

Service Children's Progression



RESEARCH BRIEFING PAPER

YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ARMED FORCES FAMILIES: POST-16 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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IN THIS BRIEFING:

This paper provides a snapshot of the state of the SCiP Alliance community's knowledge about the education of the children of Armed Forces personnel and veterans aged 16-19. It integrates the Alliance's initial scoping research with testimony and discussion at a July 2021 policy summit to draw recommendations for further action.



The research highlights four key areas:

1. Priorities for action are fourfold: mitigating systemic barriers, establishing sector-wide tracking mechanisms, increasing the scale and depth of rigorous research and coordinating cross-sector collaboration.
2. Delegates identified the importance of data, of robust research and of strategic levers to engaging and influencing education leaders in driving change.
3. Quick wins for the community were identified at the summit as raising awareness with key influencers and actors such as student bodies, staff and leadership, seeking out and sharing effective practice and using the Armed Forces Covenant as an engagement mechanism.
4. In the long term, summit experts would like to see embedded support for young people in military families aged 16-19 within a whole life-course approach. This will necessitate evidence-based frameworks, training and support for staff and long-term research and policy initiatives.

OVERVIEW

Service families may move frequently, with little agency and at short notice. Frequent separation, anxiety during deployment and the stress of transition out of the military may also present considerable potential for diverse and unique impacts on young people as they approach post-16 education and training.

The SCiP Alliance policy summit brought together leaders from key agencies and organisations such as the Department for Education, the Education and Skills Funding Agency, National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMSS), Ofsted, the Ministry of Defence and the Office for Students together with education providers, higher education (HE) researchers and practitioners, local authorities as well as Service children with recent experience of the tertiary education system.

The SCiP Alliance scoping research presented at the summit found low awareness of Service children in providers of 16-19 education at leadership, management and student-facing levels. There is little targeted policy, practice or research in relation to Service children in this sector, which is characterised by a complex and diverse landscape of providers and courses. A paucity of data, the lack of financial or regulatory mechanisms and the dispersed nature of the cohort mean that support is patchy and inconsistent. The principal challenge is the sheer complexity and diversity of individual Service children's experiences and circumstances, as well as of the post-16 provider and learning landscape.

Young People from Armed Forces families may experience fluctuating roles and pressures as they mature and may take on caring and leadership roles in the family

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POST-16 LEADERS

- Identify students who are from Armed Forces families on enrolment; they may fall under the radar. Start by building relationships with feeder schools.
- Start by listening to young people's perspectives; Service children's experiences are extremely diverse. Engage with the Students' Union.
- Explore how existing provision needs to be tailored to take account of the specific circumstances of students from Armed Forces families.
- Ensure your whole organisation is equipped to recognise and respond to potential impacts on Service children's learning and wellbeing.

FOR POLICY MAKERS

- Develop consistent systems for identifying and reporting Service children's distribution, choices and outcomes
- Consider what key systemic drivers, such as regulation and funding, could be used to improve the impetus for providers to act
- Consider the education of the children of Armed Forces personnel and veterans post-16 when developing policies, legislation and



guidance aimed at "getting it right for every Service child".

- Develop an approach to consistent Armed Forces Covenant guidance on how 16-19 education providers can address their duties under the Armed Forces Bill.

FOR THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY

Address the following gaps:

- The numbers of Service children currently in post-16 education and training across the UK
- Service child distribution (by location and by type of provision and pathway)
- How and why Service children make their post-16 choices?
- Attainment and destinations

- Evidence of need: what are the specific barriers, challenges and strengths for these young people at this stage of their education, including in relation to their earlier and subsequent experiences and outcomes?
- To what extent are these needs being met and strengths being maximised?
- What impact may post-16 experiences have on progression to HE?
- How effective is careers advice for Service children and what does effective support look like?
- What format, content and approach would be necessary for training to speak specifically to staff in this sector?

FOR THE UK AND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS AND THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- Lead the embedding of the commitment to “getting it right for every Service child” in UK and national governments’ policy through a whole-system, whole life-course approach.
- Promote links between local Armed Forces representatives and 16-19 providers focused on Service children’s success and progression.
- Support providers in understanding the local context for the Armed Forces community and the potential impacts on Service children.



Full report with references available to download at www.scipalliance.org