

# HOW DOES MILITARY LIFE SHAPE SERVICE CHILDREN'S IDENTITY AND SCHOOL EXPERIENCES?

This poster has been produced based on Lucy Robinson's doctoral research. Lucy's research is funded by an ESRC Grand Union DTP studentship. Scan the QR code to find out more about her work.



## KEY CONCEPTS

### Service child

"A person whose parent, or carer, serves in the regular Armed Forces, or as a reservist, or has done at any point during the first 25 years of that person's life" (SCiP Alliance, 2024).

Did you know?  
The official flower of a service child is the dandelion.

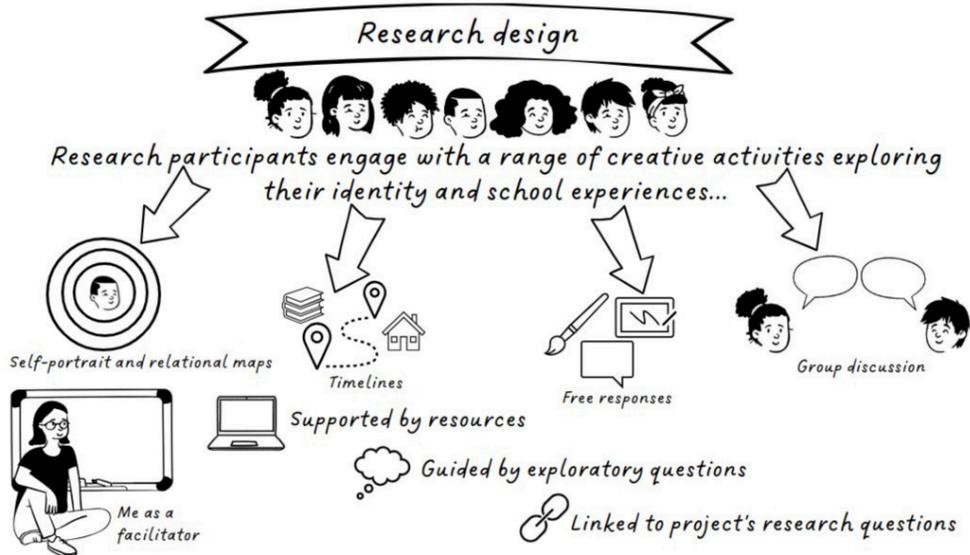
### Mobility

It is common for service children to regularly move home. Some service children live in service accommodation whilst others live in private housing, both in the UK and abroad. High mobility can mean that service children attend lots of different schools or attend boarding school.

### Separation

Service children can experience periods - from a few days to several months - of separation from their serving parents or carers due to the requirements of the Armed Forces. Serving personnel can work within the UK and abroad, both in friendly and hostile environments.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS



Bringing together voice research and creative methods, research was undertaken with 19 service children, aged between 9-16 years old, across five English state schools.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ? In what ways do service children see themselves and understand their lives as 'service children'?
- ? What do service children think and feel about their school experiences?

## KEY FINDINGS

### Military life & the service child

- Service children are an integral part of the military community; a distinct sub-culture which comes with a pre-built community with associated values, language and customs.
- Service children 'serve in their own way' through their experiences of mobility and separation. These experiences are characterised by repetition and lack of control or choice.
- Service children's 'service' shapes their sense of self, creating unique iterations of their service child identity.

### Military life & school mobility

- Service children acknowledge and accept that moving schools is an integral part of service life.
- However, despite the normality of moving, the children's thoughts and feelings on their school experiences were not always positive; particularly around continuity of learning and making friends.
- For these children, these negative emotions were felt most acutely during the period of transition into their new setting.

### Service child identity

The service child's identity is relational, child-led and contextual. It is continually shaped by service children's experiences of military life. Children's relationship to their service child identity can change and develop as they grow.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

### School belonging

Schools play a central role in supporting service children's sense of belonging. Whilst the children identified several examples of good practice, there was a clear desire for more proactive and tailored support:

- 1 More provision and school practice to focus on meeting service children's service-related needs.
- 2 Developing awareness and understanding of the service child identity from service children's own perspectives and those of their non-service peers.