

As discussed in Chapter 1, Service Children in England, attract SPP each year. It has been suggested that SPP is used for pastoral support for Service Children, in particular, during times of parental absenteeism (Ministry of Defence, 2021f). Pastoral support may also include the use of dedicated after school clubs as outlined by Joe above. However, the ways in which SPP is utilised in schools varies, and interpretations of what SPP is for differs also:

> I did ask today who to ask about how [their] Service Pupil Premium is spent. But all the children have laptops, and I'm not sure whether that's where it will have gone (Laura, SP)

> I am aware we have Pupil Premium, Service Pupil Premium, but I don't get me mits on that pot. That's the boss. You know, I don't see any of it, a lot does go to staffing for various things (Sue, KS)

> Obviously, we've got the Service Pupil Premium, and it's about how that is delivered. But really what we want to do is … give the best opportunities for everybody in the school (Liz, KS)

> We asked them (Service Parents) for suggestions (on how to spend it). If they haven't got any we make suggestions. But then that's probably indicative of how we work (Louise, KS)

> I've raised the question of how their Service Premium is used, and they haven't got an answer. There's nothing specific for Service Children (Elaine, SP)

Enquiries regarding how SPP is being spent to the AFF have increased over the last few years (Army Families Federation, 2020a). This shows that Service Parents are not only aware of what their children are entitled too, but also that they are concerned that SPP is not being spent in the way it is intended. The above extracts demonstrate that the various interpretations support this.

Further, recent research highlights there are some red tape issues with accessing funding for some children. Outside of the challenges of accessing SPP, when Service Children also fall into the category of disadvantaged, this means they are eligible for Pupil Premium. Pupil Premium[30] is significantly higher than SPP meaning schools can receive more money for these children. Research shows, problematically, children cannot be recorded as eligible for both, and some schools have opted to record them under Pupil Premium (Godier-McBard et al., 2021, pp.63-64). Although this may seem like a manageable solution for schools in terms of funding, this causes some concerns for those Service Children who are recorded under Pupil Premium. As SPP is intended to navigate Service Children's unique challenges, these children could therefore be at risk of not being adequately supported socially and emotionally.

Guidance, however, around Pupil Premium and SPP is ambiguous and contradictory. MOD guidance states (Ministry of Defence, 2021g, no pagination):

> Schools should not combine SPP with the main PP funding and the spending of each premium should be accounted for separately

Yet the Department for Education (2022, no pagination) claims:

> Service Pupil Premium is additional funding for schools, but it is not based on disadvantage. It has been combined into pupil premium payments to make it easier for schools to manage their spending

These disparities can cause issues in how SPP is allocated. SPP funding is connected to the ways in which schools support the social and emotional needs of Service Children. As argued, the challenges which Service Children experience, are unique to them, and most importantly Service Children can experience more than one of these challenges at any time. These complex and unique challenges are carried through into their school experiences. It is therefore imperative that the DfE and the MoD align the policy of SPP to prevent any confusion, for SPP to be adequately utilised in the manor it was intended. In addition, schools should also be responsible for making sure

---

[30] Pupils in England who are termed as disadvantaged attract Pupil Premium. Pupil Premium amounts vary with primary school children attracting £1385 per school year (Department for Education, 2022a)

resources which are funded through SPP prioritise Service Children, as highlighted by Joe, a Serving Parent:

> Our old primary school …there was a special club for military kids … we went to join, and all the places had gone, and we looked into it and out of 25 kids, two were military … and it's like no, this club is because their partners are away and stuff (Joe, SP)

5.3.1 The social and emotional needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs

Parent interviewees were asked if they felt their child's social and emotional needs were considered and met. For some parents this was associated with their child's Special Educational Needs:

> They will have been considered because obviously we'd have to put in a pack for [their] EHCP, so all that's kind of listed on there from all these, like different specialists, that [they] see (Carole, SP)

> I think that depends on like, the teachers, some teachers are more accepting or not accepting, whereas you've got some, they don't understand the complex needs of each child … and I think sometimes they come across as quite harsh …I don't think currently, [they are] not properly emotionally supported at all. And I think this is probably the time, with what [they are] going through, where [they] need it the most (Layla, SP)

Research suggests that 'Service Children who experience frequent transitions between schools and Local Authorities, show less social and emotional development' (Noret et al., 2015, p.7). The social and emotional needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs are additionally complex. Children with Special Educational Needs can experience a lack of emotional expression (Davis and Finke, 2015), and may not be able to express their wants and needs in the same way as other children. This is further exacerbated when parental absenteeism occurs. Much of the literature on this issue originates outside of the UK (Knobloch et al., 2017; Gewirtz et al., 2014; Waliski et al., 2012; Chandra et al., 2010a; Mmari et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Figley, 1993), and is centred around the traditional family model. Thus, there is a lack of research addressing Service Children with Special Educational Needs and their social and emotional needs, and from the position of single Service Parents. As Chapter 1 outlined, literature often discusses parental absenteeism from the perspective of a traditional two parent household, with one parent remaining in the home (Army, 2014; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Chandra et al., 2010b; Mmari et al., 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Dandeker et al., 2006; Bey and Lange, 1974). Further exploration of single parents with children with Special Educational Needs could provide deeper insights into the challenges of

supporting the social and emotional needs of children with Special Educational Needs. Support is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

As Chapter 4 highlighted, women experience what Duncombe and Marsden (1995) refer to as the 'double shift' (p.165). The roles of women have changed significantly over the last decade, however the traditionalist views of mothers being the primarily caregiver is still embedded within society (Abbott, 2000). Further, the Military is still a very male dominated work force (Harding, 2021), and in some cases, is considered as going against feminist ideals due to the strenuous conditions of the role (Dearden, 2018; BBC News, 2016). Sophie, a Service Parent, detailed how her role as a Serving mother, with two children with Special Educational Needs, affected her relationship with her child's head teacher:

> The previous Head teacher she tried to use my career against me, my role in the army … her argument was always that because [they] had numerous house moves that [they] was just a naughty child, because [they] was unsettled (Sophie, SP)

These types of attitudes can be detrimental to a child's social and emotional needs, and places children at risk of not being rightly and adequately supported. Sophie went on to state that at the time of experiencing issues with the Head teacher at her child's school, her child was yet to be diagnosed. As a result, the relationship between Sophie and the Head was based purely on Sophie's career and when Sophie was likely to move next:

> And it got to the point where every time [they] would speak to me, it would be 'oh, do you know where you're going next?' [they] was only interested in when I was going (Sophie, SP)

As research on Service Children with Special Educational Needs is scarce in the UK it is difficult to ascertain how parent and Key Stakeholder relationships in this context, affect the social and emotional needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs. Davis and Finke (2015) suggest Service Children with Special Educational Needs are more likely to display different behaviours when changes occur such as deployments and relocation. They go on to state that feeling anxious, and loss of friendships are the main triggers of changes to behaviour (Davis and Finke, 2015) and this was supported within this research:

> You're moving them from friends, and when you do it to a special educational needs child its heightened, by ten times (Sophie, SP)

> My friend got posted over the summer and I think that really hit [child] hard, [child] was quite close to [friends] little boy … and obviously [friend] was support for me … and … was a single parent as well … so yeah, I think that definitely changed [child's] behaviour (Layla, SP)

Being a single parent to a child with Special Educational Needs further compounds issues of social and emotional support. Chapter 4 has already highlighted these issues through Sophie's account, whereby she expressed moving her children would be detrimental to their well-being and would disrupt their stability. Although Sophie's experience with her children's school was currently positive, previous issues meant that Sophie does not wish to move her children, and again, and risk having to renegotiate support:

> I have made the decision that my children will stay with my parents so that I can keep them in their school, because it would be detrimental to them both. And I'm not willing to take that risk (Sophie, SP)

Carole, a Serving Parent, also illustrated the importance of her child being adequately supported. However, Carole's experience in comparison to Sophie and Layla was largely positive. Carole's child attended a Specialist Provisions School:

> Special schools are very limited, and I wouldn't want to risk the struggle of having to move [them] and not actually getting a place anywhere … but the longer [I] can keep [child] at this school, the better really because, you know, the teachers know [child] … [I] couldn't fault it (Carole, SP)

Carole then went onto discuss that she currently travels 55 minutes to her child's specialist school from her current posting. Whilst this was manageable at the time, any future postings could disrupt access to a school which was the right fit for her child:

> [I] keep [child] at that school. And I have to commute because [I] don't want to move them out of that school, because of lack of schools in other areas (Carole, SP)

Carole was the only Service Parent in this research who had a child who attended a Specialist Provisions School. For Carole, the support provided by her child's school was above adequate and her experiences of the school itself were extremely positive. A caveat however was that any future moves could potentially see Carole moving to an area with limited or no choice of Specialist Provisions School.

The majority of the parent interviewees who had a child(ren) with Special Educational Needs implied that they were currently happy but had all experienced previous issues with their children being supported socially and

emotionally. There was only one instance where Layla, a Service Parent, expressed her child could be supported more in their current school:

> I don't feel [they] get the support [they] need (Layla, SP)

Layla was the only parent who had previously had a positive experience at a previous school but was currently experiencing a lack of support in relation to her child's needs from the child's current school. Further, Layla also connected this with being a single parent:

> And obviously, being a single parent as well, they probably look down on me for that (Layla, SP)

In comparison, despite being a single parent one advantage for Carole was the child's father living locally, enabling her to draw on family support when needed:

> It does pose its issues but like I say, I've got [child's] dad to help (Carole, SP)

Compared to Layla's experiences, Carole was incredibly happy with the support she received from her child's school, and the support that they gave her child.

Although not a single parent, Bethany, a Service Parent, compared her experience of living married unaccompanied to single parent households:

> If they do have an absent father, because, to me, I feel like a single mum during the week, but because we're not actually classed as single parents, we don't necessarily get the benefit of single parents (Bethany, SP)

Bethany felt that because her husband returned to the family home each week, or when possible, she was not officially classed as a single parent despite pseudo-single parenting during the working week. In this regard Bethny felt that she did not receive the additional support experienced by some single parents. However, the majority of single parents in this research all expressed they did not feel they experienced any benefits because of their single parent status. These accounts of single Service Parents, and attitudes towards single parents, go some way to highlight the ways in which (mis)understanding occurs. Layla, and Sophie both expressed that their single parent statuses effected the ways in which school staff understood them. However, whilst Bethany was not a single parent her experience was not dissimilar to Layla, and Sophie, insofar as, she felt school staff did not understand the unique challenges of Service life. Bethany's experiences are investigated further in Chapter 6.

5.4 Special Educational Needs: barriers to parental employment

Aronson et al. (2016) recount that families who have Children with Special Educational Needs report additional stressors in their daily lives, which raises some fundamental questions regarding support for Service Families with children with Special Educational Needs. Difficulties maintaining employment has been expressed as a main challenge for families with children with Special Educational Needs, and when employment is maintained, parents are at risk of experiencing workplace stigma (Aronson et al., 2016; Brennan et al., 2016). Bethany stated that due to her youngest child's Special Educational Needs, and having a Serving spouse it was difficult for her to maintain a job:

> In terms of working, I don't have the flexibility to be able to go out and get a full time job. Because we are married unaccompanied. So, I don't have him coming home at night, which would allow me to go and get an evening job … because my [child] is nonverbal, we would be eligible for [them] to get a taxi to school. But I don't feel happy enough for [them] to go in car with a stranger when [they] can't express [their] needs … it's a good 30-35 minute trip. So, I have to take [them] … so in terms of me having a job, it's really very difficult (Bethany, SP)

Since 2007 evidence shows there has been an increase in Armed Forces Personnel spousal employment, with over half of Personnel indicating their spouse/partner is employed full time[31] (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.20). It is suggested spouses who accompany Serving Personnel on postings are less satisfied with their ability to gain employment, and maintain their chosen career path (Gribble et al., 2019b). Furthermore, Gribble and Fear (2019, p.21) illustrate spouses have also indicated they are negatively affected by separation during the working week, as they also navigate being a pseudo-single parent. However, Bethany illustrates that there are additional barriers as a direct result of being married unaccompanied and having a child with Special Educational Needs. This not only resonates with the work of Aronson et al. (2016) of parents with children with Special Educational Needs experiencing additional stressors and workplace stigma, but additionally shows that Service Parents are further disadvantaged.

As Bethany expressed, being married unaccompanied and having children with Special Educational Needs, prevented her from gaining employment. Claridge

---

[31] refers to those who completed the AFCAS survey.

(2020) similarly highlights that 'significant numbers of carers within the Military Community develop mental health issues' (p.7). This highlights the greater need for Service Parents with children with Special Educational Needs, needing additional support. Evidence from FAMCAS highlights spouses who are employed are more likely to report higher levels of well-being (Ministry of Defence, 2022h). However, it must be noted that the demographics of Service spouses vary compared to the national average as demonstrated by Office for National Statistics, such as Service Spouses being younger than those included in other well-being surveys (Office for National Statistics, 2022; Ministry of Defence, 2022h).

Nevertheless, whilst the MoD collects regular data on Service Personnel and their families, in the period of 2022, no data on Service Children with Special Educational Needs has been reported. Further, the most recent FAMCAS included and reported on spousal well-being (Ministry of Defence, 2022h). Therefore, there is no reported correlation between well-being, employment, and having a child(ren) with Special Educational Needs. As the data has shown so far, Service Parent's with children with Special Educational Needs experience many additional challenges, which have not yet been explored in adequate depth. It is vital that these issues are explored further to ensure Service Parents with children with Special Educational Needs are being supported, and to minimise any further disadvantages. As this research explored family experiences, no discussion on the effects of the Serving Person's career was explored. It is imperative however, that the MoD explore this issue as a priority.

In addition, Bradley and Almond (2022) observe an inherent focus on family well-being with families reporting there is a clear focus on the Serving person only. Evidence suggests new policy which enables Personnel to ask to work flexi time is having severe repercussions on Serving Families with additional needs (Swarbrick, 2022). The new flexible work scheme introduced by the MoD enables Personnel to either reduce working hours, and/or restrict separation from home (Ministry of Defence, 2021c). The scheme possesses many positive aspects for Personnel which reflects the modern era of working life. As such Personnel have recounted that flexible working has facilitated supporting caring

for children with Special Educational Needs (Ministry of Defence, 2021c). However, there are some concerns that where Personnel have moved to flexible working times, other Personnel have been moved to cover the labour loss (Swarbrick, 2022). Whilst this particular issue is outside the remit of this research it is imperative that this is explored further.

5.5 Compassion, empathy, and understanding the wider issues

Understanding emotions such as compassion, empathy, and understanding raises many questions, which in some cases are explained through scientific explanations of the brain (Riess, 2017; Decety and Jackson, 2006; Cavanagh, 1995). From a sociological perspective however, these emotions are viewed in relation to societies' social responsibilities, the actions individuals take, and the ways in which these emotions can affect outcomes (Greenberg and Turksma, 2015; Segal, 2011; Pancer and Pratt, 1999). Outcomes for marginalised groups of society which may experience inequality, social divisions, and disadvantage. The Military Community is generally not considered to fall into these groups, or at least they would be likely to be considered at the bottom of the scale compared to the most vulnerable members of society. It is likely that society considers Military Personnel and their families as being regarded in high esteem and adequately looked after by their employer (Hines et al., 2015; Park et al., 2012).

Understanding, empathy, and compassion in relation to military life can therefore be problematic for individuals who are outsiders of such communities. Whilst the parents in this research iterated, they wished for a deeper level of compassion, empathy, and understanding, and unless Key Stakeholders have experiences of the challenges they encounter, it can be difficult for them to fully comprehend them (Segal, 2011; Cavanagh, 1995); as outlined by Liz earlier:

> I'm not from a military family myself so the idea of having to move twelve times … in my mind … I'm completely boggled (Liz, KS)

Greenberg and Turksma (2015) state 'awareness, empathy, and compassion contribute to personal well-being and interpersonal experiences that nurture secure, authentic, and life-enhancing relationships' (p.280). They go on to state that promoting the qualities of empathy and compassion is vital in the process of supporting children's wellbeing, and further builds interconnected communities (Greenberg and Turksma, 2015, p.280). Essentially, these issues

of understanding permeate everyday practices and further affect the ways in which policy is directed (Smith, 2018; Segal, 2011, p.269); and this is problematic for Service Families.

Parent interviewees provided different accounts regarding Key Stakeholder understanding. Chapter 4 illustrated Laura's experience with Key Stakeholders when she was moving her child to a new school after the school term had started, and how the responsibility of sourcing a school place fell to her:

> I don't want to be sexist, but when the mum is serving, and it all falls on me. My husband also holds a full time job, and I was stood up for deployment and trying to move, and trying to sort schools and childcare (Laura, SP)

Laura's experience further feeds into the discussion on Key Stakeholder's not only understanding Service life but having a full comprehension of how the miso elements, such as uniform buying, present the smallest of challenges. Whilst not a physical barrier, this example is most likely one of the minor considerations which Service Parents must navigate, and a further added stressor to the process, as Joanne a Service Parent and Key Stakeholder explained:

> They said go to [removed] and get your uniform … well how long does it take to get there? I don't know where that is. What if I didn't drive? There was no consideration whatsoever (Joanne, SP)

Issues with purchasing uniform were also expressed by a parent in the LASQ:

> The appeals were delayed and then held too late for uniform ordered (LA A15)

Joanne went on to discuss that despite moving into a heavily populated military area, she did not feel that the school fully comprehended the enormity of her family's impending move:

> We were travelling 400 miles to move here, and there was no come and have a look around the school before you start. We had to knock on the door the day before they started and say please can we look around? (Joanne, SP)

Irrespective of location, all of the Key Stakeholder interviewees implied that Key Stakeholders working in schools, supported Service Children through a whole school ethos; Key Stakeholders also discussed vulnerable children:

> The building I'm sat in now was Covenant funded [its'] for vulnerable children, any vulnerable children, not just Service Children because obviously we are all about inclusion here (Sue, KS)

> Some families they don't sign up for the free school meals, they just don't … what we do is give informal support … to make sure they've got enough

> food … it's that kind of working poverty which I think is a little bit lost (Liz, KS)

> Safeguarding has been a huge impact … when children had to stay at home, although the most vulnerable could come in not all of them did. There are some that are borderline … we had to work innovatively to take food parcels and use the relationships we've built to go out and check on these families (Louise, KS)

Thus, senior Key Stakeholders provide support irrespective of their background; whether this be Military or civilian. However, Service Parents' accounts juxtaposed this with a lack of understanding, or a lack of empathy, with the challenges of Service life. Some parents indicated it was very much a *they will move on* attitude, underpinning their feelings of Key Stakeholders not fully caring about the children or the family, as illustrated by one parent:

> They didn't seem to be as interested because I think, I mean this was with the previous Head teacher, and I think to her it was a case of they'll be gone in a few years (Sophie, SP)

Overall, parents expressed however that they felt lower-level Key Stakeholders, such as teachers, as opposed to Heads of Departments, were more supportive and at least attempted to understand Service life. Parents also felt that the understanding was deeper or more genuine when the Key Stakeholders had experience of Service life themselves. This was evidenced from the Key Stakeholders interviewees when it was apparent in Local Authority A that the Key Stakeholders who had daily interaction with Service Children were more knowledgeable than higher level Key Stakeholders:

> It becomes part of your subconscious, your day-to-day life. It's very difficult … I've got two new staff started last week … and one of them doesn't have a clue about the military, and you feel like having to go backwards to explain, whereas other staff are fully aware because it's just the norm (Sue, KS)

That said, the Key Stakeholders interviewees all illustrated the compassion they had for the challenges of Service Families. In some examples this also extended beyond the classroom, to caring about their home life:

> I mean, I'm quite surprised. I'm quite shocked if I'm being honest about some of the accommodation that our Service Families live in (Liz, KS)

Liz then went on to account how some Service Families are living on the breadline, yet they were unable to access certain welfare. Liz further stated that informal welfare was provided by the school in the form of supermarket vouchers. This example demonstrated that whilst Liz could not fully

comprehend the itinerant nature of the military, she was abundantly aware of the wider mechanisms and challenges Service Families face, and that she, with her very extensive experience, was adequately equipped to recognise them. Despite this however, the sentiments of Service Parents highlighting that lower-level Key Stakeholder staff, or staff with military knowledge, understood Service life better, were supported within the research findings. Sue had expressed within the same school that senior management were unaware of certain information relating to Service Children. Throughout the interviews, Key Stakeholders illustrated that this was the case, often referring to another member of staff knowing more than what they did:

> I think the person to speak to would be [name removed] (Liz, KS)

> I'm probably not the best person to speak to about that (Pauline, KS)

Although this does not denote that Key Stakeholders do not understand the challenges of Service Children, or lack in empathy and understanding, it does raise some questions regarding best practice. In particular, in schools where there are larger numbers of Service Children, having a full comprehensive knowledge of all departments, and job roles, could be advantageous in supporting Service Children.

Most recently the SCiP Alliance have designed a toolkit which has been shared to schools to help them develop and guide such practices (Service Children's Progression Alliance, 2022c). However, Sue, a Key Stakeholder working in a secondary school, stated that there were some issues with Senior leaders being engaged with the toolkit:

> There's a new thing come out through SCIP, the thriving lives toolkit … so I came back here (school) to a meeting and said to the boss, this has come out, but it's got to go through to senior leaders (Sue, KS)

However, Sue had previously detailed that Senior Leaders were not aware of her job role involved, and that their military understanding was lacking:

> To be honest [department] doesn't know what I do … just come to me and ask me … it's not on their radar (Sue, KS)

This highlights some concerns regarding staff communication, and how best practice is shared across schools. Whilst this may be an isolated incident, it is likely that this does occur in other schools, and similar sentiments regarding information sharing and transferring knowledge were echoed by Bethany, a Service Parent:

> When the Little Troopers did a roadshow, I sent an email to the head saying, you know, this is what's happening, they're doing these roadshows, it'd be good to get involved, given that there's more than just a couple of military children in the school. And basically, I was told that they deliver all the resources that the little troopers provide. And I asked, my eldest child, have you ever done anything about Daddy being in the Army? [child] said, no. And that's the main source of [their] anxiety (Bethany, SP)

Although schools with large numbers of Service Children may be highly experienced in working with Service Families, this may not necessarily be the case with schools with smaller numbers. In Bethany's experience it is clear that this is the case. In part this could be that there is little if any direct guidance from the DfE. It has been over 10 years since the DfE undertook any significant research on Service Children in schools. The last piece of research which was undertaken was 10 years into the war on Afghanistan.

The lack of research and insight from the DfE resonates with Kevin's earlier discussion regarding the focus on Services Families dissipating, even though Service Personnel could be engaged in combat at any given time:

> [There] is always a threat coming from somewhere. And that hasn't gone away (Keving, KS)

Lack of interest from the DfE was implicitly acknowledged within the findings of this research:

> We as a group of volunteers are made up [removed] link post from the DfE. If we can ever get them to the table (Colin, KS)

Colin discussed his role within the Local Authority and illustrated how he further engages in work with Service Families and children. Colin pointed out the differences in services across the devolved nations compared to England in relation to Service Children in schools:

> I've noticed over the period of 13-14 years … when you look at the support mechanism that is in Wales … when you look at Scotland … I'm increasingly feeling that that in England, where the majority of Service Children are, we've fallen behind a bit, we're not being ambitious enough because there isn't someone that is, full time (Colin, KS)

Here Colin is referring to the work of SCiSS (cf. Chapter 2 for details) as a voluntary organisation. In comparison, Wales, and Scotland both have organisations which have full time team members. Colin further points out that although the SCiP Alliance (cf. Chapter 2) are England based, their work is UK wide. In this regard, there are some clear issues regarding funding.

In Wales, since 2019 SSCE Cymru has been funded by the Welsh Government to work with (SSCE Cymru, 2022, no pagination):

> Schools, children and young people, local authorities, Welsh Government, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations to gather their views and experiences, build networks across Wales and raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of children of Armed Forces personnel

Similarly in Scotland, Forces Children Scotland[32] is a charity which has supported Service Children since 1815 (Forces Children Scotland, 2022). Pointedly, Colin pointed out that both organisations have full time staff on their role, compared with SCiSS, which is made up of volunteers who hold other full-time jobs. Colin explicitly stated he felt there needed to be a noticeably clear funding strategy to support Service Children in schools that compared to Wales and Scotland:

> We are falling behind a bit (Colin, KS)

Coupled with Colin's comment regarding the DfE:

> If we can ever get them to the table (Colin, KS)

This highlights some important concerns regarding the views of Service Families and Children in England, and further implicitly demonstrates a lack of understanding from wider organisations such as the DfE. As such, there is no clear investment from Government departments such as the DfE and it is possible this is because the Armed Forces are currently not engaged in large scale combat.

However, it is imperative that schools fully embrace being compassionate, show empathy, and have some understanding of Service life, and the DfE must be more specific in its guidance, support, and training for Local Authorities and schools. This is important within all schools, but more so in schools where there are lower numbers of Service Children, where they are at risk of not receiving the correct support, and not having their needs met.

5.6 Meeting the needs of Service Families

Mobility is a core element in Service life which means that those with families are subject to move locations when the Service requires. As Walker et al. (2020, p.237) state:

---

[32] Formally RCET

> Moving home and relocating is one of the most stressful transitions that any family … can experience. Military families have to manage this change many times if they wish to stay living under one roof as a family. The other key transitions which cause the greatest stress for military families relate to children's education … these transitions/changes can be particularly detrimental for children with special educational needs

In some cases (as mentioned earlier) not all Personnel are required to relocate, and, in these instances, there is a greater chance of maintaining stability (Walker et al., 2020). However, this research showed, 78% of parents (63 out of 81) stated one or more of their children had had to move schools during the school year, outside of the usual entry points[33]. Not all of the parents however, indicated that they had moved for Service reasons, for example relocation. Overall, 11% of children (12 out of 107) moved because their educational or social and emotional needs were not being met, 8 of these were outside of the usual entry points for joining a new school. Parents who had children attending a boarding school were asked how many schools their child(ren) had attended prior to starting boarding school. Figure 3 showed 26% of boarding children (76 children out of 292) had attended 3 primary schools, and 8% had attended 4 secondary schools prior to starting a boarding school, whilst 65% of boarding children (15 children out of 23) had attended 1 secondary school, prior to starting a boarding school. This could suggest that Service Children are more likely to be settled into a boarding school at the start of their secondary education as data shows less school moves post-secondary education (cf. Figure 3).

[33] This data includes non-Service Children.

Figure 3. Schools attended before boarding school

Number of schools before boarding school
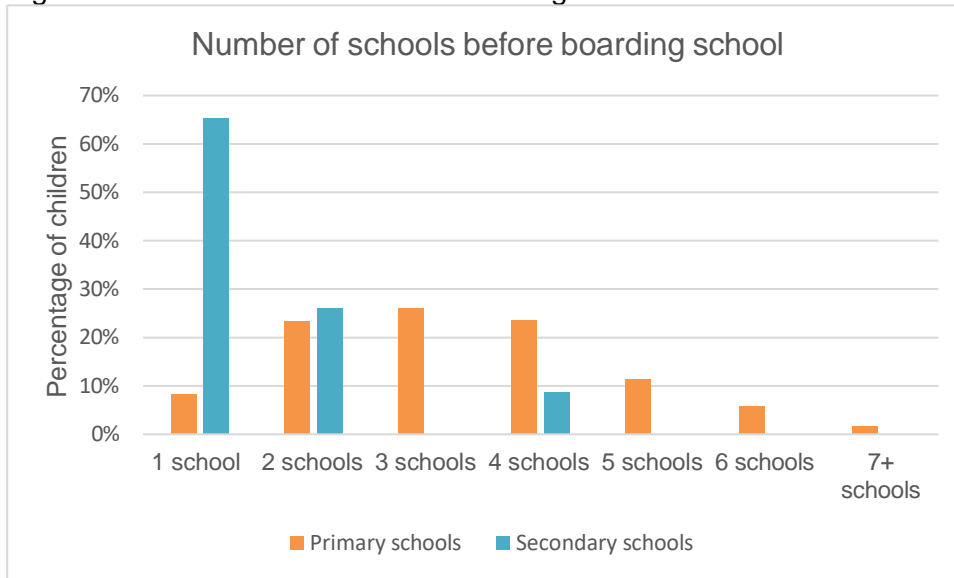
Source: BSQ

However, Figures 3 and 4 suggested that children were less likely to move at secondary stage education. In comparison, 7% of children (8 children out of 119) in the LASQ, had attended 3 secondary schools, compared with 9% of boarding children attending at least 3 secondary schools (cf. Figure 3 and 4).

Figure 4. Number of schools attended

Number of schools attended
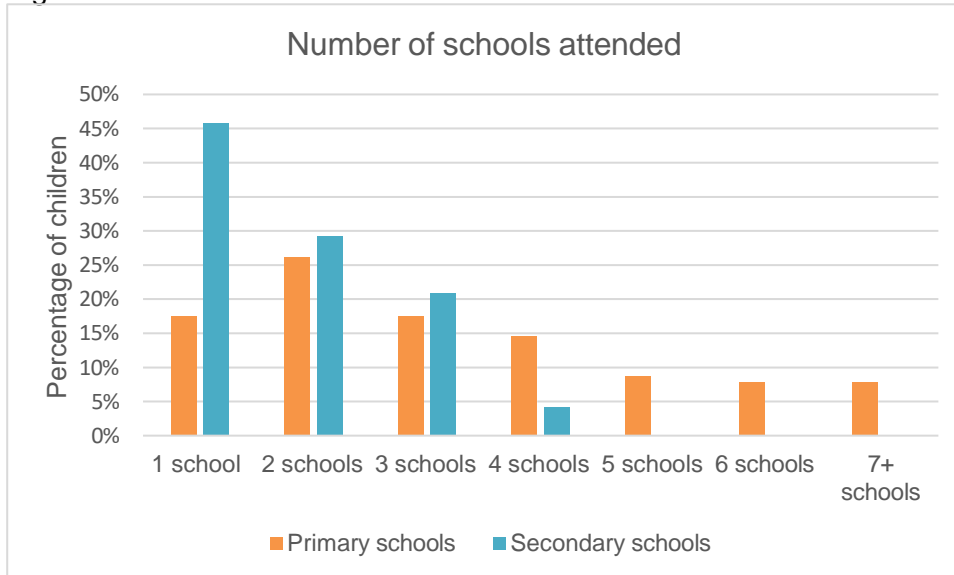
Source: LASQ

Only 1 parent in the LASQ stated that they had faced difficulties when their child was allocated a school place, as the school did not meet their social and emotional needs. This parent, however, did not appeal the decision. In comparison, only 7% of boarding children (18 children out of 270) were sent to boarding school for their social and emotional needs,. Both of these figures

could suggest that parents were satisfied that their child's social and emotional needs had been met, either previously or at their current schools.

However, as discussed in Section 5.3, 53% (87 out of 164) of boarding parents stated the school understanding the needs of military families as a main reason for choosing a boarding school, with 91% (144 out of 159) of parents stating they were overall 'satisfied' their child's social and emotional needs were understood by their school. Additionally, it has been previously discussed that Key Stakeholders were aware of the specific needs of Service Children and families, and further that these were met via a whole school ethos. Asking whether a child's needs have been understood and met is problematic insofar as every child and family is different. Therefore, understanding this context presents some challenges. Whilst the overall picture of needs depicts specific challenges (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Longfield, 2018), these are likely to differ according to child and family:

> One of the key messages that I give is not to generalise because I think every single service child is a unique person who will be shaped by the experiences they've had, particularly around deployment and mobility (Colin, KS)

Key Stakeholders in Local Authority A demonstrated an extensive range of experience working with Service Families. In this regard, it is likely they have experienced many the factors which can affect Service Children. These issues have recently been further compounded as a result of Covid-19.

The closures of schools due to the Covid pandemic brought with it many challenges for both parents and Key Stakeholders. Many parents and Key Stakeholders discussed the various ways in which learning had been disrupted, however some parents also expressed some positives:

> One [child] is dyslexic, the support from the school has been outstanding, but I do feel [they] have struggled in certain areas. This is not a reflection on the school (LA A11)

> The online lessons have been great … after the initial adjustment the provision has been very impressive (BSP 4)

> My [child] is dyslexic and no further behind ... small assessments for GCSE has been better for [them] to cope with the amount of information (LA B53)

Throughout the research the majority of participants discussed Covid-19 and demonstrated how this had shaped their recent experiences. Some lines of inquiry which did not specifically relate or mention Covid-19 for instance, were discussed in the context of Covid-19. Considering this, discussions around needs being met were generally connected to recent experiences and the inability of students to physically attend school. This was most prevalent in respect of children with Special Educational Needs:

> My [child] who is a boarder was forced to return home even though the guidelines stated that children with an EHCP can remain at school [child] was then home learning with little support (BSP 25)

> My [child] with [Special Educational Needs] had been settling in very well to boarding life and the first lockdown set [them] back immensely. [Their] mental health deteriorated and hasn't improved since (BSP 85)

> Unfortunately, our school had to use [child's] 1:1 as extra staff due to other staff members having to shield, so that meant [they] couldn't go to school (LA A1)

> Due to dyslexia home learning was near impossible (LA A5)

> I am a dyslexic person so trying to help [child] with schoolwork made things worse, as the way I read the question was not in the right way. So, the answers were wrong which made [them] fall behind (Brain, SP)

Meeting need was therefore found to be discussed within the current situational context of Covid-19. The lasting effects of Covid-19 are yet to be fully understood; however, Hobbs and Bernard (2021) determine there has been a significant decline in children's well-being and mental health as a direct effect of Covid-19. Whilst some families reported they felt like *lockdown* had brought them together, and that children had thrived and progressed more in the home environment (Clayton et al., 2020), this will not have been the case for those families with Key Workers such as Forces families[34].

Completing schoolwork at home was specifically challenging for many children, in particular those who were preparing to take important exams. Access to resources enabling children to undertake the required schoolwork was reported

---

[34] Cf.https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision

as significantly challenging for disadvantages families (Clayton et al., 2020).
Like many families, Service Families also experienced challenges with home
learning, and in some cases Service Children also assumed extra caring
responsibilities during lockdown:

> We did spend a lot of time as a school running around delivering iPads to
> try and get them engaged, because you can't do work on your phone

> I had one [child] who was in my GCSE group, really really clever, so
> engaged in class, comes from a massive family, they had one iPad
> between them, [they] was the oldest, therefore, parents didn't see it, that
> [they] would need it the most, [they] was there to supervise the children
> (Pauline, KS)

Service Children's outcomes were discussed in Chapter 4, and this highlighted
outcomes as problematic. Liz, a Key Stakeholder, expressed that within some
Service Families there is a generational ideology which can have a direct effect
on Service Children's outcomes, despite their attainment being good:

> This sort of generational, you know, my dad did this, or I'm going to do this
> and it's like, okay, well, have you thought about this, or this or this? And the
> answers so often is, no (Liz, KS)

It is difficult to ascertain whether during lockdown Service Parents *relied* on
older children to assist with younger siblings. However, in Pauline's example it
is clear that in this instance older children assumed extra responsibilities which
resonates with much of the literature on Service Children and their changing
roles during times of parental deployments (Gribble and Fear, 2019). Research
suggests that Service Children develop coping mechanisms which enable them
to adapt to changing routines during parent absences (Gribble and Fear, 2019;
Gewirtz et al., 2014; Mmari et al., 2009; Jensen et al., 1996). In this regard it is
possible that during lockdowns Service Children used their wide range of coping
strategies to navigate the situation. Whilst Pauline emphasised that the parents
'*didn't get it*', it is also possible that the child took on the extra responsibilities of
care child as an embedded norm.

Children who were classed as vulnerable or had parents who were Key
Workers, were still able to attend school during lockdown; where possible
(Cabinet Office and Department for Education, 2022). Armed Forces Personnel
were classed as Key Workers during the pandemic, however children could only
attend school in limited circumstances, such as both parents' occupations being
classed as Key Workers. Ofsted (2020) found however that Special

Educational Needs children were less likely to be attending school, compared with their peers who were also able to attend school. In some cases, it was further reported that Key Stakeholders working with Special Educational Needs children found the pandemic 'personally and professionally difficult' (Ofsted, 2020, p.2), with some indicating that they had gone *above and beyond* their job roles to support children. Isobel, a Service Parent however, illustrated a dissimilar experience:

> It was lockdown that highlighted things to us … I started emailing school and I was like look this child can't focus … when I started flagging it up in an email to [their] tutor she'd be like 'oh well [their] not in school, we can't observe [them]' (Isobel, SP)

Isobel's child had not received a formal diagnosis prior to lockdown, although she expressed there had been previous incidents of disrupted learning at school. She went on to state:

> When I look back now there's a lot of things in hindsight … that we didn't pick up on. School weren't happy with me. I said, 'are you going to refer [them]?' 'no, we just think [they] are a 13-year-old, normal teenage [child]' … so I self-referred in July last year (Isobel, SP)

Evidence shows there has been an increase in both initial requests and new EHCP's since 2020 (Gov.UK, 2022b). However, much of the literature on children with Special Educational Needs and Covid-19 focuses on children who already had a diagnosis prior to the first lockdown (Hobbs and Bernard, 2021; Cerna et al., 2020; Clayton et al., 2020; Ofsted, 2020). This area therefore requires further exploration in understanding how home learning may have facilitated parents identifying children with Special Educational Needs, with a particular focus on those who experience additional stressors such as Service Children.

5.7 Risky resilience

Hoffman (2010, p.387) postulates societal *risk* influences dominant intense and invasive parenting techniques which steers parents into micromanaging the lives of their children. In effect, micromanagement of children's lives minimises any potential *risk* and protects them from any harmful experiences. Throughout literature Service Children are often referred to as resilient, which is often supported through the coping strategies which they develop (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Longfield, 2018; McCulloch and Hall, 2016; Noret et al., 2015). It is further suggested that *risk* can be counteracted through drawing on resilience (Hoffman, 2010, p.386). A caveat, however, is to acknowledge the various

debates regarding resilience which posit resilience as being shaped from a person's situational experiences, and in some instances being shaped by belonging to a community (Hunt and Laffan, 2019; Masten, 2015). Nevertheless, resilience should not always be assumed in Service Children (Baverstock, 2018), or Service Families:

> I don't really like resilience, because …I think resilience is based on children having to bounce back, and get things together, and it doesn't necessarily address what the issues have caused… I suppose that's what's drilled into you, as an Army family, you need to be able to deal with things in a short space of time (Bethany, SP)

As previously discussed communities negotiate risk, assisting them in preparing for potential outcomes to a situation. Within this, resilience plays a key role and is built from informal and formal networks (Mancini and Bowen, 2009). However, as Bethany has clearly highlighted above, resilience is something which is assumed in both Service Families and Service Children. This is additionally complex when assuming resilience in all Service Children; and potentially harmful when assuming resilience when a child has Special Educational Needs. Gardynik and McDonald (2005) state 'there is no universal definition of resilience' (p.206) yet it is described as having the capability to manage stressful situations and master risk (Doll and Lyon, 1998, cited in Gardynik and McDonald, 2015, p.206). In a sense, communities which are considered resilient have the resources to *plan* ahead and potentially can navigate risk (Houston, 2018; Hoffman, 2010).

Planning ahead for Service Families however can cause significant issues, as plans are likely to change at any time. Evidence provided to the *Living in Our Shoes Report* demonstrates changes to deployment dates can have a fundamental effect on Service Children's well-being, and furthermore, children's anxieties increase the longer the Serving Parent is absent from the home (Walker et al., 2020, p.52). Liz, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, discussed that during parental deployments, parents were more likely to communicate with school staff:

> I think sometimes when [parents] are away … that's often when the communication is more readily coming from the home to school. Because the kids behave when dad is at home, but sometimes, the mums have got a lot on their plates when dad's away (Liz, KS)

This supports the theory of Hoffman (2010) that parents are likely to voice risk when they determine that their children required some form of intervention. In the case of Service Children this is likely to be the requirement of additional social and emotional support. Furthermore, as it is postulated Services Children's roles and behaviours change over parental deployments:

> We've got good systems on the fact that dad's away, for example, the sort of the role of the oldest child within the household unit can have quite an impact on behaviour in school, that kind of thing (Liz, KS)

and as previously discussed by Louise:

> And also, some of the psychological and emotional, and behavioural impacts on them (Louise, KS)

Furthermore, these behaviours are likely to be affected more when the child has Special Educational Needs (Davis and Finke, 2015). Therefore, parents are likely to need additional support from school during times of deployment which results in a line of communication being more open:

> But my other two children are very aware of it. At the beginning, when the war first broke out in Ukraine, we tried to keep them away from the news and the telly because it was just everywhere. And then they get to an age where they understand what happens. So, I felt compelled that I needed to make school aware, because you know, children talk about it at school when it's all over the news (Bethany, SP)

Resilience was discussed throughout all of the qualitative interviews, and this was either by explicit discussion or was implied as:

> All we used to say to them was, you think about it every year, when you go to a new year, you might not always be in the same class … quite a lot of people are in the same boat as you, moving about at the same time (Brian, SP)

> On one hand, it's made them more resilient. But on the other hand, they both sort of suffer with mental health (Elaine, SP)

> They have this resilience, it is like a barrier that you're never, for a lot of the kids, you're never gonna cross (Pauline, KS)

> You've got be resilient really to cope with everything, especially when you've got the added extra, like, say the extra needs of the child with additional needs (Carole, SP)

> We asked them if they wanted to move with dad, or whether they wanted to stay here, they wanted to stay … that to me say's there's that level of resilience again, you know, we don't get tears, he leaves on a Sunday night, and they are like 'whatever' (Isobel, SP)

Brian, a Service Parent, illustrated that each time his family moved, they prepared their children by building on their assumed resilience (Baverstock, 2018). By telling the children that they would not be the only ones having to move and make new friendships for Brian this offered some form of comfort for his children and enabled them to cope with transitions. Similarly, Isobel a Service Parent, explicitly connected her child's coping abilities to parental absence as being resilient. However, Isobel went on to state her child did not communicate with their father during times of separation, indicating this could be a coping mechanism which enables them to deal with parental absence better:

> There's that level of resilience again, you know, we don't get tears, he leaves on a Sunday night, they're like, 'yeah, whatever see you'. They hardly speak to on the phone. It's like can you please talk to your dad; he's missing you (Isobel, SP)

Nevertheless, literature suggests however, compared to civilian children, Service Children are better behaved and more disciplined (Park, 2011). Moreover, Service Children can cope better with new and challenging situations as a result of 'positive experiences' (Park, 2011, p.67). There is some suggestion that experiences of relocation which have been dealt with positively by parents, has a direct influence on Service Children and their ability to overcome new challenges (Park, 2011; Hall, 2008; Hutchinson, 2006; Frame et al., 1994; Feldman and Tompson, 1993). However, much of this is implicitly connoted with resilience and this does not consider children with Special Educational Needs:

> I don't think resilience necessarily deals with the crux of the problem. Especially with special educational needs, some children can't just bounce back, and don't have that ability to, or the flexibility around being adaptable to the life (Service life) (Bethany, SP)

> I think they've all got different needs, and they've all got to build their own resilience in different ways (Pauline, KS)

> I was a resilient person before; I cope with things really really well. And then I became a mum. And then I became a special needs mum. And that if anything has taught me you do need to be resilient because people will, and they do, treat my [children] like they aren't as valued. And for me, it's, I need to be resilient, so that I can show them actually [it] doesn't matter what everyone else thinks (Sophie, SP)

Riggs and Riggs (2011, p.676) argue that in families, each relationship between its members are different, and children's relationship with their parents may

vary, for instance one child may be more attached to one particular parent yet may feel more detached from the other. Family attachments for Riggs and Riggs (2011) are interwoven in how resilience is built within families, and this is additionally influenced by the parents' ability to cope with stress. Parents who have *good* coping strategies for instance are much more able to cope with deployments and other types of parental absence. In comparison, parents who are unable to navigate challenging situations may influence the resilience of the family unit (Riggs and Riggs, 2011).

Much of the literature available on Service Families and resilience, discusses resilience based on the unique challenges of Service life, such as deployments, relocation, and starting new schools (Children's Commissioner, 2022; Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020; Longfield, 2018; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). However, it is important to consider resilience in relation to the everyday experiences of the family unit outside of the unique challenges experienced by Service Families. As such, Service Families may already be experiencing difficulties in the home prior to additional challenges such as a deployment. In this regard it is important to acknowledge that whilst resilience may be used as coping mechanism, multiple stressors on the family unit may influence coping mechanisms. Resilience is not homogenous, it will vary from family to family, what one family may be able to cope with well, may be to challenging for another, and this is particularly important when considering multiple challenges at the same time. Therefore, the label of resilience is a risky concept in respect of Service Families, with some not having the skills, or tools to build an *adequate* level of resilience to deal with Service life.

5.8 Conclusion

This Chapter explored and answered the research questions 2, and 2.1. The Chapter has discussed and highlighted the issues experienced by Key Stakeholders, and how these transfer to their understanding of Service Families. Many of the Key Stakeholders had personal experience themselves being military connected. For those who were not, they offered an extensive background of working with Service Families. All of the Key Stakeholders were able to identity the generic challenges which Service Families face, however, for

those who were not military connected the issue of mobility and how this effects stability was a key cause for concern.

Further this Chapter has highlighted the numerous ways in which Key Stakeholders support Service Children and Families. It has also demonstrated that some Local Authorities experience challenges when there are smaller numbers or no Service Families in the area through the parent interviewee accounts. The findings also show that Service Parents with a child(ren) with Special Educational Needs encounter barriers to accessing employment, although as the literature shows these issues are not exclusive to Service Parents.

Meeting the needs of Service Families was also explored and this was positioned within the context of Covid-19. Participants demonstrated that Covid-19 encompassed many additional challenges, and in some instances Service Children were assuming extra caring responsibilities, in the same manner as parental absenteeism. Parent interviewees further indicated there were issues with access to attending school for Service Children with Special Educational Needs, and some felt they were more supported in a one-to-one setting at home.

Furthermore, much of the discussions around Service Families points towards their *resilience*. As Baverstock (2018) argues this should never be assumed in Service Children. This research, however, identifies that resilience should not be assumed in Service Families either. Identifying Service Families and children as resilient can place individuals at risk, and this is prominent in respect of children with Special Educational Needs.

Chapter 6 continues to discuss supporting the needs of Service Families and children. This Chapter draws upon the needs of Service Parents who have children with Special Educational Needs. This Chapter will focus on research questions 2.2 and 2.3.

Chapter 6 Support: Coping, communication, and meeting the needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs

One person's interpretation of a child's needs can be very different to another. The best guide here is the parent. Nobody knows their child better than they do. However, a professional from an educational perspective will have a view (Kevin, KS)

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 discussed how Key Stakeholders understand the pressures of Service life. This understanding implicitly transfers onto the support Key Stakeholders provide for Service Children and Families. This Chapter focuses on the challenges of support when a Service Child has Special Educational Needs, and addresses the following research questions: 1) How does mobility affect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places?; 2.2) To what extent are Service Families experiencing support being 'routinely put in place quickly', as set out by the SEND Code of Practice?; and 2.3) How do Key Stakeholders perceive parental expectations and what barriers do they encounter in terms of available resources in providing support for Service Children with a Special Educational Need or Disability?

For most Service Children mobility frequents their lives and impinges on their routine, their stability, and the support they receive. For Service Children with a Special Educational Need, this double disadvantage is often all too familiar when delays in support further disrupt their access to learning. As this research has already argued, this can place additional strain on Service Parents in finding a suitable school setting which will support their child's needs. The issue can be further exacerbated, when support may have to be renegotiated when a Service Family moves to a new location.

To begin, this Chapter will focus on the concept of the family being supportive and how this relates to Service Families. Literature suggests that choosing a school for a child with Special Educational Needs is more complex with parents indicating that the decision must be right for the child's entire educational journey (Mann et al., 2015; McNerney et al., 2015). For Service Parents this is problematic, as mobility means that they are obligated to find a school place

more than once. All of the parent interviewees who had a child with Special Educational Needs, implicitly positioned themselves in comparison to the non-Service Families they know in terms of the immediate support they receive from family. For example, some would discuss their civilian families and friends and compare the differences of support. Therefore, Section 6.2 discusses support from family when choosing a school before moving on to Section 6.3, which focuses on school as obstructive or supportive. The Chapter investigates how the needs of Service Children with Special Educational Needs are being met and considers the ways in which Service Parents and Key Stakeholders communicate with each other. The final sections of this Chapter examine how Key Stakeholders, working with Service Families are supported within their roles.

6.2 Family support: choosing a school, and coping

David et al. (1994) claim that historically choosing a school lay primarily with the mothers of families. As they state (David et al., 1994, p.53):

> in the majority of families of whatever form or structure, the mother has, or shares, the main responsibility. This seems to flow automatically from her general responsibility for childcare and child rearing

Although David et al. (1994) write in a different era, parent interviewees demonstrated that whilst mothers were the main decision maker, the experiences of choosing a school was mixed. Similarly, male participants also expressed that they were part of the consultation however, the main process was dealt with by the mother:

> My wife is definitely the lead on it. But we would still do it together (Joe, SP)

> We look at the schools, find out which is local … well it was my ex-wife [mainly] because I was normally at work (Brian, SP)

> No, it was just me, always has been (Bethany, SP)

> So, at the time I was with [child's] dad. And obviously with the portage worker and [child's] paediatricians, etc, they helped (Carole, SP)

> He's happy to listen and have an input on it. But it's me that always completes the paperwork and everything (Isobel, SP)

No. I do everything to do with schools. He deals with the house moves, I deal with the schools (Sian, SP)

It all falls to me. He doesn't really understand schools. And so, it does all fall to me. He probably he wouldn't have helped much. And his attitude was, 'oh, well, I've [been] given school place' and I'm like, but you don't really get the ramifications if [child] doesn't have a school place (Laura, SP)

Choosing a school involves many factors, such as location, quality of teaching, pre-existing relationships with school, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity and race, and children wanting to attend school with their friends (Jackson and Bisset, 2005; David et al., 1994; Hunter, 1991; West and Varlaam, 1991). Much of the research which pertains to choosing schools is centred around neurotypical children and civilian families (Jackson and Bisset, 2005; David et al., 1994; Hunter, 1991; West and Varlaam, 1991). In addition, studies show that whilst research on parents choosing a school for a child with Special Educational Needs exist, there is insufficient research into this issue and existing studies do not address contextual issues (Mawene and Aydin, 2018; Mann et al., 2015; Byrne, 2011).

Nevertheless, Rubner Jorgensen and Perry (2021, p.1141) observe children with Special Educational Needs are more likely to be pupils who are termed mobile pupils[35]. Their research on mobile pupils further showed Service Children with Special Educational Needs were mobile across both primary and secondary, but this was significantly higher at primary level (Rubner Jorgensen and Perry, 2021, p.1150). Literature illustrates choosing a school for children with Special Educational Needs involves a form of emotional labour as it is much more time consuming than choosing a school for a child without Special Educational Needs (Makin et al., 2017; Mann et al., 2015; McNerney et al., 2015; Byrne, 2011). McNerney et al. (2015) discuss the 'burden of decision making' (p.1104) as part of the decision when choosing a school with other scholars accounting that family support has been found to be pivotal when parents have a child with Special Educational Needs (Prendeville and Kinsella, 2019; McNerney et al., 2015; Cridland et al., 2014; Byrne, 2011; Ekas et al., 2010; Neely-Barnes and Dia, 2008; Boyd, 2002). As such, the burden and emotional labour of choosing a school could be eased when extended families

---

[35] Mobile pupils are considered as pupils who 'join and leave schools at various points in the year' (Brown et al., 2011, p.3).

are included in the decision making, and proximity to family may also assist the decision making process. Layla, a Service Parent, stated:

> The school that [they] ended up going to, the ones that were dragging their heals, I was like 'let's just give up'. There was another school that was more than happy to let [child] in, but my mum and dad thought it looked a bit rougher. The Head teacher was quite honest and open about the fact there was some troublesome children, but they were worried that [child] would be taken advantage of which also influenced my mum and dad (Layla, SP)

Layla discussed how her parents involvement influenced her decision in her child's school application. Layla went on to express that she *regretted* choosing the school which was named on her child's EHCP as she did not feel the school was adequately supporting her child. Layla described the types of negotiation around choosing new schools, particularly when the child has Special Educational Needs and outlined that her child's previous school was exceptionally good in which they were supported and settled:

> I had no issues with that school. You know, and it was one of the difficult decisions of leaving it because you always worry about them then getting into another one getting bullied and things like that (Layla, SP)

For Service Families, in addition to the emotional labour and decision-making burden, they further must make calculated decisions regarding their children's education:

> It would have been partly in between [their] GCSE's. And I thought, well, if I stay down [there], I'm going to have to then fight you know, stay in the quarter (Layla, SP)

Extended family support is likely to therefore minimise some of the strain in complex decision making about schools. Layla's experienced depicts an overly complex process of making decisions which includes a wide range of factors.

These issues when selecting the right school are further compounded when a child with Special Educational Needs does not attend a mainstream school, as previously outlined in Chapter 5. Carole, a Service Parent, discussed the complexities of a child attending a Specialist Provisions school in respect of being a Service Family:

> Special schools are very limited, and I wouldn't want to risk the struggle of having to move [them] and not actually getting a place anywhere (Carole, SP)

Figures show in 2021-22, 142,028 pupils attended a State-maintained Specialist Provisions school, and 3,954 attended a non-maintained Specialist Provisions school (Gov.UK, 2022d, no pagination). In England, data for 2021-22 shows

there are 377 schools with Special Educational Needs units, and 1,125 with resourced provision[36] (Gov.UK, 2022d, no pagination). Mann et al. (2015, p.1415) argue parents with children with Special Educational Needs may compromise when making decisions regarding mainstream school and Specialist Provisions schools. Carole however, discussed her decision to send her child to a Specialist School illustrating that she had to negotiate with her Local Authority as a mainstream school place had been offered despite stipulating she wished for a Specialist Provisions school place. Carole stated that her child would not be able to cope in the mainstream school which had been allocated. As such, Carole had begun the process of a tribunal with a Specialist school place being confirmed a week before the tribunal date. This experience alone had undoubtedly influenced Carole's anxieties regarding any potential military moves in the future. Carole's anxieties additionally resonate with Colin's (a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A) earlier discussion in Chapter 4:

> When you've got Service Children that are vulnerable with SEND, you would probably be wanting to advise parents, you know, the best thing you can have is stability, because that's not possible within a Service lifestyle (Colin, KS)

Carole was very satisfied and incredibly happy in her choice of school and despite the suggestion of parents having to compromise, Carole indicated that she was fortunate to have more than one choice in this instance:

> So, we looked at two of the Specialist schools and obviously spoke with the Head teachers, one of them was more for less complex needs. And so, the one for the more severe complex needs was the best one. So, we couldn't fault it (Carole, SP)

However, Carole outlined that even though the school was the best fit for her child 'it's a brilliant school for him' (Carole, SP), this did come with some additional challenges:

> The difference with a Specialist school is like a normal school has morning's and after school clubs, whereas the special school doesn't so it's only from 9am to 3pm, so it does pose its issues but like I say, I've got [child's] dad to help (Carole, SP)

---

[36] Gov.UK (2022d) state: 'SEN units are special provisions within a mainstream school where the pupils with SEN are taught mainly within separate classes for at least half of their time' and 'resourced provisions are places that are reserved at a mainstream school for pupils with a specific type of SEN, taught mainly within mainstream classes, but requiring a base and some specialist facilities around the school' (no pagination).

In addition, Bethany also highlighted that having children with Special Educational Needs and being part of a Service Family, meant they had had to make some compromises:

> I've felt compelled to go married unaccompanied, so that we don't have to go through change and transition, by the fact that moving schools because we can't be guaranteed a space, a special school in another area (Bethany, SP)

As the literature has already demonstrated parents of children with Special Educational Needs experience many additional stressors. This in turn can affect their mental health and well-being. As such, parents often draw on support from their wider families (Prendeville and Kinsella, 2019; Cridland et al., 2014; Ekas et al., 2010; Neely-Barnes and Dia, 2008; Boyd, 2002). For Service Parents with children with Special Educational Needs, this can be extremely difficult when, the family is married unaccompanied, they are a single Serving parent, and when they do not live in a location close to family. Although many Service Families do not live close to extended family (such as parents and siblings), geographical distance can bring with it many additional stressors, and this has been supported from the experiences of Carole and Bethany.

6.2.1 Dispersed families: coping with separation

As previous Chapters have outlined, not all Service Families are mobile. Chapter 2 discussed the issues of the School Admissions Code, with married unaccompanied families not being included in the admissions criteria. It is not clear why unaccompanied families are not included within the criteria, although it is suspected that because they do not accompany their Serving Spouse, there is no requirement for them to be included. Isobel and Bethany, Service Parents, were both married unaccompanied and expressed that being none mobile provided stability for all their children:

> So, we decided as a family rather than keep uprooting the kids every two to three years and provide a bit of stability we would do married unaccompanied (Bethany, SP)

> And we've been here ever since that we're now married unaccompanied to make sure that [children] get that continuity of education … so I've actually got a surplus quarter (Isobel, SP)

Both Isobel and Bethany had children with Special Educational Needs, and both implicitly discussed how having a firm support network was advantageous; for Bethany it was important to be close to her immediate family. Despite this, Bethany went on to state that with the advantage of being married

unaccompanied came disadvantages. This includes the continuous cycle of her spouse returning to work at the start of each week, and preparing the children for longer periods of separation when her husband was deployed:

> When I think about the circumstances, and the reasons that we made that decision they were quite comfortable with it. But I think the longer that it's gone on, it's got harder, it's got harder, you'd think it would get easier, but it actually has got harder (Bethany, SP)

Isobel also discussed the disadvantages of being married unaccompanied, despite her initial discussion on stability for the children:

> So, my husband was posted in October last year, and that's when we went married unaccompanied, had months and months and months because it had been a really messy decision as to whether he was going … it was just really stressful. So, they witnessed quite a lot of, not arguments, but you know, when you're just like 'why can't the Army sort it out?' (Isobel, SP)

Isobel further illustrated that due to a lack of clarity regarding her husband's future posting, the family were in *limbo* and were unable to prepare. As she stated, 'we prepped both the schools that this was going to happen' (Isobel, SP) however, Isobel was able to remain at her current location with her husband commuting home when possible.

Although both Isobel and Bethany illustrated stability in their children's education by being married unaccompanied, mobility was still shown as a prominent influence through their husbands' Service. Mobility is a key factor in the Armed Forces, and despite dispersed families not moving around with Personnel, the Serving Person is still highly mobile (Royal Air Force Families Federation, 2020; Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Verey and Fossey, 2013). Deployments and training exercises for example are core within the military. Therefore, Service Families who are unaccompanied may experience higher rates of parental absence when the Serving Person does not live at home during the working week (Godier-McBard et al., 2021). Furthermore, difficulties can arise when Service Children must re-negotiate their position within the household as they step down from the additional responsibilities they take on during parental absence; although this was not found to be an issue with Isobel's and Bethany's children (Gribble and Fear, 2019).

Preparing a Service Child for parental deployment can be a daunting task. Children are acutely aware in today's age of what goes on in combat due to television reports, social media, and video games, and this can additionally be

intensified through peer groups at school openly discussing current events (The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009). For dispersed families this can bring additional challenges. As the Serving Parent is already absent for longer periods this reduces the amount of time the Serving Parent can spend with their children prior to deployments. Increased anxieties around the loss of a loved one is a key factor for both Service Children and their parents (Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Mmari et al., 2009; The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund, 2009; Huebner et al., 2007; Dandeker et al., 2006). There has been much research into the effects of Iraq and Afghanistan on Service Children in the US (Cramm et al., 2022; Gewirtz et al., 2014; Knobloch et al., 2017; DeVoe and Ross, 2012; Esqueda et al., 2012; Waliski et al., 2012; Park, 2011; White et al., 2011; Chandra et al., 2010a; Chandra et al., 2010b), which shows the lasting legacy of consequences for Service Children anxieties. Isobel and Bethany illustrated this:

> As soon as he posted literally within weeks, we knew he was deploying. It's a routine deployment … my eldest turned around and said, 'is he going to war?' and I said 'no, it's just an exercise'. 'So, it's not like when dad went to Afghan? Okay' (Isobel, SP)

> When the war first broke out in Ukraine, we tried to keep them away from the news and the telly because it was just everywhere (Bethany, SP)

One of the additional advantageous for Isobel was that her child had a good support network of friends at school, and therefore she felt that her child's support network and resilience, would enable them to cope better (cf. Chapter 4 for discussion on friendships).

Noticeably, both Bethany and Isobel demonstrate that despite their stability in being married unaccompanied, mobility is still present within their lives. Their experiences show that complex decision making may limit some of the challenges of Service life, however, these are often replaced by the continued absence of the Serving Person. Therefore, although living married unaccompanied provides some advantages such as having extended family and friends close by for support, additional challenges include longer periods of separation for the family unit. As demonstrated by Isobel and Bethany, some of this coping mechanisms for preparing Service Children for longer periods of separation are intertwined with being resilient and this was either explicitly or

implicitly implied as a coping mechanism during times of separation. Although

Bethany had previously stated she did not agree with the concept of resilience:

> I don't really like resilience, because …I think resilience is based on
> children having to bounce back (Bethany, SP)

She demonstrated her own coping strategies enabled her to prepare the

children for any impending deployments:

> We tried to keep them away from the news and the telly because it was just
> everywhere (Bethany, SP)

Both accounts from Isobel and Bethany demonstrated various ways in which

Service Parents adopt their own coping strategies and that despite making a

decision to provide stability in education other challenges relating to mobility

and support persist.

## 6.3 School as an obstructive or supportive mechanism[37]

It has been suggested that the school milieu is considered and can be

constructed as a safe place for Service Children (Chandra et al., 2010b, p.222).

For children with Special Educational Needs, this is of extreme importance as

research shows that the daily routine and structure of school can be crucial to a

child with Special Educational Needs (Ashbury et al., 2020). For Service

Children with Special Educational Needs, this presents some complex

challenges. Routines in the home for instance are not consistent due to

parental absence occurring at any time. Whilst there may be time to prepare

children in some cases, the potential for imminent changes always exists

(Walker et al., 2020). Therefore, going to school and knowing what is expected,

and what is going to happen can be beneficial to Service Children's wellbeing

(Cridland et al., 2014).

Levels of support required vary depending on each child, and this is particularly

prominent when a child has Special Educational Needs (Goss, 2017). Figure 5

shows the range of type of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities across

99 children with Special Educational Needs in the LASQ and BSQ (see footnote

for abbreviations key).

---

[37] As outlined by Mike in Chapter 4

Figure 5. Special Educational Needs

Special Educational Need and Disability (SEND) by type
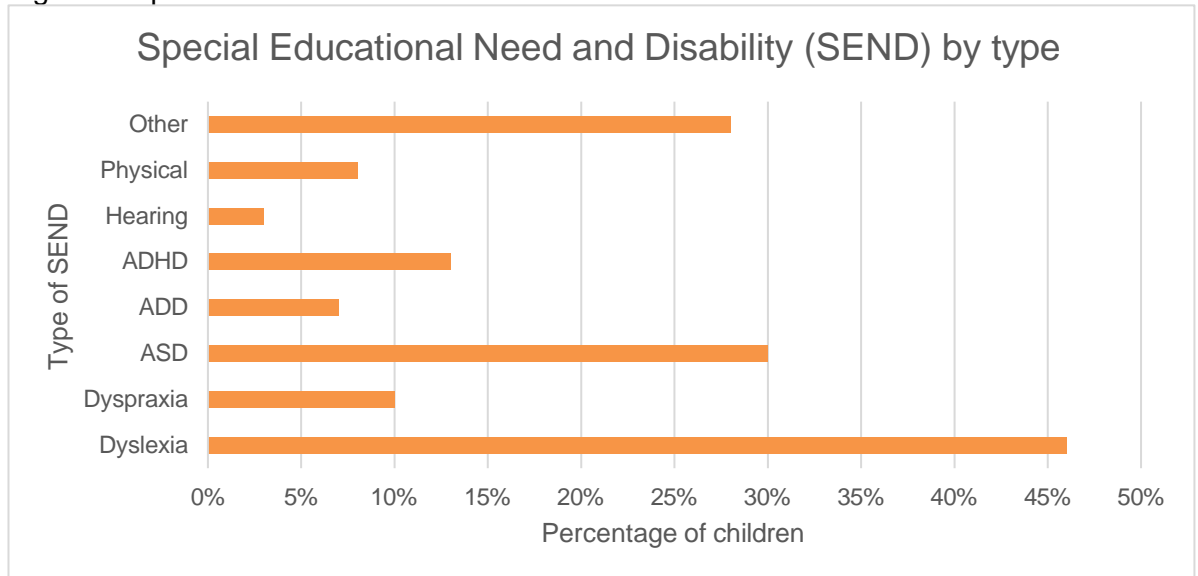
Sources: LASQ & BSQ [38] [39]

McNerney et al. (2015, p.1098) highlight there is a lack of Special Educational Needs resources in England, which results in a lack of training for Key Stakeholders to identify and understand the most appropriate responses in supporting children with Special Educational Needs. As figure 5 shows, parents indicated a wide range of Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, with some children being identified as having more than one additional need or Disability. As shown in the 'others' category, 28% of children had a Special Educational Need which could not be recorded into another category (28 out of 99) (cf. Chapter 3). This further shows the complexities of support for children with Special Educational Needs, and this is particularly complicated when a child's Special Educational Need or Disability is not common. Nevertheless, Figure 5 demonstrates, Dyslexia, and ASD, were found to be the most common Special Educational Need in Children in this research, which supports previous research on Children with Special Educational Needs (Department for Education, 2022c; Noret et al., 2015).

However, as previously argued, the research on Service Children with Special Educational Needs is sparse which is problematic. As McNerney et al., (2015)

---

[38] ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder
ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

[39] This data includes non-Service Children

state, resources and knowledge are already limited which in terms of Service Children with Special Educational Needs makes the issue of support much more complex. In part, supporting Service Children with their Special Educational Needs, given the unique challenges of being a Service Child, places additional stressors on Key Stakeholders with Service Families. As such, there are likely to be some barriers to support:

> Even though when we spoke with [school] before [child] went up there, they promised the moon but looking at it they ain't delivered it (Brian, SP)

Whilst Brian's particular circumstances pertained to him, his experience does highlight that despite his child having one of the most common Special Educational Needs, he felt that his child was still unsupported. Furthermore, Brian has highlighted on more than one occasion that his own struggles with Dyslexia were not considered 'I can't help [child], I'm Dyslexic' (Brain, SP).

Other Service Parents were able to provide much more encouraging accounts of how their Service Children were supported:

> Last year, I had a communication book with [child's] teacher, so that if anything happened, and they could tell me what had happened, and I could write in it how [they had] been at home so generally they've been really good on the whole with that (Sophie, SP)

> They just support [child] exactly like they do every single day (Carole, SP)

However, both Sophie and Carole (both Serving Parents) had expressed their journeys were not without issues. Whilst Carole was extremely happy with her child's school, and the ways in which they supported her child, being allocated a place at her chosen school came with problems (further discussion can be found in Chapter 7 regarding Carole's situation):

> [They] was in the line-up to go into a Specialist school and we still had to apply for place at a mainstream (Carole, SP)

Whilst Sophie explained there was difficulties in the teacher parent relationship:

> [Head teacher] tried to use my career … against me [Head teacher's] argument was always that because [child] had numerous house moves that [child] was just a naughty child because [child] was unsettled. Because [child] wasn't diagnosed at the time (Sophie, SP)

Sophie's experience was similar to Laura's and Layla's insofar as, they all explicitly stated they felt school staff, and Local Authority Key Stakeholders had treated them differently because of their roles in the military as women:

> I think there is still this attitude that the service person is the male, and the woman stays at home. And that goes through housing, goes through everything, and being a serving mother, attitudes are changing slowly, but

> very often, there'll be things and I'll be like, No, I'm in. I'm in the military
> (Laura, SP)

> And obviously, being a single parent as well, they probably look down on
> me for that (Layla, SP)

There is a lack of research on Serving military mothers in the UK. This particular issue was not explored in depth in this research, however participants who discussed it all felt it was important. Moreover, each of them communicated they felt disadvantaged as Serving Mothers because of the attitudes of Key Stakeholders. It would be advantageous for this issue to be explored further outside the remit of this research.

Nevertheless, Layla described subtly how she felt Key Stakeholders at her child's new school 'look[ed] down on [her]' during a visit in which Local Authority staff were also present. Layla, further discussed that as a parent she felt that Key Stakeholders were the experts:

> And I remember that the SenCO … she wanted to remove [child's]
> healthcare plan, she didn't think [child] needed it … which I was quite
> surprised at, I suppose then you think surely they know best?, but then
> obviously when [child] started school it never disappeared (Layla, SP)

Tissot (2011, p.1) observes that:

> in the UK, families and Local Authorities both desire a constructive working
> relationship and see this as the best means by which to reach an
> agreement to determine where a child should be educated

However, Layla expressed that at the time of visiting the school she was surprised at the Local Authority presence and was additionally perplexed when the school SenCO stated her child did not need an EHCP. Layla went on to discuss that despite this the EHCP remained in place, which was the correct decision due to the continued changes her child's behaviours and needs. Layla's experiences bring up specific debates regarding Key Stakeholders as experts. Whilst the SenCO considered the child's EHCP to be unnecessarily, Layla suggested that as the mother, ultimately, she understood her child's needs to a much deeper degree.

Although Layla's experience may be an isolated incident, there was further suggestion from Kevin, a Key Stakeholder in Local Authority A, that this may not be the case:

> One person's interpretation of a child's needs can be very different to
> another. The best guide here is the parent. Nobody knows their child better

than they do. However, a professional from an educational perspective will
have a view (Kevin, KS)

Kevin expressed that whilst his department were very experienced in working

with Service Families, he implicitly states here that, at times, there may be

some instances of disagreement. Kevin acknowledges that the parent in this

respect is the 'the best guide' (Kevin, KS), as it is the parent who understands

and knows their child's needs to a greater degree than some educational

professionals.

6.3.1 Parent advocacy

The relationship between parent and teacher has been shown to be one of

importance (Suissa, 2006; Reay, 2005). Chapter 1 introduced the issues with

the parent and teacher relationship when parents may not agree with the school

ethos or agenda (Crozier and Reay, 2005). Lumby (2007) argues over the last

decade parent voice has been empowered which enables them to voice risk yet

ultimately has changed the landscape of the parent teacher relationship.

Literature further illustrates historically children with Special Educational Needs

have not been heard, resulting in more advocacy for these children, with

parents now feeling more proactive in their involvement (Franklin et al., 2018;

Goss, 2017).

Choosing a school for a child with Special Educational Needs is suggested as

more complex (Mann et al., 2015; McNerney et al., 2015). All parents will

undoubtedly choose a school which they believe best suits their child and is

able to give them the support they need. For Service Parents the types of

support required centres around being able to recognise and understand

Service Families (Noret et al., 2015; Brady et al., 2013a). When a Service Child

has Special Educational Needs, this means they need support for both the

challenges of Service life, and their additional needs:

> I went for a very small village school, thinking they would settle in better
> because they only had I think it was 65 children in the whole school … but
> when you look at the flip side, it's a smaller school, they don't have the
> resources to assist with Special Educational Needs. We found out to our
> detriment, really (Bethany, SP)

Nevertheless, once a school has been chosen, problems can still occur.

Brian's child with Special Educational Needs wanted to move schools due to

existing friendships. However, Brian felt that the new school were not

supportive of his

child's Special Educational Needs, and further he described them as not taking into consideration his own Special Educational Need of Dyslexia:

> I feel like I'm butting heads with them, they go 'oh [child] hasn't done [their] homework, is someone helping with this?' … I can't help [child], I'm Dyslexic (Brain, SP)

Problems with teacher parent relationships were also discussed by Sophie, a Service Parent:

> There were certain things, [the Head teacher] would target my [child] because of [their Special Educational Needs], before [they] were diagnosed, especially, and it got to the point where that authoritative nature in me come out. Because I was protecting my child … it was only when [child] was given the diagnosis that they actually started to play ball with me (Sophie, SP)

Relationships between parents and teachers are said to be more demanding when the parent has a child with Special Educational Needs (Goss, 2017, p.3). Goss (2017) suggests there is a greater deal of work required from teachers in terms of paperwork and supporting children with Special Educational Needs. Therefore, he posits this becomes time consuming for the teacher which influences any potential good relationships with the parents (Goss, 2017, p.4). Furthermore, there is some suggestion that not all parents are able to advocate for their children, as they may be lacking in information (Mann et al., 2015). This is further influenced by the types of language used by teachers, and in policies which parents may not understand. Literature further suggests, parent's views may differ from that of teachers causing issues in communication and building supportive relationships (Mann et al., 2015; Hodge and Runswick-Cole, 2008). Moreover, in some case parents may even be excluded from discussions regarding their child (Goss, 2017; Bacon and Causton-Theoharis., 2013). This research however, found that parents of children with Special Educational Needs all expressed that they were knowledgeable and adequately equipped with the right information to advocate for their children:

> I feel I'm in more control of it, doing it off my own back. I feel that I've had to go out and seek independent advice (Bethany, SP)

> My expectation is, you will give [child] the same attention you give a neuro-typical child, if you cannot do that, I will force your hand. My argument is you get extra funding for my children, so therefore, if [child] needs a one to one, [they] will use that funding to fund the one to one. And that is my attitude. Because where those two are concerned, I take no prisoners (Sophie, SP)

This reinforces an earlier quote from Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A:

> One person's interpretation of a child's needs can be very different to another. The best guide here is the parent. Nobody knows their child better than they do. However, a professional from an educational perspective will have a view (Kevin, KS)

Goss (2017) and Shilling (1991) illustrate that the institution of education is founded on power, which Goss (2017, pp.6-7) describes as:

> It is an instrument of the state—a patriarchal state—and acts as such. It takes the position of authority over (female) parents and determines what is accept-able behaviour for parents. In fact, many teachers are hesitant to trust parents with too much involvement in school. The structure of schools gives us some insight into why parent participation in the governance of schools is both limited and resisted.

This idea of limitations and resistance is based upon the idea of knowledge production which Foucault (1980) argues is produced through power. Foucault (1980, p.122) claims the State can only operate on the basis of power and existing power connections. The institution of education therefore requires retaining such power and knowledge insomuch as, this enables schools to be knowledgeable and maintain the balance of power; the teacher as the authority. However, as noted earlier, parents have now begun to obtain more power in the teacher parent relationship through autonomy of obtaining knowledge (Franklin et al., 2018; Goss, 2017; Lumby, 2007; Shilling, 1991; Foucault, 1980). This idea of parents and power, was supported in the findings of this research:

> I feel I'm in more control of it, doing it off my own back (Bethany, SP)

> My expectation is, you will give [child] the same attention you give a neuro-typical child, if you cannot do that, I will force your hand (Sophie, SP)

Burke et al. (2017, p.1) highlight in terms of parent advocacy there is little research which focuses on how Key Stakeholders perceive this. They imply parents have greater power in being advocates for their children with Special Educational Needs due to the ability to increase knowledge. Being aware of the Special Educational Needs process and knowing what children's rights are, has enabled parents to be strategic in their approach to advocacy (Burke et al., 2017; Trainor, 2010). Research into Service Families with Children with Special Educational Needs in the UK is extremely limited. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether Service Parents are more forceful in their approaches for advocacy. However, this research found from the perspective of Karen, a Key

Stakeholder, working directly with children Special Educational Needs, that there was no difference in advocacy and communication:

> I think Service Families differ. So, I wouldn't necessarily say that what they expect differs. I wouldn't particularly say that I get calls from people saying, look, my child's already had to go to five schools and I'm really worried … I just get occasional calls from parents who might say they started to look at this [Special Educational Need] in the last school I wonder if you've been given information

Karen illustrates that not all Service Families are the same insomuch as, the mobility factor differs between each Service Family. She further highlighted that in her experience there are no differences in the ways families with Special Educational Needs communicate:

> I don't think so. I would probably say some. I'm often aware that it's a Service Family … I might then ask particular questions because they are. Because not all military children have been disrupted, so I'll just ask what has been the background and people always speak very freely if they haven't been happy with something they tell you. So, I don't think they really hold back any more than somebody was moving from the North of the country down to the South (Karen, KS)

Karen's experience also enabled her to recognise that in addition to being a Service Family, some parents may also have a Special Educational Need:

> But then it's not an equal playing field because some parents themselves have got Special Educational Needs and so they're not going to perhaps be as able to use the systems that are in place (Karen, KS)

Karen illustrates the differences in Key Stakeholder understanding of Special Educational Needs which differs from Brian's earlier extract 'I can't help [child], I'm Dyslexic'

Karen and Brian, from two different Local Authorities, demonstrated their differences in expectations. Brian discussed his child's school had clear expectations in terms of school and homework which did not consider his own Special Educational Need. Whereas Karen noticeably points out her depth of understanding and expectations that some parents may need additional support themselves. Expectations are discussed in more depth in Chapter 7.

Nevertheless, both Bethany and Sophie expressed how being knowledgeable about their child's Special Educational Needs and their rights, enabled them to advocate on behalf of their children (Burke et al., 2017). This further demonstrated that school as an institution can either support or obstruct, and

this stems predominantly from the teacher parent relationship and the basis of power and knowledge.

6.4 Meeting the needs of Service Children with SEND

Each child with Special Educational Needs will have diverse needs and will require different levels of support. Schools all have separate ways in assessing children when they join the school. Key Stakeholders who worked with Service Children in schools all provided accounts of particularly good systems for assessment:

> We have a system because we frequently have new students. There is often testing, that's partly because of the military association so therefore we have more movement. But they come in there's a program that's the same for *all* children that come in during the school year, which begins with learning support assessments (Karen, KS)

> When they do arrive to us, we have very good system here, they are buddied up. They are pre-tested before they have a start sate. So, the day they actually start school is the day they start their timetable, there's none of this withdrawing them from lessons and trying to get them tested, you know the background work, it's been done before they arrive, so it's less stressful for them (Sue, KS)

Both Karen and Sue discussed all children being assessed when joining the schools to determine any gaps in learning, to establish whether they require additional support, and to establish attainment levels. One challenge however to these types of assessment is the issues with obtaining information from their previous school. Karen a Key Stakeholder, working in a secondary explained that the process of obtaining previous information can be time consuming:

> We do obviously request Special Educational Needs records from schools when children are transferred to us and it can take quite a long time, a few months perhaps (Karen, KS)

This was also echoed by Sue, who stated that:

> General information sharing and getting the information … there's been a lot of talk … a child with [Special Educational Needs] shouldn't have to start all over again, there should be a passport that actually moves with that child … why can't it just move with the child? … like a medical record (Sue, KS)

Dockrell et al. (2002, p.3) state that children with Special Educational Needs have a variety of different learning requirements. In this regard Dockrell et al. (2002) suggest evidence shows that teachers are ill equipped to meet the needs of every child as there is a lack of training which supports teaching staff in their pedagogy. In the case of teachers who work with Service Children, this

could be particularly worrisome, as Service Children with Special Educational Needs are likely to be at an increased disadvantaged compared to some of their peers.

Evidence further shows that Service Children are at risk of missing and repeating parts of the curricular (Noret et al., 2015). Therefore, not receiving information ahead of a Service Child starting a new school places both the teaching staff and the child at a disadvantage. Sue further accounted that it can sometimes take up to 18 months for information on Service Children to arrive. As she went on to state:

> It's really, really frustrating. And very disheartening having to say that to the parents in the politest way, that we're really sorry, but we will do the best we can, but it's gonna take time (Sue, KS)

However, Karen further stipulated that communication from parents is paramount to understanding the needs of their children. As she states:

> Parents have an important role in telling us about that. We have a system because we frequently have new students … and that's partly because of the military (Karen, KS)

Karen further stated that the process of obtaining information can be made easier when a parent is prepared through keeping their child's records:

> Some parents, you know, will give you the record. You know, some parents have kept on the ball wherever their child [has been], so they can do that very effectively. And that's fine by me. I don't have to be told by a school (Karen, KS)

Furthermore, evidence suggests some parents have previously expressed when a move occurs, they have not informed new schools that their child is going through the process of being assessed, in the event that doing so would hinder allocation of a school place (Department for Education, 2010b, p.12). Across the LASQ and BSQ parents stated that 6% of children (6 out of 105 children) were currently in the process of obtaining an EHCP. Furthermore, 31% of parents (21 out of 68 parents) stated 'yes' some of their children who had a Special Educational Need had to move to a new school before their EHCP had been completed. All of the parent interviewees however, stipulated that they had fully informed the Local Authority and the schools of their child's Special Educational Need, despite evidence suggesting that this does occur in some cases.

6.4.1 Delays and support for children with Special Educational Needs

Parents were asked if any of their children had experienced delays in SEND support. Parents in the LASQ reported that 74% (23 out of 31 children) of children had experienced delays.   Whilst participants of the BSQ reported 25% (14 out of 57 children) of children with Special Educational Needs had experienced receiving delays in support[40]. Table 2 shows changes in the levels of support since their child had started a boarding school, with parents stating 83% (44 out of 53) of children with Special Educational Needs had experienced an increase in support since starting a boarding school.

Table 2. Changes in support

Increased	Reduced	Remained the same	Total
83% (44)	8% (4)	9% (5)	100% (53)

Source: BSQ

Independent schools set their own admissions policies which are generally selective, requiring the child to sit an entrance exam (Independent Schools Council, 2022). The majority of Independent schools also follow their own curricular as opposed to the National Curriculum (Gov.UK, 2022e). Having to sit an entrance exam can potentially cause additional barriers for some Service Parents if their child does not pass the selection exam for the school they have chosen, and this is irrespective of Independent or State status:

> [Child] did not pass entrance exam because [they] had 7 schools in 6 years (BSP 34)

> The only State boarding school in the … area we needed was a selective school requiring passing academic testing for admission. Child was already behind … due to attend[ing] 4 different primary schools, therefore we dismissed it as a choice (BSP 38)

> State boarding schools are few and far between – lots are entrance tested so if your child isn't academic or behind due to having moved every couple of years, it makes it that much harder to get in (BSP 49)

These barriers are further intensified when Service Parents are selecting a school for a child with Special Educational Needs. Supporting a child with Special Educational Needs in an Independent school could therefore be problematic, yet not unrealistic, as the curriculum and support available may

---

[40] Other children who do not attend a boarding school are included in this calculation.

differ from the national standard of State schools. This decision would rest with the school in question in whether they are adequately equipped but also *willing* to accept children with Special Educational Needs. In comparison to State schools, SEND provisions in an Independent school incur additional costs. For Service Parents with children who attend an Independent boarding school, and require additional support, these costs may be covered by SENA funding (as discussed in Chapter 2). As Brian demonstrated:

> We did all the tests to prove [they] were dyslexic, and then went through the Army and got the funding … and they paid for [the school] because it's a specialised school. I didn't even have to pay the 10% (Brian, SP)

Although CEA enables parents to utilise boarding schools, there are some barriers for Service Parents with a child with Special Educational Needs. Dependent on the child's Special Educational Needs, this group of children can be difficult to place in a boarding school setting, as some schools may not accept a child with Special Educational Needs. Further, some Independent schools are not required to adhere to the SEND Code of Practice, yet they are required to abide by the Equality Act (Independent Schools Council, 2015). The Equality Act in respect of education ensures that no child should be discriminated against because of disability. Not having to adhere to the SEND Code of Practice can complicate the process of placing a child with Special Educational Needs in an Independent boarding school; unless it is an Independent boarding school which caters specifically for children with Special Educational Needs.

However, data from the BSQ shows that 32% of parents (52 out of 164 parents) indicated they had at least one child with Special Educational Needs. The majority of children with a Special Educational Need attended an Independent boarding school compared to a State boarding school (91%, compared with 11% of boarding children with SEN). This was to be expected given the lower numbers of children attending a State boarding school; 91% of children attended an Independent boarding school compared with 9% attending a State school (242 children compared with 25 children). Data additionally showed that 23% of boarding children (14 out of 60 children with SEND) were attending a boarding school with Special Educational Needs provisions as the main reason for their parents choosing to send their child to a boarding school.

Furthermore, children from the BSQ were reported to have a variety of Special Educational Needs, with many being identified with more than one need. Overall Dyslexia and Autism were reported as the most common Special Educational Need; 58% of children with Special Educational Needs had Dyslexia (35 out of 60 children with Special Educational Needs) and 25% of children with Special Educational Needs had Autism (15 out of 60 children with Special Educational Needs)[41]. Parents were asked if they felt support for their children's Special Educational Needs had changed since starting a boarding school. Table 2 showed overall support had increased for Special Educational Needs since starting a boarding school (83%, 44 out of 53 children), with only a small number of children experiencing a decrease in support (8%, 4 children out of 53).

As Figure 5 showed earlier, Dyslexia and Autism were found to be the most common Special Educational Needs across all children with SEND in this research. Table 3 shows the majority of children with Dyslexia and Autism had experienced an increase in support since starting boarding school. Further exploration of the data ascertained one parent who had stipulated their child had experienced a reduction in support, was currently going through the process of obtaining an EHCP, and that they felt 'very unsupported' in relation to their child's Special Educational Needs. However, two parents with children with Dyslexia, stated their child(ren) had experienced a reduction in support, further stated they felt 'very supported' in relation to their child's Special Educational Needs (cf. Table 4).

Table 3. Changes in support by type of Special Educational Need and Disability

	Dyslexia	Autism
Increased	84% (26)	92% (11)
Reduced	6% (2)	0% (0)
Stayed the same	10% (3)	8% (1)
Total children	100% (31)	100% (12)

Source: BSQ

---

[41] This data includes children who are not in a boarding school.

Table 4. Type of Special Educational Need and Disability, changes, and support cross-tabulation

		Increased	Reduced	Total children
Dyslexia	Very Supported	87% (13)	13% (2)	100% (15)

Source: BSQ

Without further discussion with these parents, it is difficult to ascertain the reasons why support had been reduced. Given that the parents expressed that they felt very supported, this could indicate that these children no longer require the same levels of support, as they are supported implicitly from stability in a boarding milieu. Nevertheless, Liz, a Key Stakeholder working in a secondary school in Local Authority A stated:

> We find that quite a lot do fall through the net, but then sort of on the flip side we find that some pupils have been on the SEND register, who no longer need to be on it (Liz, KS)

Only one of the interview participants implied that her child had *fallen through the net* in respect of a Special Educational Needs diagnosis. Isobel, a Service Parent, discussed how home schooling during Covid-19 had highlighted her child had additional needs. Isobel further accounted throughout her interview there had been incidents in the past at home which were perceived as the child not coping, all of which were likely to be a direct result of the child's undiagnosed Special Educational Need:

> It was pretty much lockdown that kind of highlighted a lot of things … so literally just after lockdown I had started emailing school and I was like, 'look, … this child can't focus' (Isobel, SP)

> Actually, looking back in hindsight now and going through what we are going through with [child], I feel like there's a lot of things that might have been missed earlier on, due to being a Service Family (Isobel, SP)

Noret et al. (2015, p.23) observed 5.8% of parents in their study on Army Children's educational attainment, stated they had had to move prior to a SEND assessment being completed. Whilst Isobel had not moved when she suspected her child had a Special Educational Need, she did identify that previous mobility, and being a Service Family had potentially hindered any identification, diagnosis, or assessments. Due to the wide range of Service Children's social and emotional needs, it is suspected that in some instances, Key Stakeholders miss opportunities to identify Special Educational Needs, and that Service Families move on too quickly. It is important to note here that Key Stakeholders working in schools are not trained in diagnosis, and from the Key

Stakeholders interviewed in this research, all schools had particularly good mechanisms of assessment for SEND and attainment.

Nevertheless, parents in the BSQ were also asked how supported they felt in relation to their child's Special Educational Needs since they had started a boarding school. Overall parents indicated they felt very supported in respect of their child; 62% (33 out of 52 parents) (cf. Table 5).

Table 5. How supported do you feel by your child's school in relation to Special Educational Needs and Disability

	Parents
Very supported	62% (33)
Somewhat supported	23% (12)
Neither	4% (2)
Somewhat unsupported	6% (3)
Very unsupported	6% (3)
Total	100% (53)

Source: BSQ

Dyslexia and Autism were also found to be the most common Special Educational Needs in the LASQ. Parents in the LASQ stated that 34% (11 out of 32 children) of children had Dyslexia, and 44% (14 out of 32 children) had Autism[42]. It is important to note that some children were indicated as having more than one Special Educational Need, however. Higher numbers of children with Autism was also reinforced by Liz, a Key stakeholder in Local Authority A:

> We've got an increasing number of ASD pupils, I don't know if that's something nationally that schools are finding, but I just remember 10-15 years ago, you would just have a handful of ASD kids. And we're really talking quite a lot now (Liz, KS)

Research suggests identification of Autism has grown over the last twenty years as a result of increased reporting and diagnosis (Russell et al., 2021). This was also supported by Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A:

> Nowadays they are much better at diagnosis, much better identifying, and also better at dealing [with it] (Kevin, KS)

Specific research into Service Children with Special Educational Needs is limited with the UK, however from the little research available previous studies have showed Autism, Dyslexia, and speech and language difficulties as the

---

[42] This data includes non-Service Children

most prevalent (Noret et al., 2015, p.24). This was supported within the findings of this research. Around 10% of the population have Dyslexia in the UK (NHS, 2022), with figures suggesting approximately 80% of school children with Dyslexia are undiagnosed (BBC News, 2019, no pagination). Moreover, the British Medical Association (2022) states 'one in a hundred children in the UK have a diagnosis of [ASD]' (no pagination).

LASQ parent participants were asked how supported they felt in respect of their child's Special Educational Needs by their Local Authority. Compared to BSP, parents in the LASQ indicated that they felt 'very unsupported' by their Local Authority in respect of their child's Special Educational Needs (cf. Table 6).

Table 6. How supported do you feel by your Local Authority

	Parents
Very supported	11% (3)
Somewhat supported	25% (7)
Neither	25% (7)
Somewhat unsupported	7% (2)
Very unsupported	32% (9)
Total	100% (28)

Source: LASQ

In the LASQ 23% of parents (6 out of 26 parents) whose children did not have an EHCP or were currently going through the process of obtaining one, were more likely to feel 'very unsupported'. In comparison 23% of parents (25 parents out of 59) in the BSQ whose children did not have an EHCP or were currently going through the process were more likely to feel 'very supported' in respect of their child's Special Educational Needs. This could suggest that parents in the LASQ whose children did not have an EHCP felt that by having firm support in place for their child through an EHCP, they would be better supported. However, Bethany had the following to say about her Local Authority, which provided some thought-provoking insights:

> We've recently had Ofsted inspection of our local SEND team in the Local Authority … they failed in eight areas on the last inspection … they've managed to pass six out of the eight areas … the ones that they have failed on is co-production with parents and conflict. The other one, it's around, delivering quality EHCPs (Bethany, SP)

Bethany went on to state that a Freedom of Information request revealed that schools in her Local Authority were asking/advising parents to request EHCPs

due to the Local Authority refusing school requests. Whilst the data from the LASQ are different from Bethany's Local Authority, this does raise some concerns that Local Authorities are refusing EHCP requests, and this is causing conflict with parents feeling unsupported. In comparison however, BSPs indicated they felt 'very supported' despite no EHCP being in place which may be as a result of smaller class sizes in some boarding schools as implied by one parent:

> Quality of education in private sector is generally superior. Smaller class sizes (BSP 14)

6.5 Communication: 'parents have an important role in telling us about that'[43]

Lumby (2007, p.220) states over previous decades there has been a shift in parental power, through school choice, which has included an active and persistent involvement from parents, creating a change within the traditional teacher parent relationship. However, literature posits that the prevailing power lays with the teacher as they explicitly seek to ensure parents' views replicate the aims and agenda of the school (Crozier and Reay, 2005; Miretzky, 2004). Therefore, parents who essentially do not agree with teachers or the schools position may be considered as troublesome, confrontational, and problematic. Crozier and Reay (2005) further emphasise that parent values and concerns centre around their own children, and not that of the whole school cohort. In effect, when a parent may not agree with the school agenda or an approach to a particular issue because it does not represent or assist with the needs of their own child, barriers may become apparent with a breakdown in the teacher parent relationship (Crozier and Reay, 2005; Reay, 2005). As a result, relationships between teacher and parents may influence a child's school experience, in the event that children have picked up feelings of animosity between the parent and teacher. Feelings of resentment towards a school for instance may exacerbate or influence the teacher, parent, and child relationships, which in turn could exacerbate any further relationship and breakdowns in communication (Lumby, 2007, p.221).

---

[43] Quote from Karen, a Key Stakeholder working in a secondary school

Experiences of communication varied across all of the parents within this research, and this also differed from the experiences and expectations of Key Stakeholders. In the LASQ 26% (18 out of 68 parents) of parents stated they had experienced difficulties communicating with schools in the past. Tables and 8 provides a breakdown of satisfaction levels when communicating with several types of school staff.

Table 7. Communication by staff role

	School staff	Admissions	SenCo
Very satisfied	24% (18)	29% (19)	12% (3)
Satisfied	50% (38)	38% (25)	28% (7)
Neither	13% (10)	20% (13)	16% (4)
Unsatisfied	11% (8)	8% (5)	32% (8)
Very unsatisfied	3% (2)	5% (3)	12% (3)
Total	100% (76)	100% (65)	100% (25)

Source: LAS

Table 8. Communication by staff role

	School staff	House parent's	Admissions/office	SenCo
Very satisfied	51% (82)	69% (112)	56% (89)	37% (20)
Satisfied	35% (56)	20% (33)	34% (55)	39% (21)
Neither	6% (10)	5% (8)	6% (10)	11% (6)
Unsatisfied	9% (14)	5% (8)	3% (5)	6% (3)
Very unsatisfied	0% (0)	1% (1)	1% (1)	7% (4)
Total	100% (162)	100% (162)	100% (160)	100% (54)

Source: BSQ

Nevertheless, communication between schools and parents was found to be problematic however, in some circumstances:

> I felt like he was quite dismissive of me, like I was a nagging mum, and that this was just hormones, and I didn't have anything to worry about (Isobel, SP)

> It's good to have a better rapport with parents, but then they need to speak up as well (Sue, KS)

> I've been sending in regular emails to their teacher, and she took nearly a week to get back to me … I wanted it to be taken seriously and it took her a week, nearly ten days (Joanne, SP)

> There are some parents who, the children just appear here, and they don't look for communication. But I wouldn't say that's particular military parents (Karen, KS)

> School weren't happy with me. I kind of said, 'well, are you going to refer [child] or not?' (Isobel, SP)

Key Stakeholders interviewees all discussed the whole school ethos approach either implicitly or explicitly. This supports the literature which suggests despite parents having the power to voice their concerns, schools will endeavour to support children equally, via their own approaches (Lumby, 2007; Crozier and Reay, 2005; Reay, 2005). Whole school approaches are likely to work to some extent when the school has a larger cohort of Service Children, as these schools will be experienced in recognising the challenges of Service life. However, this research has found this not to be the case in every circumstance. Colin, a Key Stakeholder in Local Authority A, provided some insights into issues of communication:

> I think our communication chains are quite good. But it comes with the caveat that getting onto the agenda can be very, very challenging when there's 101 other things to do. And Service Children are roughly 5% of the county's children. So, it's a very small minority, but a significant one, nevertheless (Colin, KS)

Colin discussed communication here in the context of the extensive work he has undertaken in his Local Authority in respect of Service Families and Children. However, Colin highlights the complexities of bringing Service Children to the forefront within schools as this raises some issues. Service Children are usually a minority cohort of children. Therefore, a wider agenda from school Governing bodies is likely to take priority. Despite this however, Colin demonstrated throughout his sheer hard work and determination to make Service Families, and other vulnerable families, a priority in his Local Authority:

> I would say that within school improvement, there is a good awareness and a good understanding. Because I've made sure that it's on people's radars (Colin, KS)

Overall, communication was said to be challenging within some cases, and this was additionally found to be more problematic when a child has Special Educational Needs. Service Parents were found to voice risk when they felt the circumstances required, and this was found to be more prevalent during time of parental absenteeism. The data showed 93% of parents who responded to the BSQ stated when communicating with boarding school staff they would expect staff to be 'understanding of Service life'. Within Local Authority A there was a vast expertise amongst Key Stakeholders which enabled Key Stakeholders to navigate parental expectations regarding support for their children. However,

interviewee parents in other Local Authorities demonstrated some Key Stakeholder staff were not responding to their concerns adequately. The focus of the next section explores Key Stakeholders communicating with each other, and how this supports them in their own roles.

6.6 Key stakeholders being supported in their roles

Evidence from Ofsted shows several factors can lead to low well-being of teachers. These include increased workload, lack of resources, lack of support in managing pupil behaviour, absence of work life balance, and a shortage of support from school leaders (Ofsted, 2019, p.1). The well-being of Key Stakeholders was not explored within this research. However, Key Stakeholder interviewees were asked about the types of support they receive within their job roles, and if they felt supported. The majority of Key Stakeholders indicated or explicitly discussed that they felt supported, only one participant indicated that they did not feel supported:

> I could maybe do with a bit more support … I'm talking like senior level management, I don't get asked to be involved in anything, I just find out third hand what's going on ... I'm not important enough. But I'm expected to put things in place to sort things out. I mean for instance I've got another [information removed], and they need alternative provision, then all of a sudden an email comes into my inbox 'sort it out'. But I've not been included in any meetings or discussions (Sue, KS)

Flemming et al. (2022) note the challenges of interviewing key informants in research when the research seeks to explore the workplace milieu. Problematically, participants representing an organisation are likely to present with some bias and they seek to represent a collective good (Flemming et al., 2022). Overall, the participants implied they were happy within their roles, they enjoyed working with Service Families and Children, and they spoke with a sense of pride. In terms of support however, responses varied across the Key Stakeholders, with some deflecting the response to wider issues outside of the school, or Local Authority department:

> I would like the DfE to give Local Authorities more teeth. Where we are able to actually challenge academies, who are their own admissions authorities …, and not go through a series of hoops (Kevin, KS)

> I mean at the moment, it's more me to them, than them to me … [in the time I have worked here] I've received very few updates around Service Children, which is my thing, but then I've been the one that's been sorting the information and sharing that with others. Like, probably most people that work in Local Government, there seems to be a never-ending priority list, and you can never get everything down and finding time for raising

> issues that are relatively minority issues with senior leaders that are very, very stretched in very strict budgetary times is difficult. I'm not going to pretend it isn't (Colin, KS)

> Local Authorities don't even talk, we have issues, sometimes even with our own Local Authority, getting hold of somebody… (Sue, KS)

Experiences of support overall however were seen as very good within schools, and challenges which lead to barriers of support were identified:

> I have a very good relationship with all the subject teachers. So, I tend to sort of like ignore senior management and work in another direction, I find I get more done, and more support from subject staff (Sue, KS)

> I mean, one of the issues that we're having is we just haven't got enough Teaching Assistant's ... it's a real juggling act with making sure they get enough support, but that we can actually spread some support around in the classrooms as well. We've got more than twenty percent of the students on the SEND register now (Liz, KS)

> Well, the Head teacher here is marvellous [they are] my line manager so we work on things together for Special Educational Needs … [Local Authority] has had significant difficulties because of volumes … so there's been backlogs (Karen, KS)

Research suggests that communication, and respect contribute to higher levels of well-being across school staff (Flemming et al., 2022). Flemming et al. (2022, p.42) observe there is a common trend in which school staff account good relationships with peer colleagues, but experience challenges in support from senior leaders. This supports Sue's comment 'I have a very good relationship with all the subject teachers' in which she goes to state that communication with subject teachers is good. Further she implies that communicating with subject teachers enables her in her role to support Service Children:

> They know where the student is within that subject area, if they need extra we do extra sessions … sometimes some of the students maybe need a bit more of a bespoke timetable (Sue, KS)

What Sue illustrated here was that her good relationship with subject teachers facilitated some students having additional support, whether this be catch up sessions or pastoral. Sue discussed that when a bespoke timetable is required, she was a main source of support, providing extra sessions outside of the classroom, and this was underpinned through clear lines of communication with

subject staff. Sharing knowledge and information as a form of support was also reinforced by Karen:

> [The] plan is shared with about 40 members of staff. So, it would be all the people who are going to teach them, all the people that are going to possibly be in classes supporting them … so that everyone has the same information … obviously for military children it isn't necessarily a perfect start in September … so we need to make sure that they don't go under the radar (Karen, KS)

Overall, Key Stakeholders expressed they felt supported. Although this was often marred by other challenges, such as Local Authority issues, wider organisation matters, and the general issues of perceived lack of resources within the education sector.

6.7 Conclusion

Overall, coping strategies across parent participants varied and further how coping strategies were perceived by Key Stakeholders differed. Each interview parent participant demonstrated that each move, and situation was different and unique to them. This was particularly evident when they had a child with Special Educational Needs. Therefore, in response to question 1) How does mobility effect the challenges experienced by Service Parents when applying for and accessing school places? this Chapter has demonstrated that each Service Family does not experience the same challenges. In particular, Service Families with children with Special Educational Needs, experience challenges which may be unique to them. This may be as a result of their living arrangements, being a single parent, pseudo-single parenting during Serving partners being absent, or a combination of all of these factors. As such this may cause some issues in the levels of support Service Families experience.

Chapter 7 is the final analysis Chapter in this thesis. Chapter 7 focusses on the theme of expectations, drawing on issues of how expectations align with policy and practice.

Chapter 7 Expectations: policy and practice

I chased them and said, I need to know where [they] are going, I'm in the military … there's still this very archaic view that the men are in the military and the wives follow around, and it doesn't matter if [the wives] have time off … I needed [child] to start school, I didn't want [child] having to wait a couple of weeks, but their attitude was very Laissez Faire and 'oh well' … 'you're choosing to move' … and it was very much the attitude of 'you're choosing to move, you're moving your child' (Laura, SP)

7.1 Introduction

So far, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, have discussed three of the main themes identified in this research: Stability, Understanding, and Support. The final theme of Expectations is explored within this Chapter. Expectations are a complicated part of everyday lived experiences. In part, this is because expectations will vary from everyone, and further each community. In the Military Community expectations are a complicated issue, because a large part of Service life is unpredictable. Therefore, having set expectations is unrealistic in some sense. For Service Children with Special Educational Needs in particular, the ability to know what is going to happen next is problematic; as Service Children cycle in and out of different routines influenced by mobility. Expectations for parents of these children are likely to vary significantly and according to their child's needs.

For Service Parents however, in relation to their children's education, expectations were found to be based around, compassion, empathy and understanding. However, these expectations were often intrinsically bound in rights. This Chapter therefore focuses on the theme of Expectations and how these transfer to policies which directly affect Service Families. To begin, this Chapter investigates the School Admissions Code and parental expectations of what the Code should and does not do. Much of the discussions from Service Parents were heavily linked with the Armed Forces Covenant. Chapter 2 examined the principles of the Covenant and outlined the promise set out from the State to the Military Community. This Chapter therefore investigates the Armed Forces Covenant in respect of Service Parents Expectations.

This Chapter answers the following research questions: 1) How does mobility affect the challenges experienced by Service Parent's when applying for and accessing school places?; 3) How does the Armed Forces Covenant contribute to society fulfilling its moral obligation to Service Families in respect of

accessing suitable schools?; 3.1) What are Service Parents' and Key Stakeholders understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant?, and 3.2) Does the Armed Forces Covenant uphold Service Children's rights to inclusive education? And, is this assured?

7.2 The School Admissions Code: a conundrum, what it does and what it *should* do

Chapter 2 highlighted the recent changes to the School Admissions Code (Department for Education, 2021b; 2014). However, these changes are minor and whilst provision has been made for Service Families, it can be argued that these changes are just a rephrasing of words. The new Code does, however, make a clearer emphasis on Service Families being able to use the Service Person's unit address. When asked about the provisions set out in the School Admissions Code (2014) 66% of parents in the LASQ (49 parents out of 74) stated they did not know what the Schools Admissions Code sets out for Service Families. However, 36% (30 out of 83 children) of children's school applications in the LASQ did use the Serving Persons unit address demonstrating that they were aware of the criteria set out for Service Families.

Further to this, parent interviewees stated they felt when speaking with Local Authority staff, there was a lack of understanding and empathy. Laura, a Service Parent, associated this lack of understanding and empathy with an absence of experience within her current Local Authority. In Laura's experience, the experience of dealing with Service Families led to poor practice (as previously discussed in Chapter 4):

> There aren't that many big bases, and we're not a big base. So, they don't have a huge amount of experience dealing with military [families] (Laura, SP)

Laura's point of absence of experience was supported by Kevin, A Key Stakeholder, working in Local Authority A:

> What's interesting is that if you live in [removed], you're unlikely to have any Service Families predominantly in there … I think it's the lack of numbers that sort of make it 'It's a Service Family, what do we do with this?' (Kevin, KS)

Chapter 5 discussed how Key Stakeholders understand the Military Community, and how their knowledge transfers into everyday practices. Key Stakeholders with connections to the Military Community expressed that their positionality enabled them to understand the wider issues experienced by Service Families:

> I think a lot of the experiences come out of sheer hard work and the experience actually on the ground (Kevin, KS)

and further how this enabled them to support Service Families, as demonstrated in Chapter 6. Only two of the Key Stakeholder interviewees worked in Local Authority departments, and both demonstrated they had a very wide range of expertise, and a lengthy career of working with Service Families. Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, discussed the School Admissions Code at length, and highlighted key issues with Service Parents' interpretation, and understanding:

> I think there's a huge myth around the Covenant and what the Code (School Admissions) says, and its practical experience that actually stops/starts becoming out of hand. And very often Service Personnel will say some horrendous things to you 'well you have to do this' 'no we've done what we have to do' 'oh no, the Covenant says you've got to' (Kevin, KS)

Kevin highlighted there were issues with the School Admissions Code and at the time of interview, the Code was being updated. However, Chapter 2 highlighted that despite these changes to the Code, there is still some ambiguity in what is set out for Service Families. As Kevin pointed out:

> This is all predicated on a posting order. It should be based on it's a Service Family, even if it's an inter school move. But it's not there in the Code (Kevin, KS)

Kevin highlighted that issues around the Code were associated with the Code itself and the criteria set out for Service Families, and how Service Parents understand the Code. Problematically, Kevin discussed that many Service Parents felt that the Code was heavily linked to the Armed Forces Covenant and that this entitled them in some way, to be prioritised for school places. This was supported in the findings of this research with 79% of LASQ participants (56 out of 71 parents) stating 'yes', Service Children should be prioritised for school places. Some of the interviewee participants additionally spoke about priority for Service Children when applying for school places. Whilst some were firm that there should be priority, others expressed the issues and challenges this would bring:

> We're having to move around because we're getting posted. We didn't choose this. Yes, I "chose" [the] lifestyle. My kids my didn't. So, they should be prioritised because of that reason (Brian, SP)

> If I was on civvie street, I think I would find it really difficult, you go for a school in your village, but the military child gets priority … but I do see it

> from both sides … I think if it's a school within the area and there's no alternative then yes, the priority should be adopted … I think there should be a priority. But in limited circumstances (Bethany, SP)

> I think Service Children should be a group that's looked at in the same way as looked after children are and those with Education Health Care Plans, I'm a little bit uncomfortable at the idea of Service Children being a priority group for in year access, because then that's then giving an advantage to Service communities that other parents don't have. So, I don't think they should be prioritised in that regard. I think they need to be treated fairly, like all children are (Colin, KS)

All of the parent interviewees implicitly expressed that being a Service Family should facilitate some form of priority, if not urgency. In some cases, whilst applying for school places parents had directly quoted the Armed Forces Covenant to Local Authorities, or had warned to complain about Local Authorities to MP's:

> When I got to my final straw … I wrote to the local MP and said I've tried military welfare, I've tried CEAS[44], and no one could help us, there was no spaces … so I wrote to the local MP, and I said we don't get to choose where we live … but we should get to choose where our kids go to school, it's only fair (Sian, SP)

> I turned to them and said, under the military Covenant you need to give me a school place, because if you don't I'm going to take it to [MP name removed] (Sophie, SP)

Tipping (2008) argues 'a Covenant is a contract' (p.13) and as such proposes that the State, and Personnel should be responsible in upholding their obligations. Further, contracts which are broken are accountable to 'legal sanction' (Tipping, 2008, p.13). Whilst the Covenant does cover the education of Service Children, insofar as there should be no disadvantages due to the nature of Service life, there are some issues in how this pertains to the allocation of school places. Local Authorities must allocate a place in accordance with the criteria of the School Admissions Code, it is also important to note that Academy schools, must be *guided* by the Code also[45] (Department for Education, 2022b). If a Local Authority or Academy school has followed the Code, but there are no places at the parents chosen school, another school place can be allocated, where space permits. This means a school place which

---

[44] CEAS was the Continuity of Education Advisory which is now known as Education Advisory Team (EAT)
[45] Academy schools can set their own admissions criteria

is not of the parents' choosing can be allocated. Thus, the Local Authority has met their responsibility by providing a school place.

This raises questions regarding what the Covenant facilitates in respect of Service Children's education. As such, the Covenant is not a tool which Service Parents can utilise to gain higher access to a waiting list for school places, nor does it give automatic *right* to a school place of their choice; this is despite Sophie's extract in Chapter 4:

> The only reason [they] got the place was basically I had to use the Armed Forces Covenant and basically say they're a child of the Armed Forces (Sophie, SP)

Such misconceptions around the Covenant can be problematic as this leads to a further lack of understanding about what the Covenant is, and what it can and cannot do. Although the Covenant is a great enabler at removing some disadvantages, insofar as it acknowledges the unique nature of Service life, the Covenant does not take precedence over the School Admissions Code (Scott, 2013). The Covenant, in some cases, places expectations upon Local Authorities in what they should and should not be doing in school place allocation. That said, wider training of the Covenant would be advantageous; across all Local Authorities, schools, and Military Communities. Further discussion on Armed Forces Covenant awareness can be found in Section 7.5.

Overall, Key Stakeholder interviewees working in Local Authority departments were able to demonstrate that their understanding and expertise had been built from years of experience. As this research has demonstrated, knowledge of the Military Community transfers into understanding the unique issues Service Families encounter. However, not all Local Authorities possess this extensive knowledge and experience, and this can lead to difficulties for Service Parents:

> They responded and sent me, I can't remember if it was a letter, I remember reading it and then turning around and saying, 'we're not signed up to it'. And I remember ringing them and saying, 'is this correct?' And they're like, 'well, you can opt in' I don't know how true that was, she could have been lying to me (Sophie, SP)

All 407 Local Authorities have signed the Covenant, however there is one important caveat which must be acknowledged (Ministry of Defence, 2019a, no pagination):

Covenants in each community may look quite different from one location to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all, and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity.

There are striking similarities between the wording of the School Admissions Code (cf. Chapter 2) and the Military Covenant, in which both state interpretation according to area. This means that in areas with smaller numbers of Service Families, support may not be available because the Local Council does not deem there to be an adequate need. This is troubling and further places members of the Armed Forces community at risk of disadvantage. This is also problematic in understanding what the Covenant is because individual Councils in Local Authorities can opt in and opt out despite all Local Authorities signing the Covenant. At best, this is confusing for Service Families and Local Authorities.

Nonetheless, Kevin, further demonstrated that his Local Authority was adequately knowledgably in communicating effectively and working with Service Parents, and military units to mitigate issues of sourcing school places:

> You manage it by … expectations, and sometimes you have conversations with the families 'is there an alternative school you wish to consider?' because there might be spaces at XX school or XX school, and you guide them (Kevin, KS)

Kevin additionally outlined that large unit moves required a lot of work in sourcing school places for Service Children. This includes speaking with various military units and collaborating with other Local Authorities. However, he also described issues when a significant amount of work had been completed for large unit moves, only for them then not to take place:

> Communication is ongoing on a daily basis, and certainly with the schools within [removed] at the moment, their issue is numbers. Four years ago, we were expanding schools in [removed], because we were told all the soldiers were coming in, it hasn't happened. So, we've got schools that are looking for kids (Kevin, KS)

The majority of parent interviewees stipulated some key factors when choosing a school. These were, that the school was: a suitable distance from home; could accommodate all of their children; could meet their child's Special Educational Needs, and that before and after school childcare was available. In this regard, despite some schools having abundant space they may not fit these requirements. Laura, a Service Parent, indicated that childcare and distance were key factors in her school choice. The school place which was allocated to her eldest child was in a different direction to her youngest child's nursery.

Laura pointed out this meant she had the additional challenge each morning of getting her two children to two places at the same time, in two different directions. However, Laura illustrated that despite her child not being allocated the school of her choice, she was happy with the outcome:

> Although the processes were not the best and could have been done better, my child is in a safe happy school. And they did provide a school. It's not like they turned around went 'no you can't have one'. Actually, it has worked out well (Laura, SP)

Whilst Laura's experience turned out to be successful, this was not the case for Sian, a Service Parent:

> So, I said right well, we'll keep [child] at home for a while because … [they] was behind with learning so I didn't want to put [child] in a school and then a few months later have to move [them] when a better one came up. So, when we said we will de-register [child] for now keep them at home and that ended up being 14 months before a reasonable school at a reasonable distance could take [child], so nightmare (Sian, SP)

Chapter 4 outlined Sian had been offered places for her children at two different schools:

> They offered us a school for [eldest child], and then a school over a mile away for [second child]. So, they were offering us a school space, but I couldn't be in two places at once (Sian, SP)

This echoes Laura's earlier experience of being in a similar situation. Both experiences show that despite not been given their first-choice school, their Local Authorities had provided school places as set out by the School Admissions Code. Although Sian's child was home schooled for 14 months, this decision was considered the most suitable option for her family at that time. It is important to note however that Sian's experience was exacerbated by Covid-19:

> A good six to eight months of that was COVID anyway, so no one would have taken [child] … so in the January, [child] got the space, they rang, and then that night, Boris said, 'you can't go to school tomorrow', and we were like [shocked expression]. But because [child] missed so much, they took [them] as a vulnerable child (Sian, SP)

LASQ data showed, 86% (90 out of 105 children) of children were granted their first choice preference, and 14% (15 children out of 105) of children were not granted their first choice preference[46]. Overall, it can be argued that whilst the School Admissions Code is ambiguous to some extent, the parent interviewees

---

[46] This data includes non-service families

all illustrated that school places had been offered, despite them not being necessarily their first choice. Further, respondents in the LASQ highlighted relatively small numbers of Service Children were not granted first choice school places, 13% (14 out of 105 Service Children).

There is much deliberation surrounding the priority of Service Children within the School Admissions Code. Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, emphasised that the criteria for Service Children needs to be clearer and go beyond the allocation of places based on a posting order. However, much of this conversation requires further discussion from the DfE and the Ministry of Defence:

> This is all predicated on a posting order. It should be based on it's a Service Family, even if it's an inter school move. But it's not there in the Code … this is the pressure gauge, by which it should be shoved back up to the MoD. They need to speak to the DfE 'look, thank you for what you did for the Code, can we do more?' (Kevin, KS)

Therefore, despite recent changes to the School Admissions Code, the DfE should make the criteria for Service Families clearer and consider both mobile and non-mobile Service Families. Further, the expectations of what the Armed Forces Covenant does and cannot do need to be communicated effectively, across all levels to avoid any misunderstandings.

7.3 Expectations of support from Local Authorities

The school application process can be daunting and stressful, as demonstrated throughout this research. Local Authorities play a large part as the initial point of contact when applying for school places. For some families this may go further when a child has Special Educational Needs, as additional support and guidance is required. Participants were asked about support from their Local Authorities as demonstrated in Chapter 6. Only 2 of the interviewee participants expressed that they had not experienced any difficulties with their Local Authority when applying for school places. However, both of these participants indicated that applications for school places lay mainly with their spouses:

> Well, it was my ex-wife [mainly] because I was normally at work (Brian, SP)

> My wife is definitely the lead on it (Joe, SP)

The remainder of parent interviewees communicated that they had directly spoken with someone within their Local Authority regarding school applications.

These participants either indirectly or openly expressed that they perceived certain expectations from their Local Authority. These expectations were intrinsically bound with rights and obligations towards Service Families and Children. Sian, a Service Parent, explained that she expected more support from her Local Authority when the decision was made to home school her child, due to no school places being available within a reasonable distance.

Sian illustrated that whilst the decision to home school her child was the right choice at the time of applying for schools, difficulties arose when she was not provided with any guidance from her Local Authority:

> The main challenge is that there's no curriculum for home school. So, you really are just making it up as you go along. And they were very slow in [Local Authority] for support … it took over a year for [them] to contact me even though I'd contacted them. I didn't hear back from them until [child] had been offered a school space (Sian, SP)

Government guidance states that children from the age of five must be educated full-time and this can be in the form of home schooling. Children who are home schooled do not have to follow the National curriculum, and Local Authorities can enquire to make sure home-schooled children are receiving a suitable education (Gov.UK, 2022b). However, Sian explained that despite contacting her Local Authority for support no guidance was received, leaving her to source resources herself. It is possible this experience was affected by Covid-19, with home working for some limiting the amount of support they provided. That said, Sian's decision to home school was taken prior to Covid-19 lockdown, and therefore she should have been provided with the necessary guidance regarding home schooling. Research suggests, approximately 81,200 children are registered in England as being home schooled (Long and Danechi, 2022, p.5). Of these, only 4% of all school aged children are educated at home because they were not allocated their preferred school (Long and Danechi, 2022, p.9).

Recent research by Long and Danechi (2022) observes there is a requirement for Local Authorities to provide more support to home schooled children. However, it was shown that support from Local Authorities should only be provided when parents ask for it (Long and Danechi, 2022). In Sian's experience her request for support was ignored for an extended period. There is very little discussion on Service Children being home schooled in the UK, and

this generally centres around Service Children with Special Educational Needs (Bradley and Almond, 2022; Godier-McBard et al., 2021; Walker et al., 2020). Further examination on this issue would be advantageous to ascertain how and if, short periods of home-schooling in Service Children are common, and how this effects their education. In addition, further exploration could highlight any instances of Service Children being home schooled for longer periods of time, in particular when a new move occurs.

Parent interviewees illustrated the types of support they expected as a minimum from their Local Authority. Many of these expectations varied across the interview participants but the fundamental areas included, understanding they are a Service Family, providing a school place with minimal stress, and recognising the Armed Forces Covenant as a tool for application. Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, stated there needs to be clearer guidance for Service Families, which caters for all levels of ability:

> It is that balance. And that's where I think going back to the Covenant and the Code, the DfE might want to be more dynamic, and much clearer on what they want for Service Families. And the Covenant may need to be a bit clearer about what Service Families should expect from admissions authorities (Kevin, KS)

Kevin highlighted that across the Services, there are various levels of aptitude in understanding complex policy and information. Chapter 4 discussed the level entry requirements for some recruits (Brady et al., 2013b; The Defence Committee, 2013b), illustrating and supporting Kevin's statement, that Personnel digest information on different levels. Further, Kevin explained, in some cases, there is an over reliance on information from social media, and the community, on information gathering and sharing, which may not always be the correct information:

> A lot of Personnel, they rely on extracts, they rely on I suppose the local tomtom drums on social media (Kevin, KS)

This was further reinforced by Colin, a Key Stakeholder also working in Local Authority A:

> We have a high incidence of what might be called lower ranks and not Officers … a lot of young inexperienced families, there's a high level of need (Colin, KS)

Both Key Stakeholders demonstrated there is a need for much clearer information sharing across the Services to cater to all levels of ability. Within the parent interviews however, many participants discussed school places as a

right, and this was interweaved within the right of the Covenant. Expectations were discussed very clearly in that the Local Authority must provide a place of choice, and that this was linked to the Covenant, and their rights as a Service Family.

Interestingly all of the parent interviewees implicitly stated their position of rights due to their Service Family label. Rights are discussed in much greater depth in Section 7.9; however, all the interviewees had a clear expectation that they should be allocated their first-choice school place because of being a Service Family. LASQ parents were asked if they felt Service Children should be given priority in school applications with 79% of parents (56 out of 71 parents) stating 'yes'. These opinions were mixed from Key Stakeholders, although they were not asked questions on priority, this was on occasion brought into other discussions by the interviewee:

> I'm a little bit uncomfortable at the idea of Service Children being a priority group for in year access because then that's giving advantage to Service Communities which other parents don't have (Colin, KS)

> I think the [School Admissions] Code is wrong, I think we should say Service should be given a higher criteria as do looked after children, there should be no arguments (Kevin, KS)

Nevertheless, Laura and Sian's (Service Parents) experiences demonstrated that there was a clear expectation that being provided with their first-choice school was the very minimum expectation from their Local Authorities.' In Carole's experience however, there were additional barriers to her child's school application:

> [They] was in the line-up to go into a Specialist school and we still had to apply for place at a mainstream school, but on [child's] EHCP they named a mainstream school, which actually [child] wouldn't have coped with, so we had to go take it almost to a tribunal in order to get the school place (Carole, SP)

Carole, a Service Parent, illustrated that she had being receiving support from a portage worker who had assisted in supporting an application for a Specialist Provisions school:

> They have meetings with a Local Authority, so they have meetings about like certain children, the portage worker, she said, when she received the EHCP. She cried. The whole time [child] had been spoken about in these meetings, there was the plan for [child] to go to a Specialist school. But the Local Authority just named the mainstream, because even though you want a Specialist place, you still have to apply for a normal place (Carole, SP)

Carole had a clear expectation that her child would be allocated a place at a Specialist Provisions school as this had always been the intention. However, Carole's Local Authority provided a place at a mainstream school. Carole went on to discuss that the process would have been less stressful if her child had been allocated a place at the Specialist Provision school to begin with. In this regard, Carole implicitly stated she did not feel supported by the Local Authority yet demonstrated that she was able to draw on support from her child's portage worker, and others such as the child's paediatrician.

Overall, the majority of parent participants discussed their Local Authority in relation to the support they expected during the school application process. Support was considered to be providing a school place of choice which suited the Service Family's needs, and this was implicitly expressed as a clear expectation.

7.4 The Armed Forces Covenant: expectations and awareness

Since its implementation, the Covenant has been a vital tool in increasing awareness and minimising disadvantage to Service Personnel, Veterans, and their Families. Although awareness of the Covenant is considered to be good, there is some discussion surrounding how the Covenant is understood. The AFCAS shows Personnel who are Officers are more likely to have a greater awareness of the Covenant compared to lower ranks (97% of Officers, compared to, 69% Other Ranks) (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.20). In contrast the FAMCAS shows only 10% of Service Spouses have 'heard of the Covenant and know a lot about it' (Ministry of Defence, 2022h, p.8). As Chapter 2 outlined, the Armed Forces Covenant covers the key area of education, meaning no Service Child should be disadvantaged in their access to education because of their Service status. LASQ parent participants were asked if they were aware of the Armed Forces Covenant with 90% of parents (211 out of 234 parents) stating 'yes' they are aware of the Covenant. Parents were additionally asked if they utilised the Armed Forces Covenant when applying for their child's school place, 40% of parents (31 out of 78 parents) stated 'yes' they had utilised the Covenant. From those who answered 'no' however, 29% of parents stated that they did not fully understand what the Covenant covers (14 out of 49 parents). Similarly, 95% (155 out of 164 parents) of BSQ parents stated 'yes'

they are aware of the Armed Forces Covenant, 3% (5 out of 157 parents) of parents further stated they had experienced some disadvantages when applying for their child's boarding school place.

Overall discussions with interviewees, and responses from questionnaire parents varied around the Covenant. Only one parent interviewee however stated that they were unaware of the Covenant and simply responded to this question with 'no' (Sian, SP) and this was also the same for a LASQ parent:

> Never heard of it in 15 years of Army life (LA B49)

Key Stakeholder Karen had also not heard of the Covenant when asked but did state that she was aware of the principle:

> I'm familiar with the idea, those children and their families are entitled to seamless, in terms of what children are meant to have in the eyes of the law, for education … I've never had [a parent] use it in conversation (Karen, KS)

The majority of the other participants expressed that the Covenant was there to assist with applying for school places, in addition to other things, and whilst this was not explicitly stated, there was some suggestion that the Covenant can be used in gaining school places, and assisting in moving things quicker such as assessments and health queues:

> The schools don't adhere to any of it, so I have given up on it (LA B50)

> I turned to them and said, 'under the Covenant you need to give me a school place' (Sophie, SP)

> I'm trying to play the Armed Forces Covenant with it at the moment (Joe, SP)

Knowledge of the Covenant was also varied across the interviewee participants. Bethany, a Service Parent, for instance had a very good working knowledge of many polices including the Covenant and demonstrated that despite its intentions the Covenant is convoluted when it comes to understanding and being implemented on the ground:

> I don't think it has any impact. It's not law. So, they have the choice on whether they want to implement it and I think you'll find a lot of Local Authorities choose not to. They say they observe it, but in practice, I don't think they do (Bethany, SP)

Key Stakeholders also identified the challenges of the Covenant working on the ground in addition to how the Covenant is understood. Louise, a Key Stakeholder, stated that parental awareness of the Covenant may vary:

> I think that could be down to the age of the parents; cognitive ability of the parents (Louise, SP)

As Chapter 4 previously demonstrated the academic ability of Personnel varies, with the minimal entry requirements for some job roles being as low as a reading age of 7-8 year olds (The Defence Committee, 2013b). Recent data further shows that 50% of Service Spouse are educated to undergraduate degree level or higher, although this can be considered differently according to which Service their serving spouse belongs to. Officers' spouses were reported as more likely to be educated to degree level compared to other ranks across the Tri-Services, and Army spouses were least likely to be educated to degree level compared to RAF and RN spouses (Ministry of Defence, 2022h, p.2). This shows the various levels of ability which resonates with Louise's extract above. This was additionally, communicated by other Key Stakeholders in respect of some Service Parents having a lower ability of comprehension:

> There are levels of understanding, you have to take into consideration the Army take all sorts if backgrounds. They're not all lawyers. They [might] not know how to read a document. But they are very good at what they do because they are trained … then you give them the Covenant, a Sergeant Major will have a different interpretation of the Covenant than his troop (Kevin, KS)

> It's interesting because obviously young soldiers who don't have a C at English and Math have still got this idea that they don't need it … But there are some you know, incredibly switched on, successful families (Sarah, KS)

> So, we have a high incidence of what are called lower ranks and not Officers … So, a lot of young inexperienced families [in the area] (Colin, KS)

In terms of how the Covenant is understood is therefore difficult, as Kevin highlighted several individuals will interpret it differently and this is despite the awareness of the Covenant being considered as good (Ministry of Defence, 2022f, p.20; Ministry of Defence, 2022h, p.8).

Nevertheless, the Covenant was considered as something which is a *tool* to enable Service Families in not being disadvantaged. Whilst this is a core principle of the Covenant, quoting the Covenant as shown by some parent participants to Local Authorities or schools will not automatically eliminate disadvantages, nor does the Covenant enable Service Families to queue jump waiting lists:

Why should you be disadvantaged because you've moved, so I believe the, you know, the Armed Forces Covenant comes into things like that (Isobel, SP)

We did have issues, and this is where the … Covenant didn't work. We initiated some speech and language therapy in [area] … we ended up relocating … [Local Authority] tried to transfer care into new [Local Authority] and they basically rejected it (Bethany, SP)

When we moved here we had to transfer [child's] medical stuff across and they was put to the bottom of the queue, but you put the Armed Forces Covenant to them, and they like bump you back up because you can't be disadvantaged (Carole, SP)

Discussions with interviewees suggest that whilst awareness of the Covenant is good, yet understanding what the Covenant can be used for is debatable. It is therefore clear that significant work is required to effectively communicate what the Covenant does and does not do for the Military Community, although this may be challenging in itself to account for the various levels of ability as outlined previously discussed.

Nevertheless, LASQ parents indicated that they felt Local Authority and school staff do not fully understand the principles of the Covenant with 21% parents (5 out of 24 parents) stating this as a reason for not utilising the Covenant when applying for their child's school place. Only 8% of parents (2 out of 24 parents) stated that they felt the Covenant should not be used in this way. Forster (2012) argues that since its implementation, the Covenant has been used to promote respect for Personnel yet there is some distance between what Personnel expect from the public and what the public are prepared to give. Further, he argues that there is a great difference between respect and understanding insofar as, the public may respect Personnel despite some being opposed to conflict, yet this does not mean that they understand the role of the Military or the challenges they encounter (Forster, 2012). Colin, a Key Stakeholder, iterated that there are also challenges around evaluation of progress on the ground, in respect of support for Service Families. In particular, Colin discussed the recommendations which were made in the *Living in our shoes report:*

The response from the Government is that virtually all of the recommendations have been accepted. I'm not convinced that the Government fully understands that some of the things that they think are in place, are in place (Colin, KS)

He further went on to state:

> How well does everybody that works in Local Government, that works in admissions, in schools, understand what the Covenant actually is? (Colin, KS)

This raises some questions regarding the evaluation of the Covenant working on the ground, in particular in respect of Service Children's education and the challenges experienced by parents when sourcing a school place. Two of the parent interviews felt that whilst the Covenant was an innovative idea the practicalities were problematic:

> I think it's more lip service than actually makes a difference (Laura, SP)

> Its paying lip service. I don't know what they can actually do (Elaine, SP)

Overall, whilst the Covenant sets out a promise between the State and its members (cf. Chapter 2), there is still a significant amount of work to be undertaken in regard to awareness and understanding. As Forster (2012) argues however, the distance between expectations in the relationship between the Military Community and the public are complex, as understanding the Covenant is different from implementing it to eliminate disadvantage.

7.5 Quality of education

Chapter 2 introduced the evidence in relation to Service Children attending Outstanding schools as rated by Ofsted. Choice for Service Parents will be diminished to some extent (where Service Families are subject to mobility), as it suggested in this research most Service Children attend a school closest to the military base they reside near. This was continually expressed throughout from the parent interviewees, in which they indicated, generally speaking their children would attend the closest school; or the closest school would be their first-choice preference. In some cases, this was because Service Parents were aware that other Service Children attended the school:

> I knew other children from the patch went to that school, I'd already spoken to the school themselves (Laura, SP)

> When we knew we're moving … first of all, we looked at the schools to see where we wanted to go … but none of them had spaces (for both children) … they offered us a school for [eldest child] and a school over a mile away for [youngest child] … I couldn't be in two places at once … we'd rather they were at the same school together (Sian, SP)

> One of [child's] friends when [they] went up to senior school, his mum didn't like the local school. So, she was taking [child] like 20 miles away. And [my child] was 'I want to go to that school' We were like it's probably just a bit of logistical nightmare. That's not going to happen sort of thing (Joe, SP)

> Every time we've got a posting order, we got forwarded the local school numbers, and we just rang them (Brian, SP)

> They've got no space at this school, and you can move to a different school down the road, but this one's got more mileage (Joanne, SP)

Parent interviewees were asked about the quality of education their children receive and if they felt their children had fair and equal access to a high standard of education. Although Service Children are less likely to attend an Ofsted rated Outstanding school there are some caveats to consider. Data which pertains to this is outdated and requires further examination.

Furthermore, as Service Children can be highly mobile, they are more likely to experience different standards of education as they cycle in and out of different schools. Recent evidence shows, 88% of schools in England are rated either as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted[47] (Ofsted, 2022, no pagination). Therefore, it is important to note that they are not disadvantaged in this regard because their access to Outstanding schools will be similar to non-Service Children. Joe, a Service Parent, described that due to the locality of some military bases, he felt some children are excluded from *better* schools:

> I think the nearest would be [name removed] grammar, which I would love to send my kids to but it's just too far away … then after that the school next door to their school I would have liked to have sent [child] to but it's a catholic school. We're not catholic, so straight way we can't get in there (Joe, SP)

Joe goes on to illustrate how parents who lived in the village since their children were born, have had their children baptized, and tick all the relevant boxes to ensure their children can secure a place at the school he preferred for his children. Joe felt that those who are in the military are limited in choice because of not being *settled* in one area. This was also supported by Brian, a Service Parent, who illustrated many military bases are in lower socioeconomic areas which he felt led to poorer choices in better performing schools:

> All the decent schools … we're never near any of those because of the camps, the boundaries, so you won't get [in]. Now, that's not my fault. It's

---

[47] Data from September 2021 to December 2021

not my kid's fault. So, if this decent school is two miles over the border, they should be given a chance to go there (Brian, SP)

Nevertheless, Brian went on to state that after a recent move the travel to his child's current school was causing issues resulting in his child being unhappy. As a result, the decision was made for his child to move school:

[Child] wanted to go there. [They] was the one that chose that school. [They] actually knew people who are already at the school, people [they] went to junior school with (Brian, SP)

Brian expressed that he was dissatisfied with the education his child was receiving and he felt that they were not being adequately supported in their new school for his child's Special Educational Need (cf. Chapter 6). Brian had additionally highlighted that when he initially applied for his child's secondary school place, the new school was not considered as a first-choice preference because he did not want his child to attend that school. Although Brian did not give a reason why; it was implied that he felt the school did not perform well. Brian did however note that his child started their new school during the Covid-19 pandemic and therefore Brian also recognised that the lack of support may have been due to the pandemic.

In comparison, LASQ respondents were asked how important they felt the Ofsted rating was when choosing a school for their child. Table 9 shows 35% of parents (28 out of 79 parents)[48] felt that the Ofsted rating was 'very important', and Figure 6 further shows that 74% (58 out of 78 parents)[49]of parents stated they 'agree' that their children had access to a high standard of education.

Table 9. Importance of Ofsted rating

	Parents
Very important	35% (28)
Somewhat important	44% (35)
Neither important nor unimportant	19% (15)
Somewhat unimportant	0% (0)
Very unimportant	1% (1)
Total	100% (79)

Source: LASQ

---

[48] This data includes non-Service Children
[49] this data included non-Service Children

Figure 6. Does your child have access to a high standard of education
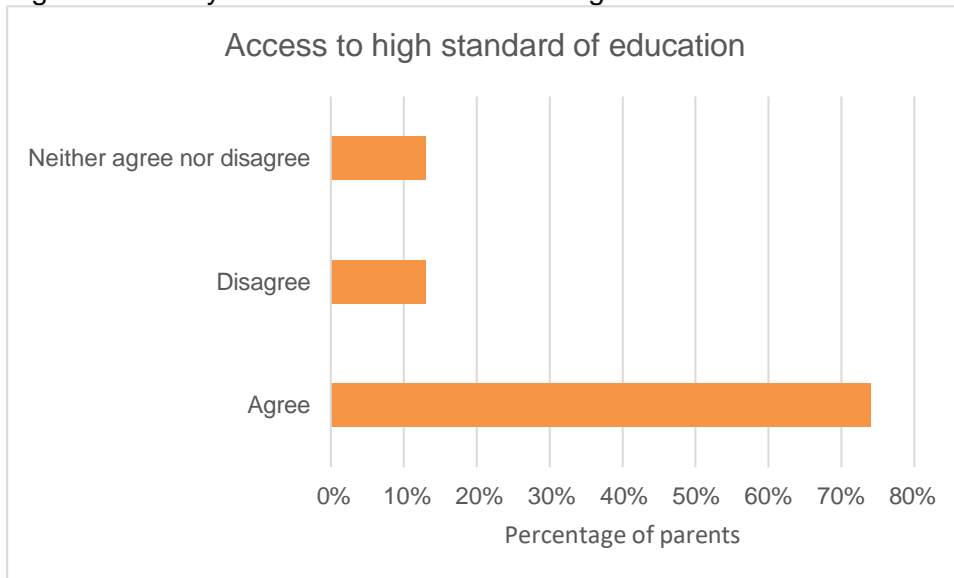
Source: LASQ

Research suggests Service Children are likely to experience different pedagogical approaches to learning throughout their school experiences, which has been shown to cause concern across some Service Parents (Ofsted, 2011). Evidence provided by Ofsted (2011) highlighted that issues arise when different pedagogical approaches may hinder academic progression. Examples include assorted styles of reading and writing in primary schools, repeating the same topics more than once, and changing exam boards when moving across different areas (Ofsted, 2011, p.31-32). Nevertheless, investigating access to a high standard of education for Service Children is problematic, as it is the influences of mobility which compounds these issues. Only one of the parent interviewees indicated that they were dissatisfied with teaching standards in respect of the curriculum and none of the interviewees explicitly discussed Ofsted ratings. Whilst comparisons were made in respect of choice of school, with some being *better,* only one parent interviewee explicitly stipulated that they were dissatisfied with learning experiences:

> Not every school does the same thing … it's the actual teaching that is different (Brian, SP)

> [Child] was improving. They said [child] would get a C in Math. Now since being there (new school) [Child's] Math grade has dropped dramatically (Brian, SP)

Literature suggests (Noret et al., 2015; Department for Education, 2010a) that Service Children perform academically similar to their civilian peers, and this was supported by Liz, a Key Stakeholder:

> In terms of outcomes, our military pupils are doing better than our civilian pupils (Liz, KS)

However, Noret et al. (2015) argue that the unique challenges of Service life should be considered when examining Service Children's outcomes. In particular they state that the experiences of Army Service Children may differ from those who are RAF or RN (Noret et al., 2015, p.39). In this regard, Service Children should not be compared to their civilian peers, nor one another. There is limited research to suggest that Service Children do not perform well as a result of lack of access to 'Outstanding' rated Ofsted schools. It is likely that, those who do not perform academically similar to their peers, do so as a result of their experiences which are unique to them.

7.6 Understanding the SEND Code of Practice

Literature argues that the SEND Code of Practice sets out that working in partnership with parents is crucial to ensure the success, the inclusivity, and the support of children with Special Educational Needs (Bryant et al., 2022; Hellawell, 2017). A crucial element of the Code states that all children with Special Educational Needs will be provided with support in the first instance, without delay (Department for Education and Department for Health, 2015). Problematically, evidence suggests that Children who have a Special Educational Need are more likely to be termed as mobile students, insofar as, they are more likely to move schools (Rubner Jorgensen and Perry, 2021). In this regard there are some concerns which affect the principles of support as set out in the SEND Code of Practice, and this is most prominent in respect of Service Children.

Recent reports demonstrate that children with Special Educational Needs are repeatedly being failed within the UK (ITV News, 2023; Hall, 2021) with some cases highlighting a significant lack in funding and provisions for this group of children. This places these children at risk and goes against the provisions set out in the Code and the UN CRPD which states, 'persons with disabilities receive the support required, within the general education system, to facilitate their effective education' (United Nations, 2006, no pagination).

LASQ and BSQ parents were asked whether they were aware of the SEND Code of Practice. Figure 7 shows that 41% of parents (32 out of 78 parents) stated that 'yes' they are aware of the Code, 31% (24 out of 78 parents) stated they 'no', and 28% (22 out of 78 parents) stated they were 'unsure'. Only one of the parent interviewee, Isobel, who had a child with a Special Educational Need stated that she was not aware of the Code, however she had a particularly good working knowledge around Special Educational Needs and the process of support. Isobel, a Service Parent, iterated that her knowledge was acquired outside of school:

> I only found this out through work. So, nobody at school shared that information with me, it took me a long time to get him even to have [child's] processing speeds and everything checked at school. And that took a lot of nagging. And I'm like, 'this is what the SenCO team are for why are you not doing it?' (Isobel, SP)

Figure 7. Parental awareness SEND Code of Practice
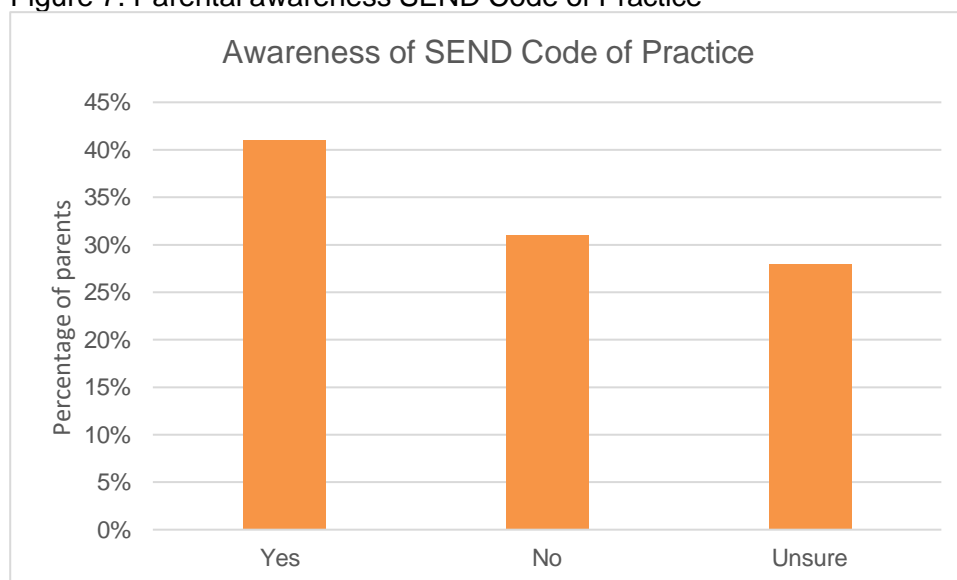
Sources: LASQ & BSQ

Furthermore, BSQ parents were also asked to explain their understanding of the SEND Code of Practice, responses were varied:

> Good channels between parents and teachers (BSP 96)

> Support [child] to reach potential in exams (BSP 85)

> That the school will provide support based on recommendations from dyslexia and [educational Psychologist] reports (BSP 75)

> To make reasonable provisions when needed to adapt teaching and remove learning barriers (BSP 128)

> To support and ensure opportunities are the same as others (BSP 35)

Despite parent interviewees stipulating that they were aware of the SEND Code of Practice only one interviewee demonstrated that they had an in depth knowledge of the Code. However, none of the interviewees mentioned the Code of Practice throughout the interviews until they were specifically asked about their awareness. Being aware of the Code is different to having an understanding of what the Code does and in some cases parent interviewees deflected discussions of the Code onto EHCPs or about meeting need:

> I think what they said was the Educational Health Care Plan that I got from [previous Local Authority], they said it was a waste of time, said it just looked like a paper exercise just to give [child], you know, that label (Layla, SP)

> Each school is different. Each schools got its own criteria, its own SenCo and all that lot. And depending on how good that is, depends on what they can do (Brian, SP)

Key Stakeholder interviewees however did demonstrate not only an awareness but additionally an understanding. That said, Karen, a Key Stakeholder working in a secondary school, related the Code to the increase in EHCPs:

> One of my biggest concerns is the increase in children with EHCPs (Karen, KS)

Karen went on to state that changes to the SEND Code of Practice had caused delays within her Local Authority which was a cause for concern. Moreover, Karen highlighted that changes over the years inevitably affected children with Special Educational Needs as there is always the question of being able to meet need through a sheer lack of resources. Kevin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, stated that he felt the Code was very effective:

> Its seriously effective, but remember a child with an EHCP, once you know what a child's needs are it is sent out to school, 'can you meet the child's needs?' Even if they say 'no' they can be directed to take the child … but a child without a plan that's another conversation (Kevin, KS)

Similarly, Colin, a Key Stakeholder working in Local Authority A, iterated that despite the SEND Code of Practice having good intent, there are serious issues in respect of mobile pupils and the differences in resources across the UK:

> Theres good intent within that document around meeting the needs of mobile SEND learners, whether they are military or not. I think the reality though on the ground is very very different to what is intended and very variable depending on where the children are (Colin, KS)

Overall, there were no perceived expectations in what the SEND Code of Practice does as demonstrated by the parent interviewees. However, this is likely a reflection of the understanding of the Code and what the Code should do. Key Stakeholders additionally demonstrated that there are issues within the Code which may not be reflected in everyday practice.

7.7 Rights and obligations

Exploring the rights of Service Personnel and their families and the obligations of the State toward the Military Community is complex and has been discussed throughout this research. Chapter 2 outlined the rights of Personnel and the lack of, or removal of rights once they attest to the Crown. Service Personnel are therefore unique in some respects as the divide between the private and public sphere is fluid. Unlike civilians, Service Personnel must *perform* in their roles at all times, insofar as, they are trained and disciplined to uphold the value and standards of the military. These are: Courage, Discipline, Respect for Others, Integrity, Loyalty, and Selfless Commitment, Lawful, Appropriate Behaviour, Total Professionalism, and Application (Army, 2023).

The demands of the military are argued as greedy as their time and commitment to the *job* takes priority over any other aspect of daily life; including their family (Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Segal, 1986; Meyer, 1975; Coser, 1974). Spouses/partners and children of Personnel, however, are not obligated to the *job*, although they are implicitly bound to some degree as the Serving persons career takes priority (cf. Chapter 2) (Ziff and Garland-Jackson, 2020). Elaine, a Service Parent, acknowledged that her family had made a commitment implicitly by supporting her husband's career:

> My husband has been serving his country, and due to ourselves, his family supporting him to do that, we are massively disadvantaged (Elaine, SP)

Elaine had previously accounted that serious decisions had been made within her family unit with one of their children making the decision not to move with the family and live with grandparents:

> [Child] made the decision at age 16 not come with us, and live with my mother-in-law, and [that] was horrendous (Elaine, SP)

The Covenant states that no members of the Military Community should experience disadvantage as a result of Service life. Yet Service Families are increasingly reporting that despite such measures being in place disadvantage still persists (Walker et al., 2020). In Elaine's case the education available to her children did not meet their needs. Whilst one child did initially move with the family, decisions were made to ensure that there would be no further disruption to the child's education:

> We had to make a very quick decision what to do because it wasn't going to work. This was year 9, a key point in [child's] education. So, we very quickly had to make the decision to put [child] in boarding school (Elaine, SP)

Much of the theoretical debates on the military as a greedy institution centre on the issues of the demands of Personnel from the State, and their operational effectiveness during times of deployment (Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Dandeker et al., 2006). It is during this time that the military is the greediest (Coser, 1974). What is missing from the literature, however, is the effectiveness of the family unit which is also argued as greedy by Vuga and Juvan (2013), when spouses/partners must take responsibility for everyday processes such as house moves and school applications. Whilst these processes may appear to be an everyday family norm, within the military family unit, the influence of mobility and the Serving persons obligations compound these norms further.

Castaneda and Harrell (2008) argue that although spouses/partners experience increase stress during times of Personnel absences, these stressors are still present during times when the Serving person is home. Further, the greediness of the military influences the ways in which spouses/partners take on the majority of household responsibilities despite the Serving person being home (Castaneda and Harrell, 2008). The majority of parent interviewees either explicitly or implicitly iterated that the stress of finding a school place lay with the mother, whilst some indicated that their spouse/partner had an input it was predominantly the mother who had to navigate school applications, and the stressors of their child's school experiences. As the previous Chapters have argued parent interviewees expressed that they wished for empathy and understanding during the challenging times of relocation. Empathy and understanding were found to be additionally embedded with rights:

> I don't feel like as a military family we should have any more rights than anybody else. But I do see if from the other side. I think we should have

some allowances, not rights, … and a bit of empathy from society … that
our life is quite difficult (Bethany, SP)

Nothing particularly different to other members of society, except I think
there has to be allowances and understanding that we don't choose to
move (Laura, SP)

I think it's just the right to be treated equally … why should you be
disadvantaged when you move? … the Armed Forces Covenant comes
into things like that (Isobel, SP)

I don't really know what my rights are. But I think my rights should be to
have a say in where I live, and how I'm able to do my job and stuff. And
yeah, where my children go to school, the area in which my children go to
school, all of those things, I think should be our right. Definitely (Sian, SP)

Parent interviewees were asked if they felt that their children's rights had ever

not been met. The majority of participants indicated that they felt their children's

rights had been met but this was not without its challenges. Only one parent

interviewee simply replied with 'yes' (Sophie, SP) when asked and did not wish

to divulge further.

Rights were also discussed in terms of how the Military Community is viewed by

the public. The majority of the interviewees discussed their rights in the context

of being understood. Whilst they did not wish for people to feel sorry for them,

there was an expectation that there should be some understanding about the

unique challenges they experience:

I believe we deserve the same respect as everyone. And I don't believe we
get that. Sometimes I think we're looked at as a hindrance in society
(Sophie, SP)

I wouldn't exactly say you feel like a valued part of society. No, not at all
(Layla, SP)

Hines et al. (2015) argue that support for the Services is higher when there are

times of conflict. Yet Personnel are trained and always required to be prepared

in the event of *threat:*

There is always a threat coming from somewhere (Kevin, KS)

It is the unique nature of their roles in the military which sets them apart from

the civilian population which in turn underpins the principles of the Covenant

(Ministry of Defence, 2015a). A caveat however is that the Covenant clearly

stipulates that there is an obligation towards the Military Community from every

member of society (Ministry of Defence, 2015a), yet for this to be achievable all individuals would need to agree with the principles of the Armed Forces; to protect the State (Army, 2022).

These debates of rights and obligations are embedded in the performance of social responsibility (Bowen et al., 2016; Segal, 2011; Miller et al., 1990). Social responsibility is said to be something which is learnt and additionally performed towards those who are considered *deserving* (Miller et al., 1990). If the general public do not agree with the Armed Forces then their moral obligations and social responsibility towards its members will be waivered and directed towards others (Bowen et al., 2016; Segal, 2011; Miller et al., 1990). In this regard, Service Personnel are likely to always experience barriers when met with individuals who do not feel morally obligated towards them in spite of what the Covenant stipulates.

7.8 Conclusion

This Chapter explored the theme of expectations and how this pertains to policy and practice in respect of the Service Family. This Chapter investigated the expectations of the School Admissions Code in respect of what Service Parents expect. Despite recent changes to the Code parent and Key Stakeholder interviewees highlight that the Code remains ambiguous in respect of Service Families. For some parents there was an expectation that Service Families should have some form of priority, if not at the very minimum an understanding of the challenges encountered. In answering research question 1, this research found that Service Parents are hindered in the school application process due to red tape issues in the School Admissions Code and because of its ambiguity.

This Chapter additionally focused on research questions 3, 3.1, and 3.2 and found that there are many issues in respect of the Covenant. Parent interviewees highlighted that in some cases the Covenant is seen as *lip service,* and this is often compounded by awareness and understanding of the Covenant. However, there was a clear expectation of the Covenant insomuch as, parents felt the Covenant could be utilised as a tool in school applications.

Furthermore, investigation of the SEND Code of practice was discussed and highlighted that the majority of parents had an awareness of the Code, in addition to Key Stakeholders. That said, there are some challenges surrounding what the Code does, and how it is understood. It was found that there was some expectations of what the Code should do, but this area requires further investigation.

Overall, quality of education was not found to be an overall factor in applying for school places although access to schools of choice was found to be limited (research question 1). Parents indicated that their children had access to a high standard of education although there were some concerns regarding different levels of teaching. In answering research questions 3, 3.1, and 3.2, this research found that whilst Service Children do have access to a high standard of education, this is highly influenced through mobility.

The moral obligations of the State towards Service Families was additionally examined in respect of research questions 3, 3.1, 3.2. As the literature points out in Chapter 2 the moral obligations of State towards the Military Community are complex (Bowen et al., 2016; Segal, 2011; Miller et al., 1990). Parent interviewees all demonstrated the ways in which they viewed their rights. The accounts highlight that whilst they feel their rights do not drastically differ there is the requirement for understanding, empathy and compassion regarding the experiences they encounter.

The following Chapter concludes this thesis drawing on the findings of this research.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The aims of this research were to explore Service Families' experiences of choosing and accessing suitable schools for their children, and to investigate the range of factors shaping these experiences of Service Families. Further this research investigated the experiences of Service Families who have a child or children with a Special Educational Need or Disability, and how the *military lifestyle* impacts these families. Moreover, it examined the obligations of the State in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant, and how these obligations are being met. It additionally investigated whether the rights of Service Children and Service Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities, to quality, inclusive education are being assured. Using mixed methods this research investigated and examined the challenges Service Parents experience when accessing school places for their children and in what ways Service Parents navigate the complex process of Special Educational Needs provisions for their children.

Analysis of existing literature and the data collected identified four main themes of (in)stability, (mis)understanding, support, and expectations. These key areas highlight the complex and complicated situations Service Parents experience as a result of the mobility they experience. However, as this research has shown these challenges are not specific to mobile Service Families, as mobility is not homogenous. Mobility is therefore a core feature in Service Families lives and is what often compounds the difficulties Service Families experience.

This Chapter will summarise the main findings of this research in relation to the research questions before making a series of important recommendations and will highlight the limitations of this research. Finally, this Chapter will conclude by emphasising the importance of this research and any potential impact this research will in the future.

8.1.1 (In)Stability

Chapter 4 focused on the theme of (in)stability and argued that (in)stability is a direct influence of the itinerant nature of the military. Chapter 4 answered research questions 1 and 1.1 (cf. Chapter 1). In Service life stability is

temporary and is something which can be experienced as a cycle, this influence has become known in this research as (in)stability. Stability is a concept to many Service Families which is desired, but also the ultimate *ideal*. In terms of Service Children's education, many Service Parents demonstrated that stability was the key factor in their educational journey, and this was often reinforced by Key Stakeholders implying that they also wish Service Families could have more stability in their lives. Throughout, many of the participants demonstrated (in)stability, with one participant explicitly acknowledging and demonstrating what (in)stability is; episodic periods of stability. (In)stability is many things, however the fundamental cause of (in)stability for this community is mobility.

Parents demonstrated that applying for school places is complex and goes beyond selecting a school and completing an application form. Service Families often have to navigate and make complex decisions when a new move occurs. Many red tape issues such as Assignment Order delays, housing allocation delays, in year access applications, and residing outside of Local Authorities further compound school applications. These challenges are additionally stressful when school applications are for children with Special Educational Needs. In part, mobility is only one influence of the school application process. To navigate this issue, some parents opt for boarding school, however this has also been described as 'overwhelming' and a complex process.

The parents in this research all provided individual accounts of how their experiences were unique to them despite experiencing the same challenges of mobility. Moreover, some parents described the emotional forms of labour which are involved when a new school place is required. In some instances, Service Parents demonstrated that it would be/was necessary for their children to live with other family members. Other participants described the choice to live separately from the Service person which was influenced as a direct result of mobility, and the disruption it brings to Service Families.

8.1.2 (Mis)Understanding

Chapter 5 focused on the theme of (mis)understanding and demonstrated the ways in which (mis)understanding is present within Service Families lives and explored research question 2 and question 2.1 (cf. Chapter 1). The Military

Community, as mentioned throughout, experience challenges which are unique to them. Often these challenges are perplexing to those outside of the community. However, many of the Key Stakeholders in this research demonstrated an array of experience which has facilitated them in understanding the complex nature of Service life. At times, parents expressed that they felt they were not always understood, or that there is a general lack of understanding from some members of society. This included school staff and Government departments. Only three of the Key Stakeholders interviewed were from the Military Community themselves, however their range of expertise did not differ vastly from the other non-Military Community Key Stakeholders. All of the Key Stakeholders interviewed, identified the key issues of Service life, with mobility being the first factor they often mentioned.

Nevertheless, Key Stakeholders expressed that mobility was a key area of concern for them as it is mobility which can dictate the educational life course of a Service Child. Some Key Stakeholders provided specific accounts of children missing key stages of curriculum in addition to repeating the same materials more than twice. In some extreme cases, Key Stakeholders spoke about the additional support required in order to ensure Service Children were not missing out on vital stages of work such as preparing for GCSE exams. All of the Key Stakeholders working in schools highlighted particularly good examples of assessing Service Children on arrival and ensuring that they were supported when settling into their new schools. These practices were often guided through their understanding of how to support Service Children. However, parents often depicted a different picture with many of the parents stating Key Stakeholders did not fully understand the challenges of Service life.

The majority of the Key Stakeholder interviewees discussed the challenges they experienced in the context of Covid-19. As this research took place during the pandemic this was inevitable. However, all Key Stakeholders highlighted that they either needed support from other staff which included better lines of communication and information dissemination, and that Local Authority departments needed to communicate better with schools. In one instance this also included better support from the DfE in respect of the School Admissions

Code with the suggestion that Local Authorities have more autonomy with academy schools. These issues are explored further in Section 8.2.

8.1.3 Support

Chapter 6 focused on theme of support and answered research questions 1, 2.2, and 2.3 (cf. Chapter 1). This Chapter focused in particular on Special Educational Needs. Support was found to be heavily linked with the coping strategies Service Families use to negate the unique challenges they experience. Support was additionally linked to Special Educational Needs provisions, and the ways in which Service Children are adequately supported in schools. Parent interviewees all provided different account of their experiences, however in some of these experiences, support was connected to wider family support. For some participants this included, choosing schools based on their own parents opinions, deciding to be married unaccompanied to provide continued support for their children in school, and comparing themselves with other families who may have additional support from wider family members.

Data showed that in terms of support parents whose children attended a boarding school were more likely to feel supported, although there were some instances where parents expressed support had reduced since starting a boarding school. In some cases, parent interviewees demonstrated that in order to receive and maintain support for their children, a degree of advocacy was required. Chapter 7 therefore argued and demonstrated that support is founded upon the relationship between Key Stakeholders and parents. In terms of Service Parents this means that when a move occurs, these relationships are continually being rebuilt. Service Parents are continually renegotiating and advocating for support for their children.

Furthermore, Key Stakeholder interviewees demonstrated that in addition to their wide range of expertise, good systems were in place to ensure that support is provided for Service Children. That, said in some instances Key Stakeholders expressed that communication between them and Service Parents was vital in ensuring that there are no delays in children receiving the support they require. Key Stakeholder interviewees also iterated that they felt supported in their roles in the majority of cases, however this was often marred

with wider issues of communication from Local Authorities and wider Government departments.

8.1.4 Expectations

Chapter 7 focused on the theme of expectations and demonstrated the ways in which Service Parents expect schools and Local Authorities to understand the unique challenges associated with a military life. Further, Chapter 7 highlighted what Service Parents expect from Key Stakeholders in terms of support in their children's education in respect of the Covenant. Many of the expectations communicated related to policy and practice, such as the Covenant and what it means, and the SEND Code of Practice. Chapter 7 answered research questions 1, 3, 3.1, and 3.2 (cf. Chapter 1).

Examination of the School Admissions Code highlighted that there is some ambiguity in respect of Service Children. Key Stakeholder interviewees stipulated that providing priority for Service Families posed many challenges such as giving priority over other children. In this respect priority for Service Families calls into question debates on equality for all children. However, both Key Stakeholder and parent interviewees acknowledged that there needs to be clearer clarification, and empathy and understanding within the application process. Furthermore, it was demonstrated that unaccompanied Service Families are not included in the criteria. Data from the LASQ also showed that the majority of parents felt Service Children should have priority when applying for school places. In answering research question 1. the expectations of how the Code should be implemented was shown to differ, however parent interviewees expressed that they felt they should have the right to apply for and be allocated the school of their choice.

This Chapter also highlighted that there are significant challenges around understanding the Covenant. Participants expressed various different levels of understanding regarding what the Covenant is and does, and further communicated the ways in which they had utilised the Covenant. As argued the Covenant does not take precedence over any other policy, and this becomes complicated in respect of Service Families. Although the Covenant is there to mitigate and eliminate disadvantage, the School Admissions Code takes priority. Better understanding of the Covenant for both Service Parents and Key

Stakeholders is therefore advantageous and may remove any expectation that the Covenant can facilitate school applications.

Further this Chapter explored the rights of Service Children to inclusive education and examined the rights of Service Families. Overall, there some very clear expectations in respect of what Service Parents consider as a right. Significantly these rights are, the right to be treated fairly, the right to be understood, and the right for compassion and empathy.

8.2 Theoretical implications and insights

For decades scholars have argued that the military institution is greedy, with the classic associations of loyalty, commitment, and time from its members permeating theoretical arguments (Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974). Whilst the idea of the military as a greedy institution does still exist, changes to the military family unit raises questions as to whether this idea is outdated. This research has argued that whilst military family members do not attest to the Crown, they are implicitly obligated and are subjected to the demands placed on Personnel by the State. They are, in its nature, at the whim of the military. As an institution the military differs from other ideas of institutions such as Goffman's work on total institutions. Personnel voluntarily join the military institution, and it is here that scholars have unpicked the demands placed on Personnel such as sacrificing one's life; and this is often the centrepiece for its greediness (Vuga and Juvan, 2013; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974).

Yet, what is often missing from these debates is the idea that the military is not solely a greedy institution, it is in fact also an idle one; and this is no truer when considering the military family unit. It has been argued that Personnel require support from their families to maintain their effectiveness in their soldier roles (Vuga and Juvan, 2013), however, this idea assumes that either the spouse/partner is resilient enough to cope with stress (particularly in times of deployment when the Serving Person is away), and/or that the spouse/partner is responsible for, and undertakes, caring responsibilities for their children. Thus, the military is a greedy institution because of its demands placed on

Personnel and its ignorance of the unique stressors experienced by the military family unit.

Military families have been following their loved ones since the 1600s (Venning, 2005), yet these families are ignored through the idleness of this institution. In the modern era, families are changing, and they are no longer shaped by the religious notions of heterosexuality and marriage. Dual-working couples are also more common with many families being unable to afford one parent staying at home or having one household income (Ministry of Defence, 2022e). In terms of military families, they too, are affected by these changes (Walker et al., 2020), yet the military continues to demand the same level of loyalty, commitment, and time from its members as it did 100 years ago.

Personnel are more likely to be effective when their home life is stress free (Walker et al., 2020), yet this is juxtaposed by working in one of the most chaotic occupations in the UK. For the family unit to be stress free, the military, and other Government departments, should take particular aspects of life into consideration, for instance, spousal employment, health needs, and children's education. It is clear that a significant shift in the demands placed on Personnel is required, and that attitudes towards the military family need to change in order to avoid placing them at the whim of the military. Without this, the institution of the military is therefore no longer just greedy, it is indeed idle, as its ignorance towards the military family unit places them at risk of continuing to experience inequality and disadvantage – contradicting the promise of the Armed Forces Covenant.

8.3 Recommendations and limitations

In this section recommendations for further research and investigation into Service Families are presented, together with suggestions to help improve understanding of the needs of Service families. This section will also highlight the limitations of this research.

8.3.1 Recommendations

This research investigated the understanding of the Armed Forces Covenant. Whilst the majority of participants were aware of the Covenant there is much misunderstanding about what the Covenant actually does. In this regard it is

recommended that all Local Authorities receive compulsory in depth training on the Armed Forces Covenant. Training in all Local Authorities is beneficial in increasing awareness of the Covenant, but also, to ensure that the promise set out to the Military Community is being upheld. Greater awareness of the Covenant will facilitate minimising disadvantage across all Public and Private Services. Further the MoD should provide statutory guidance and training to Personnel and families to ensure that there is no confusion regarding the Covenant.

This research also highlighted that across Local Authorities there are some differences in the school application process with parent interviewees providing various accounts of the challenges they had encountered. It is therefore recommended that all Local Authorities provide a 'how to guide' for Military Families applying school places in the area. This simple measure could alleviate some stress from Service Parents when moving into new areas as suggested by a participant. Further, these guides should be widely available and disseminated to Service Families upon receipt of posting order.

This research has additionally highlighted that since 2011 there has been a lack of interest and research from the DfE in respect of Service Children, and this has been supported in the Key Stakeholder interviewee accounts. Therefore, this research recommends that the DfE should promote and encourage school staff training, in all schools, on the challenges of Service life. At present, resources and information on Service Families falls to third party organisations and charities. In this regard, Key Stakeholders working in schools may miss the opportunity to broaden their understanding, particularly if they are not from the Military Community.

Moreover, the findings demonstrated that there are some issues with the interpretation of the School Admissions Code. Therefore, it is recommended that the DfE reconsider the wording of the School Admissions Code, and to consider Service Families status regardless of mobility. This is of the upmost importance for those families who may be leaving the Services or may choose to live married unaccompanied. Further, to allow Service Families to apply for school places with greater ease by removing red tape issues such as requiring proof of a move. The parent participants in this research further demonstrated

that they experienced challenges at all points in the year when applying for school places. Although this research did not seek to express that Service Families should be prioritised, it has highlighted that indeed these families experience challenges which are unique to them. In light of this, it is recommended that the red tape issues of school application deadlines are reconsidered for Service Families. This particular recommendation draws on the premise of the Covenant; no Service Family should experience disadvantaged as a result of Service life.

The Covenant has been discussed throughout this thesis and it has been highlighted that there is some misunderstanding in what the Covenant does in respect of Service Children's education. Some of the participants in this research implied that the Covenant could assist in the school application process. To avoid any misunderstandings there needs to be clear communications on what the Covenant can and cannot do in respect of Service Parents applying for school places. Some participants indicated that their Local Authority was not aware or had signed up to the Covenant. This is problematic. In line with the previous recommendations the MoD should provide clearer guidance to Service Parents regarding the Covenant. It is vital that this information is disseminated to spouses and partners, in addition to Personnel.

Finally, this research explored Service Parents who choose to send their children to a boarding school. Whilst the majority of these parents indicated that they chose boarding school for 'stability' there are some significant concerns surrounding costs. Whilst CEA is widely available to all those who qualify it is recommended that the personal contributions percentage takes into account the rank and pay of soldiers.

8.3.2 Limitations and areas for future research

There were some limitations in this research which could not investigate all Local Authorities in England in respect of their school applications process. It would have been advantageous to include more Local Authorities within the original research design. However, as Chapter 3 argues, there were many challenges within this research which were influenced by Covid-19. Conducting this research during the pandemic resulted in a smaller sample size. In terms of

future research, it would be advantageous to investigate this area with a larger sample size and include more Local Authorities to examine any comparisons. However, this research has demonstrated that whilst the School Admissions Code sets out criteria for Service Families differences do occur across the Local Authorities as shown in the data.

Furthermore, this research could not address many of the specific challenges encountered such as the complex negotiation of support for Service Children with a Special Educational Need and Disability. Whilst this research did not solely focus on the Special Educational Needs of Service Children, it is acknowledged that this area is worthy, and required, of further investigation. It is suspected that Service Children with Special Educational Needs are being missed and lost in the system as a result of frequent mobility. As the parent interviewees have demonstrated, Service Children are missed or assumed as having behavioural issues due to their parents careers and the mobility they may experience. Therefore, further investigation of these issues is important to ensure that the rights of these children are being met.

8.4 Conclusion

Overall, this research has demonstrated the unique challenges which influence the lives of Service Families and this further compounds simple everyday issues such as applying for school places. Whilst this research has not sought to make comparisons with civilian families, it has demonstrated the additional *labour* for Service Families which they endure when an everyday process is not simple. A school application should be a straightforward process from start to finish, although the stressors of everyday life cannot guarantee this, Service Families often experience many issues along the way. In applying for school places on each move, the challenges become additionally complex when policies counteract each other. This is particularly the case in respect of the Armed Forces Covenant and the School Admissions Code. On the one hand, the Covenant underpins the moral commitment to society stipulating that Service Families should not experience any disadvantages, yet the School Admissions Code takes priority and in many ways can disadvantage Service Families when they left waiting for school places or having to fight for a school which meets their child's needs.

Meeting the needs of Service Children, should, as with all children, be a priority. Yet many of the parents in this research expressed or implied that they felt their children's needs had not always been met. This was particularly true for Service Parents who had children with a Special Educational Need. These groups of parents demonstrated that the issues of mobility further compound the unique challenges of Service life, and often it is these parents who have to fight harder for their children needs to be meet. Whilst the Key Stakeholder interviewees demonstrated some exceptionally good best practice examples of meeting need, and further how they understand the challenges of Service life, there are many red tape areas which inhibit minimising such challenges. At best, as the recommendations point out, a wider awareness of Service Families and Service Children in schools communicated and supported by the DfE would be beneficial.

The concluding thoughts of this research point to the moral obligations of the State towards Service Families. The Covenant, as stated, is underpinned by its moral obligations, yet this obligation is questionable. For the State to be entirely obligated this would mean every individual in the country, every Public Service, and every private entity, would need to be committed to upholding the Covenant. Yet signing the Covenant is not compulsory, and in some regards is considered as *lip service* to the Military Community as pointed out by some participants. The State must do better to ensure that where possible, the Covenant is promoted, respected, and understood. Only then can true moral obligation be achieved.

Bibliography

Abbott, P. 2000. Gender. In: Payne, G. ed. *Social Divisions.* Hampshire: Palgrave, pp.55-90.

Adams, R. and Stewart, H. 2020. UK schools to be closed indefinitely and exams cancelled. [Online]. [Accessed 30 April 2021]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/18/coronavirus-uk-schools-to-be-closed-indefinitely-and-exams-cancelled

Aerny-Perrenton, N., Dominguez-Berjon, M.F., Esteban-Vasallo, M.D. and Garcia-Riolobos, C. 2015. Participation and factors associated with late or non-response to an online survey. *Journal of Evaluation in Clinical Practice.* **21**(4), pp.688-693.

Alderson, P. and Morrow, V. 2011. *The ethics of research with children and young people: a practical handbook.* London: Sage.

Allen, K. 2021. *Conversation with Gemma Carr and Karen Tatham,* 22nd March.

Arksey, H. and Knight, P.T. 1999. *Interviewing for social scientists: an introductory resource with examples.* London: Sage.

Armed Forces Covenant. 2022. *Sign the covenant.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/get-involved/sign-the-covenant/

Army. 2014. *A guide for Army families* [Online]. [Accessed 15 July]. Available from: www.army.mod.uk

Army. 2022. *What we do: we are always ready to serve.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.army.mod.uk/what-we-do/

Army. 2023. *A soldier's values and standards.* [Online]. [Accessed 3 May 2023]. Available from: https://www.army.mod.uk/who-we-are/our-people/a-soldiers-values-and-standards/

Army Families Federation. 2015. *State boarding schools survey results.* Andover.

Army Families Federation. 2020a. *Families concerns 2019.* [Online]. Andover: Army Families Federation [Accessed 22 June 2020]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Families-Concerns-2019-FINAL-ONLINE.pdf

Army Families Federation. 2020b. *Families concerns 2020.* [Online]. Andover: Army Families Federation. [Accessed 31 October 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/about-aff/surveys-research/

Army Families Federation. 2022a. *Applying for SFA/SSFA.* [Online]. [Accessed 28 February 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/advice/housing/applying-sfa-ssfa/

Army Families Federation. 2022b. *Continuity of education allowance (CEA).* [Online]. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/advice/money-and-allowances/continuity-of-education-allowance/

Army Families Federation. 2022c. *Families concerns apr 21 - mar 22.* [Online]. Andover: Army Families Federation. [Accessed 31 October 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/about-aff/surveys-research/

Army Families Federation. 2022d. *Special educational needs and disability (send).* [Online]. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/advice/education-childcare/special-educational-needs/

Army Families Federation. 2022e. *Your germany posting.* [Online]. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/your-posting/your-germany-posting/

Army Families Federation, Naval Families Federation and Royal Air Force Families Federation. 2014. *Armed Forces information* [Online]. [Accessed 4 January 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417260/Families_Federation_factsheet_armed_forces_information.pdf

Army&You. 2013. *Recruit the soldier, retain the family.* [Online]. [Accessed 16 May 2022]. Available from: https://armyandyou.co.uk/recruit-soldier-retain-family/

Aronson, K.R., Sandee, J., Kyler, M.S., Jeremy, D., Moeller, M.A. and Perkins, D.F. 2016. Understanding military families who have dependents with special health care and/or educational needs. *Disability and Health Journal.* **9**(8), pp.423-430.

Ashbury, A., Fox, L., Deniz, E., Code, A. and Tosseb, U. 2020. How is covid-19 affecting the mental health of children with special educational needs and disabilities and their families *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.* **51**(5), pp.1772-1780.

Asselin, M.E. 2003. Insider research: issues to consider when doing qualitative research in your own setting. *Journal for nurses in staff development.* **19**(2), pp.99-103.

Bacon, J.K. and Causton-Theoharis. 2013. 'It should be teamwork': a critical investigation of school practices and parent advocacy in special education. *International Journal of Inclusive Education.* **17**(7), pp.682-699.

Bandura, A. 1997. *Self-efficacy: the exercise of control.* New York: Freeman and Company.

Baverstock, A. 2018. Never assume resilience in forces children. *Tes.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 January 2020]. Available from: https://www.tes.com/news/never-assume-resilience-forces-children

BBC News. 2015. UK troops in Afghanistan: timeline of key events. *BBC News Online.* 22 December

BBC News. 2016. Female front line soldiers 'will put lives at risk', says ex-army chief. [Online]. [Accessed 1 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-35976113

BBC News. 2019. Schools 'failing to diagnose at least 80% of dyslexic pupils'. *BBC News.* [Online]. 25 October [Accessed 16 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-50095218

BBC News. 2020. Coronavirus: parents heed calls not to send children to school. [Online]. [Accessed 22 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-51999539

Beardslee, W., Lester, P., Klosinski, L., Saltzman, W., Woodward, K., Nash, W., Mogil, C., Koffman, R. and Leskin, G. 2011. Family-centered preventive intervention for military families: implications for implementation science. *Prevention Science.* **12**(4), pp.339-348.

Bey, D.R. and Lange, J. 1974. Waiting wives: women under stress. *American Journal of Psychiatry.* **131**(3), pp.283-286.

Bishop, K. 2022. The 'time poverty' that robs parents of success. [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20220201-the-time-poverty-that-robs-parents-of-success

Blaikie, N. 2000. *Designing social research.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bloor, M., Frankland, J. and Thomas, M. 2001. *Focus groups in social research: introducing qualitative methods.* London: Sage.

Bowen, G.L., Jensen, T.M., Martin, J.A. and Mancini, J.A.a.B., G.L. 2016. The willingness of military members to seek help: the role of social involvement and social responsibility. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* **57**(1-2), pp.203-215.

Boyatziz, R.E. 1998. Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development. London: Sage.

Boyd, B.A. 2002. Examining the relationship between stress and lack of social support in mothers of children with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities* **17**(4), pp.208-215.

Bradley, S. and Almond, M. 2022. *Duty and care: Armed Forces family mobility and health care report.* [Online]. London: Anglia Ruskin University. [Accessed 11 August 2022]. Available from: https://aru.ac.uk/veterans-and-families-institute

Brady, D., Low, N., Neogi, R. and Vinson, N. 2013a. *The education of Service Children: findings of a national audit office consultation.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 2 December 2018]. Available from: https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/10145-001-The-Education-of-Service-Children.pdf

Brady, D., Low, N. and Vinson, N. 2013b. *The education of service personnel: findings of a national audit office consultation.* [Online]. London: HMSO. Available from: www.nao.org.uk

Brannick, T. and Coghlan, D. 2007. In defence of being "native" the case for insider academic research. *Organizational Research Methods.* **10**(1), pp.59-74.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology.* **3**(2), pp.77-101.

Brennan, E.M., Rosenzweig, P.J. and Stewart, L.M. 2016. Challenges and supports for employed parents of children and youth with special needs. In: Allen, T.D. and Eby, L.T. eds. *The Oxford handbook of work and family.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.165-181.

British Medical Association. 2022. *Autism spectrum disorder.* [Online]. [Accessed 16 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.bma.org.uk/what-we-do/population-health/improving-the-health-of-specific-groups/autism-spectrum-disorder

British Sociological Association. 2017. *Statement of ethical practice.* [Online]. Durham: British Sociological Association. [Accessed 19 March 2021.]. Available from: https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24310/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice.pdf

British Sociological Association. 2020. *Ethics guidelines and collated resources for digital research: statement of practice Annexe.* [Online]. Durham: British Sociological Association. [Accessed 18 March 2021.]. Available from: https://www.britsoc.co.uk/media/24309/bsa_statement_of_ethical_practice_annexe.pdf

Brooke-Holland, L. and Mills, C. 2020. *The Armed Forces Covenant and status in law.* London: HMSO.

Brown, C., Daniels, H., James, C., Jones, G. and Lauder, H. 2011. *Managing pupil mobility to maximise learning.* [Online]. Nottingham National College. [Accessed 31 March 2023]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/339990/managing-pupil-mobility-to-maximise-learning-summary.pdf

Bryant, B., Parish, N. and Kulawik, K. 2022. *Agreeing to disagree? research into arrangements for avoiding disagreements and resolving disputes in the SEND system in England.* [Online]. London Isos partnership and Local Government Association. [Accessed 14 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.local.gov.uk/agreeing-disagree-research-arrangements-avoiding-disagreements-and-resolving-disputes-send-system

Bryman, A. 2012. *Social Research Methods.* 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burgess, S., Greaves, E., Vignoles, A. and Wilson, D. 2015. What parents want: school preferences and school choice. *The Economic Journal.* **125**(587), pp.1262-1289.

Burke, M.M., Meaden-Kaplansky, H., Patton, K.A. and Cummings, K.P. 2017. Advocacy for children with social communication needs: perspectivites from parents and school professionals. *The Journal of Special Education.* **00**(0), pp.1-10.

Burnard, P. 1994. The telephone interview as a data collection method. *Nurse Education.* **14**(1), pp.67-72.

Burrell, L.M., Adams, G.A., Durand, D.B. and Castro, C.A. 2006. The impact of military lifestyle demands on well-being, army, and family outcomes *Armed Forces and Society.* **33**(1), pp.43-58.

Byrne, A. 2011. What factors influence the decisions of parents of children with special educational needs when choosing a secondary educational provision for their child at change of phase from primary to secondary education? a review of the literature *Journal of Research in Special Educational Needs.* **13**(2), pp.129-141.

Cabinet Office and Department for Education. 2022. *Children of critical workers and vulnerable children who can access schools or education settings.* [Online]. [Accessed 28 September 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-educational-provision/guidance-for-schools-colleges-and-local-authorities-on-maintaining-educational-provision

Cambridgeshire County Council and Council, P.C. 2020. *Cambridgeshire and Peterborough service children's education guide.* Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

Carr, G. and Tatham, K. 2021. 'Excuse me, I have a delivery' The [re] construction of interview 'space' in the Covid-19 pandemic. *Hillary Place Papers.* [Online]. (9). [Accessed 15 May 2022]. Available from: https://hpp.education.leeds.ac.uk/issues/issue-six-2020-2021/

Carrell, J. 2019. *Listening to our service children survey.* [Online]. [Accessed 19 February 2020.]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/AFF_Listening_to_our_Service_Children_Survey_Command_Brief_FINAL.pdf

Castaneda, L.W. and Harrell, M.C. 2008. Military spouse employment: a grounded theory approach to experiences and perceptions. *Armed Forces and Society.* **34**(3), pp.389-412.

Cavanagh, M.E. 1995. Rediscovering compassion. *Journal of Religion and Health.* **34**(4), pp.317-328.

Centre for Educational Neuroscience. 2022. *Why has there been a rise in number of SEN children, especially in the early year?* [Online]. [Accessed 20 October 2022]. Available from: http://www.educationalneuroscience.org.uk/2022/04/01/why-has-there-been-a-rise-in-number-of-sen-children-especially-in-the-early-years/

Centre for Social Justice. 2016. *Military families and transition.* [Online]. London: Centre for Social Justice. [Accessed 29 January 2019]. Available from: https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/MILITARY-FAMILIES.pdf

Cerna, L., Rutigliano, A. and Mezzanotte, C. 2020. *The impact of Covid-19 on student equity and inclusion: supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings.* [Online]. Paris: OECD. [Accessed 28 September 2020]. Available from: https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion-supporting-vulnerable-students-during-school-closures-and-school-re-openings-d593b5c8/

Chandra, A., Lara-Cinisomo, S., Jaycox, L.H., Tanielian, T., Burns, R.M., Ruder, T. and Han, B. 2010a. Children on the homefront: the experience of children from military families. *Pediatrics.* **125**(1), pp.16-25.

Chandra, A., Martin, L.T., Hawkins, S.A. and Richardson, A. 2010b. The impact of parental deployment on child social and emotional functioning: perspectives of school staff. *Journal of Adolescent Health.* **46**(3), pp.218-223.

Chavez, C. 2008. Conceptualizing from the inside: advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *The Qualitative Report.* **13**(3), pp.474-494.

Child Rights International Network. 2019. *Conscription by poverty?: deprivation and army recruitment in the UK.* [Online]. London: Child Rights International Network. [Accessed 18 March 2022]. Available from: https://home.crin.org/readlistenwatch/stories/2020/5/19/press-release-british-army-targets-youngest-and-poorest-for-riskiest-roles?rq=conscription%20by%20poverty

Children's Commissioner. 2019. *Childhood vulnerability in numbers: need, spend, and the millions of children in england who miss out.* [Online]. London: Children's Commissioner. [Accessed 2 February 2023]. Available from: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/childhood-vulnerability-in-england-2019/

Children's Commissioner. 2022. *Celebrating military families: Annex to a positive approach to a parenting: part 2 of the independent family review.* [Online]. London: Children's Commissioner. [Accessed 1 February 2023]. Available from: https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/2022/12/20/family-review-part-ii-celebrating-military-families-annex/

Children's Education Advisory Service. 2020. *Continuity of education allowance (CEA).* [Online]. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/the-childrens-education-advisory-service-ceas#continuity-of-education-allowance-cea

Claridge, M. 2020. *Forces additional needs and disability forum: 30th anniversary report "families fighting on".* [Online]. London: FANDF and SSAFA. [Accessed 24 July 2022]. Available from: https://nff.org.uk/fandf-report/

Clayton, C., Clayton, R. and Potter, M. 2020. *British families in lockdown: initial findings.* [Online]. Leeds: Leeds Trinity University. [Accessed 26 September 2022]. Available from: https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/media/site-assets/documents/key-documents/pdfs/british-families-in-lockdown-report.pdf

Clever, M. and Segal, D.R. 2013. The demographics of military children and families. *Future Child.* **23**(2), pp.13-39.

Clifton, G. 2004. Making the case for the BRAT (British Regiment Attached Traveller). *British Educational Research Journal.* **30**(3), pp.457-462.

Cobseo. 2009. *The unique nature of military service.* [Online]. [Accessed 4 August 2021]. Available from: https://www.cobseo.org.uk/files/unique-nature-may-2009.pdf

Coser, L.A. 1974. *Greedy institutions: patterns of undivided commitment.* New York: The Free Press.

Cramm, H., Godfrey, C.M., Murphy, S., McKeown, S. and Dekel, R. 2022. Experiences of children growing up with a parent who has military-related post-traumatic stress disorder: a qualitative systematic review. *JBI Evidence Synthesis.* **20**(7), pp.1638-1740.

Creswell, J.W. and Plano Clark, V.L. 2007. *Designing and conducting mixed methods research.* London: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J.W., Plano Clark, V.L., Gutmann, M.L. and Hanson, W.E. 2003. Advanced mixed methods research design. In: Tashakkori, A. and Teddle, C. eds. *Handbook of mixed methods in social & behavioural research.* London: Sage, pp.209-239.

Cridland, E.K., Jones, S.C., Magee, C.A. and Caputi, P. 2014. Family-focused autism spectrum disorder research: a review of the utility of family systems approaches. *Autism.* **18**(3), pp.213-222.

Crozier, G. and Reay, D. 2005. *Activating participation: parents and teachers working towards partnership.* Stoke on Trent Trentham Books.

Dandeker, C., French, C., Birtles, C. and Wessely, S. 2006. *Deployment experiences of British Army wives before, during and after deployment: satisfaction with military life and use of support networks.* KING'S COLLEGE LONDON (UNITED KINGDOM) DEPT OF WAR STUDIES.

David, M., West, A. and Ribbens, J. 1994. *Mother's intuition? choosing secondary school.* London: The Farmer Press.

Davis, J.M. and Finke, E.H. 2015. The experience of military families with children with autism spectrum disorders during relocation and separation. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.* **45**(7), pp.2019-2034.

Dearden, L. 2018. Women now allowed to apply for Royal Marines and all other frontline military roles, defence secretary announces. [Online]. [Accessed 1 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/women-soldiers-army-military-sas-defence-government-infantry-frontline-gavin-williamson-female-a8601371.html

Decety, J. and Jackson, P.L. 2006. A social-neuroscience perspective on empathy. *Current Directions in Psycho=logical science.* **15**(2), pp.54-58.

Decker, S.E., Naugle, A.E., Carter-Visscher, R., Bell, K. and Seifet, A. 2011. Ethical issues in research on sensitive topics: participants' experiences of distress and benefit. *Journaal of Empirical Research on Human ResearchEthics: An International Journal.* **6**(3), pp.55-64.

Denscombe, M. 2008. Communities of practice: a research paradigm for the mixed methods approach. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research.* **2**(3), pp.270-283.

Department for Education. 2010a. *The educational performance of children of service personnel.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 6 May 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-educational-performance-of-children-of-service-personnel

Department for Education. 2010b. *How schools secure the progress of children from the armed forces families: good practice guidance.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 3 December 2018]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/how-schools-secure-the-progress-of-children-from-the-armed-forces-families

Department for Education. 2014. *School admissions code* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 2 December 2020]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/389388/School_Admissions_Code_2014_-_19_Dec.pdf

Department for Education. 2016. *DfE strategy 2015-2020: world class education and care.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 5 May 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/508421/DfE-strategy-narrative.pdf

Department for Education. 2021a. *Complete the school census.* [Online]. [Accessed 18 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/complete-the-school-census

Department for Education. 2021b. *School admissions code.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 10 July 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2

Department for Education. 2021c. *School census 2020 to 2021: business and technical specification.* [Online]. London: HMSO. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/953011/School_Census_Business_and_Technical_Specification_Version_1.6_publishing.pdf

Department for Education. 2022a. *Pupil premium: overview.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 July 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pupil-premium/pupil-premium

Department for Education. 2022b. *School admissions code.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-admissions-code--2

Department for Education. 2022c. *Special educational needs and disability: an analysis and summary of data sources.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 15th February 2023]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082518/Special_educational_needs_publication_June_2022.pdf

Department for Education and Department for Health. 2015. *Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years.* London: HMSO.

DePoy, E. and Gitlin, L.N. 2011. *Introduction to research: understanding and applying multiple strategies.* 4th ed. Missouri: Elsevier Mosby.

DeVoe, E.R. and Ross, A. 2012. The parenting cycle of deployment. *Military Medicine.* **177**(2), pp.184-190.

Docherty, L. 2021. *Armed forces: private education, question for ministry of defence.* [Online]. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2021-06-28/23128

Dockrell, J., Peacey, N. and Lunt, I. 2002. *Literature review: meeting the needs of children with special educational need.* [Online]. London: Institute of Education, University of London. [Accessed 13 June 2022]. Available from: https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1507350/

Doll, B. and Lyon, M. 1998. A risk and resilience: implications for the delivery of education, and mental health services in schools. **27**(3), pp.348-363.

Duncombe, J. and Marsden, D. 1995. 'Workaholics' and 'whingeing women': theorising intimacy and emotion work-the last frontier of gender inequality?. *The Sociological Review.* **43**(1), pp.151-169.

Dwyer, S.C. and Buckle, J.L. 2009. The Space between: on being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* **8**(1), pp.54-63.

Easterbrooks, M.A., Ginsburg, K. and Lerner, R.M. 2013. Resilience among military youth. *Future Child.* **23**(2), pp.99-120.

Edwards, R. and Holland, J. 2013. *What is qualitative interviewing?* London: Bloomsbury.

Ekas, N.V., Lickenbrock, D.M. and Whitham, T.L. 2010. Optimism, social support, and well-being in mothers of children with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.* **40**(10), pp.1274-1284.

Elwood, S.A. and Martin, D.G. 2000. "Placing" interviews: location and scales of power in qualitative research. *The Professional Geographer.* **52**(4), pp.649-657.

Emmel, N. 2013. *Sampling and choosing cases in qualitative research: a realist approach* London: Sage.

Esqueda, M.C., Astor, R.V. and Tunac De Pedro, K.M. 2012. A call to duty: educational policy and school reform addressing the needs of children from military families. *Educational Researcher.* **41**(2), pp.65-70.

Feldman, D.C. and Tompson, H.B. 1993. Expatriation, repatriation, and domestic geographical relocation: an empirical investigation of adjustment to new job assignments *Journal of International Business Studies.* **24**(3), pp.507-529.

Field, A. 2013. *Discovering statistics using imb spss statistics.* 4th ed. London: Sage.

Figley, C.R. 1993. Coping with stressors on the home front. *Journal of Social Issues.* **49**(4), pp.51-71.

Flemming, W., King, B., Robinson, K., Wade, E. and B., E. 2022. Is there no "I" in team? potential bias in key informant interviews when asking individuals to represent a collective perspective *PLOS ONE.* [Online]. **17**(1). [Accessed 6 December 2022]. Available from:
https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261452

Forces Children Scotland. 2022. *About us.* [Online]. [Accessed 1 August 2022]. Available from: https://forceschildrenscotland.org.uk/about-us/

Forces in Mind Trust. 2016. *"Our community-our covenant" improving the delivery of local covenant pledges.* [Online]. London: Shared Intelligence, Forces in Mind Trust, and Local Government Association. [Accessed 4 December 2018]. Available from:
https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/our-community-our-covenant-improving-delivery-local-covenant-pledges.pdf

ForcesWatch. 2011. *Terms of service in the UK Armed Forces.* [Online]. [Accessed 4 August 2021]. Available from: https://www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/joint-committees/human-rights/Briefing_from_Forces_Watch_Terms_of_service.pdf

Forster, A. 2012. The military covenant and british civil-military relations: letting the genie out of the bottle. *Armed Forces and Society.* **382**(2), pp.273-290.

Foster, D. and Long, R. 2018. *Briefing paper: the pupil premium, number 6700, 17 April.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 11 January 2018]. Available from:
http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06700/SN06700.pdf

Foucault, M. 1980. *Power Knowledge: selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977 by Michel Foucault.* London Pearson Education Limited

Frame, E.M., Davis, B.E., Johnson, P.L. and Middleton, L.S. 1994. Work and well-being in the two person career: relocation stress and coping among clergy husbands and wives. *Family Relocations.* **43**(2), pp.169-205.

Franklin, A., Brady, G. and Durell, S. 2018. *Defining quality and rights based education, health and care plans (EHCPs) for disabled children and young people.* Coventry: Coventry University

Fugard, A.J.B. and Potts, H.W.W. 2015. Supporting thinking on sample sizes for thematic analyses: a quantitative tool. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology.* **18**(6), pp.669-684.

Gardynik, U.M. and McDonald, L. 2005. Implications of risk and resilience in the life of the individual who is gifted/learning disabled. *Roeper Review.* **27**(4), pp.206-214.

Gewirtz, A.H., Pinna, K.L.M., Hanson, S.K. and Brockberg, D. 2014. Promoting parenting to support reintegrating military families: after deployment, adaptive parenting tools. *Psychological Services.* **11**(1), pp.31-40.

Gibson, C. 2012. *Army childhood: british army children's lives and times.* London: Shire Publications Ltd.

Godier-McBard, L., Wood, A. and Fossey, M. 2021. *The impact of service life on the military child: the overlooked casualties of conflict- update and review report.* [Online]. Portsmouth: The Naval Children's Charity. [Accessed 5 May 2021]. Available from: https://www.navalchildrenscharity.org.uk/research-2/

Goffman, E. 1991. Total institutions. In: Worsley, P. ed. *The new modern sociology readings.* Harmondsworth: Penguin, pp.369-373.

Goss, A.C. 2017. Power to engage, power to resist: a structuration analysis of barriers to parent involvement. *Education and Urban Society* **00**(0), pp.1-18.

Gov.UK. 2019. *GCSE 9 to 1 grades.* [Online]. [Accessed 2 August 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-gcse-9-to-1-grades-coming-soon

Gov.UK. 2022a. *Children with special educational needs and disability (send).* [Online]. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs/extra-SEN-help

Gov.UK. 2022b. *Education, health and care plans.* [Online]. [Accessed 28 September 2022]. Available from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/education-health-and-care-plans

Gov.UK. 2022c. *Schools, pupils and their characteristics.* [Online]. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/school-pupils-and-their-characteristics

Gov.UK. 2022d. *Special educational needs in england* [Online]. [Accessed 10 November 2022]. Available from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england

Gov.UK. 2022e. *Types of school.* [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/types-of-school/private-schools

Greenberg, M.T. and Turksma, C. 2015. Understanding and watering the seeds of compassion. *Research in Human Development.* **12**(3-4), pp.280-287.

Gribble, R. and Fear, N.T. 2019. *The effect of non-operational family separation family functioning and well-being among Royal Navy/Royal Marines families.* [Online]. London King's Centre for Military Health Research, King's College London. [Accessed 15 December 2020]. Available from: https://www.kcl.ac.uk/kcmhr/publications/reports/files/gribble2019.pdf

Gribble, R., Goodwin, L. and Fear, N.T. 2019a. Mental health outcomes and alcohol consumption among UK military spouses/partners: a comparison with women in the general population. *European journal of psychotraumatology.* **10**(1), p1654781.

Gribble, R., Goodwin, L., Oram, S. and Fear, N.T. 2019b. 'It's nice to just be you': The influence of the employment experiences of UK military spouses during accompanied postings on well-being. *Health Psychology Open.* **6**(1), p2055102919838909.

Gribble, R., Wessely, S., Klein, S., Alexander, D.A., Dandeker, C. and Feat, N.T. 2012. *British Social Attitudes 29, Armed Forces, the UK's Armed Forces: public support for the troops but not their missions?* [Online]. London: NatCen Social Research. [Accessed 30 June 2019]. Available from: https://www.bsa.natcen.ac.uk/media/1150/bsa29_armed_forces.pdf

Groves, R.M., Cialdini, R.B. and Couper, M.P. 1992. Understanding the decision to participate in a survey. *The Public Opinion Quarterly.* **56**(4), pp.475-495.

Guest, G., Bunce, A. and Johnson, L. 2006. How many interviews are enough? an experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods.* **18**(1), pp.59-82.

Gye, H. 2015. Scheme sending the children of forces top brass to private schools is revealed to cost taxpayers £84m a year as mp's question it value for money. *Daily Mail.* [Online]. 9 July. [Accessed 29 January 2019]. Available from: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3234994/Sending-children-offices- boarding-schools-costs-taxpayers-84m-year.html

Hall, C.M. 2018. Parent consultation and transitional care for military families of children with autism: a teleconsultation implementation project. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation.* **28**(3), pp.368-381.

Hall, L.K. 2008. *Counseling military families: what mental health professionals need to know.* New York: Routledge.

Hall, M. 2019. *Resilience an educational good?* Winchester: Service Children's Progression Alliance.

Hall, R. 2021. Schools in england forced to cut support for special needs pupils. *The Guardian.* [Online]. 8 September. [Accessed 30 March 2023]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/sep/08/schools-in-england-forced-to-cut-support-for-special-needs-pupils

Hammersley, M. 2015. Sampling and thematic analysis: a response to Fugard and Potts. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* **18**(6), pp.687-688.

Hanna, P. 2012. Using internet technologies (such as Skype) as a research medium: a research note. *Qualitative Research.* **12**(2), pp.239-242.

Harding, J. 2013. *Qualitative data analysis from start to finish.* London: Sage.

Harding, M. 2021. *Representation of women in the Armed Forces.* [Online]. Available from: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/representation-of-women-in-the-armed-forces/

Hellawell, B. 2017. A review of parent–professional partnerships and some new obligations and concerns arising from the introduction of the SEND Code of Practice 2015. *British Journal of Special Education.* **44**(4), pp.411-430.

Heller, K. 1989. The return to community. *American Journal of Community Psychology.* **17**(1), pp.1-15.

Herrman, H., Stewart, D.E., Diaz-Granados, N., Berger, E.L., Jackson, B. and Yuen, T. 2011. What is resilience? *La Revue canadienne de psychiatrie.* **56**(5), pp.258-265.

Hertzog, M.A. 2008. Considerations in determining sample size for pilot studies. *Research in Nursing & Health.* **31**(2), pp.180-191.

Hines, L.A., Gribble, R., Wessely, S., Dandeker, C. and Fear, N.T. 2015. Are the armed forces understood and supported by the public? a view from the United Kingdom. *Armed Forces & Society.* **41**(4), pp.688-713.

Hinson, S. and Bolton, P. 2022. *Fuel poverty.* [Online]. London HMSO. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8730/

HM Government. 2022. *SEND review: right support, right place, right time government consultation on the SEND and alternative provision system in england.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 19 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/send-review-right-support-right-place-right-time

Hobbs, A. and Bernard, R. 2021. *Impact of covid-19 on early childhood education and care.*

Hodge, N. and Runswick-Cole, K. 2008. Problematising parent-professional partnerships in education. *Disability and Society.* **23**(6), pp.637-647.

Hoffman, D.M. 2010. Risky investments: parenting and the production of the 'resilient child'. *Health, Risk & Society.* **13**(4), pp.385-394.

Houston, B.J. 2018. Community resilience and communication: dynamic interconnections between and among individuals, families, and organizations. *Journal of Applied Communication Research.* **46**(1), pp.19-22.

Howlett, M. 2021. Looking at the 'field' through a Zoom lens: methodological reflections on conducting online research during a global pandemic. *Qualitative Research.* **00**(0), pp.1-16.

Huebner, A.J., Mancini, J.A., Wilcox, R.M., Grass, S.R. and Grass, G.A. 2007. Parental deployment and youth in military families: exploring uncertainty and ambiguous loss*. *Family Relations.* **56**(2), pp.112-122.

Hunt, K. and Laffan, A. 2019. *Improving the psychological wellbeing of children and young people.* London: Jessica Kingley Publishers.

Hunter, J. 1991. Which school? a study of parents' choice of secondary Scholl. *Educational Research.* **33**(1), pp.31-41.

Hutchinson, J.W. 2006. Evaluating risk-taking behaviors of youth in military families. *Journal of Adolescent Health.* **39**(6), pp.927-928.

Independent Schools Council. 2015. *SEND code of practice and the children and families act 2014: faqs for independent schools.* [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2022]. Available from: www.isc.co.uk/media/2842/faqs_send_code_of_practice_feb2015.pdf

Independent Schools Council. 2022. *Applying to an independent (private) school.* [Online]. [Accessed 9 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.isc.co.uk/schools/sub-pages/applying-to-an-independent-private-school/

Irani, E. 2019. The use of videoconferencing for qualitative interviewing: opportunities, challenges, and considerations. *Clinical Nursing Research.* **28**(1), pp.3-8.

Irvine, A., Drew, P. and Sainsbury, R. 2012. Am I not answering your questions properly? clarification, adequacy and responsiveness in semi-structured telephone and face to face interviews. *Qualitative Research.* **13**(1), pp.87-106.

ITV News. 2023. Special educational needs: parents spending thousands fighting for children's right to education. *ITV News.* [Online]. 1 March. [Accessed 30 March 2023]. Available from: https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2023-03-01/weve-spent-70000-fighting-for-our-sons-right-to-education

Jackson, C. and Bisset, M. 2005. Gender and school choice: factors influencing parents when choosing single-sex or co-educational independent schools for their children. *Cambridge Journal of Education.* **35**(2), pp.195-211.

Jensen, P.S., Lewis, R.L. and Xenakis, S.N. 1986. The military family in review: context, risk, and prevention. *J Am Acad Child Psychiatry.* **25**(2), pp.225-234.

Jensen, P.S., Martin, D. and Watanabe, H. 1996. Children's response to parental separation during Operation Desert Storm. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry.* **35**(4), pp.433-441.

Johanson, G.A. and Brooks, G.P. 2009. Initial scale development: sample size for pilot studies. *Educational and Psychological Measurement.* **70**(3), pp.394-400.

King, N. and Horrocks, C. 2010. *Interviews in qualitative research.* London: Sage.

Knobloch, L.K., Knobloch-Fedders, L.M., Yorgason, J.B., Ebata, A.T. and McGlaughlin, P.C. 2017. Military children's difficulty with reintegration after deployment: a relational turbulence model perspective. *Journal of Family Psychology.* **31**(5), pp.542-552.

Krueger, R. 1994. *Focus groups: a practical guide for applied research.* Thousand Oaks: CA: Sage Publication.

Kustatscher, M. 2017. The emotional geographies of belonging: children's intersectional identities in primary school. *Children's Geographies.* **15**(1), pp.65-79.

Kvale, S. 2007. *Doing interviews.* London: Sage.

Lee, R. 1993. *Doing sensitive topics.* London: Sage.

Liu, M. and Wronski, L. 2018. Examining completion rates in web surveys via over 25,00 real-world surveys. *Social Science Computer Review.* **36**(1), pp.116-124.

Lobe, B., Morgan, D. and Hoffman, K.A. 2020. Qualitative data collection in an era of social distancing *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* **19**, pp.1-8.

Local Government Association. 2022. *Armed forces act 2021: background, implications for councils and practical steps to get ready for the act.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.local.gov.uk/parliament/briefings-and-responses/armed-forces-act-2021-background-implications-councils-and

Long, R. and Danechi, S. 2022. *Home education in england* [Online]. London HMSO. [Accessed 28 November 2022]. Available from: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn05108/

Longfield, A. 2018. *Kin and country: growing up as an Armed Forces child.* [Online]. London: Children's Commissioner for England [Accessed 25 January 2019]. Available from: https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/31856/

Lumby, J. 2007. Parent voice: knowledge, values and viewpoint. *Improving Schools.* **10**(3), pp.220-232.

MacSwan, A. 2022. Ukrainian soldiers arrive in uk for training with british forces. *The Guardian.* [Online]. 9 July. [Accessed 1 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/09/ukrainian-soldiers-arrive-uk-training-british-forces

Makin, C.M., Hill, V. and Pellicano, E. 2017. The primary-to-secondary school transition for children on the autism spectrum: a multi-informant mixed-methods study. *Autism & Development Language Impairments.* **35**(2), pp.1-18.

Mancini, J.A. and Bowen, G.L. 2009. Community resilience: a social organization theory of action and change. In: Mancini, J.A.a.R., K.A ed. *Pathways of human development" explorations of change.* New York: Lexington Books, pp.245-265.

Mann, G., Cuskelly, M. and Moni, K. 2015. Choosing a school: parental decision-making when special schools are an option. *Disability and Society.* **30**(9), pp.1413-1427.

March, J.G., Sproull, L.S. and Tamuz, M. 2003. Learning from samples of one or fewer. *Quality and Safety Health Care.* **12**, pp.465-472.

Martin, D. 2013. £90m, school perk for forces chiefs based in the UK: thousands of officers and civil servants have private fees paid by the taxpayer. [Online]. [Accessed 29 January 2019]. Available from: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2278305/90m-school-perk-Forces-chiefs-based-UK-Thousands-officers-civil-servants-private-fees-paid-taxpayer.html

Mason, J. 2006. Mixing methods in a qualitatively driven way. *Qualitative Research.* **6**(1), pp.9-25.

Mason, J. 2018. *Qualitative researching.* 3rd. ed. London: Sage.

Masten, A.S. 2013. Competence, Risk, and Resilience in Military Families: Conceptual Commentary. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review.* **16**(3), pp.278-281.

Masten, A.S. 2015. *Ordinary magic: resilience in development.* New York: The Guildford Press.

Mawene, D. and Aydin, B. 2018. Factors influencing parents selection of school for children with disabilities: a systematic review of the literature. *International Journal of Special Education.* **33**(2), pp.313-329.

McChesney, K. and Aldridge, J. 2019. Weaving an interpretivist stance throughout mixed methods research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* **42**(3), pp.225-238.

McCulloch, J. and Hall, M. 2016. *Further and higher progression for Service Children: research paper.* [Online]. Winchester: The University of Winchester. [Accessed 10 March 2019]. Available from: UoW-research-paper_Further-and-Higher-Progression-for-Service-Children.pdf

McCulloch, J., Hall, M. and Ellis, S. 2018. The education of children from Military families: identity and agency. *Educational Futures.* **9**(2), pp.4-27.

McDowell, L. 1992. Doing gender: feminism, feminists and research methods in human geography. *Transactions, institute of British Geographers.* **17**(4), pp.399-416.

McNerney, C., Hill, V. and Pellicano, E. 2015. Choosing a secondary school young people on the autism spectrum: a multi-informant study. *International Journal of Inclusive Education.* **10**(10), pp.1096-1116.

McPeake, J., Bateson, M. and O'Neil, A. 2014. Electronic surveys: how to maximise success. *Nurse Researcher.* **21**(3), pp.24-26.

Metropolis Education. 2022. *The state boarding forum.* [Online]. [Accessed 17 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.ukboardingschools.com/advice/the-state-boarding-schools-association/

Meyer, M.W. 1975. Greedy institutions: patterns of undivided commitment. Lewis A. Coser. *American Journal of Sociology.* **80**(6), pp.1495-1496.

Miller, J.G., Bersoff, D.M. and Harwood, R.K. 1990. Perceptions of social responsibilities in India and the United States: moral imperatives or personal decisions? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* **58**(1), pp.33-47.

Ministry of Defence. 2015a. *The Armed Forces Covenant.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 2 December 2018]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49469/the_armed_forces_covenant.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2015b. *Armed forces service complaints process.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/armed-forces-service-complaints-process

Ministry of Defence. 2016a. *Ad hoc statistical bulletin: children of UK armed forces personnel: education statistics for England 2014/15.* [Online]. [Accessed 10 January 2019]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attac hment_data/file/575582/20161208-Adhoc_Statistical_Bulletin-Service_children_educational_attainment_in_England.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2016b. *Children of UK Armed Forces Personnel: education statistics for England, 2014/15.* [Online]. [Accessed 5 May 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575582/20161208-Adhoc_Statistical_Bulletin-Service_children_educational_attainment_in_England.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2017. *Armed Forces Covenant for communities.* [Online]. [Accessed 3 December 2018]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant/armed-forces-community-covenant#the-covenant-in-the-community-conference

Ministry of Defence. 2018a. *Admissions to schools in england.* London: HMSO.

Ministry of Defence. 2018b. *Advice and guidance for schools and parents on completion of the cea special educational needs allowance (sena) application for (dcyp form 013-sena).* London: HMSO.

Ministry of Defence. 2018c. *Armed Forces Covenant annual report.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 12 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-and-summary-2018

243

Ministry of Defence. 2018d. *Education overseas for service children.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-overseas-for-service-children#mod-schools-and-settings-by-location

Ministry of Defence. 2019a. *Armed Forces Covenant for communities* [Online]. [Accessed 23 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-community-covenant/armed-forces-community-covenant

Ministry of Defence. 2019b. *JSP 322 Education of Service Children and young people.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/832224/JSP_342_Part_1_V4.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2019c. *The Queen's regulations for the Army 1975.* London: HMSO.

Ministry of Defence. 2019d. *UK regular Armed Forces continuous attitude survey results 2019.* [Online]. [Accessed 4 January 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/811689/Armed_Forces_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2019_Main_Report.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2019e. *UK tri-service families continuous attitude survey results 2019.* [Online]. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tri-service-families-continuous-attitude-survey-2019

Ministry of Defence. 2020. *UK regular Armed Forces continuous attitude survey.* [Online]. [Accessed 15 December 2020]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/885861/Armed_Forces_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2020_Main_Report.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2021a. *Armed forces covenant annual report.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 8 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-and-veterans-annual-report-2021

Ministry of Defence. 2021b. *Education overseas for service children.* [Online]. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/education-overseas-for-service-children

Ministry of Defence. 2021c. *Flexible service in the armed forces.* [Online]. [Accessed 13 September 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flexible-engagements-system-what-you-need-to-know/what-you-need-to-know-about-the-flexible-engagements-system

Ministry of Defence. 2021d. *JSP 752 Tri-Service regulations for expenses and allowances.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/950387/20210101-JSP_752_v45_Jan_21.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2021e. *MoD local authority partnership (MODLAP).* [Online]. [Accessed 11 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/mod-local-authority-partnership-modlap

Ministry of Defence. 2021f. *Service Pupil Premium: what you need to know.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know

Ministry of Defence. 2021g. *Service Pupil Premium: what you need to know.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 July 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-service-pupil-premium/service-pupil-premium-what-you-need-to-know

Ministry of Defence. 2021h. *UK Tri-Service Families Continuous Attitude Survey Results 2021.* [Online]. [Accessed 29 July 2021]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004856/Tri-Service_Families_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2021_Main_Report.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2022a. *CEAS information 13a: SENA process responsibilities* [Online]. [Accessed 18 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcyp-forms-and-information-sheets/ceas-information-13a-sena-process-responsibilities

Ministry of Defence. 2022b. *JSP 464 Tri-Service accommodation regulations V1: service family accommodation (SFA) and substitute service family accommodation - UK and overseas.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 28 February 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jsp-464-tri-service-accommodation-regulations-tsars

Ministry of Defence. 2022c. *JSP 752 Tri-service regulations for expenses and allowances.* [Online]. London HMSS. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://assest.publishing.service.gov.uk

Ministry of Defence. 2022d. *JSP Tri-Service regulations for expenses and allowances.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 14 March 2022]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

Ministry of Defence. 2022e. *UK armed forces families strategy 2022-32.* [Online]. London HMSO. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-armed-forces-families-strategy-2022-to-2032

Ministry of Defence. 2022f. *UK regular Armed Forces continuous attitude survey results 2022.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 August 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2022

Ministry of Defence. 2022g. *UK Tri-Service families continuous attitude survey results 2021.* [Online]. [Accessed 28 February 2022]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1004856/Tri-Service_Families_Continuous_Attitude_Survey_2021_Main_Report.pdf

Ministry of Defence. 2022h. *UK tri-service families continuous attitude survey results 2022.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 August 2022]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

Ministry of Defence. and Education., D.f. 2020. *Service pupil premium (spp): information for schools.* [Online]. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/service-premium-information-for-schools

Miretzky, D. 2004. The communication requirements of democratic schools: parent-teacher perspectives on their relationships. *Teacher College Record.* **106**(4), pp.814-851.

Mmari, K., Roche, K.M., Sudhinaraset, M. and Blum, R. 2009. When a parent goes off to war: exploring the issues faced by adolescents and their families. *Youth & Society.* **40**(4), pp.455-475.

Moore, J. 2012. A personal insight into researcher positionality. *Nurse Researcher.* **19**(4), pp.11-14.

Morgan, D.L. 1997. *Focus groups as qualitative research.* 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Morris, S. 2017. British army is targeting working-class young people, report shows. [Online]. [Accessed 18 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/jul/09/british-army-is-targeting-working-class-young-people-report-shows

Munton, A.G. 1990. Job relocation, stress and the family *Journal of Organizational Behavior.* **11**(5), pp.401-406.

National Statistics. 2022. *Special educational needs in england* [Online]. [Accessed 6 February 2023]. Available from: https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/special-educational-needs-in-england/2021-22

Neely-Barnes, S.L. and Dia, D.A. 2008. Families of children with disabilities: a review of literature and recommendations for interventions. *Journal of Intensive Behaviour Intervention.* **5**(3), pp.93-107.

NHS. 2022. *Overview: dyslexia.* [Online]. [Accessed 16 November 2022]. Available from: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dyslexia/

Nightingale, D.J. and Cromby, J. eds. 1999. *Social constructionist psychology: a critical analysis of theory and practice.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Noret, N., Mayor, H., Al-Afaleq, H., Lingard, S. and Mair, E. 2015. *The educational attainment of Army children.* [Online]. Andover: Army Families Federation and York St John University. [Accessed 19 November 2018]. Available from: https://aff.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/affeducationalattainmentofarmychildrenreport.pdf

Novick, G. 2008. Is there bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research? *Research in Nursing.* **31**(4), pp.391-398.

Nowell, L.S., Norris, J.M., White, D.E. and Moules, N.J. 2017. Thematic analysis: striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods.* **16**(1), pp.1-13.

Office for National Statistics. 2014. *2011 Census: Armed Forces statistics for local authorities in England and Wales, table AF002.* [Online]. [Accessed 20 May 2019]. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/2011censusarmedforcesstatisticsforlocalauthoritiesinenglandandwales

Office for National Statistics. 2022. *Personal well-being in the UK, quarterly: April 2011 to September 2021.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 August 2022]. Available from: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/personalwellbeingintheukquarterly/april2011toseptember2021

Ofsted. 2011. *Children in Service families: the quality and impact of partnership provision for children in Service families.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 22 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/children-in- service-families

Ofsted. 2019. *Teacher well-being at work in schools and further education providers.* [Online]. Manchester Ofsted [Accessed 6 December 2022]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk

Ofsted. 2020. *Covid-19 series: briefing on special educational needs and disabilities provision, November 2020.* [Online]. [Accessed 28 September 2022]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachme nt_data/file/943488/COVID-19_series_briefing_on_special_educational_needs_and_disabilities_provision___Nove mber_2020.pdf

Ofsted. 2022. *State-funded schools inspections and outcomes as at 31 December 2021.* [Online]. [Accessed 16 December 2022]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/state-funded-school-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-december-2021/state-funded-schools-inspections-and-outcomes-as-at-31-december-2021

Ormston, R., Spencer, L., Barnard, M. and Snape, D. 2014. The foundations of qualitative research. In: Ritchie, J., et al. eds. *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students & researchers.* 2nd ed. London: Sage, pp.1-23.

Osbourbe, A. 2018. Geographically dispersed military families: exploring the psycho-social impact of intermittent separation. In: *Health and Life Sciences PGR Conference 2018, Northumbria University*, *Northumbria University*.

Pancer, S.M. and Pratt, M.W. 1999. Social and family determinants of community service involvement in Canadian youth. In: Yates, M. and Youniss, J. eds. *Roots of civic involvement: international perspectives on community service and activism in youth.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.32-55.

Park, A., Clery, E., Curtice, J., Phillips, M. and Utting, D. 2012. British social attitudes 29. *London, NatCen Social Research.*

Park, N. 2011. Military children and families strengths and challenges during peace and war. *American Psychologist.* **66**(1), pp.65-72.

Patton, M.Q. 2002. *Qualitative research and evaluation methods.* 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Perreault, K., McDuff, P. and Dion, J. 2020. Impact of relocations on mental health and school functioning of adolescents from Canadian military families. *Military Behavioral Health.* **8**(3), pp.333-344.

Personnel Capability Branch. 2017. *British Army Guide to the employment and deployment of serving parents and carers.* London: HMSO.

Peterson, R.A. 2000. *Constructing effective questionnaires.* London: Sage.

Pincus, S.H., House, R., Christenson, J. and Adler, L.E. 2001. The emotional cycle of deployment: a military family perspective. *US Army Medical Department Journal.* **4**(6), pp.15-23.

Pluye, P. and Hong, Q.N. 2013. Combining the power of stories and the power of numbers: mixed methods research and mixed studies reviews. *The Annual Review of Public Health.* **35**(no issue), pp.29-45.

Porter, S.R. 2004. Raising response rates: what works?. *New Directions for Institutional Research.* **2004**(121), pp.5-21.

Prendeville, P. and Kinsella, W. 2019. The role of grandparents in supporting families of children with autism spectrum disorders: a family systems approach. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.* **49**(2), pp.738-749.

Punch, M. 1994. Politics and ethics in fieldwork. In: Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. eds. *Handbook of qualitative research.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp.83-97.

Rayment, S. 2021. Six Army officers accused of using taxpayer cash to send kids to private schools. [Online]. [Accessed 17 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/six-army-officers-accused-using-24506886

Reay, D. 2000. A useful extension of Bourdieu's conceptual framework: emotional capital as a way of understanding mothers involvement in their children's education?. **48**(4), pp.568-585.

Reay, D. 2002. Mothers' Involvement in Their Children's Schooling: Social Reproduction in action? *Improving Schools.* **5**(3), pp.23-33.

Reay, D. 2005. Mother's involvement in their children's schooling: social reproduction in action? In: Crozier, G. and Reay, D. eds. *Activating participation: parents and teachers working towards partnership.* Stoke on Trent Trentham Books.

Riess, H. 2017. The science of empathy. *Journal of Patient Experience.* **4**(2), pp.74-77.

Riggs, S.A. and Riggs, D.S. 2011. Risk and resilience in military families experiencing deployment: the role of the family attachment network. *Journal of family psychology.* **25**(5), p675.

Riley, J.R. and Masten, A.S. 2005. Resilience in Context. In: Peters, R.D., et al. eds. *Resilience in Children, Families, and Communities: Linking Context to Practice and Policy.* Boston, MA: Springer US, pp.13-25.

Roberts, N. 2022. *The pupil premium (England).* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 22 February 2023]. Available from: https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN06700/SN06700.pdf

Roberts, N., Foster, D. and Long, R. 2021. *The Pupil Premium.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 24 October 2022]. Available from: https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06700/

Rogers, C. 2007. Experiencing an 'inclusive' education: parents and their children with 'special educational needs'. *British Journal of Sociology of Education.* **28**(1), pp.55-68.

Rose, C. and Rose, P. 2021. *Supporting Service Children: the voice of schools.* [Online]. London: Service Children in State Schools and Tiller Research [Accessed 6 May 2021]. Available from: https://www.sciss.org.uk/copy-of-sciss-neac-policies

Rose, G. 1997. Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexitivities and other tactics. *Progress in human geography.* **21**(3), pp.305-320.

Rowe, S., L,, Keeling, M., Wessely, S. and Fear, N.T. 2014. Perceptions of the impact a military career has on children. *Occupational Medicine.* **64**(7), pp.490-496.

Royal Air Force Families Federation. 2020. *RAF dispersed families.* Peterborough.

Rubner Jorgensen, C. and Perry, T. 2021. Understanding school mobility and mobile pupils in england. *British Educational Research Journal.* **47**(5), pp.1139-1157.

Russell, G., Stapley, S., Newlove-Delgado, Salmon, A., White, R., Warren, F., Pearson, A. and Ford, T. 2021. Time trends in autism diagnosis over 20 years: a UK population based cohort study. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry.* **63**(6), pp.674-682.

Ryan, G.W. and Bernard, H.R. 2003. Techniques to identify themes. Field Methods. 15(1), pp.85-109.

Saleh, A. and Bista, K. 2017. Examining factors impacting online survey response rates in educational research: perceptions of graduate students *Online Submission.* **13**(2), pp.63-74.

Saunders, B., Kitzinger, J. and Kitzinger, C. 2015. Anonymising interview data: challenges and compromise in practice. *Qualitative research.* **15**(6), pp.616-632.

Scott, L. 2013. *Briefing 2013: access to school places in advance of move.* Andover.

Segal, D.R. and Segal, M.W. 2003. Implications for military families of changes in the armed forces of the United States. In: Caforio, G. ed. *Handbook of the sociology of the military.* New York: Kluwer Academic and Plenum Publishers, pp.225-233.

Segal, E.A. 2011. Social empathy: a model built on empathy, contexual understanding, and social responsibility that promotes social justice. *Journal of Social Science Research.* **37**(3), pp.266-277.

Segal, M.W. 1986. The military and the family as greedy institutions. *Armed Forces & Society.* **13**(1), pp.9-38.

Segal, M.W.a.H., J.J. 1993. *What we know about Army families.* Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

Seltman, H.J. 2012. Experimental Design and Analysis. Pittsburgh: Carnegie Mellon University.

Service Children's Progression Alliance. 2020. *The importance of accessible data.* [Online]. [Accessed 18 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.scipalliance.org/news/2020/the-importance-of-usable-up-to-date-information-and-data

Service Children's Progression Alliance. 2021. *Service Children in State Schools.* [Online]. [Accessed 11 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.scipalliance.org/about/partners/service-children-in-state-schools

Service Children's Progression Alliance. 2022a. *About.* [Online]. [Accessed 8 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.scipalliance.org/about/information-page

Service Children's Progression Alliance. 2022b. *Online targeting tool.* [Online]. [Accessed 14 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.scipalliance.org/map

Service Children's Progression Alliance. 2022c. *Thriving lives toolkit.* [Online]. [Accessed 27 July 2022]. Available from: https://www.scipalliance.org/thriving-lives-toolkit

Shildrick, T., MacDonald, R., Webster, C. and Garthwaite, K. 2010. *The low-pay, no-pay cycle.* [Online]. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. [Accessed 14 March 2022]. Available from: https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/low-pay-no-pay-cycle-understanding-recurrent-poverty

Shilling, C. 1991. Gender inequalities and educational differentiation. *British Journal of Sociology of Education.* **12**(1), pp.23-44.

Silverman, D. 2005. *Doing qualitative research.* 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Simons, H. 2009. *Case study research in practice.* London: Sage.

Simpson, L. 2013. *The armed forces covenant in action? part 3: educating the children of service personnel.* Andover.

Sky News. 2022. *Ukraine war: thousands of uk troops to be sent to europe in bid to combat russian aggression.* [Online]. Available from: https://news.sky.com/story/ukraine-war-thousands-of-uk-troops-to-be-sent-to-europe-in-bid-to-combat-russian-aggression-12601279

Small, S. and Supple, A. 1998. *Communities as systems: is a community more than the sum of it's parts?* [Online]. Madison: Department of Child and Family Studies. [Accessed 2 December 2018]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228393171_Communities_as_Systems_Is_a_Community_More_Than_the_Sum_of_Its_Parts

Smith, A. 2018. "My understanding has … literally changed": addressing the military-civilian gap with an academic-community engagement project. *Journal of Veterans Studies.* **3**(1), pp.1-17.

SSCE Cymru. 2022. *About SSCE Cymru: our mission and history.* [Online]. [Accessed 1 August 2022]. Available from: https://www.sscecymru.co.uk/aboutsscecymru/ourmission/default.htm

Steeh, C. 1981. Trends in nonresponse rates. *The Public Opinion Quarterly.* **47**(1), pp.40-57.

Suissa, J. 2006. Untangling the mother knot: some thoughts on parents, children and philosophers of education. *Ethics and Education.* **1**(1), pp.65-77.

Swarbrick, R. 2022. *Conversation with Gemma Carr, 7 April.,*

The Alliance for Inclusive Education. 2023. *SEND review consultation submission: right support, right place, right time.* [Online]. [Accessed 30 March 2023]. Available from: https://www.allfie.org.uk/news/briefings/send-review-consultation-submission-right-support-right-place-right-time/

The Defence Committee. 2006. *Educating service children: government response to the eleventh report of session 2005-06, first special report of session 2006-07.* London: HMSO.

The Defence Committee. 2013a. *The armed forces covenant in action? part 3: educating the children of service personnel.* London HMSO.

The Defence Committee. 2013b. *The armed forces covenant in action? part 4: education of service personnel* London: HMSO.

The Howard League for Penal Reform. 2011. *Report of the inquiry into former armed service personnel in prison.* [Online]. London: The Howard League for Penal Reform. [Accessed 13 October 2022]. Available from: https://howardleague.org/publications/report-of-the-inquiry-into-former-armed-service-personnel-in-prison-2/

The Open University. 2022. *Timeline of learning disability history.* [Online]. [Accessed 20 October 2022]. Available from: https://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/research/shld/timeline-learning-disability-history

The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund. 2009. *Royal Marines Children's Fund.* [Online]. Portsmouth Royal Maines Children's Fund. [Accessed 29 March 2019]. Available from: https://www.basw.co.uk/system/files/resources/basw_20618-1_0.pdf

Thorne, M. 2018. *Career aspirations of service children: a case study of service children from a secondary school and sixth form college, their aims and goals.* Doctorate in Education thesis, University of Reading.

Tipping, C. 2008. Understanding the Military Covenant. *The RUSI Journal.* [Online]. **153**(3), pp.12-15. [Accessed 28 February 2022]. Available from: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/03071840802249398?needAccess=true

Tirraoro, T. 2020. *How has special education needs evolved in the 40 years since the warnock report?* [Online]. [Accessed 2 February 2023]. Available from: https://www.specialneedsjungle.com/how-has-special-education-needs-evolved-in-the-40-years-since-the-warnock-report/

Tissot, C. 2011. "Working together?" parent and local authority views on the process of obtaining appropriate educational provision for children with autistic spectrum disorders. *Educational Research.* **53**(1), pp.1-55.

Toepoel, V. 2016. *Doing surveys online.* [Online]. LA: SAGE. [Accessed 6 October 2022]. Available from: https://methods.sagepub.com/book/doing-surveys-online/i2178.xml

Trainor, A.A. 2010. Diverse approaches to parent advocacy during special education home-school interactions: identification and use of cultural and social capital.
Remedical and Special Education. **31**(1), p34037.

United Nations. 2006. *Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (CRPD).* [Online]. [Accessed 1st July 2019]. Available from: https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html

University of Leeds. 2017. *Research data management policy.* [Online]. [Accessed 12 May 2022]. Available from: https://library.leeds.ac.uk/info/14062/research_data_management/68/research_data_management_policy

Venning, A. 2005. *Following the drum: the lives of Army wives and daughters past and present.* London: Headline Book Publishing

Verey, A. and Fossey, M. 2013. *Report on geographically dispersed families.* Andover.

Vuga, J. and Juvan, J. 2013. Work-family conflict between two greedy institutions - the family and the military. *Current Sociology* **61**(7), pp.1058-1077.

Waliski, A., Bokony, P. and Kirchner, J.E. 2012. Combat-related parental deployment: identifying the impacts on families with preschool-age children. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment.* **22**(6), pp.653-670.

Walker, J., Selous, A. and Misca, M. 2020. *Living in our shoes: understanding the needs of UK Armed Forces families.* [Online]. London: HMSO. [Accessed 1 July]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-our-shoes-understanding-the-needs-of-uk-armed-forces-families

Weale, S. 2018. Parents using 'dubious tactics' to beat school admissions criteria *The Guardian* 13 September

West, A. and Varlaam, A. 1991. Choosing a secondary school: parents of junior school children. *Educational Research.* **33**(1), pp.22-30.

Which School. 2022. *UK state boarding: what, where, how much?* [Online]. [Accessed 17 October 2022]. Available from: https://whichschooladvisor.com/uk/guides/uk-state-boarding-schools-what-where-how-much/2

White, C.J., de Burgh, H.T., Fear, N.T. and Iversen, A.C. 2011. The impact of deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan on military children: A review of the literature. *International Review of Psychiatry.* **23**(2), pp.210-217.

Wiles, R., Coffet, A., Robinson, J. and Heath, S. 2012. Anonymisation and visual images: issues of respect, 'voice' and protection. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* **15**(1), pp.41-53.

Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S. and Charles, V. 2006. *Anonymity and confidentiality.* [Online]. Southampton: University of Southampton. [Accessed 25 April 2019]. Available from: http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/423/1/0206_anonymity%2520and%2520confidentiality.pdf

Wolfe, A. 1989. *Whose keeper.* Berkley: The University of California.

Woolcock, N. 2019. Buying homes near good schools 'worse than going private'. *The Times.* 21 September

World Health Organisation. 2021. *Coronavirus.* [Online]. [Accessed 22 March 2021]. Available from: https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1

Wright, K.B. 2017. Researching internet-based populations: advantages and disadvantages of online survey research, online questionnaire authoring software packages, and web survey services. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication.* [Online]. **10**(3), pp.00-00. [Accessed 7 July 2021]. Available from: https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2005.tb00259.x

Yin, R. 1994. *Case study research: design and methods.* 2nd ed. Beverley Hills, CA: Sage.

Yin, R.K. 2003. *Case study research.* 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Zainal, Z. 2007. Case study as a research design. *Jurnal Kemanusiann.* **9**(1-6), pp.1-5.

Ziff, E. and Garland-Jackson, F. 2020. "I'm not your 'typical' military wife": the construction of gender and agency through stereotypes. *Armed Forces and Society.* **46**(3), pp.351-533.

Appendices

Appendix i) Questionnaire questions table

Question	Option	LASQ	BSQ
What is your gender	M/F/Other/PNS	√	√
How old are you	Age brackets	√	√
Are you part of a Service Family	Yes/No/PNS	√	
In your family who is the Serving person	Myself/Partner/Dual	√	√
What Service do you belong to	Army/RAF/Navy/Other	√	√
Do you move as part of a regiment or as an individual	MC	√	
How many children do you have	1-6		√
How many children between the ages 11-18 do you have	1-6	√	
Please indicate the ages of children	Age brackets	√	√
What are the ages of your children who attend a secondary school	Age brackets	√	
Please indicate the stages of education	Primary/Secondary/Sixth form/Other/PNS	√	√
How many of your children attend a boarding school	1-6		√
Do your children attend the same boarding school	Yes/No		√
If you answered no, please state why	MC		√
Which part of the UK does your child attend a boarding school	SC regions		√
What type of boarding school does your child attend	State/Independent/NA/PNS		√
Please indicate why you chose a state boarding school	MC		√
Please indicate why you chose an independent boarding school	MC		√

How many schools had your child attended before boarding school	1-6 Primary 1-6 Secondary		√
Have any of your children had to move school during the school year	Yes/No/PNS	√	
Please indicate how many times your child has moved school	SC 1-6	√	
What was the main reason for moving schools	MC – single option	√	
What was the main reason for choosing a boarding school	MC – single option		√
Before applying for your child's current school place did you have the opportunity to visit schools beforehand	Yes/No/NA	√	√
If yes, how would you rate the opportunity to visit beforehand as part of the decision-making process	Likert scale – Very important to Very unimportant		√
If no, what were the reasons	MC	√	
If you did not choose a state boarding school, please indicate the main factors which influenced this decision	MC		√
Before applying for boarding school how accessible was information	MC		√
How useful was this in relation to making a decision	MC		√
How would you describe the experience of applying for a boarding school place	Likert scale/MC Strongly agree to Strongly disagree		√
When applying for your child's current secondary school place was your first preference granted	Yes/No/NA	√	
If you were not granted your first preference, did you appeal this decision	Yes/No/NA	√	

If yes, what was the main reason for the appeal	MC – single option	√	
When you applied for your child's school place did you experience any difficulties	Yes/No/PNS/NA	√	
If yes, what difficulties did you encounter	MC	√	
Do any of your children have a Special Educational Need	Yes/No/PNS	√	√
If you answered yes would you be happy to disclose the nature of the child's SEND	Yes/No	√	√
SEND	MC	√	√
Does your child have an EHCP	Yes/No/Obtaining/PNS/NA	√	√
Was your child consulted during the decision-making process?	Yes/No/Not sure/PNS/NA	√	√
Have any of your children had to move schools before an EHCP has been completed	Yes/No	√	√
How supported have you felt by your child's current school/Local Authority in relation to your child's SEND	Likert scale – Very supported to Very unsupported	√	√
Has your child experienced any delays in receiving support for their SEND at their current school	Yes/No/PNS/NA	√	√
Was your child identified as having a SEND before you applied for boarding school	Yes/No/PNS/NA		√
Since starting boarding school has your child experienced any differences in the support they receive	Yes, support had increased Yes, support has reduced Support has remained the same PNS NA		√
Thinking about all of your children who have a Special Educational Need or Disability and attend a boarding school, was this a main reason for	Yes/No/PNS/NA		√

choosing boarding school?			
Are you aware of the SEND Code of Practice	Yes/No/Not sure		√
Thinking about the SEND code of practice, what are your expectations of your school meeting your child's needs? Please provide a brief explanation of the main points	Open text		√
When your child began boarding school how satisfied were you with communication from the following (staff types)	Likert scale – Very satisfied to Very unsatisfied		√
When your child started their current school did you experience any difficulties communicating with staff regarding past learning experiences	Yes/No/PNS/NA	√	
If any of your children have moved to a new school in the past how satisfied have you been with communication	Likert scale – Very satisfied to Very unsatisfied	√	
When you contact your child's school in relation to any concerns such as social and emotional wellbeing, learning needs, pastoral care etc, what level of support do you expect from them?	MC		√
When applying for school places how important is the Ofsted rating	Likert scale- Very important to Very unimportant	√	
The Department of Education states 'all children should have equal access to a high-quality education regardless of background.' Thinking about your child's current secondary school do you agree	Agree/Disagree/Neither/NA/PNS	√	

your child has access to a high standard of education			
Have you ever sought information from the following services	MC	√	
Are you aware of the Armed Forces Covenant	Yes/No/Unsure	√	√
If yes, did you utilise the Covenant when applying for your child's school place	Yes/No/PNS/NA	√	
If no, please explain why	MC – single option	√	
The Armed Forces Covenant states that no Service Family should experience any disadvantages due to Service Life. When applying for boarding schools did you experience any disadvantages in accessing a place due to Service Life (Free text box for yes)	Yes/No/PNS/NA		√
Is your child's school aware of the Armed Forces Covenant	Yes/No/Unsure/NA		√
Are you aware of the Schools Admission Code and what provisions are set out for Service Families	Yes/No/NA	√	
When applying for your child's current school place did you use the Serving persons unit address	Yes/No/PNS/NA	√	
Do you feel that Service Families should be prioritised when applying for school places	Yes/No/PNS	√	
How satisfied are you that your child's current school understands the emotional and social needs of your child	Likert Scale – Very satisfied to Very unsatisfied		√

258

Has Covid-19 affected your family in relation to education and school/support	Yes/No	√	√
If yes, please provide a summary of the main points of how your family has been affected	Free text box	√	√

Key: MC=Multiple choice/ SC=Single choice/ PNS=Prefer not to say/ NA=Not applicable

Appendix ii) LASQ and BSQ participant characteristics

Gender	LASQ	BSQ
Female	88% (71)	89% (146)
Male	12% (1)	10% (16)
Prefer not to say	0% (0)	1% (2)
Total	100% (81)	100% (164)

Age		
25-29	0% (0)	1% (1)
30-34	33% (18)	16% (15)
35-39	47% (21)	16% (27)
40-44	70% (25)	32% (53)
45-49	31% (11)	25% (41)
50-54	15% (5)	13% (22)
55 &over	5% (1)	1% (2)
Prefer not to say	0% (0)	2% (3)
Total	100% (81)	100% (164)

Type of Service Family		
Army	91% (67)	75% (123)
Royal Navy	0% (0)	7% (12)
Royal Air Force	31% (7)	17% (28)
Royal Marines	0% (0)	1% (1)
Total	100% (74)	100% (164)

Relocation by type (moves as)		
Regiment	12% (9)	N/A
Individually	85% (63)	N/A
N/A	3% (2)	N/A
Total	100% (74)	N/A

Appendix iii) Example interview topic guide (Key Stakeholders)

Expectations

1. In your experience, what expectations do parents have in terms of you and what your job role involves?

⇨ 1a. In terms of what parents expect do you feel supported and adequately equipped to deal with their expectations?

⇨ 1b. If so, can you expand on anything your school or local authority does particularly well to support you?

⇨ 1c. Does support differ in terms of dealing with Service families and non-Service families?

⇨ 1d. Do you feel you are able to navigate parent's expectations with ease?

2. Thinking about Service and non-Service Children, do parental expectations differ?

3. When a child with SEN joins the school midyear, do you experience any difficulties? And if so can you explain?

⇨ 3a. Do you feel there are any differences in the level of support you receive when a new child enters mid-year compared with a child entering the year at the usual entry points?

Communication with parents

4. When parents are communicating with you regarding their child's needs, do you recognise any differences between Service families and non-Service Families?

4a. Are there any particular challenges you encounter when engaging with parents?

5. If you are trying to obtain information regarding a child from their previous schools, are there any issues which may arise?

⇨ 5a. In what ways do you manage any of these issues?

⇨ 5b. Does your school or local authority support you?

⇨ 5c. Are there any differences you can think of when trying to obtain information for a Service Child?

Navigating SEND

6. What types of support are in place for you in job role for you to fulfil the requirements of making sure children are adequately supported?

7. Thinking about parental expectations and their child/ren's Special Educational Needs, do you feel you are supported and equipped within your role is to meet their expectations?

8. Can you tell me in what ways the SEND code of practice supports your school in delivering support to all children with a Special Educational Need?

9. Have you ever experienced any challenges in terms of support being put into place for a child?

⇨ 9a. If yes, how do you manage this?

⇨ 9b. How did this affect you in your role, and were you supported?

10. Are you aware of any differences in terms of support being put into place, between Service and non-Service Children, and if so can you explain?

⇨ 10a. How does this affect you in your role and how do you manage this?

Understanding Service Families

11. When working with parents do you recognise and understand any challenges or barriers which Service families may experience?

⇨ 11a. In your experience how well would you say your school or local authority has helped you to recognise and understand these challenges?

12. Thinking about the social and emotional needs of children, how supported do you feel in being able to identify and help Service and non-Service Children when needed?

13. Are you able to provide any best practice examples of how you understand, identity, and support families?

Awareness of Armed Forces Covenant

14. How well do you feel that you understand the principles of the Armed Forces Covenant?

14a. Do you believe the Covenant supports your school or local authority, and your job role, in terms of understanding Service Life? And in what ways?

15. Did you receive any training in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant which could help you to support to Service Children?

⇨ 15a. If no, is this something you think would assist you in the future?

⇨ 15b. Do you have access to any materials perhaps online or a booklet regarding Service families which assists you in your role?

16. How do you interpret Service Parents expectations in how the Covenant is utilised in respect of their child's access to education and Special Educational Needs?

Covid-19

17. Thinking about the recent events and changes, can you think of any challenges you have experienced within your own job role?

18. Going forward how do you envisage any changes to your job role in terms of how you offer support, and how you are supported within your role?

Appendix iv) Example interview topic guide for parents

Can you start by telling me a bit about yourself? How many moves? How many schools your children have been too?

Mobility and applying for a school place

1. When your family receives a new posting order, how do you source information on schools?

2. Who do you consult with when sourcing information on schools?
⇨ 2a. How much input does your partner/spouse have?

3. How much involvement does your child have in the decision making process of a new school, and how important do you think their involvement is? ☞ weave into question how important, how do you discuss this with your child?

4. Have your ever experienced a time where there have been significant barriers when applying for a school place? If yes can you expand

5. Do you consider to be there are any positive aspects for your child(ren) as a result of mobility?

6. Do you think there are any aspects of Service Life which influence the 'things' you look for in a school?

7. Have you ever had to comprise on these 'things'?
⇨ 7a. Can you expand? ☞ ask participant for further details if yes.

8. Quite often Service Families are labelled as resilient, would you say you agree with this?
⇨ 8a. (if yes) Is there anything from Service Life which has taught you/helped you to cope better?
    8b. How has this/they helped you?
⇨ 8c. (if no) can you explain why?
⇨ 8d. (if applicable) have you ever used these coping methods to apply for a new school?

❗ Navigating the SEND journey
9. When choosing a school what do you consider to be the most important in terms of your child's Special Educational Needs or Disability?
⇨ 9a. Have you ever had to compromise on these?

10. Have you ever experienced any barriers or issues when looking for a suitable school for your child(ren)? Or whilst at school?

11. Thinking about being able to communicate your child/ren's needs, have you always been able to communicate effectively with Local Authority and schools staff?

⇨ 11a. Do you feel that they understand your child's needs?

12. Is there anything or has there been a time when your school or Local

Authority has done something particularly well? ☞ best practice examples, NGO's etc

⚠ 13. Are you aware of the SEND code of practice?

⇨ How effective do you feel the SEND code of practice is in terms of your child/ren's needs?

⚠14. If answers no

I would like to show you a section from the document which shows the principles of the SEND code of practice, is that ok?
 (this will be read out to participants as an overview. Those who answered no on the survey will be asked to read this prior to interview)

image removed

14a. as a Service Family with a child/ren with SEN, do you feel that these principles have been considered/upheld in respect your child/ren's access to education?

⚠15. Have you ever experienced delays when receiving support for your child/ren SEN?

⇨ What challenges did this present for you and how did you overcome them?

Policy and practice

⚠ Are you aware of the Armed Forces Covenant?

16. How do you feel the Covenant relates to your child/ren's access to education?

⚠ Answered no to understanding Armed Forces Covenant:
17. I would like to show you a slide which shows the Armed Forces Covenant would that be ok? Now you have read this, how do you feel the Covenant relates to your child/ren's access to education? (this will be read out to participants as an overview. Those who answered no on the survey will be asked to read this prior to interview)
image removed

18. Do you feel that as a Service Family you are considered and included within the promise that the Covenant sets out? ☞ participants may need reminding of the Covenants principles use previous slide

19. Is your child/ren aware of the Covenant?
⇨ 19a. How did they learn about the Covenant?

20. In your experience do you think the general public, for instance, non-military, are aware of the Covenant and understand it?

21. When you apply for a school place, do you tell the school you are a Service Family?
⇨ 21a. Do you feel this advantages/disadvantages your child?

22. When your child moves to a new school do you feel that your circumstances i.e., being a Service Family are understood?

Access to education

23. When you have moved to a new area, have you ever felt that the quality of education your child(ren) received has varied significantly in local authorities?

24. Evidence suggests that Service Children are less likely to attend a school which is rated as outstanding by Ofsted, in your experience do you agree?

25. In your experience, do you feel your child/ren's social and emotional needs were considered when you applied for your child current school place?

26. When you applied for your child's current school place, how much choice did you feel you had in which schools you applied for?
⇨ 26a. Did you feel that this was influenced by Service Family Life?

Rights and responsibilities

27. As an individual, and most importantly as a Service Family, can you describe to me what you believe your rights are as a member of society?

28. If you were to compare yourself to a 'civilian' family, do you feel that your rights differ?

39. At any point have you felt your child(rens) rights have not been met because you are part of a Service Family?

Appendix v) Example participant information sheet

The title of the research project

Stand to attention: Challenges and barriers to Service Children's access to education.

Invitation to take part

Hello, my name is Gemma, and I am a military spouse and parent, completing my Doctorate at the University of Leeds. You are being invited to take part in my research project which explores the challenges and barriers of Service Families, and other families who have a moved a child to a new school when accessing new school places. Before you decide if you wish to take part in this research it is important for you to understand and consider what the research is about, why it is being conducted, and what you will be asked to do. Please read this information sheet carefully before you decide if you wish to take part. Contact details are provided at the bottom of this sheet should you wish to discuss this further and/or if you have any additional questions.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aims of this research are to explore and establish, the range of experiences and issues arising from Service Families, and other families who have moved their child to a new school, choosing and accessing suitable schools for their children. Previous research suggests finding new school places is a primary anxiety for Service Parents, and this can be additionally complicated where a child has a Special Educational Need and Disability. It is important that Service Parents are able to express and highlight these anxieties and issues.

Why have I been chosen to take part?

Participants for this research will be chosen where they have expressed an interest to take part and meet the relevant criteria.

COVID-19
Participants who take part in the research during Covid-19 will be asked to complete a one to one interview via either Microsoft Teams or Zoom. If participants do not have access to these the interview will be conducted via telephone. All telephone calls will be at the researcher's expense.

Do I have to take part in this research?

Once the researcher has contacted you on the details provided you will have two weeks to decide if you wish to take part in a one to one interview. You are under no obligation to take part and your involvement is entirely voluntary. However, if you do decide to take part participants will be required to sign a consent form which should either be signed electronically or a photograph of your signature on the form should be returned via email to the researcher. You should also keep this information sheet for future reference. If you do decide to take part, you may withdraw your one to one interview answers from the study without reason up to two months after participation. You do not have to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable during the interview.

COVID-19
Participants who take part in a one-to-one interview via Microsoft Teams/Zoom or telephone call will be sent a consent form via email. Verbal consent will be sought at the start of each interview. This will include verbal consent to being recorded during the interview.

What will I be asked to do?

One to one interviews will take place in a location convenient to both the participant and the researcher for one hour (**interviews can be split into two sessions if required**). Participants will be asked a series of questions which they should answer based on their experiences and opinions. Again, there are no right or wrong answers to these questions. You do not need to answer any questions you do not feel comfortable with, and in this instance the researcher will move onto the next question. All interviews will be recorded and transcribed.

Direct responses and quotations will be used in this research and in some instances quotations will be published. All responses will be anonymised throughout this research and no identifiable information will be published. Participants of the one to one interviews may request a copy of their responses if they so wish by emailing the researcher on completion of the interview.

Are there any possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in this research?

There are no immediate disadvantages to taking part in this research. All responses will be anonymised, and no in-depth personal information will be discussed unless you wish to disclose such information.

Are there any advantages of taking part?

There are no direct advantages for participants of this research however your contribution will assist the researcher in presenting key findings. At the end of this research the findings may be disseminated to government organisations and third parties such as the families' federations.

Information regarding confidentiality and publishing of this research.

All information and responses gathered during this research will be in accordance with the University of Leeds data management and research policies. All data will be kept in a secure location, will not be distributed to others, and will only be available to the researcher and the researcher's supervisors. Anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained at all times. All data will be destroyed after five years from completion of this research and will be held in a secure location. One to one interviews will be recorded and transcribed at a later date. All participants will be provided with a pseudonym, and this will be used where direct quotations appear. Requests for transcripts can be made direct to the researcher via the contact details at the bottom of this information sheet. On completion of data analysis, all results will be written up in the researcher thesis which will then be submitted to the University of Leeds. The researcher and/or the University may decide to disseminate and publish the findings of this research on completion.

What will happen to my personal information?

Any personal information that is collected will be kept in a secure location and will only be available to the researcher and the researcher's supervisors. At no point will this information be shared or replicated in the written findings with others and all personal contact information will be destroyed on completion of the research.

What type of information will I be asked for?

Please read the following points carefully:

A) Personal information such as name and contact details will only be collected for participants who wish to take part in a one to one interview.

B) No personal information regarding the Serving Person will be collected, other than type of Force (Army, RAF, Royal Navy) or the Local Authority you reside in. You do not have to provide this information if you do not wish.

C) No in-depth information will be sought in relation to a child's medical details. However, questions may be asked in relation to a child's SEND. You do not have to answer any questions you are not comfortable with.

D) Any participants who are personally known to the researcher will not be chosen to take part in one to one interviews.

Contact for further information

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet. Should you decide to become a participant please read and sign the attached consent form and return to the researcher **via email.** Please find below all relevant contact details. Please also see the following information regarding data privacy

http://www.leeds.ac.uk/info/5000/about/237/privacy_notice

Name	Email	Position
Gemma Carr	Ss13glc@leeds.ac.uk	Researcher
Dr Lisa Buckner	L.J.Buckner@leeds.ac.uk	Supervisor
Dr Angharad Beckett	A.E.Beckett@leeds.ac.uk	Supervisor

Project title	Document type	Version #	Date
Stand to attention: Challenges and barriers to Service Children's access to education.	Participant info sheet [parents]	6	8/2/22

Appendix vi) Consent form

Consent to take part in Stand to attention: Challenges and barriers to Service children's access to education.	Add your initials next to the statement if you agree
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 12/2/21 explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. However, I understand that withdrawal two months after participation will not be possible. In this instance my data will continue to be included in the research. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. I understand that all requests for transcripts and to withdraw must be done so in writing to Gemma Carr at ss13glc@leeds.ac.uk	
I give permission for the researcher, and the researchers supervisors (information provided on participant information sheet) to have access to my anonymised responses. I understand that my name will not be linked with the research materials, and I will not be identified or identifiable in the report or reports that result from the research.	
I understand that anonymised published results of this research, may be used by other researchers and may use my anonymised words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs.	
I understand that relevant sections of the data collected during the study, may be looked at by auditors from the University of Leeds where it is relevant to my taking part in this research. I give permission for these individuals to have access to my records.	
I agree to take part in the above research project and will inform the lead researcher should my contact details change during the project and, if necessary, afterwards.	
I agree to my responses being recorded for the purposes of transcription	
The researcher is not known to me in a personal capacity	

Name of participant	
Participant's signature	
Date	

Name of lead researcher	Gemma Carr
Signature	
Date*	

*To be signed and dated in the presence of the participant.
Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/ pre-written script/ information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy of the signed and dated consent form should be kept with the project's main documents which must be kept in a secure location.

Appendix vii) List of thematic codes

Code name	Participants	References
STABILITY		**203**
School applications	14	60
Admissions Code	4	17
Choice	9	36
Attainment & outcomes	18	46
Gendering	5	9
Mobility	18	35
Separation	2	2
UNDERSTANDING		**177**
Knowledge	7	11
Experiences & attitudes	18	46
Social & emotional needs	5	10
Othering	6	11
Building relationships	7	11
SEND	10	28
Resilience	11	26
Covid	11	34
SUPPORT		**326**
KS/school/LA support	18	54
Communication	18	69
Coping	14	19
Separation	7	12
Parent advocacy	6	16
SEND	12	106

Obtaining & sharing information	13	37
Friendships	9	25
Settling in	7	10
Welfare	4	7
EXPECTATIONS		**236**
SSP	7	21
Rights & obligations	7	19
SEND Code of Practice	4	6
Education	11	17
AFC	18	39
Awareness	18	66
SEND	10	68
OTHER		17
Viewing schools	1	1
Relationships with students	1	2
KS comparing schools	2	4
Nation differences	1	2
Behaviours	2	4
Work life balance	2	4