WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT CHILDREN FROM MILITARY FAMILIES?

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Where were we when KCMHR started in 2003?

**NO** research on UK military families
Meaning **NO** recognition of the needs of families
Thus **NO** evidence based interventions available
Traditional definition of family
**KCMHR MILITARY COHORT**

- Three phases of data collection
- 9,990 participants (response rate = 56%) – based on Phase 2

- Sample includes:
- Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and RAF personnel
- Regulars and reservists
- Men and women
- Service leavers
- **Our only exclusion is Special Forces**

*UK MoD funded*
KCMHR MILITARY COHORT

- Included questions on:
  - Relationship status & satisfaction; Family circumstances; Impact of military service on relationships & children; Family problems as a result of deployment

- Allows for sub-studies

- BUT from the perspective of the Service person
Marital status by gender (%)

- **Long-term relationship**
  - Male: 78%
  - Female: 63%
- **Single**
  - Male: 16%
  - Female: 27%
- **Ex-relationship**
  - Male: 7%
  - Female: 10%
PERCEIVED IMPACT OF MILITARY CAREER ON CHILDREN

- 52% Negative impact
- 29% No impact
- 20% Positive impact
DEPLOYMENT WORRIES

Communication with home

Being separated from their family

Not getting enough sleep/time to relax

Experiencing combat

In danger of being killed or injured
THE KIDS STUDY

Funded by the US Department of Defense
How does paternal deployment impact on children’s emotional, social and behavioural development?

What about paternal post-traumatic stress disorder & alcohol misuse?

How do military children compare with the other children?

What’s it like to have a father in the military?

Kids study funded by:
U.S. Department of Defense
Kids Study – ideal scenario

- Father
  - Mother 1
    - Child 1: Teacher/care giver
    - Child 2: Teacher/care giver
Kids Study – real world

Father

Mother 1
  Child 1
  Teacher/care giver

Mother 2
  Child 2
  Teacher/care giver

Mother 3
  Child 3
  Teacher/care giver
  Child 4
  Teacher/care giver
  Child 5
  Teacher/care giver
WORST THINGS ABOUT HAVING A FATHER IN THE UK ARMED FORCES

- Lack of contact (61%)
- Nothing (18%)
- Relocating (16%)

“Him never being around. He missed most of my childhood.”

“No, it has always been part of my life and I am used to it.”

“That we have to leave friends and family behind when we move.”
A military kid’s life is so much more than deployments and moving.

We owe these kids more. We need to talk about the positives of being a part of a military family. But there’s a reason this story doesn’t get as much press; and the result may be causing a lot of unrecognized harm.
BEST THINGS ABOUT HAVING A FATHER IN THE UK ARMED FORCES

- Financial benefits (25%)
- Sense of pride (25%)
- Relocating (21%)

“We go to good schools because of the discount that dad gets from the Army.”

“That he fights for the country and helps people.”

“I have done and seen things most people wouldn’t get to do and it’s been really fun …”
ADOLESCENCE IS A TIME OF CHANGE

SERVICE PARENTS’ & ADOLESCENTS’ CHALLENGES & EXPERIENCES STUDY

Funded by the US Department of Defense
100 Fathers
Selected on basis of their PCL-5 responses collected from Phase 3 of KCMHR cohort study

Online data
Father/mother/child

Data from home visits
Father/mother/child
NOVEL METHODOLOGY

✓ Data collected online & through home visits
✓ Multi-informant data
✓ Hot Topics
  – communication & relationship quality
✓ Five Minute Speech Sample (FMSS)
  - parent-child communication
✓ DAWBA (Development & Well-Being Assessment)
  - adolescent emotional wellbeing
✓ FAD (Family Assessment Device)
  - family functioning
Foreword

I am delighted to publish the first UK Armed Forces Families’ Strategy which sets out our approach to Service families and provides guidance for MOD policy officials.

The recent Strategic Defence and Security Review rightly placed the recruitment and retention of our people as a priority for Defence. Britain’s military competitive advantage is due to the professionalism and skills of our people, both Regulars and Reserves. At times of financial constraint, when there are increasing demands on our resources, we must make the most of the talents of all who work for us. But our personnel can only fully deliver their Defence task if they have the support of their families as well as the confidence that their loved ones will be able to access the right support when required. So doing more to listen, talk to and empower those families is vital if we are to continue attracting and retaining capable and motivated Service personnel.

We already expect a great deal from our military families. Our personnel are expected to provide an unlimited liability; this means that they might face serious injury or death during their service to the Nation. They will periodically be required to deploy on operations, sometimes at very short notice, or for protracted periods, or having only recently returned from a previous separation – and sometimes all three. There is often little or no choice for the Service person or their families in these separations. Their military career will also necessitate directed relocation within the United Kingdom or overseas. There are also the day-to-day realities of Service life, working long or unsociable hours with the associated impact that this can have on the family, such as childcare responsibilities. All of this places considerable additional pressure on Armed Forces’ families; this combination of pressures is not faced in almost any other profession. So I remain indebted to Service families for their continued contribution to Defence. I am determined to do everything to make sure they are given the support and recognition they deserve.

Lt Gen Andrew Gregory, Chief of Defence People

January 2016
UK ARMED FORCES FAMILIES’ STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

SERVICE FAMILY

a. Partner Employment
b. Accommodation
c. Children's Education and Childcare
d. Community Support
e. Specialist Support
f. Health and Wellbeing
g. Transition
Highlighted difficulties that families have during transition
- Housing
- Schools
- Finances

Recommendations to improve spouse’s participation in the process
- Families to be considered during resettlement plans
- Allow access for spouses to education & training material provided to personnel on leaving to aid family preparation
- Families should be able to access transition consultancy service
GAPS IN THE KNOWLEDGE BASE

Families in transition from military to civilian life

Military mothers

Parents & siblings of Service personnel
CONCLUDING POINTS

There is a large community of children from military families

These children can face a range of unique challenges which may impact on their health & wellbeing

A robust evidence base is needed to develop & deliver effective support & services