

The Educational Progression of Children from Military Families: National Innovation Conference

Context:

The conference took place on 23rd June 2016. It was a celebration of the University of Winchester's research and practice project funded by the MoD DCYP's Education Support Fund and was a collaboration between the university's widening participation team and the Centre for Research in Teaching and Teacher Education. The event was attended by 130 delegates from education, 3rd sector, military and policy organisations.

Outline of the day:

Time	Thursday 23 rd June 2016 in the Stripe Building, University of Winchester	Venue
09.30	Arrival and Registration: Networking and poster displays	The Stripe Foyer
10.00	Welcome to Winchester <i>Colette Cherry, Assistant Vice-Chancellor, The University of Winchester</i>	The Stripe Auditorium
10.10	Film: Children from military families: challenges, strengths and messages	
10.30	Practice: Outreach, Resources and Film <i>Dr Terri Sandison and Kath Lawrence with Student Ambassadors, University of Winchester</i>	
10.45	Break: Networking and poster displays	The Stripe Foyer
11.15	Research: The educational progression of service children <i>Dr Judith McCullouch, The University of Winchester</i>	The Stripe Auditorium
11.35	Panel Discussion: <i>What are the keys to unlocking higher education progression for the children of armed forces personnel?</i> <i>Professor John Denham (Chair, Southern Policy Centre) with Professor Les Ebdon (Director of Fair Access, OFFA); Russell Collier (Principal Education Officer, DCYP, MoD); Rick Jump (Acting Headteacher, Park Gate Primary School); Louise Simpson (Evidence Director, Army Families Federation); Ann Maglio (School Liaison Officer, USAF); Dr Judith McCullouch (Senior Lecturer, University of Winchester); and Steffi Mutton (Undergraduate, University of Winchester)</i>	
12.15	Lunch	St Alphege Foyer /SAB301/SAB303
13.15	Different perspectives on improving progression for service children: <i>What are the challenges to and opportunities for improving service children's progression to higher education?</i>	The Stripe/SAB

	Families <i>Stripe Studio 2</i> Lucy Scott and Louise Simpson Army Families Federation Bridget Nicholson Navy Families Federation	Further/Higher Education <i>Stripe Studio 1</i> Sally Griffin Laura Heeley Bath Spa University Mandy Weyers Avon Valley College Katherine Lawrence University of Winchester	Schools <i>Stripe lecture theatre</i> Glyn Wright Education and Inclusion, Hampshire County Council Lauren Dickinson University of Winchester undergraduate	Charities and agencies: Devolved nations SAB 301 Moira Lesley, Royal Caledonian Education Trust Jason Hurford HMF Education Support Service Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council	
14.40	What have we learned? Conference findings and future aspirations <i>Phil Dent, University of Winchester</i>				The Stripe Auditorium
15.00	Conference closes				

Outputs

Workshops had a brief to consider and workshop chairs reported to the final plenary. An additional output was a series of recorded interviews with a range of high profile guests such as Les Ebdon, Director of Fair Access, OFFA.

Workshop outcomes

Workshops were asked to consider the challenges of working to support service children, participants' wishes for the future and the opportunities we now have to make a difference.

Questions

- What has the greatest impact in schools?
- How can we best utilise the service pupil premium?
- How can we encourage more service children into HE and teaching particularly?
- How many service children are there and where are they?
- How can we network and share experience more effectively?
- Are there any geographical target areas?
- What scholarships/bursaries are available?

Challenges

Collecting data on highly mobile children

- Identifying and recording service children within each school
- National datasets and tracking
- Tracking student destinations especially post 16
- Differences within forces children (eg children who board vs those who don't)

Transition

- Identifying school contacts
- Obtaining transition information and maintaining continuity
- Cross-border issues - curriculum, PiP, levels

Expectations

- Low aspirations
- Parents' lack of understanding about the benefits of HE

Awareness

- Impact of mobility
- Emotional cycle of deployment
- Impact of living overseas on HE funding
- School understanding of service life
- Different protocol and practices across 3 services
- Identification and awareness of reservist families
- Reaching parents

Sustainability

Wishes

Research

- Longitudinal rather than snapshot research
- Research on long term emotional impact
- Coherence
- School based and child-led research

Communication

- Better dialogue between schools on transition (not just emails/paper admin)
- Mechanisms to share best practice
- Listen to children's voices
- Greater awareness and understanding
- Increased engagement and reduced ignorance
- Link between pastoral support in school and forces welfare
- Open communication between family, child, school and military
- Engagement and access to parents

Data

- Data on FE to enable tracking to HE
- Coherent datasets
- Consideration of military children as key vulnerable group

Practice

- Service students working together to inspire others
- Schools, FE, HE working together

Opportunities

Research

- This research provides evidence for policy change
- Academic research to support decisions to work with service children and underpin activities
- Build links with other organisations and coordinate research
- Research withdrawal rates in HE

Practice

- Raise aspirations and expectations so that students are aware of opportunities by the time they reach FE
- Engage with parents and improve their aspirations
- CPD for governors and teachers
- Recognise and celebrate the achievements, identity and strengths of service children
- Communicate and collaborate
- Build on what's working well and share experiences

- Use new NNCO funding for universities to develop programmes for this cohort
- Include MoD in awareness raising
- HEI work together to support service children and organise outreach days
- Military communication channels are good:)

Post event email questionnaire delegate responses:

1. What did you find of value?

- Networking
- The chances to network with people of a variety of backgrounds. Hearing the results of research and future opportunities
- The most value to me was the research paper that was delivered
- Understanding the context and varying needs of the military child
- The final report
- Realising that after reviewing the research there was probably no educational concern for children from military families.
- The launch of the research and learning more about the background to events run specifically for service children
- The video showing the challenges and the perspective of 'grown up' service children
- The video I thought was excellent as gave the perspective from the eyes of the children involved.
- networking with the delegates
- Involvement of various departments
- Good variety of speakers and workshops. Networking opportunities for ideas/fresh perspectives.

2. What questions did the day raise?

- There is FFT data on service children this wasn't discussed
- What more can we do to help children and at what point is intervention most beneficial
- Why service children have been dealt with so poorly by the education system for so many years
- How best to support this group and whether they should be considered WP, given that they do access and succeed in HE despite their challenges. I.e. the need to understanding and support is often hidden by their resilience and achievement
- More research is needed - we need to really understand how this compares to civilians and where these 4/10 are going
- Why the relevant questions were not primarily being asked within the research. For example: What are children from military families doing instead of HE? Is the gap due to Parents having left the military by the time they are doing UCAS applications
- How we could offer a similar programme to address specific issues
- how can we educate schools on service children
- What the next steps might be
- How can we all better share what we are doing to support youngsters from Armed Forces families
- What can we do together to address the concern of service children?
- What responsibilities and roles MOD Commanding Officers/ Welfare Officers might play 'on the base' in supporting their Military Families' Children to consider Higher Education options e.g liaising with schools' pastoral care teams, holding events on base hosted by senior officers - taking responsibility for their military families' wider educational welfare, prospects and aspirations and not leaving that responsibility just with local schools near the base

3. What was the best part of the day?

- Networking
- Afternoon workshop
- Research presentation and panel discussion

- The lectures and hearing from so many with experience. There was a good balance of people invited and speaking. Also the day was very well organised and smooth, well done Winchester, your events are always excellently executed
- The panel
- All parts of the day were interesting
- presentations
- For me the video
- it was all relevant and interesting
- Watching of the video
- Seeing the impact of the University's academic research and listening to the young people from military families describe their experiences. Having opportunities over coffee and lunch to network with other conference delegates

4. What could we have done better?

- Explored wider research already completed in this area
- Nothing
- Nothing
- Not sure
- Nothing - thank you so much for putting on this event and sharing your research, resources and knowledge
- The attendance at the workshops was quite uneven
- A bit more time for the workshops so perhaps starting a little earlier though I realise people have to travel
- Everything went very smoothly - the organisation was well thought out
- It would have been better to have all those children present at the lunch
- Perhaps have invited more senior military officers/welfare officers from the three forces, in order to support them in understanding what role they could play in furthering the educational welfare of Military Families in their care

5. What will you do differently as a result of the conference?

- Speak with colleagues in Hants more
- Look for more opportunities to be involved with the support of military children
- I've already changed my mindset and approach. I'll be sharing the information with academics and senior university staff as widely as I can get people to listen
- Press DCYP for further money to be spent on this area
- Perhaps some of my own internal tracking within the college
- Deliver specialised days targeted solely at service children
- think about long term aspirations not just the immediate transition
- Consider the FE/HE question when thinking about Svc children/young people
- I will make even greater efforts to link up with others who are in the same field. I will try to encourage Scottish Universities and schools to arrange outreach days
- Raise more awareness
- Try to question more on how outcomes for particular groups such as the military children can be positively changed by beginning to listen to their first hand experiences