

## Service Children's Progression



# RESEARCH BRIEFING PAPER

DR MATTHEW THORNE

### IN THIS BRIEFING:

- A small scale case examines how service children achieve at A level and gives some suggestions for why there may be differences between service and non-service children
- Links to interesting and related policy and research

## HOW SERVICE CHILDREN ACHIEVE AT A LEVEL

Existing research shows that at GCSE level service children achieve at least as well as students from non-service backgrounds, but is this an educational pattern that is continued when students study A levels? This small scale study at a college in north Hampshire has examined how service children achieve at A level. The following table shows the exam results achieved by service and non-service children over the last three years:

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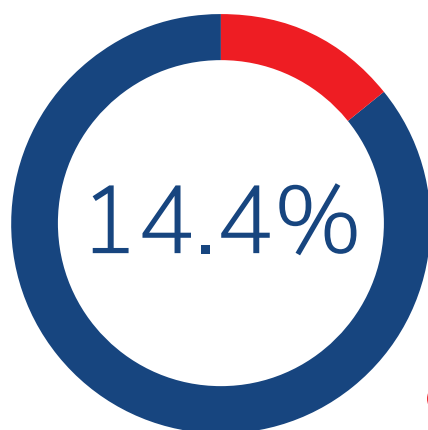


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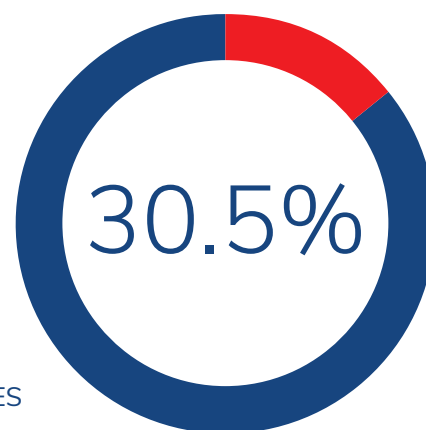
YEAR	CATEGORY	STUDENTS	A/AS/A2	A*	A	B	C	D	E
2015	ARMED FORCES	107	317	1.3%	16.7%	25.6%	25.6%	17.0%	8.5%
	EVERYONE ELSE	3358	10740	4.5%	23.8%	26.2%	21.4%	13.4%	6.2%
2016	ARMED FORCES	114	282	3.2%	16.0%	22.3%	23.4%	18.8%	11.7%
	EVERYONE ELSE	3434	10213	4.9%	24.7%	26.4%	20.7%	12.6%	6.4%
2017	ARMED FORCES	117	258	0.4%	14.0%	22.9%	26.4%	17.1%	9.3%
	EVERYONE ELSE	3397	8549	5.4%	25.1%	26.8%	21.7%	11.8%	5.6%

Looking at the table above it is clear to see that in the A level results at A and A\* Service children are achieving on average about 12% less than their non-Service compatriots. In 2017 14.4% of Service children achieve A or A\* compared to 30.5% of non-Service children. This pattern of A level results have been consistent for the last three years, which to me means that there needs to be some investigation into why, at

A level, Service children may be achieving at a lower level than non-Service children. If we look purely at the results they would imply that Service children would find it harder to go to Russell Group universities or access the highest level apprenticeships. Both of these progression routes need A and A\* grades. Why is there such a difference and what can we do to reduce it?



SERVICE CHILDREN



NON-SERVICE CHILDREN

 A\* AND A GRADES AT A LEVEL

## A CLOSER LOOK:

So if GCSE results are apparently similar, why are these students struggling so much to achieve higher level A level grades. The answer might be in the GCSE results that these students achieved at school. Two pieces of research might help with this explanation. Strand (2007) found that the more a student was mobile in their secondary schooling the lower their GCSE grades would be. Noret et al. (2015) found that, although Service children on the whole achieved as well as - if not better than - non-Service children at GCSE, there was a drop off in the results of Service children in GCSE English. I feel that this is really important in that Service child mobility is affecting GCSE results and that there is potentially a poorer performance in GCSE English for these students. This performance at GCSE is having a major impact on A level attainment.

In college, for students to achieve at the highest level at their A level they need to have a GCSE English grade at a 'B' (or 5 in the new grades) or higher. Achieving at this higher level allows students to not only be able to write good answers in their exams but also be able to understand the questions being asked. If Service children in the local area are not achieving these grades in their GCSEs it may be that when they attend college they find it hard to access and achieve A levels at the A/A\* grades. It must be said though, that these Service children at college were mainly students who have come from parents who were in the rank and file in the forces



rather than from officer families. The importance of this was that these students potentially had a number of issues that also affected their educational performance at GCSE; not just being from a forces family but also issues connected to educational performance related to being from lower social and economic backgrounds.

At the moment schools may claim £300 per Service child in Service Pupil Premium (SPP), but the use of that money is not checked on by Ofsted. In this case study it was highlighted often times that this money, although ring-fenced for the service children for the extra support they need, is just subsumed by the whole school budget. Until there is a time that the service children premium monies are tracked like the pupil premium there is a temptation for schools to not use the money effectively on improving the attainment of service children at GCSE level.

## TWO POSSIBLE TAKEAWAY MESSAGES FROM THIS CASE STUDY WERE:

- Work on ensuring that students from Service families get extra support in GCSE English so they can achieve at the highest levels and take this into A level study.
- Ensure that SPP is spent to improve the education of Service children as it is meant to be used for

## USEFUL LINKS:

Department of Education, 2010, 'The Educational Performance of children of service personnel', 29 July, 2010, viewed 10th June 2015 [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/182525/DFE-RR011.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/182525/DFE-RR011.pdf)

Forces in Mind Trust., 2015, 'Better understanding of the support needs of Service families', London, Brian Parry Associates

McCullough, J., 2016, 'Further and Higher Progression for Service Children', paper presented to The Educational Progression of Children from Military Families Conference, Winchester University, 23rd June 2016

Naval Families Federation, 2017, 'Applying to University', viewed 14th December, <https://nff.org.uk/telling-your-story-to-ucas/>

Noret, N., Mayor, H., Al-Afaleq, H., Lingard, S. and Mair, E., 2014, 'The Educational Attainment of Army Children', York: York St. John University

Strand, S. & Demie, F., 2007, 'Pupil mobility, attainment and progress in secondary school', Educational Studies, vol. 33, No. 3, pp. 313-331

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