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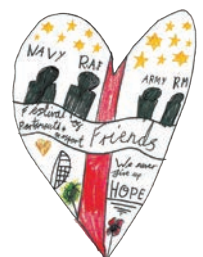


PORTSMOUTH & GOSPORT FESTIVAL OF FRIENDS

**A schools' project to
support Service children:
SCHOOL CASE STUDIES**

Autumn 2024 - Summer 2025

Funded by the Armed Forces
Education Trust, and supported
by Greenwich Hospital.



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Cover heart logo: Designed by Felicity, Y4, from Court Lane Junior School

INTRODUCTION

The *Festival of Friends* is a tried and tested, collaborative, year-long school improvement project which has run successfully in the following geographical areas, each time with invaluable University support:

- Hampshire – in partnership with the University of Winchester (2017-18)
- North Yorkshire and York – in partnership with *Inspiring Choices* UniConnect, based at York St John University (2019-2021)
- Oxfordshire – in partnership with *Study Higher* UniConnect, based at Oxford Brookes University (2022-23)
- Lincolnshire – in partnership with *LiNCHigher* UniConnect, based at Bishop Grosseteste University (2023-24).

Since children of Armed Forces families (Service children) are recognised as an underrepresented group in higher education, some UniConnect / university programmes target activities to this group of **potentially** vulnerable young people.

The 24 project schools (covering **over 950 Service children**) are indebted to the trustees of the **Armed Forces Education Trust** charity, as without its generous grant this project could not have taken place. A memorable celebratory / dissemination event at the end of the project, hosted by the University of Portsmouth, was kindly sponsored by the charity **Greenwich Hospital**.

I am extremely grateful to the following University staff

- **Tian Barratt**, Schools and Colleges Manager
- **Louise Meredith**, Senior Outreach and Transition Officer, Marketing and Student Recruitment

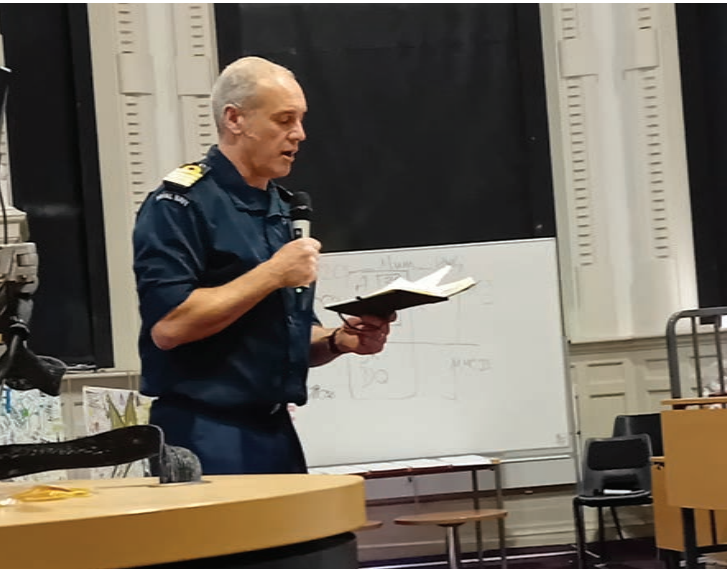
both of whom have generously given their time and energy throughout the year, including providing venues and overseeing the production of this case study booklet.

A contributing factor to the project’s considerable success has been the range of people from partner organisations who have given great support throughout the year. In particular, I am grateful to:

- Caitriona Scully, Senior Educational Psychologist, Portsmouth City Council
- Charlotte Jones, Head of Stakeholder Engagement (Naval Families Federation)
- Karen Baldwin, Aggies Community Waves Portsmouth Coordinator
- Kim Hill, Project Manager of The Naval Children’s Charity
- Clair and Steve, Directors of *Seekers Create*
- *Never Such Innocence* arts practitioners
- Captain Chris Ling, RN Head of People Support, People & Training Directorate

I hope you enjoy reading the wide range of school case studies.

Matt Blyton
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SCISS National Executive & SCiP Alliance Management Group member
Festival of Friends Project Lead
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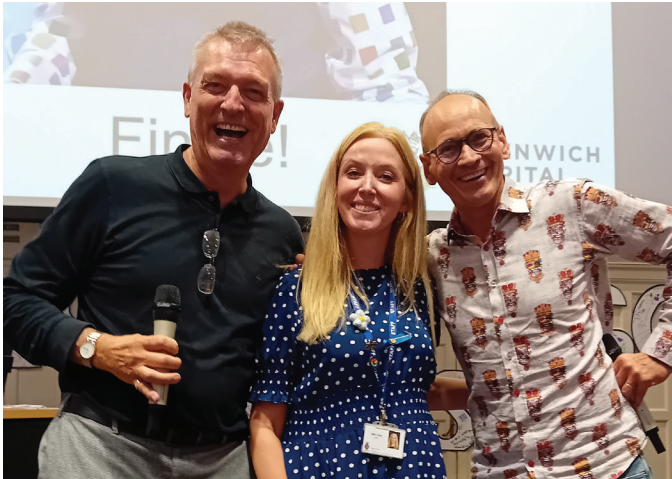
PROJECT AIMS

The *Festival of Friends*’ key aims are to develop, and then share, good practice in the educational and pastoral support of Service children. It also aims to promote Service children’s progression to further and higher education, thereby improving opportunities – and ultimately outcomes.

The project provides opportunities for building links between participating schools to support one another, share good practice and disseminate professional development across schools’ staff teams. It has been designed to be of particular benefit to schools that have small numbers of Service children on their rolls, as is the case with many of the schools across Portsmouth

and Gosport which have Service children on their rolls. A key element of the project is the requirement for participating schools to use the evidence-based *Thriving Lives Toolkit* created by the Service Children’s Progression (SCiP) Alliance.

Furthermore, the collaborative activity involved in the *Festival of Friends* promotes the identity of Service children amongst their non-Service peers, raising their profile by celebrating their lived experiences. To support this, the project brings together key stakeholders to support Service children’s educational progression and strengthen these pupils’ integration with their civilian peers by raising awareness of their distinctive needs.



PROJECT ORGANISATION

Initially, 27 project schools signed up to the project and were allocated to one of three networks (Hubs), based on three geographical areas within the wider Portsmouth and Gosport locality. These areas are served by two different local authorities, Portsmouth City Council and Hampshire County Council. Each of the three Hubs was co-led by two staff members from schools with recognised good practice in their Service children provision: middle or senior leaders who kindly agreed to support the project, working in partnership with the Project Lead:

- Portsmouth Central – **Nikki North** (St Jude’s CE Primary, Southsea) & **Charlotte Argyle** (Trafalgar School, Portsmouth)
- Portsmouth North – **Angela Clark** (Solent Infant School, Portsmouth) & **Louise Witt** (Solent Junior School, Portsmouth)
- Gosport – **Beki Hull** (Elson Junior School, Gosport) & **Lesley Ure** (King’s Academies Community & Gosport Community Hub lead)

These six *Hub Leaders* met with the Project Lead for four half-days across the year to receive professional development (CPD) and project guidance. Following these sessions, they then ran their own network meetings with all other project schools, to cascade this CPD and to help schools’ nominated school-based Champions develop improvement projects that would

strengthen their schools’ Service children provision. These improvement projects were all linked to at least one of the seven principles of effective support described in the SCiP Alliance’s *Thriving Lives Toolkit*. Mid-way through the project, a day-long Pupil Voice conference was held at the University of Portsmouth. Over 120 Service children attended from 24 of the schools, providing an excellent opportunity for them and accompanying staff to meet and learn from others. The children explored their military-family lifestyles and shared both the opportunities and challenges that this can present. Their ‘voices’ were expertly drawn out through the medium of the arts, with sessions run by the charity **Never Such Innocence**, and **Seekers Create**, a Portsmouth-based creative social enterprise that brings together communities. As such, Service children’s unique identity was celebrated.

The project culminated in a celebratory event in June 2025 involving: 114 representative Service children from 20 schools (Key Stages 1 to 4); 34 school staff; and over 40 guests, presenters and VIPs. Hosted by the University of Portsmouth, this showcased school achievements across the year, whilst also giving the children a range of memorable activities to participate in from juggling, doodling, meeting members of the *Royal Navy Bomb Disposal Team*, and learning about university life through an interactive board game. Extremely positive feedback was received from the schools involved.



ADMIRAL LORD NELSON SCHOOL (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Supporting Service Families	
School context	Number on roll	1246
	% of Service children	3% (37 students)
	How many classes?	48 tutor groups
	Main military base served	HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	2 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	No
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	We identified that we had a need to support our Service children in a more proactive way.	



Project overview

Improving support for Service families and students by first gathering feedback, then providing emotional support, creating peer mentoring opportunities, and strengthening access to relevant resources.

Main Project objective

To improve support for Service children and raise awareness of their lived experiences within the school community.

Intended outcomes of the project

- To gain a better understanding of the needs and experiences of Service families.
- To provide more targeted emotional and practical support for Service children.
- To develop a peer mentoring structure to foster belonging and leadership.
- To improve communication with families and signpost relevant opportunities and services more effectively.

Description of what you did

At the beginning of the project, we conducted a survey aimed at both Service families and students. This asked what they thought we were doing well, what we could improve, and how military life and deployments were affecting family wellbeing and student experience.

From this feedback, we implemented several key changes:

- 1:1 Emotional Support: Students, identified through the survey, were offered tailored, one-to-one emotional support, helping them to manage feelings related to family changes, transitions or deployment.
- KS3 Support Group: We set up half-termly support meetings for KS3 Service children. These sessions offer a space to share experiences and build peer support.
- Peer Mentoring for Year 7s: Plans are now in place for the KS3 group to support new Year 7 Service children next year through a mentoring programme.
- Improved Signposting: We became more proactive in sharing information with families about local and national support services, wellbeing opportunities, and events specifically for military families.

'It's nice knowing there are other people like me at school. I don't feel as weird about Dad being away.' (KS3 student)

Details of any funding costs

No additional funding was required; the project was delivered using existing school staff and resources.



What has been the impact?

The project has helped create a more inclusive environment, where Service students feel seen and supported. We also strengthened our communication with families, ensuring they feel connected to the wider school community.

As a result, Service children at the school now report feeling more supported and better understood. The KS3 group has fostered friendships and reduced feelings of isolation. Students receiving 1:1 support have shown increased confidence and engagement in school. Families have fed back positively about being more informed and connected. The project has laid the foundation for a long-term peer support network and improved the school's approach to recognising the lived experience of military families.

Next steps

Launch the Year 7 peer mentoring programme; continue KS3 support meetings; and build a stronger feedback loop with families to refine our ongoing support.

'I really appreciate the breakfast meetings but even walking round school is better now, as we all know we are in the same place.' (KS3 Student)



KING'S ACADEMY BAY HOUSE (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Operation Understanding: A King’s Group Academy Mission to Support Service Children	
School context	Bay House is a large secondary school within the King’s Group Academy Trust. The school has a diverse intake, including a number of Service children. Some of our KGA schools are located in areas with high military affiliation. While Bay House led this initiative, the project was created with the intention of sharing it across all schools in the trust to ensure equitable support for Service children.	
	Number on roll	About 2000
	% of Service children	9.7% (192 students)
	Main military base served	HMS Sultan and HMS Collingwood
	Distance to military base	2.5 miles and 5.4 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Any other relevant information	KGA is committed to improving outcomes for Service children through initiatives that we believe will support and celebrate them.
	Although piloted at Kings Academy Bay House, this project was developed to be implemented across all KGA schools. The resources, Service Pupil Premium (SPP) support, and staff training materials were designed with scalability in mind and shared trust-wide to ensure consistent understanding and support for Service children across the entire organisation.	

Project overview

Our secondary schools in Gosport already had a strong foundation in supporting Service children, and this project felt like a natural and welcome progression of that work. Taking part in Festival of Friends gave us a useful platform to pilot and shape a more formalised offer when it came to awareness of Service needs, while also raising the visibility of Service support through social media and wider trust engagement. It enabled us to build on what we were already doing, with offers like our school cluster group, while amplifying our message and reach.

Main Project objective

To raise awareness and understanding of the unique experiences of Service children, equipping staff across the trust with the tools and confidence to support them effectively.

‘I am pleased that staff will be more aware of what Service children might need.’ (Service Ambassador student)



Intended outcomes of the project

We aimed to ensure Service children feel recognised, understood, and included, and that staff across all KGA schools are confident in identifying and supporting them. Through the beginnings of a centralised KGA offer, trust-wide induction materials, and clear staff guidance, we intended to bring consistency to our approach. This work also sought to enhance emotional literacy among staff, ensuring that Service children’s transitions and challenges, such as deployment, are met with empathy and timely support.

Description of what you did

The development of a centralised KGA-wide strategy is to improve staff understanding of Service children’s experiences. Using the Thriving Lives Toolkit principles and federation advice, the team created clear, accessible slides and training content for new and existing staff. These materials cover the emotional cycle of deployment, the definition and profile of Service children, and evidence-based insights into their wellbeing needs.

This content was integrated into the KGA induction processes. The aim was to ensure that every staff member, regardless of role or location, had a foundational understanding of how to support Service children.

In parallel, we designed a trust-wide support offer. This outlines what support families can expect and guides how schools can implement and report on SPP activity, ensuring consistent, transparent, and impactful provision. Although we are part of a large academy trust, we are still on hand to assist our schools.

Key to this work was close collaboration with HR and our induction teams to embed Service family awareness into onboarding. We also worked with the Service champion at King’s Academy Brune Park to identify local needs and engage children in activities.

The work reflects KGA’s broader international and inclusive values. Service children, whether from UK or Commonwealth backgrounds, are supported as part of our commitment to global understanding and personal wellbeing. We see this as an evolving offer, designed to adapt alongside student voice and emerging needs.

Details of any funding costs

Printing costs £136.00



King’s Academy Bay House

What has been the impact?

Staff across our pilot schools reported a clearer understanding of Service children’s needs and greater confidence in offering support. By embedding the emotional cycle of deployment into induction and CPD, staff can now respond more empathetically during key moments, such as pre-deployment, separation, and return. Feedback from Service children indicates a significant improvement in how supported they feel at school. As part of our wider Service Ambassador project, which ran alongside this initiative:

- Only **53%** of Service children felt that staff understood their needs **before** the project.
- This rose to **87% after** the project was implemented.

The most common reasons for this shift included staff being more aware of their Service background, more regular check-ins during key moments like deployments, and greater confidence in talking openly about military life in school.

Next steps

We will embed updated resources into KGA staff training, develop a pupil-led welcome pack, and add key Service support information to the KGA website. We’ll continue forging relationships across schools to share practice, strengthen staff confidence, and ensure Service pupils are visible, valued, and supported.

*‘With first-hand knowledge of the emotional cycle of deployments and the profound impact separation has, the International Dimension helps to bridge distances and provide dedicated support to Service families. We offer understanding of Cultural differentiation and robust support within our local communities, all underpinned by our unwavering values of Honesty, Faith and Courage.’
(Tracy Hutton / Early Career Phase Administrative Assistant)*

BEDENHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	The Cosmo Effect	
School context	Number on roll	199
	% of Service children	4% (8 pupils)
	How many classes?	7
	Main military base served	HMS Collingwood
	Distance to military base	6 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes – Head of School’s husband
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To enhance the provision and offer for our Forces Families.	



'It was fun and exciting because we could spend time with mini-Cosmo even though it wasn't the real one.' (Lewis, Year 4)

Project overview

Pupil feedback and parent voice reported that they struggled to cope with parents on deployment. The project aimed to support the children to share experiences through training the school’s therapy dog, and having a link between home and school with the ‘Cosmo Scrapbook’.

Main Project objective

To share experiences and increase resilience when parents are on deployment.

Intended outcomes of the project

For our Forces children to have opportunities to share experiences both in school (through working with the therapy dog) and outside of school, allowing them to feel better understood and supported.

Description of what you did

Our therapy dog, Cosmo, joined our school in September 2024. Our Forces children have joined training sessions to support Cosmo in becoming a fully qualified therapy dog. This has involved working alongside the trainer to give commands and reward the dog accordingly. They are encouraged to see Cosmo when they need to, particularly when faced with parents going away for extended periods of time.

The school’s ELSA then purchased a ‘mini-Cosmo’ (small dog toy) which accompanied a scrapbook in a rucksack. Each Forces child has taken the rucksack home to take mini-Cosmo on a weekend adventure. They are encouraged to take photographs and present these in the scrapbook along with some writing of what they have done to share with others in our Forces group. This creates a sense of shared experiences between the children and gives them an opportunity to talk about what they do with their parents when they are land-based and what their days look like when parents are on deployment. The rucksack is sent home for a 2-week period and the children then meet after that time.

Details of any funding costs

The therapy dog training has not been funded by Forces premium – our SEND budget has covered this. The project has been really inexpensive with just the purchasing of the small toy and some additional doggy treats! £30



What has been the impact?

Children have loved the ‘Cosmo training’ afternoons – this has made them feel special and they feel recognised that their family situation is different to their peers.

The children like ‘mini-Cosmo’ – they feel a sense of ownership. Some service families find it harder to have a pet (especially if they move around) so Cosmo feels part of their family.

All enjoy having special dedicated time with the ELSA and each other to share experiences.

Next steps

Training with Cosmo will continue and once this ends there will be scheduled time with the therapy dog. New Forces pupils will be introduced to Cosmo and the mini-Cosmo project.

Mini-Cosmo will continue to be sent home and dedicated time spent as a Forces group to share their experiences.

'I really like him as a therapy dog.' (Arya, Year 3)



BROCKHURST PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Forces Champions	
School context	Number on roll	297
	% of Service children	7% (20 pupils)
	How many classes?	10
	Main military base served	No predominant base served. Personnel are based on variety of shore bases and ships.
	Distance to military base	Closest base is HMS Sultan, 0.9 miles.
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes – 2 Serving Royal Navy, and 1 Veteran.
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes – 5.
	Any other relevant information	HMS Sultan is primarily a training establishment with Service personal assigned there for professional courses anywhere between a few weeks and a few years, resulting in a high turnover of Service families.

Project overview

We aim to celebrate and support the unique experiences of Service children while fostering a sense of community and belonging.

A Thriving Culture of Belonging

"Schools develop a whole-school culture in which Service children feel a sense of belonging."

Wellbeing Support for Service Children

"Schools are proactive in supporting the mental health and emotional wellbeing of Service children."

Forces Club (Arts and Crafts). This will be run weekly by an external provider.

Main Project objective

To give our Service children a sense of togetherness by enhancing their group identity within the school.

'It's really lovely that the children can get together because they understand what they are going through when a parent is deployed.' (Parent)



Intended outcomes of the project

To improve the profile of our Service children by:

- Service children having access to a weekly club where they all come together to have an opportunity to express themselves
- Children being able to talk about any worries regarding deployment of their parents
- Having a weekly catch up with friends who have similar lived experiences.
- The outcomes will be measured through:
- Quantitative attendance data for the club.
- Qualitative data from Service children on the effectiveness of the club.
- Qualitative data from parents includes questions about satisfaction, perceived benefits, and suggestions for improvement.

Description of what you did

Clubs can serve as a semi-structured pastoral space where children can talk about feelings, share concerns, or simply unwind. Even if not overtly therapeutic, the emotional containment and relational consistency of these groups play a key role in maintaining wellbeing during periods of family separation or transition.

Running our dedicated club provides Service children with a consistent peer group and a safe, familiar space to connect with others who share similar experiences (e.g., mobility, deployment). This nurtures belonging, reduces isolation, and builds positive relationships—all of which are protective factors for wellbeing and attainment.

Details of any funding costs

Summer term – £720 (12 sessions)

We also ran a harmonica club for Service children – Harmonicas £98

Time back in lieu for running a club – M6 teacher is £134 with oncosts for half a day.



What has been the impact?

Attendance Data

- 9 children have attended regularly.

Parent Feedback

- How satisfied are you with the arts and crafts club?

'Very happy and it's been a good debrief at the end of school. It has helped him make friends with other Service children who can be there when his dad is deployed.'

'My son really enjoys going to the club.'

- Have you noticed any changes in your child's engagement or confidence?

'It has supported him in his confidence and communication.'

'My child really enjoys attending.'

'Both my children attend the club. He likes being in a non-formal environment. Orla loves the arts and crafts.'

- What improvements would you suggest for the club?

'If they can have a small snack and a drink.'

'Maybe an after-school club for military children, where they can play games, e.g. Lego, board games.'

Service Children Feedback

- What do you enjoy most about the arts and crafts club?

'I enjoy the artwork.'

'I enjoy crafting and making things.'

'I like it because my friend also goes there.'

'I like spending time with my friends.'

'I like painting.'

- How do you feel when you participate in the activities?

Most children felt good participating in the activities. One child expressed that they don't like arts and crafts but do attend.

- What would you like to do differently in the club?
- 'To be able to play and not sit down and do art.'
- 'Maybe snacks.'

Next steps

Act on the pupil and parental feedback.



KING'S ACADEMY BRUNE PARK (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Atelier Connect	
School context	Number on roll	1243
	% of Service children	6% (73 students)
	Main military base served	HMS Sultan
	Distance to military base	Under ½ mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Unsure
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Service pupils' wellbeing is supported. Service children are heard Staff are well informed	



Project overview

Led by a military spouse, the Atelier Connect sessions create opportunities of shared experiences through art themed creative sessions, linked to community events, throughout the calendar year.

Main Project objective

To provide a dedicated group support network for Service children and families.

Intended outcomes of the project

To produce artwork which has fluidity to be personalised.

Description of what you did

Using chalk in colours of their choosing to replicate the soft details and movement of the dandelion head.

Summer term 1 – Using coloured inks, the children made hand printed papers.

Summer term 2 – The second phase will be to create a mosaic of an icon of their chosen service to be showcased within the school.

Details of any funding costs

None



King's Academy
Brune Park

What has been the impact?

The knowledge that there are other serving families/ adults and children who can offer peer support and stability with understanding.

Unfortunately, the intended outcomes were not fully fulfilled due to a key member of staff being on long term sick who was keen to lead and set out the future offer. Due to this change, we have only been able to facilitate one workshop within the school to date but the Community Hub on site has been the backbone in supporting our Service children.

Next steps

To complete the initial work from the previous workshop to pull together a cohesive outcome.



COPNOR PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Copnor communication is key!	
School context	Number on roll	677
	% of Service children	1% (7 children)
	How many classes?	21
	Main military base served	HM Naval Base
	Distance to military base	3 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Unknown
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Unknown
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To support our school's development in understanding the needs of Service children and improve communication between children, staff and parents.	

Project overview

ELSA support group – named by the children.
Higher social media visibility – posts on social media about trips, group activities, updates to parents through the newsletter.

Letter/Questionnaire to parents to ensure we have up to date and valid information for the family's structure (deployments, end of service, family dynamics).

Main Project objective

Thriving Lives Toolkit:
Principle 2 – Well-being is supported.
Principle 5 – Children are heard.
Principle 6 – Parents are engaged.

Intended outcomes of the project

Begin to build a stable foundation where the Service children at Copnor feel celebrated, heard and their feelings validated.

We hoped to do this through the use of a Service ELSA group and more increased visibility around the school/ schools' social media platforms.

We also hoped to increase the communication between school and parents/carers to ensure we are supporting the family to the best of our ability.

Description of what you did

The school's support for the well-being of our Service children for the past few years has been under the umbrella of the whole school well-being. The children have not had open opportunities to celebrate an important part of their lives with others who have a similar understanding as openly as they would have liked. This is something as a school we felt was important to improve.

Our first step was to open our ELSA Service group which was named 'Copnor Cadets' by the children. This is a fortnightly group which gives the children time to speak to a trained ELSA about anything on their mind or simply spend 30 minutes with a group of children from varying year groups with the understanding they all have experience being children who have/had a parent serving in the Forces.

'It's good to do things that build our trust together.' (Year 5 girl)

'I feel like I've been listened to more!' (Year 4 boy)

This has also given the children who have a parent on deployment the added time to speak 1:1 with an adult about how they are feeling and opening the conversation to families of how we can further support during this time.

A display board has also been created in KS2 for the Copnor Cadets where they are able to display anything they have been creating in their sessions, pictures from trips or celebrations regarding the military throughout the year.

For the first time this year, Copnor celebrated 'Purple Up Day' where the whole school community was encouraged to wear purple. Teachers discussed the meaning behind this day with their classes. Parents were also informed of this through our weekly newsletter.

Throughout the project we have posted several times on our social media page regarding trips, activities and accomplishments that our Service children have been involved in. We also have updated parents in our newsletter about these events to celebrate and bring awareness of what Copnor is doing to support our Service children.

Details of any funding costs

There has been little to no funding costs. We have used art resources from around the school and have designated ELSA areas where the group is able to be held. This group is held during school time so can be supported by an ELSA at no additional cost.

What has been the impact?

Through this project, the children have been vocal about their enjoyment in attending Copnor Cadets. The interactions during our sessions have created friendships outside the group and given the older member an opportunity to be a positive role model to the younger members of our group.

Previously they had not attended any trips outside their year groups but have already attended 3 since the start of this project which has been widely enjoyed by all. Without the connections made through this project, as well as Portsmouth Military kids, these may have been missed opportunities for the children in our school to interact with other Service children.

I have gained knowledge of how our school already supports the Service children and we have now put in place clear plans as to where we would like to progress in the future. One of the members of Copnor Cadets was previously unknown as a Service child but when her parent saw the social media posts about our Christmas event, they updated their details through the school and this child is now getting additional support.

Next steps

We have created a letter, which pending agreement from Senior leadership, will be sent out to Service children's parents/carers with a questionnaire attached to help gain further knowledge on the family's information as well as any future deployments where they may need additional support. Our next step is therefore to continue building communication with military-connected parents/carers.

We will also continue to post on our social media and in newsletters. In the future we hope to create a tab on our school website with helpful resources and information around we support in school.

'I love arts & crafts so really enjoyed making our dandelion.' (Year 2 girl)



Court Lane Junior Academy

Name of project	Court Lane Troopers: Building Belonging Through Understanding	
School context	Number on roll	470
	% of Service children	3% (14 children)
	How many classes?	16 (4-form entry)
	Main military base served	HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	5.7 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	A number of staff members are ex forces. We also have many staff members who were military children themselves, including our Service Children Champion.
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Court Lane Junior Academy wanted to strengthen the support it provides for our Service children – we wanted them and their families to feel seen, valued and supported.	

Project overview

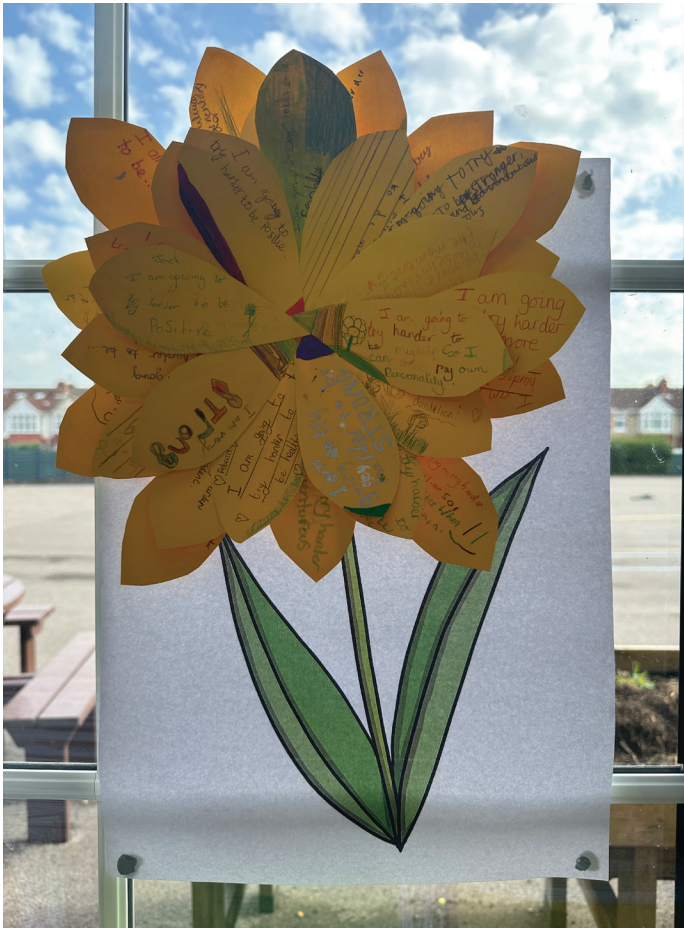
Over the course of this academic year, Court Lane Junior school has taken purposeful steps to ensure our Service children feel a deep sense of belonging and identity within our school community. We have worked collaboratively to create an environment where every child – regardless of background or lived experience – feels safe, cared for and valued.

Main Project objective

To develop Service children’s sense of identity and pride in their experiences, while promoting whole-school understanding and appreciation of life as a Service child.

‘Court Lane troopers has meant we have place where we can speak openly and express ourselves.’ (Year 6 girl)

‘It has meant that we have been able to make new friends across year groups.’ (Year 6 girl)



Intended outcomes of the project

Our project aimed to support Service children in developing a strong sense of identity – both as individuals and as part of a group of children with unique shared experiences. We wanted our children to feel recognised and valued within our school community, ensuring all members held a clear understanding of what it means to be a Service child and to appreciate the unique challenges they face and strengths they hold. We wanted to develop the support we provided for our military children and their families throughout their journey with us at Court Lane and beyond.

Description of what you did

At Court Lane Juniors, we began by laying firm foundations, listening to our Service children, mapping their needs and asking what ‘belonging’ actually looked like to them. Their responses shaped every step that followed.

Our first step in our journey was reshaping what was already known as our ‘military club’ into what is now known as ‘Court Lane Troopers’: a group of Service children and staff that meet once a week. During this time, children are able to voice whatever is on their minds, worries they may be facing or successes they wish to celebrate.

Pupils began to develop friendships across year groups that they otherwise would not have made. We also designated a member of staff (our Service Children Champion) as a point of contact for all military children and their families, ensuring continuity of support and a clear communication link throughout a child’s time at Court Lane.

Alongside our group, we knew that the next step for us would be to identify a place we could turn into a hub for our Court Lane Troopers. This space, which we continue to work on, would provide our Service children with another reminder of their identity. It would offer resources, strategies and support as well as a place to display our work we had created together and the experiences we have shared.

One of the most powerful and unifying events of our year was Dandelion Day. Every pupil and adult wore yellow to honour the resilience symbolised by the dandelion, which thrives wherever its roots land. A whole school assembly was delivered, providing an insightful exploration of what it meant to be a military child – frequent moves, long separations and the adaptability these experiences nurture. We also focused on the characteristics/strengths of our military children – determination, team work and resilience, and invited each member of the school community to choose a characteristic they would work harder to demonstrate. Back in classrooms,

each class created a class dandelion, every petal a pledge of what they would try harder to be. Our dandelions are now displayed around our school as a constant reminder of the identity of our military children and what they bring to our community.



Details of any funding costs

Resources to support children and families through deployments and adjustments to home life: £60
Travel to Festival of Friends events: £40

What has been the impact?

The impact of these initiatives has extended far beyond our Service children, creating a more empathetic, inclusive, and connected school culture. By establishing the Court Lane Troopers and a designated staff contact, we’ve fostered a sense of trust and visibility for Service families, while modelling the importance of listening and valuing every child’s background. As a result, our whole community is becoming more compassionate, more aware of each other’s experiences, and more united in celebrating diversity and resilience.

Next steps

Moving forward we would like to implement the following, to continue to develop the support provided for our Service children;

- Develop staff subject knowledge on strategies to support our Service children, specifically the deployment cycle.
- Continue to strengthen relationships with parents and families of Service children through regular contact home, coffee mornings and events as a community.
- Continue to support our Service children through our ‘Court Lane Trooper meetings’, offering this meeting during a lunchtime as well as after school so everyone has the opportunity to come together.



CROFTON SCHOOL (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Crofton DandelIONS Website	
School context	Number on roll	1100
	% of Service children	15% (166 students)
	How many classes?	40
	Main military base served	HMS Collingwood and HMS Sultan
	Distance to military base	2 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes (The Chair is a current reservist with a 25 year military background.)
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Fifteen percent of our students at Crofton come from military families; it was important to us to improve the support we offer. Taking part in this project provided a structured, supportive method in which to enhance our policies and procedures regarding Service students.	

Project overview

We created a webpage allowing us to collate multiple smaller projects.

Main Project objective

To improve parental engagement – Principle 6 of the Thriving Lives Toolkit.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Increase our awareness of our Service students' individual circumstances.
- Improve parental engagement and communication.
- Communicate support mechanisms deployed by the school.
- Communicate support packages and charities.
- Advertise community programmes/events.
- Inform parents/students of upcoming events.
- Provide feedback on events that have occurred.
- Enhance a sense of community and belonging.
- Provide parents with a single point of contact.
- Provide staff members with access to supporting documents.
- Provide staff members with direct points of contact to aid with supporting Service students.

'Thank you so much for supporting our children.' (Parent)



'Your talk was really interesting. As an individual who doesn't know anyone in the military, I didn't have much information on their circumstances. I learnt so much from that briefing.' (English Teacher)

Description of what you did

Our project enabled us to implement several initiatives within it. Creating a webpage allowed us to communicate support measures and reduce email traffic to parents, whilst meeting the objectives described above.

To ensure we met our objectives, our website contains:

- Names and pictures of support staff for the group. (The supporting staff members include the school's ELSA, a military wife and a military veteran.)
- A bespoke email address to contact support staff ensuring a direct line of communication for parents, staff and students.
- Links to supporting documents, charities and initiatives. (In providing this information we hope to broaden and strengthen the feeling of community in addition to providing information on emotional, academic and financial support.)
- Supporting documents such as the Emotional Cycle of Deployment.
- Pictures and descriptions of previous events run by the group. (Events held include pumpkin carving, making and decorating gingerbread people, challenge events, slime making and many more.)
- Information on upcoming events hosted by the school and external organisations.
- A blog (The blog allows us to communicate further information and support measures that aren't mentioned elsewhere on the page. It also provides us with the opportunity to feedback on projects the students have been working on such as a mural they painted in their base classroom.)

Details of any funding costs

Staff members spent time creating content for the webpage in addition to the webpage.



What has been the impact?

- Increase in parental emails to the school providing information on students and their circumstances.
- Increase in communication across the staff body relating to Service Students.
- Increase in student awareness of upcoming events.
- Increase in students attending our support group.
- Decrease in email traffic to parents.
- Increase in support measures provided to students and families.
- Increase in communication with cluster schools.

Next steps

We would like to continue collaborating and sharing information with our cluster schools, attend our feeder schools Service Clubs to aid transition and continue to embed the Thriving Lives Toolkit. We would also like to increase communication throughout the Trust regarding our Service Student support measures.

'Thank you for all of your hard work running the Crofton DandelIONS and supporting our Service Students. You're amazing.' (Fellow Teacher)



ELSON INFANT SCHOOL (YEAR R,1,2)

Name of project	Quackers and Friends	
School context	Number on roll	224
	% of Service children	12.1% (27 pupils)
	How many classes?	9
	Main military base served	HMS Sultan
	Distance to military base	1.3 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes – 6
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Raising the profile of the Service group of families in school- everyone in school knowing who they are and knowing something about life for the children at home in order to best support their needs.	



'I like taking the toys home because I like sharing the things I did with my friends.'
(Sian - age 7)

Project overview

We purchased a bag and a diary to contain a new Service club toy.

The children took it in turns to take the toy 'Quackers and Baby Quackers' home for a week and then returned to the group to share their experiences.

Main Project objective

Raising the profile of the Service group of families in our school.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Knowing about all our military-connected families.
- Keeping in touch with all children and families even those who don't attend the service club sessions.
- Service club parent events – termly.

Description of what you did

We purchased a bag and a diary to contain a new service club toy.

The children took it in turns to take the toy 'Quackers and Baby Quackers' home for a week and then returned to the group to share their experiences.



Details of any funding costs

Cost of bag (x4) – approximately £20
Cost of diary (x2) – £20.50



What has been the impact?

The children are more interested in hearing about the experiences of other children in the group by looking at photos and listening to their ideas. As a staff team, we now have a better understanding of the lived experiences of our military families.

Next steps

To use the *Thriving Lives Toolkit* to identify any gaps which could further help and support our children and families.

'This has improved our understanding of the children and their home lives by hearing more information about them.'
(Anita - Learning Support Assistant)

'I liked doing lots of things with the toys and showing everybody.' (Florence - age 7)

ELSON JUNIOR SCHOOL

Name of project	Service Child and Family Handbook	
School context	Number on roll	308
	% of Service children	11% (34 pupils)
	How many classes?	12
	Main military base served	HMS Sultan
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To focus on, and strengthen, our provision for Service Children. To embed the use of the <i>Thriving Lives Toolkit</i> into our practice. To be part of a wider Service Community.	

Project overview

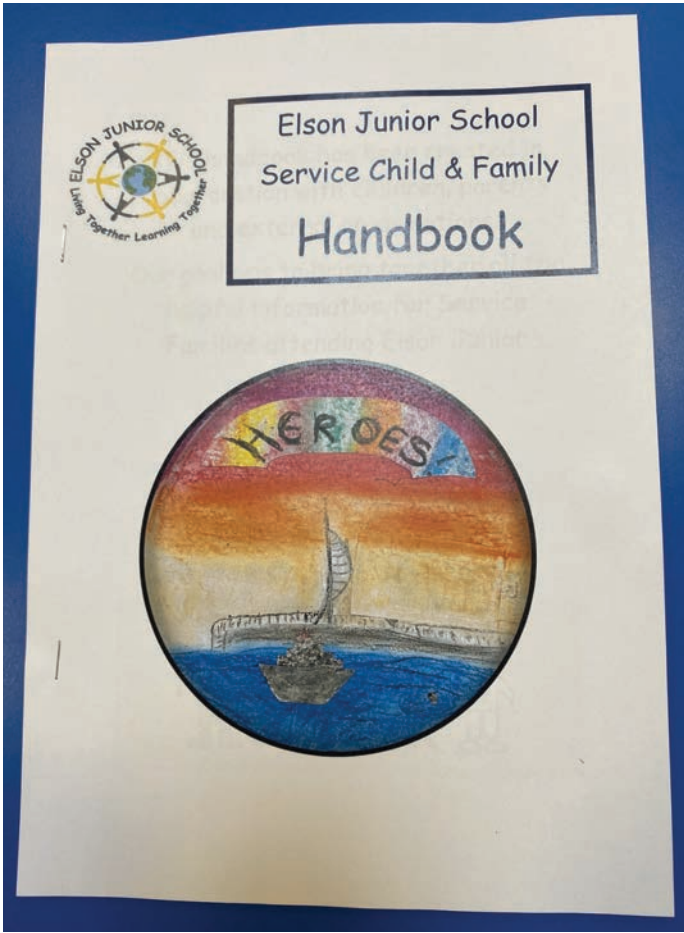
To create a handbook in collaboration with Service Children, families, local community organisations and charities, that draws together helpful information for families and staff.

Main Project objective

To create a handbook using the voice of Service children that collates helpful information in one document. This handbook can be distributed to current Service children and new-comers to help welcome them to the local Service community. The handbook will also be part of the staff induction pack and given to all current staff to develop their understanding of the lived experience of Service children.

'The handbook puts all the information I need in one place, which really helps when lives are hectic.' (Parent)

'The handbook reminds me about all the good things and how I can get help when times are tricky.' (Boy aged 10)



Intended outcomes of the project

We hope that the handbook will pull together information into a friendly and easy to use resource. It will create one document that reflects the experiences of Service children and families. This document will hopefully provide useful information to serving families alongside developing the understanding across the whole school staff team. We hope that by raising awareness of support and provision in school we will further strengthen our links with parents.

Description of what you did

The school's Family Link Worker / ELSA identified the areas of the *Thriving Lives Toolkit* that she wished to focus on - Principle 5: *Children are heard*; Principle 6: *Parents are engaged* & Principle 7: *Staff are well-informed*. She felt that improvement in these areas could be reached by creating a Service Child and Family Handbook in collaboration with the children, families and charities.

The next step was inviting families to a coffee morning to discuss what they would find useful in the handbook. Their feedback focused on support available, discounts and a deeper understanding from teaching staff.

The children were keen to share their lived experiences as a Service Child and thoughts on how *Elson Heroes Club* supports them. In response to children's voice, and to promote their sense of belonging, we hired *Never Such Innocence* to run an art workshop to create designs for an Elson Heroes badge that would also become our group logo. This logo appears on the front cover of our handbook. This has enriched the project but was not vital for the success of the handbook.

Charities and local organisations were then contacted to ask whether they would like to contribute to the handbook – the response was very positive. Examples of handbook content:

- School Service Child Lead contact details;
- Child voice about being a Service child;
- The Elson Heroes pet;
- The Deployment Cycle & support both in school and for the family;
- Local and national support available.

The handbook will be distributed to all Service Children and their families and school staff. The handbook will be included in the new staff induction pack and be given to new Service child applicants.

'The handbook makes me feel proud to be important enough to have a book all about us.' (Girl aged 9)

Details of any funding costs

There was no real cost to the project besides staff time. Meetings with parents were held during coffee morning slots that were already scheduled and the children's input came during *Elson Heroes* club sessions.

The school's lead chose to use the project as an opportunity to develop an Elson Heroes logo. She sourced an art workshop delivered by *Never Such Innocence* as one of the school's *Month of the Military Child* events in April. The cost of this was £450. This was not a requirement to complete the handbook but the quality of the experience and end design was enriched by a professional artist's input.

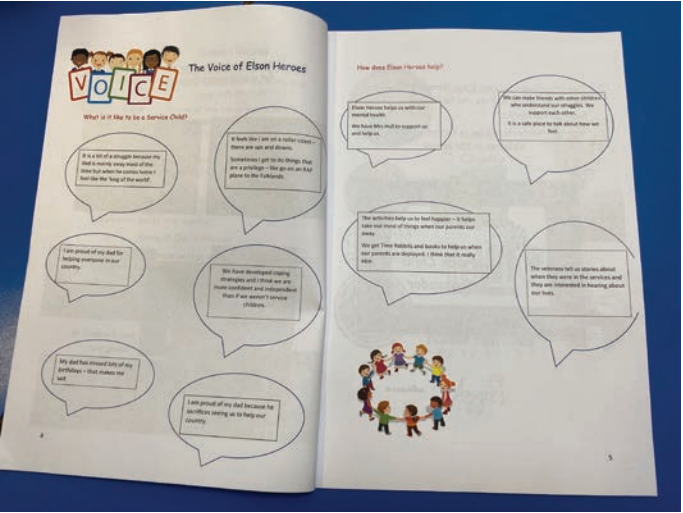
What has been the impact?

The impact has been to promote and develop a shared understanding of our Service children in school. The badge and the handbook roll-out has further raised the profile of our Service children in a way that the children themselves feel comfortable with.

Service families report that the handbook makes them feel valued, welcome and understood. Some Service families agreed that they are often reluctant to come forward to ask for help and they appreciated having the information to seek support discreetly.

Next steps

We will continue to build on our positive links with families and the wider community. Our new Service Ambassadors will champion Service Children. We will ensure that the voice of Service Children is continues across the school.



GOMER INFANT SCHOOL

Name of project	Mo and Moony's Marvellous Adventures	
School context	Number on roll	177
	% of Service children	15% (23 Service children + 4 children unofficially for reasons of a parent contracted to work for the Armed Forces, so work away for periods of time).
	How many classes?	6
	Main military base served	HM Royal Navy
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Unknown
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes 1 member of staff's husband is in the Navy
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Any other relevant information	Most of our families do not move around much due to postings and tend to be with us for the full 3 years. Most parents are not often deployed.
	To give our Service children a chance to have a voice and for them to tell us what it is like for them being Service children.	



Project overview

Strengthening Service children's voice – Principle 5 of the SCiP Alliance's *Thriving Lives Toolkit*.

Main Project objective

We wanted children who attend our Service club to share out of school experiences with each other.

Intended outcomes of the project

The school's Service Children's Champion, also a Higher Level Teaching Assistant / Home School Link Worker, runs 2 separate club sessions so all Service children can attend if they wish to. The idea of introducing 2 mascots was so each group could hear all about each other's adventures and so that more children would get the chance to take home one of the mascots before the end of this school year.

Description of what you did

The Champion asked the children in each Service club group about the other group. For example, did they know who is in the other group, whether they live near each other, which classes they are in, and if they knew anything about the parents' role in the services?

Lots of conversations came from this and we discussed a way of being more involved with each other's groups. We decided to have a mascot for each group - this was mostly led by a Year 2 boy, as his friend attends the session held on different day to his. He wanted a way for us all to be one big group so that we can all find out what the other Service children at the school do at the weekends, where they go on holiday and if they ever have a parent who is away/deployed, etc.

So, we used 2 monkeys from our box of soft toys and voted for which ones we wanted to use for which group. The school's Champion took a back seat on this; it was completely the young children's choice. The names Moony and Mo came about purely because they can be girls' or boys' names.

The monkeys now go home with a Service child from each group on a Monday or Tuesday and are returned the following week. At each Service club session, we share the adventures each monkey has been on. The children can take photos or draw and write about the adventures Mooney and Mo have been on - it is completely their choice of how they record it.

'When I take Mo home he can play with my other teddies because he is part of my family now.' (6-year old girl)



Gomer
Infant
School

Details of any funding costs

£10 for 2 notebooks and 2 bags

What has been the impact?

The children love hearing about each group and their own group's adventures. Lots of parents have been very good at supporting this new idea with some lovely contributions shared from exciting days out (e.g. Royal Albert Hall) to just chilling at home.

Next steps

The school's Champion will be looking at getting a Service Club *DoJo* page for the next school year as so military-connected parents and children can access the adventures at any time. She would also like to get parents together more next school year for mutual support.

'Can I give Moony or Mo to my daddy to take away on his ship so he can share his adventures with us and you can see what my daddy does when he goes to work?' (7-year old girl)

'I gonna take Mo on my daddy's ship when we go to visit him at the weekend.' (7-year old boy)



GRANGE INFANT SCHOOL

Name of project	Forces Lunch Club	
School context	Number on roll	187
	% of Service children	27% (50 pupils)
	How many classes?	7
	Main military base served	HMS Sultan, HMS Collingwood, HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	1 Mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To improve the provision and support we offer our Service children.	



Project overview

To set up a Service club during the school day that can be accessed by all Service children, as the only Service club that was on offer was after school when many children couldn't attend due to other commitments or parents' working hours.

Main Project objective

To provide an opportunity for pupil voice, 'drop in' style pastoral support on the children's terms, and an opportunity to socialise with peers who have similar lived-in experiences. It was felt that this would build a secure support network built on friendship and mutual understanding.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Service children to be able to freely access support from an experienced adult in a relaxed environment.
- Service children have opportunities to pick and choose when they want to attend ('drop in' style).
- Service children have opportunities to socialise with other children who share similar lived-in experiences.
- Service children to talk freely about their emotions and the ups and downs of being a military child in the company of people who understand.
- Service children to celebrate their uniqueness!

Description of what you did

The school's link staff member set up a drop in style lunch club in the school library that the school's Key Stage 1 children could access every Monday. Due to different lunch sittings, the whole hour is allocated so that all are able to come before or after they had eaten their lunch (or both for some of them!), depending on their sitting.

A range of toys are provided, along with games and activities for the children to play with, as well as colouring and themed art and craft activities. There are opportunities to share some of the school's Forces story books and the 'champion' offers general welfare check-ins, enabling her to recognise any children she may need to pick up on later for a one-to-one check in.

The children are free to come and go as they please which makes the club unique at the school. If children only want to stay for 10 minutes and then go out and play, they can! Equally they don't have to come every week. They know it is available to them and they can come whenever they like. This, it is felt, is what has made the club so successful!

Details of any funding costs

No cost as we have used resources we already have in school.

What has been the impact?

We have lots of children who access the club regularly who thrive on having somewhere quieter to go, especially when they are struggling with a loved one being away. They are able to talk openly and they know their feelings are validated. The children that attend are forming friendships with peers that they didn't really play with before, based on their new found common ground! It is so lovely hearing the children sharing stories about homecomings, going on their loved one's ships or supporting each other when they are feeling sad.

Next steps

To open this up for our Reception Year children to access too. We may need to look at a separate session initially, but the goal is to have them all together so that they can socialise with different age groups.

'I love coming to Forces Lunch Club. It makes me feel special as it is only for Service children!'
(Ralf, age 7)

'I have made some new friends in Forces Lunch Club. I didn't know their Dads were in the Navy like mine.' (Amiyah, age 6)



HIGHBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	The Dandelion Club	
School context	Number on roll	407
	% of Service children	2% (8 pupils)
	How many classes?	14
	Main military base served	All different
	Distance to military base	4.5 miles from HM Naval Base, Portsmouth
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	No
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	As a school within a military city, we thought there's no better project to be involved in to help reinforce our support for the Service children in our care.	



Project overview

At Highbury Primary School, we are thrilled to share an inspiring initiative that enriches our school community, especially for our cherished Service children. Allow us to present: the Dandelion Club!

Main Project objective

The world can sometimes feel as scattered and unpredictable as the seeds of a dandelion, especially for children from Service families who often face unique challenges. With this in mind, our school embarked on creating the Dandelion Club, a nurturing space tailored just for our Service children.

Intended outcomes of the project

Thriving Lives Toolkit links:

- Wellbeing is Supported – Principle 2
- Service children are Heard – Principle 5

A special highlight of our club in our heartwarming Teddy initiative. When a parent in service is deployed, we provide a lovely teddy for the children to take home and keep as well as one for the Service parent. This cuddly companion serves as a comforting reminder that they are always connected to their loved one, even when miles apart.

Description of what you did

We marked a momentous occasion for our first ever Dandelion Day! The entire school community came together in a spectacular sea of yellow. This vibrant display was not just about fun and unity; it was a meaningful gesture of recognition and support for our special Service children. From this, our club was launched.

Our commitment is to continue embedding the values and support of the Dandelion Club into the very fabric of our school culture. We want every Service child to feel recognised and supported through their school years, ensuring they can thrive both academically and personally. This initiative reaffirms our dedication to creating an inclusive environment where diversity is celebrated, and every student is given the tools they need to succeed.



Details of any funding costs

Funded by our Service Pupil Premium.



What has been the impact?

The positive impact of the Dandelion Club has already been evident! Children say they feel more supported and connected. Teachers have noticed a boost in the children's overall confidence and happiness at school. We're incredibly proud of the joy and growth the club has fostered.

It has been such a wonderful journey. Together—parents, educators, and the community — we can ensure the continued success and adaptation of the Dandelion Club, improving support for Service children at Highbury Primary School.

Next steps

Our school remains committed to nurturing each child's unique potential, and with the Dandelion Club, we're excited to watch our students bloom and shine brightly against any 'winds' they may face. We continue working together to make our school a beacon of hope and a haven of learning and laughter for all our children.

The last words should be that of our children:

'We love the Dandelion Club because we get to share how we feel, eat, play games and go on trips that include sailing, gardening and much more. We like knowing we aren't alone and we have each other to help us to talk through tough times. We didn't know how many children there were in the city until we did Festival of Friends! We thought it was only us, so too see so many others help us realise we aren't alone.'

#HighburyPrimary #DandelionClub
#ServiceChildrenSupport#BloomandGrow

MAYFIELD SCHOOL - ALL THROUGH SCHOOL (PRIMARY & SECONDARY)

Name of project	Mayfield Military Monkeys	
School context	Number on roll	1364
	% of Service children	2.5% (35 children known of – but thought to be more)
	How many classes?	12 year groups. 2 form entry in year R
	Main military base served	HM Naval Base- Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	3 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Unsure
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	An opportunity to learn from other schools and develop our knowledge and understanding.	



Project overview

- To create a club for Service children to meet.
- To create display boards of world maps for Service children to have visual aids of where their parents are deployed.
- To have termly meet ups across primary and secondary.
- To attend trips throughout the year for service children.

Main Project objective

To improve support for Service children and create a space in which they can socialise and talk about their lived experiences.

Intended outcomes of the project

- Service children and their families to feel better supported by school.
- Service children to know who to go to for support during times of deployment or uncertainty in their lives.
- Greater camaraderie to exist between Service children across the phases of primary and secondary.
- Staff to have become more aware of the Service children on roll and the experiences they are going through.
- Other children to be more aware of experiences their military-connected classmates are going through.

Description of what you did

At the back end of academic year 2023/2024, we celebrated Armed Forces Day as a whole primary school with an assault course for children to participate in. This launched our very new club “Mayfield Military Monkeys” - a space for military children in primary to meet weekly and talk about their feelings and share ideas.

Each primary military child is now gifted an A4 scrap book and a monkey teddy bear, with the intention their parents take it away on deployment and send in photos to school and their child about where they are.

We created two big display boards, one in our infant corridor and one in our junior corridor, and our Service children design a ship, tank or aircraft and then move it around the world map when one of their parents is deployed.

We have now also held a couple of all-through tea parties: the primary Service children have been very engaged, enjoying the time together along with pizza and cake and the activities we’ve done. The

children who attended the last tea party also all received a “Little Troopers” badge to wear on their blazers.



We celebrated Dandelion Day in April 2025 by making bracelets for child and parent, as well colouring activities with younger children.

Details of any funding costs

Estimated to be around £250 so far.

What has been the impact?

Children have enjoyed meeting up weekly and tell us they look forward to seeing each other. They’re often disappointed when unable to attend due to parent commitments elsewhere.

At the last tea party, the Service children from seniors asked for “more events like this please”.

Staff are more aware of children from Service families and ask to speak to staff running the military club about children’s wellbeing.

Next steps

- A survey is to be sent out via *ClassCharts* to ensure all Service children are enrolled in our offer.
- A survey asking parents and carers how we can better support them and their children is also planned.
- A whole school mural, painted on a central location wall of a world map, will be created so primary and secondary Service children can share their deployment vehicles together.
- A selection of books will be purchased for the whole school library aimed at supporting deployment.

‘I would like to do more activities like this.’ (12 year old boy after attending our Dandelion Day celebration)

‘Since our children have been attending Mayfield Military Monkeys, they have felt more settled about their dad deploying and really look forward to the photos of their monkey they receive when he’s away.’ (Parent of two Service children in Primary.)

NEWTOWN C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Hoodies for Heroes	
School context	Number on roll	364
	% of Service children	1.6% (6 children)
	How many classes?	14
	Main military base served	HMS Excellence
	Distance to military base	12.8 miles (by road)
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Although 1.6% is the percentage of pupils we receive Service Pupil Premium funding for, the percentage is actually 3% because we support children whose parents are separated but Mum/Dad are in the forces, as well as those whose parents are separated but Mum/Dad are veterans.
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Newtown wanted its children to be part of a collaborative support network for all Service children across Gosport and Portsmouth.	

Project overview

Using the SCiP Alliance’s *Thriving Lives Toolkit*, we wanted to look at the *Children are Heard* section of the toolkit, as we felt that this was important for our Service children. A child came up with the idea of all Service children having hoodies so they would have a sense of belonging to the *Dandelion Club* and they would feel recognised. They also wanted to update our dedicated noticeboard.

‘It feels like we are in a bubble that people can now see. It’s acknowledgement and it’s recognition of what we are going through. Wearing the hoodies will mean people will stop and ask how we are and recognise what we go through.’ (10 year old boy, Year 6)



Main Project objective

Giving our Service children a stronger voice so that they are heard and recognised as Service children. We felt that this would strengthen their sense of belonging.

Intended outcomes of the project

Our children will have designed their own hoodies to represent how proud they are of being Service children and as recognition that they are part of a group and a network of other Service children.

As a result, they will feel better listened to and know they have support from others if needed.

Description of what you did

At the beginning of this year, we carried out a survey with our Service children and their parents, asking them what they wanted from the support group this year.

One parent told Miss Claridge, our ELSA (but now also our Service Children’s lead), that they had had a conversation at home with their child about *Dandelion Club*. The parent said that their child had discussed the *Dandelion Club* children having their own hoodies. The child had said he wanted to let everyone know that they were Service children and how he felt proud to be part of this group.

Miss Claridge took this idea and printed out outlines of the hoodies and the children spent some time discussing together what was important for them to have on their hoodies. They then designed their own versions and discussed these within the group. The group fed back what they liked about each design. The next week the group took parts of each other’s designs to make one final design. This was taken to the Headteacher who approved it to be funded and they are now in the process of being printed.

The children also wanted to update the school’s military notice board so that other pupils and staff are more aware of *Dandelion Club* and what it is like to be a Service child.

We have added to the Pledge that we created during the *Festival of Friends* pupil voice event in January 2025, which the children designed together. There was lots of discussion about what it is like to be a Service child. This pledge now takes pride of place in the hall, so that our Service children can share it with friends and staff of the school.

Details of any funding costs

The school has used funding from Service Pupil Premium to fund for the hoodies.

What has been the impact?

The children are excited to be able to wear their hoodies with pride and to wear them on *Dandelion Club* days.



The discussions had between themselves and other children from the *Festival of Friends* project of what it is like to be a Service child, have made them feel that they are not on their own. They now have a stronger sense of belonging and feel recognised.

Our Service children now feel like they can talk to others about what they are going through, and they have felt understood when talking to others going through the same thing.

Next steps

We are going to continue using the *Thriving Lives Toolkit*’s Self-evaluation framework to identify a project for next year. The impact this project has had on the Service children of our school is huge and we would like this to continue.

‘Dandelion Club provides a place for belonging for our special group of children allowing them to mix with others whom empathise with their home circumstances. This Club being part of the Festival of Friends has provided unique learning opportunities and experiences, enabling them to mix with the wider community.’ (Parent)



PRIORY SCHOOL SOUTHSEA (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Developing Relationships	
School context	Number on roll	1264
	% of Service children	1% (13 students)
	How many classes?	Mixed at Secondary
	Main military base served	HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	It is only in the last 3 years that Service Pupil Premium (SPP) has become an area of specific focus within the school and we wanted to develop this using the tools that were available and through the project.	

Project overview

Our key focus was to develop the relationships with our families as whole. Previously we had done a lot of trips for the students but the links with the families as a whole still remained an area in need of development.

Main Project objective

- Improving parent links.
- Improving Service student wellbeing.
- Improving staff understanding of SPP students and their families.



Intended outcomes of the project

- We wanted better communication with our parents and what the home circumstances are around each Service family.
- We wanted to know who was on deployment and when.
- Service students to feel and know there are safe places and safe adults they can go to for support.
- Ensuring all staff know who our Service students are.
- Ensuring all staff know and understand life of a Service child and how they can support.
- Knowing where to send students for support.
- For parents of upcoming Service children to know what support is available and who they can go to for information.

Description of what you did

We started by identifying what our strengths and weaknesses were by completing the SCiP Alliance's *Thriving Lives Toolkit* self-evaluation framework and, from that, completed our own 3-year plan focusing on prioritising communication and developing relationships.

The Toolkit helped us to realise that while we had a LOT of areas to develop, our starting point needed to be building the communication with parents. In order to do this, we started by building a page on the school website to signpost parents to the available support both from school and from outside agencies.

We then made contact with each parent individually, firstly by email, introducing ourselves, what we could offer directing them to the website and all the available support, and then with phone calls to really get a better understanding of each family's personal circumstances and needs. This was really beneficial as it allowed us to see what support was needed, whose parents were deploying still and when, and it has opened up communication so parents can now openly contact us with any areas that they need help with.

We have created newsletters each half term that have given Service parents the information relating to the events that we have been doing each half term as well as upcoming events and this has been received well by parents.

We also arranged for Aggies to come in to work with two of our students whose parents were going on deployment, one who was completely unexpected - that parent has gone away with a book to report back on all they do over their deployment. We were also able to arrange for a day off school so one of the students could go and look around his Dad's ship and also to see him off.

We have also participated in a range of activities that have been offered and have had more students than we have ever had engaging in these. They included Boleh sailing, the planter activities led by Aggies at Victoria Park, Fort Nelson and a day at the Andrew Simpson Centre. We have plans for a coffee morning later this term and we are intending to continue these on a half-termly basis.

We also recognised that staff need to understand the life of a Services family too and as a part of our work around staff awareness, we have created an SPP tracker that clearly shows the military backgrounds of the families, the expected deployments, the family situation (e.g. Dad deploying but mum and dad don't live together etc.). In addition to this, we have also created pupil passports (written with the students themselves) for all of our Service students that give staff a better understanding of some of the roles that students take on in the home, as well as how they best achieve educationally and through which the students share their interests and future ambitions.

Details of any funding costs

No funding costs beyond time

What has been the impact?

The regular contact that we now have with our military-connected parents is making things so much easier, not just in terms of supporting the students as individuals but also as a family. It has enabled us to be able to get support in from Aggies, to arrange well-being support for students where circumstances are changing or they are feeling unsettled and in need of support.

Overall, the relationships between us as a school and our military families are so much greater.

Next steps

We have used information from the Portsmouth City Council's Toolkit, as well as the information from the project support sessions attended, to put together a CPD session which we will be delivering to staff to help them understand the needs of SPP families.

We are also looking to start our half-termly coffee mornings not just for families in our school but within the Trust and the local area.

We also have a clear 3-year plan in place to ensure we meet all areas of the SCiP Alliance Toolkit by the end of the 2027-2028 academic year.



THE SOLENT SCHOOLS

INFANTS (YEAR R-YEAR 2) & JUNIORS (YEAR 3-YEAR 6).
THE SCHOOLS ARE PART OF THE DE CURCI TRUST.

Name of project	Solent Service Families Celebration	
School context	Number on roll	635
	% of Service children	9% (57 children)
	How many classes?	21
	Main military base served	Portsmouth Naval Base
	Distance to military base	4 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	We have very little transition of Service pupils due to Portsmouth being a homeport base, but considerable parental absence due to deployment.
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	The Solent Schools agreed to take part in this project so that we could share our long-standing expertise in supporting Service children and families with other schools in Portsmouth, whilst at the same time striving to enhance our current provision by learning from other providers.	

Project overview

Planning and delivering a Service families community event supported by Seekers Create, a dynamic social enterprise, driven by a team of creatives dedicated to fostering meaningful connections within communities.

Main Project objective

As identified in Principle 6 (*Parents are Engaged*) of the SCiP Alliance’s *Thriving Lives Toolkit*, and in response to a parent survey, we wanted to embrace our families in a more proactive way and provide improved contact for them with supporting agencies.

Intended outcomes of the project

The intended outcome of the project was to address the support requirements raised by our Service families identified through a survey. They asked for a cross-school event whereby they could meet each other socially, whilst at the same time supporting their children in that environment. They also asked for access to professional agencies such as NFF, NCC and Aggies.



'The school puts the needs of pupils from more disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, including young carers and pupils from service families, at the forefront of their thinking.' (Solent Infant inspection report, June 2025)

'Pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable, such as service children and young carers, are particularly well supported. The school provides safe spaces in the Rainbow rooms where these pupils can share their worries.' (Solent Junior inspection report, March 2025)

Description of what you did

We asked our Service families what additional support they would like, and the main response was that they would like an informal meeting of families under one roof, as well as having access to military support agencies.

On a Friday afternoon between 3pm and 5pm we hosted the majority of our Service families (26 families, 75 attendees) at Solent Junior School in the main hall. Centre stage was an interactive art project facilitated by Seekers Create <https://www.seekerscreate.com/>. It provided a workshop-style art project that allowed all ages to get involved. Alongside this, there were representatives from The Naval Children’s Charity (NCC), Aggies, The Royal Navy Sailing Association and Swim Free.

In addition, there were zoned areas for families to enjoy e.g. construction / dressing up / colouring / books and board games.

Snack and drinks were provided by the school’s kitchen and were very much enjoyed.

Details of any funding costs

£300 of SPP money spent on having Seekers Create support the event. Everything else was sourced internally from our schools.

'As a parent, I thought the event was so wonderful! Bringing everyone together, with such a wide range of activities, having charities there to access for support where needed - it was fabulous! I saw lots of happy children, and lots of families catching up and supporting one another!' (Military parent)



What has been the impact?

The impact has been that Service families are now more aware of each other and have made connections that will enable them to feel increasingly part of a supportive group. Families were also able to seek professional advice from the supporting agencies. Those agencies felt that they were appreciated and valued at this event and they have given families the confidence to approach them if required.

Next steps

On the back of this successful event, we aim to run this type of event for our families each year. We would also like to bring all our Service children together from both schools during the school day and run an art session facilitated by Seekers Create.

'We celebrated with all our forces children and created a big Solent Poster. My favourite thing was decorating the poster.' (Service child)



SOUTHSEA INFANTS SCHOOL

Name of project	Service Children Awareness Project	
School context	Number on roll	172
	% of Service children	3% (5 children)
	How many classes?	7
	Main military base served	Dockyard
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	No
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To monitor and increase awareness of Service children and their unique lifestyles and needs.	



Project overview

To improve awareness of Service children across the school community.

Main Project objective

To track the progress of Service children and to ensure that they meet all targets and milestones.

Intended outcomes of the project

- To improve the school experience of our Service children.
- To raise staff understanding of Service children’s potential needs arising from a military lifestyle.

Description of what you did

The school’s Service Pupil Premium Champion, also an ELSA, met every two weeks with the deputy head to work through the SCiP Alliance’s *Thriving Lives Toolkit* self-evaluation framework.

- As a result, we then implemented a tracking tool to capture progress of our Service children.
- We trained all staff members on the challenges that Service children may face.
- We have reviewed our Service Pupil Premium (SPP) spending to make sure that it is spent appropriately.
- We are now in regular contact with the assigned SPP/PP governor.

Details of any funding costs

None

What has been the impact?

The Festival of Friends project has raised awareness within the school of the challenges and strengths of Service children and their families.

It has also increased our Service children’s sense of belonging with each other during regular Service club sessions.

Next steps

To continue to monitor, track and give the necessary attention and care that Service children uniquely require.

‘We have put in policies to benefit our Service children that have come about due to our involvement in this project. It has also been wonderful to meet regularly with other Service leads and to share their passion for supporting service children and their families... The whole process has been excellent for raising awareness.’ (ELSA and Service Pupil Premium Champion)



The 7 principles of effective support

Principle	Vision
1 Our approach is clear	Leaders’ understanding and approach ensure resources and policies improve Armed Forces children’s outcomes.
2 Wellbeing is supported	Tailored pastoral provision supports Armed Forces children’s mental health and wellbeing.
3 Achievement is maximised	Teaching, assessment and support ensure the continuity of Armed Forces children’s learning and progression.
4 Transition is effective	Systems and support ensure seamless transitions for Armed Forces children arriving at and leaving school.
5 Children are heard	Armed Forces children’s diverse voices are heard and inform the support they receive.
6 Parents are engaged	Strong home-school partnerships help Armed Forces families feel valued as part of the school community.
7 Staff are well-informed	Supportive training and networks ensure all staff understand and support each Armed Forces child.

ST. JOHN'S C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Solent Service Families Celebration	
School context	Number on roll	386
	% of Service children	8.03 (31 children)
	How many classes?	8
	Main military base served	Serves HMS Nelson and HMS Sultan
	Distance to military base	12 miles / 1.4 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Some staff are also spouses of veterans
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To join a wider network of Service children and schools and implement a better use of the <i>Thriving Lives Toolkit</i> . To hopefully access more funding to support our Service children.	

Adult: 'Are you happy to take the bear home?' Year 6 girl: 'What Hero? Yeah, he's cute!'

Project overview

To introduce a well-being teddy to allow the children to share information about how they cope in Service life and celebrate their military parent. Also to encourage our Service children to open up about their feelings and/or struggles more, so that they could use this for emotional support.

Main Project objective

Supporting and improving Service pupils' well-being (Principle 2 of the *Thriving Lives Toolkit*)

Intended outcomes of the project

- To raise the profile of our Service club, 'Little Heroes', within the school.
- To encourage greater engagement within the school.

Description of what you did

Firstly, we purchased a Teddy Bear, had a t-shirt with Little Heroes logo printed on it and named the bear (Hero). We then called a meeting for all our Service children to attend to introduce the bear and its intended purpose.

All pupils' names are put into a hat and then each week a pupil is selected to take the bear home. Children are invited to share their experiences /days by writing in the diary provided and adding pictures.

Details of any funding costs

Cost to purchase the bear £25.00



What has been the impact?

- More children now attend Little Heroes, which is a voluntary club, as they are wanting a turn with the bear.
- Our Service Leads have learnt more about our Service children's home life, enabling them to be more relatable and understanding of the individual needs.

Next steps

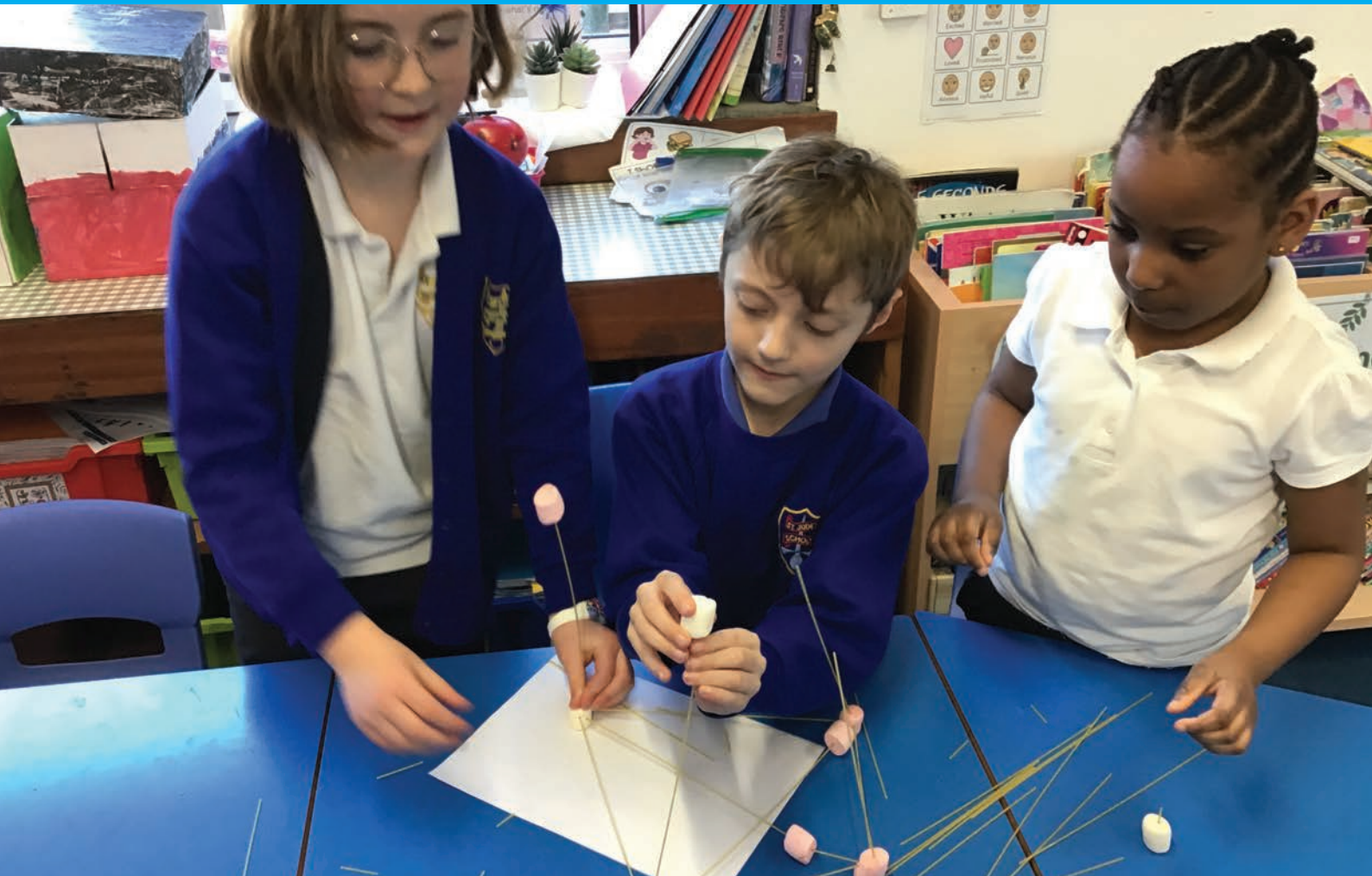
- To create a Facebook page for our Little Heroes enabling our Service Leads to pass on relevant information to those at home and on deployment. This will also enable deployed personnel to see thigs their Little Heroes are doing at the group.
- To help support our schools Service families more, we wish to set up a coffee morning, once a half term, within the school to invite Service families to.

'When's it my turn to take Hero home? I can't wait to show him where I live!' (Year 2 child)



ST JUDE'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Little Troopers Club	
School context	Number on roll	410
	% of Service children	12% (49 children)
	How many classes?	7
	Main military base served	HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	0.9 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	Yes – 2 are retired Service personnel and 1 member is a military spouse
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	We were excited to learn more about the SCiP Alliance's <i>Thriving Lives Toolkit</i> and wanted to use this to offer bespoke provision for our Service children.	



Project overview

- Our project was developed with two key objectives in mind:
- Firstly, the project aimed to enhance communication with parents by providing clear, accessible information about the support services available to their children.
 - Secondly, the project focused on creating a stronger sense of identity and belonging among Service children through the introduction of an afterschool service club called Little Troopers.

Main Project objective

Our main objectives were focussed on the Toolkit's Principle 1: *Our Approach is Clear* and Principle 4: *Wellbeing is supported*.

Intended outcomes of the project

Our project aimed to ensure parents are well-informed about the support available for their children and how to communicate deployments to the school. Success would include improved parental awareness and accessibility of information.

For children, the project was aimed to foster a sense of community and connection through a collaborative art piece gifted to the local naval community house. Additionally, engagement in STEM-based activities are expected to inspire and motivate the children.

Description of what you did

Our project aimed to strengthen support for Service families within our school community through two key initiatives.

Firstly, we created a dedicated *Service* tab on our school website to provide a central hub for all relevant information. This section outlines the support available for children from Service families, details how the Service Pupil Premium is allocated, offers a downloadable deployment letter, and includes links to external Service charities that parents can access. The goal was to improve visibility, accessibility, and transparency of the resources and support available.

In addition, we launched a new after-school Service Club called *Little Troopers*, specifically for children from Service families. The club began with a collaborative art project that was presented to the local Navy community house as a gesture of connection and appreciation. Following this, the club focused on STEM-based activities and creative crafts, providing both enrichment and a supportive environment for Service pupils to engage, collaborate, and thrive.

Details of any funding costs

Craft supplies – £40
Stem resources – £10
Staffing for after school club – £100 per term



What has been the impact?

The project has had a significant positive impact on both parents and their Service children.

Parents are now well-informed and have a clearer understanding of the Service provision offered by the school. A structured and accessible communication pathway has been established, enabling parents to notify the school about deployments with ease. Additionally, families are now more aware of the support available through Service charities, ensuring they can access the help they need.

For Service children, the after-school club has been particularly beneficial. It has provided a welcoming space where they can connect with peers who share similar experiences, fostering a strong sense of community. Through engaging in collaborative art projects and STEM-based activities, the children have developed new skills, built friendships, and enjoyed meaningful, creative experiences that support their well-being and personal development.

Next steps

We would like to establish a dedicated "Service Shelf" within the school library. This shelf will feature a curated selection of high-quality books that reflect the unique experiences, challenges, and strengths of Service life.

We would also like to implement a comprehensive transition plan aimed at supporting Service children, particularly those who are new to the school.

'The boys have regularly discussed how they feel that they get looked after as Service children. Thank you!' (Military parent)



TRAFALGAR SCHOOL (SECONDARY)

Name of project	Dandelion Division	
School context	Number on roll	1031
	% of Service children	5.4% (56 students)
	Main military base served	Hilsea Barracks
	Distance to military base	1 mile
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
	Any other relevant information	Mainly navy families, but we also have some army families.
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	We really wanted to ensure that we explicitly and intentionally offered support and opportunities specifically for our Service children and their families.	



'It was an amazing experience to watch our daughter down at the dockyard being part of a fashion show project...and watching her give a speech at the Festival of Friends celebration was phenomenal.' (Parent of a year 9 Service child)

Project overview

Despite having a large number of Service pupils, we had few opportunities for Service pupils to really get to know other pupils within their military community. Our project was to explore and develop these relationships, as well as strengthen the students' relationship with the school's Service Children Lead.

Main Project objective

We feel like our Service children already a feel a sense of overall belonging as part of our school community, thanks to our Relational ethos. However, we wanted to really encourage and foster that sense of belonging and support within the school's Service children community.

Intended outcomes of the project

We wanted to ensure there were a greater opportunities specifically for our Service pupils, both inside and outside of school, to undertake activities together.

We also wanted our Service students to feel they had a main point of contact (the Service Children Lead) who they could come to if they needed emotional support, especially during parental deployments.

Description of what you did

With our with Service pupils, we co-created a bespoke time-out card, which they could use in lessons, should they need some time to regulate or seek support.

We also now run a half-termly tutor breakfast specifically for our Service children, where they can socialise and have their breakfast together.

We also run a fortnightly youth club, which is led by a Royal Navy family support worker, where we play games and have snacks together.

Transition processes are also now far more bespoke, and all Year 6 into Year 7 Service child transition meetings are held by the Service Children Lead, so she can meet families beforehand. Our paperwork for transition regarding paperwork has been improved.

Details of any funding costs

Service Pupil Premium was used for food items supplied both for the half termly breakfast and for the youth club.



What has been the impact?

Students attending the activities, youth club and breakfast club have given very positive feedback, as have their parents. These have meant Service pupils have made meaningful connections within their community.

For some students struggling with attendance and emotional issues, we have managed to intercept earlier resulting in improved attendance for those students in the second half of the year.

Next steps

Now we need to ensure that all staff are made more aware of who our Service children are, and what their lived experiences are like, along with how this may impact them in the classroom.

We also want to make a display to show are strong connections with the Armed Forces, both amongst our student community, but also our staff.

'Since I've been at school, Miss has been very helpful putting in place Service club, breakfast and little trips and activities, making Service children finally feel heard and more welcome.' (Year 7 Service child)



UTC PORTSMOUTH (SECONDARY WITH SIXTH FORM)

Name of project	Forces Aware	
School context	Number on roll	492
	% of Service children	4.3% (21 students)
	Main military base served	Portsmouth Naval Base
	Distance to military base	2 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	Yes
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To build connections in the Service support network for the benefit of our own students.	



Project overview

- To raise awareness within the college of the unique challenges and needs of our Service children.
- To inform staff of the support provided by the Service pupil support team.

Main Project objective

To build a better understanding of Service children’s needs within the college and provide a safe space for them to access support and build their community.

Intended outcomes of the project

Better understanding amongst staff and a stronger sense of belonging among Service students.

Description of what you did

We created a digital classroom for the students. This has been used to disseminate information, and links for events and opportunities aimed solely at the military community. It has also been used as a safe way for them to request support, vote on activities and communicate with each other.

We have also provided a bite-sized awareness talk to the staff body informing them of challenges these students may face, support they may need and what is currently in place for them.



Details of any funding costs

Pastoral support resources to help children develop their community and access support.

What has been the impact?

- Students have formed friendships with other Service children.
- Staff now aware of the Service children on our roll.

Next steps

To investigate resources / support for students to communicate with parents when they are deployed.

*‘We are very appreciative to have been involved in the meetings and discussions with other schools, as they have highlighted a number of things which we needed to put in place to improve our provision for our Service children. We don’t have many that receive funding, and so our challenge has been trying to ensure that our KS5 students receive the same support as our KS4.’
(Engineering teacher and school project lead)*



WIMBORNE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Name of project	Speak and be heard!	
School context	Number on roll	560
	% of Service children	3.6% (20 children)
	How many classes?	19
	Main military base served	HMNB Portsmouth
	Distance to military base	2.2 miles
	Are there any military members on Governing Body?	No
	Are there any staff Service spouses?	No
Why the school agreed to take part in the project	To guide and assist with how we utilise our Service Pupil Premium (SSP) and how we can best meet our Service Children's needs.	



'The school holds sessions where all the Service children get together which really helps my little boy understand that part of his identity is being a Service child alongside some of his peers. He feels proud and excited when he comes home after these.' (Parent)

Project overview

This project was developed with two key objectives in mind:

Firstly, to survey the parents and see what they thought of the provision already available and how they thought it could be improved. (We also wanted to check if they were aware of the Service information collection sheets that are sent out at the start of each year.)

Secondly, to survey our Service children to see what they thought of the provision already available and how they thought it could be improved.

Main Project objective

Our main objectives were focussed on Principle 5 and 6 of the SCiP Alliance's *Thriving Lives Toolkit*, to ensure children are heard and parents are engaged.

Intended outcomes of the project

To ensure that children feel heard and have a sense of belonging, and that parents are aware of how we support and engage with both them and their children.

Description of what you did

We utilised the *Thriving Lives Toolkit* self-evaluation framework to create and manage surveys for both our children and their parents. The results were then shared with the school's SLT and a plan of action going forward was agreed.

It became apparent that some of our staff were not as well informed as we had hoped so training has been put in place for the school staff as a whole.

Details of any funding costs

As we utilised the Toolkit and an email delivery system, this project initially did not cost us anything. However, delivery of the training will utilise school resources and staff out of hours' time, resulting in an overall cost of approximately £50.

What has been the impact?

Training has now been put in place for the school staff as a whole. Staff are now made more aware of upcoming deployments and "week ending" so that they are able to support any Service children that they work, or come into contact, with.



Next steps

We would like to establish a dedicated "Service Shelf" within the school library. This shelf will feature a selection of high-quality books that reflect the unique experiences, challenges, and strengths of Service life.

We would also like to implement a comprehensive transition plan aimed at supporting service children, particularly those who are newly joining our school.

'Luckily we don't have the challenge of going away at the moment but some other mums do know that we have a connection with the RN through our children meeting as Service children and mums seek out support on occasion.' (Parent)



'I like spending time with other children whose parents go away and I like helping the younger children who have families like me.' (Year 6 Boy)



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