

Listening to Service Children: Using Research Findings to Reflect on Practice



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Aims of the session

To present what we've learned from our own research about listening to service children.

To provide a space for reflection on how you could draw upon and develop these ideas within your own practice.



Image: Kid Playing with Toys by Gan Khoon Lay from the Noun Project

Outline of the session



- Reflection – previous experience
- Examples from our own research
- Q&A
- Reflection – what are the take-aways?
- Final thoughts

What is your previous
experience of listening to
Service children?



<https://www.menti.com/pcz9r58dnr>



My research – Under the Radar:
Experiences of children from Royal Air
Forces families in a UK primary school

Dr Claire Lee

How did I research this?

The research involved nine children from Armed Forces families (mainly RAF) in a primary school in England.

Meeting weekly for 5 weeks, we explored the overarching question “What’s it like to be a service child in this school?”.

Arts-based participatory methods (drawing, sculpture, stop-motion animation, writing, poetry, song-writing).



Son

When the world feels
you don't know how close you are.

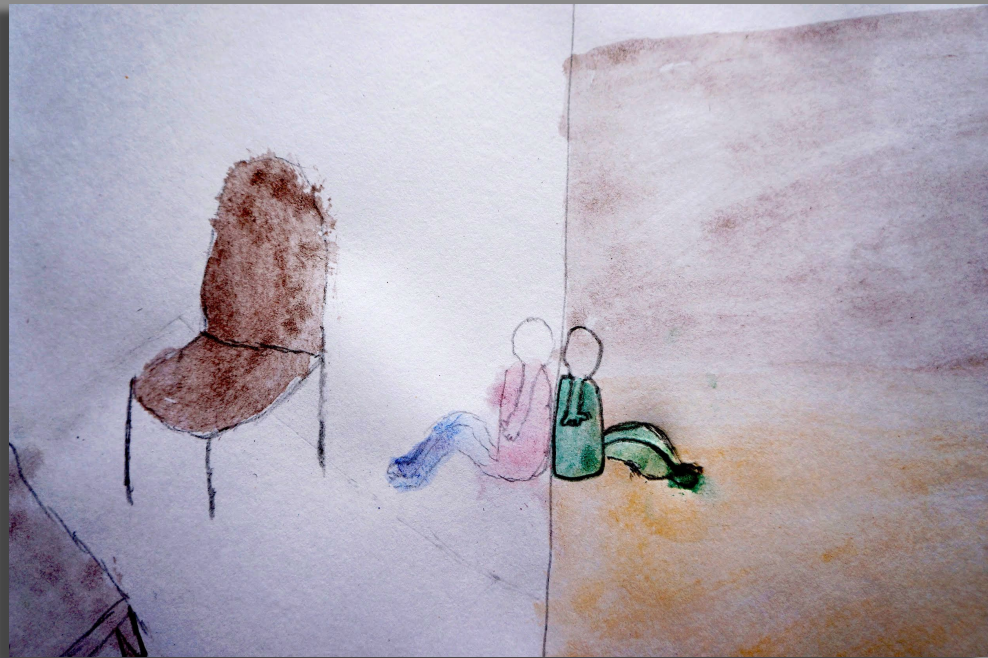
When the world feels
you don't know how full it is.

When you miss
you know he has your back.
wherever he is.

Dad



When the world feels bigger
than it is
You don't know how close
you are.
When the world feels empty
You don't know how full it is.
When you miss your dad
You know he has your back
Wherever he is.



“He thinks it’s all hotels when I go away, that I’ve never worn green, never drawn a weapon; as far as he’s concerned it’s all hotels!” (Arthur’s dad)



The voices of pre-school children

Dr Georgina Normile

A current problem within service children's research

Children under the age of five are frequently not the focus of research with service children, both within the British and international context.

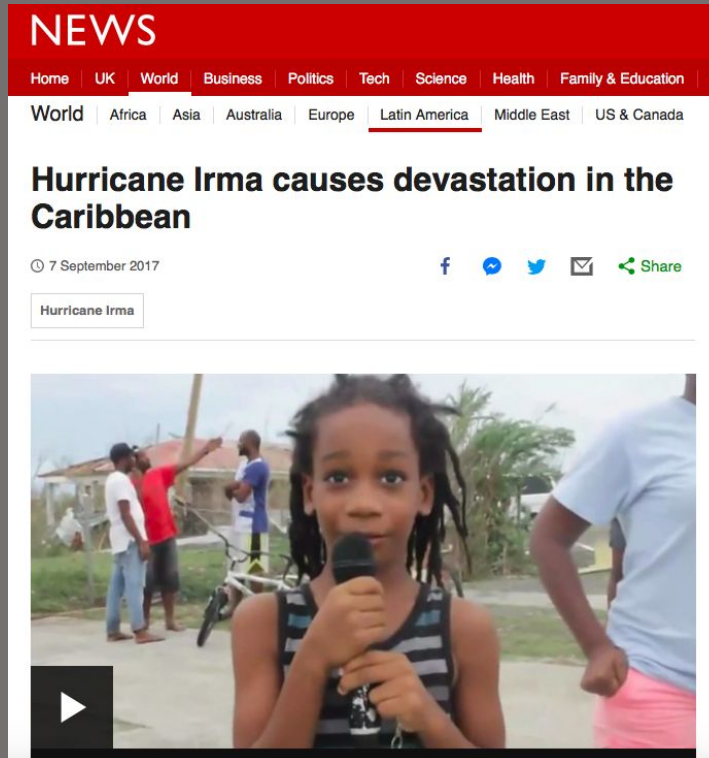
However...

There are approximately 41,000 UK service children aged five and below (MOD, 2021)

‘There is a yawning hole in the British literature that urgently needs to be filled to ensure the wellbeing of young children in British military families in relation to the deployment cycle.’

(Nolan and Misca, 2018, p.14)

So can they represent their experiences of a deployment?



How did I research this?

A case study - ten children aged 3-4 years experiencing a parental deployment in an Army Garrison in England.

Interviews with the ten non-deployed/at home mothers and fourteen pre-school practitioners.

Participatory research methods (drawing, photography, talking alongside a known adult) with six of the pre-school children.





“He gave me a special badge
and said I’m the man of the house.”

(Toby, aged 4)



Toby's Mother - Did I go in the bathroom,
where did I go?

Toby - In your bedroom and locked the door
and said 'I will never come out again' and you
goned out the gate without us.



“I was scared, I thought my
Mum had runned away”

Toby, aged 4



Toby's Mother - That was the time when, I mean. (Pauses). It's been hard. They were playing up, Matt wasn't here and I found out I was pregnant and they knew something was going on and it was really difficult and I, yeah, I did have those moments where it's just - I can't take this, it's really hard.

Key messages

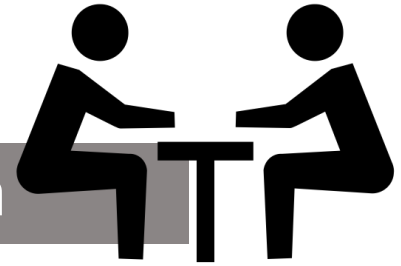
Lives are complex. Service children remain under-represented and some groups even more so. There is work still to be done.

To us, Service children's voice is about:

- building a rich understanding, not taking a snapshot
- bringing together multiple perspectives.
- avoiding over-simplification (e.g. 'needy', 'resilient' or crisis narratives)
- finding appropriate methods for different children, including younger children
- respecting children's right not to say
- being there on the children's terms
- Understanding there is no formula and it can be a messy business!

Questions?

Reflection and Table Discussion



What are your thoughts?

Has this challenged your previous thinking/practice?

What might you take away from these examples for your own practice?

Thank you for your
contributions

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