



Supporting ALL to Thrive

 **THE ARMED FORCES
COVENANT FUND TRUST**
Funded by HM Government


Ministry
of Defence

OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY



Supporting Service children with additional needs to thrive

- Introduction to project
- Presentation of headline findings
- Reflection on implications



Funders

The Armed Forces
Covenant Fund Trust

Ministry of Defence,
Armed Forces Family
Fund Research Grant
programme



Research Team



Claire Lee



Alison Cotton



Dianne Newbury



Vince Connelly

Steering Group



Chair: Nicola Fear, CBE,
Kings Centre for Military
Health Research

Nicola Fear

Ali Stokes, RAF Families Federation

Ellen Chard, SSAFA, Forces Additional Needs and
Disabilities Forum (FANDF)

Jenny Ward, Naval Families Federation

Jess Lovett, Educational Psychologist, Defence
Children's Services

Karen Ross, Army Families Federation

Matt Blyton, Garrison Assist Plus, Independent
Education Advisor

Philip Dent, SCiP Alliance

Rebecca Lovell, Naval Families Federation

Ed Harris, Armed Forces Families and Safeguarding,
MOD Education Policy Team

Samantha Reynolds-Dunn, RAF Brize Norton HIVE

Project Aims

To develop a holistic understanding of the impact of Service life on the education of children with Additional Needs (SEND/ASN/ALN) and their families' experiences of supporting them.

National
Pupil
Database
analysis



Survey



Participatory
arts-based
methods



Whole person, whole journey

We define education as a **lifelong process** of **intellectual, social, emotional, moral, physical and identity development** that takes place in all the **contexts** within which people spend their lives.

Education not only equips people with **knowledge and skills** and provides **qualifications**; it also supports people in the process of **becoming unique and autonomous individuals**.

In line with this concept of education, 'thriving' is not just about achieving expected levels of attainment but about a **holistic sense of well-being, purpose and empowerment**; in short, **living well in and with the world**.

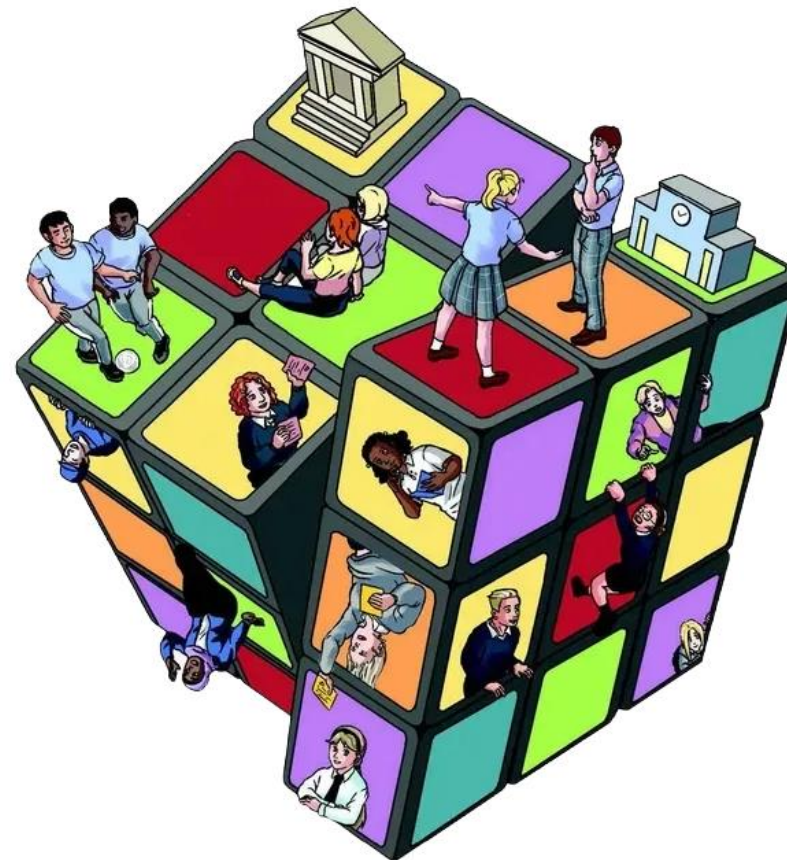
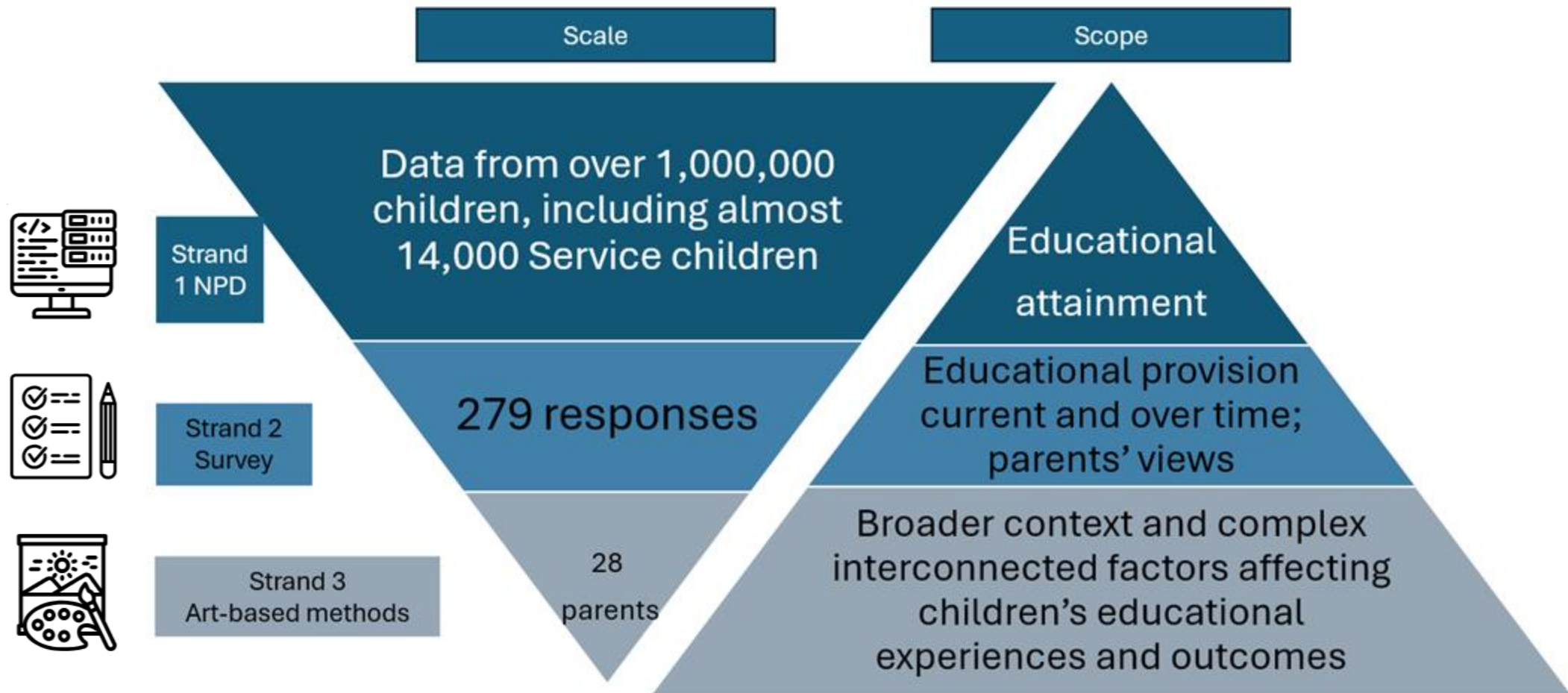


Image reproduced with kind permission of Divya Jindal-Snape
© Divya Jindal-Snape. See <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/projects/multiple-and-multi-dimensional-primary-secondary-school-transitions>

Whole person, whole journey research approach



Headline findings from Strand 1



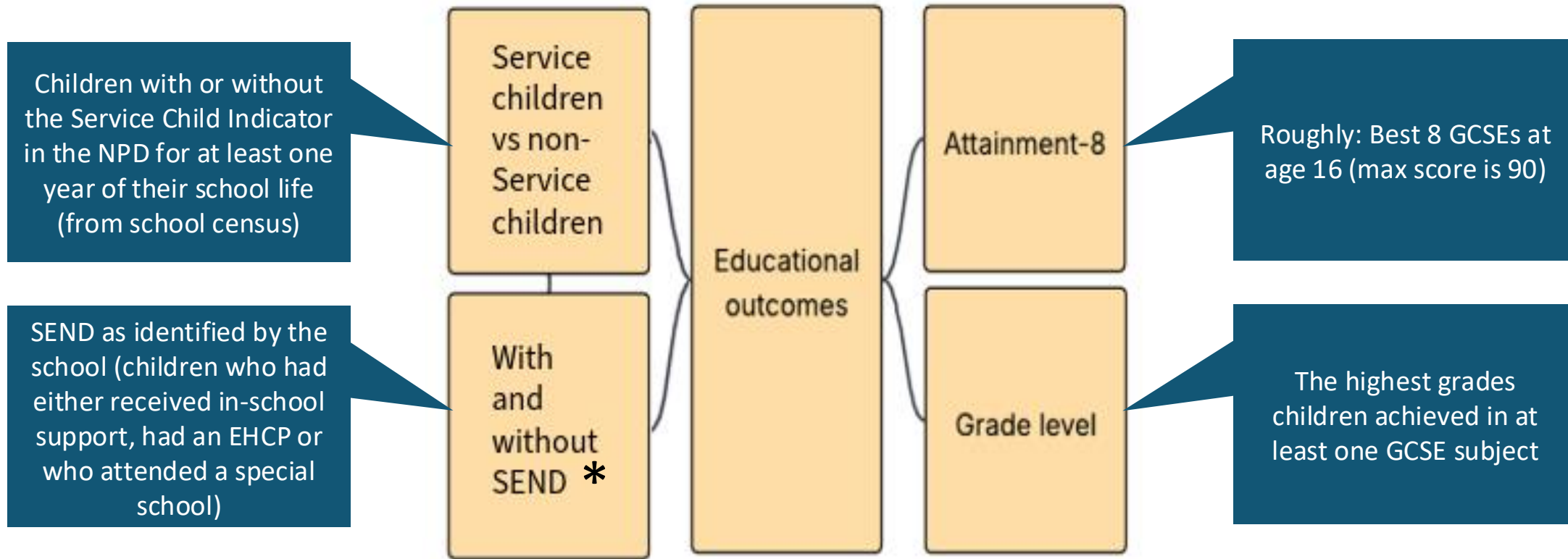
Analysis of attainment data from the
English Department for Education
National Pupil Database (NPD)



Data Use

- This analysis was carried out in the Secure Research Service, part of the Office for National Statistics using SPSS (DSAP 2003865)
- We have been given clearance to share the contents of this presentation by the Secure Research Service and the Department for Education
- Note: This work contains statistical data from ONS which is Crown Copyright. The use of the ONS statistical data in this work does not imply the endorsement of the ONS in relation to the interpretation or analysis of the statistical data. This work uses research datasets which may not exactly reproduce National Statistics aggregates

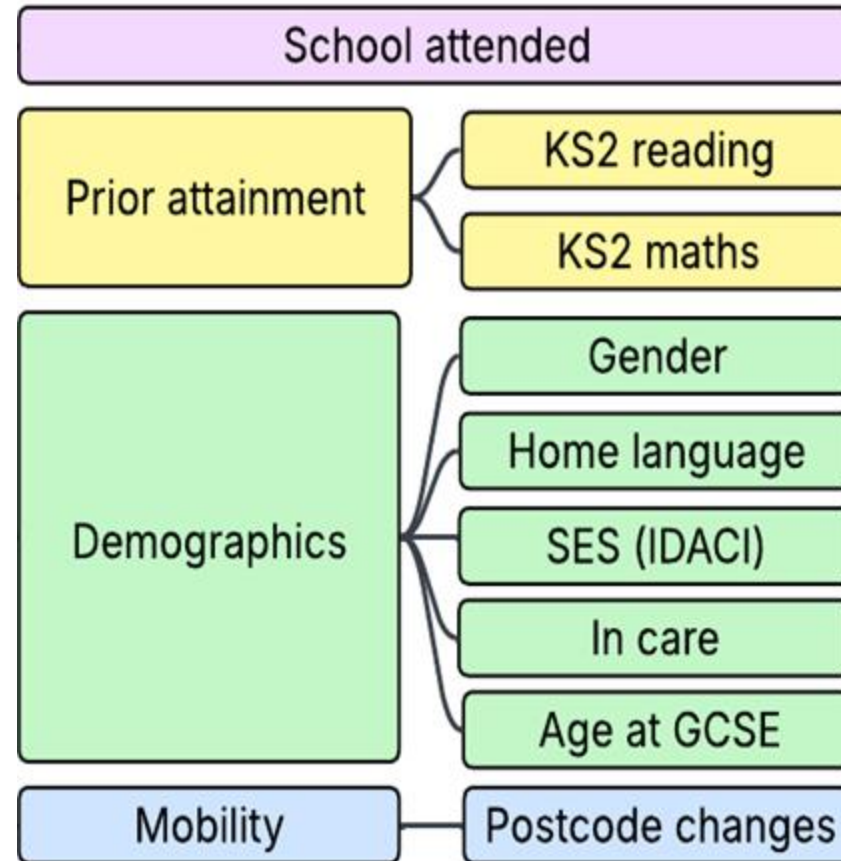
Analysis



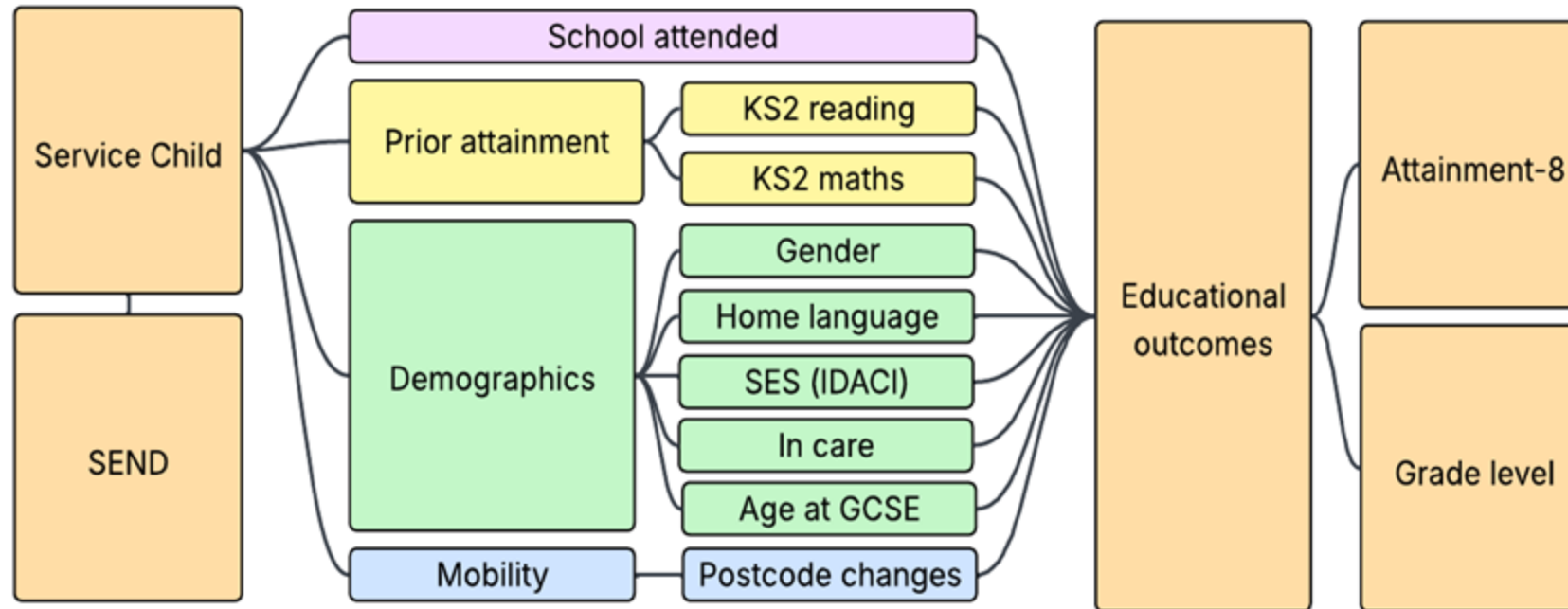
*

The term 'SEND', rather than 'additional needs,' is used here because this strand is using the English NPD.

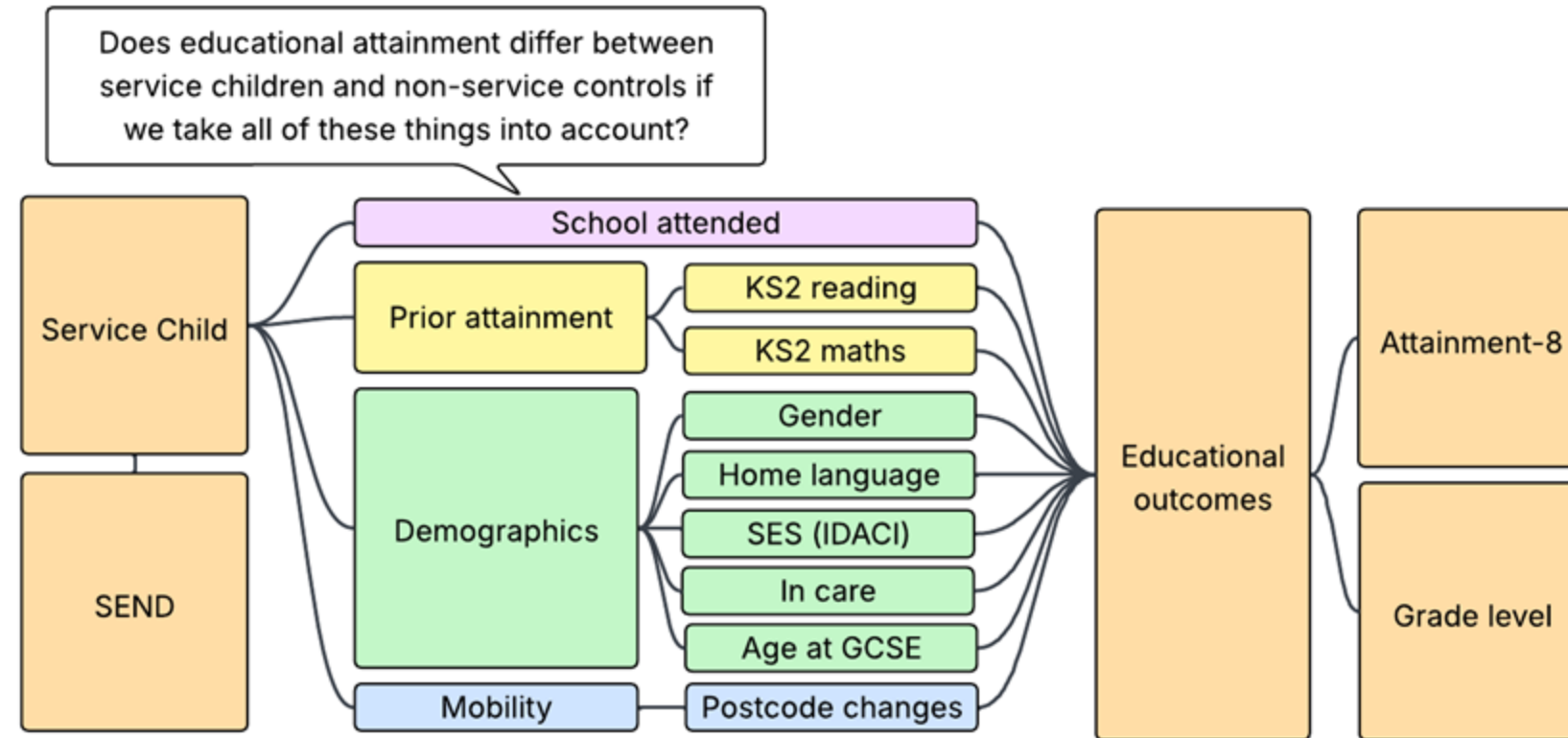
Factors we took into account



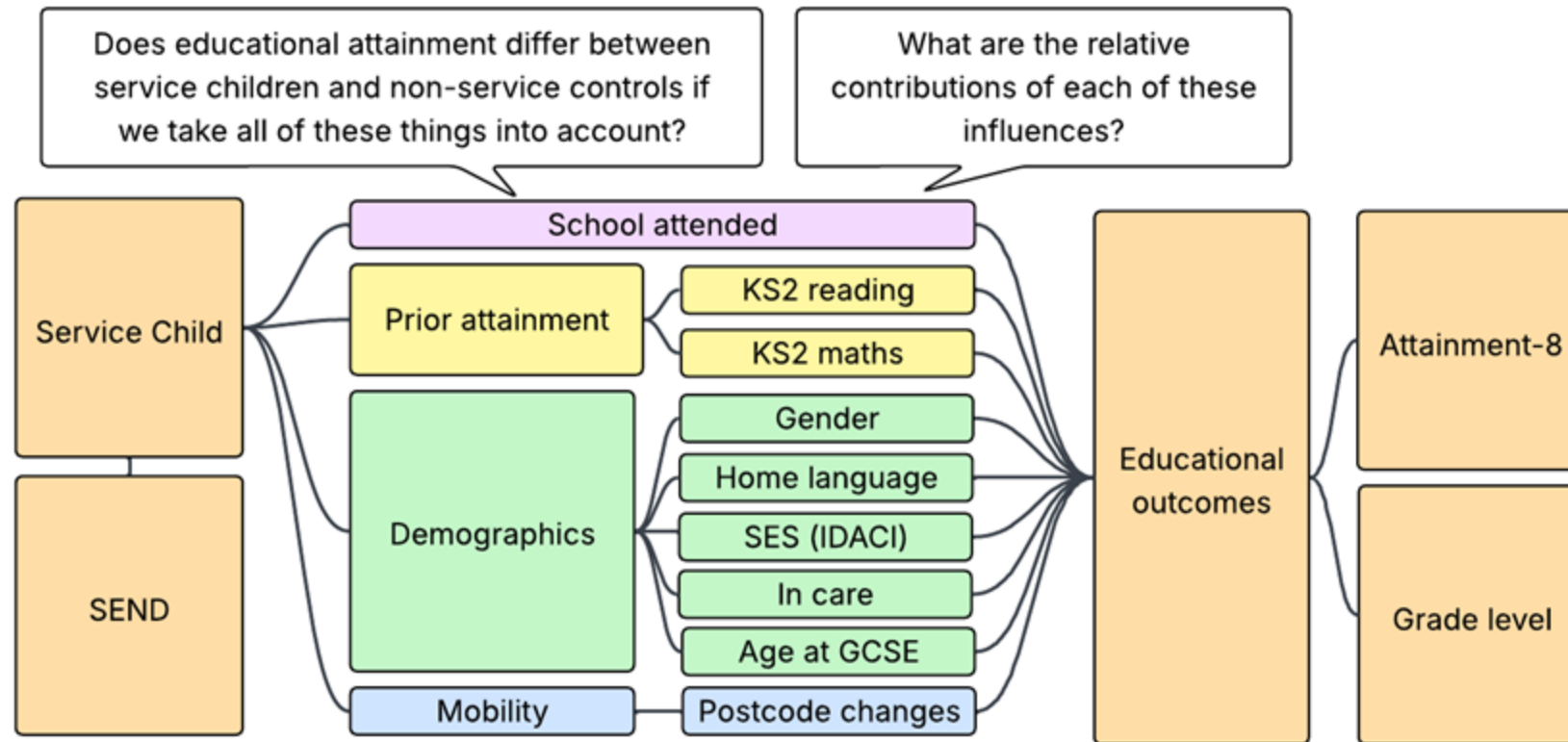
Research Questions



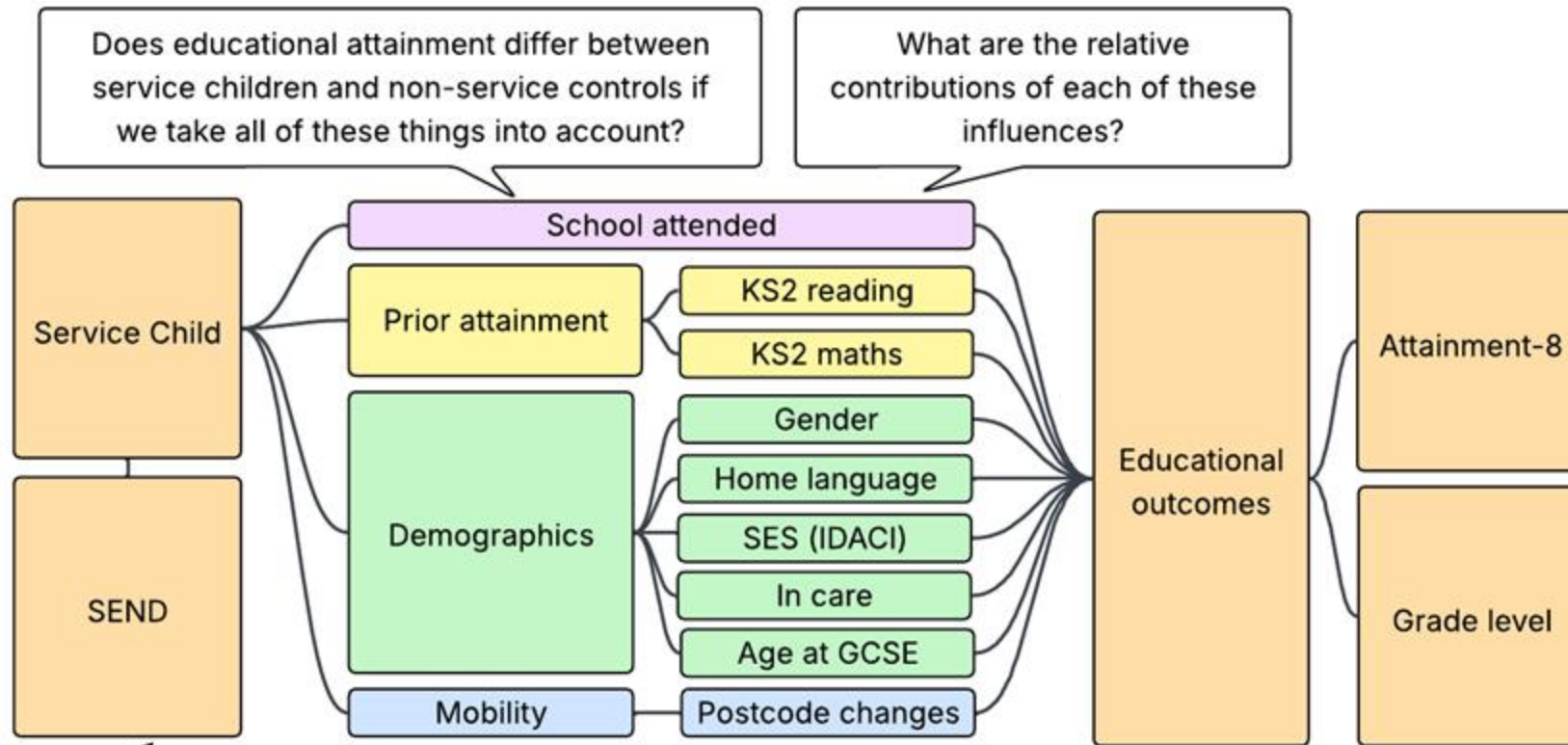
Research Questions



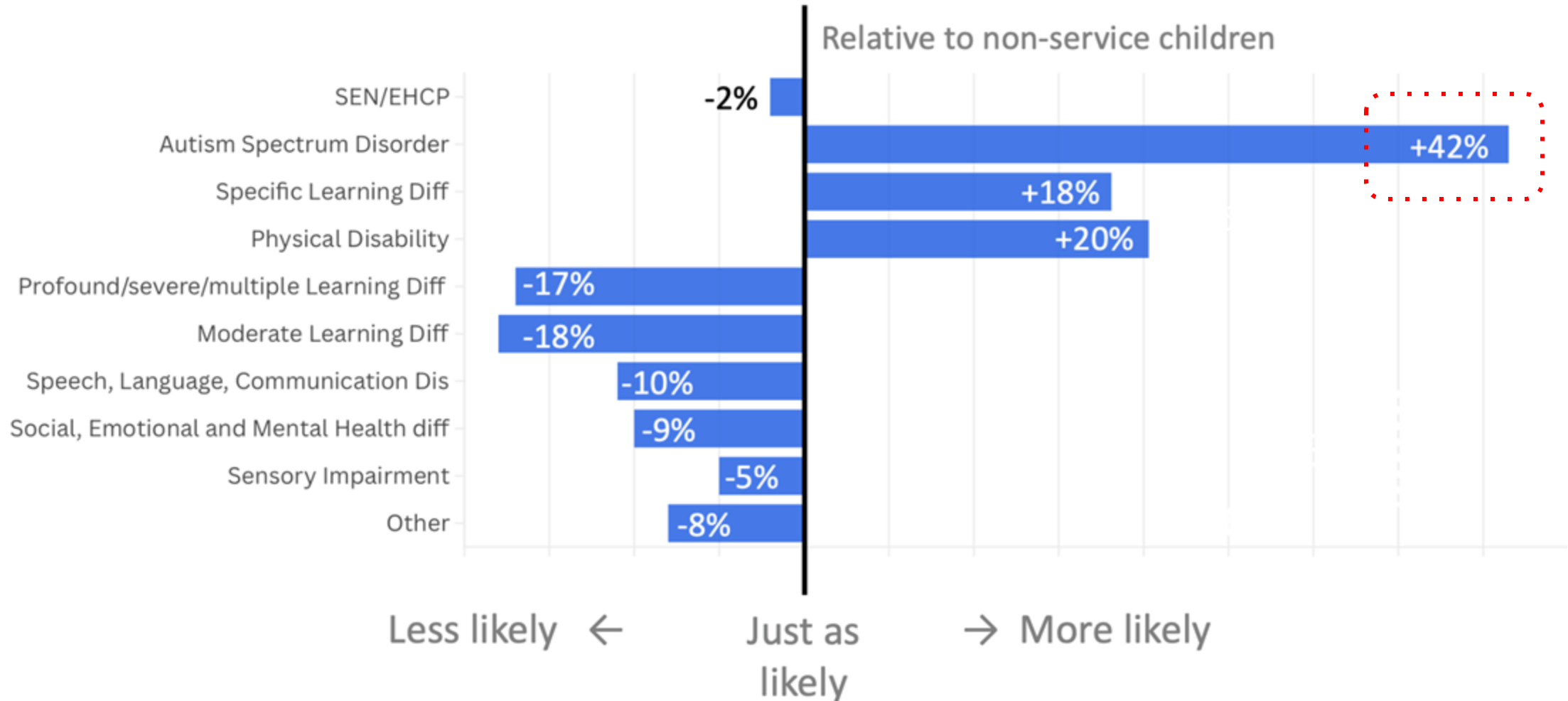
Research Questions



Research Questions



Additional needs in Service Children in England



Comparison of ATT-8 scores (all children)

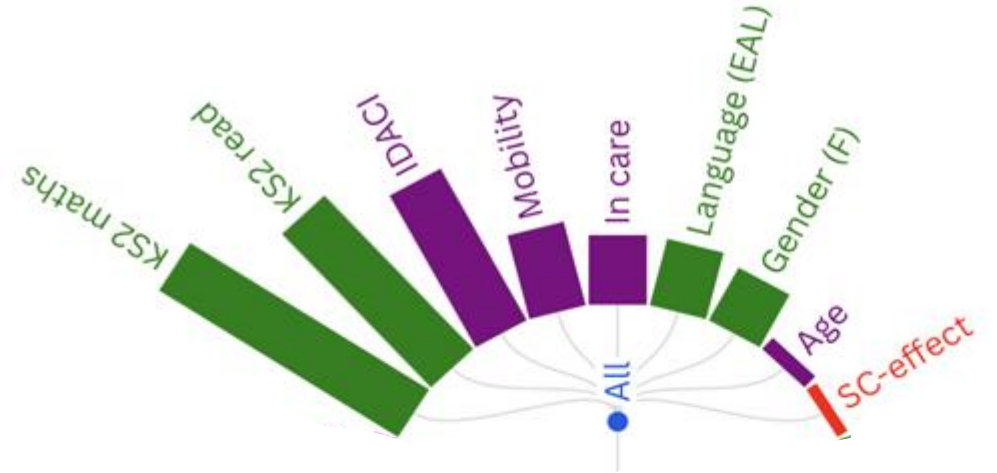
	Service children Average ATT-8 score	Non-Service children Average ATT-8 score	Difference in scores
Before all influencing factors were taken into account	45.06	44.29	0.77
After all influencing factors were taken into account			0.96*

This means that Service children on average scored the equivalent of around 1 grade higher in one of their 8 GCSEs

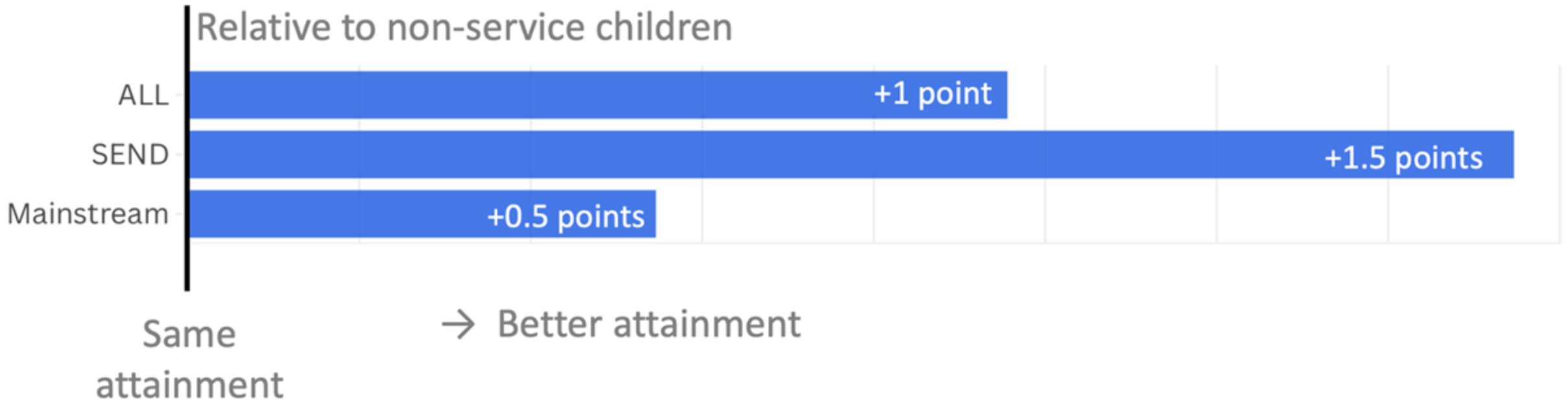
*95% CI = 0.73-1.19, $P < 0.001$

Relative contributions of different factors

- Positive effects (green)
 - Prior attainment
 - English as a second language
 - Being female
 - Being a Service child
- Negative effects (purple)
 - Living in an area of deprivation
 - Being mobile
 - Being older
 - In care



SEND & Mainstream Service children's ATT-8 scores

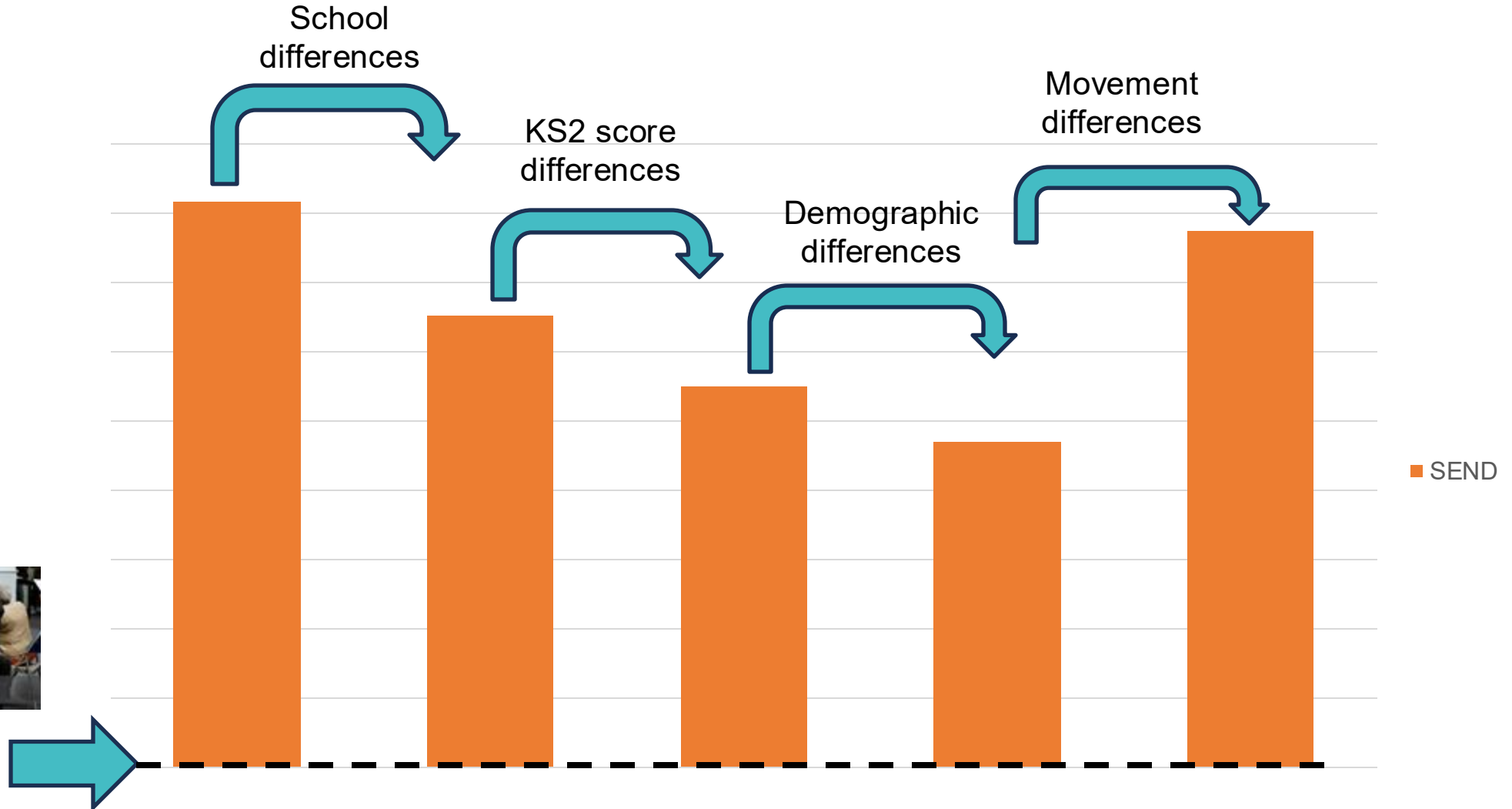


Service child effect (SEND)

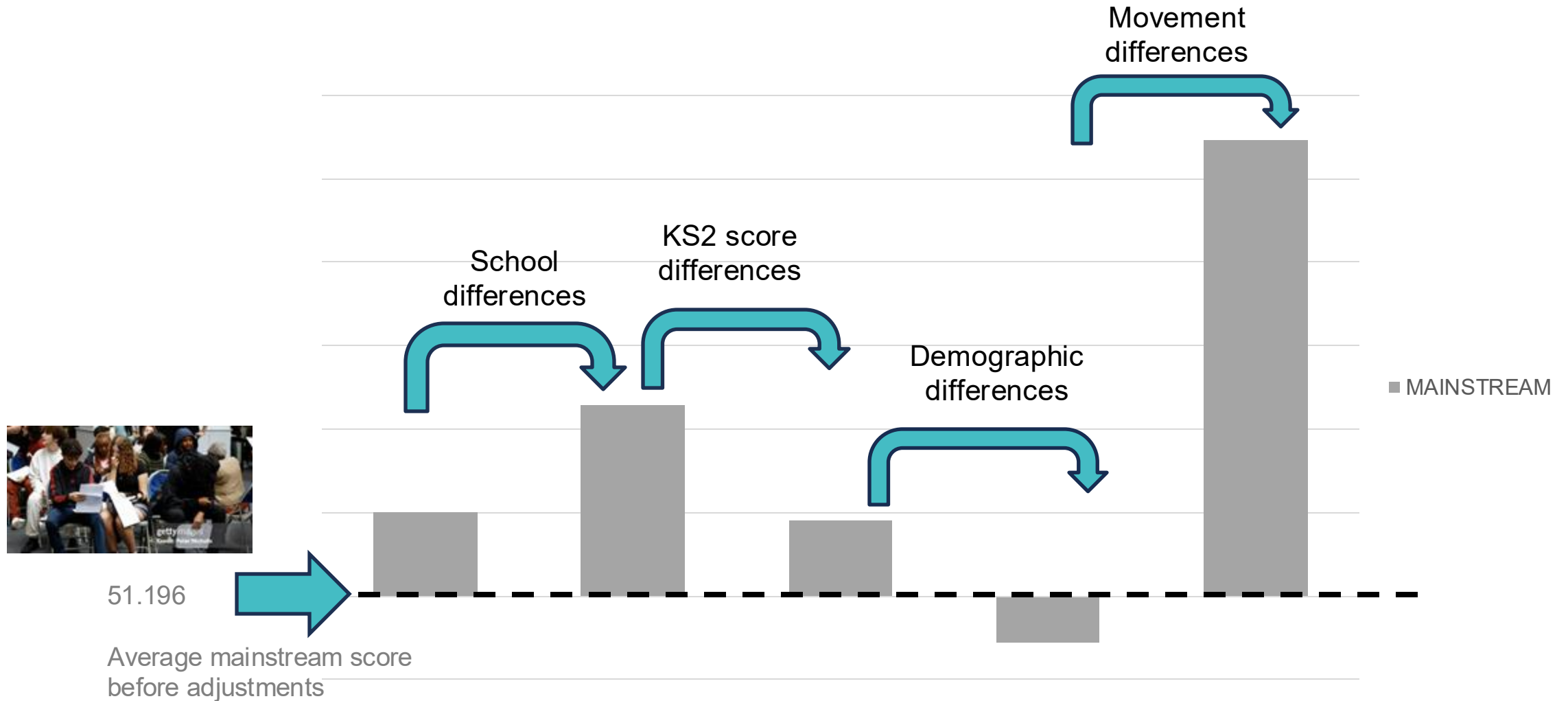


32.465

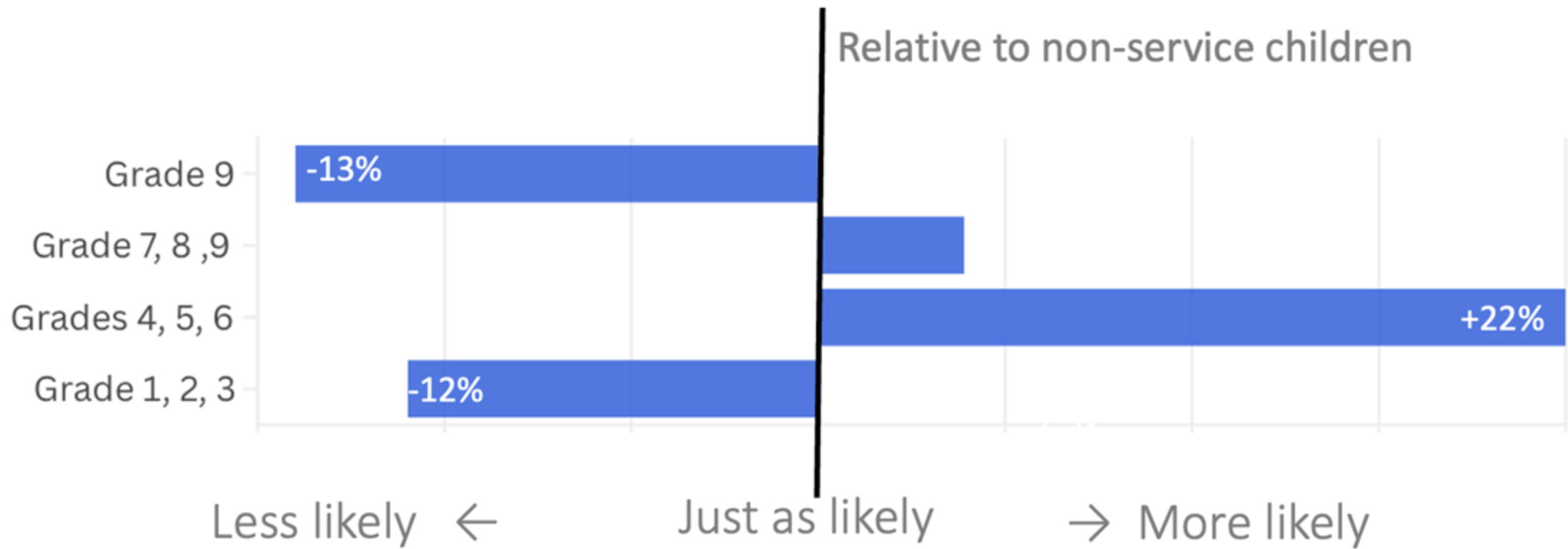
average score for children who received SEND support (before adjustments)



Service child effect (mainstream)



Grades achieved – the Service Child ‘Squeeze’



In summary

- In general, Service children attained at, or above, expected level in GCSEs
- The 'advantage' was largely driven by the SEND subset
 - ⇒ Where help is given, it is working to narrow the gap
- Other factors, including mobility, have a greater effect on attainment than being a Service child in itself
- Despite the apparent advantage, Service children's attainment was squeezed
 - Children at higher ability levels are not doing as well as they could
 - Variability is greatest within SEND and mobile sub-groups

⇒ **Visibility aids attainment**

Headline findings from Strand 2



Survey



Research questions:

- What factors support children with additional needs from Armed Forces families to thrive or prevent them from thriving?
- What are their parents' views of their educational provision and of the experience of navigating support systems?
- How do Service and non-Service parents' views on their children's education differ, and what do they have in common?

Survey responses (all families with children with additional needs)

Non-Service families

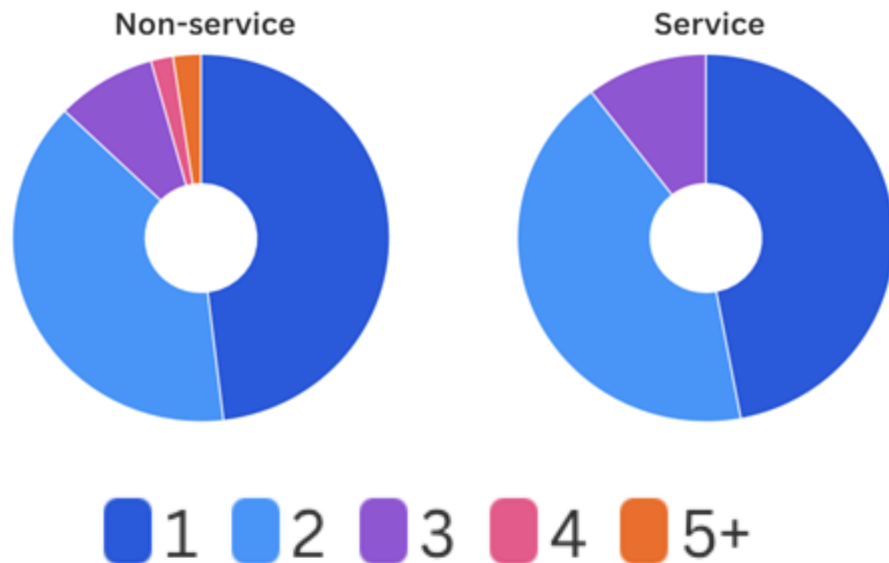
- 150 households including 320 children
- 210 children with additional needs
- Detailed data were collected for 164 children

Service families

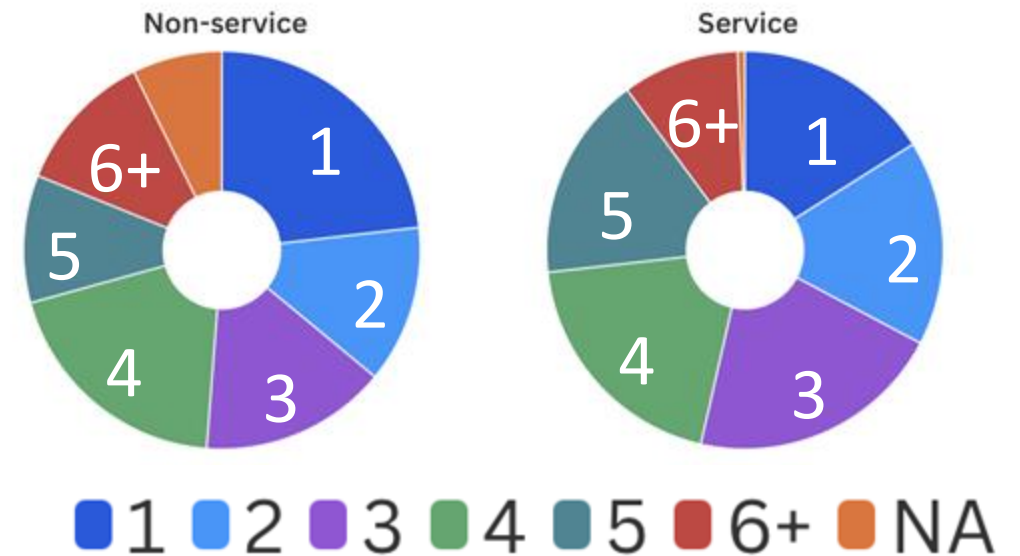
- 145 households including 295 children
- 202 children with additional needs
- Detailed data were collected for 168 children

Complex picture for children and families

Number of children with additional needs



Numbers of areas of support need*



*Parents could select more than 1 area

Mobility

1. Moves between local authorities (%)



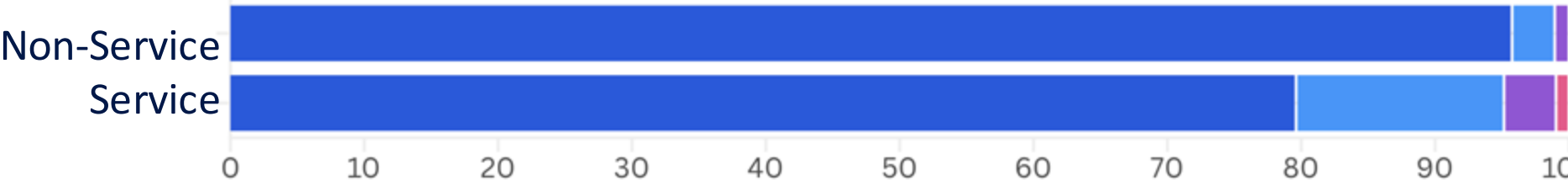
Of children who moved **between LAs**, 18% of Service children moved 5 or more times, compared with 1.1% of non-Service children

2. Moves between countries within UK



Of children who moved **between countries**, 28% of Service children moved 2 or more times, compared with 2.1% of non-Service children

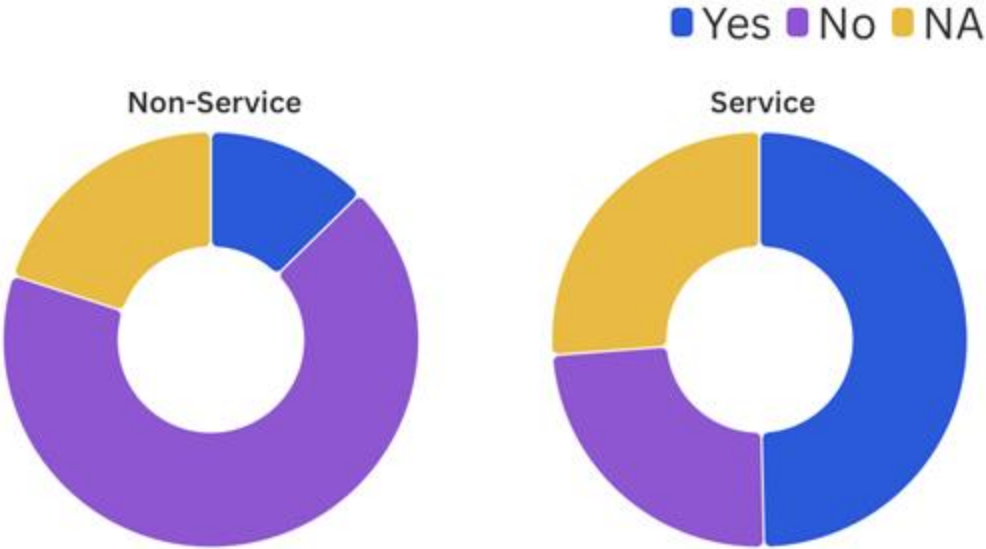
3. International moves



Of children who moved **internationally**, 20% of Service children moved 2 or more times, compared with 2.3% of non-Service children)

Parent/carer away from home regularly for work reasons?

16% of non-Service family respondents had worked away regularly compared with 67% of Service family respondents

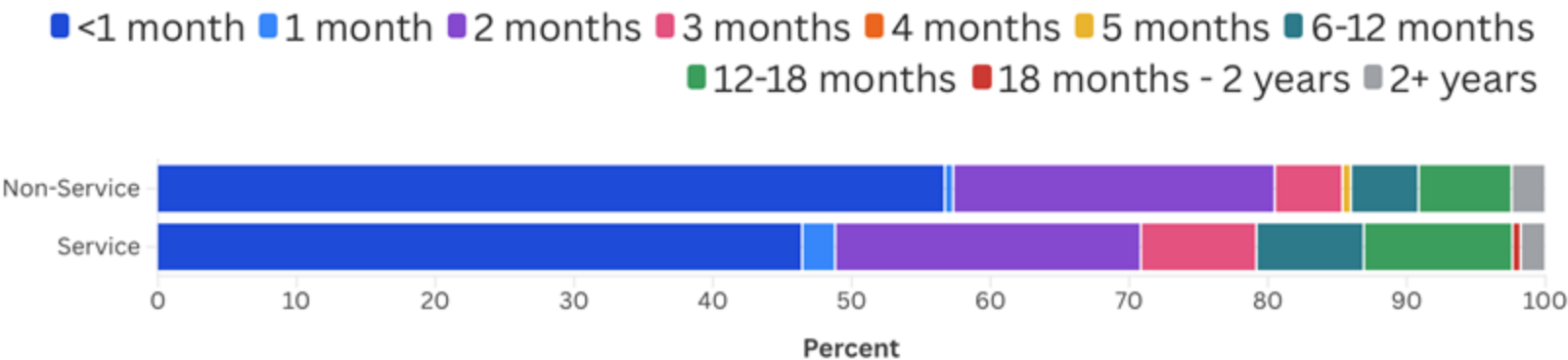


Deployment time (months over last two years)

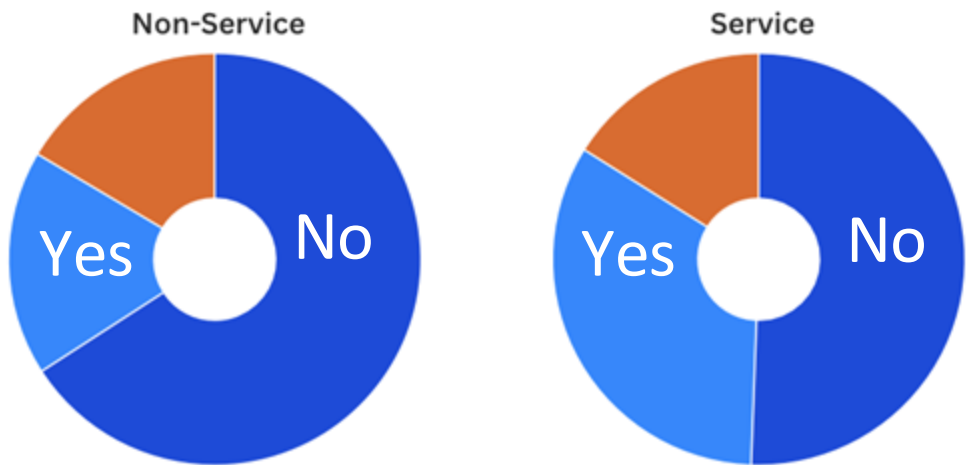
■ 0-3 ■ 3-6 ■ 6-9 ■ 9-12 ■ 12-18 ■ 18-24 ■ NA



Waiting times for education plans



Has your child had any other formal education plan?



17.5% of families had to wait longer than 1 year for a formal educational plan (20.8% Service vs 14% non-Service)

The average reported wait time was 2.6 months (10 weeks) for non-Service families vs 3.3 months (13 weeks) for Service families

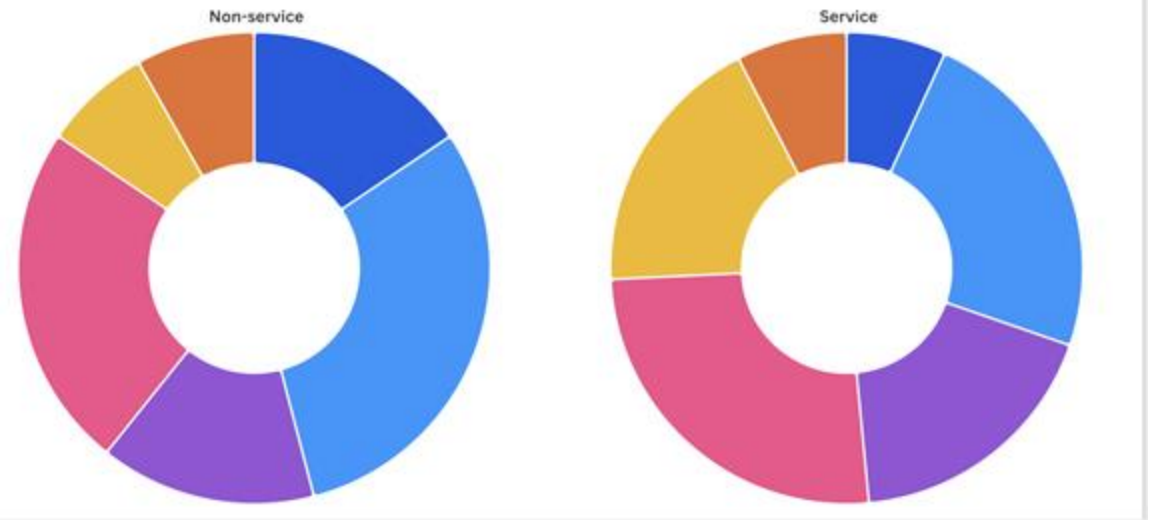
Service families were more likely to have previously had another plan than non-Service families (39.7% vs 21.2%)

Parents' views of children's current educational provision

12 statements about provision

Service carers were consistently less satisfied with their children's educational provision than their non-Service counterparts

My child is getting the support I believe they are entitled to



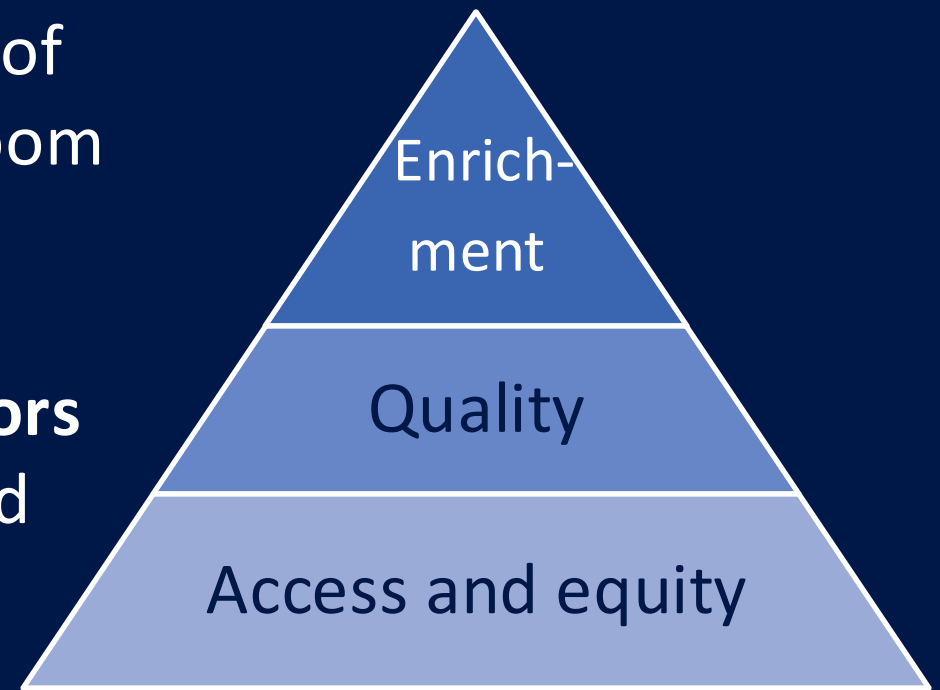
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree ■ IDK/NA

30% of Service respondents agreed with the above statement, compared with 46% of non-Service respondents

Supporting or hindering children's thriving

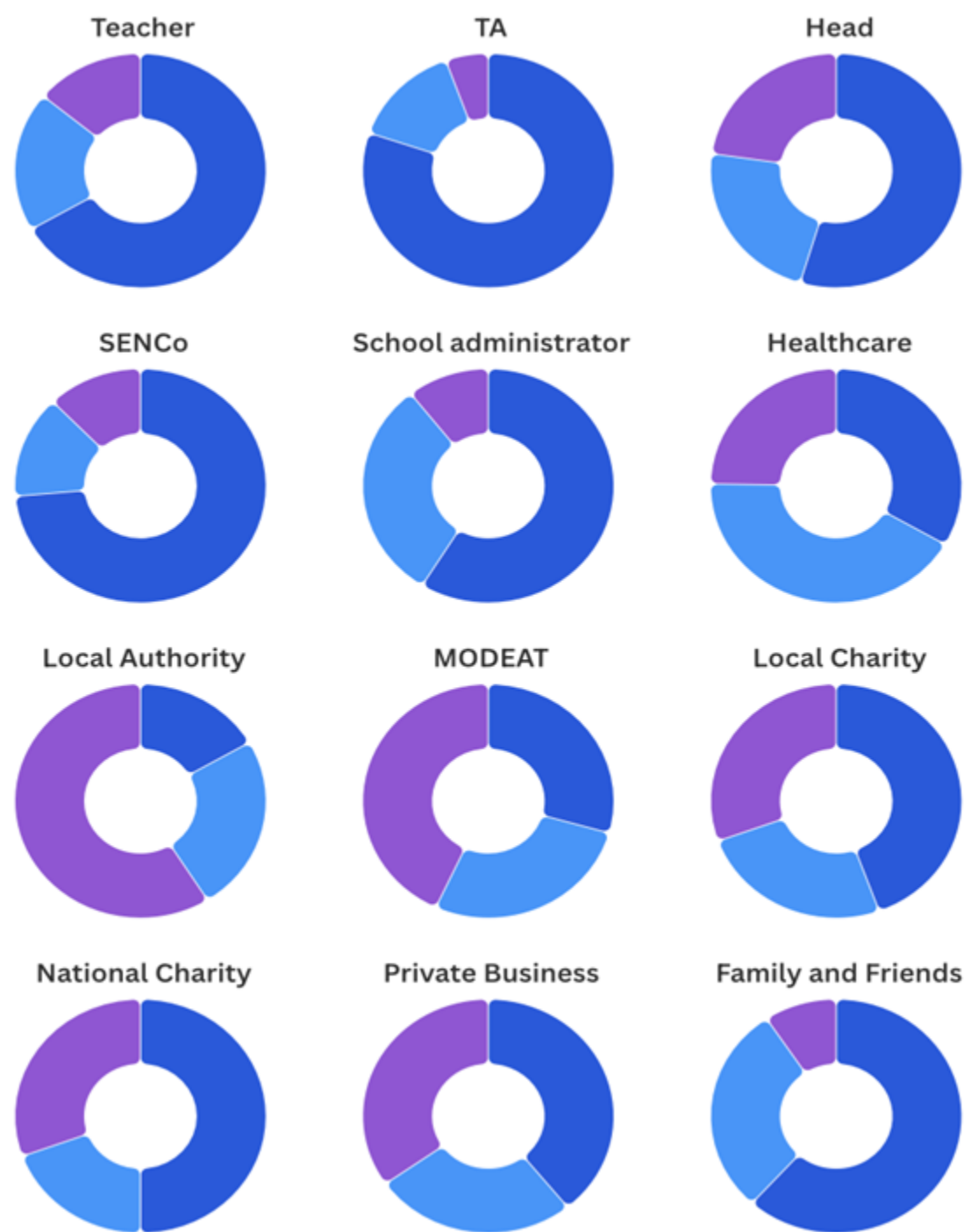
Service families were **less likely** than non-Service families to nominate **aspects of the school environment** as factors that affected whether their child was thriving (such as caring staff, quality of teaching and curriculum, workload and classroom management)...

...and were **more likely** to select **external factors** (such as their financial investment, funding and external help, family matters and support networks).



How helpful or unhelpful are these people or organisations in providing support for your child with additional needs?
(Service families' responses)

■ Helpful ■ Neither ■ Unhelpful

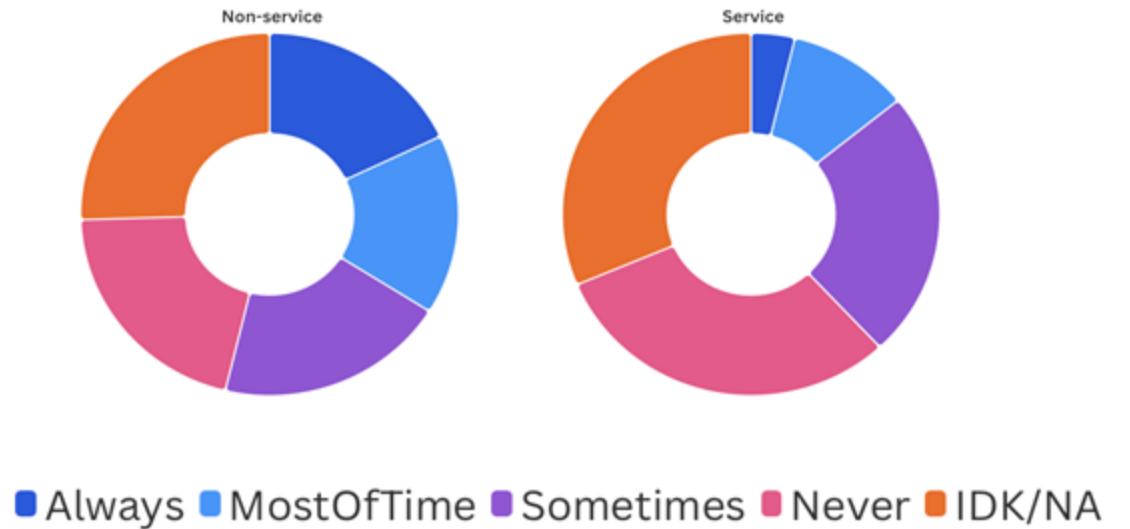


Parents' views of moves

9 statements about moves

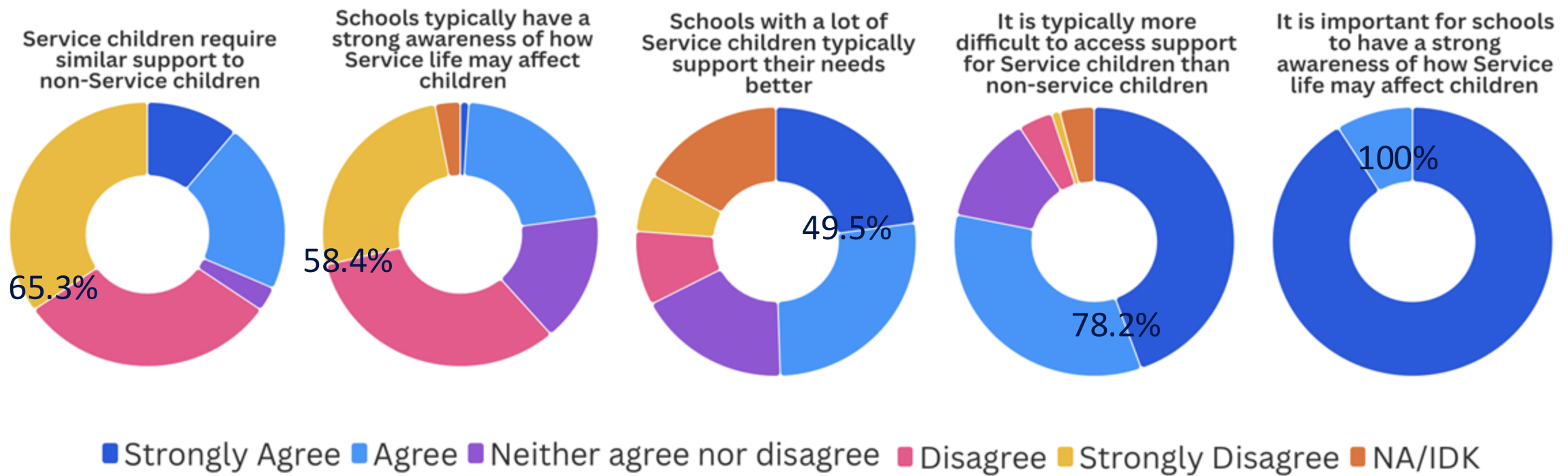
Service carers were consistently less pleased with the experience they received when moving school places compared to their non-service counterparts

"Getting support in place for my child was a positive experience"



20.4% of service respondents said that getting support in place was a positive experience, compared with 43.4% of non-service respondents

Service parents' views on Service children's educational provision

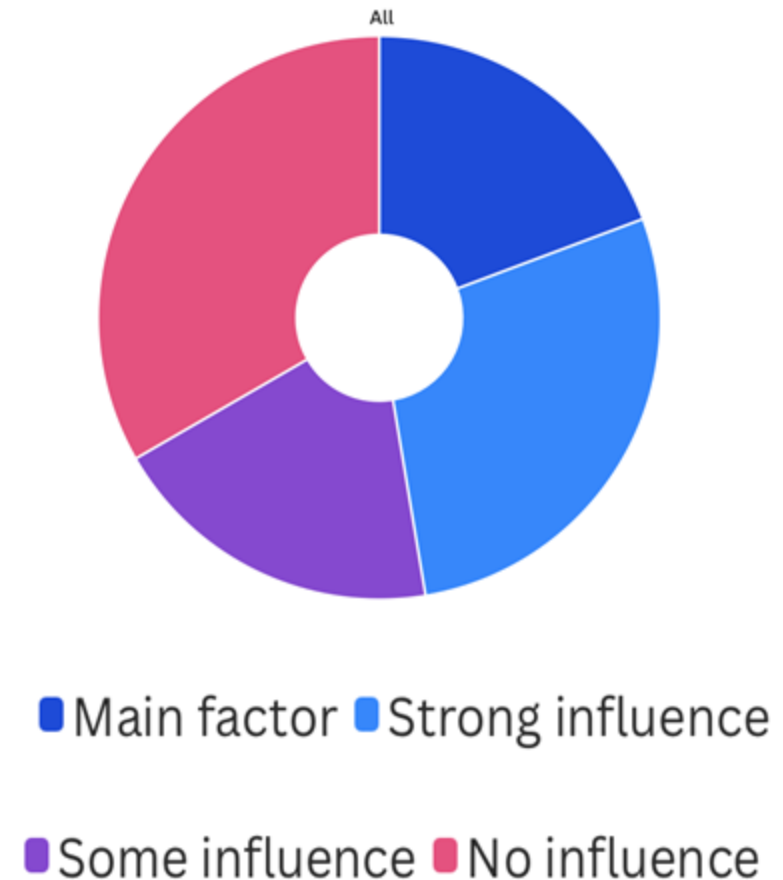


Retention

38% of 81 people who answered the retention question said that they were considering leaving the Armed Forces.

Of those that had left or were thinking of leaving the Armed Forces, two-thirds said their decision would be influenced by their child's additional needs; 19% said it would be the main factor in their decision.

Did/would your child's additional needs influence your decision to leave the Armed Forces?



In summary

- Service parents/carers were consistently less satisfied with their children's educational provision and the handling of their moves than non-Service parents.
- When asked what affected their children's thriving, Service parents were less likely to select environment-related factors and more likely to select external factors than non-Service parents. The same trend was seen in the free text responses.
- This suggests that Service children with additional needs are disadvantaged at a more foundational level than their non-Service peers.
- Effect on retention

Case studies from Strand 3



Participatory art-based research



Research question:

How do participants describe their children's educational journeys and their experiences of supporting their children to thrive?

11 in-person and 3 online art workshops (2-3 hours each)

Participants: Parents of Service children aged 4-18 with additional needs

- Northern England (6),
- Southern England (3),
- South-East England (3)
- South-West England (9),
- Scotland (5),
- Northern Ireland (1),
- Wales (1)
- RNRM/Army/RAF/RFA

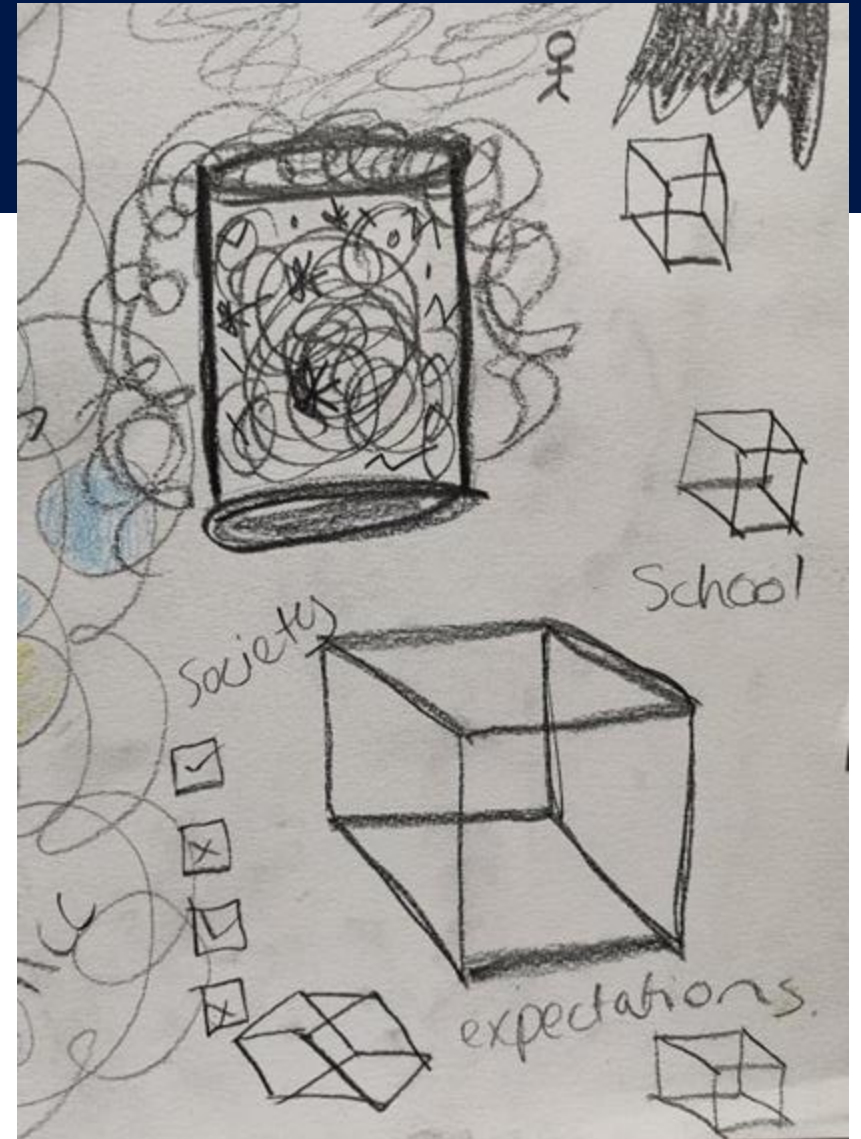
TRIGGER WARNING



Composite Journey 1

“he's a big masker, and then he ends up so burnt out, exhaustion... he went selectively mute”

“in primary he was locked in a shed by other children. He was poked with sticks”



Emotional impact

“he came home for the first couple of months, just a little bit more broken every day, and he would sit on the kitchen floor and sob his heart out”.

“he does get lonely, and he'll say he's lonely.”

“We got to the point where he was physically sick because of anxiety, he was biting himself.”

School refusal

“It was like trying to put a circle in a box, right?... But he had to go through the trauma of seeing it through to see if it works.

He was an emotional wreck... He wasn't facing going back in. I was getting school refusal. I was getting anger. I was getting tears.”

Lack of understanding

“The SENCO... didn’t bother putting in the paperwork for my child’s autism assessment because we would have been moving on.”

“there seems to be that [idea that] ‘You can get it sorted elsewhere’, sort of thing. ‘We’re going to focus on other people.’”

Deployment

“He'll be gone for three to four weeks... And then other times he's done, like, six, nine weeks, and then other times he's just away all week, and then comes home at weekends. And they just, they are really struggling with that”.

“The reason I had my breakdown was because, in an 18-month period prior to the breakdown, I was away for twelve months, so [my wife] was at home.... I think we were borderline on the edge of her just leaving”

Impact on parents of constant plate-spinning

“we take the antidepressants, cry on the kitchen floor, pull ourselves back up again and then fight again the following day.”

“I ended up having a month off because I basically had a breakdown.”



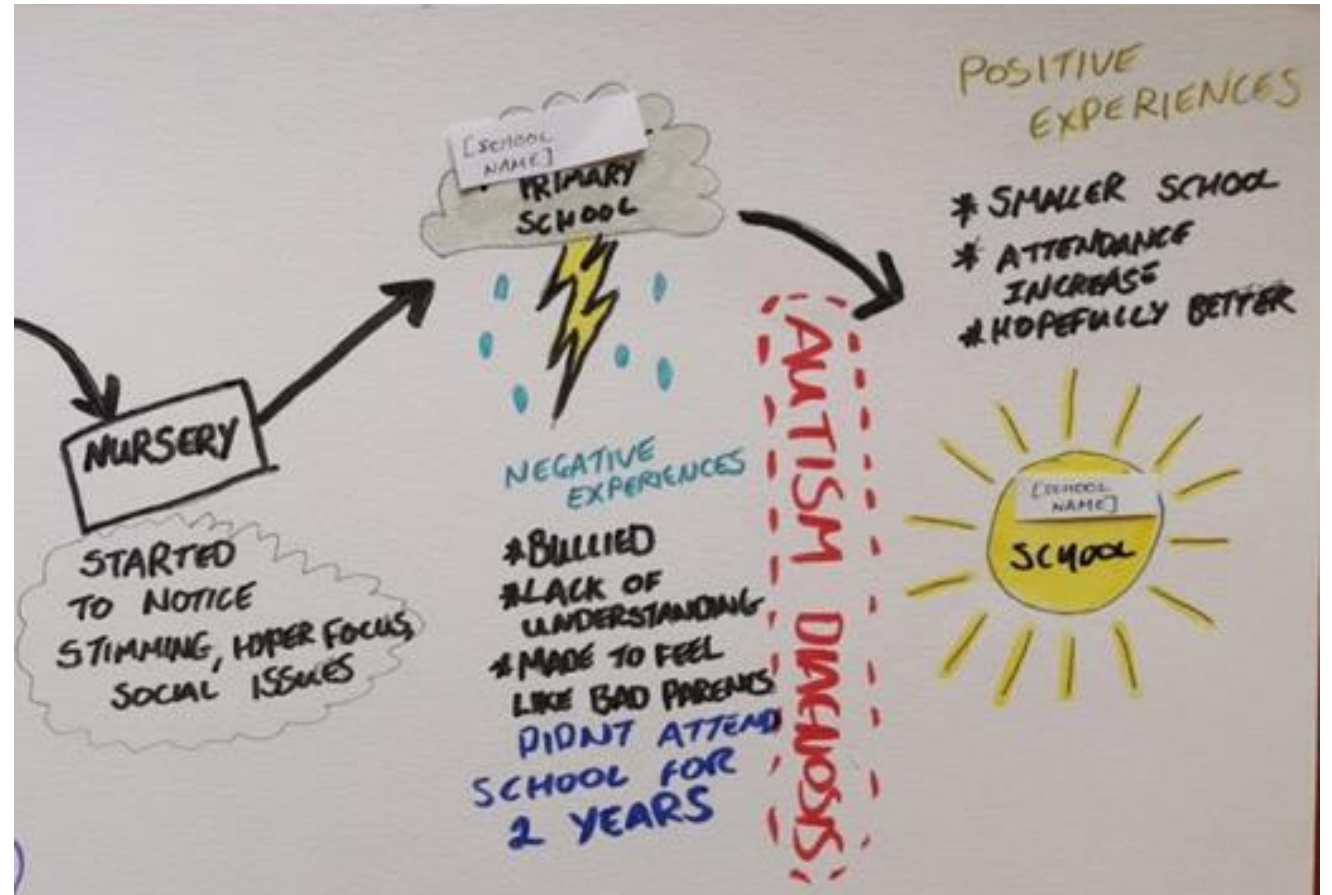
Effect on career

"I had a full breakdown in their office. I was like, in tears, and I was just like, "I feel like I can't be a good dad, a good husband and do this job with two additional needs kids. I don't feel that I can do this. And I think the right thing for me to do is to leave the job."

Finding the right school

“The teacher... said, ‘How can we make this work for [child] in the classroom? What can we do?... Where do you want to sit? Is it too busy? Do the displays bother you? The sound? Who do you want to sit next to?’”

“His education has bounced back and he enjoys going to school now.”



Pride and validation

“They do love their dad and they love the army.”

“Camo Day, [helicopters] would fly into the school field so the kids could look around them. Those... little things are the things that make it special.”



Composite journey 2

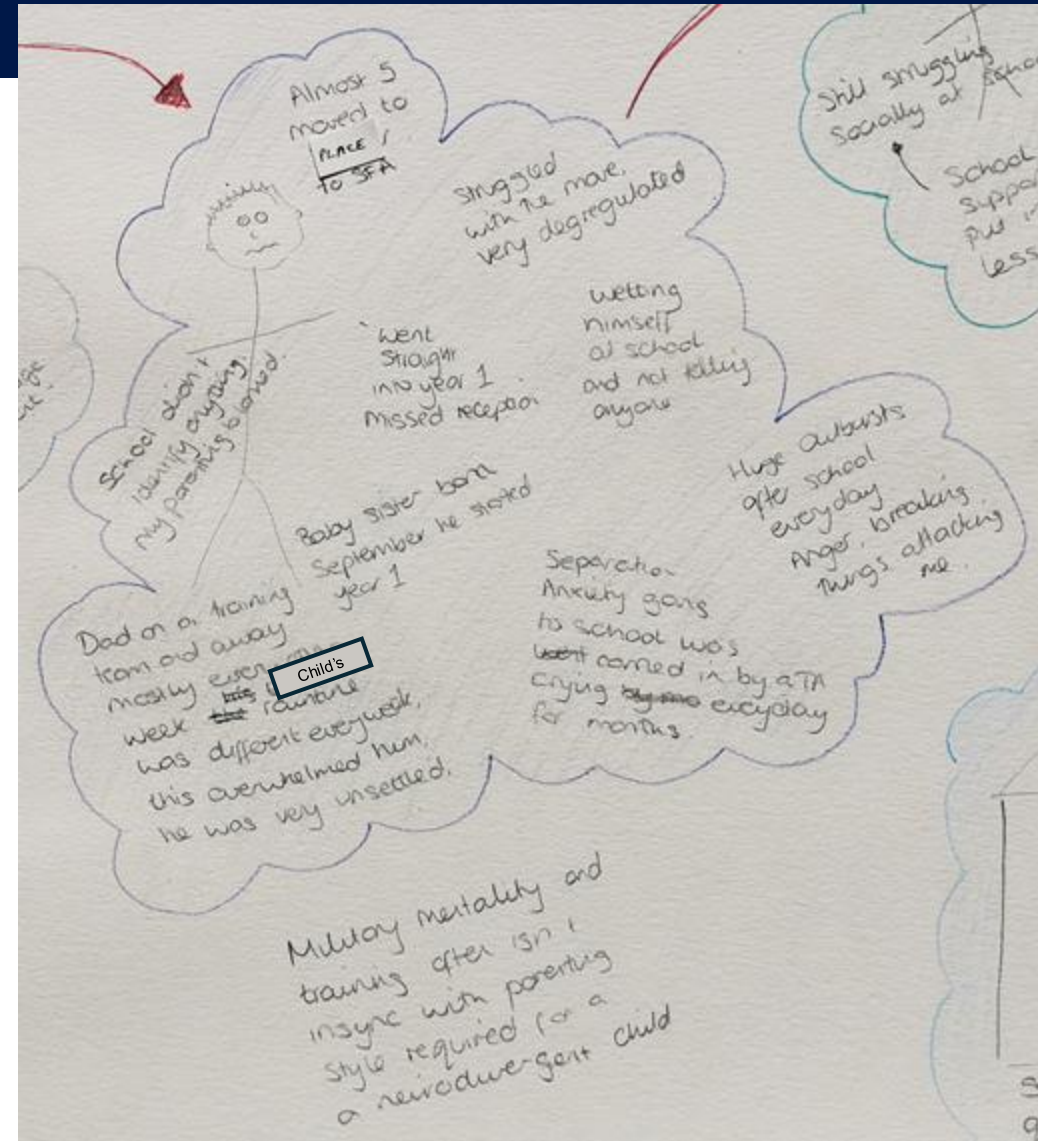


*“I don't just care
for [my daughter].
I have to fight for
her every single
day”*

Mobility: The impact on children with additional needs

“the period between being given the posting and the move actually happening was always difficult as it would create anxiety with not knowing where he was going to be living”.

“My son loved school and loved learning and begs me to go back to our last location and I can't do anything.”



Mobility and parents' battles

"You're fighting battles with education. You're fighting battles with the council at every place you move to, and NHS sometimes to get moved back up the waiting list because you moved."

"Housing were fighting us."

"we just started entering into this massive battle with the school"



Battling local authorities

“I went through [the] legal acts that they'd breached, and it took all of that before they'd actually agree to continue with that provision...”

But it makes you worried that the next time you're gonna have the same battle again.

Lack of accountability

“you're almost prejudiced AGAINST because you're a military family... I don't think [LAs] see us as constituents. I think they see us as outsiders coming in. We'll be here for a certain time and then we'll go.”

“What good is legislation if councils... can breach the legislation and have no consequence to it?”

Parent resourcefulness

“mini-lawyers”

“We've long since accepted we have to go private and pay and what have you”.

“It's only because we are savvy and push that our son has what he has now.”

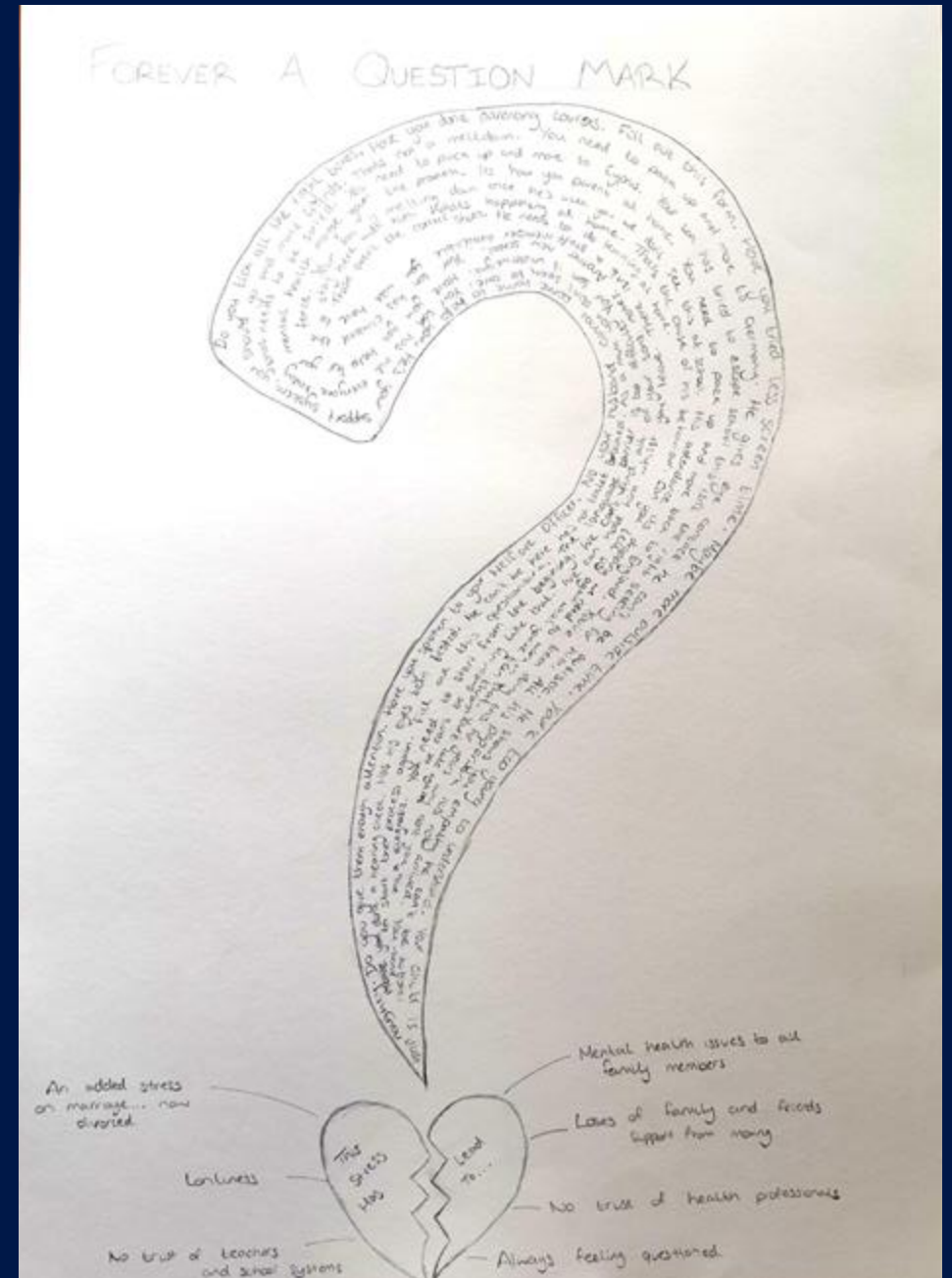
“We are the continuity in our children's education”

[I am] “acutely aware that there are many children in the education system whose parents do not have the knowledge, finances or voice to speak up for and support their child's educational journey”

Composite journey 3

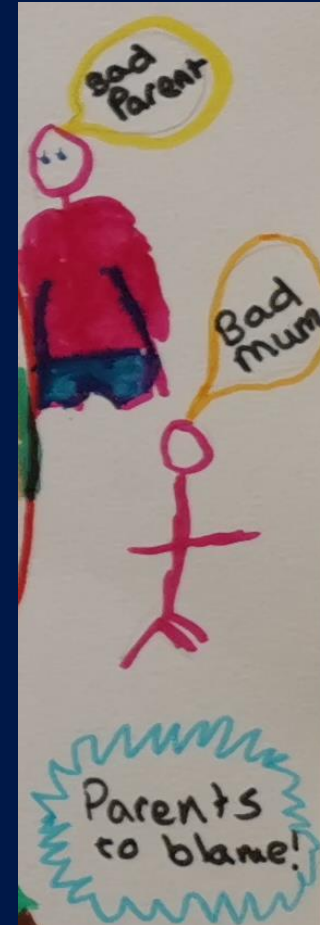
"I think sometimes people think we make stuff up, but trust me, I've got better things to do with my time."

“for years just I would dread taking her anywhere because of the looks... I became scared to take her out and about and do anything.”

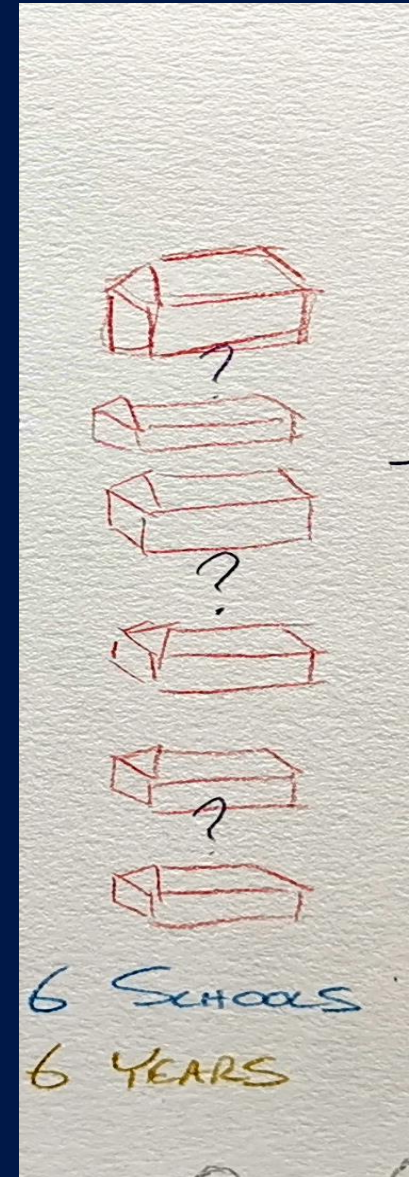


Being dismissed or blamed

“You're not listening. You're not listening. What are you not hearing me say? How many times do I have to say this? Or am I just a mother... and therefore my... you know, my, kind of... narrative doesn't matter, because I'm not a professional? Because I'm not... you know. I know her. I know her like the back of my hand. You need to be listening, you know?”



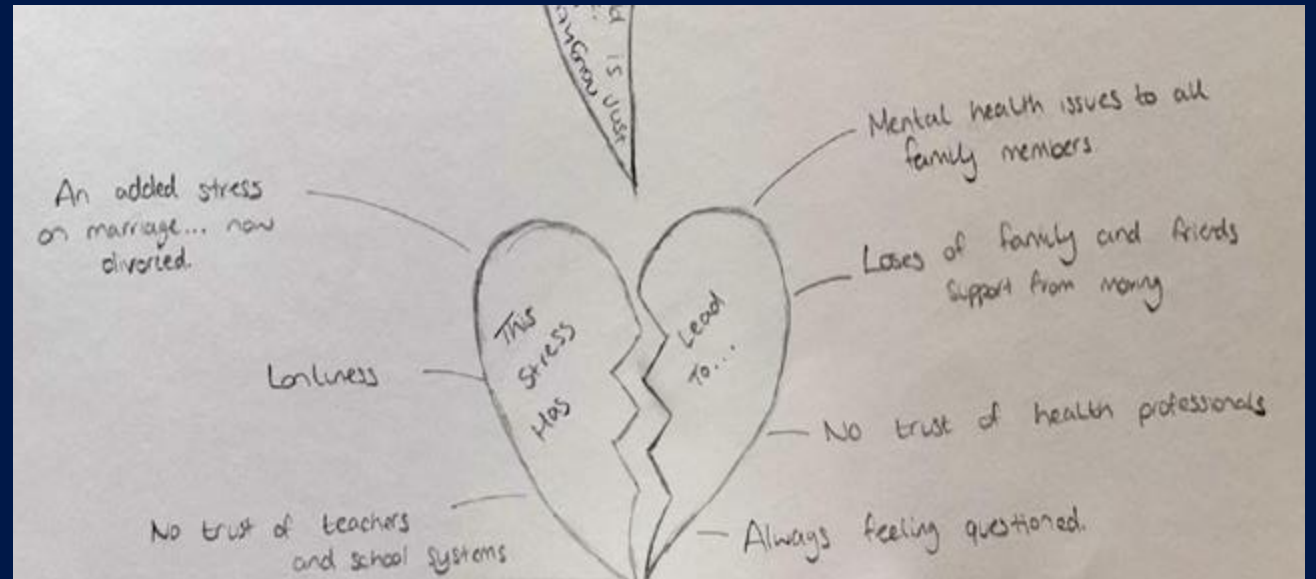
“they said that, “you know, you're gonna have to start the process again.” I said, “I absolutely refuse. Like, I know the waiting list's long,” I said, “but I've been doing this in two different countries, like, I can't... I have every bit of paperwork. Like, there's absolutely no way. She needs a diagnosis.”



[People would say], "we don't want to label her", you know, like that. And I said, "I'm sorry. I REALLY want to label her, because that's the only way you're gonna... anyone's gonna pay any intention or notice"."

All through school, I was saying, 'She needs help,' all through school, saying, 'She needs the support, she's not going to make it.' Came through her GCSEs with very limited grades, started college, struggled in college, couldn't cope. She's now 18 next month, sat at home... bad anxiety.

“the stress... led to... so obviously I'm now divorced, and I'm not saying that [military life] was the sole thing of that, but it definitely contributed to that, because there's so much stress of it.”



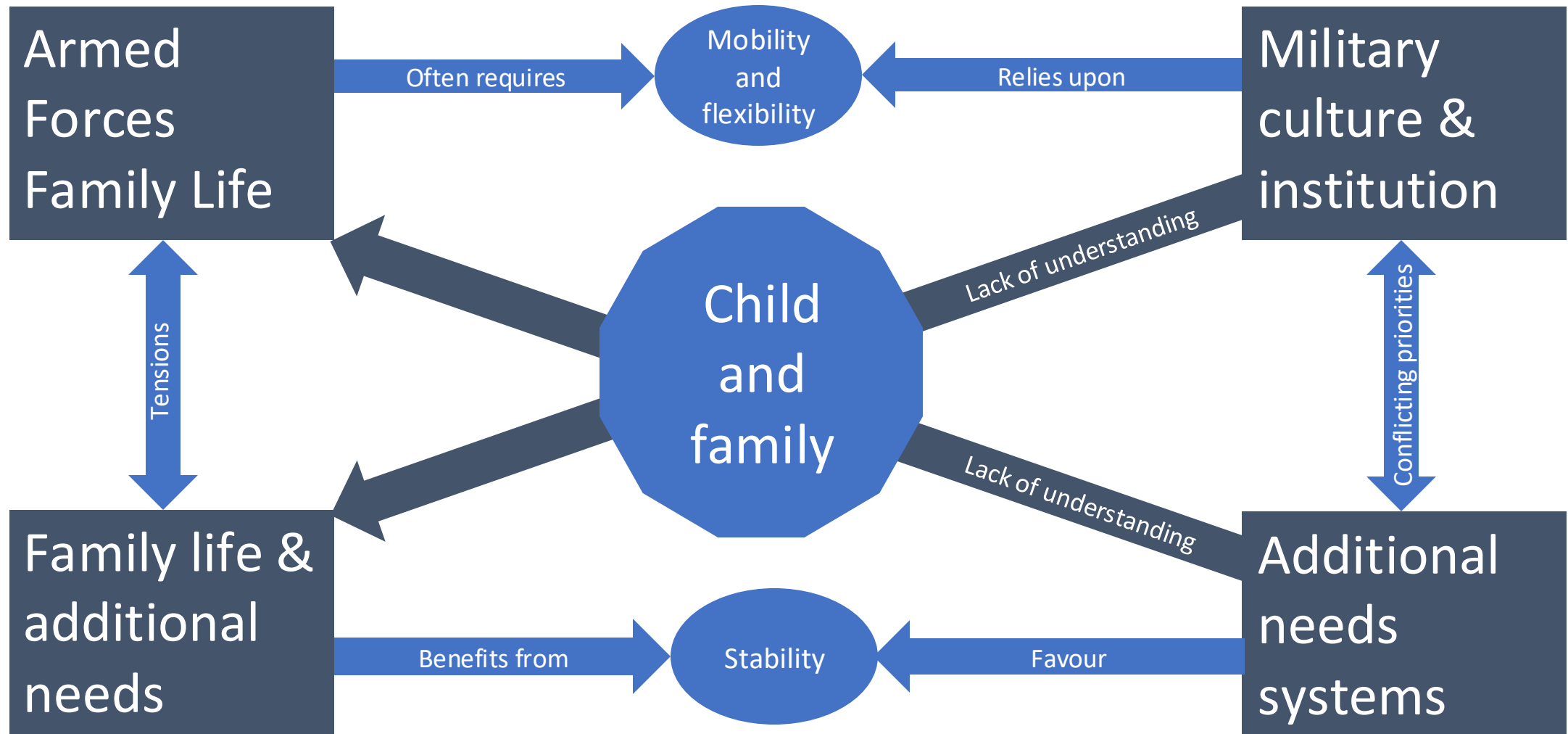
Small victories

“the charity side of things, that's what has made the difference for us.”

“There's nothing I found more moving than when a [professional] takes the fight for you. It's astonishing and unfortunately rare.”



To conclude



Reflection on implications of the research findings

1. Were there missed opportunities to support these children and families sooner? What actions could have made their journeys easier, who could have helped, and at what points? Are policy/practice changes or resources needed?

Journey 1 – child masking, square peg in round hole – school refusal, non-attendance – stress of deployment – marriage at risk – career change – child's diagnosis – new school and fresh start

Journey 2 – local authority breaching legislation - children at risk of losing their provision – parent research leading to threat of legal action – children's educational provision maintained – parent exhausted and worried about the future

Journey 3 – parent dismissed - children not diagnosed before they moved again - support needs not met – too little too late for one child – child struggling with consequences – marriage breakdown, lack of trust in professionals, loneliness

2. What are the key takeaways for you from the SATT project findings, and can you identify one concrete change you will make in your everyday role?

Thank you

www.sattproject.org.uk

