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An exploration into the risk and protective factors to school adaptation as experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to explore the similarities and differences of perceived risk and protective factors to school adaptation as experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families to inform educational psychology practice.

Design/Method: This study followed a qualitative design. Parents of 3 and 4 year olds, attending a maintained nursery, in a specific Southern East England area, which is host to an army base and where children experience a relative number of disadvantages were contacted through a research leaflet and a family information questionnaire. 6 parents each from army and non-army families, and 4 practitioners who talked about 3 children in their classes, participated in semi-structured interviews. The transcripts were subjected to a thematic analysis.

Findings: Unique risks, such as deployment and parental absence, are experienced by children living in army families, and they emotionally affect children. However, as well as adapting well to difficult situations, unlike children living in non-army families, these children benefit from community cohesion and social and familial support. Children living in army families are also exposed to unique risks such as army culture, possible bereavement and injury, post-deployment reunion, transitions and relocations. Despite experiencing these risks which have the potential to be extreme, proactive systemic planning is at the forethought of familial and school systems, whereas children living in non-army families experience many risks at family and school levels, such as parenting difficulties, parental mental health difficulties, conflict-based familial relationships and divided school systems.

Implications for EP practice: EPs are well placed in implementing systemic support strategies at familial and school levels to help parents and practitioners at a crucial time in their children's educational career, and promote school adaptation.

Originality/value: This study uniquely contributes to the limited literature on risk and protective factors experienced by children from army families in the UK. The comparative nature of this study provides suggestions for EP interventions.

Keywords: Risk and protective factors, army families, disadvantages, educational psychology practice, maintained nursery settings, school adaptation

Declaration

I hereby declare, that except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

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Acknowledgements

To my little family, Malcolm, Louis, Emma and our new addition, Émile…

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis by presenting its background and rationale. This will be followed by the presentation of the aims, research questions and methodology involved. Finally, the structure of the overall thesis is outlined.

1.2 This Study

This study examines risk and protective factors to school adaptation experienced by young children who live in army and non-army families in a specific area of a Southern county of England where the researcher works as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP).

1.3 Why Study Risk and Protective Factors to School Adaptation?

A wider context

For many years now, researchers have studied children's positive adaptation during or following exposure to adversities or risks that have the potential to harm development (Luthar, 2006; Masten, 2007). Indeed, a wide variety of events and experiences, such as war, family violence, natural disasters, divorce and poverty (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008) and a number of different factors within children's lives, such as problem behaviours, mental health difficulties, and educational failure or disadvantage (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch & Ungar, 2005; Wright & Masten, 2006) have been recognised to cause possible risks to children's development and positive school adaptation that therefore disadvantage these children.

Many disadvantages have been identified in the literature, such as the home-learning environment (HLE), ethnic background, language, gender, socio-economic disadvantage, parental qualifications (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) and family relationships (Cowan Cowan, Ablow, Johnson and Measelle, 2005). For example, poverty is well documented in the literature as a significant risk to a child's development and school adaptation (Fthenakis, 1998; Ramey & Campbell, 1991; Vitaro, Larose, Brendgen & Tremblay, 2005) and as having a causal influence on children's behaviour at school (Costello, Compton, Keeler & Angold, 2003; MacMillan, McMorris & Kruttschnitt, 2004).

Some disadvantages, however, are still under-researched. The literature related to children living in army families outlines risk factors, such as frequent transitions and relocation, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), deployment and post-deployment reunion possibly

influencing a child's psychosocial and academic outcomes (Palmer, 2008), but these remain under-researched (Eodanable & Lauchlan, 2011; Palmer, 2008). A literature search carried out in November 2011 and May 2012 indicated limited literature in the UK.[1] As recommended by Palmer (2008), further studies to help identify factors protecting children and families against negative outcomes are therefore necessary.

Local Context

The researcher works as a TEP in wards situated on either side of a well-established army base. Since 2009, the researcher has become familiar, during professional consultations, with the disadvantages associated with children living in army and non-army families. In ward 2, children live in the context of disadvantaged households where risks are often related to a lack of qualifications, parental mental health, inconsistent parenting and complex family situations. Familial difficulties, in some circumstances, lead to social care involvement with the implementation of a child protection plan. Practitioners working in this context have expressed difficulties in identifying protective factors which could help children and families. In ward 1, many children live in army families where risks are related to a high level of mobility and transitions, anxieties about parental absence and return, the possibility of loss and parental mental health difficulties, especially given the current conflict in a dangerous war zone, i.e. Afghanistan. In both circumstances, these risks may affect children's school adaptation and challenge educational psychology practice because it adds complexity to the understanding of children's needs and developmental problems, and impacts on the strategies that educational psychologist (EP) may suggest.

Locally, the need to support maintained nursery practitioners in their role became highly relevant as difficulties in assessing 'children at risk', implementing strategies and monitoring progress have been identified by the team leader for the Pre-School Special Education Needs Additional Educational Needs (SENCAN). Despite recommendations that EPs are in a key position to offer information, support and offer guidance to families and childcare settings to prevent difficulties from emerging later in a child's school career (Armstrong, Missal, Shatter & Hojnoski, 2009), the EP role has traditionally been embedded in the identification of special educational needs (SEN) that children may have (Hojnoski & Missall, 2009). Consequently, EPs have limited time to support practitioners to assess fully, discuss 'children at risk' and provide information to prevent the early onset of difficulties. Research into the risk and protective factors to school adaptation of disadvantaged children is therefore highly pertinent to inform educational psychology practice and support maintained nursery practitioners in their role.

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[1] 2.4.2 for details

1.3.1 Rationale of the Study

This research aimed to identify risk and protective factors experienced by children living in army and non-army families to inform professional practice. Locally, risks associated with disadvantaged households were considered to be challenging for practitioners, highlighting the need for further research into protective factors. Furthermore, the literature in relation to the risk and protective factors experienced by children living in army families largely comes from the US: little has been undertaken in the UK. Further research to identify risk and protective factors experienced by young children with disadvantages such as living in army families is needed, so that a better understanding of the risk and protective factors can be gained to help EPs support maintained nursery practitioners in their role.

1.3.2 What is the Unique Contribution of the Study?

The study consists of unique research, exploring risk and protective factors experienced by the children of army families in the UK compared to non-army families. The comparative nature of the study has the potential to enhance current EP practice in helping practitioners to identify risks and protective factors by gaining a better understanding of the factors which might impact on children's school adaptation and in informing on the interventions needed in maintained nursery settings to support children.

1.3.3 What was the Methodology Involved in the Study?

Since children of wards 1 and 2 experience many disadvantages to school adaptation, a comparative qualitative study to investigate the emergence of similar or distinct factors within these army and non-army families was designed. According to the literature, children from army families are more likely to experience exposure to army culture, bereavement and develop anxieties related to parental absence. This study aimed to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1 - What are the perceived risk factors experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these risk factors similar, distinct or unique?

RQ2 - What are the perceived protective factors experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these protective factors similar, distinct or unique?

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured to provide a detailed account of the research undertaken to investigate the aims and research questions. In Chapter 2, an overview of the literature related to the research problem will be described. The psychological perspective of this study and a definition of the constructs will be examined and the research aims and questions will be formulated. Chapter 3 will present the methodological approach adopted and the research tools used to answer the research questions. In Chapter 4 the qualitative results are presented in relation to each research question. Finally, Chapter 5 will present an interpretation of the findings, their implications for professional practice, future research and a critical evaluation of the study.

To provide a coherent narrative to the thesis, several keypoints were considered. Contextual localised factors and different sources of information, such as Ofsted reports, LA X documents and Borough Council information were used to help gain a better understanding of the local context of the study. The literature reviewed includes a large amount of American research. American literature was included to provide a background to the study. Since American terminology can often be different from British terminology, such as 'kindergarten' for 'preschool' or 'nursery education', 'school psychologist' for 'educational psychologist', the author has retained the use of these terms, but aims to use this terminology within the British context of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

2.1 Overview

This chapter provides a review of the literature on the risk and protective factors to school adaptation. First, the rationale for studying risk and protective factors and the definitions and challenges associated with these constructs is examined, followed by risk and protective factors associated with children experiencing disadvantages, such as living in army families. Finally, a summary of the rationale and a brief overview of the methodology and research questions are presented.

2.2 Why Study Risk and Protective Factors to School Adaptation?

In the last 30 years, researchers have become increasingly interested in how children 'make it' when their development is threatened by adverse circumstances such as poverty, violence, exposure to war, what protects them against risks such as parental mental illness or serious physical illness and how children succeed despite serious developmental challenges (Wright & Masten, 2006). This rapid surge of resilience research has been based on a number of reasons and needs. Mainly, the complexity and number of adversities children face have increased, leaving more children at risk (Goldstein & Brooks, 2006). These risks have been identified with long-term consequences for school adaptation.

2.2.1 Risks with Lasting Consequences to School Adaptation

According to Cowan *et al.* (2005), entry into primary school is an important developmental milestone, not only because of the need to adapt to a new environment, but also due to the subsequent challenges with potential long-lasting consequences for a child's school career (Fabian, 2003; Ladd, 1990; Pianta & Cox, 1999). Children who engage in maladaptive social patterns (difficulties in the initiation and maintenance of interaction, sharing) and task-related patterns (difficulties in listening, following instructions) have negative experiences of preschool and reception. They are more likely to experience learning and social difficulties in school, resulting in negative long-term consequences (Hinshaw, 1992; Ladd & Coleman, 1997; Masten, *et al.*, 1995). According to Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey (1995), these negative behaviours tend to inhibit the development of positive, resilient skills and result in stable behaviour patterns that are resistant to intervention by the age of 8; this has significant consequences for the future. Vitaro *et al.* (2005) found that early externalising behaviours in kindergarten are predictive of the later noncompletion of high school. Moffit and Caspi (2001) explain that negative behaviours in early schooling can lead to problems during adolescence and adulthood. Cowan *et al.* (2005) note that children's ability to grasp

academic material and build positive friendships in kindergarten and Year 1 are good predictors of educational, social and mental health outcomes as they complete secondary school. Thus, it is critical that children enter preschool and reception education with well-developed and adaptive social and academic skills to maximise their chances of positive adaptation to school and subsequent school success.

School adaptation refers to a child adjusting to an environment as well as showing signs of originality, creativity and problem-solving (Cowan *et al.*, 2005). This includes two important constructs: adjustment and accommodation. This definition differs from school adjustment which tends to refer to a child who is well-adjusted and conforming to the demands of the system, including only the adjustment construct. Important developmental markers indicate positive school adaptation, namely, learning-related, academic, peer-related and adult-related social skills (Armstrong *et al.*, 2009). The factors associated with school adaptation strongly point to the strong role of family relationships shaping children's school achievement. Cowan, Powell and Cowan (1998) explain that multiple family domains predict children's adaptation to school and that, families and children who are at risk of developing difficulties in primary school can be identified during the preschool years. These family domains are:

1. The psychological adjustment of individual family members.
2. The quality of each parent's relationship with the child.
3. The quality of the parents' relationship as a couple.
4. The transmission of relationship patterns across three generations.
5. The balance of stressors and supports outside the family.

Despite these family domains being considered as predictors of school adaptation, studying family systems alone would not give a complete picture of school adaptation as children experience school systems daily. Following longitudinal research into family factors that impact on school adaptation, Cowan *et al.* (2005) conclude that future research should study school factors which can promote school adaptation. As Weinstein (2002) explains, variations in the classroom and school environments can have marked and lasting effects on children's school adaptation.

> Issues that must be investigated in the future include the possibility that families and school each contribute uniquely and additively to variations in children's adaptation, that they may have interactive effects (Epstein, 1996), and that the 'fit' of 'lack of fit' between the family and school environments may have separate effects on children (p.353-354).

Since both family and school systems can have long-lasting consequences for a child's school adaptation, this study aimed to explore the risk and protective factors to school adaptation for children experiencing disadvantages, such as living in an army family. The predictive links presented above put even more emphasis on the need to identify children at risk early and implement interventions to support the children's positive adaptation in the face of adversity.

2.2.2 National and Local Policies Recognising the Need for Early Intervention

Over recent years, the UK Government has prioritised the aim of improving educational outcomes for children through early intervention. These policies have been developed at national and local levels.

Key publications (Every Child Matters (ECM), DfES, 2003a; The Children's Act, DfES, 2004; The Children's Plan, DCSF, 2007) have been at the heart of early intervention. In early years, since the ECM publication (DfES, 2003a) and its legal framework, The Children's Act 2004 (DfES, 2004) and, more recently, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) (DfES, 2007), many changes have been implemented to meet standards for young children's school adaptation in England and Wales. The principles guiding practice in the early years are reflected in 'every child is a competent learner from birth who can be resilient, capable, confident and self-assured' (DCSF, 2008, p.5). More specifically, the EYFS recommends that, in relation to Personal, Social and Emotional Development, 'providers must ensure support for children's emotional well-being to help them to know themselves and what they can do' (DCSF, 2008, p. 24).

The need for early identification and intervention is also reflected in LA X policies, where the research took place. A specific priority of this LA has been to endeavour to improve emotional well-being by reducing inequalities (LA strategy 2008-2018, LA X) for better outcomes for children, such as 'Improving Emotional Well-Being/Mental Health and Physical Well-Being'. The Special Educational Needs (SEN) Strategy notes that 'early prevention and identification' of 'children at risk' is a priority (LA X, 2012). Within the LA structure, the Educational Psychology Services (EPS) are closely linked with working towards these targets as EPs work with many vulnerable children.

2.2.3 EPs Working Towards Early Identification and Intervention to Promote School Adaptation

EPs are well positioned within LAs to promote early identification and interventions as they work with many vulnerable children and families needing support. Armstrong *et al.* (2009)

argue that EPs are in a key position to offer information, support and guidance to families, school and childcare settings and prevent the early onset of difficulties which may create poorer outcomes for children. The DfES (2005) outlines the role of the EP in early years as offering '…assessment, consultation, advice and training to early years settings, schools, families and the Local Education Authority' (p.1). Similarly, Wolfendale & Robinson (2001) suggest that EPs working in early years have a key role at an individual as well as an organisational level to provide support for all early years children through training, and interventions that promote child development and learning. Curran, Gersch & Wolfendale (2003) outline educational psychology practice at three levels:

- Individual: assessment and intervention with a child;
- Organisational: providing training to staff;
- Systemic: developing additional provision with a LA.

In a study into the current role of the EP working in early years and models of service delivery, Shannon & Posada (2007) found that EPs work at these different levels and are involved in a wide range of early years work, particularly those with specialist posts. Davis, Gayton & O'Nions (2008) and Soni (2010) explore the systemic projects EPs have been involved with in LAs, such as:

- Supervision offered to an early years professional group;
- Work within Children's Centres;
- Early years language intervention as established with other agencies;
- Supporting the transition to nursery;
- Home liaison for vulnerable children.

All of these interventions show that EPs are in an ideal position to identify risk and promote school adaptation in the early years. However, EPs face significant difficulties which prevent them from working in this way and delivering such interventions. Shannon & Posada (2007) explain that EPs were engaged most often with individual casework, but were highly dissatisfied with it due to the many issues that prevented systemic and development work.

Within the local context of LA X, EPs have similarly questioned their unique contribution in the early years where the EP's role is structured solely around the assessment and monitoring of the young children presenting possible additional/SEN. Locally, in team meetings in 2010 and 2011, EPs have raised the following issues: the limited time to address systemic issues within individual casework, evaluate outcomes, review cases regularly and attend multi-disciplinary meetings. In addition, they discussed their limited

involvement in order to communicate fully the psychological models of practice with other professionals and parents, and their absence of involvement with Children's Centres.

The need for EPs to be involved in more preventative practices was expressed during an EP team meeting in LA X (October 2011) by the team leader for the Pre-School SENCAN, as concerns were raised about how maintained nursery practitioners assess, monitor, implement strategies and make use of the funding available to support children in these settings. Such concerns have also been echoed by the practitioners themselves. Since a qualified teacher is automatically in charge of a maintained nursery setting, it is assumed by LA X that this workforce is given training and support within the school system. However, during professional consultations in 2010 with the researcher/link EP, maintained nursery practitioners have expressed concerns about the limited training and support they receive compared to practitioners in Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) settings:

- Support from the Area SENCo who can respond to specific requests related to additional needs and SEN: such training, resources and support is only available to PVI practitioners.
- Training sessions provided within school contexts and the teaching profession are often removed from the reality of early years professionals.

A number of school support strategies can act to promote better chances for high-risk children, such as identifying and addressing important early risk factors that work against school success through early screening for school readiness (Masten *et al.*, 2008). However, in maintained nursery settings of LA X, practitioners may need further support from EPs to implement protective strategies as the support and training they access does not fully respond to their needs.

2.2.4 Summary

Existing policies support early intervention, however, the role of the EP is mainly linked to identifying SEN and deficits and is limited in its ability to promote preventative practices. Consequently, EPs have limited time to support practitioners to assess fully, discuss 'children at risk', provide information to prevent the early onset of difficulties and identify risks and protective factors. Such support is much needed by maintained nursery practitioners, as the current support systems do not fully respond to their needs. In order to inform educational psychology practice, this research aims to study the risks and protective factors to school adaptation for children experiencing specific disadvantages, such as living in army families.

2.3 What is Resilience?

Resilience is a hotly debated construct. In this section, the origin of the resilience construct, its definitions and epistemological challenges are discussed, including definitions of the risk and adversity constructs, followed by a discussion of the risks and protective factors associated with disadvantages such as living in army families.

2.3.1 Where does Resilience Come From?

The resilience framework emerged from a broader transformation in theory and research on psychopathology which created developmental psychopathology (Sroufe & Rutter, 1984). A growing interest in studying positive and negative adaptation sparked this development (Sroufe, 1997), instead of adopting a deficit model which encourages the analysis of abnormality over normality, maladjustment over adjustment, sickness over health (Yates & Masten, 2004). Sroufe & Rutter (1984) were interested in adopting this developmental psychopathology model to predict who will succumb or not to disease or natural disasters, such as famine, hurricanes and storms. In the late twentieth century, this growing interest developed into scholarly attention for positive psychology, because researchers were interested in the human capacity for positive adaptation in the face of adversity (Masten, 2001). Prevention scientists and advocates of a positive approach to psychology have therefore adopted the resilience framework for its potential to inform efforts to foster positive developmental outcomes among disadvantaged children, families and communities (Yates & Masten, 2004).

2.3.2 Definitions

In recent years, research has defined resilience as a protective factor in children's well-being (McAuley & Rose, 2010), and a dynamic process influenced by protective factors (Dyer & McGuinness, 1996). A protective factor is defined as 'a quality of a person or context or their interaction that predicts better outcomes, particularly in situations of risk or adversity' (Wright & Masten, 2006, p.19) such as, a mentor or an attentive parent. Armstrong *et al.* (2005) explain 'protective factors can 'modify, ameliorate, or alter a person's response to stressors' (p.276). This shift in thinking was intended to represent a move away from the 'medical model', which was focusing on children's deficits, to begin to identify areas of strength, with the increased possibility for positive change.

Despite this move away from studying children's deficits, there is a need to know what children are protected against, so resilience studies should also research risks. Indeed, Fonagy, Steele, Steele, Higgit and Target (1994) define resilience as normal development under difficult conditions. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) explain that resilience is a

dynamic developmental process where the exposure to substantial adversity is presupposed. It is therefore important to define adversity and its associated constructs.

Wright and Masten (2006) define adversity as 'environmental conditions that interfere with or threaten the accomplishment of age-appropriate developmental tasks such as poverty, child maltreatment and community violence' and risk as 'an elevated probability of an undesirable outcome such as the odds of developing schizophrenia being higher in groups of people who have a biological parent with this disorder' (p.19). Research has identified a number of different factors within children's lives that place them 'at-risk' from, or vulnerable to, restricted life outcomes such as problem behaviours, mental health difficulties, and educational failure or disadvantage (Armstrong, *et al*., 2005; Wright & Masten, 2006). Risk factors to school adaptation include low birth weight (Klerman, 1991; Siraj-Blatchford, 2004; Sykes *et al*., 1997), birth complications (Daniel & Wassell, 2002), being a boy (Margetts, 2003; Pollack, 2006; Royer, 2010), discontinuity between the language spoken at school and at home (Brooker, 2008; Margetts, 1994, 2006), a young mother (Orlebeke, Knol, Boomsma & Verhulst, 1998), a lack of parental employment (Margetts, 2006; Masten, 2001), parental negative interactions with the child (Jourdan-Ionescu, Palacio-Quintin, Desaulniers & Couture, 1998), lack of parental qualifications (Masten, 2001; Siraj-Blatchford, 2004) and parental separation/divorce (Neighbors, Forehand & Amistead, 1992).

However, the concept of resilience presents important epistemological challenges which are discussed in the next section:

- The failure of the risk model led to a resilience model based on competence enhancement.
- To study the construct of resilience, there must be the presence of a threat to a given child's well-being as well as evidence of positive adaptation in this child.
- Difficulties with operationalising risks and adversity.
- Understanding the dynamic processes operating between risk and protective factors is a challenge.

2.3.3 Epistemological Challenges

Resilience is a concept that can be controversial, as it was the failure of the risk model to explain success and failure that led to a paradigm shift towards models of resilience and competence enhancement (Cefai, 2008). In studies of adaptation to life crises, researchers typically equate a good outcome with the absence of physical symptoms and psychopathology (Kaplan, 2006). They usually fail to consider the possibility of a new and better level of adaptation that reflects personal growth rather than a return to the status quo

(Shaefer & Moss, 1992). Determining whether children are just presenting new and better levels of adaptation or just going back to their previous state is therefore difficult. Additionally, since this paradigm shift was made towards competence enhancement, it may be argued that there is no need to study risks.

However, many authors argue that positive adaptation needs to take place under the conditions of adversity. Masten (1994) recommends that the term resilience be used exclusively when referring to the maintenance of positive adjustment under challenging life conditions. Indeed, most contemporary definitions refer to the positive outcomes, adaptation, or the attainment of developmental milestones and competencies in the face of significant risk (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2006), compared to well-being where the adversity component is not present. However, Reivich and Shatte (2002) argue that 'everyone needs resilience':

> …we have come to realise that the same skills of resilience are important
> to broadening and enriching one's life as they are to recovering from
> setbacks (p.20).

This concept that 'everyone needs resilience to broadening and enriching one's life' is controversial as resilience is meant to be studied where there is substantial exposure to adversity. However, it is consistently proposed that the resilient child presents specific attributes such as social competence, problem-solving skills, autonomy and sense of future (Krovetz, 1999), which contribute to a successful adaptation to a new situation or environment. Indeed, Werner (1989), following a 32 year longitudinal study, reports that in school, resilient children get along with their peers, have better reasoning and reading skills, have many interests and are engaged in activities and hobbies, which provide pride. Resilient children also appear to maintain a high level of self-esteem, a realistic sense of personal control and a feeling of hope (Brooks, 1994). Mayr & Ulich (2003 in 2009) list characteristics of resilient children which have been reported by research in the field, such as an easy temperament and friendliness, autonomy and independence, proactive approach to problem-solving, curiosity and exploratory drive. Mayr & Ulich (2009) explain that these characteristics are typical 'developmental tasks' early years children develop. However, Luthar (2005) explains that 'resilience is not a personal trait of the individual' (p.1) as children can do well despite risk because many assets are external to their personalities, such as supportive parents, an extended family and close community. He therefore recommends prudence in using the term 'resilient' as an adjective, as in 'resilient children', to reflect the dynamic process that exists between resilience and adversity and risk. 'Simply' using resilience to note children's competencies and developmental milestones therefore

brings challenges, as it is unclear whether these competencies have developed in face of significant risk.

Additionally, challenges related to the construct of risk are also identified in the literature. Catterall (1998) notes that the term 'risk' has a tendency to be used in a rather general way which results in an ambiguity of meaning. Wright and Masten (2006), however, explain that there is a growing consensus on a working terminology for this domain and definitions have attempted to operationalise this concept. Masten *et al.* (2008) give this definition of the concept as: 'any measurable predictor of an undesirable outcome' (p.5). As well as intending to operationalise this construct with a 'measure', this definition aims to reflect the claim that risk factors can be present from different sources, such as the child themselves, their family, neighbourhood and societal structures (Armstrong *et al.*, 2005). Other definitions intend to reflect the presence of risks which are present within specific groups. For example, Wright and Masten (2006) define a risk factor as 'a characteristic in a group of individuals or their situation that predicts a negative outcome on a specific outcome criterion such as premature birth or parental mental illness' (p.19). Yet, how can we operationalise adversity and risk?

The concept of adversity, specifically in relation to young children, consists of enumerating the risks and sources of adversity in children's lives, major life events and daily hassles (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2006). However, despite the presence of statistics and formulae to 'measure' adversity and identify these risks, difficulties remain in enumerating risks to determine whether adversity is present or not. For example, The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2004 (IMD, 2004) is a measure of multiple deprivations at the small-area level. The IMD contains seven domains of deprivation: income deprivation, employment deprivation, health deprivation and disability, education, skills and training deprivation, barriers to housing and services, living environment deprivation and crime. Determining whether a family experience of deprivation falls in one or two domains, or whether another child may experience deprivation in all domains, becomes a challenge. Similarly, Gordon and Song (1994) explain that some individuals might see themselves as 'relatively well', even though scientists have defined their life circumstances as highly stressful through statistical data. Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) name this 'the concept of statistical risk versus actual risk' and give the following advice:

> Do not automatically fault resilience research…Once researchers have determined that the odds of maladjustment are high in the presence of a certain risk, it is entirely logical–indeed, worthwhile–to try to determine the factors with relatively positive child outcomes, as well as…risk marker which confers vulnerability on affected groups of children' (pp.550-551).

Given that Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) explain it is worthwhile to research risk, despite challenges associated with the resilience construct, in this study this recommendation was adopted. Risks and adversity associated with children living in army and non-army families were therefore researched further.

However, it is clear from the literature that risk factors cannot be studied alone, as many researchers have argued that risk and protective factors are involved in an interactive process. Indeed, researchers in the field have begun to conceptualise resilience in which multiple factors and mediating mechanisms, or dynamic processes, are explored (Armstrong, *et al.* 2005; Brennan, 2008) such as the Transactional Framework of Resilience (Kumpfer & Summerhays, 2006). This model acknowledges risk and protective factors stemming from internal and external sources to the child, the interaction between these factors and the child, and the resulting processes and mechanisms that lead to a resilient response.

This transactional process, where a child influences the environment and the environment influences the child, was originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), where an 'ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls' (p.3). At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person that is the home or the school. The next level, Bronfenbrenner (1979) consists of relationships between the single setting and the developing person. Bronfenbrenner views these interconnections as having a decisive impact on the developing person.

Based on Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1979), Jourdan-Ionescu *et al.* (1998) examine the construct of resilience as a dynamic process influenced by protection factors and present a three-level protection ecosystemic vision (also in Jourdan-Ionescu, 2001; Niesel & Griebel, 2005):

- Individual factors: good intellectual functioning, easy-going disposition, sociable, self-efficacy, self-confidence and high self-esteem, talents and spirituality.
- Relationships level: protective factors include a close relationship with a caring parent figure, an identification process, authoritative parenting (warm structure and high expectations), maternal employment/socioeconomic advantages, the presence of siblings and connections to extended supportive family networks.
- Extra-familial level: protective factors include bonds to a prosocial adult outside the family, connections to prosocial organisations and attending effective schools.
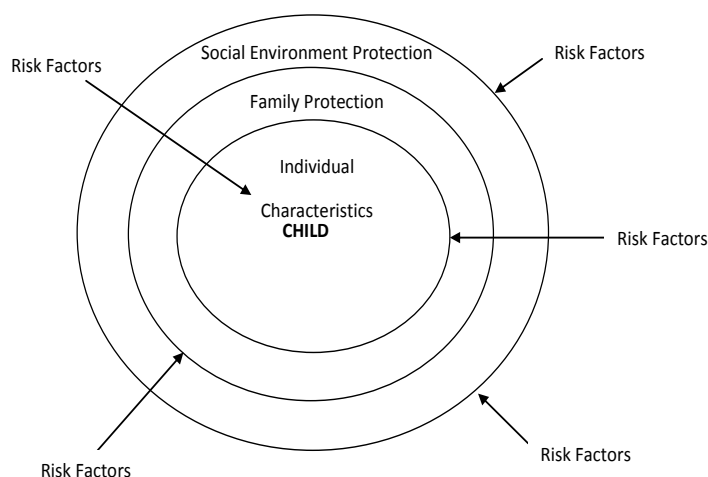
Figure 2.1 - Ecosystemic Vision for Protective Factors

Taken from Jourdan-Ionescu, *et al*., 1998, cited in Jourdan-Ionescu, 2001.

In Figure 2.1, the child is situated in the middle with its individual characteristics. Risk factors are presented at the child, family and social protection levels. According to Jourdan-Ionescu (2001), the presence of different protection levels can influence a child's development at one point and the intensity of the risks can play a significant part against the effectiveness of these protective factors. She argues that protective factors are not necessarily the opposite of risks, but more part of a dynamic, as highlighted by many authors (Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993; Felner *et al.,* 1995; Luthar & Zigler, 1991; Rutter, Quinton & Hill, 1990). However, Jourdan-Ionescu (2001) highlights that the mechanisms and effects of this interaction are still unknown and therefore recommends studying both risk and protective factors to understand the dynamics of child development. Lack of knowledge of these interactive mechanisms and effects therefore justify the need to study this field further.

2.3.4 Summary of Resilience

Different epistemological challenges associated with the resilience construct were discussed. As is clear from the literature, resilience can only be used as a construct where adversity is presupposed, in this study, adversity and risk factors were closely examined. As many researchers argue that risk and protective factors need to be studied jointly to understand the dynamics of child development, these were therefore examined together.

2.4 Risk and Protective Factors

Risk and protective factors identified by previous research are examined. As socio-economic disadvantages can have a significant impact on children's school adaptation, these risk

factors are given specific attention, followed by risk factors associated with children living in army families.

2.4.1 Risk and Protective Factors Specific to Children Experiencing Certain Disadvantages

Poverty has been associated in the literature with poor outcomes for children. Schorr (1988) points out:

> Poverty is the greatest risk factor of all. Family poverty is relentlessly correlated with school-aged childbearing, school failure and violent crime…Virtually all other risk factors that make rotten outcomes more likely are also found disproportionately among poor children (p. xxii).

Poverty is the key risk factor in the development of children (Fthenakis, 1998) as it is associated with a higher rate of infant mortality, low birth weight, serious diseases, injuries and death (Klerman, 1991). In recent years, poverty has been associated with the risk of delay in children's development, considerable cognitive deficits and slower school adaptation, which frequently leads to dropping out of education (Ramey & Campbell, 1991; Vitaro *et al*., 2005). Research indicates that differences in general cognitive competencies between high and low socio-economic status backgrounds are apparent by the age of three and this gap increases through the pre-school years (Stipek & Ryan, 1997). Income has been found to be one of the strongest predictors of a child's competence in school (Patterson, Kupersmidt & Vaden, 1990), where children from low-income families are at greater risk of having academic difficulties.

In a longitudinal study from preschool to first grade, Pianta and Stuhlman (2004) found that children with low socio-economic status had consistently higher levels of relational risk (quality child-adult, parent and caregiver, relationships), and relational risks were found to be more significant in mother-child relations. Children living in poverty show higher social and emotional behavioural problems (fear, social retreat, aggression and delinquency) with low self-esteem and self-confidence (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991), problems which often escalate into juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy and dropping out of school (Garbarino, 1989).

Additionally, poverty has been associated with harsh and unsupportive parenting, which leads to mental health difficulties in children (Grant*, et al.,* 2003). The effects of dysfunctional parenting (inconsistent style, maltreatment) are well documented (Sanders & Cann, 2002). The family environment often lacks attributes which promote school readiness, such as language and literacy exposure (High, LaGasse, Becker, Ahlgren & Gardner, 2000).

Furthermore, deprived neighbourhoods are characterised by high unemployment rates, dense public housing, crime and violence, and social isolation (Massey & Kanaiaupuni, 1993) which can impact indirectly on children's development by increasing behavioural difficulties and children's disturbance (Jenkins, 2008). Deprived neighbourhoods also have a negative impact on parents, where parents are more likely to show higher levels of depression, less positive parenting and more negative parenting (Pinderhughes, Nix, Foster & Jones, 2001).

A number of protective factors interacting with these risks are identified in the literature. Pre-school education was found to reduce educational risks for children growing up in socially disadvantaged situations (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004), especially when children attended centres catering for children from a mixture of social backgrounds (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Children from high-quality preschools had in general higher academic attainment at the end of year 1 and had fewer conduct problems two years after school entry (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). In a 2-year longitudinal study, involving 5 year old children, Criss, Pettit, Bates, Dodge and Lapp (2002) found that children who experienced higher levels of family adversity, such as violent marital conflict, and harsh discipline, benefited from having greater peer acceptance and friendship in Reception and Year 1, which could be perceived as a protective factor.

Werner (2009) reviews the major protective factors that transcended ethnics, social class and geographic boundaries which have been replicated in resilience longitudinal studies of children living in poverty. These protective factors are divided into three distinct levels: children's characteristics, family and school levels.

Table 2.1 - Protective factors for children living in poverty (Werner, 2009)

Children's characteristics	• Low distress/low emotionality • 'Easy', engaging temperament (affectionate and cuddly) • Advanced self-help skills • Average-above average intelligence, especially language and problem-solving skills • Special talents/hobbies • Relationship with close/competent friends
Family system	• Mother's education • maternal competence • close bond with primary caregiver (not necessarily the biological parent) • supportive grandparents • supportive siblings • faith and religious affiliations
School system	• Supportive teachers • Successful school experiences

Parental employment (full-time work) contributes to better school adjustment as this familial situation creates stability for the child, alleviating uncertainties that might occur in a period of dislocation (Margetts, 2006) and is therefore seen as the way out of poverty as well as helping parents to build confidence, better skills and better opportunities (Werner, 2009).

Risk and protective factors have also been identified in the Effective Provision of Preschool Education (EPPE) research which aimed to explore the effects of preschool education on children's attainment and social/behavioural development on entry to school and beyond (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). In order to provide a fair comparison, family and home factors were controlled. Over 98% of parents were interviewed based on an 11 page interview, where a range of disadvantage-indicators were found (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004):

Table 2.2 – Disadvantages found in the EPPE research (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004)

Child characteristics	• English not first language • Lived in large families with 3 or more siblings • Born prematurely or with a low birth weight (below 2500 grams)
Parental characteristics	• The mother had no educational qualifications. • The father was semi-skilled, unskilled, never worked, or absent. • The mother was aged 13-17 at birth of child. • One parent was unemployed. • Children were brought up in a single parent household.

The frequency of the seven types of home learning environment (HLE) activities, such as reading to a child, library visits, painting/drawing, teaching letters/numbers, the alphabet, songs and nursery rhymes, were identified as having a positive impact on the HLE (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Although parents' socio-economic status and levels of education were related to the child's outcomes, the quality of the HLE was important, as from age 3, a strong association was found between poor cognitive attainment and a less stimulating HLE (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004). Melhuish *et al.* (2001) explain that 'in other words, EPPE found that it is what parents did that is more important than who they were' (in Siraj-Blatchford, 2004, p.10).

However, the EPPE research does not specifically look into the disadvantages associated with living in army families, but 'what they do' may depend on the specific risks they experience. For example, emotional issues, such as the fear of losing a loved one to war and the anxiety related to numerous pressures on the remaining parent may significantly impact on a parent's ability to perform activities with a child. Risk and protective factors experienced by children living in army families therefore require exploration.

2.4.2 Risk and Protective Factors Specific to Children Living in Army Families

Researchers continue to debate whether there is reliable evidence supporting the claim that life is hazardous to children and families faced with exposure to military life (Terr 1992; Palmer 2008). Many researchers highlight that the risks experienced by children living within army families are unique and different from those experienced by civilian children (MacDermid *et al.*, 2008; Palmer, 2008). Indeed, Ofsted (2011), following a survey where inspectors visited 30 maintained and three independent schools in England with varying

percentages of Service children on roll, reported that Service children faced challenges that often go beyond the experiences of the majority of families and children living in the UK.

However, MacDermid *et al.* (2008) explain that empirical evidence on child outcomes and deployment-related experiences is sparse. Indeed, a search in EBSCO Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection (November 2011) found many American articles, only four specifically looked into risk and protective factors experienced by children and families living in army families (Campbell, Brown, & Okwara, 2010; Chandra, *et al.*, 2009; MacDermid *et al.*, 2008; Palmer, 2008), and there was limited UK literature.

An estimated 175,000 children[2] live the Service lifestyle, which accounts for approximately 0.5% of the total school population in the UK (Royal Navy (RN) & Royal Marines (RM) Children's Fund, 2009). The latest statistics show there were 2,014 Service children with SEN on the Ministry of Defense (MoD) database of whom 700 move schools in any one year. Despite the presence of this population in UK's educational setting, educational psychology literature in the UK is limited. A search of the EBSCO Psychology and Behavioural Sciences Collection (November 2011) and three UK dedicated educational psychology journals (May 2012), *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *British Journal of Educational Psychology* and *Educational and Child Psychology*, found no articles related to army families and children and only one UK paper, 'Promoting positive emotional health of children of transient armed forces families' (Eodanable & Lauchlan, 2011) was found using Google Scholar searches (May 2012) in the *School Psychology International*.

The literature found is mainly American and old (1970-1990). It is therefore acknowledged that there are limitations to the validity of this literature, as it may not reflect current children's and families' experiences in the context of the present conflicts and resources. For example, the current war conflict may be different to the ones experienced by military staff in America in the '70s. Additionally, UK service personnel may receive different resources from American personnel. However, since there is limited UK literature, American and older literature was included in this section providing an overview of the available literature to give a basis for interpretation.

In the most detailed review of the literature on risk and protective factors experienced by army families to date, Palmer (2008) divides risk and protective factors into four distinct

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[2] The RN and RM (2009) reports that there are no existing official statistics related to the number of children living the Service lifestyle, but give an estimate. Ofsted (2011) also gives an estimate of a total of 90,450 dependants, aged 18 and under. However, they explain this is likely to be under-estimated as preschool children are not included.

themes: transitions and relocations, deployment, post-deployment and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

2.4.2.1 Transitions and Relocations

There is no doubt that frequent changes of school and country can bring challenges for children living in army families (Fabian & Roberts, 2006). The multiple changes in the child's life may bring discontinuity of education, difficulties with friendships and varying cultural lifestyles. Exploring the nature of highly mobile families, including children whose parent(s) serve in the armed forces, Wormington (2002) explains that mobility may be an issue for schools, as they are designed for a static population. Feelings of a lack of belonging, academic and social marginalisation and being lost in the school environment, unless inclusive programmes are implemented, have been repeatedly noted by highly mobile children (Wormington, 2002).

Continual moves appear to have an impact on children's learning and social, behavioural and emotional development (Ofsted, 2011). The Dobson report (Dobson, Henthorne & Lynas, 2000), a government-funded study on pupil mobility in England and Wales, found that mobile children were disproportionately represented amongst the population of children identified as having learning and behavioural difficulties. Ofsted (2011) reported that some children felt bullied because their parents were in the armed forces and found it difficult to settle and adapt to school following a transition.

Dobson *et al.* (2000) note that disrupted schooling prevents children from being assessed, which results in them falling behind their peers. Difficulties in communicating children's needs and sharing a child's progress in the curriculum are also reported as important features of disrupted schooling (Dobson *et al.*, 2000). Obtaining school records was often a lengthy process or not always possible (Wormington, 2002). Schools may also be reluctant to admit mobile children at certain times in the year, when annual examinations are taking place (Wormington, 2002). A lack of continuity of support and provision for children from Service families as they moved school in the UK, especially during term time, and the frequent need to go through LA appeal processes to secure a school place, were reported by Ofsted (2011).

In terms of protective factors, children may develop adaptive skills and flexibility which may help them with a high-mobility lifestyle (Fabian & Roberts, 2006). The presence of social support (Kirkland & Kartz, 1989), relocation frequency (Martin, 1995) and the degree of preparation prior to moving (Martin, 1999) impact on the way the family cope with transitions. Some studies suggest that frequent transitions and deployments increase family coping

(Graham-Weber, 2001) and possible repeated exposure to stressful events may provide valuable learning experiences for all family members and result in better coping and maturation (Gore & Eckenrode, 1996).

Other parents opt for stability over transitions, such as refusing a promotion which required another move, or leaving the Armed Forces, for their children's academic achievement and well-being (Ofsted, 2011).

Schools can play a protective role in helping children experiencing transitions to settle at school by having transfer procedures and induction arrangements, creating a warm atmosphere, buddy systems and additional classroom support (Ofsted, 2011).

2.4.2.2 Deployment

The RN and RM Children's Fund (2009) explains that children have emotional reactions to deployment. Indeed, 83.3% of Navy families say their children find it difficult when a serving parent goes away for long periods of time (MoD, 2006). Many children experience socio-emotional difficulties during this period (Ofsted, 2011). The US Pentagon (2009), following a survey of 13,000 spouses of active Servicemen, note that 57% reported increased behavioural problems in their children at home during deployment and 36%, at school.

In a very rare British study, O'Shaughnessy (2004, cited in RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009), who specifically looked at British Naval children's behaviour and family life affected by parental absence, involving focus groups and quantitative research amongst 28 Naval spouses, found that 96.4% of parents said they noticed distinct changes in the emotional well-being of their child while the serving parent is away, with 11% reporting that their child always feels stressed or anxious during times of deployment. For many children, parental deployment can lead to greater responsibilities, such as housework and taking care of younger siblings (O'Shaughnessy, 2004). Boys might adopt the male role, as they may have been told 'look after the family' and subsequently try to replace the dominant figure (O'Shaughnessy, 2004). Since most Servicemen are very dominant figures, mothers have to be very strong to counteract this behaviour (O'Shaughnessy, 2004), which increases the pressure on mothers. The stress of additional chores on top of busy schedules meant that some activities had to be dropped (O'Shaughnessy, 2004).

However, many factors appear to impact on the severity of a child's response to deployment. These factors have been repeatedly identified as closely linked to parental responses to deployment. Indeed, the RN and RM Children's Fund (2009) explains that parent-child relationships and the coping skills of the remaining parent impact on the child's response to

deployment. Campbell, Brown and Okwara (2010) explain that long parental absence is of serious concern in early childhood as the caregiver often experiences depression two weeks after deployment and subsequent difficulties with self and child-care skills. Gibbs, Martin, Kupper and Johnson (2007) reported that, among military families, the risk of maltreatment was 42% greater during combat-related deployment compared to periods of non-deployment, which could be due to the non-deployed parent experiencing a heightened period of stress during deployment-induced separation.

Many protective factors identified in the literature are indeed related to maternal well-being. When the remaining parent (often the mother) adapts well to separation, deployment appears to be less strongly associated with child's depression and anxiety (Jensen, Bloedeau, Degroot, Ussery & Davis, 1990; Jensen, Lewis & Xenakis, 1986; Jensen, Martin & Watanabe, 1996). Other protective factors to deployment are identified in the literature, such as experiencing limited family stressors (Jensen *et al.*, 1990; Jensen, Grogan, Xenakis & Bain, 1989), parental coping strategies (Jensen *et al.*, 1986), marital stability (Amen, Merves, Jellen & Lee, 1988), social support and community support groups (Amen *et al.*, 1988; Hiew, 1992), spouses' satisfaction with the military (Amen *et al.*, 1988), regular communication between spouses (Wiens & Boss, 2006), shorter deployments (McCarroll *et al.*, 2000) and ensuring family readiness (Norwood, Fullerton & Hagen, 1996) as children may worry about the deployed parent as well as the non-deployed parent's coping ability with deployment (Hardaway, 2004). As these factors are related more specifically to parental factors, the literature proposes an indirect influence on children's outcomes, which is characterised by parental factors influencing the parent-child relationship influencing the children's outcomes. Therefore these factors may have a significant impact on the parent-child relationship during deployment, which may lead to better child outcome during deployment and wartime (Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991; Webb, 2004).

School systems can also develop protective mechanisms to deployment. Ofsted (2011) reports that some of the schools visited highlighted the need to offer support to parents who were feeling isolated while their partner was deployed. This support took the form of offering training to allow them to become volunteers or classroom assistants in their child's school, a strategy perceived as a way to promote parental involvement in the community and their child's learning (Ofsted, 2011). Targeted steps, school-based training, working in partnership with support agencies, such as bereavement and counselling services, and effective pastoral school systems were identified as effective strategies to ensure the early knowledge of children being confronted with deployment situations and addressing any possible social and emotional disturbance of children during deployment (Ofsted, 2011). Some schools run 'E-

blueys'[3] clubs, which enable pupils to communicate with parents whilst on active service (Ofsted, 2011).

Communicating with the absent parent is identified in the literature as an important protective factor as children develop a better relationship with the absent parent due to more frank and honest discussions in letters, emails and/or blueys (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009). Long parental absence can have a positive impact on children's maturity, as they become more involved in extra household responsibilities and on children's resilience, as they learn to deal with more stressful events (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009).

2.4.2.3 Post-Deployment Reunion

Campbell *et al.* (2010) explore cultural factors, such as an authoritarian culture and transitions that may have an impact on family functioning, especially after exposure to trauma. The MoD (2006) explain that 68% of Naval spouses say they have to make large adjustments when their partner leaves or returns from long periods away from home. The reunion post-deployment can be a time of heightened stress, associated with a period of ambivalent responses, characterised by anxiety and anger (Hardaway, 2004). Post-deployment challenges include:

- Role and boundary re-assignment, changes to household management (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009).
- Fear of rejection by parents (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009), spouses (McCubbin & Dahl, 1976) and returning soldiers (Metres, McCubbin & Hunter, 1974); returning soldiers wanting to resume family life but feeling excluded and unneeded (Hunter, 1984); feelings of depression, irritation, anger, distress and emotional detachment in spouses (Bey & Lange, 1974);
- Anxiety and re-bonding (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009): when the honeymoon effect wears off there has to be a re-establishing of relationships, and it refers to service member's physical and mental conditions.
- Communication difficulties, decreased intimacy and disagreement over the discipline of children resulting in marital conflict (Bey & Lange, 1974).

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[3] Hybrid mail system that allows Service personnel, relatives and friends to maintain personal and private contact with each other while serving on operations or exercises for more than 60-days. This system is two way. This means those Service personnel have access to either a postal (blueys) or electronic system (e-blueys) form of communication.

These risk factors do not necessarily directly impact on children themselves, but this period of heightened parental stress and these difficulties are said to impact on the child-parent relationship, which may affect children's outcomes (Palmer, 2008).

The most successful protective factors identified are writing letters to maintain the emotional relationship with the deployed parent (Jensen & Shaw, 1996; Wiens & Boss, 2006), as that supports reunion and maintains the permanency of roles within the family unit. Flexibility in performing multiple parental roles (Kelley, Herzog-Simmer & Harris, 1994), so families do not have to go through intensive periods of adjustment following reunions, is also an identified protective factor in the literature.

2.4.2.4 Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Severity in combat exposure has been associated with the development of PTSD (Hendrix, Jurich & Schumm, 1995). PTSD appears to have a mostly negative impact on family members and family relationships (Palmer, 2008). Studies found that families of male Vietnam veterans with PTSD have more severe problems with marital and family adjustment, parenting skills and violent behaviour (Glenn *et al.*, 2002; Jordan *et al.*, 1992). Children in military families may also be at greater risk of child abuse, as spousal abuse has been associated with child physical and sexual abuse within the military (Rumm, Cummings, Krauss, Bell & Rivara, 2000). Major physical, sexual and emotional abuse does not appear to have decreased significantly in the American Army between 1975 and 1997 (McCarroll *et al.*, 1999). A greater risk also relates to negative parent-child interactions which are associated with the degree of how parenting skills, attachment and hostility are influenced by the PTSD symptoms (Palmer, 2008).

Successful interventions, aiming to protect the military parent after deployment, have included fostering resiliency prior to the development of PTSD symptoms (Palmer, 2008), including programmes such as field training, unit cohesiveness, stress management, optimism and positive psychology models (Palmer, 2008). Since research on PTSD suggests that children living in army families may be at greater risk due to negative parent-child interactions compared to civilian children (Palmer, 2008), coping, parenting skills and parent-child relationship interventions are important protective factors following traumatic events (Nader, 2004; Watson, Ritchie, Demer, Bartone & Pfefferbaum, 2006).

2.5 Summary of Risk and Protective Factors to School Adaptation

Similarities between children living with certain disadvantages and children living in army families, such as familial challenges, complex relationships and the risk of developing

behavioural and emotional difficulties, were found in the literature. Differences were also noted, such that children living in army families are more likely to experience many transitions and possible loss. Children living in army families may experience risks that are different from the majority of children living in the UK. However, there are limitations to the literature presented. Firstly, the risks focus on an indirect pathway, where parent-child interactions have an impact on children's outcomes rather than the military lifestyle having a direct effect on the child, therefore it is difficult to ascertain whether children are directly affected by these family circumstances. Secondly, the literature is mainly American and some of it old, therefore it lacks ecological validity to the UK context. Despite the presence of some reliable sources, RN and RM Children's Fund (2009) and Ofsted (2011), academic literature in the UK is limited.

2.6 This Study

The study aimed to explore risks and protective factors to school adaptation experienced by children living in the army compared to non-army families.

2.6.1 Summary of the Research Rationale

This research project originated from professional practice experiences. The researcher became aware of risk factors associated with children living with specific disadvantages, such as living in army families. It was argued that UK-based research was limited and the study therefore aims to address this gap in the literature to support educational psychology practice. Additionally, practitioners working in the setting supporting children living in non-army families expressed difficulties associated with identifying protective factors to support children's school adaptation. This study, therefore, aimed to address this local concern by researching risks and protective factors to inform educational psychology and support practitioners in their roles. According to the literature reviewed, both groups of children may experience similar and/or different disadvantages, which could impact on school adaptation. These risks and protective factors therefore became of specific interest to inform educational psychology practice.

It was argued that an EP deficit model of practice had limited time to explore protective and risk factors to school adaptation with maintained nursery practitioners who need further support in their role. This study, therefore, aimed to enhance current EP practice in helping EPs and practitioners to gain a better understanding of these risks and protective factors impacting on children living in army and non-army families. The study also aimed to inform the interventions needed in maintained nursery settings to promote children's school adaptation.

2.6.2 Research Questions

The study aims to address the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1 - What are the perceived risk factors to school adaptation experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these risk factors similar, distinct or unique?

RQ2 - What are the perceived protective factors to school adaptation experienced by children living in army, compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these protective factors similar, distinct or unique?

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter provides a justification for the methods used to answer the research questions. The research design, the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach to the study and the methods of data collection are discussed. The process of participants' recruitment, a description of the participants and the procedures used, ethical considerations and data analysis methods are discussed.

3.2 Research Paradigms and Beliefs

This research was conducted from an epistemological perspective that is consistent with the pragmatic school of thought. This view asserts that there is both a real world to uncover and that individuals have their own unique way of interpreting the world (Mertens, 2005). As it was argued that there was limited literature in relation to the risks and protective factors experienced by children living in army families, gaining participants' understanding of these factors was considered important. Indeed, the ontological assumption for pragmatism (an assumption which is concerned with the nature of reality) relates to reality being determined by what is useful to increase the clarity of understanding (Mertens, 2009).

Since pragmatism advocates the selection of research methods based on what works best to answer the research questions posed (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), a qualitative method design was chosen so qualitative data could help gain a better understanding of the risks and protection experienced by these children and allow for comparisons between groups, such as army and non-army families.

3.3 Qualitative Research Design

Qualitative methods were chosen over quantitative methods to help provide explanations for the data. As the study aimed to gather exaplanations for the data, quantitative methods were rejected as these are typically weak in establishing reasons for them (Robson, 2002). Qualitative methods were designed to gather information from a smaller sample of participants.

Semi-structured interviews were designed to gather the participants' perceptions of risk and protective factors to school adaptation. Parents, practitioners and children were invited to participate in these interviews. Observations of children in their maintained nursery settings were also designed to allow for familiarisation with the children and their contexts. By using a

qualitative approach, this study aimed to gain a detailed picture that is sensitive to the varied experiences and subjective perspectives that people living in these particular contexts have. Qualitative resilience research is well positioned to identify resilience processes and risk and protective factors, as it is based on how people feel, think and behave (Este, Sitter & MacLaurin, 2009) and captures rich and in-depth understandings from the perspective of the participants.

This qualitative study aimed to compare the risk and protective factors to school adaptation associated with children living in army and non-army families. The study aimed to gain a better understanding of the risks posed to children living in army and non-army families. As Liebenberg and Ungar (2009) note,

> Studying resilience requires that we assess the level of risk posed to children, which means we must get close enough to vulnerable individuals to understand their lives within the culture and context in which they live (p.3).

Understanding the culture and context in which children live was therefore considered important to this study.

3.4 Context of this Study

The literature on resilience is clear: resilience should only be researched in the presence of adversity. To ensure that adversity was potentially experienced by the participants in this study, who live in wards 1 and 2 in a large county of South East England, different sources of information, such as statistical information gained from the IMD (2004), and from the borough council website,[4] were consulted.

3.4.1 Risks Associated with Living in Wards 1 and 2

In the southern part of one of the four most deprived districts in the county, a non-metropolitan district is host to a large army base. The regiment was deployed to Afghanistan during the timeline of this study. The two wards are situated on either side of the army base: ward 1 and ward 2. Ward 2 is considered to have the second highest concentration of deprived small areas (67%, 4 small areas) compared to 29% of deprivation in 2 small areas for ward 1. The widest contrast in deprivation and relative affluence was noted in ward 1.

In ward 1, where the majority of army families live, 13 % of adults were in higher education compared to 19.2% nationally, 18% were considered to be high social class households compared to 20.1 % nationally, 8.3 % were considered to be minority ethnic children

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[4] For anonymity, the website is not given.

compared to 23.5% and 6.1 % were considered to live in over-crowded households compared to 14.6% nationally. In ward 2, 9.6 % of adults were in higher education, 14.7% were considered to be high social class households, 2.9% were considered to be minority ethnic children and 7.7% were considered to live in over-crowded households.

Considering the risks associated with school adaptation (2.4.1), the education, skills and training deprivation IMD domain, which consists of two sub-domains, was reviewed more specifically:

- *Education deprivation for children and young people* (indicators: average test score of pupils at Key Stage (KS) 2 and 3, best of 8 average capped points score at KS4, the proportion of young people not staying on in school or non-advanced education above 16, the secondary school absence rate and the proportion of those under 21 not entering Higher Education).
- *The lack of skills and qualifications in the working age population* (indicators: proportion of working adults with no/low qualifications).

In the district, 16 small areas were within the 20% most affected in England in this domain. More specifically, the small area of ward 2, where the study took place, was amongst the 'seriously deprived small areas' within the 1-10% most affected small areas of England. The small area of ward 1 was not affected by this domain of deprivation (higher than 50%).

A slight difference between wards 1 and 2 is noticeable, with ward 2, being at a slight disadvantage, particularly in terms of education, skills and training deprivation, as compared to ward 1. However, in ward 1, many children live in army families. From this information, it is clear that, children living in wards 1 and 2 experience specific disadvantages that may impact on school adaptation. This, therefore, respects the literature on resilience, which recommends that, to study resilience, adversity should be presupposed.

3.4.2 Sample Recruitment

Discussions took place with SENCos, headteachers and/or nursery managers of four Infant Schools and Nurseries situated in wards 1 and 2. Headteachers from these schools verbally consented to participate in the study in the first instance, then a letter (Appendix 1), a brief 'contractual agreement' (Appendix 2) and a research leaflet (Appendix 5), were sent out to them.

3.4.2.1 Context of the Maintained Nursery Classes

The four maintained nursery classes are sited on the premises of Infant Schools. The settings have a qualified teacher in charge working with qualified nursery nurses and volunteers. Maintained nurseries follow the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) curriculum. The nurseries have separate entrances to the school, enjoy an outside area surrounded by trees and use the outdoor space daily. Qualified teachers are in post and have implemented transition activities from home to nursery and nursery to reception to help children's adaptation to the nursery and school.

3.4.2.2 Rationale for Choosing Participants for This Study

Since a child interacts with a nursery environment as well as a home environment, and that both environments can influence a child's school adaptation, the risk and protective factor information from both parents and practitioners were gathered. These adults are well placed to inform research on risk and protective factors as they are the ones who are directly involved on a day-to-day basis with a child, are likely to know the child best and can inform on the risk and protective factors present in the children's lives.

Methods of data collection were designed to reach parents and practitioners and collect data for analysis.

3.5 Qualitative Data Collection

The research instruments designed for data collection are examined in this section.

3.5.1 Overview of the Choice of Data Collection Instruments

In the first instance, information about the research project (research leaflet, Appendix 5, and a letter, Appendix 3 and a family information questionnaire, Appendix 4) was sent out to parents via nursery practitioners. This method was considered suitable as it aimed to reach many parents, in a relatively short period of time with anonymity and simplicity (Robson, 2002). Since it was intended to reach parents from four maintained nursery settings, other methods of data collection (interviews, focus groups, telephone interviews) were not considered suitable.

The data collection was designed to capture participants' personal experiences, feelings and beliefs by means of semi-structured interviews (see interview schedules in Appendices 6 and 7) and gain perceptions of risk and protective factors. In this study, alternative approaches to the collection of the data, such as focus groups and open-ended questionnaires, were considered but rejected because they could lead to a limited and/or

insufficiently detailed response (open ended questionnaires and focus groups) and/or deemed inappropriate because of the sensitive nature of the topics and issues that might be discussed (focus groups).

A multiple case-studies design was originally planned for this study. However, qualitative data were grouped and analysed to allow comparison between army and non-army families and provide the similarities and differences in risk and protective factors between the groups. As the multiple case studies were originally very descriptive, analysing two distinct groups of data was considered to provide much more in-depth data and a unique contribution to the field of risk and protective factors. However, since multiple case studies were selected to show some differences, non-homogeneous groups of participants form an important limitation to this study.[5]

3.5.2 Research Instruments

Data collecting instruments, a letter (Appendix 3), a research leaflet (Appendix 5) and the family information questionnaire (Appendix 4) were developed to invite parents to participate in the study. Pilot work was undertaken to help adapt and improve both the family information questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews

3.5.2.1 Family Information Questionnaire

In order to collect further information about families, their background details (such as whether they were an army family or not) and information on the possible risk factors experienced, a family information questionnaire was constructed to gain demographic information about the family situation and possible risk factors. This questionnaire was designed after researching factors that may influence a child's school adaptation (2.3.2, p.11, paragraph 2). Many factors are present in the literature, so inclusion criteria were applied. Factors concerning the family and nursery/school levels were asked more specifically, as this reflected the participants' contexts. As children were attending a maintained nursery class (regular daily attendance), information about childcare issues was not requested. Personal questions, such as the level of income, mental health issues and marital discord, were felt to be too intrusive and would risk low questionnaire return.

The Census Test 2007 (www.statistics.gov.uk/censustest) helped shape the terminology and gain ideas on how to phrase sensitive and personal questions. A flexible and personal approach to the questionnaire was adopted. Some questions of the Census Test, such as the ethnic group question, were considered to be complicated for parents. An open ended

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[5] 5.3 for further discussion.

format was therefore chosen over a fixed one, that is: 'What do you consider your ethnic group to be?' Consistently, with this open ended approach, the term 'others' as a possible answer and a blank page with the comment, 'Please share any comments you may have' were added to allow parents to contribute further, should they wish to.

3.5.2.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews consist of a list of questions relevant to the research question but allow considerable flexibility in terms of sequencing the questions, the wording of the questions and time allocated to different topics (Robson, 2002). They provide participants with the opportunity to talk about a particular experience and provide the researcher with a structure to maintain the focus on the research question with the flexibility to capture new insights into the research question (Willig, 2001). Due to the possibly sensitive nature of the topics under discussion and its individualistic nature, one-to-one interviews were chosen. Additionally, all interviews were recorded digitally (with the participants' consent) to ensure the researcher was engaged in actively listening to the participant for the full duration of the interview. To ensure the participants talked freely and shared ideas openly, interviews took place in a private room away from noise and disruptions.

Semi-structured interviews for participants were designed with the help of the interview schedule designed by Pianta & Kraft-Sayre (2003). These American authors have constructed parents' and practitioners' interviews before and after transition to school which were found to be helpful in designing semi-structured questions as these were appropriate to school adaptation. For example, the interviews have different sections, such as 'your child's experiences at nursery', 'peer contact', 'your child's activities at home' and 'family information'. Terminology and vocabulary were revised to reflect local experience. The repeated measure design was also adapted to respect the design of this study.

This interview schedule used open-ended questions, such as, 'How well does your child get along with other children?' to explore issues such as friendship, experiences of nursery, strengths and difficulties. Open-ended questions were considered to be important, as they allow flexibility, more in-depth discussions, encourage co-operation and rapport and help produce unanticipated answers (Robson, 2002). More importantly, they aim to avoid constraining what people had to say so they were able to present their own views and experiences. A main disadvantage of open-ended questions is the possibility of the interviewer losing control of the flow of the interview (Robson, 2002). To avoid this situation, the interview schedule was closely respected during the interviews, allowing flexibility and paraphrasing for clarifications as and when necessary.

To respect the aim of the study, questions pertinent to the field of resilience were added, such as a question related to 'coping strategies and feelings when faced with a difficult situation', the family story, factors influencing resilience, the parent-child relationship, thoughts and feelings about resilience and support in promoting it. Due to the potential mobility of families, a question about relocation was designed and concentrated more specifically on transition as a family and ways of coping. In order to capture any factors relevant to army families, additional questions were prepared. Prompts, using areas of child development such as self-regulation, social skills and friendship were also included in the interview schedule.

As recommended by Robson (2002), a range of prompts were incorporated into the schedule and used consistently during the interviews, so that the researcher could provide the interviewee with possible options for discussion, should these not have been approached by the interviewee. The practitioners' interviews were designed in the same way using the same principles.

3.5.2.3 Piloting the Research Instruments

The pilot study helped inform the development of the information directed at the parents (family information questionnaire, research leaflet) and practitioners (research leaflet). The parent of a 4 year old completed the questionnaire. A nursery manager looked at all the instruments and her professional advice was sought. To increase the validity of the pilot study, the parent and nursery manager were not part of the sample and were external to the study. Written comments were sought and a verbal feedback session took place. Regarding the family information questionnaire, the nursery manager recommended that the information requested needed to be more concise as parents may have limited time to complete it. The format of these instruments was therefore amended. Following parental and professional advice, the information contained in the research leaflet was also reviewed and condensed to give focused information and limit its length.

As recommended by Yin (2003), pilot work was carried out to refine the data collection plans and ensure that the questions were relevant and appropriate and could be understood by parents and practitioners. A semi-structured interview with a parent of a four-year old child took place, so that the questions, the interview flow and any other specific issues could be trialled with a person external to the study. Some questions and the order of the topics were changed slightly. For example, this parent suggested moving an open-ended family story question to the beginning of the interview to allow parents to talk freely about a known element of their life and put them at ease about the interview process. This revision proved

to be helpful, as it allowed a better flow for the interview. As the interviews with parents and practitioners were similar, and the practitioners were familiar with working with the researcher, an interview script with a practitioner was not piloted.

3.5.2.4 Observations

In order to allow for familiarisation with the context and children, and to enable the researcher to relate to and understand participants' comments during the interviews, children were observed in their nursery/reception context. This aimed to allow the researcher to experience their settings over a longer period of time. Following reflections and a pilot observation, the decision was made that this exercise would need to be informal and unobtrusive. These 'unobtrusive observations' involved the researcher undertaking a non-participatory role in the interest of being non-reactive (Robson, 2002), as it allowed the observations to be focused on the child and context, favouring a slow familiarisation process and taking in events and behaviours by recording these in a narrative way. Brief notes were taken as an aide-mémoire of the context and child more than as data. Each child was observed for a minimum of thirty minutes. As there was more than one child per class, a period between two hours and half a day was spent in each class at one time. Parents and practitioners knew children were being observed by the researcher. This exercise helped build a rapport and trust with the participants during the interviews as on many occasions participants referred to contextual factors. In such an event, the researcher was able to refer to observations and experiences and show understanding to the participants. If asked about the observations by participants, this was done by giving examples of the child's strengths and/or anecdotal evidence.

3.5.3 Participants

A total of 160 parents of 3 and 4 years old children attending four maintained nursery settings in wards 1 and 2 at the time of data collection were given an envelope containing the documents described in 3.5.2, by practitioners working in these four settings. A total of 21 parents agreed to participate in the study. This response rate was considered to be low.

A lack of personal contact with the researcher which results in a low response rate is an important disadvantage of 'postal'[6] questionnaires (Robson, 2002). In order to counteract this difficulty, following a low questionnaire return, strategies to enhance the response rate were implemented. Brief times when the researcher was available to parents were arranged and called a 'drop in'. A short note was sent to all maintained nurseries explaining that the

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[6] The method used was considered to be 'postal' as the researcher did not interact with participants and the questionnaires were sent back in a sealed envelope to the researcher.

researcher would be there at a specific time, should parents wish to talk to the researcher, hand in their questionnaire personally or ask any questions about the study. Times were specifically chosen to coincide with drop off and pick up times, so that parents did not have to make additional trips to the nursery. The researcher handed out questionnaires to parents who had lost or forgotten them. One parent filled in the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher.

Despite these strategies, the response rate was low. Many factors may have influenced the low return rate, such as the length and personal aspect of the questionnaire, participants' family commitments, a lack of privacy and space in the nursery to meet the researcher and staff, a lack of interest in the topic, low levels of literacy or other factors. The lack of space and privacy to meet parents was a barrier to meeting them informally. As Robson (2002) highlights, a face-to-face approach increases questionnaire return. However, none of the maintained nurseries had an informal meeting place or a designated meeting place for parents to socialise apart from an outside drop off space. Opportunities were maximised to meet parents there; however, difficulties arose in approaching parents privately as these areas tended to be crowded, busy and tense, as a result of younger children waiting for their older sibling to be picked up while demanding food or drinks, parents needing to rush elsewhere, children not wanting to go home or running out of the nursery to go home, or a member of staff needing to talk to the parent about the session.

As it was intended to gain in-depth information of perceived risk and protective factors, involving long interviews and engagement in the settings through observations, a selection process to reduce the number of participants took place. Indeed, Yardley (2000) explains that data from a large sample cannot be analysed in-depth, as it becomes too complex to analyse and this consequently undermines the rationale for using qualitative methods. However, a higher response rate would have helped with proceeding with a more rigorous sampling strategy.

Out of these 21 parents who agreed to participate in the study, 11 were from each of settings 1 and 2, and 6 were serving in the army. Setting 3's headteacher submitted a late agreement to participate in the study. No participants from setting 4 agreed to participate in the study.

3.5.3.1 Settings 1 and 2

Most recent Ofsted and Raiseonline summary reports (Autumn 2011) were consulted to provide a more depth description of the risks experienced by children attending these settings.

Setting 1 (ward 1) is located within the married quarters of the army base. It serves 72% of children whose parents work for the Armed Services but also takes children whose families are renting accommodation from housing associations within the perimeter of the estate and those who apply from outside the catchment area. Few children are eligible for free school meals (FSM) (4.5%). The school deprivation indicator (0.13) is below the national average. There are 224 children on roll including 48 in the nursery. Girls consists of 51.8% of the pupils, 79.5% of the children are of white British origin and 13.7% of the children have English as their second language, an increase since 2009 (5.8%). Well above average numbers of pupils leave or join the school at times other than at the beginning of the year. Staff are sensitive to the fact that many children have fathers who are serving overseas and provide great support for the children and their families. There have been staffing changes in the past two years. The headteacher was appointed after being a SENCo and a Reception teacher has taken over the SENCo role. The school has received an 'outstanding' grade from Ofsted for the last three inspections.

Setting 2 (ward 2) is an average-sized infant school serving the local community, although increasing numbers of children are now being admitted from outside the area. The school is situated on the edge of a large housing estate and families live in either council or privately rented accommodation, housing association properties or private housing. There are 214 children on roll, including 48 children in the nursery, of which 46.7% are girls. High numbers of pupils move in and out of the school on a regular basis. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for FSM is significantly higher (27.9%) than the national average (19.2%). The school deprivation indicator is higher (0.28) than the national average (0.23). A few pupils speak English as an additional language (5.4%). The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds (90.2%). The school has undergone a period of staffing changes in the last two years, such as a changing role for the SENCo to a headship position and on-going difficulties in recruiting governors. For the last three inspections, the grade 'good' was awarded with some 'outstanding' categories.

In summary, in setting 1, children from army families may experience a high level of transition and mobility. In setting 2, a higher percentage of children are on FSM and the deprivation indicator is higher than setting 1 and the national average.

3.5.3.2 Sampling Strategies

Normally, in qualitative research a form of purposeful sampling is used to select participants. Purposeful sampling in qualitative research means that the researcher selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research

problem and the central constructs under study (Creswell, 2007). Ideally, in this study, children would have been selected purposefully and, because this study aimed to be comparative, a form of purposeful criterion based on homogeneous sampling, possibly combined with purposeful random sampling, may have been best. For example, selecting randomly from all the willing persons that responded, two homogeneous groups of children that met the criteria of either being in an army or non-army family and experiencing a stressful event would have brought rigour to this process. In the event, purposeful sampling was not possible, as only 6 army families positively responded to participating in the interviews and a small number of parents agreed to participate in the study. This difficulty constrained the number of possible children available for selection to form homogeneous groups (5.3 for further explanation).

Since the study was comparative in nature, choosing an equal number of participants from each group was considered the best option to select participants. Named 'a comparable case selection', this strategy consists of selecting individuals, sites, and groups on the basis of the same relevant characteristics (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The 6 army parents were therefore selected as they were representative of the characteristic needed to fulfil the research aim. An equal number from setting 2, and therefore not more than 6 children, were selected.

Ideally, a rigourous form of purposeful sampling would have been used. Initially, it was intended to use a form of purposeful sampling where an equal number of boys and girls experiencing at least one disadvantage and one stressful event would be selected. Where possible, children experiencing more severe circumstances (more disadvantages and stressful events) would also be selected. Table 3.1 shows the disadvantages, stressful events and the selection decision for each child.

From a total of 11 returned questionnaires, only a possible 8 were available for selection. Parents of Child 10 and 11 declined further involvement in the study. Child 13 had moved school. The parents of Child 8 needed a translator to participate in the interviews, but were known to the researcher to be using an older child as a translator. As family circumstances were to be discussed, this was considered inadequate for the purpose of the study. Time constraints prevented further arrangements with a qualified translator being made. According to parents of Child 15, disadvantages were not experienced so those parents were not selected to participate in the interviews.

Table 3.1 – Selection decision for children of Setting 2

Children	Gender	Disadvantages	Stressful events in the last 12 months	Selected/ Comment
7[7]	Girl	EAL, two parents unemployed	Depression, bipolar disorder	Yes
8	Boy	EAL, one parent unemployed, more than three children	Family difficulties	Needed a translator, no
9	Boy	EAL, one parent unemployed, father unskilled	Moving from Africa to UK	Yes
10	Boy	More than 3 children, father unskilled	None reported	No further involvement in this study
11	Boy	Single parent, parent under 18 at birth of child	Financial difficulties, problems with neighbours	Declined
12	Girl	Two parents unemployed	Illness in the family, depression, financial difficulties, sleeping difficulties	Yes
13	Boy	One parent unemployed	Moving house, financial difficulties	Changed school
14	Girl	One parent unemployed, father unskilled	Depression	Yes
15	Boy	-	Moving house, pregnancy/birth of child	No
21	Boy	One parent unemployed	Financial difficulties	Yes
22	Boy	One parent unemployed, father semi-skilled	Behaviour management difficulties	Yes

A total of 12 parents were selected for this study, 6 from each of settings 1 and 2. In order to gain a more in-depth portrait of each child, different sources of information (family information questionnaire and semi-structured interviews) were collated. A pen-portrait for each child can be found in Appendix 12. The disadvantages experienced by each child and family are outlined in Table 3.2, Appendices 9 and 10).

The participants were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews. Observations in the maintained nursery settings by the researcher also took place more particularly as a

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[7] Questionnaire number

familiarisation process with the children and their settings rather than as a method of data collection.

Table 3.2 shows the disadvantages experienced by children and families of both groups. Since children and families experienced similar disadvantages such speaking another language, being on FSM, or being unemployed, the two groups were considered comparable. As these disadvantages could generate different perceived risks and protective factors between the two groups, these familial and socio-economic similarities meant that the risks and protective factors identified in the study were less likely to be due to familial and socio-economic disadvantages and more likely specifically related to living in an army family or not.

Table 3.2 – Disadvantages experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families

No. of parents interviewed	Setting	Mean age of children	Disadvantages									
			Range of stressful events moderate and severe	(FSM	Mother has no qualifications	Father is semi-skilled or never worked	One parent is unemployed	Non-working family	English as an additional language (EAL)	Ethnic minority	3 or more children in the household	One family member has longstanding illness/disability
6[8]	1 (army group)	3.5	Pregnancy/child birth; sleeping, behaviour management, family difficulties; moving house; injury; depression; illness in the family; lack of support	1	0	2	4	1	2	2	1	1
6[9]	2 (non-army group)	3.7	Behaviour management, financial, sleeping difficulties; depression, bipolar disorder; illness in the family	2	1	4	4	2	2	3	2	1

[8] 4 mothers, 1 father and 1 couple
[9] 5 mothers and 1 couple

At the time of the study, all children lived with both parents and most parents were aged 25 to 34. A total of 12 parents (9 mothers, 2 couples and 1 father) participated in the nursery/school-based interviews. The meeting with parents lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. A meeting was arranged at the nursery with the parents concerned and the practitioners separately. All parents agreed to participate in the interviews. Appointments were arranged after drop off or before a pick up time, so that parents did not make additional trips. Some parents came with a younger child. In these cases, toys and drinks were provided to make the parent and the child feel at ease.

Four practitioners, who knew each parent's child best, also participated in the semi-structured interviews. Half of the children made a transition to reception during the course of the study, 3 in each setting, so practitioners who were teaching the children at the time of the study were invited to participate in the interviews. Practitioners, 2 nursery and 2 reception teachers, agreed to participate in the interviews and talked about the 3 children who were in their class at the time of the study.[10] These meetings lasted longer than the parent meetings, between 40 and 90 minutes. Practitioner 3 insisted on talking briefly about the 3 children who had just moved to the reception class. To avoid unbalancing the data from practitioners, only pertinent and complementary information was analysed. Meetings were arranged at the end of the nursery/school day to enable practitioners to participate without feeling worried about their responsibilities in the setting.

3.5.4 Ethical Considerations

This study followed ethical guidelines from the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2010), which influenced the development of this study. The strategies used to respect these guidelines and other ethical considerations are described in this section.

3.5.4.1 Ethical Guidelines

The researcher was in possession of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check, which was necessary due to direct involvement with children and their settings. Specific strategies were used to ensure these guidelines were respected.

A research leaflet was produced to inform participants fully about the study. This leaflet was left in all the nurseries/schools and given to all contacted participants. A briefing script[11] was read at the beginning of each interview to explain the ethical considerations to participants.

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[10] Appendix 14 gives a description of the practitioners who participated in the semi-structured interviews.
[11] See interview schedules, Appendices 6 and 7.

The right to withdraw at any time during the study was explained in the research leaflet and in this script.

Information about confidentiality was given to participants in the research leaflet, letters, consent form and the interview scripts. To maintain confidentiality, all names contained in this report have been changed. At the beginning of the interviews, participants were assured that information would not be shared with others. Information about participants, such as phone numbers and names, were handled with care and kept locked during the timeline of the study. Participants were informed of the researcher's dual role, researcher and TEP, and assured that information would remain confidential at all times.

During the interviews, the researcher was alert to participants' feelings when sharing sensitive information and adopted a warm, calm, empathic and reassuring attitude.

All participants were debriefed at the end of the interviews. The research leaflet explained that the dissemination of information from the research findings would be available through a Research Report Briefing in schools once the research project was completed.

The participants were all treated equally and in accordance with the scripts designed and written for this purpose. Advice was not given to participants. In certain cases, where more difficult moments occurred, reassurance was used to respond to the participants' needs in the most natural manner possible. None of the participants exposed emotions that were felt to be difficult to deal with or caused concerns.

3.5.4.2 Research with Children from Army Families

After data collection, the following information regarding ethical guidelines when doing research with Service children was published:

> It should be noted that research involving service children as participants requires ethical approval and an independent MoD Research Ethics Committee scrutinises research protocols. (Walker-Smith & Hacker Hughes, April, 2011).

This need for approval by the MoD came as a surprise as this is not reported in recent BPS documentation, which does discuss the need for approval for National Health Services (NHS) projects. However, as outlined in 3.5.4.1, the researcher abided by the BPS code of conduct for research ethics where the agreement to undertake research was gained from:

- the ethical committee at the Institute of Education, University of London;

- the headteachers of both schools through brief contractual agreement;
- all parents involved in the study in written form through permission slips;
- all parents and practitioners verbally, at the beginning of the interviews.

Additionally, a research leaflet was given to all parents, practitioners and headteachers informing participants of the study and ways to contact the researcher.

3.5.4.3 The Comparative Nature of the Study

Throughout the research project, the comparative nature of the study was not fully disclosed to participants in letters, scripts and the research leaflet. These means of communication aimed to reach participants in the most positive manner in order to recruit participants. As recommended in the pilot study (3.5.2.3), the minimum amount of information was needed to maximise questionnaire returns.

Not fully disclosing the comparative nature of the study was not deliberate in itself as the researcher originally intended to analyse the data using a multiple case study design. It is acknowledged that comparing these two groups may equate to some deception.

However, other strategies had been developed which helped minimising possible deception. For example, the aim of the study, finding about young children's resilience to inform practice and support children and families, was clearly outlined in letters and the research leaflet. Additionally, the family information collected, such as age, birth weight, qualifications, employment, stressful events in the last year, was informative in itself. For example, any participants completing this information would have understood that this information would be used for research purposes, and could allow comparisons between families experiencing different circumstances and that similar elements would be discussed during the interviews.

During the interviews, parents and practitioners fully contributed to the questions asked, openly talking about their family story and associated factors. Questions were designed to be open, such as: 'Tell me about your family story', 'Tell me what's going well for (child) at the moment', allowing parents to talk about their feelings, beliefs and perceptions. Parents from army families freely talked about their experiences without much prompting from the researcher, except for the last question in the script which directly asked about the support they felt was needed in relation to the their army situation. Throughout the transcripts, there is evidence of laughter and open communication, demonstrating that participants were comfortable and happy to talk. No concerns were raised from participants about the content of the interviews.

3.6 Data Analysis

The semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006), which is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data in rich detail and involves searching across a data set to find repeated patterns, analysing data in response to specific research questions and allowing additional themes to emerge from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since it was argued that there is limited UK literature related to children from army families, this method of data analysis was judged the most appropriate as it responded specifically to the research questions and allowed themes of relevance to emerge 'organically', as chosen over other possible methods of data analysis, such as a grounded theory, interpretative phenomological analysis, discourse analysis, because of its flexibility. A phased process of analysis was adopted, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), and it is summarised below.

3.6.1 Becoming Familiar with the Data

Due to time constraints, the interviews were transcribed by an external professional, which allowed the researcher to spend more time on reading and reflecting on the interviews rather than mechanically transcribing data. Following this, as this study aimed to compare risk and protective factors between the two groups, qualitative data were prepared for analysis by inserting all transcripts in a folder and dividing them into two sections 1) transcripts from the army participants and 2) transcripts from the non-army participants. All participants' transcripts were given a label (*e.g.*, armyparent1) and all transcripts' lines numbered to ensure a consistent method was used during the data analysis. This technique also used so that codes and quotations could be easily tracked. All transcripts were read at least once before data analysis. Data from the army group was coded and themes outlined first, followed by the non-army group.

3.6.2 Generating Initial Codes

During this stage, initial codes linked to the research questions were noted. An inductive approach to coding was chosen. In thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) make a key distinction between the theoretical and inductive identification of themes. An inductive analysis consists of coding data, without preconceived themes and referring to previous research in the area. In this approach, the researcher has no prior experience of the area under study. In contrast, a theoretical analysis is influenced by the researcher's prior theoretical knowledge. The researcher begins with the theory, looking for indicators and evidence of codes supporting a theory. The researcher has predetermined key ideas about the field studied. These two distinctions were given consideration. As the field under study

was considered to be under-researched, an inductive approach to coding was used. An inductive approach also respected the aim of the study by allowing participants' perceptions of risk and protective factors to emerge from the data. However, the researcher had prior knowledge of the resilience literature that could not be ignored. Also, the research questions aimed to find out about risk and protective factors, which, therefore, created a theoretical element to data analysis. It should be noted that Boyatzis (1998) suggests the idea of a continuum between theory-driven and data-driven analyses. As the researcher had particular questions in mind, but allowed participants voices and experiences to determine the relevant codes and themes, the development of codes in the study moved along this continuum in the inductive approach direction, allowing theoretical constructs and the researcher's knowledge to be applied when necessary.

Initial codes were written in the margins of the transcripts indicating whether the comments related to risk or protective factors. Comments related to risk and protective factors were highlighted in two different colours. These initial codes were then written on the same coloured 'post-it notes' with the participant's label and transcript number lines (*e.g.*, Non-armypractitioner4, 101-105). This initial coding technique allowed a rigorous record of the codes and data extracts and the opportunity for these to be collated into a cluster of themes in preparation for the next stage. To avoid confusion when working with the 'post-it notes', different colours were used for the army group (risk, red; protective, blue) and non-army group (risk, pink; protective, green).

3.6.3 Searching for Themes

During this stage, the analysis was focused on a broader level of themes rather than codes. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), 'it is vital that you do not just paraphrase the content of the data extracts presented but identify what is of interest about them and why' (p.92). The codes were sorted into potential themes, using the 'post-it notes'. This allowed for flexibility and the movement of codes. Decisions were also made whether some codes were relevant to the research questions. Relevant coded data extracts were collated within identified themes, which led to themes, subthemes, categories and subcategories.

3.6.4 Reviewing Themes

This stage required close inspection of the data within the themes to reflect coherent patterns and clear distinctions between themes. Some of the themes and subthemes were retained, others were merged, or dropped altogether. Consideration was also given at this point to the issue of prevalence, the number of instances in which a theme occurs in a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the interviews were of different length, as one participant

would be more talkative than another, the numbers of instances were not recorded. Instead, the prevalence of themes was based on the number of participants who talked about a theme; that was recorded to gain a better view of the most important themes to the participants. However, given the small sample size and possibly divergent views between participants, themes and subthemes were retained, even if these represented a minority perception. As this field of research is under-studied, this was considered to be important in understanding different views, experiences and feelings.

3.6.5 Defining and Naming Themes

This stage involved the identification of the 'essence' of what each theme was about (Braun & Clarke, 2006), and the interest these generate in relation to the research questions and why. A detailed analysis was conducted and each theme was considered in relation to the overall 'story' of the data in relation to the research questions. To ensure consistency across the themes, and to define and refine what each theme was about, each theme was given a brief description (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The definitions were written using, initially, a cluster of codes and what these represented together, to reflect the meaning and coded extracts. Psychological terms and participants' words were also used to illustrate themes and subthemes.

3.6.6 Producing the Report

The final themes are presented in Chapter 4. For each theme, a graphic form presents subthemes and categories; a rationale for developing these is explained in the text. To demonstrate an in-depth analysis of the data, each subtheme is also presented in a graphic form showing categories and subcategories. Explanations are then developed in the text with illustrative quotations, highlighting similarities and differences between the army and non-army groups. Appendix 13, shows the themes, subthemes, categories, subcategories/codes generated for each group with its associated data extracts and, Appendix 14 shows the coded interview transcripts, detail further the thematic analysis.

 'Army group' and 'non-army group' are terms used to differentiate both groups. The term 'group' refers to all parents and practitioners who participated in the interviews who belonged to either the army or non-army group. When presenting the findings, participants (parents/ practitioners), their group (army/non-army), and a number are presented to distinguish participants (Armyparent3), followed by the line numbers of the transcript where the quote was taken (Armyparent3, 112-114). Since practitioners talked about three children each, when a practitioner is identified, at the end of the line numbers, the number in bracket refers to the child the practitioner talked about in the quote (Armypractitioner2, 97-99(1)). The

absence of significant differences between parents and practitioners did not justify the need to report the qualitative data separately for these two groups. The aim of the study was to look at similarities and differences between the army and non-army groups, and not parents and practitioners. However, for clarity, the participants are distinguished as explained above.

The use of reliability with respect to qualitative data was considered during this stage of analysis. When interview data are collected, reliability is usually established through having interview transcripts read through and coded by another person, and then results compared. However, Yardley (2000) has questioned applying reliability criteria to qualitative methodologies. Seidel and Kelle (1995) note that, where a researcher believes that knowledge cannot be objective, the use of inter-rater reliability as a check on a coding scheme is meaningless. Yardley goes on to say that two people coding the same text does not exclude subjectivity, but just becomes a process where an interpretation of the codes is agreed. Nevertheless this is a useful process for enhancing engagement with the data, for developing ideas about the interpretation of the data and for generally enhancing the credibility of the analysis. During the coding process, the interview transcripts and the thematic analysis were discussed with colleagues external to the study. These discussions guided some coding and merging of codes, themes and labelling. This process allowed for a better description of codes and themes, a better presentation of important themes and a more narrow focus on the data.

3.7 Summary

This chapter presented an overview of the methodological considerations that influenced the design of this study. Whilst the design was presented with a rationale, different factors affected the research design and many difficulties were encountered. These limitations will be presented in Chapter 5. In Chapter 4, a preliminary exploration of the findings will be outlined, followed by the presentation of the themes and illustrative quotations related to the research questions posed.

CHAPTER 4: Results

4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the research findings in relation to the two research questions posed. Themes, subthemes, categories and subcategories are presented with illustrative quotations, leading to a summary of the findings.

4.2 Preliminary Information

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the interview transcripts in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1 - What are the perceived risk factors experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these risk factors similar, distinct or unique?

RQ2 - What are the perceived protective factors experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families of similar familial contexts and socio-economic status? To what extent are these protective factors similar, distinct or unique?

As risk and protective factors are often involved in an interactive process (2.3.3), results for risk (RQ1) and protective factors (RQ2) are presented together and were characterised as:

- *risk factors:* 'factors perceived as negative and having the potential to have a negative impact or worsen the child's life or situation';
- *protective factors:* 'factors perceived as positive and having the potential to better or ameliorate the child's life or situation'.

The thematic analysis was carried out to identify themes for the army and non-army groups separately. From the codes, three main themes (T), including subthemes (ST), categories (C) and subcategories (SC) were developed.

- **T1 - Children's Well-being***:* 'comments related to the child's skills, competence, feelings, ability, coping strategy and factors influencing these'.
- **T2 - Family Systems and Contexts**: 'comments related to familial ways of supporting the child, parenting skills and attitudes and perceptions of child's upbringing'.

- **T3 - School Systems and Contexts**: 'comments related to the school system and staff, and factors such as ethos, perceptions of the system and attitudes'.

Figure 4.1 presents themes and subthemes in a graphic form. Throughout this chapter, each theme and subtheme is represented in a similar graphic format as Figure 4.1, with a rationale for its development and illustrative quotations.
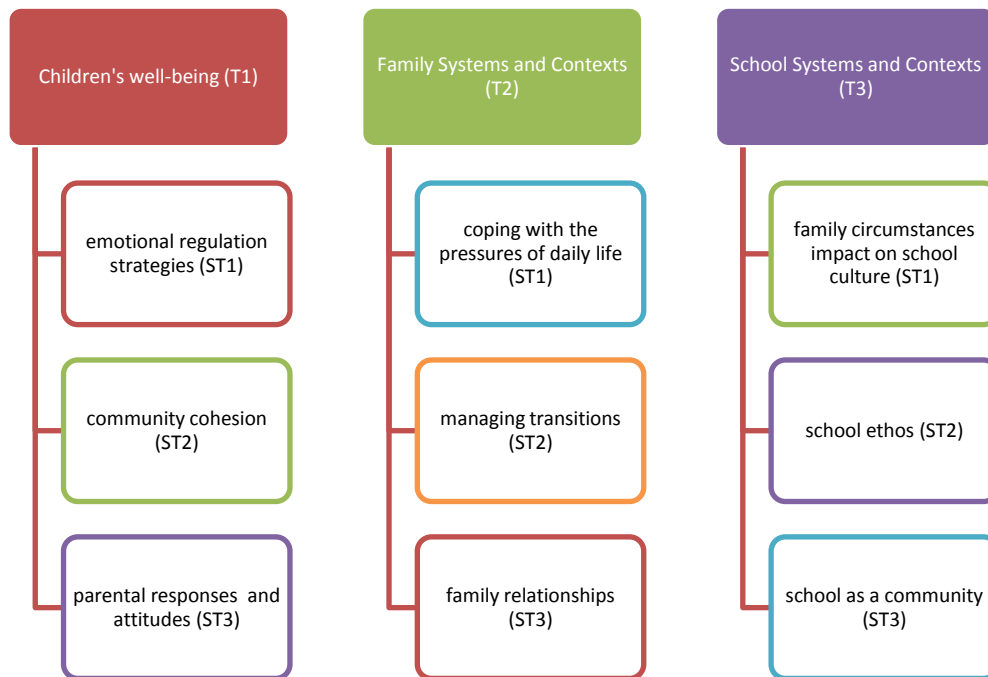
Figure 4.1 - Overview of themes and subthemes identified in the thematic analysis of parent and practitioner interview data

4.3 T1 – Children's well-being: Subthemes, Categories and Subcategories

T1 was developed to represent the wide-ranging participants' comments in relation to children's well-being. Participants repetitively highlighted the strengths and difficulties at home and at school, which is particularly common for children of this age. Friendship, feelings about school, transition from nursery to reception, exploration and curiosity were emphasised extensively by the participants. Emotional Regulation Strategies (ST1) were particularly developed to highlight the differences between children living in army and non-army families, as children were described as having different strategies to cope with difficult life events.

T1, Figure 4.2, was also developed to represent a number of factors directly influencing children's well-being, represented in Community Cohesion (ST2) and Parental Responses (ST3).
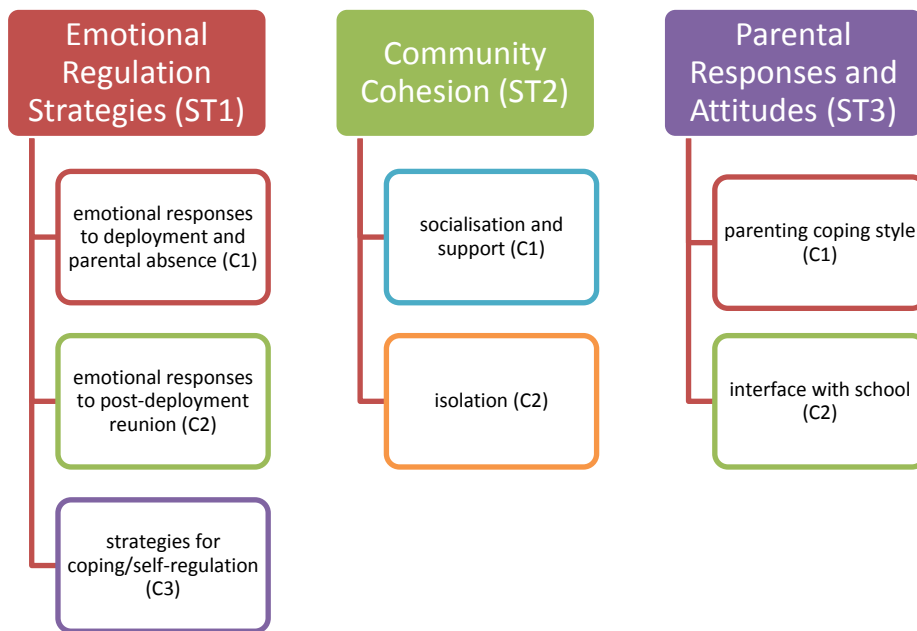
Figure 4.2 - T1 - Children's well-being: Subthemes and Categories

Emotional regulation strategies (ST1), Figure 4.3, were particularly important as these appeared to be different for both groups. Represented in C1 and C2, parental absence and deployment had a particular impact on children's well-being. Some children were able to face difficult situations, deal with these and find coping strategies, and others were completely overwhelmed by difficult situations. C3, Strategies for Coping/Self-regulation, was developed to illustrate the presence or the lack of coping strategies.
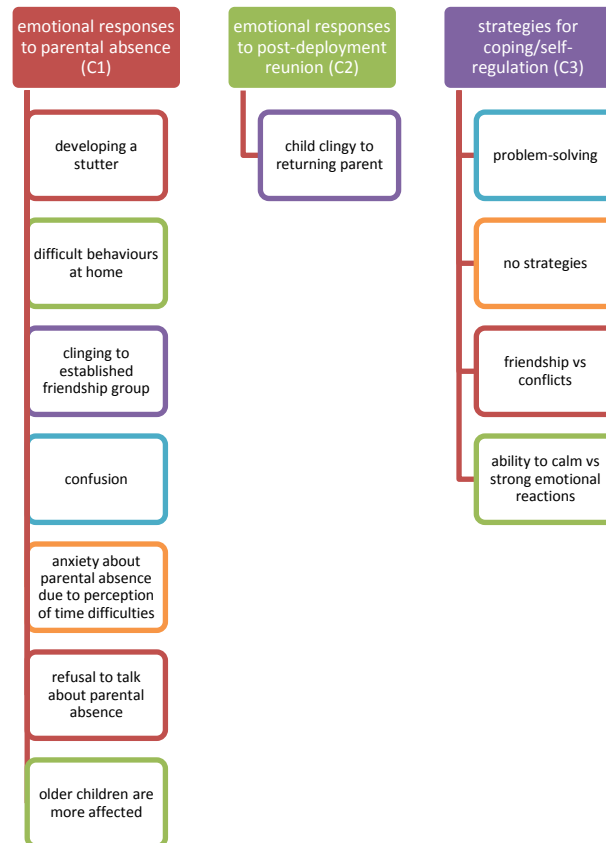
Figure 4.3 - ST1 (T1) – Emotional Regulation Strategies: Categories and Subcategories

Parents and practitioners from both groups talked about coping strategies, but for the army group, these appeared to be particularly specific to difficult situations, especially deployment and parental absence (C1), for children living in army families. Emotional responses to these events are represented in C1-2 and their subcategories. Parents and practitioners strongly noted that the children suffer during parental absence.

Children are affected if daddy is away, yes… (Armypractitioner2, 336-338)

He was very upset by the fact my husband's going back after two weeks' break. (Armyparent1, 502)

Some parents explained that as children become older they tend to understand more and tend to be even more affected by this family situation.

It's the first time he's (dad) been away for this long, and now he is of an age where he really notices and that, so you know he's really sad about that. (Armyparent4, 13-15)

Children are anxious about parental absence as they have difficulties conceptualising the notion of time which makes it difficult to understand parental return.

> *Because he was crying a lot…I said to my son that daddy will come back*
> *for his sister's birthday…children don't have the perception of time.*
> (Armyparent1, 506-508)

Children's emotional responses to parental absence and deployment, such as anxiety, were expressed in different ways by the children. One child developed a stutter during parental absence.

> *She developed a stutter coming, probably about half term last year, a lot of,*
> *I think, personal things were going on, she had an operation in the summer,*
> *daddy's gone away.* (Armypractitioner2,156-159(2))

Another child was worried about his father being away in hospital. This hospital stay was needed due to injuries sustained whilst on duty.

> *I have warned the nursery that he might be a little bit up and down,*
> *because his dad's going to be in hospital, and he's got used to his dad*
> *being there, and dad's not going to be there.* (Armyparent5, 193-195)

Another child held on to established friendship groups.

> *He was very quiet, he was pining for the other Polish boy that was still in*
> *nursery, would often stand at the fence and chatted to him…no, he wasn't*
> *happy…* (Armypractitioner2, 69-72(1))

Some children displayed difficult behaviours at home.

> *Because there isn't anything you can do with him, because you can tire him*
> *out but after five minutes he'll sit down, and then in two minutes he starts*
> *running around and crashing into everything again.* (Armyparent3, 556-559)

Some participants also expressed that children respond emotionally to post-deployment reunions (C2).

> *His dad is often away for work, sometimes without notice…he tends to be*
> *clingy on his return.* (Armyparent4, 1-2)

Even though children from army families responded emotionally to parental absence and deployment, parents and practitioners from the army group commented strongly on the children's ability to problem-solve, compared to the non-army group. Reflected in C3, many parents and practitioners from the army group explained that the children were able to adapt

to different situations, cope well with changes and seek ways to solve problems, such as reaching out to friends and using communication.

Emotionally, I think he's quite mature, he can understand a lot of things. (Armyparent6, 215)

He'll sort of adapt things (situations) to what he wants them to be. (Armypractitioner1, 238(4))

In the non-army group, self-regulation and problem-solving skills were sometimes highlighted by parents and practitioners, but not so prominently. Qualitatively, children were not described as being able to adapt to difficult situations easily and seek solutions independently, but more as having difficulties dealing with tricky situations, self-regulation and friendship issues.

Not sure he's got a special friend. He does get upset, because when the group of children he plays with are playing with somebody else he will say to me and so say's he's not my friend. (Non-armypractitioner3, 22-24(10))

She'll argue back. (Non-armypractitioner4, 231-233(8))

He's absolutely rubbish at sharing. (Non-armyparent10, 111)

I do feel that it's quite hard for him. It's a mixture of feelings, he was so excited about his brother, he told us all the time, my brother is coming from Africa…suddenly the reality is oh my God. I don't know what's going on. Rio today went down, collapsed on the floor, he doesn't cry very much, and put his head on the table, and just sobbed, wouldn't get up. (Non-armypractitioner4, 357-359(9); 363-368 (9))

He goes and hides under the settee or try and hide in the bushes outside…He tends to be the instigator of that really, and some of the others follow him. Like he's broken his arm, he fell off a stool, it's a nasty break…we've been saying to Dan, you must walk…no matter how much talking he actually has been running in the nursery inside. (Non-armypractitioner3, 465-470)

Community cohesion (ST2), Figure 4.4, was identified as an important protective factor in children's well-being because it directly influenced children's opportunities to socialise, develop social skills and build friendships.
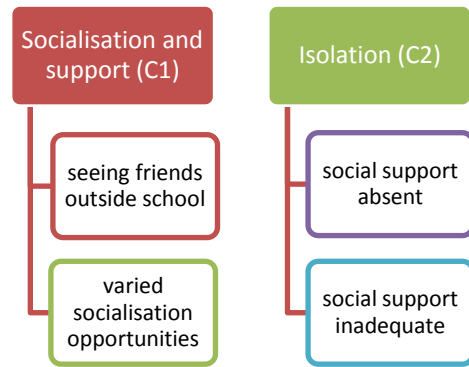
Figure 4.4 - ST2 (T1) – Community Cohesion: Categories and subcategories

In ST2, important differences between the army and non-army group emerged. For parents living in army families, belonging to friendship groups impacted on their child's opportunities to socialise (C1). These children were able to see friends from school and other friends in these particular social networks.

> *He has lots of friends…other people I was friends with at uni [sic], we seemed to all stay here, and had babies at the same time, and they still are a part of his life.* (Armyparent4, 178-182)

For the non-army group, many parents and practitioners talked about isolation and inadequate or absent social support groups, over and above socialisation (C2). The absence of these social support groups directly impacted on children's opportunities to socialise and meet other children outside school.

> *I suppose I miss teamwork…I wish I wasn't so much on my own.* (Non-armyparent3, 29)

> *I don't think he goes to anybody else's house.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 125(10))

The parent below highlights that her child learning how to misbehave and being able to trust others were difficulties associated with her child socialising with other children in the close community:

> *It's very rare she gets bored, but she doesn't interact, unless it's with the neighbour, or at school…I am very wary there are people around that you can't really trust much. And I don't want her to be like, I'm not saying all children are naughty, but some children can be, and I don't want her to*

learn…the naughty parts and how to misbehave. (Non-armyparent4, 320-328)

Parental Responses and Attitudes (ST3), Figure 4.5, also formed a subtheme identified as having a significant and direct influence on children's well-being. This subtheme demonstrates the number of parental responses and attitudes highlighted by parents and practitioners as having a direct impact on children's well-being. Important differences were found between the army and non-army groups. In the army group, parents and practitioners highlighted many positive parental responses and attitudes to children compared to the non-army group. In the non-army group, many parenting issues that impacted on children's well-being emerged in relation to their parenting style (C1), and the interface with school (C2).
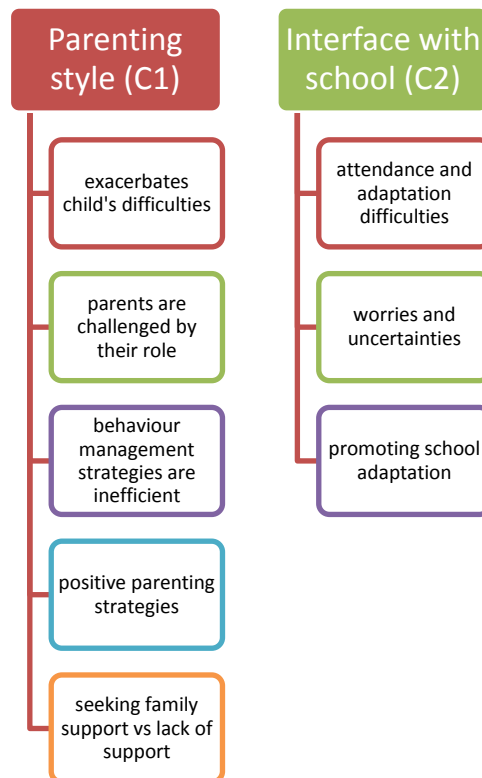
Figure 4.5 - ST3 (T1) – Parental Responses and attitudes: Categories and Subcategories

Many parents from both groups talked about positive parenting strategies, but important differences emerged between the two groups. Behaviour management difficulties, such as parents lacking strategies to deal with their child's behaviour, lack of consistency, difficulties in implementing boundaries and not perceiving their child and parenting skills positively were issues brought up by the non-army group.

No matter where we go, if it's a bathroom she has to look at it. Strange child…She is horrible at home. (Non-armyparent12, 355; 396-399)

Many participants particularly noted the inefficiency of parental behaviour management strategies.

We used star charts-that got scrapped because he just ignored it in the end. (Non-armyparent11, 245-246)

Some parents related situations where their parenting intervention exacerbated the child's behaviour and emotional response.

F[12]: 'When she gets angry she crunches her face up, clenches her fists, and then shakes, like shakes her head, which is quite amusing to watch as well. You've got to try and remember not to laugh. She looks funny doing it, but I've got to try and remember not to laugh, because if I laugh she tells me off. M: and gets even angrier. (Non-armyparent12, 304-310)

If we tell her off for something…she'll hide at the end of her bed, she's quite amusing. We've put a table there so she can't do it. Until she climbed underneath it, and banged her head. (Non-armyparent12, 301-303)

Only one parent from the army group mentioned having behaviour-management difficulties, but these difficulties were only observed at home. Overall, parents of the army group spoke much more positively about their role as a parent and promoted communication, hobbies, socialisation and encouraged learning at home.

I tell him things like the environment around him, about types of birds…things like that. A lot of the time he'll ask questions, and I'll just answer whatever questions he asks as best as I can. A lot of the time I don't know the answers, so we'll look it up together. (Armyparent1, 368-372)

Parents from the army group used positive parenting strategies such as using positive language and effective behaviour management strategies.

We praise her…tell her I'm very proud of her a lot. (Armyparent2, 140)

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[12] F: father; M: mother

Give him a few warnings…time out…the step. He doesn't usually behave badly, because we try to deal with him and stop him behaving badly. (Armyparent6, 422-439)

As well as being much more positive about their parental role, the army group commented on seeking family support. Many explained how they valued this support and going the extra mile to stay and live close to family.

I have a great connection with my family, they help out with the boys, so that's why we ended up living here. (Armyparent3, 6-7)

Parental responses and attitudes (ST3) were often interfaced with school issues (C2). Many parents from both groups talked about strategies they use to promote school adaptation, but for the non-army group, difficulties which arose as a result of parental responses were much more prominent. In particular, parental responses, which are important risk factors to school adaptation, created attendance and adaptation difficulties for the child.

Her attendance has been really quite poor…she does apparently have chest infections, but also I don't know whether mum and dad's health, but my understanding is that neither mum and dad work…they go away on long weekends. (Non-armypractitioner3, 131, 153-158(12))

I think mum and dad had quite high expectations of her…but I wondered sometimes whether she was a little bit under pressure. (Non-armypractitioner3, 711-713(8))

Other attendance and adaptation issues were highlighted by parents and practitioners from the non-army group.

- Adaptation to nursery issues impacting on family relationships and parents consequently delaying entry to nursery for a younger sibling:

    Suzie's little sister, Nina, is the youngest of the three, and mum has already said she is going to delay Nina's starting time for nursery…I think mum worried about Suzie settling, and I think it's going to be mum's worry that Nina won't be settling, really. (Non-armypractitioner3, 760-761; 769-770(7))

- Lack of parenting consistency and regular patterns impacting on the child's adaptation to nursery:

…when she was settling it lacked a bit of consistency it might have been fairer to Sofia, but harder to mum and dad, to have kept the same person coming and going. (Non-armypractitioner3, 377-378(12))

- Difficulties coping with the child's separation anxiety:

…involving poor nanny to give mum a break, because mum didn't want to see Sofia so upset. (Non-armypractitioner3, 378-382(12))

Parents from both groups talked about uncertainties and worries about schooling. Again, a range of worries and uncertainties about educational issues were more prominently talked about by the non-army group.

- Child being bored at school:

I am just hoping she won't get bored with it (school), or something, you know, if the novelty wears off. (Non-armyparent7, 87-88)

- *Child developing dyslexia like her parent:*

Because I'm dyslexic I don't want her to end up being dyslexic too… (Non-armyparent12, 52-55)

- Transition from home to nursery and nursery to reception:

I was so worried, because all the letters said, you know, must be potty trained. (Non-armyparent12, 767-768)

- Not knowing what can be done with child if the child fails to make progress:

Perhaps a little slower (progress) than I would have liked…I would quite like for him to at least know a few letters by now. But he's not particularly interested and there's not a lot I can do about it. (Non-armyparent10, 87; 90-91)

4.3.1 Summary T1 – Children's Well-Being

Children living in army families are affected by deployment and parental absence in different ways. Many children emotionally respond to these family circumstances. However, these children also develop problem-solving and adaptation skills compared to children from the non-army group. Additionally, parents living in army families seek familial and social support and belong to cohesive communities which impact on their child's ability to socialise. The

risk factors for army families also seem to promote resilience, as the very knowledge of the risks promote proactive planning for emotional support, which, in turn, helps with the child's wider developmental needs. Finally, children living in army families benefit from more positive parental responses and less anxiety related to school issues compared to the children living in non-army families. It appears that children living in non-army families do not benefit from the same direct protection. Parenting difficulties that exacerbate the children's issues and create adaptation difficulties, and the lack of community cohesion were identified as important risk factors for the non-army group. Children were perceived as having many more self-regulation and adaptation difficulties than the army group.

4.4 T2 - Family systems and contexts: Subthemes, Categories and Subcategories

T2, Figure 4.6, was developed in response to an extensive number of comments related to indirect familial risk and protective factors influencing children's well-being; ST1, Coping with the Pressures of Daily Life, ST2, Managing Transitions, and ST3, Family Relationships. Important differences between the army and non-army groups are represented especially in ST1's categories, Managing Transitions (ST2) which was specifically developed for the army group to reflect the frequent moves and changes (C1) these families experience and, ST3, Family Relationships, which was developed to reflect the perceptions of both groups, but also to highlight differences.
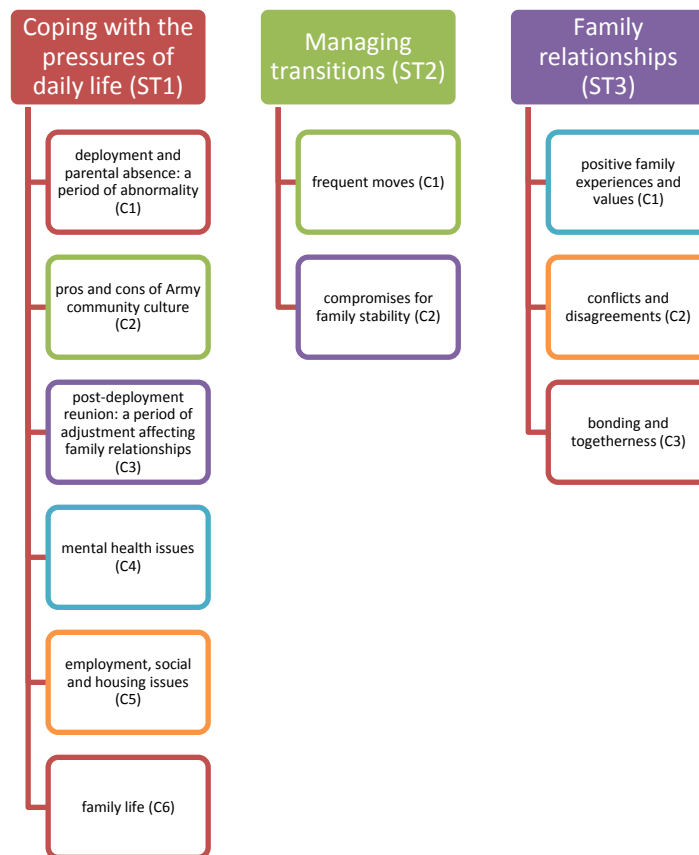
Figure 4.6 - T2 – Family systems and contexts: Subthemes and Categories

Illustrated in Figure 4.7, parents and practitioners talked about how families cope with the pressures of daily life (ST1). Clear distinctions between the army and non-army groups for this subtheme were identified. C1, Deployment and Parental Absence, C2, the Army Culture and Community and C3, Post-deployment Reunions were developed to represent the numerous risk and protective factors the army group referred to in relation to specific family situations. C1, Deployment and Parental Absence, was referred to more frequently than the other family situations. It is important to note that the local Regiment was deployed to a dangerous war zone at the time of the study. This deployment was intensively covered by the local and national media as leading to many casualties. Therefore, all family and school systems experienced this dangerous deployment directly or indirectly at the time of the study. However, families who participated in the study experienced heterogeneous circumstances. Three families were experiencing a deployment to a war zone. One family was experiencing deployment for training purposes and therefore not in a dangerous war zone. One family was not experiencing deployment because the father had been seriously injured whilst on duty and was left with disabling injuries. One family chose not to experience deployment and postings (see Managing Transitions, ST2).
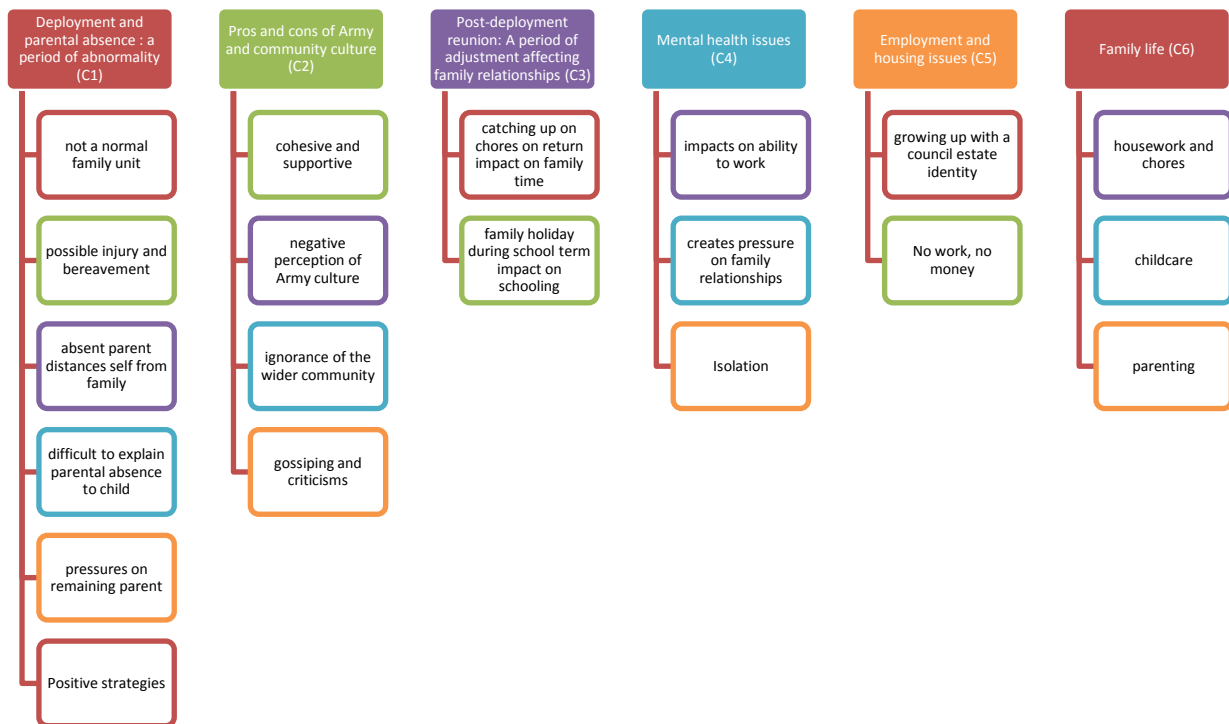
Figure 4.7 - ST1 (T2) - Coping with the pressures of daily life: Categories and Subcategories

Even though these families were experiencing heterogeneous circumstances, many risk factors related to the impact of deployment and parental absence on the family (C1) were noted by participants. The practitioner below comprehensively explained that during deployment the family unit experiences a period of 'abnormality':

> *… you've got a mum and dad unit, you think it's normal, but for that period of time it's not, it's mummy and the children* (Armypractitioner 2, 336-338)

This period of 'abnormality' is characterised by different pressures on the remaining parent which impact significantly on family life and relationships:

- not being able to carry on activities as normal and/or stopping family activities.

  > *…used to go to the zoo quite a lot before I went away, but obviously being away.* (Armyparent 2, 90)

- difficulties in adopting the absent parent's roles impact on family relationships.

> *I don't sit with him and read books because my husband enjoys doing that,*
> *but he's not there…sometimes I'm so tired I cannot be bothered, my fault.*
> (Armyparent1, 281-283).

- explaining parental absence to young children who have difficulties conceptualising time and understanding long parental absences.

- lacking sleep and being tired.

> *I'm pregnant I'm really tired, and that, and my other son is two, and he's*
> *quite demanding still. So he's Frank, it's hard work…I'm such a better mum*
> *when I've had sleep than I am without it, and I think that's the worst thing,*
> *being tired, you know…if you are tired it's like argggh, everything seems to*
> *escalate from that.* (Armyparent4, 21; 324-330).

Many comments were made regarding the family unit (the remaining parent and children) being affected by deployment and parental absence.

> *…it's too much with the deployment, the soldiers are going…I could hear*
> *the neighbours crying next door because their dad's gone, there's so much.*
> (Armyparent4, 100-105)

Such strong emotional responses are not simply due to parental absence, but a combination of parental absence as well as possible life-changing outcomes such as injury and bereavement.

Even though parents and practitioners said that the parents and children cope during this 'period of abnormality', the pressure on the remaining parent to keep the family unit intact and running is immense. The parent below explains that as long as she is fine, her son is fine, bringing huge pressures on her to cope well with the deployment.

> *As long as I'm OK, he is OK, because I think he looks at how I am, and so*
> *he thinks oh, my mum's alright, and everything is OK.* (Armyparent4, 264-266).

Parents explained that their family relationships are affected by deployment and parental absence. The father below distances himself from the family unit during his absence.

> *They don't really need me.* (Armyparent2, father on R&R, 8)

Another parent said that an 11-month absence was impacting on her child's ability to talk to his father, the absent parent.

> *I mean their dad's been out, he was out eleven months last year, so for a dad to be away for eleven months is incredibly long…He talks to me more than he does to his dad.* (Armyparent3, 34-35; 447-448)

Some parents talked about positive strategies they use to cope with deployment. Some said they needed to set milestones to explain parental absence to the children, such as using a birthday. Other parents explained needing to have a positive mindset on deployment.

> *You have to imagine that your husband is on delegation somewhere, you have to just create something, some story in your head, and it's not so bad…Yes, and just pick yourself up, because a lot of things are out of your control. And you will have, how they say, a healthy mind…life has to carry on.* (Armyparent1, 517-521)

Others said it was important to protect their child from the deployed parent's role, so that the child is not exposed to difficult war language and images.

> *Charlie is a vehicle mechanic anyway, so we just say that he's fixing all the lorries and the cars, so we don't go too much into it.* (Armyparent2, 13-14)

However, despite protecting their child from difficult war language and images, parents explained there are still risks that cannot be avoided; children learn difficult messages from an early age.

> *But if she sees Afghanistan on TV she'll say oh, daddy's there.* (Armyparent2, 14-15).

> *It's a shame that they've had to learn about this already (war)…Other people tell their children different things, don't they? So some things they come home with, things that they've heard said, are quite nasty, and nothing that we'd say at home, and that's quite, I don't like that really, but you can't help that, children say things to each other. An example is they are going to Afghan to kill the baddies. And I said to Frankie, it's not like that…my friend's daughter said I hope my daddy doesn't get shot, I hope nobody shoots my daddy. And she's only four, and to be thinking about something, she probably can't even understand. It's like distressing really.* (Armyparent4, 124;130-133)

For some parents, the cohesion of the Army culture (C2) was important as it offered a supportive environment during deployment, especially for those remaining.

> *It's a small community in the army, which is quite nice, because I think if we weren't in the army we would really have nothing in common with the other parents, and the other kids…People here do the same job, and the kids all live in the same houses, because obviously it's all army housing…it is a community, which I think is important, and it's rare these days, because people live now a lot more isolated from each other…especially for the wives, as well, of the husbands that go away, they have little groups of friends, who all understand, exactly the same thing, they are all in the same position, and they can understand each other, which I think is nice for them.*
> (Armyparent6, 489-495; 540-543)

However, some parents also noted some issues that prevented them from belonging to this community. These issues were described as 'gossiping', 'unhelpful culture' and 'feeling inadequate when asking for help'.

> *Sometimes they can be horrendous, you know, when they are sending your husband away, and they can be really unhelpful.* (Armyparent4, 375-376)

> *They don't know anything about anything, except gossiping, so I won't go there again.* (Armyparent1, 528)

> *You can't necessarily ask for somebody else to change a light bulb for you because you can't reach, or you don't feel comfortable climbing a ladder.*
> (Armyparent2, father on R&R, 167-170)

Issues related to the post-deployment reunion (C3) were characterised by a period of adjustment affecting family relationships. A practitioner explained she had academic concerns about a pupil who had just been on holiday during term time during his father's R&R. However, this holiday may have been crucial for this family in terms of responding to emotional needs and creating a short sense of 'family normality'.

> *The other half of my worries that he's had a lot of time off recently, for family holiday, things like that, I know dad's been back on R&R.*
> (Armypractitioner2, 59-65(1))

The post-deployment reunion was also said to affect family relationships as the returning parent needs to catch up on many chores during their R&R and holidays, which prevents them from having special time as a family.

M[13]: *He does lots of jobs when he comes home.*

F: *Spend a week doing all the jobs. Nice holiday. Yeah.* (Armyparent2, 172)

Evidenced in C4, C5 and C6, categories developed specifically for this group, daily pressures for parents from the non-army group were very different from the army group. The non-army group talked about parents having mental health difficulties (C4), but this terminology was absent from the army group.

She had serious depression problems, not only depression, but there was an incident where actually social services were called, because she had locked herself in the bathroom with the little one… (Non-armypractitioner3, 720-723(7))

Mental health issues were said to impact on family life, opportunities for work and brought isolation.

My partner has passed his university degree…because he wanted to be a teacher, but because he is bipolar he won't be able to…[he doesn't work]. (Non-armyparent8, 70)

Mental health difficulties were also perceived as having an impact on relationship building and bonding as a family unit, and also in terms of building significant relationships with wider social networks including staff at school.

Dad's a bit tricky…not quite sure, I'm a little wary of him…I wouldn't say aggressive, he's quite overfriendly. (Non-armypractitioner4, 295-301(8))

Many parents talked about the impact of unemployment and financial difficulties and their impact on the family unit (C5).

I don't have a car…I get to places on foot, or on the bus…We don't have a lot of money at the moment. (Non-armyparent10, 19; 23-24; 154-155)

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[13] M: mother; F: father

Many parents talked about the inadequacy of the community social networks (C5) which impact on their social family life. For example, the parent below doesn't perceive living on an estate positively:

> *She started lying and we are obviously trying to bang that on the head straightaway. I don't want her to be, obviously me being from the country, and living on an estate, what used to be one of the largest estate of C., I don't want her to grow up being what I'd class as a typical child estate.* (Non-armyparent12, 82-85)

Social housing also brought difficulties for this family. As the parent below explains, having to live in social housing impacted on family-life decisions.

> *We did think about having another one, but we don't want to be one of these families that ends up with a boy and the council won't move us, or we've too many children and the council won't move us.* (Non-armyparent12, 14-16)

Chores, housework, childcare, lack of support from their partner and parenting (C6) were also pressures parents and practitioners noted as difficult to cope with.

> *Its hard work being a mum…they are hard to look after, for me, I find it really hard being a mum, and being a housewife.* (Non-armyparent7, 18-21)

> *Our house is such a mess, all the time. We haven't sorted it out yet, and it seems like I can never get on top of things, so for me it's always a struggle, just keeping up with the housework and things…things like that, it just gets me a bit down.* (Non-armyparent7, 23-25)

> *My husband works full-time, shift work, and he's almost never there, it's really weird times of the day that he's around.* (Non-armyparent10, 24-25)

> *We have had a lot of problems with him eating…quite a stressful time, mealtimes.* (Non-armyparent11, 211-213; 216)

Managing transitions (ST2), Figure 4.8, was identified as a subtheme, specifically for the army group, to represent the nature of their lifestyle.

> *We are a service family, we move on average every two to three years.* (Armyparent3, 3-5)

```
┌──────────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
│  Frequent moves  │      │  Compromises for │
│      (C1)        │      │  family stability│
│                  │      │      (C2)        │
└──────────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
    ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
    │  frequent    │          │              │
    │  transitions │          │ downgrading  │
    │  impact on   │          │              │
    │  childcare   │          │              │
    │  and chilren's│         │              │
    │  learning    │          │              │
    └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘
    ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
    │  impact on   │          │   financial  │
    │ opportunities│          │   comprises  │
    │  for spouse  │          │              │
    └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘
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    │ separation   │          │ seeking      │
    │ from family  │          │ family       │
    │              │          │ support      │
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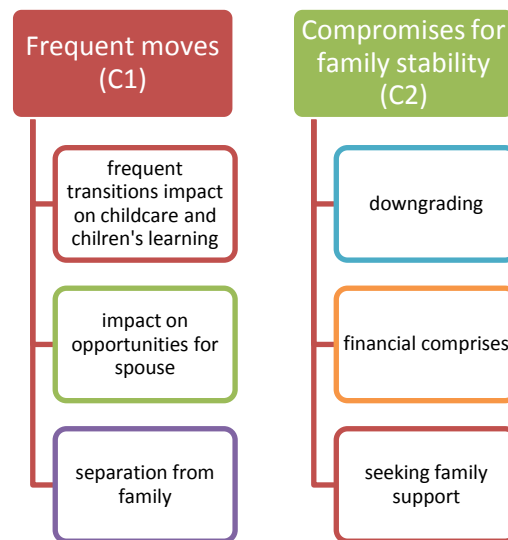
Figure 4.8 - ST2 (T2) – Managing transitions: Categories and Subcategories

Frequent moves were said to impact on family life, childcare and children's learning.

> *…children came here with limited education because they are constantly moving.* (Armyparent3, 55-56)

One parent described a 'horrible childcare experience' which required Social Services involvement due to concerns regarding her child's welfare. She explained how tricky it is to trust 'new people' every time there is a transition.

The only working mother of this group highlighted that transitions brought important barriers to employment, such as the need to retrain and gain UK recognised qualifications. These frequent moves also meant that families were separated from their extended family and this impacted on social support and childcare. For some families, the need for stability (C2) was greater and important compromises were made to ensure family stability and avoid deployment and/or postings. The parent below explains he opted for an employment downgrade to assure stability for his family.

> *I used to go away a lot with the army and moved from place to place every two to three years, but since I've had Mark and been married I've changed jobs, so I just stay here all the time, I don't go away, to be a bit more stable for the kids…I'm just a security guard now.* (Armyparent6, 14-17; 21)

Some families also decided on their posting location so they could be close to their extended family and gain social and childcare support. Some parents spoke of going to great lengths to ensure their family remained close by. The parent below explains that she asked her

parents to relocate to the UK to ensure family support and security. This consequently brought the need for them to remain permanently posted in one location and to make financial compromises.

> *No, they live here (parents), I just brought them, you know, I came and I said to sell everything in Poland, sell everything and just come...it's very important…that's why we haven't moved, because we are located here permanently.* (Armyparent1, 68-70)

> R: *So you are not posted?*

> P: *No, because I don't want to actually…So I prefer to have less money, but I think it's better for the kids.* (Armyparent1, 74-75)

For many families, this family support during deployment was crucial to ensure feelings of safety, security and normality.

> *…because what happens, if my husband's away, and we'd have to take away grandparents and all the security without him. I think it's very important to have somebody around.* (Armyparent1, 75-78)

> *I think he (child) feels safe and loved because my parents are here, my dad is coming every Friday.* (Armyparent1, 61-62)

The importance of positive family relationships (ST3), Figure 4.9, was commented on strongly by parents of the army group, compared to the non-army group. Both groups made comments relevant to C1, C2 and C3, but, as demonstrated in C1 and C3, the army group was much more positive about their family experiences. The army group also talked about some existing conflicts in their family, but these were not qualitatively as strong as the ones described by the non-army group (C2).
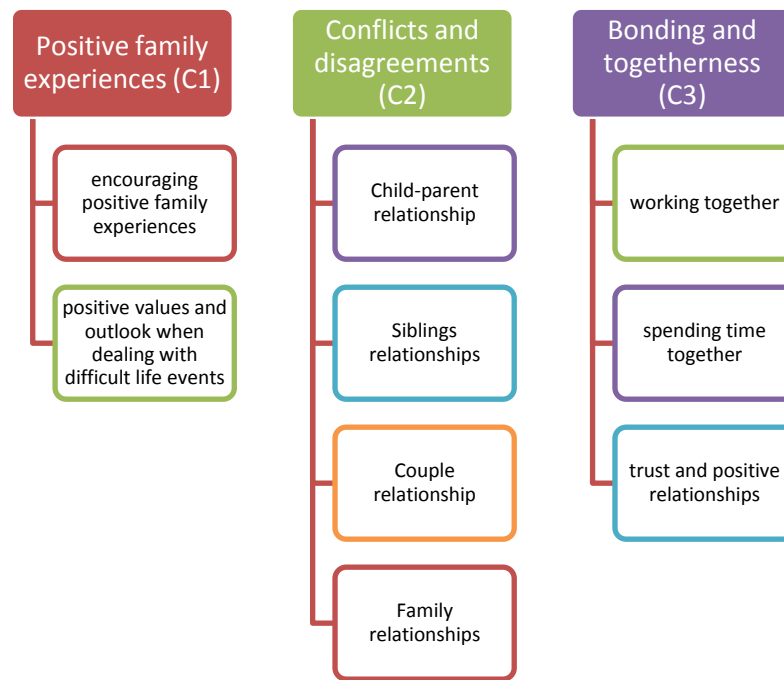
Figure 4.9 - ST3 (T2) – Family relationships: Categories and subcategories

Parents of the army group appeared to be much more positive about their family life and promoted a number of positive family values such as communication, spending quality time together and eating together (C3).

> *And as a family we all try to have a meal together, and we try to include baby as much as we can, because we want them to be close brothers together, so we'll sit them down together a lot of the time.* (Armyparent6, 351-354)

They also talked about deployment with a positive outlook on life (C1).

> *I have two legs, two hands, everyone's healthy and happy, and you have to find a way to make yourself happy in a way.* (Armyparent1, 5365-536)

On the other hand, parents and practitioners of the non-army group referred to a number of conflicting relationships and disagreements (C2), either child-parent, sibling, couple or/and family relationships.

> *Dan's mum's got a fierce temper, Dan has got a bad temper, and I think they quite clash.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 947-948(11))

> *He does tend to play us off against, me and my husband, where he'll get dressed for daddy but he won't do it for me. Going on and on and on.* (Non-armyparent11, 78-79)

With her brother, they sometimes hate each other. (Non-armyparent7, 133-135)

She definitely thinks she's in charge during the day…she rules the roost. (Non-armyparent12, 534)

The practitioner below comments on a mother-daughter relationship. She explains that the mother is going for a gastric band operation because her daughter called her 'fat'.

The operation that mum's going in for is going to be a gastric band fitted, and one of the reasons she's doing that is because Sofia's been calling mum fat…say that mum is fat, and mum won't be able to run, or mum can't do this is, you know, seemed a little bit harsh to me. (Non-armypractitioner3, 373-375; 387-389(12))

Some parents and practitioners from the non-army group also talked about the lack of support from their partner.

I have to show my partner who really, because he had his son nearly eight years ago, he never lived with him, to sort of give him some insight of what I've been through with my first, to show him how to be a father for the second. (Non-armyparent8, 416-420)

Despite parental absence, conflicting relationships were not strongly commented on by parents in the army group. Instead, they focused on working together and enjoying life together.

My husband is completely opposite personality to me…it does work, even though we are two foreigners in a different country, and although we are very very different with religion and culture…it doesn't bother us. We enjoy life…(Armyparent1, 31-35)

We are both quite hands on parents…me and my wife made a big effort to make it smooth for him [child]. (Armyparent6, 267-272)

4.4.1 Summary T2 – Family systems and Contexts

Children living in army families clearly experience different pressures, such as long-term parental absence, deployment, transitions and being exposed to the army culture at a young age, compared to children living in non-army families who experience parental mental health difficulties and disadvantages such as unemployment. However, children living in army

families benefit from experiencing positive family values and developing close family ties compared to children living in non-army families who are more exposed to many conflicts and disagreements. The threats of army life seem to promote more positive family support systems than were observed in the non-army families, where there is an absence of familial support systems.

4.5 T3 - School Systems and Contexts: Subthemes, Categories and Subcategories

T3, Figure 4.10, was developed to reflect a substantial number of comments related to school risk and protective factors indirectly influencing children's well-being. These risk and protective factors are represented in ST1, Family Circumstances Impacting on School Culture, ST2, School Ethos, and ST3, School as a Community. Important differences between the army and non-army groups were noted. ST1 was specifically developed to represent the different terms used by participants to describe family circumstances influencing school systems. C1, Deployment and Postings, was specifically developed to represent terms used by the army group, and C2, Vulnerability, terms used by the non-army group. ST2 was developed to represent the numerous comments related to the school ethos such as the schools' atmosphere and support systems. ST3 was developed to reflect strong comments made by the army group about the school as a community. This is closely linked to ST2, School Ethos, but provides a more in-depth perspective of participants' reflections regarding the community spirit of the school systems. Differences between the two groups are explained in the text.
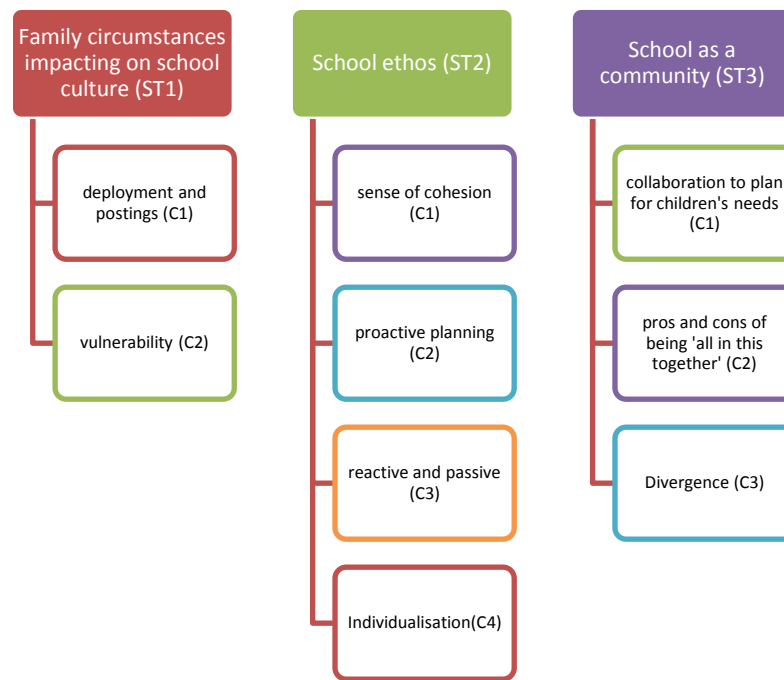
Figure 4.10 - T3 – School Systems and Contexts: Subthemes and Categories

Parents and practitioners from both groups talked about family circumstances that affect school culture (ST1), Figure 4.11. However, the terminology used by practitioners from the army group and the non-army group was very different.
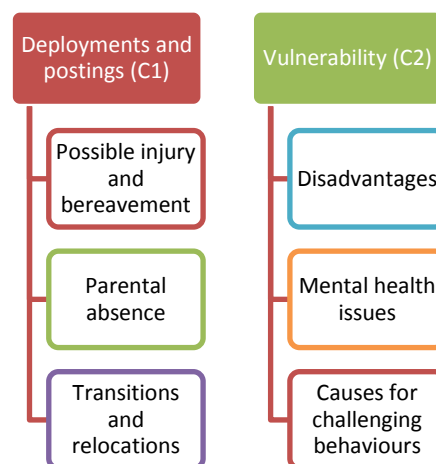
Figure 4.11 - ST1 (T3) – Family circumstances impacting on school cultures: Categories and Subcategories

C1, Deployment and Postings, demonstrates the terminology used by the army group's participants. These family circumstances create significant risk factors such as frequent moves, relocations and long parental absence, as these have the potential to destabilise the school context and emotionally disturb its members. As a practitioner clearly pointed out, the family unit experiencing parental absence is 'no longer normal' and goes through frequent

changes. Additionally, these family circumstances may lead to possible bereavement and injury emotionally impacting on children and families.

> *We've had situations where you've had a parent who, one thing that happened last term was a bereavement, and the parent came in and as she was trying to sort of say this to me, she was very distressed.* (Armypractitioner1, 448-451)

As this other practitioner explains, these family circumstances have the potential to affect members of this community emotionally.

> *I mean I will go home and talk to my husband about it, and I get all emotional about it.* (Armypractitioner2, 303-304)

The non-army practitioners talked more specifically about the vulnerability (C2) of their children and parents. The terminology used to describe the school community was related to mental health issues, challenging behaviours, and a lack of parental ability to cope. Parents of this group also talked about mental health affecting their daily lives (also see T2, ST4).

> *…very challenging children…they take up a lot of time, very challenging, they are going to be a nightmare over here, particularly K. he's quite a damaged little boy.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 655-657)

> *You know, mums, dads, whoever, quite often say they are having a really tough time with them…mums have been depressed, they haven't managed to spend time with the child, so then the child is doing all of his behaviour, just try and get their attention.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 884-887)

> *I try to feedback as much as I can with the vulnerable children...* (Non-armypractitioner4, 641-642)

Reflected in ST2, Figure 4.12, these risk factors bring different challenges to the schools' systems and were responded to in different ways. C1 and C2 were specifically developed to demonstrate the army group's perceptions, and C3 and C4, the non-army group's perceptions.

Sense of Cohesion (C1)	Proactive planning (C2)	Reactive and passive (C3)	Individualisation (C4)
'Like a family'	Aware of community needs	Seeking external support	Support systems are individualised
Unique	Communication systems	Feeling inadequate to respond	lack of systemic strategies to respond to needs
Normalising	Unique and specific strategies responding to needs	Needing training	

Figure 4.12 - ST2 (T3) – School ethos: Categories and Subcategories

For the army group, the school ethos was felt to be cohesive and responsive to the needs of children and families living in army families as well as being inclusive of civilian children (C1).

everyone's in the same sort of boat. (Armyparent2, 175-176)

…we like to call it the M. family. (Armypractitioner1, 466)

The uniqueness of the school system compared to other schools was also noted.

…it helps (this school) because there's no service schools, as such, in the UK, unless they are boarding. (Armyparent3, 689-690)

I don't think you are going to get that (support) anywhere else. (Armyparent3, 28)

Some participants explained that knowing other children are 'in the same boat' normalised their family situation.

…he also knew that there were other children there whose dads were away at different times, so it's kind of normalising the situation… (Armyparent3, 30-31)

This school had implemented a number of proactive strategies[14] to respond to risk factors, such as parental absence and deployment, associated with living in army families (C2). Strategies, such as Blueys and parcels, were highly praised by parents and practitioners and described as effective and positive.

> *…there's massive support, their work, they sent parcels at Christmas, they send the children's drawings out, they send pictures, and clips, and all sorts of stuff.* (Armyparent3, 26-27)

These strategies were said to promote a sense of connectedness (feeling connected to the absent parent) for children as they can continue to communicate with their absent parent.

> *…it keeps the continuity between the child and the absent parent, and it helps the children emotionally as well…* (Armyparent3, 29-30)

As explained in C1, these strategies were also said to normalise the situation for the children by helping them to understand that other children also experience parental absence. Parents felt these strategies were unique, responding to unique family circumstances, but also unique in relation to strategies that were absent from other school contexts.

> *…they (staff) understand that it's a little different to a regular school…I think they know how to deal with the kids, because it must affect the kids when their dad is here and gone and then here and gone.* (Armyparent6, 501-504)

The parent below explains feelings of having no contact to receiving letters and drawings from his daughter when he is away. Strategies implemented by the school system clearly help the parent and child to continue communicate during parental absence.

> *The blueys…it's a nice gesture, because a lot of the time we don't get mail, and then all of a sudden you get one, and it's from her, and you know that she's taken her time to draw it, and that's just a nice feeling, especially when you've not had anything through for a while, no letters, no contact, and all of a sudden you get a letter…my bed space is sort of decorated with bits that I've had from her, pictures and that. Yeah, it's nice.* (Armyparent2, father on R&R, 148-152)

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[14] Collaboration with Army Welfare, sending parcels and 'Blueys' emails/letters, a number of clubs (gardening, breakfast, bedtime story and Saturday clubs), sharing story books with parents 'My Daddy's a soldier' 'My Daddy's going away', workshops with a storyteller, special assemblies, links with the Army Padre.

This sense of cohesion and community was not strongly talked about by the non-army group. The school ethos appeared to be reactive and passive to children's and families needs (C3). The need for external support, such as extra adults in classrooms, support from external agencies and funding, was highlighted. These strategies are quite different from the army group who talked about 'home-grown' strategies to respond to community needs.

> *They (family) need something else these children…counselling, play therapy.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 676).

> *If you actually get somebody to stay a night and day with them, to give them support, show them what you mean, a model, and be consistent.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 935-937).

> *They've got to identify the problem first…what they (family) need…it's funding isn't?* (Non-armypractitioner3, 699)

> *It would be nice to have more adults for fewer children…You are trying to split yourself between these very, very needy children, and the rest of twenty-five children.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 657; 670-671)

> *Like the day she got covered in paint, oh I wasn't having it that day, so I went to find out what had happened, it turned out that there were only two teachers, one inside, one outside, they all had the paint out unattended, they were all throwing paint at each other.* (Non-armyparent12, 376-380)

Parents and practitioners also referred to challenging behaviours present in the classroom. Practitioners especially said they felt inadequate and inundated with difficult behaviours in their classes which impacted on their ability to teach and manage the class.

> *There was an incident where she was poked in the eye with a pencil, and they dented her, the jelly of the eyeball on the outside was dented in.* (Non-armyparent8, 86-88)

> [He] *would stand at the sandpit and bop children over the head, other children on the head, and he was one of them, so we were getting all kinds of problems.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 994-996)

> *Everything's fine, you turn away, they've hit somebody…throwing something.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 667-668)

> *A bad day, I am talking about myself…on Thursday, they were particularly challenging, I am terribly tired, had enough, and they are just out of the window with bad behaviour.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 660-664)

When talking about effective strategies which could help children, practitioners also highlighted the lack of time to observe children, recording difficulties and the need for training.

> P: *You've got to observe the children…to really get to know them…*

> R: *Do you feel you have enough time and capacity to be observing children?*

> P: *Not as much as I'd like.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 654-656)

> *And at the end of their time at nursery we get that bit of paper out, assuming we can find it and look at targets.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 830-831)

> *I think we can always learn more, we can always have more training on that because we are not really trained. I mean we have some training, but we can always have more training. I don't think you can every have enough.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 712-714)

For the non-army group, the support available at school was described as individualised and specific to children's needs (C4). This may be a positive approach when a small number of children have specific needs. However, for this school, practitioners talked about the vulnerability of the children and families, the need for more external and intensive parenting support and the presence of challenging behaviours in classrooms. When identifying support and strategies that could help support children and families, parents and practitioners from the non-army group did not have a cohesive plan to meet their needs. Both practitioners from the non-army group talked about using different strategies, such as talking to parents about the support available, signposting to Children's Centres, being a model for parents dealing with difficult behaviours, making suggestions about strategies to deal with their child, reassuring parents and being positive.

> *I try to feedback as much as I can with the vulnerable children as positive or negative, but mainly positive. I don't go back for every negative little thing. Obviously you have to fill them in, but generally I try and be positive, try and have a positive slant.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 641-644)

However, there was no mention of cohesive, coordinated and systemic strategies to respond to children's needs. Parents and practitioners also talked about barriers to receiving support instead of talking about effective support in the way that the army group did.

> *We used to run parenting classes, but it's never the ones you think should come who come, because I think all parents want to do it right, they just don't always know.* (Non-armypractitioner4, 693-696)

> *To be honest I haven't really noticed….we don't really need it…'school is to educate'.* (Non-armyparent12, 666; 678; 686)

> *If you are depressed or tired, and you've hardly got enough energy to sort yourself out, it's going to be doubly hard and difficult, and you susceptible to anything that might be construed as criticism.* (Non-armypractitioner3, 938-943)

This is quite different from the army group's practitioners who talked about working together. ST3, Figure 4.13, was developed to highlight these different perceptions of the 'school as a community'.
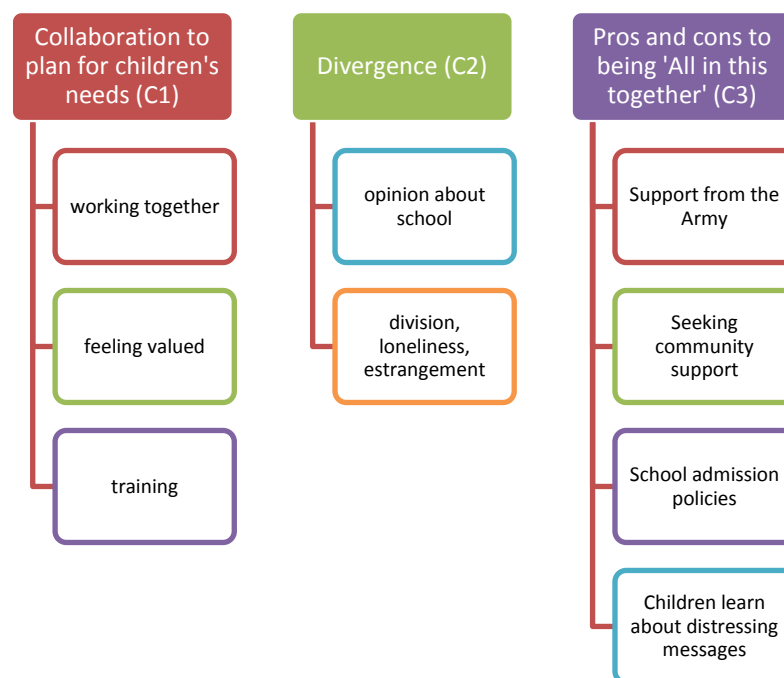
Figure 4.13 - ST3 (T3) – School as a Community: Categories and Subcategories

Reflected in C1, practitioners from the army group talked about a supportive environment where staff work together to meet children's needs, meet regularly, receive training and have

the opportunity to discuss issues. The practitioner below also highlights that practitioners are made to feel valued in this supportive environment:

> R: *So what do you think supports nursery/school staff to help families?*
>
> P[15]: *Yes it's modelling, it's any training, and it's being a supportive environment, where they are made to feel that they are valued, and what they say matters, so that they are able to communicate to sort of communicate freely with others, yeah, yeah.* (Armypractitioner1, 601-603)

Reflected in C2, this sense of community amongst staff did not emerge very strongly in the non-army group when they reported their feelings about the school. Parents talked more about divergent opinions in the school and the community.

> *I get lots of feedback from parents saying it isn't a very good school.* (Non-armyparent4, 455-456)
>
> *For me they are fine, I'm really happy with them…Everyone has their own opinion.*
>
> R: *Do you feel other people complain?*
>
> P[16]: *Yeah I do.* (Non-armyparent9, 308-311)

Throughout the non-army group transcripts, there was a sense that participants did not feel strongly about their school and community. Many reported dealing with difficult issues, such as challenging behaviours, mental health issues impacting on relationship-building, feeling isolated and not trusting others. There was a sense that many participants–both parents and practitioners–were dealing with their own pressures on their own without the strong support of their peers. Some parents were not aware of the support available at school. Practitioners did not report cohesive strategies to respond to children's and family's needs. This is quite different from the army group who talked about community cohesion and the need to stay together within a community that can respond confidently to risk factors associated with deployment and parental absence (C3).

> *…you wouldn't get that, if he was in an ordinary school, where they didn't deal with that, he would think, oh my dad's never home, and dad might*

---

[15] Practitioner.
[16] Parent

adversely affect him, so I think that's crucial, I think that's really key to what
they do at school. (Armyparent3, 31-34)

However, some parents mentioned there were pros and cons to such a cohesive ethos, as children from a young age learn distressing messages from their peers. These messages appear even more distressing as parents may have decided not to discuss war issues at home, either to protect the child or because it is not necessarily relevant to their family situation.

It's a shame that they've had to learn about this already [war].
(Armyparent4, 124)

Other people tell their children different things…some things they come
home with, things that they've heard said, are quite nasty...they are going
to Afghan to kill the baddies…to be thinking about something...It's like
distressing really. (Armyparent4, 130-133)

Additionally, even though 'staying together' is considered to be a priority for parents so that children access specific support and belong to a cohesive environment, the Army decided to sell many houses on the estate. These houses are currently being refurbished. Some of the MoD land has also been sold off to build new houses. As the father below explains, some parents perceive this as a possible threat for their child being admitted to the school based on the Army estate. This is because the new housing developments are expected to create an influx of civilian children on the estate, as these refurbished houses will be sold off to the public. Army families may not be in a position to buy these houses due to their transient lifestyle. School admission criteria are based on postcodes and not on 'belonging to the Army group', therefore, Army families located further away on the estate or outside the estate may not be admitted to the school. As refurbishing and building new houses on this estate will create an influx of families in the area, there are even talks about building another school close by. Some parents are becoming anxious about whether they will have a place in a community they feel they belong to and doubt other schools will offer the same type of support, support they feel to be crucial in the socio-emotional development of their child that acts as a significant protective factor.

They've sold a lot of army estate off to non-army people, like the building
site that is over the other side of the fields, in my opinion that should just be
a priority for army people who live on this estate, but I'm biased…I think it
would be nice if that was a priority, then we could keep all the kids together,

and they'd understand that we are from similar backgrounds. Whereas
army kids that didn't get into this school, and maybe have to go to a school
where there was no one else from the army, then any changes with their
dad or mum going away might be a bit harder for them to deal with…
(Armyparent6, 513-523; 528-532)

4.5.1 Summary T3 – School Systems and Contexts

School systems are affected by the family circumstances experienced by children living in army and non-army families. However, these family circumstances for both groups are very different. The army group's school systems are affected by deployments, parental absence, transitions, possible bereavement and injury compared to the non-army group's school systems which are affected by vulnerability, parenting difficulties and mental health issues. These school systems respond to these adverse circumstances in different ways. The army group's school systems are proactive, cohesive and supportive, as the non-army group's school systems are reactive, passive and individualised. These two communities are also different as the army group's school community collaborate to respond to various needs and feel the need to stay together, compared to the non-army group's community which appears to be divided.

4.6 Overall Summary

From the thematic analysis, important differences between the army and non-army groups were identified. Children living in non-army families experience risk factors at different levels, such as self-regulation difficulties, family conflicts and disagreements, parenting difficulties that noticeably impact on school adaptation and divided school systems. Despite experiencing difficult life situations which have the potential to be life threatening for close family members, children living in army families develop positive problem-solving and adaptation skills, as families seek social and family support, promote togetherness and positive values. Further, school systems are proactive, unique, cohesive and supportive. There is a sense that no one is left to cope with these adverse circumstances alone, and protective factors are carefully scaffolded around the child and family. The real, unique and distinct risk of the army family context stimulates proactive systemic planning both at a school and family levels, whereas the non-army families may have many known risk factors but these prompt little or no proactive planning. It may be that the nature of army family risk factors, which are extreme, stimulate much more forethought, whereas the risks of the non-army families seem to be managed reactively.

CHAPTER 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4. Firstly, reflections on the process of writing this thesis and the limitations of the study are discussed. Following this, a section on the quality of the study is presented. Then, the interpretation of the key findings is discussed, followed by the implications for the study and concluding comments.

5.2 Reflections on the Thesis Process

At first, the non-army group was not considered to be a comparable group but a group experiencing specific pressures such as possible deprivation and mental health difficulties. However, with much thought, research and consideration, it became evident that children living in non-army families were experiencing adversity and familial and socio-economic disadvantages, as were children living in army families. Considering that the construct of resilience needed to be studied in the face of adversity, on reflection, the comparison between the two groups was the right approach to take. Ethical considerations remain, but this was not deliberate and many other strategies were used to ensure ethical guidelines were respected (3.5.4). Contextual information and the risks for children living in army and non-army families are explained in different part of the thesis, justifying the use of the 'resilience' construct as an integral construct of the study. This qualitative design provided relevant and purposeful educational psychology interventions that could be used to the benefit of the participants and maintained nursery settings. However, limitations remain with this study, which are presented in the next section.

5.3 Limitations of the study

5.3.1 Reaching Families

A small percentage of questionnaires were returned, despite reminders and efforts to increase the response rate. Indeed, attempts were made to increase parental engagement (3.5.2.4). For example, a second wave of questionnaires was sent out. Additionally, four maintained nursery settings were initially contacted, but limited responses were obtained from two settings. These strategies were not sufficient for increasing the number of questionnaire returns to obtain a higher number of participants to allow a more rigourous sampling strategy. Further work with families and nursery practitioners would have helped increase questionnaire returns. There may be other factors which impacted on parental engagement in research. Parents are notoriously difficult to engage because the early years

can be a very demanding time for parents. A lack of available time may have affected parents' ability and willingness to consider involvement in activities that are not considered as a 'priority' for them.

A higher number of participants would have helped to select more rigorously homogeneous groups of participants for the study. A practitioner from the non-army group questioned the reasoning behind choosing the three children she talked about because she felt these children were doing well compared to other children in her class. However, interesting findings arose from the interviews. For example, risk factors such as mental health difficulties and family relationships were identified in the thematic analysis. For the army group, only six parents from an army background agreed to participate in the study, limiting the selection process of a homogeneous group. These families experienced varied army and family circumstances. One mother selected did not experience deployment as such as her husband was no longer deployed due to sustaining injury whilst on duty. Some parents had chosen stability over postings and four fathers were deployed. More homogeneous groups of participants would have enhanced the results.

5.3.2 Perception of adversity

Since resilience can only be researched in face of adversity, further information about the participants' perceptions of adversity would have helped to apply a more rigorous sampling strategy and gain homogeneity in the groups. In order to achieve this, in the family information questionnaire, a scaling system for stressful events, rating the events that have had the most significant impact on the child's life to the least impact on a scale of 1 to 10, could have provided the study with a better insight into stressful events affecting families. Alternatively, a standardised instrument may have helped with this issue, but since the information sent by letter to parents aimed to be minimal, this was not judged the right approach. Additionally, some theorists have argued that, in order to gain a complete picture of risk and adversity, a measure of daily hassles is recommended, as these are a potential source of risk due to their lower severity but greater chronicity compared with major life events (Naglieri & LeBuffe, 2006). Since only some researchers use this technique, awareness of this issue emerged after the data collection instruments were designed and sent out. The need to look into daily hassles is consistent with the findings of this study as the subtheme, Coping with Pressures of Daily Life, was identified in the thematic analysis. Collecting daily hassles information would have been helpful and should be considered for future research in the field.

It is important to remember that children not accessing early years education were not represented in the current study. Asking for participation through maintained nurseries excluded families not attending any childcare provision (although, only 4% of children in LA X do not attend a form of preschool education). Attending preschool education is considered to be an important protective factor in terms of adaptation to school and later school achievement for disadvantaged children (Sylva, *et al.*, 2004). Additionally, parents were contacted through a questionnaire which may have impacted on the type of parents represented in the study, parents with a certain level of literacy skills. Even though it was agreed with practitioners that support would be given to parents who may present literacy difficulties, parents may not have sought this help. A higher maternal education level forms a protective factor in the literature (Werner, 2009). Trying to reach parents of children not attending early years education and who have not acquired literacy skills would have required a different approach by the study.

The parents who participated in this study did so voluntarily. Therefore, certain characteristics could be attributed to the self-selecting nature of the sample and might not be fully representative of the population as a whole. A more at-risk sample may have produced different results, but as the headteacher of the non-army group explained to the researcher, more at-risk families are notoriously difficult to reach and may not have volunteered for such a study due to a fear of being judged. Limited responses to the questionnaire prevented rigourous purposeful sampling and this formed an important problem of this research.

5.3.3 Can the findings be generalised?

An important limitation of a qualitative study design is the generalisation of data. The problems discussed above seriously calls into question the generalisability of the findings. The findings are illustrative of the issues and themes that children and families face but not necessarily their full range.

Este, Sitter & MacLaurin (2009) suggest that it is important to describe the cultural and contextual factors of the systems studied in order to attempt some generalisations of the findings. This strategy was therefore used throughout the thesis. However, limitations remain, as it would be very difficult to generalise findings in other systems, as the systems studied were very specific in their nature.

5.3.4 Power imbalance

The researcher not belonging to either schools or culture may have played a part in participants not fully disclosing the true nature of their experiences, feelings and beliefs, in

fear of being judged or the information being disclosed to others. To counteract this issue, strategies were applied, such as a long-term engagement in the settings and reiterating the confidential nature of the study at several points. However, one cannot be assured these strategies were successful. Additionally, the participants' awareness of the researcher's role in the school as a TEP may have impacted on their perceptions regarding the research project. Even though all ethical guidelines were respected, parents might not have been as open as they would with someone they felt was not an educational professional. Furthermore, the data analysis was carried out with a certain level of interpretation, making judgements as to whether comments were related to a risk or protective factor. This level of interpretation did not come from the participants. Even though some strategies were applied to counteract this issue, power imbalance may remain and the present findings should be considered as taking into account an inequality of power at the interview and interpretation levels.

5.3.5 Participants' Perceptions of Risk and Protective Factors

The study was largely based on informants reporting their perceptions of risk and protective factors. It is acknowledged that people may be likely to distort their perceptions to create a particular impression of themselves. Therefore, there is a possibility that participants talked about their family stories and different factors in particular ways. In order to encourage a more 'honest' response and build a rapport, it was stressed to participants that all responses would remain anonymous. Additionally, the design that allowed for both parents' and practitioners' perceptions to be collected, aimed to limit this tendency. However, this can never be fully eliminated.

5.3.6 Resilience Processes

The researcher attempted to look at resilience processes in the thematic analysis and was able to identify risks and protective factors at the child, family and school levels (see 5.5 for a discussion). However, in the context of this study, it is impossible to determine fully the exact causes and nature of these interacting processes. The study does not claim to explain these resilience processes, as it is acknowledged that there are difficulties with finding exact interacting processes. However, it is argued that the study outlines many risk and protective factors at the child, family and nursery/school levels which have the potential to interact positively or negatively with one and other and, consequently, have a positive or negative impact on a child's school adaptation. As Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) explain, it is important not to fault resilience research when the risks have been determined, identifying the factors which may confer vulnerability is perfectly logical.

5.3.7 The Researcher's Role in Making Sense of Participants' Perceptions

Practitioners talked about three children in their class. They also talked, anonymously, about non-participant children of the study. This may have had an impact on the findings. However, it gave important contextual information that influences practitioners' work at nursery/school.

It is inevitable that a different researcher may arrive at different outcomes, even using the process outlined in 3.6, as different factors, such as previous educational experiences, professional practice and life experiences, may play an important role in interpreting data. Only the replication of a similar study would help ascertain this, but even then, another researcher would apply their own beliefs and interpretation to the data.

5.3.8 Thematic Analysis

As explained in sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, the study could have been improved by a more homogeneous sample of participants experiencing more adverse circumstances. Ideally, participants would have experienced similar army situation and similar social disadvantages. In the event, participants did not necessarily share the same army situation, such as deployment and moving or were not in very difficult circumstances. These factors have had an impact on the thematic analysis and how themes were developed.

As participants did not experience all the same family circumstances, a small number of quotes supporting the themes and subthemes come from a small number of the interview sample. This may have had an impact on how a subtheme is pertinent and valid to the rest of the group. This difficulty could also be due to the fact that some subthemes and subcategories were considered to have been stretched too far. However, as this topic is understudied in the UK, it was considered important to include in the thematic analysis as many possible risk and protective factors to allow a broad understanding of the issues faced by children living in army and non-army families. The study therefore represents an initial look at these issues and future researchers can learn and improve what has been done.

A smaller number of quotes supporting themes and subthemes could also be due to the design of the interview schedules which aimed to be open so that participants could tell their story. The interviews could have been richer had there been greater probing on army life and social disadvantages and a more substantive phase of piloting. More specific questions on army life and social disadvantages may have helped to gain more consistent numbers of participants talking about specific subthemes and subcategories. As it is, participants talked about these if they chose to.

Prevalence of the themes and subthemes were not reported in the results as numbers would not have been useful and may have been misleading given the small sample size. As this field of research is under-studied, reporting themes and subthemes even if these were talked about by a small number of participants was considered important as it aimed to gain a better understanding of their views, feelings and experiences.

It is important to note that the themes and subthemes which were developed in this study are from a small number of participants and do not necessarily come from homogeneous groups of participants which therefore impacts on the number of participants who talked about issues affecting them and similar to other participants. Further research using a larger and more homogeneous sample of participants would help in confirming themes and subthemes found in this study.

5.3.9 Within-school Context Effects

There is a possibility that the results obtained may be explained entirely by school or location effects. For example, setting 1 was judged as 'outstanding' by Ofsted, compared to setting 2, which was judged 'good with outstanding features'. To avoid this issue, it may have been better to study risks and protective factors experienced by children attending the school supporting the army families and compare army and non-army families in this way. However, this study found that the school supporting army families had a strong school ethos and cohesive support systems, so it is possible that non-army families are completely immersed in this army culture and that comparing both groups would not have created interesting results, but it may be interesting to gather non-army parents' perceptions of risk and protective factors as these may help inform professional practice.

5.4 Quality of the study

Despite important limitations, some quality features of the study, rigour, sensitivity, transparency and coherence, and credibility, are worth a mention. Yardley (2000) argues that large sample sizes are not viable in the analysis of qualitative data in depth, as too many samples risk losing the richness of the interviews. This research aimed to gain more in-depth perceptions of risk and protective factors and address a specific gap in the literature, so a smaller sample size was used. As this was an initial look at these issues, an in depth qualitative analysis may have proved difficult with a much larger number of participants.

To provide sensitivity to the study (awareness of the research context in the form of theoretical knowledge and socio-cultural context, Yardley (2000)), theoretical knowledge was presented in Chapters 1 and 2, and the socio-cultural contexts were set out in 1.3, 3.4 and 3.5.3.4. The researcher engaged positively with participants, asking naïve questions to understand their experiences, beliefs and feelings, not pretending to know or make assumptions about their experiences.

To bring transparency and coherence to this study (constructing a version of reality which is meaningful to the reader, which, consequently, sets up the quality of the narrative as central, Yardley (2000)), a narrative of the study was created. Details of the contextual factors surrounding the settings and the families who participated in this study were presented in this study.

Some theorists have argued that thematic analysis is not an approach in its own right, but more a foundation method to be used with other approaches (Boyatzis, 1998). However, it is argued by Braun and Clarke's (2006) that the thematic analysis of qualitative data allows for flexibility as well as respecting the beliefs held by the researcher and allowing participants' perceptions to emerge. The process used to analyse the data was clearly outlined to allow others to replicate the process as recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006). Additionally, to increase the credibility of the data analysis, the codes, subthemes and themes were shared with colleagues who have an understanding of thematic analysis and work in the field of educational psychology. These discussions helped bring rigour to the data analysis in terms of ensuring that the codes and themes matched the research questions, using appropriate labelling and, making sure codes and quotes reflected the themes.

Quality and impact, that is, assessing the value of a piece of research in relation to the objectives of the analysis and its applications to the community for whom it is relevant (Yardley, 2000), consist of qualititive features of this study. Such a localised research project has the potential to shape EP practice and inform specific interventions for the two school systems involved in this study. Since there is limited UK literature on risk and protective factors experienced by children living in army families, the impact of the research is also situated at an EPS level, where the dissemination of the findings has the potential to help EPs working in similar schools to gain a better understanding of risks and protective factors.

5.5 Interpretation of the Findings

Similarities and differences of risk (RQ1) and protective (RQ2) factors to school adaptation experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families were presented in

Chapter 4, using themes, subthemes, categories and subcategories. As the differences generated important points for discussion, these were given more emphasis. This section offers an interpretation of these findings, using the same themes and subthemes.

5.5.1 Risk (RQ1) and Protective (RQ2) Factors Experienced by Children Living in Army Compared to Non-Army Families

T1 – Children's Well-Being

In ST1, Emotional Regulation Strategies, important differences were found between children living in army and non-army families. Many children living in army families were affected by parental absence and deployment and displayed a range of emotional responses, such as developing a stutter, clinging to an established friendship group and anxiety about parental absence due to difficulties with the perception of time.

This is consistent with the limited literature on this issue. RN and RM Children's Fund (2009) explains that children experience a range of emotions and reactions when a parent is deployed. However, existing literature (Palmer, 2008; RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009) also emphasises the parent-child relationship and the coping skills of the remaining parent as impacting on the severity of these emotional reactions. Indeed, Palmer (2008) notes that the effects of a military lifestyle on a child's outcomes may follow an indirect pathway, where the military lifestyle impacts on parent-child interactions rather than having a direct effect on the child. However, from the findings of this study, it is possible to note that children are directly affected by this military lifestyle, particularly by deployment and parental absence, as they display a range of emotional responses to these circumstances.

Despite children responding emotionally to deployment and parental absence, parents and practitioners explained that children from the army group were able to solve problems verbally and adapt to difficult situations. Effective emotional and behavioural regulation strategies are repeatedly referred to as an important asset to successful adaptations (Wright & Masten, 2006). The non-army group did not comment so strongly on these skills and particularly highlighted their children's self-regulation difficulties. This could be due to the fact that children living in army families need and are encouraged to develop these skills in the face of adversity.

Indeed, positive family support systems, particularly community cohesion (ST2) and parental responses and attitudes (ST3), appear to protect children directly from present risks. Parents from the army group actively encouraged children to socialise and develop friendships through their own friendship groups, compared to the non-army parents, who felt isolated

and reported many difficulties related to the socialisation processes. Protective factors related to parental responses and attitudes (ST3), such as a positive perception of family life, positive values and positive behaviour management strategies were strongly talked about by the army group compared to the non-army group. Positive parental responses and attitudes identified in this study are consistent with protective factors for school adaptation found in the literature:

- a close relationship to a responsive caregiver (Wright & Masten, 2006) with good parenting practices, such as maternal warmth, support and responsiveness (Pianta, Smith & Reeve, 1991);
- parental involvement in a child's education (Wright & Masten, 2006), such as engaging families in their child's education at the earliest point possible (Hojnoski & Missall, 2006);
- a positive outlook on life (Wright & Masten, 2006).

For the non-army group, these protective factors were not strongly spoken about. Parental responses and attitudes (ST3) often exacerbated the child's emotional responses and created adaptation difficulties for school. Parents had many concerns, were uncertain about educational issues and commented strongly on behaviour management difficulties.

Additionally, social support systems were not evidently present in non-army families. Social and familial support is consistently identified as a protective factor in the literature. Werner (2009), presenting findings from the Kauai longitudinal study, explains that the grandparents' presence played an important role as caregivers and sources of emotional support for children whose parents had mental health difficulties. Hiew (1992) found that social support and community groups influenced adjustment during deployment. In this study, the importance of social and familial support was noted by both groups, but the army group particularly valued and sought social support compared to the non-army group. Many chose to stay close to their family to gain this security, emotional and childcare support during deployment. The non-army group talked about having difficulties with their family and social support, such as disagreeing about behaviour management strategies and finding it difficult to trust others. Children living in army families appear to benefit from social and familial support as well as community cohesion and positive parental responses and attitudes, compared to children living in non-army families.

T2 – Family Systems and Contexts

Many risk factors were identified in relation to coping with daily pressures of life (ST1). Participants from the army group talked about different risk factors such as deployment (C1),

army culture (C2), post-deployment reunion (C3) and managing transitions (ST2), compared to the non-army group. These risk factors are consistent with the limited literature that specifically looks into the stressors and strains affecting army families:

- deployment affects the children and families and impacts on family relationships (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009);
- post-deployment reunion is an intense and stressful period of adjustment (Hardaway, 2004; MoD, 2006) affecting family relationships and involves a re-assignment of roles (Palmer, 2008; RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009);
- deployment creates many pressures on the remaining parent; the remaining parent finds it difficult to fulfil the parental roles of the absent parent and has difficulties in carrying on activities as normal (RN & RM Children's Fund, 2009).

Transitions (ST2) for children living in army families were more frequent than for children living in non-army families. Frequent transition as a risk factor for children living in army families is consistent with the literature (Fabian & Roberts, 2006; Palmer, 2008). However, many parents who participated in this study were not currently experiencing regular postings, but had experienced these in the past, every two to three years. Families who participated in this study experienced varied posting circumstances. It is therefore difficult to make conclusions about the transitions and coping strategies used by these families. However, some risks were identified in relation to transitions, such as the separation from family, limited opportunities for the spouse and frequent transitions affecting the children's learning and childcare. The fact that many families made compromises and sought stability to protect children against frequent transitions indicates that seeking stability acts as a protective factor in itself. Ofsted (2011) also found that some parents chose this option over transition for their children's academic achievement and well-being.

For the non-army group, numerous risk factors were identified in relation to parents experiencing mental health issues (C4), employment, housing, social, (C5) and family life (C6) issues. These had an important impact on family life and indirectly affected children's well-being. Socioeconomic advantages, postsecondary education and employment opportunities are well-identified protective factors in the literature (Wright & Masten, 2006). Interestingly, the army-group did not mention these issues. This may be because army families experience more socio-economic advantages, as housing is often provided by the army and at least one parent is employed. Despite PTSD and deployment-related depression of the remaining parent being well documented in the literature (Palmer, 2008), mental health issues were not mentioned by the army group. There could be different explanations (some of which may be unknown) for this, including:

- mental health is a 'non-talked about risk' in army culture, due to the possible difficulties this would generate for the family and employment;

- the participants were experiencing deployment and therefore failed to identify the possible signs of depression and post-deployment difficulties such as PTSD;

- the numerous protective factors identified, such as a positive mindset, family support and healthy family relationships (ST3) act as buffers to this specific risk factor.

Indeed, the army group referred to healthy family relationship patterns (ST3) compared to the non-army group who noted conflicts and disagreements with family members. Stable and supportive home environments, including low levels of parental discord, positive sibling relationships and a close relationship to the caregiver are well documented protective factors (Wright & Masten, 2006). As well as protecting against mental health risks, these healthy family relationship patterns could also protect the child and explain the limited number of comments from the army group related to children's self-regulation difficulties. The army group also commented on many the protective factors implemented in the school system (T3), adding another level of protection to the numerous and different risk factors identified.

T3 – School Systems and Contexts

Important differences were found between the family circumstances of the army and non-army groups' and how these impacted on their school culture (ST1). The school system supporting children living in army families has to respond to deployment, parental absence, possible injury and bereavement, and frequent relocations and transitions. These unique features in the school system were talked about by the army group and were described as having the potential to upset community members emotionally and destabilise the school context. Knowing about this school culture is particularly important for EPs working in these schools, as it may have specific implications for EP practice (5.6). The school system supporting non-army families responded to very different family circumstances, especially disadvantages, mental health issues and challenging behaviours. Different strategies were implemented in the school system to respond to these difficult family circumstances.

A shared approach to identified risks was evident in the school system supporting army families. This school system had implemented a number of effective strategies to help children who experience parental absence. Consistent with Ofsted (2011), the Bluey club was considered to be successful and effective. This strategy was considered to help children deal with their emotions during deployment, normalise the situation for children, allow children to talk to one another about parental absence with the support of an adult and feel connected to the absent parent. All involved in this system were able to share these risks

with others, unlike the non-army group. In the non-army group, participants were often unaware of the risks, lacked knowledge about available support systems or the need to access these and did not present cohesive support strategies to respond to family circumstances impacting on school culture. As these risks are not necessarily shared by all, it may be more difficult for practitioners working with non-army families to identify risks and implement support.

Sharing concerns therefore appears to be an important protective factor. This could be because a system which shares concerns has identified the risks and may have implemented protection mechanisms. Since the majority of children and families in the school system supporting army families share common risks, such parental absence and deployment, it may be easier for this school system to plan proactively. Sharing risks appears to bring a sense of social cohesion as everyone understands them and works together towards minimising the risks. This sense of social cohesion was evident when the army group talked about the school promoting a sense of togetherness and their desire to stay together in the face of adversity.

However, this desire to stay together also brings risks. Children living in army families may be at risk of not receiving support from the school, due to the Army selling houses to the public. Since 'belonging to the army group' is not a school admission criterion, children may not access the unique school support described by participants. Ofsted (2011) discuss the difficulties of school admission policies for army families, as some parents often need to go through a lengthy appeal process to get their child into a school, especially during a transition from one posting to another. However, the risk factor identified in this study is slightly different to the one described by Ofsted (2011), even though Ofsted's message is still applicable to families experiencing relocations. In this study, parents expressed anxiety and fear related to admissions, in the sense that their children might not be admitted to a supportive school, and therefore not receive the right support; this reinforces the importance of social cohesion in the face of adversity.

Social cohesion is recognised as groups of people getting together to promote and defend the same interest (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Defending the same common interest, such as helping each other in the face adversity, may serve a protecting role against all the risks associated with deployment. For the non-army group, this lack of social cohesion was evident in comments made by participants, such as 'not wanting their child to have a typical council estate identity', fear that a child would 'learn the parts of naughty behaviours' displayed by children in the community and disagreements about the school system. Additionally, parents who participated in the study experienced different family pressures,

such as mental health issues, poverty and social housing, but did not all share these pressures. The lack of social cohesion in the context of disadvantaged communities is identified as a concern in the literature (Forrest & Kearns, 2001), as it is believed that community members do not have the ingredients to favour social cohesion. For example, contacts between networks do not extend to the world of work, residents spend more time in local areas, which restrict the opportunities for social networking and increase the chance of developing socially defiant behaviours (Forrest & Kearns, 2001). Differences identified between the army and non-army groups, such as the lack of social support, family discord and behavioural difficulties, could be explained by these contextual issues arising from disadvantaged communities. In 3.4.1, it was noted that ward 2 was at a slight disadvantage compared to ward 1, particularly in terms of education, skills and training. Despite families experiencing similar disadvantages and having a similar socio-economic status, risk and protective factors appear to be different at the level of community cohesion and this appears to impact indirectly on children's well-being. This lack of social cohesion may therefore bring difficulties in developing school systems responsive to various needs as these may be perceived more as individual rather than community risks. This was evident in the school's individualised response to children's and families' needs and their perceived need for external support. It could be useful for practitioners supporting this school system to consider social cohesion as a protective factor to counteract the numerous risk factors described.

5.5.2 Interpretation of the Findings: Conclusions

Unique risk and protective factors were identified for children living in army families. Parental absence and deployment create long periods of abnormality for the children and families with the potential to have emotionally devastating outcomes. This suggests that children living in army families experience many risk factors that are very different from children living in non-army families. However this does not necessarily mean that the children living in army families are more at risk, as the nature of these risks stimulates proactive systemic planning at the family and school levels, whereas the risks for the non-army group appear to be managed reactively.

What is more surprising is the number of perceived protective factors which were present in the army group's family and school systems, as compared to the non-army group. Children from army families are emotionally affected by these circumstances but also develop emotional regulation and coping strategies to deal with difficult situations. Proactive family systems (seeking social and familial support, promoting togetherness and encouraging a positive attitude to life, children and behaviour), and cohesive school systems (with unique support strategies and school ethos), contribute to protecting children against some of the

most extreme risks. The differences between the two groups were evident and strongly presented by participants, which can only strengthen the case for building school support systems based on a strong ethos, shared risks and understandings, and cohesive support strategies.

This suggests that many protective factors are built around children living in army families working for protection against risk factors and does not necessarily indicate a more at-risk population. As Niesel and Griebel (2005) highlight, a child needs support from their social systems to build resilience:

> The identification of protective factors has led to preventative approaches to equip children with competencies to meet future demands….children cannot turn into resilient persons by themselves. They need significant support from their social systems (pp.4-6).

As evidenced in this study, school systems can play a crucial role in fostering strengths, adaptive traits and critical skills (Armstrong, *et al.*, 2009) and promoting school adaptation. The implications for EP practice are therefore discussed in the next section.

5.6 Implications of the Study

The implications of the study are discussed, including key messages informing professional practice, possible future research and the contribution made to the academic literature. The limitations of this study have been recognised, and there is a need for further research in this particular area.

5.6.1 Implications for EP Practice

Participants noted different risk factors to school adaptation which would benefit from being addressed in order to prevent difficulties from evolving in children's school careers. However, as argued in 2.2.3, current models of practice, such as the emphasis on statutory assessments, characterised as being reactive work based on a child's level of needs, generally do not incorporate the time to carry out systemic and organisational preventative work. Even though statutory assessments are an important duty fulfilled by EPs, increasing EPs' capacities and time allocation to promote resilience at different systemic levels have the potential to impact significantly on successful school adaptations. Indeed, in this study, risk factors were found to be situated at the child's level (emotional regulation strategies), and at the family and school levels. Additionally, findings from this study showed that many

protective factors from the family and school systems support children from army families, and school systems can play a role in fostering children's well-being.

It is therefore important for EPs to have the opportunity to work intensively at these levels to promote school adaptation. Dessent (1992) argues that organisational level work is undertaken where educational psychology can be more effective. EPs are therefore well placed to support practitioners to develop policies and systemic interventions. Systemic interventions appear even more important as maintained nursery practitioners need further support (2.2.3). The need to work at systemic levels to promote school adaptation is also supported by Gutkin and Curtis (2009) and Kennedy, Cameron and Greene (2012). Based on the risk and protective factors to school adaptation identified in this study and the need for organisational and systemic work, support strategies which could be implemented by the schools and EPs are presented below.

T1 – Children's Well-Being

For children living in army families
EPs should be aware of a range of emotional responses to parental absence and deployment. Children may experience a different military lifestyle, deployment to a war zone versus training, relocations versus permanent postings. These different family circumstances may affect children's well-being in different ways. Despite the school responding to these cohesively, there may be a need for specific individualised attention to respond to a child's emotional needs, such as the development of a stutter during deployment. EPs should therefore be able to work together with school staff to help them identify possible difficulties at an early stage and discuss possible strategies.

For children living in non-army families
EPs should be aware of the importance of emotional regulation strategies when working with children experiencing specific disadvantages and support practitioners in implementing strategies to promote the development of these skills with a view to promoting school adaptation. Helping parents to develop positive parental responses and attitudes to children could also help the development of positive adaptation skills.

T2- Family Systems and Contexts
Parents would benefit from the opportunity to reflect on their parental experiences, as many risk factors in the family system were identified. This support could be valuable to parents in promoting school adaptation and prevent difficulties from evolving during their child's school career. Systemic strategies, such as consultation, parental support groups and/or workshops could be offered in schools to respond to the needs identified in this study.

For children living in army families

Parents from this group would benefit from support for parental absence and deployment, such as support for the remaining parent regarding the pressures they face and adopting different parental roles. Helping parents think about the importance of social and familial support and possible deployment-related emotional issues and coping strategies for the child and family would also be useful. Support for bereavement and injury issues (if needed), transitions and relocations, and adaptation to the post-deployment reunion could also be implemented.

For children living in non-army families

Families from this group experienced a range of difficulties which had an impact on the children and families, such as mental health issues, coping with parenting, behaviour management difficulties, seeking family and social support, worrying about school issues. Since having a positive outlook on life appeared to have a positive impact on army families, workshops on a positive mindset and outlook on life and retraining negative thoughts into positive ones could be offered to parents from this group.

T3 – School Systems and Contexts

EPs need to be aware of the family circumstances affecting school cultures, as these were found to be particularly different for both groups and impacted significantly on school support systems.

For children living in army families

The school supporting army families is particularly affected by family circumstances, such as parental absence, deployment, transitions, possible injury and bereavement, that have the potential to disrupt daily routines and impact on the community's emotional well-being. EPs working in similar schools need to be aware of these unique cultural features affecting school support systems. Policies at school and EPS/LA levels may need to be developed to ensure children and families are supported at times of need. A policy could strengthen the fact the needs of children and their families fluctuate and characterised by short notification that normal academic planning may need to be flexible to these needs. Many EPS now have a critical incidents' policy in place (this is the case for LA X), but this policy may not be sufficient to respond to family and school needs, as bereavement is only one cultural feature impacting on the school culture.

Although significant, risk factors were shared and known about by the school community and mitigated against by a number of effective and proactive strategies, which responded specifically to these specific risks. EPs can encourage in their practice the development of

supportive and proactive school systems and contexts. This sense of community cohesion and a supportive environment appear to have a significant impact on school ethos.

School admission policies may need to be reviewed in the light of the new housing development. It may not be possible to change school admission policies to include all army families. In this case, the EPS could develop training and develop cohesive strategies with nurseries/schools supporting army families surrounding the housing development. This support would ensure that children living in army families which are admitted in other schools do not feel isolated and receive the necessary support to develop emotional regulation strategies to cope with a military lifestyle.

For children living in non-army families

Working closely with this school could help develop more cohesive school systems. Identifying shared risks could be an important first step. In the light of this study, families were found to be vulnerable, experiencing mental health issues, needing parenting support and needing to deal with challenging behaviours. EPs working in this school could help staff develop cohesive and systemic approaches to respond to these family circumstances.

5.6.2 Contribution to the Academic Literature

Whilst acknowledging the substantial limitations affecting the study and the limit to the transferability of the findings, the results do contribute to the literature that exists on risk and protective factors faced by children living in army families, as this sort of the study has not been undertaken in the UK before. The comparative nature of this study has helped shape EP interventions which could be explored with the schools' practitioners and act as protective factors in response to the risk factors identified in this study.

5.6.3 Future Research Directions

Studying a more homogeneous group of families experiencing deployment (all families experiencing deployment of a parent at the time of the study) and/or a more homogeneous group of families experiencing frequent transitions due to postings in the UK or abroad would enhance this research field.

All families had experienced or were experiencing the deployment of the father. Researching deployment-related risk and protective factors in different family situations, such as the deployment of mothers, dual-military marriages or single parents would add value to the field. In professional practice, the researcher worked with children experiencing the deployment of mothers and this situation had a significant impact on young children's emotional regulation strategies. As Masten & Obradovic (2006) explain, an attachment

system is part of various adaptive systems in the world literature on resilience, thus, research into deployment related risk and protective factors more specifically would help understand these better. Researching risk and protective factors associated with dual-military marriages would also add value, as children may experience some more complex risks such temporary guardianship, often at short notice, and separation from both parents at the same time. Single parenthood and deployment also bring similar challenges, but children may also experience different risks such as fear of losing the sole parent.

Comments related to post-deployment issues were limited, because participants were experiencing deployment at the time of the study. This means that asking participants to anticipate their reactions to a post-deployment reunion would have been difficult. Nonetheless, it would be interesting to investigate children's and parents' coping strategies whilst experiencing a post-deployment reunion. Similarly, no comments were made related to PTSD or the depression of the remaining parent during deployment. This is a very sensitive issue to research, as it could potentially affect the children and families and would need careful ethical attention. Such research could help understand this field further and inform educational psychology practice.

For the non-army group, a research project could be developed to evaluate how cohesive systemic support systems can make a difference to children and families. For example, the pre- and post-evaluation of children's resilience, with an intervention addressing risk factors, could be developed in the school system supporting families experiencing disadvantages.

Some theorists argue that young children should be involved in giving their views on research that concerns them because children are not passive recipients, but active constructors, of their social and cultural contexts (Griebel & Niesel, 2000). They are also powerful social actors and the principal stakeholders who can shape policy and practice (Einarsdottir, 2007). Children's views of parental absence and deployment would add value to the field, as would their views on coping with daily family pressures. However, this is a sensitive subject and would need careful ethical attention.

Early years settings are extremely diverse in nature. Research into the similarities and differences between other early years systems in comparison to the schools/maintained nursery systems in this study could add value to the field and further inform practice.

5.7 Conclusions

The study presented in this thesis has provided a unique contribution to the field of educational psychology by gaining a deeper understanding of the risk and protective factors

experienced by children living in army compared to non-army families. It has utilised an in-depth comparative method of inquiry to elicit risk and protective factors to school adaptation experienced by children of both groups. This comparative aspect of the study has informed important avenues worth exploring with school systems and EP intervention strategies. The present findings illustrate the complex picture of resilience research in young children's lives and possible interacting factors. Eliciting parents' together with practitioners' voices helped gain a more in-depth picture of these interacting factors. More research would certainly help to continue to develop this research field of how to support children, parents and practitioners at a crucial stage of the child's school career.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Letter to Headteachers

Dear Headteacher,

With reference to the above, I am writing to ask your permission to undertake a study of the well-being and resilience of children before transition to primary school. I am currently working as a trainee educational psychologist in your school and studying towards a doctorate. My thesis project will study well-being and resilience in early childhood. Should you agree to be involved in this project, I will require the help of parents, practitioners and children from your school. Parents and practitioners will be asked to complete short questionnaires and to give their views on well-being and resilience skills in early childhood. The children will be consulted through activities. This is an opportunity to support the development of practice in this field and gain a better understanding of how young children can be supported before transition to primary school.

This research is being carried out under the supervision of tutors within the Institute of Education in London and will follow the ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society. All data will be kept confidential at all times. Throughout the study, a research leaflet containing information about this project will be available to parents and practitioners. Towards the end of the research project, a research briefing will be available to parents and practitioners at school. Please, return the form below to the provided address and do not hesitate to contact me should you wish further information.

Yours Sincerely,

Pascale Paradis
Trainee Educational Psychologist
Address and contact details provided

Appendix 2 - School Consent Form - Contract with Headteachers

- I_____Headteacher of _____School accept for this project research to be carried out in collaboration with our nursery school.

- I understand that practitioners will be asked to contribute to this project. This should take approximately maximum one hour of their time (half an hour for questionnaires and half an hour for discussion, should this be required).

- I understand that this project will be respecting ethical guidelines from the British Psychological Society.

- I understand that children's information will be needed for this project to be carried out and these will be provided on request.

- I understand that this information will be kept confidential and that it will be impossible for participants to be identified in the dissemination of the results.

- I understand that, should there be any issues arising from this research project, information provided in the research leaflet will provide contact details for communication with the researcher to take place.

Signature:_____

Date:_____

Appendix 3 – Letter to Parents

Date

Dear Parent,

I am a trainee educational psychologist working in this area. I am currently studying and have to complete a research study to complete my qualification. I am interested in young children's resilience. My study may help to understand how children develop positive skills before starting school and how we can support families and children.

I am writing to see if you would like to help with this research. I would really like to hear your views about your child's development. Here is attached a short questionnaire about family information and a permission slip. An envelope is provided for you to return these questionnaires at no cost. All information will be kept confidential which means that no one will be able to recognise you or your child from the research data. Nursery staff will also be asked to help me with this study.

Your participation in this research is voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. A leaflet is included explaining this project in more detail, but if you have further questions please do not hesitate to get in touch. My contact details are provided below. Please return the form below with the questionnaire and your details.

Yours Sincerely,

Pascale Paradis, Trainee Educational Psychologist
Address and contact details provided

Please tick as appropriate and return to Pascale Paradis in the envelope provided.

___   I agree to take part in this research by completing the form attached.

___   I agree to take part in this research by meeting to talk about how my child feels about nursery.

Name_____

Telephone:_____

Email (if available)_____

___   I agree that the preschool may pass on information regarding my child's progress.

Please note that all the information provided at any stages of this research will be kept confidential at all times. This means that this information will not be shared with staff or other parents. Names will only be mentioned to make arrangements to meet you or your child and ask information about your child's progress. Also, if you wish to cease your participation to this research, you have the right to do so at any stage.

Signature:_____   Date:_____

Appendix 4- Family Information

Dear Parents/Carers,

FAMILY INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE: I would like to learn more about your child's early experiences. Please answer below by a tick and complete the information. Please note that the information you are asked to give might include some sensitive issues. All the information you give will be kept confidential at all times.

YOUR CHILD - Name:_____Nursery:_____
Date of birth: _____Age:_____

YOUR CHILD'S EARLY EXPERIENCES

1. Were there any complications during the pregnancy?
Yes __What type of complications? _____No__ N/A__

2. What was your child's weight at birth? _____ N/A___

YOU and YOUR FAMILY

3. What is your relationship to the child?
Mother __Father __Other: Please specify:_____

4. How old are you? 18-24 _____ 25-34_____ 35-44 _____ 45-60 _____ 60+_____

5. What do you consider your ethnic group to be? _____

6. What languages does your child hear spoken at home?_____

7. How would you describe your family circumstances?
__Single Parent Family
__Two Parent Family
Other: Please specify_____

8. Are there other children in your household? Yes __No__
If yes, what is their age and relationship to your child.
_____
_____

9. What is the highest qualification you have completed?_____

10. Are you currently employed? Yes __No__
If yes, what type of your work do you do? _____

If you are a two parent family, please answer the information below about the other parent. If you are a single parent family, please continue with question 16.

11. What is their relationship to your child?
Mother __Father __Others: Please specify:_____

12. How old are they? 18-24 _____ 25-34_____ 35-44 _____ 45-60 _____ 60+ _____

13. What do they consider their ethnic group to be? _____

14. What is the highest qualification he/she has completed?_____

15. Are they currently employed? Yes __No___
If yes, what type of work do they do? _____

16. Please tick any of the following stressful events that may have affected you or your child in the last year. You may tick as many as you need.
__Bereavement
__Divorce/Separation
__Moving house
__Pregnancy/Birth of a child
__Illness in the family
__Injury
__Difficulties at work
__Family difficulties
__Depression
__Lack of support
__Financial difficulties
__Sleeping difficulties
__Anxiety
__Behaviour management difficulties
__Problems with neighbours or friends

Please give any comments you may have. Thank you very much for your time. Your input is valued.

Appendix 5 – Research Leaflet

Young Children's Well-Being and Resilience

A research project
Information for Parents and children of preschool age in the X Area.

Please will you help with my research?

My name is Pascale Paradis. I am currently studying for a doctoral degree, while working as a Trainee Educational Psychologist in X. This leaflet tells you about my research.

Why am I doing this research?

The purpose of this research is to investigate young children's resilience. I am hoping this project will help with understanding resilience in young children and help teachers to support children and families at preschool.

Do you have to take part?

You decide if you want to take part – and even if you say 'yes', you can drop out at any time or say that you don't want to answer some questions. You can tell me that you and your child will take part by signing the consent form.

Will you know about the research results?

A research report will be available at preschool for you to access information regarding the results of the research by July 2011.

Who is funding the research?

This research is carried out in collaboration with X Council, Educational Psychology Services and the Institute of Education, London. There is no funding associate to this research. This research is part of the requirements of my Doctorate in Child, Adolescent and Educational Psychology.

Thank you for reading this leaflet.

Pascale Paradis, Trainee Educational Psychologist
Details provided

Who will be in the project?

I will ask up to 100 parents and preschool children to join in this project by completing a questionnaire. After this I will ask you to talk to me about how your child.

What will happen during the research?

The questionnaire should not take more than 15 minutes to fill in. The discussion should take maximum an hour of your time. Should you wish to participate in the discussion, I will contact you to arrange a convenient time and place for us to meet. I will also be observing the children in the nursery to get to know them and the setting.

What questions will I be asking?

Questions in relation to your child's well-being and resilience. For example, I am interested to hear how you would describe your child's strengths, and how they manage new experiences.

What will happen to you if you take part?

I will gather information from the questionnaire. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, only for what you really think.

What will happen to you if you take part?

I will gather information from the questionnaire. If you are asked to participate in the discussion, I will tape record our discussion, so I can remember what we talked about and type it up later. I am not looking for right or wrong answers, only for what you really think.

Could there be problems for you if you take part?

I hope you will enjoy giving your views through the questionnaire. Some people may feel upset when looking at some of the topics. If you want to stop talking, we will stop. If you have any problems with the project, please tell me.

Will doing the research help you?

I hope you will enjoy helping me. The research will help us to understand how children and parents cope with their lives and how we can support them. It will guide teachers in their work with children's resilience.

Who will know that you have been in the research?

The nursery staff may be aware that you are taking part in the research, but I will not tell them or anyone else what you tell me unless I think someone might be hurt. If so, I will talk to you first about the best thing to do. I will keep tapes and notes in a safe place, and I will change all the names when I write my report.

Appendix 6 - Semi-Structured Interview Schedule - Parents

This interview will be audiotaped for recording purposes. Consent will be asked to the parents. If parents feel uncomfortable about this, answers will be written on paper.

If parents had not completed the first questionnaire, this will be revisited before starting this interview.

Briefing

'Thank you for agreeing to contribute to this study. Would it be ok if we record this, it is just for me to be able to refer back to this information. I am interested in learning about children's and families' experiences in preschool, how they cope with their lives. All your comments will be kept confidential (eg. no discussion with preschool staff). There is no wrong or right answer, I just want to hear what you think. Do you have any questions before we start?'

Your child's experience at preschool

This study is looking at family lives. Please tell me about your family story (narrative, more open). Is there a family story you have?

Prompts such as meeting your partner, culture, language

What has brought you to this area?

Have you been here long? How do you feel about being here?

What is going well? What would you wish?

Have you ever felt you needed support from the preschool/school staff?

How do you feel about the support you receive from preschool/school?

What goes well?

What could be put in place?

'I would like to talk to you about your child's experiences at preschool. Tell me how _____(child's name) is doing at preschool this year.'

What types of things is he/she learning?

What does he/she like to do at preschool?

What activities does he/she not like to do?

Tell me about your child's progress. What are you particularly pleased with? What do you have concerns about?

Areas to explore

Friendship

Problem-solving – deal with social situations – self assertiveness

Independence

Trust with adults

Self-control/self-regulation

Exploring

 'Tell me about your child's behaviour at preschool.'

To prompt the discussion – here are more specific questions

How well does your child get along with children there?

How does he/she get along with children outside the preschool?

How well does he/she get along with the staff?

How does your child resolve problems with others?

How does he/she cope with changes or more stressful events in life?

What are his/her reactions and ways of coping when he/she expressing views with friends/argues with friends?

When your child has a more difficult time, what does he/she does to make things better?

What is your relationship with the staff like? How is _____getting along with staff? i.e. talks about them, wants to see them, goes confidently to staff.

How would you describe your involvement at preschool? Do you go to help? How would you describe the contact you have with preschool staff?

Your child's experience with his/her peers

Outside preschool, what kind of things does your child do with other children?

Do any of the children your child goes to preschool with, play with him/her? Which activities do they do together?

Your child's experience at home

'Now, I would like to ask you about _____(child) at home. What does your child like to do at home?

What kinds of activities do you and your child enjoy together?

What things do you like to do with your child to help him/her learn?

Tell me about your child's behaviour at home.

What is a typical good day for you and your child?

What is a typical bad day for you and your child? When your child is frustrated or upset, what does he/she do? How do you handle this? How are things turned around to achieve a positive outcome?

How do you promote positive behaviour at home?

Do you feel more support would be needed in this area? Why?

In terms of support around promoting resilience at nursery and in school, what type of strategies help or would help in relation to your situation, (for example as an army family), what do you think would help?

Debriefing

Do you have any questions? Or any comments?

'That is it. Your input is very important and valued. Everything we discussed will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your time.'

Appendix 7 – Semi-Structured Interview Schedule – Practitioners

This interview will be audiotaped for recording purposes. Consent will be sought.

If pedagogues had not completed the questionnaire, this will be revisited before starting this interview.

Briefing

'Thank you for agreeing to contribute to this study. Would it be ok if we record this, it is just for me to be able to refer back to this information. I am interested in learning about children's and families' experiences in preschool, how they cope with their lives and how they live transitions. All your comments will be kept confidential (no discussion with parents). This means that no name will be associated with information. Do you have any questions before we start?'

Please tell me about……….(child's name) experience of preschool.

Friendship

Problem-solving

Independence

Trust with adults

Self-control/self-regulation

Exploring

To prompt the discussion – here are more specific questions

What types of things is he/she learning?

What does he/she like to do at preschool?

What activities does he/she not like to do?

Tell me about this child's progress. What are you particularly pleased with? What do you have concerns about?

'Tell me about this child's behaviour at preschool.'

To prompt the discussion – here are more specific questions

How well does this child get along with children there?

How well does he/she get along with the staff?

How does this child resolve problems with others?

How does he/she cope with stressful events in life?
What are his/her reactions and ways of coping when he/she argues with friends?
When your child has a more difficult time, what does he/she does to make things better?

What is your relationship with the parents like? How does this child talk about home?

Outside preschool, what kind of things does this child do with other children?

Do any of the children this child goes to preschool with, play with him/her? Which activities do they do together?

Many families experience transitions. How does this have an impact on families? What have you noticed about families experience transitions? What support do you feel these families needs? What works well? What else could help?

How would you describe a resilient child?
Give an example
How do you support children and families at preschool?
What works well?
Do you find some children are not responding to some of these strategies? What do you feel would help these children and families?
What do you think would help and support preschool staff to help families and children to build more resilience?

In terms of support around promoting resilience at nursery and in school, what type of strategies help or would help in relation to specific situations (for example for army families), what do you think would help?

Debriefing

Do you have any questions? Or any comments?
'That is it. Your input is very important and valued. Everything we discussed will be kept confidential. Thank you very much for your time.'

Appendix 8 - Timeline of the Study

February-March 2010	Discussions took place with SENCos, headteachers and/or nursery managers of two Infant Schools and Nurseries
End of April 2010	Letters and research leaflet were sent out to headteachers A pilot study took place and subsequently, instruments were reviewed and amended.
May-June 2010	Brief contractual agreement was signed by headteachers. Letters, research leaflet and the family information questionnaire scales were handed out to parents of 3 and 4 years old children by practitioners from the two maintained nurseries. The permission slips were returned, the sampling process took place.
September 2010 – January 2011	Following a pilot study, the script of the semi-structured interviews was amended slightly. Practitioners and parents were contacted and a visit arranged. There were some cancellations due to snow and illness. In order to facilitate the coordination of interview arrangements, practitioners helped contact parents. During first visits in settings, familiarisation with the setting took place and logistic and practical arrangements were discussed (brief explanation of the practical aspect of the study, booking times for observations, choosing a convenient place for future meetings with parents). All observations took place before the interviews.

Appendix 9 – Description of Children and Parents from the Army Group

Child[17]	Child/ Parent	Participant	Setting	Age (at time of study)	Stressful events in the last 12 months	Disadvantages								
						Free school meal (FSM)	Mother has no qualification	Father is semi-skilled or never worked	One parent is unemployed	Non-working family	English as an additional language (EAL)	Ethnic minority	3 and more children in the household	One parent or child has longstanding illness or disability
Justin	1	Mother	1	4	Pregnancy/birth of a sibling.						✓	✓		
Henry	3	Mother	1	4	Sleeping difficulties. Anxiety. Behaviour management difficulties. Problems with friends/neighbours	✓			✓					
Mark	6	Father	1	3	Moving house. Pregnancy/birth of a sibling. Behaviour management difficulties.				✓					
Leo	5	Mother	1	3	Moving house. Pregnancy/birth of a sibling. Injury. Behaviour management difficulties.			✓		✓			✓	✓
Alice	2	Couple	1	4	Moving house. Pregnancy/birth of a child			✓	✓					
Frankie	4	Mother	1	3	Bereavement. Pregnancy/birth				✓		✓	✓		

[17] All names have been changed

				of a sibling. Illness in the family. Family difficulties. Lack of support. Depression. Financial difficulties.								

Appendix 10 – Description of Children and Parents from the Non-Army Group

Child[18]	Child / Parent	Participant	Setting	Age (at time of study)	Stressful Events in the last 12 months	Disadvantages								
						Free school meal (FSM)	Mother has no qualification	Father is semi-skilled, unskilled or never worked	One parent is unemployed	Non-working family	English as an additional language (EAL)	Ethnic minority	3 or more children in the household	One parent or child with longstanding illness or disability
Zed	10	Mother	2	3	Financial difficulties				✓			✓		
Dan	11	Mother	2	4	Behaviour management difficulties			✓	✓					
Rio	9	Mother	2	4	Moving from Africa to UK			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Sofia	12	Couple	2	3	Illness in the family. Depression. Financial difficulties. Sleeping difficulties.	✓			✓		✓			
Suzie	7	Mother	2	4	Depression			✓	✓					
Elle	8	Mother	2	4	Bipolar disorder	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓

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[18] All names have been changed

Appendix 11 – Description of Practitioners who Participated in the Semi-Structured Interviews

Role	Practitioner	Setting	Description	Child talked about
Nursery teacher	1	1	Has been in post for a long time. Also acts as Deputy Head in school.	4,5,6
Reception teacher	2	1	No previous experience working with Army families.	1,2,3
Nursery teacher	3	2	Has been in post for a long time. SENCo of the nursery.	4,5,6
Reception teacher	4	2	Has been in post for a long time.	1,2,3

Appendix 12 - Pen-portrait for each child

Army group	Justin (1)	Two children. Father was deployed for 6 months to a war zone during the time of the study. Mother is from Poland and the father, a white Afrikaan[19]. The mother's family relocated from Poland to help with childcare. Parents opted for not being posted elsewhere so they can continue to gain the family support. Justin found adaptation to reception difficult because his Polish friend was still at nursery. The practitioner raised concerns about his learning and communication skills. She worries there may be some language barriers issues preventing Justin from progressing. In class, Justin is quiet, watching others, and often engaged in solitary play.
	Henry (3)	Three children. Father was deployed for 6 months to a war zone during the time of the study. The family was posted to different areas of the country before, but the parents chose this posting as their last one so they can buy a house and gain extended family support. Mother has concerns about Henry's behaviour at home and feels he is not coping at school. The practitioner does not share these concerns. In class, Henry participates actively to all activities and interacts positively with his peers.
	Mark (6)	Two children. Parents have relocated to the south of England following a posting with the army. They have experienced different postings and deployments before but father has decided to downgrade his job for family stability. The mother volunteers at the army radio. Mark presents as an imaginative, talkative and friendly child.
	Leo (5)	Father was injured when working as an army security guard and is suffering from serious physically disabling difficulties. Reconstituted family. Four children altogether. Mother was married to an army soldier before. The father has relocated to the south of England from Scotland. Leo has autism. He found adaptation to the nursery setting difficult, but parent and practitioner worked together to help him through this difficult time. The father and Leo's difficulties bring specific mobility and socialisation challenges to this family. In class, Leo has settled well now. He benefits from the support of a keyworker and has just received a Statement of Special Educational Needs.
	Alice (2)	Two children. Father was deployed for 6 months to a war zone during the time of the study. The couple did not talk about posting issues during the interview. Alice developed a stutter during the absence of her father. In class, she plays with others positively, but tends to suck her thumb or chew her jumper when confronted with more formal conversations such as circle time. In role-play, her stutter is not so evident.
	Frankie (4)	Two children. Mother is from Chile and speaks Spanish. Father deployed to Norway for 6 weeks and other deployments to follow but not to Afghanistan. Mother is eight months pregnant during deployment. Mother explains not to be deployed to Afghanistan is 'just a question of luck'. Her father helps during her husband's absence. In August 2009, Frankie contracted a virus which affected his cerebellum which caused severe ataxia. He had to learn to walk and talk again. The practitioner explained he has made great progress considering how vulnerable he was when he first attended nursery.

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[19] As reported by parent

Non-army group	Zed (10)	Two children. Father is from a Caribbean heritage. Mother finds it difficult to manage children's behaviour. She reported financial difficulties. She doesn't drive and has to rely on public transport to bring children to and from school. She feels she lacks support from her partner as he works unfriendly family shifts. Zed presents as sociable, but quiet.
	Dan (11)	Two children. Mother has difficulties managing Dan's behaviour and establishing boundaries. Dan refused to eat when little which impacted on his mother's ability to cope. She had to go to specialist classes to support him with his eating difficulties. Mother is heavily reliant on her own mother to manage the children's behaviour. She has sought support at nursery and from her GP[20]. Dan tends to be on his own agenda when playing at nursery and be strong will towards others. The practitioner has concerns about his development.
	Rio (9)	Three children. Family from Africa (Zulu of origin). The family experiences cultural and adaptation difficulties. For example, they had to move back to Africa during Rio's early years due to visa issues. Mother has an older son from a previous relationship who remained in Africa due to the inability to gain a visa. He has recently been granted the right to live in the UK. His presence has significantly impacted on Rio's behavioural and emotional ability to cope with school. Rio has been found displaying inappropriate behaviours at school such as carrying a knife. He has also displayed inappropriate sexual behaviours which were found to be linked to how his brother behaves at home. A referral to social services has been made.
	Sofia (12)	One child. Parents are on benefits and reported difficulties with social housing. Mother experienced bullying at school and her past experiences impact on Sofia. She is being overly protective of Sofia and this has an impact on Sofia's attendance at school. Sofia tends to be anxious about her friendship and falling out with other children. In class, Sofia appears to be bossy towards younger children. The practitioner reported that Sofia's experience of preschool has been limited due to her family situation and lack of attendance. She had an extremely difficult time adapting to nursery.
	Suzie (7)	Three children at home. Mother has had difficulties dealing with her oldest son's behaviour as he tends to be quite anxious. She finds her mother's role isolating and suffers from depression. She often appears to be struggling and of low mood. Children are very protective of their mother. She was found locked in a bathroom with the younger child threatening to hurt herself. Social services were involved at the time. Mental health support and intervention were put in place.
	Elle (8)	Four children. Mother speaks Spanish. Mother reports her husband's has bipolar disorder and is responsible for managing the household on her own. He is unable to work due to his difficulties. The mother explains Elle has some sort of understanding of her father's difficulties and tends to cope well with these. Elle is described as a 'tough girl' by the practitioner.

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[20] General Practitioner

Appendix 13 – Thematic Analysis

Risk factors for children living in army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Prevalence	Codes	Data extracts
Children's well-being	Negative feelings about school and relationship issues with peers and staff	Negative feelings about school	5	Child provides little information about school to parent	armyparent1, 87; armyparent4,93-96; armyparent6,120-123
				School is boring	armyparent6,118
				Child finds school hard which leads to feelings of sadness and low self-esteem (parent) child struggling slightly (teacher)	armyparent3,80-82; armyparent3,93-96; armyparent3,74-75; armyparent3,86-90; armyparent3,102; armyparent3,114; armypractitioner2,119(3),
		Friendship issues	4	Conflicts and relational difficulties with friends (do not seek out other children; regular rows with friend; not my friend anymore)	armypractitioner1,149-156(5); armyparent6,142-144; armyparent5, 112; armyparent1, 310-313;
				Limited opportunities to meet friends outside school	armyparent5,185-187
		Relational issues with staff	3	Relational issues with staff (being scared of adult; slow process to approach staff; not an open relationship with child)	armypractitioner1,168-169(5); armyparent3,289-293; armyparent3,412-413; armyparent3,417-418; armyparent3,422-426; armyparent3,275-278; armyparent3,287-288; armypractitioner2,40(1); armypractitioner2,42(1)
	Developmental and adaptation difficulties	Coping skills	10	Emotional coping and psychological skills (child needs to build confidence, frustrated when things don't go own way, moody, when tired struggles emotionally; child wants to be treated like a baby, stubborn, rely on parents, tantrums)	armypractitioner2,172-1732);armypractitioner2,205-208(2), armypractitioner2,219-220(2);armypractitioner1,109-114(4); armypractitioner1,16-18(4); armypractitioner1,81-84(4); armyparent6,174; armyparent6,116; armyparent6,199-201; armyparent1,192; armyparent5, 268; armyparent4,237; armypractitioner1,11-16(4); armyparent3,308; armyparent3,313-316; armyparent3,324-325; armyparent2,124; armyparent2,112; armyparent2,62
				Coping with difficult situations (father going into hospital impacts on child's coping, child lacks strategies to cope with changes, difficulties coping with difficulties,	armyparent5,193-195; armyparent2,58-59; armyparent1, 310-313; armyparent4,194-195; armypractitioner2,23(1); armypractitioner2,32-33(1); armypractitioner2,77-80(1); armypractitioner1,205-299(5); armypractitioner2,19-21(1); armypractitioner1,176-179(5)

				difficulties coping due to lack of communication skills)	
		Communication and social skills	4	stutter developed during deployment, child sucks thumb in social situations, child always a dog in play, stutter appear in formal situations; child lacks social skills; need support with social situations; child is talkative but does not talk about parental absence worries, quiet man, watcher	armypractitioner2,156-159(2); armypractitioner2,163-165(2); armypractitioner2,175-177(2); armypractitioner2,179-180(2); armypractitioner2,187-189(2); armypractitioner2,191-194(2); armypractitioner2,13(1); armypractitioner2,9-11(1); armypractitioner1,58-59(4);armyparent1, 56; armypractitioner2,2(1); armypractitioner2,2-3(1); armypractitioner2,3(1); armyparent1, 270;
		Self-regulation skills and autonomy	4	Self-regulation skills (needs reminders, concerns about attention and concentration, behaviour difficulties at home and some at school)	armypractitioner1,249(6); armyparent3,125-147; armyparent3,199-203; armyparent3,303-306; armypractitioner1,197-198(5); armyparent3,378-382; armyparent3,405-409; armyparent4,248
				Independence (getting changed due to concentration issues)	armypractitioner1,163(5); armyparent3,256; armyparent4,218
		Curiosity	3	don't make choices promptly, explore depending on activities, explore from a distance	armypractitioner2,53-55(1); armyparent3,269-273; armypractitioner1,188-189(5)
		Lack of progress and concerns	3	Concerns (language barriers)	armypractitioner2,57-58(1); armyparent3,114; armyparent3,86-87
				Limited progress	armypractitioner1,194-195(5)
		Difficulty coping with transition to nursery/reception	5	Transition to nursery difficult	armypractitioner1,130-132 (5); armyparent5,97
				Transition to reception difficult (tiring, quiet, a watcher)	armyparent4,63-64; armypractitioner2,46-50(1); armypractitioner2,69-72(1); armypractitioner2,73-74(1)
				Transition impacts on friendship	armypractitioner2,69-72(1); armypractitioner1,46-48(4),

Risk factors experienced by children living in army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Preval ence	Codes	Data Extract
Family systems and contexts	Difficulties coping with army lifestyle and family pressures	Deployment affects children and families	5	Deployment affects the community, families and school staff	armypractitioner2,257; armypractitioner2,325-327; armypractitioner2,336-338; armyparent4,100-105; armypractitioner2,276-278
				Deployment impacts on family relationships (absent parent distance self from family; child talks more to mother than father; 'loves me too much')	armyparent2,8; armyparent3,447-448; armyparent1,49;
				Child suffers during parental absence/finds it difficult to cope/presents with behavioural difficulties at home	armyparent4,10-11; armyparent4,13; armyparent4,12; armypractitioner2,276-278; armyparent3,15-17; armyparent4,264-266; armyparent1,502-502; armyparent2,28-31; armyparent3,330-341
				Difficult to explain to child parental absence	armyparent1,506-508; armyparent4,107-188
				'Incredibly long absence' (11 months)	armyparent3,34-35
				Older children understand more and have more difficulties coping with deployment	armyparent4,13-15; armyparent3,15-17
				Deployment to Afghanistan brings worries	armyparent2,3; armyparent4,18-20
				Different pressures on remaining parent (tiredness, demands from children, being pregnant, time, child more cuddly, can't carry on all activities, 'as long as I am OK, he is OK'), including parents have different roles in the family (impact on learning and activities during parental absence; absent parent has jobs to do on return); Lack of sleep and tiredness impacts on parenting	armyparent4,20-21; armyparent4,269-273; armyparent1,51-54; armyparent1,53; armyparent2,90; armyparent1,296-297; armyparent4,264-266 armyparent1,281-283; armyparent1,295; armyparent2,9; armyparent4,286; armyparent4,324-330
		Post-deployment reunion is a period of adjustment affecting child and family relationship	3	concerns about family having a holiday for R&R during school term; returning parent has different jobs to do which impact on family time and holiday; child clingy on return	armypractitioner2,59-65(1) armyparent2,9; armyparent2,172 armyparent4,5

		Issues with army culture and community support	4	Spouse negative perception of army culture	armyparent4,375-376; armyparent4,376; armyparent4,379
				Ignorance from wider community about Army life	armypractitioner2,319-325
				Difficulties with social support (don't feel comfortable asking for help, parent criticised for thinking positively about deployment, gossiping, lack of a supportive attitude; little to do with Army community)	armyparent2,167-170; armyparent1,256; armyparent1,528; armyparent1,528; armyparent5,23-24
				Complex family situation impacts on socialisation and access to places	armyparent5,2-18
		Transitions can be frequent and challenging	4	Some posting circumstances bring more transitions	armyparent3,3-5; armyparent6,14-17
				Transitions create culturally diverse family circumstances which are challenging (different languages and culture, difficulties teaching child maternal language, parent unsure about explaining to child race and diversity, restrictions on employment for spouse)	armyparent4,37-41; armyparent1,289-291; armyparent4,28-29; armyparent1,476-483; armyparent4,24; armyparent1,13; armyparent1, 16-17
				Frequent transitions impact on child's learning	armyparent3,55-56
				Family compromises to assure stability- Downgrade to assure family stability brings less pride in work; Wish for more money but family making financial compromises to assure family stability	armyparent6,14-17; 21; armyparent1, 534; armyparent1, 75
	Family relationships	Family disagreements and conflicts	2	Couple disagreement about parental practices	armyparent4,42-44
				Mother-child relationship is argumentative	armyparent3,297-306
				Fight with sibling	armyparent4,81-82; armyparent4,201;
	Parenting	Parent is uncertain about education issues	3	Anxiety, worries, parent anxious about socialisation	armyparent1, 182; armyparent1, 194; armyparent1, 324; armyparent6,378-379; armypractitioner2,104(1)
		Difficulties with managing child's behaviour	1	always challenging days;	armyparent3,171-176; armyparent3,203-205; armyparent3,181-183; armyparent3,200; armyparent3,571-572; armyparent3,556-559; armyparent3,532-538; armyparent3,544-547; armyparent3,73-76; armyparent3,118-123; armyparent3,519-523; armyparent3,535-537;

Risk factors for children living in army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Prevalence**	**Codes**	**Data Extract**
School systems and contexts	Concerns about home-school communication	Barriers accessing clubs and communicating prevent parent-staff relationship from developing	5	Barriers to communication (staff busy, pick two children at the same time, child is independent, older children come in independently, some families are harder to reach, parent and staff have a different perception of child)	armyparent3,465-469; armyparent4,394-396; armypractitioner2,233armyparent3,; armypractitioner2,229-armypractitioner2,231armyparent3,; armypractitioner2,232armyparent3,; armypractitioner1,564-565; armyparent1, 427;
				Barriers with accessing clubs (too rigid, negative experience, morning parent only for breakfast club, wish for club that meet all children's needs (physical)) Difficulties with implementing new clubs (time, parental attendance and communication)	armyparent3,473-480; armypractitioner1,486-488; armypractitioner1,491; armypractitioner1,493; armypractitioner1,502-503; armypractitioner1,494-497
		Lack of relationship and communication	5	Lack of communication (don't know how child is doing; teacher relies on parent to communicate; parent lacks knowledge about school system)/ wish for better communication; not a relationship parent-staff; don't know staff	armyparent3,70; armyparent3,108-110; armyparent3,378-380; armyparent3,384; armyparent3,464; armyparent3,469-471; armyparent1, 345; armyparent1, 346-348; armyparent1, 422-423; armypractitioner2,228armyparent3,; armypractitioner2,235-236armyparent3,; armyparent4,396; armypractitioner2,252-258(1); armyparent1, 417-418; armyparent1, 338; armyparent3,464; armypractitioner2,228armyparent3,
	Concerns about nursery/school support strategies and school ethos	Difficulties with transition support	6	Parents find some practices difficult to understand and wish for more explanations	armyparent4,389; armyparent4,392-393;
				Preference for nursery practices	armyparent3,594; armyparent1, 442

				Worries about transition to reception (no support mechanism in place to support child initially)	armyparent4,47-50; armyparent6,73-79; armyparent6,80-84; armypractitioner2,136-138armyparent3,; armypractitioner1,132-134e
		Difficult situations at school affect parents and staff emotions	3	Sad to hear a child not understanding race/ need for school to support to cultural diversity	armyparent1, 440-473;
				Staff support difficult situations such as bereavement	armypractitioner1,448-450
				Army families situations affect staff	armypractitioner2,303-304
		Disagreement about religious and army school ethos	1	Parent not ready to embrace religious beliefs taught at school	armyparent4,167-170
				Children learn distressing messages	armyparent4,129; armyparent4,124; armyparent4,130-133
		School admission policies	1	Housing development prevents children from Army families accessing school support	armyparent6,513-523; armyparent6,528-532

Protective factors for children living in army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Preval ence**	**Codes**	**Data Extract**
Children's well-being	Positive feelings about school and relationships with peers and staff	Positive feelings about school	6	Child has positive feelings about school	armyparent4,147-150; armyparent2,190; armyparent2,194-195; armyparent3,27; armypractitioner2,83(3); armyparent5,61; armyparent6,116; armyparent6,123;
		Positive friendships	12	Positive friendships at school (made lots of friends;	armypractitioner2,5(1);armypractitioner2,7(1); armypractitioner2,12(1),; armypractitioner1,34(4);armypractitioner2,85-86(3),,; armypractitioner2,167(2),,; armypractitioner2,96(3); armypractitioner1,228-231(6); armypractitioner1,144-148(5),,; armyparent1,88; armyparent2,40; armypractitioner1,4-5(4); armyparent1,170; armypractitioner1,165(5); armypractitioner1,166-167(5); armypractitioner2,102(3),,; armypractitioner2,104(3); armypractitioner2,222-223(2); armyparent1,88; armyparent4,186; armyparent5,119; armyparent3,66; armyparent6,145-148
				Meets friends outside school	armyparent3,162; armyparent3,494-496; armyparent2,72-73; armyparent4,76; armyparent4,178-182; armyparent6,140-141; armyparent6,145-146; armyparent1,353
		Positive relationships with staff	7	Relationship with adults at school (quite trusting, seek affection from teacher, very good relationship with keyworker, built trust with adults, trustworthy,	armyparent1,241; armyparent2,45-47; armyparent2,202-205; armypractitioner1,75armyparent4,; armypractitioner1,246armyparent6,; armyparent3,110; armyparent6,258-260; armypractitioner1,246armyparent6,; armyparent2,45; armypractitioner1,75-79armyparent4,; armyparent5,70; armyparent5,71-72
	Positive development al and adaptation	Coping skills	10	Emotional coping and psychological skills (tolerant, determined; confident; express emotions to cope with more stressful events; sense of future, all sorts of drive, determined,	armyparent3,442; armyparent1,245; armyparent4,261-263; armyparent4,59; armypractitioner1,102(4); armypractitioner1,102-103(4); armyparent6,215-219;

		skills				mature, pride)	armypractitioner1,222-223(6); armyparent4,255; armypractitioner2,200(2),
						Coping with difficult situations (tries hard, adaptation to changes; seeks ways to solve a problem; uses communication to solve problems, clams down quickly, use verbal skills to solve problems, copes well with changes, reaches out friends to problem-solve, has a good try and sorts it out by self, good adaptation to changes, adapts things to be he wants them to be, overcome relationship issues very quickly and turn these to something else)	armyparent1,175-176; armyparent3,394-395; armyparent6,162-164; armyparent6,273-294; armyparent6,158-161; armypractitioner2,93-94(3); armypractitioner2,149(3); armypractitioner2,98(3); armypractitioner2,153-155(3); armypractitioner1,171-172(5),; armypractitioner1,236-238armyparent6,; armypractitioner1,21-27(4); armypractitioner2,124(3); armypractitioner2,120-121(3); armypractitioner1,231-234(6); armypractitioner2,274-276; armypractitioner1,297-301(6); armypractitioner1,301-306(6); armypractitioner1,308-314(6); armyparent1,58; armyparent4,85-88
			Communication and social skills	7		Communication and social skills (not rude, talkative, chatty, sociable, good vocabulary, positive social skills, articulate)	armyparent3,152; armyparent6,98-99; armyparent6,107-109; armyparent6,125; armypractitioner1,30(4),; armypractitioner1,272-273(6); armypractitioner2,88(3); armypractitioner2,141(3); armypractitioner2,86(3); armyparent6,152-155; armyparent3,149; armyparent1,47; armyparent1,107-125
			Self-regulation and autonomy	10		Self-regulation skills (wants to do the right thing)	armyparent3,386; armyparent3,403-404; armyparent3,294-296; armypractitioner1,248(6); armypractitioner2,108-113(3); armyparent4,248
						Independence (independent in choices he makes, incredibly independent, child takes role of supporting other children, knows routines well; occupy self, self-motivation to be fully independent)	armyparent6,166-169; armyparent6,174; armypractitioner1,66-73(4); armypractitioner2,35-38(1); armypractitioner2,99(3); armypractitioner1,158-159(5); armypractitioner1,240(6); armypractitioner1,241-242(6); armypractitioner1,244(6); armyparent4,218; armyparent5,142; armyparent3,244; armyparent1,48
			Curiosity	6		Curiosity and interest (imagination, excited about exploring, curious, inquisitive, great imagination, fully participates in all activities, interested in all sorts of activities)	armyparent1,259; armypractitioner1,181-182(5); armyparent6,228-230; armyparent6,370; armyparent6,105; armypractitioner1,256-258(6); armypractitioner1,258(6); armypractitioner1,262-

					269(6); armypractitioner1,259-260(6); armypractitioner1,86-91(4),; armypractitioner2,115(3); armypractitioner1,224-226(6);
		Developmental progress	6	No concerns	armypractitioner1,94(4),; armypractitioner2,199(2); armypractitioner1,277-278(6); armyparent1,138-140
				Good progress (participation is fantastic; brilliant; progress made to area of need, exceptional progress	armypractitioner1,94-99(4); armyparent5,84; armypractitioner1,193-194(5); armypractitioner1,271(6); armypractitioner1,273-276(6);
		Positive adaptation to nursery/reception	4	Positive transition to nursery/reception	armypractitioner1,4(4); armypractitioner2,131-134(3); armyparent4,46; armyparent3,66; armyparent4,50-51

Protective factors for children living in army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Prevalence	Codes	Data Extract
Family systems and contexts	Coping with army lifestyle and family pressures	Coping well with deployment	5	Family and child cope well	armyparent1,308; armyparent3,433-435; armyparent2,9; armyparent2,18; armypractitioner1,444
				Writing letters	armyparent2,11; armyparent3,20-23
				Explaining and talking to child	armyparent3,436-441; armyparent2,12
				Setting milestones	armyparent1,509; armyparent2,16-17
				Protecting the child against army culture or parental upset	armyparent1,515; armyparent2,13-15
				Positive mindset	armyparent1,516-521; armyparent1,514; armyparent1,531
				Positive outlook on an Army job	armyparent4,369-374; armyparent4,376; armyparent4,378
				Some deployments are less risky	armyparent4,113-115[21]
		Mother enjoys work	1	Mother's employment favours child independence; mother enjoys work	armyparent1,21; armyparent1,188
		Coping with transitions and seeking stability	4	Seeking stability - stable postings minimise transitions; downgrading and financial compromises secure family stability	armyparent4,4-5; armyparent6,13; armyparent1,74-75; armyparent6,21-23; armyparent6,14-17; armyparent1,75
				Transitions have a positive outcome	armyparent6,30-38; armyparent3,2-12
				Transition create culturally diverse family circumstances due to transitions and parents have coping strategies to deal with this –coping with cultural diversity due to transitions	armyparent1,288-293; armyparent4,26-27
		Valuing social support	6	Seeking and valuing extended family support (Grandparents help during parental absence; Relocation of grandparents from abroad to gain support and Extended family support offers security and childcare; Posting chosen to gain extended family support)	armyparent2,12; armyparent1,505; armyparent3,6-7; armyparent4,25 armyparent1,68-70; armyparent1,65; armyparent1,61-63 armyparent1,72-73; armyparent3,5; armyparent3,6-9

				Social networks are important for the child and family; Social networks promote child's socialisation; Families and friends	armyparent5,119-120; armyparent4,178-179; armyparent6,245-249; armyparent3,267 armyparent5,24; armyparent4,25; armyparent4,227; armyparent4,78; armyparent4,229; armyparent6,328
				Valuing community ethos/Relationship with community	armyparent6,489; armyparent6,540-543; armyparent6,33-38
	Family relationship	Positive values and perception of family life	4	Positive values, perception of family life and outlook when dealing with difficult life events	armyparent1,267-268; armyparent1,263 armyparent1,358; armyparent1,381; armyparent1,394; armyparent5,38; armyparent1,535-537; armyparent5,207; armyparent2,52
				Encouraging positive relationships in the family (activities as a family, meals together)	armyparent6,274-280; armyparent6,351; armyparent6,351-354; armyparent6,359-361; armyparent1,371
		Trust and togetherness	7	Spending time together	armyparent1,365; armyparent2,85-86; armyparent2,95-97; armyparent4,284-290; armyparent4,299-305; armyparent3,510-513; armyparent6,325-333; armyparent6,343-349; armyparent6,355; armyparent6,339; armyparent6,341-342
				Couple working together and enjoying life together	armyparent1,31-34; armyparent6,271-272; armyparent1,34-36
				Trusting and good relationship	armyparent1,335; armyparent4,263; armypractitioner2,42-43(1); armyparent6,219-222; armyparent2,36; armyparent5,122-126; armyparent3,444-446; armyparent3,71-72
				Positive sibling-child relationship (tolerant, play together)	armyparent6,151; armyparent3,505; armyparent3,264
	Positive parental attitude to child's upbringing and education	Positive behaviour management strategies	6	boundaries; adaptation to the situation; hands on; positive mindset	armyparent6,340; armyparent5,277-278; armyparent5,280; armyparent2,128-131; armyparent2,139; armyparent2,140; armyparent2,141-144; armyparent2,338-346; armyparent3,565-568; armyparent6,202-206; armyparent5,275; armyparent6,454; armyparent6,457-459; armyparent1,396-401; armyparent1,402; armyparent1,41; armyparent6,422; armyparent4,332-336; armyparent4,338; armyparent6,267-268; armyparent6,340; armyparent4,332
		Promoting emotional	5	Encouraging communication and listening to child	armyparent3,212; armyparent3,216-armyparent3,223; armyparent1,38-40; armyparent1,46; armyparent1,105;

		development and communicati on with child		armyparent4,206; armyparent6,282-284
			Supporting emotional development and expression of emotions	armyparent5,160-162; armyparent5,204-205; armyparent6,271-272; armyparent1,41; armyparent1,382
		Promoting socialisation	6	Promoting hobbies	armyparent1,300; armyparent2,72; armyparent4,74-75; armyparent6,288; armyparent4,255; armyparent6,288-291
			Encouraging socialisation	armyparent6,86-90; armyparent6,87-88; armyparent6,148-149; armyparent3,494; armyparent1,351; armyparent5,119; armyparent4,178-184
		Positive attitude to learning	4	Encouraging child with learning	armyparent2,104-109; armyparent6,363; armyparent6,316-322; armyparent4,299; armyparent6,374; armyparent6,365-368; armyparent5,254; armyparent2,104

Protective factors for children living in army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Prevalence	Codes	Data Extract
School systems and context	Home-school communication	Positive parent-staff relationship	6	Good relationship between staff and parents	armyparent2,67; armyparent5,219; armypractitioner1,416-417; armypractitioner2,240-244(1); armypractitioner2,214-217(2); armypractitioner1,425-429(5); armyparent6,260-262
				Parents and staff work together (mutual understanding of child's needs);	armyparent5,220; armyparent5,44; armyparent5,227; armyparent5,47-49; armyparent6,207; armypractitioner2,243-244(1),
		Parents and staff promote communication	8	Parents open to communication, approach staff or seek advice	armyparent1,98; armyparent4,153-156; armyparent4,165-166; armyparent2,68-69; armyparent5,193; armyparent6,185-188; armyparent6,196-197;
				Staff are approachable (available, take on board parents' comments and find time to communicate with parents)	armyparent2,67; armyparent2,198; armyparent2,198-202; armypractitioner2,254-255; armypractitioner2,261-262; armypractitioner2,266-267; armypractitioner1,569; armypractitioner2,266-267; armypractitioner2,259-260
		Positive and helpful strategies favouring communication and relationship building	6	share information, initial parent interview, home visits, stay and play, emails, clubs, open door policy, being persistent, talk about something the child has done, greet parents at the door, establish a club routine	share information, initial parent interview, home visits, stay and play armyparent3,592-593, emails armypractitioner1,497-499, clubs armyparent3,690; armypractitioner1,468-474; armypractitioner1,476-478; armyparent5,90-91; armypractitioner1,540-544; armypractitioner1,544-547; armypractitioner1,547-552; armypractitioner1,553; armypractitioner1,553-557; armypractitioner1,572-574; armyparent3,481-482; armypractitioner1,537-539; armypractitioner1,544-552; armyparent6,58-62; armypractitioner1,432-433armyparent6,; armypractitioner1,434-435; Open door policy armyparent4,277-282; armypractitioner2,260; armypractitioner1,417-419; armypractitioner1,419-420; armypractitioner2,264-269; armypractitioner2,269-271; armypractitioner1,559-561; being persistent, talk about something the child has done, greet parents at the door armypractitioner1,568; armypractitioner1,569-571; armypractitioner1,576-578; armypractitioner1,580-584; armypractitioner1,585-589; armypractitioner1,575-576; establish a club routine armypractitioner1,481-485

	Support strategies and unique school ethos	Positive whole school and individualised strategies to support children at nursery/school	7	Practices to support children depending on their needs (talk to child, gentle coaxing, routines, procedures)	armypractitioner1,17-18(4); armypractitioner1,19(4); armypractitioner1,120-126(4) armypractitioner1,252-253(6); armypractitioner1,134-135(5); armypractitioner2,169-172(2); armypractitioner2,217-219(2); armypractitioner1,172-173(5); armypractitioner1,136(5), armypractitioner1,1183-186(5); armypractitioner1,137-138(5); armypractitioner1,159-162(5); armypractitioner1,139-142(5); armypractitioner1,158(5); armypractitioner1,198-203(5); armypractitioner1,210(5); armypractitioner1,249(6),
				Whole nursery/school practices (behaviour management, outdoor play, learning about cultures, teaching different topics)	armyparent6,62; armyparent6,66; armyparent6,68; armyparent6,232-241; armyparent6,69; armyparent6,100-103; armyparent6,112-114; armyparent6,242; armyparent6,253-254; armyparent6,53-54; armyparent4,354; armyparent3,418-419; armyparent3,599-602
		Unique and specific strategies supporting parental absence and deployment	7	Different specific strategies are implemented to support Army families (the Blueys are popular and successful; assemblies, storytelling, books, work with army welfare, parcels, news bulletin); Staff support stressful situations such as bereavement	blueys armypractitioner2,285; armypractitioner2,286; armypractitioner1,459-462; armypractitioner1,462-465; armyparent3,635-654; armyparent3,589; armyparent1,491-494; armyparent2,148-152; armyparent4,122-123; armyparent3,20-23; armyparent6,478-479; armyparent2,156-161;Parcels armypractitioner2,290; armyparent3,25-29 assemblies armyparent2,153-154; armyparent3,680-681 News bulletin armypractitioner2,289-290 Storyteller armypractitioner1,504-514; armypractitioner1,515-522 books about 'daddy being away' armypractitioner1,478-481 Work with army welfare armyparent3,668-670; armypractitioner1,450-452; armypractitioner1,453-457
		Staff knowledge and understanding of the situation	5	Staff understanding of situation and knowledge	armyparent6,503-504; armypractitioner2,304-305; armypractitioner2,280-282; armypractitioner2,281-283; armyparent3,60; armyparent6,479-480
				Being available/open door policy/not judging/listening	armypractitioner2,345-350; armypractitioner2,278-280; armypractitioner1,466-467
				Building a positive relationship with parents and children	armypractitioner1,446-448; armypractitioner2,339; armypractitioner2,361-364; armypractitioner2,364-367; armypractitioner1,453-457; armyparent3,46-47; armyparent3,22-23
				Acknowledging 'not knowing' about culture	armypractitioner2,341
				Looking for signs	armypractitioner2,338-339

		Supportive environment for staff to work together	2	Supportive environment for staff to work together	armypractitioner2,378;armypractitioner2,379-380; armypractitioner1,601-603
				Training and regular meetings	armypractitioner1,592-594; armypractitioner1,594-599
				Role modelling from more experienced staff	armypractitioner1,594-599
				Be prepared to look for advice and support	armypractitioner2,332-336; armypractitioner2,371-373; armypractitioner2,370
		Sense of togetherness	8	Positive leadership - Headteacher has positive skills and is experienced	armyparent3,580; armyparent3,579; armyparent3,597; armyparent3,611-616
				Sense of togetherness (supportive, caring, working together, M. family, open, nurturing)	armypractitioner2,377; armyparent5,44; armypractitioner2,379-380; armyparent5,285-286; armyparent5,287-288; armypractitioner1,466; armyparent3,54; armyparent2,175-176; armyparent6,505; armyparent4,97-100; armyparent4,118-121; armyparent6,307-308; armyparent6,508-509; armyparent2,164; armyparent1,491
				Inclusive	armyparent3,690-694; armyparent3,590-592; armyparent2,179-181
				Unique ethos – different from other schools	armyparent6,501-503; armypractitioner2,297-300; armypractitioner2,306; armypractitioner2,308; armypractitioner2,310-317; armyparent3,671-680; armyparent3,24-26; armyparent3,27-31; armyparent3,37-41; armyparent3,57-61; armyparent4,118-121
				School support takes pressure off parents, bring a sense of continuity for children and normalises the situation for children	armyparent3,656-661; armyparent3,662-666; armyparent3,43-45; armyparent3,36-37; armyparent6,505
				School choice is based on support to Army families	armyparent3,9-12; armyparent3,14

Risk factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Prevalence**	**codes/subcategories**	**Data Extract**
Children's Well-Being	Negative feelings about nursery/ school and relationship issues with peers and staff	Negative feelings about school	4	Child provides little information about school to parent (unlike he did at nursery; does not talk about school but can remember shopping list)	non-armyparent11,40; non-armyparent12,68-69; non-armyparent12,77;
				Child did not like nursery; poor attendance had an impact on these feelings	non-armyparent12,107; non-armypractitioner3,130-131(12);
				Developed negative feelings about Forest school	non-armypractitioner3,412-413(11); non-armyparent11,44-45
		Friendship issues	8	Friendships are difficult (tends to follow and interact with wrong children, quickly led; does not come home talking about friends; no special friend more parallel play; not happy without friend; choosy about friend; poor attendance impact on friendship; not sure special friend; upset when friend play with others;)	non-armyparent8,328-331; non-armyparent8,335-338; non-armyparent8,340-341; non-armyparent12,206-207; non-armypractitioner3,392-394(12); non-armyparent7,64-65; non-armyparent7,129-130; non-armypractitioner3,157-150(12); non-armypractitioner3,22(10); non-armypractitioner3,23-24(10); non-armypractitioner4,116(7),
				Limited opportunities to meet friends outside school (one friend but no other opportunities; child finds it difficult to mix in club because don't know children)	non-armypractitioner3,125(10); non-armypractitioner3,398(12); non-armypractitioner3,426(11); non-armyparent7,186-187; non-armyparent12,386; non-armyparent10,104-105; non-armyparent10,173; non-armyparent10,178-179; non-armyparent8,320-328;
		Relational issues with staff	4	Relationship with staff (very slow process, difficult; lack of trust, don't know; does not talk about staff; rel. difficult)	non-armypractitioner3,204(12); non-armyparent10,124-128; non-armyparent12,218; non-armypractitioner3,488-489(11); non-armypractitioner3,484-485(11);
	Developmental and adaptation difficulties	Coping skills	12	Difficulties with emotional coping and psychological skills (stubborn; sensitive; temper; little things make child cross; regression for	non-armyparent12,487; non-armyparent12,489-490; non-armyparent9,109; non-armyparent9,136-137; non-armyparent7,149; non-armyparent10,111; non-armypractitioner3,454-457(11); non-armyparent7,110-114;

				adult attention; shouts, gets cross; depends on mood, situation at home and tiredness; self-esteem)	non-armypractitioner3,539-541(11); non-armypractitioner3,556(11); non-armypractitioner3,566-568(11); non-armypractitioner4,116(7); non-armyparent10,202;
				Coping with difficult situations (no strategies to cope with more stressful events; don't know/no events; shouts and hides; does not know what to do; needs help; copes at the time but night terrors; tiredness impact on ability to cope; storms off and does not resolve it; own terms; cry and needs parents; just gets cross; cross to be left; difficulties impact on emotions, worries, concentration and behaviour; child needs to cope with parent mental health and transition, difficult for child; long-term adaptation to change; excitement following change followed emotional difficulties; significant family change impact on coping)	non-armyparent10,163-165; non-armyparent10,159; non-armyparent12,445; non-armyparent12,448; non-armyparent11,119; non-armyparent12,401-402; non-armyparent11,70-71; non-armyparent12,217-221; non-armyparent8,217-218; non-armyparent8,219-220; non-armyparent11,114-115; non-armyparent11,116-117; non-armypractitioner3,609-611(11); non-armypractitioner3,664-668(11); non-armypractitioner3,649-650(11); non-armypractitioner3,611-614(12); non-armypractitioner3,637(10); non-armypractitioner3,633-635(11); non-armypractitioner3,657-660(12); non-armypractitioner4,500-503(9); non-armypractitioner4,520-525(9); non-armyparent8,22-26; non-armypractitioner4,428-429(9); non-armypractitioner4,357-359(9); non-armypractitioner4,363-368(9); non-armypractitioner4,370-377
		Communication and social skills	8	difficulties sharing; wants to be a leader, difficult if he is not; bossy/in charge; mood; barriers with communication, child does not speak maternal language; easily led; manipulative; argumentative	non-armypractitioner3,413-416(11); non-armypractitioner3,419-422(11); non-armypractitioner3,430-431(11); non-armyparent10,111; non-armyparent12,726-728; non-armyparent12,532-534; non-armyparent9,160; non-armypractitioner3,17-18(10); non-armypractitioner4,8-11(7); non-armypractitioner4,197-198(8); non-armypractitioner4,231-233(8); non-armypractitioner3,736-738(9),

		Self-regulation and autonomy	7	Self-regulation (does not listen; little concentration; can't sit still and be quiet; would not choose sit down activities; behaviour difficult; still developing; child instigator of inappropriate behaviour; difficulties understand danger, difficult behaviour; can't stand to lose; difficulties to focus; prefers fun; not focused, distracted; tiredness impact on concentration	non-armypractitioner3,426-427(11); non-armyparent10,204-206; non-armyparent11,27-29; non-armyparent12,188; non-armypractitioner3,76-77(10); non-armypractitioner3,81-82(10); non-armyparent11,105-108; non-armypractitioner3,460-464(11); non-armypractitioner3,470-474(11); non-armypractitioner3,465-470(11); non-armypractitioner3,477(11); non-armyparent10,36-43; non-armyparent10,33; non-armyparent10,69-70; non-armypractitioner3,48-51(10); non-armypractitioner3,57-60(10); non-armypractitioner3,105(10); non-armypractitioner3,549-553(11); non-armypractitioner4,272-274(8);
				Independence (won't try, needs help does not ask for help; needs adults; not quite independent)	non-armyparent10,120-121; non-armyparent12,243-244; non-armyparent12,261; non-armypractitioner3,446-447(11);
		Curiosity	4	Curiosity and interest (explore if someone with him; explore based on own interests; own terms; lazy; obsession with visiting toilets; doesn't like crowded and new places; needs adult there to explore unfamiliar activities)	non-armyparent10,139; non-armyparent10,142; non-armyparent12,327; non-armyparent12,336-337; non-armypractitioner3,504-508(11); non-armypractitioner3,283(12); non-armypractitioner3,510-514(11); non-armypractitioner3,524(11); non-armyparent11,165; non-armyparent11,24-26; non-armyparent12,338-354; non-armyparent12,436-440; non-armypractitioner3,344-345non-armyparent12;
		Lack of developmental progress	3	Concerns (record of concerns)	non-armypractitioner3,536non-armyparent11;
				Limited progress (parent can't comment on child's progress; slower than expected)	non-armyparent12,196-201; non-armyparent10,87
		Adaptation difficulties to nursery/reception	6	Transition to nursery difficult (needed parent there; had not been left before; poor attendance, consistent picking up patterns and illness impacted on transition)	non-armyparent7,40-41; non-armyparent7,43-44; non-armyparent8,12-15; non-armyparent8,16-17; non-armyparent12,125-129; non-armypractitioner3,132-136(12); non-armypractitioner3,131(12); non-armypractitioner3,143-145(12); non-armypractitioner3,378-382(12);
				Transition impacts on friendship (no opportunities to meet friends, still talks about a friend and see through window; child upset because did not make transition to reception with a friend)	non-armyparent12,211-215; non-armyparent12,148-151; non-armyparent11,159-162

Risk factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Prevalence**	**codes/subcategories**	**Data Extract**
Family systems and contexts	Daily hassles and family pressures	Family life	6	Housework and chores	non-armyparent7,25-27; non-armyparent7,23-25
				Child's care (child getting into parents' bed at night, child's difficulties with getting messy and eating; If child is tired, has difficulties to separate from parents)	non-armyparent12,560-567; non-armypractitioner3,544(11); non-armyparent11,211-213; 216; non-armyparent11,223-225; non-armyparent12,284
				No more children (two children enough; four, don't know how they cope)	non-armyparent10,14-15; non-armypractitioner4,603
		Parents are challenged by parental role	5	Hard work being a mum (hard work being a mum/isolating; feeling responsible; mother degrade role; children love it when mother tell them superhero stories but mother hates it)	non-armyparent7,18-21; non-armyparent7,29; non-armyparent7,30-31; non-armyparent8,5; non-armyparent7,201-205; non-armyparent7,18-21; non-armyparent7,240-247
				Parent emotionally affected by child's emotional behavioural difficulties (mood, tantrums)	non-armyparent10,203-204
				Parental roles are different	non-armyparent8,138-139; non-armyparent8,314-316; non-armyparent12,513-516
				Lack of support from partner (no support from husband, parent needs to show to other parent how to parent, lack of partner's presence)	non-armyparent8,416-420; non-armypractitioner3,733(7); non-armyparent10,24-25
		Mental health issues, housing, employment and financial difficulties	5	mental health difficulties impacts on ability to work and career, mental health issues impact on family relationship (create pressure on other parent; giving time to child is difficult due to different pressures; father needs to be isolated a lot, mother doesn't always know the mood; child has difficulties coping with parental mental health issues)	non-armypractitioner3,720-7231(7); non-armyparent8,4; non-armyparent8,374-375; non-armyparent8,68-70; non-armyparent8,375; non-armyparent8,392-395; non-armyparent8,108-110; non-armyparent8,114-118; non-armyparent8,363-364; non-armyparent8,371-373; non-armyparent8,348-349; non-armypractitioner3,884-887

				housing impacts on family decisions (having another child; parents do not want child to grow up with a typical council estate identity – yob; No work/money; No car/need to rely on transport or walk)	non-armyparent12,14-16; non-armyparent12,82-86; non-armyparent10,154-155; non-armyparent12,700-701; non-armyparent10,19; non-armyparent10,23-24; non-armyparent10,26; non-armyparent8,70; non-armyparent8,37
		Transitions are challenging	5	Transitions (move from a different country, move due to work, family illness and financial implications of care)	non-armypractitioner3,753-758(9); non-armyparent7,15; non-armyparent8,30-39
				Complex family situation creates challenging transitions; Transition brings cultural shock and family relationship issues (need to build new relationships due to transition, difficult to leave family behind; Brings separation issues (missing a loved one)	non-armypractitioner4,476-478(9); non-armypractitioner4,480-484(9); non-armyparent9,50-54; non-armyparent9,59-60; non-armyparent9,78-81; non-armypractitioner3,744-747(9);
				Transitions create cultural diverse family circumstances which are challenging – barriers in speaking maternal language	non-armyparent8,74-81; non-armyparent9,160-161
		Social support is limited or inadequate	5	Limited social support (family in Africa and far in UK, grandparents not nearby)	non-armyparent9,47-52; non-armyparent7,5
				Relationships are difficult with social network (big family secret, disagreement between parents and grandparents about ways of dealing with child and speak to child)	non-armyparent12,23; non-armyparent12,-356-359; non-armyparent12,782-784
				Community issues; Difficulties promoting socialisation; opportunities limited to socialise in the community because of parental concerns about other children's behaviour; behaviour of children in the community is perceived as difficult and worst than own child; dilemma in promoting socialisation and mixed gender friendship)	non-armyparent8,320-328; non-armyparent11,167; non-armyparent8,99-101; non-armyparent8,187-198;
	Family relationship	Disagreements and conflicts	4	Disagreement between couple (about housing, teaching methods, homework)	non-armyparent12,17-18; non-armyparent12,58-62; non-armyparent12,160-170;

		amongst family members		Difficult sibling-child relationship (argumentative, hurt each other; always fight)	non-armyparent7,133-135 non-armyparent7,147-148; non-armyparent9,194-195; non-armyparent10,179
		Child-parents conflictual relationship	6	Parent has a negative perception of child's behaviour (child horrible at home/parent fed up with behaviour/difficulties dealing with behaviour)	non-armyparent12,396-399; non-armypractitioner3,467-470(11); non-armypractitioner3,541-542(11); non-armypractitioner3,579(11); non-armypractitioner3,590-591(11); non-armyparent12,355
				Difficulties with mother-child relationship (possible clash/ time spent together impact on child's behaviour, child communicates difficult message to mother)	non-armypractitioner3,947-948(11); non-armypractitioner3,570-572(11); non-armypractitioner3,559(11); non-armypractitioner3,388-389(12); non-armypractitioner3,373-375(12); non-armypractitioner3,387-389(12);
				Child is in charge/child tells parent off; child plays parent off each other	non-armypractitioner3,373-377(12); non-armyparent7,155-156; non-armyparent12,534; non-armyparent11,78-79
				Causes for child's behaviour	non-armypractitioner3,884-887; non-armypractitioner4,534-539; non-armypractitioner4,550-554; non-armypractitioner4,562-571; non-armypractitioner4,556-559 non-armypractitioner3,991-996
	Parents are challenged by child and education issues	Parental attitude exacerbates issues with child	3	overmothering; parent a 'big kid anyway'; child won't be quiet when spending time together; parent finds it funny when child is angry which increases child anger; feels responsible for child's tantrums; child behind in speech but parent refuses to use baby speech	non-armypractitioner3,186(12); non-armyparent12,31-32; non-armyparent12,190-191; non-armyparent12,304-310; non-armyparent10,113-116; non-armyparent12,773-780
		Parental coping difficulties with education issues	7	Parent puts pressure on child - Lots of support at home demotivates and bores the child	non-armypractitioner3,711-713(8); non-armypractitioner4,455-457(9); non-armypractitioner4,450-452(9); non-armypractitioner4,459-461(9); non-armyparent12,53-54
				Parent uncertain about child's education (parent worried about child having dyslexia due to own difficulties; parent worried about child being bored at school, parent not fully aware of what can be done with child as child fails to make	non-armyparent10,90; non-armyparent12,52-53; non-armyparent12,704-706; non-armyparent7,87-88

				progress)	
				Issues with poor attendance to nursery (due to child and parental illness, long family holiday; nursery was relax because child didn't have to be there)	non-armypractitioner3,131(12); non-armypractitioner3,153-158(12); non-armyparent12,670-671
				Parent has difficulties coping with child making a transition to nursery or reception (parent worried about transition to nursery – child not potty trained; parent has difficulties coping with child's difficulties adapting to nursery; Difficult transition with older child impacts on perception of transition with younger child and decisions regarding attending nursery; parent continues to worry about child's adaptation to nursery/school following a difficult transition)	non-armyparent12,767-770; non-armypractitioner3,378-382(12); non-armypractitioner3,767-773(7); non-armyparent7,300-305;
		Parent lack strategies to deal with child	6	parent lack strategies to deal with children (including sibling relationship); parent tells child off, child hides, doesn't like to be told off; difficulties with implementing boundaries; child is in charge; inconsistent behaviour management patterns (parents don't reward good behaviour, child is not naughty, but punish bad behaviour, then go on to say they reward good behaviour); not a very good teacher	non-armyparent7,260-262; non-armyparent7,254-258; non-armyparent11,245-246; non-armyparent7,240-247; non-armyparent12,195-196; non-armyparent12,298-300; non-armyparent12,301-303; non-armypractitioner4,690-691; non-armypractitioner3,373-377(12); non-armyparent12,620; non-armyparent12,621-629; non-armyparent12,631-648; non-armyparent12,652-661; non-armyparent7,250-254; non-armyparent10,192-195

Risk factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Prevalence**	**codes/subcategories**	**Data Extract**
School Systems and Contexts	Home-school communication	Lack of communication and relationship	5	No relationship (don't really have much of a relationship; difficult relationship; no parental involvement at school)	non-armyparent8,254; non-armyparent12,461-462; non-armypractitioner4,295-301(8); non-armyparent8,272-274
				Lack of communication/knowledge about child (don't know about what child is learning; limited knowledge of child at school	non-armyparent10,67-68; non-armyparent10,103; non-armyparent10,145-148; non-armyparent11,38-39; non-armyparent11,103-104; non-armyparent12,364-366; non-armyparent12,368-367; non-armypractitioner4,290-293(8),
		Barriers prevent relationship building and communication	6	Parental difficulties impact on communication with staff (mental health, not liking new people; parent communicates depending on mood)	non-armyparent12,464; non-armypractitioner3,585-588(11); non-armypractitioner3,724-729(7); non-armypractitioner4,248(8); non-armypractitioner4,295-301(8);
				Knowledge, time, leaving it to parents and child and parental dissatisfaction act as barriers to communication (staff lacking knowledge about issues important to parent; no clubs; do parents discuss important issues at the door; parent not happy; when parents start reception they can't keep up the contact with school; to decide on a strategy to help child at school; rely on parent to talk about concerns; talk to child about difficulties at nursery; children talk to parents and not practitioners about their needs not being met)	non-armyparent12,475-481; non-armyparent12,692-693; non-armypractitioner3,836; non-armypractitioner3,850-852; non-armypractitioner3,914; non-armypractitioner3,880-882; non-armypractitioner3,924-927; non-armypractitioner3,880-882; non-armypractitioner3,168-170; non-armypractitioner3,210-212
				Preference for nursery (no communication at reception; need for more communication; no relationship in reception)	non-armyparent11,274-276; non-armyparent12,371; non-armyparent11,279-280; non-armyparent12,383-384; non-armyparent12,465-466
	Concerns about support strategies and negative	Difficulties or disagreement about support strategies and	9	Ratio and reception practices (child covered in paint; parent doesn't agree with child having homework at 4; should have more maths and history because children are	non-armyparent12,376-380; non-armyparent12,160-170; non-armyparent8,62; non-armyparent8,7-9; non-armypractitioner3,982-985; non-

	attitude towards school	practices		curious at that age; need more staff for children)	armypractitioner3,999; non-armypractitioner4,657-658; non-armypractitioner4,670-671
				System favours girls	non-armypractitioner4,89(7); non-armypractitioner4,403-413; non-armypractitioner4,419; non-armypractitioner3,448-450; non-armyparent7,281-284; non-armyparent7,285-287
				Changes at nursery impact on child (Transition to reception difficult (impacts on children's behaviour)	non-armypractitioner3,4-7(10); non-armypractitioner3,592-597; non-armyparent12,111-113
				Lack of understanding of the system (Parent does not understand system testing dyslexia; parent and child could not understand such a long transition process)	non-armyparent12,705-706; non-armyparent12,111-113
				Support strategies are not effective; Reward system is endorsed even though not effective (giving chocolate buttons; parent comment that reward system should not be food)	non-armypractitioner3,579-585(11); non-armyparent12,646-648; non-armypractitioner3,927-929(11);
				Difficulties with knowledge of children and system (practitioner feels information needs to be memorised; limited observations of children and lack of time impact on knowledge of children; problems with finding records of child; challenging children in class; Talking scenarios don't fully meet the needs of children /need to do more little group	non-armypractitioner3,588-509(11); non-armypractitioner3,99-100; non-armypractitioner3,435; non-armypractitioner3,437-438; non-armypractitioner3,164(12); non-armypractitioner3,367; non-armypractitioner3,893-894; non-armypractitioner3,829-831; non-armypractitioner4,654; non-armypractitioner4,655-656; non-armypractitioner3,976-977; non-armypractitioner3,1000-1001;
		Barriers prevent from supporting children and families	3	Mental health difficulties, lack of knowledge, not realising the need for support, time, feeling disempowered act as barriers to supporting families (parent don't feel school should provide support; parent lack time to gain support; parents have not noticed	non-armyparent12,678; non-armyparent12,682-683; non-armyparent12,685-686; non-armyparent12,692; non-armyparent12,676; non-armypractitioner4,673-674; non-armypractitioner3,938-943; non-armypractitioner4,607-608; non-

				support offered by school; practitioner feels disempowered/not going to solve the problem; Parents' mental health difficulties impacts on type of support which can be offered to them (parents with depression and tired are less likely to want to receive criticism)	armypractitioner4,616-622; non-armypractitioner4,693-696; non-armyparent12,666
				Support needed (heavy intervention, build relationship over time, intense one to one support in the house, counselling, play therapy, parenting classes) not available due to funding and time	non-armypractitioner4,569-572; non-armypractitioner4,611-612; non-armypractitioner4,699; non-armypractitioner4,569-572; non-armypractitioner4,699; non-armypractitioner4,573-574; non-armypractitioner4,676; non-armypractitioner3,935-937; non-armypractitioner3,944-945; non-armypractitioner3,946-947;
		Practitioners need more support	1	Need for more training to practitioners	non-armypractitioner4,712-714;
		Conflict and divergent opinion about school	4	Feedback about school – not a good school	non-armyparent8,455-456;
				Divergent opinion about school (Not all parents are happy about the school)	non-armyparent9,302-303; non-armyparent9,308; non-armyparent9,311; non-armyparent8,431-436;
				Parent communicates directly with other parent about a conflict child has had; parent was very upset	non-armypractitioner4,238-242(8);
	Presence of challenging behaviour at nursery/ school	Challenging behaviours at school	6	pencil in the eye; pulling trouser down in playground; show their bits; boy hit child; hiding under desks or behind bushed; shouting; child bob children over head; children argue; Children don't always feel safe because of other children	non-armyparent8,86-88; non-armyparent10,36; non-armyparent10,42-43; non-armyparent12,93; non-armyparent11,104-107; non-armypractitioner3,465-466; non-armypractitioner3,539; non-armypractitioner3,994; non-armypractitioner4,464-467; non-armypractitioner4,262-263(8); non-armypractitioner4,667-668; non-armypractitioner3,1012
		Perceived causes for	4	History of child (killed a cat at home; real developmental and behavioural problems;	non-armypractitioner4,647; non-armypractitioner3,839-840; non-

		behaviours		child damaged)	armypractitioner4,657; non-armypractitioner3,991-996
				Causes for behaviour (Parent explain child's difficult behaviour being learnt at school; children start to be cheeky when they start school; child show fist to father)	non-armyparent7,94-95; non-armyparent12,91-93
		Challenging behaviours impact on practitioners' feeling and practice	2	Teacher's ability to cope with challenging children depends on own state/teacher need to split self between needy children and rest of class; Difficult child-parent separation impact on practitioner	non-armypractitioner4,660-664; non-armypractitioner4,669-671; non-armypractitioner3,138-140

Protective factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	**Subthemes**	**Categories**	**Prevalence**	**codes/subcategories**	**Data Extract**
Children's well-being	Positive feelings about school and relationships with peers and staff	Positive feelings about school	6	Child has positive feelings about school (including Forest School)	non-armypractitioner4,109(7); non-armypractitioner4,1177(7); non-armypractitioner4,113(7); non-armyparent10,62-64; non-armypractitioner3,494-495(11); non-armyparent8,476-478; non-armyparent8,48; non-armyparent8,83-84; non-armyparent8,85; non-armyparent9,3-8; non-armyparent9,18; non-armypractitioner3,14-15(10); non-armypractitioner3,37(10);
		Positive friendships help child	9	Friendships at school (lots of friends; looks after friends; walks to school with a friend; play with different children	non-armypractitioner4,12(7); non-armypractitioner4,206(8); non-armypractitioner4,381(9); non-armyparent12,203; non-armyparent7,68-69; non-armyparent7,92-94; non-armyparent7,137-138; non-armyparent8,86; non-armyparent8,171; non-armyparent9,121; non-armyparent9,122-123; non-armyparent9,149; non-armyparent8,308; non-armypractitioner3,23(10); non-armyparent11,56-57; non-armyparent11,62-63; non-armypractitioner4,13(8);
				Security of a group of friends helps child's (social skills, adaptation; Friendship helps child through a difficult time (difficult life event, transition)	non-armypractitioner4,11-12(7); non-armyparent12,142-147; non-armypractitioner4,506-509(9); non-armyparent7,60-63
				Meets friends outside school	non-armyparent11,145-146; non-armyparent7,140; non-armyparent8,184; non-armyparent9,153-154; non-armyparent9,203; non-armyparent9,165; non-armyparent9,208-210; non-armyparent7,188-191;
		Positive relationships with staff	9	Relationship with adults at school (talks to adults, chat not clingy; enjoys adults' company; accepts cuddle)	non-armypractitioner4,131(7); non-armypractitioner4,66-69(7); non-armypractitioner4,136(7); non-armypractitioner4,224(8); non-armypractitioner4,227-228(8); non-armyparent11,86-88; non-armyparent9,176-178; non-armyparent7,164; non-armyparent8,85; non-armypractitioner3,37(10); non-armypractitioner3,204(12); non-armyparent8,201-203; non-armyparent8,267-269; non-armyparent8,259-262; non-armyparent12,267; non-armyparent12,74-280; non-armypractitioner3,646-649(10),; non-armypractitioner3,655(12),

					671-674(12);
	Positive developmental and adaptation skills	Coping skills	8	Emotional coping and psychological skills (pride; confident; mature; not frightened to make a mistake, take risks; empathy; drive; assertive; sense of humour)	non-armypractitioner4,6-7(7); non-armypractitioner4,7(7); non-armypractitioner4,34(7); non-armypractitioner4,58-45(7); non-armypractitioner4,168(7); non-armypractitioner4,69-75(7); non-armypractitioner4,133(7); non-armypractitioner4,200-201(8); non-armypractitioner4,132(7); non-armypractitioner4,80-81(7); non-armypractitioner4,83(7); non-armyparent11,16-18; non-armyparent7,114-116; non-armypractitioner3,224-225(12); non-armypractitioner3,228-229(12); non-armyparent8,119; non-armyparent8,121-123; non-armyparent12,311-320
				Coping with difficult situations (calm, not worried even though parent is anxious; stick up for self; tough girl; thinks for herself; strong; child copes with family circumstances such as father's mental health (knows mood, leaves him alone when he needs to, knows when to interact	non-armypractitioner4,144-159(7); non-armypractitioner4,388(8); non-armypractitioner4,198-200(8); non-armypractitioner4,60(7); non-armypractitioner4,215(8); non-armyparent8,86-92; non-armypractitioner3,27-28(10); non-armyparent8,106-108; non-armyparent8,113; non-armyparent8,110; non-armyparent8,111-112; non-armyparent8,295-299
		Communication and social skills	8	sociable, leader, good skills; cooperative; caring, considerate; helpful; social intuition	non-armypractitioner4,259(8); non-armypractitioner4,329(8); non-armypractitioner4,6(7); non-armypractitioner4,47-48(7); non-armypractitioner4,13(7); non-armypractitioner4,29(7); non-armypractitioner4,204(8); non-armypractitioner4,210(8); non-armypractitioner4,436(9); non-armypractitioner4,489-490(9); non-armyparent11,14-15; non-armypractitioner3,104-105(10); non-armypractitioner3,362-365(12); non-armyparent8,75-76; non-armyparent8,49; non-armyparent10,105-109; non-armypractitioner3,19(10); non-armyparent11,64-65;
		Self-regulation skills and autonomy	10	Self-regulation skills (knows how to behave; knows right from wrong; focused; good behaviour	non-armypractitioner4,327(8); non-armypractitioner4,218-219(8); non-armypractitioner4,224(8); non-armypractitioner4,78(7); non-armyparent7,126; non-armyparent9,148; non-armyparent8,48; non-armyparent7,262-263;
				Independence (wants to do by self)	non-armyparent12,232-236; non-armyparent12,250-251; non-armypractitioner4,394-396(9); non-armypractitioner4,62-63(7); non-armypractitioner4,221(8); non-armypractitioner3,176-

				178(12); non-armypractitioner3,497-498(11); non-armyparent10,118-119; non-armyparent11,80-82; non-armyparent11,83-84;
	Curiosity	8	Curiosity and interest (imagination; tremendous experience abroad; exploring the environment; outside)	non-armypractitioner4,52(7); non-armypractitioner4,252(8); non-armypractitioner4,99-103(7); non-armypractitioner4,250(8); non-armyparent8,96; non-armypractitioner3,734-736(9); non-armypractitioner3,508(11); non-armypractitioner3,501-503(11); non-armypractitioner3,67-71(10); non-armyparent8,143; non-armyparent7,120-121; non-armyparent7,91; non-armyparent10,72-73; non-armyparent10,73;
	Child has shown developmental progress	6	No concerns	non-armyparent11,32; non-armyparent11,53; non-armyparent9,114;
			Good progress (fantastic, child has overcome difficulties; better at school than nursery; matured at school; child surprises parent; has separate anxiety for a long time but now settled)	non-armypractitioner4,15(7); non-armypractitioner4,197(7); non-armypractitioner4,117-118(7); non-armyparent7,40; non-armyparent7,77-81; non-armyparent7,90; non-armyparent8,151; non-armyparent8,301-302; non-armyparent8,12; non-armyparent8,52; non-armyparent12,281-284
	Positive adaptation to nursery/school	8	Positive transition to nursery/reception (found some friends following transition)	non-armypractitioner4,6(7); non-armypractitioner4,197(8); non-armypractitioner4,321(9); non-armyparent11,36; non-armyparent12,203-206; non-armypractitioner3,206-209(12); non-armyparent7,299-300; non-armyparent8,18-19

Protective factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Prevalence	codes/subcategories	Data Extract
Family systems and contexts	Coping with family pressures	Coping well	3	Parent coping with different family pressures (children, chores, partner's mental health)	non-armyparent9,89-94; non-armyparent8,393-396
				Parent role not difficult (need to be the boss; never a bad day, different with a second child, more knowledge about being a parent)	non-armyparent9,227-230; non-armyparent9,232-236; non-armyparent9,240-242; non-armyparent9,225; non-armyparent9,227; non-armyparent9,244-246; non-armyparent11,6; non-armyparent8,411-415; non-armyparent8,405-410
		Family stability	5	Limited transitions, family stability	non-armyparent12,424; non-armyparent11,8-9; non-armyparent12,401; non-armyparent7,4-5; non-armyparent8,16; non-armyparent7,7
		Transition has a positive outcome	1	Positive outcome (living with husband, people in UK lovely and friendly)	non-armyparent9,77; non-armyparent9,36-37; non-armyparent9,42
		Presence of extended family support and social networks	7	Extended family present for family and child; Regular visits to meet cousins, go to grandparents' house; family hobby; godmother	non-armypractitioner3,398(12); non-armyparent11,146-149; non-armyparent12,262; non-armyparent12,274-280; non-armyparent11,177-180; non-armypractitioner3,401(12);
				Family social networks promotes child's socialisation (church, neighbour, friends)	non-armyparent7,214; non-armypractitioner3,600-602(11); non-armyparent8,290-291; non-armypractitioner3,717-719(7); non-armypractitioner3,402-405(12);
	Family relationship	Positive relationship amongst family members	8	Spending time together	non-armyparent12,492-499; non-armyparent12,500-508; non-armyparent12,542-553; non-armyparent11,177-180; non-armyparent11,186; non-armyparent11,174-177; non-armyparent10,185; non-armyparent7,202; non-armyparent8,136-138; non-armyparent8,138-148; non-armyparent8,314-319; non-armyparent8,344-347; non-armyparent7,211
				Positive child-parent relationship (stable, good; caring, loving relationship, child appreciates mother's compliments)	non-armypractitioner4,119-120(7); non-armypractitioner4,187-188(7); non-armypractitioner4,511-513(9); non-armypractitioner3,112-113(10); non-armyparent7,121-123

				Positive sibling-child relationship (share, play together, close, child protects siblings)	non-armyparent8,224; non-armyparent7,132; non-armyparent7,134; non-armyparent7,135; non-armypractitioner3,62non-armyparent10,; non-armyparent8,231-232
Positive parental attitude to child and education	Positive behaviour management strategies	4		Positive behaviour management strategies (praise, positive language; promoting right from wrong) Effective behaviour management strategies (being the boss works; when behaviour is difficult, important not to give in)	non-armyparent11,245; non-armyparent11,124-129; non-armyparent11,242-243; non-armyparent11,250; non-armyparent8,398-399; non-armyparent8,401-402; non-armyparent8,410-411; non-armyparent8,410-411 non-armyparent9,264-267; non-armyparent9,269-271; non-armyparent9,272; non-armyparent10,133-137; non-armyparent11,232-242
	Promoting socialisation	6		Promotes socialisation (including mixed gender relationship)	non-armyparent7,400; non-armyparent8,184; non-armyparent11,145-146; non-armyparent9,153-154; non-armyparent9,203; non-armyparent9,165; non-armyparent9,208-210; non-armyparent7,188-191; non-armypractitioner3,181-185(12); non-armyparent8,174-175; non-armyparent8,175-182
				Encourages pursue of hobbies	non-armyparent12,38; non-armyparent7,185; non-armyparent9,166
	Promoting learning	3		Promotes learning at home (model reading to child)	non-armyparent11,195-198; non-armyparent9,213-222; non-armyparent8,275; non-armyparent8,53-54; non-armyparent11,194;
				Pursue courses to help child	non-armyparent11,212; non-armyparent9,96-98
	Supporting child to cope with more difficult situations	4		Teach child strategies to cope in more difficult situations	non-armyparent7,144-146
				Promotes communication when conflict with child	non-armyparent7,309-313; non-armyparent8,141; non-armyparent8,494-496; non-armyparent8,500-511; non-armyparent9,250-252; non-armyparent9,255-260; non-armyparent10,209-214; non-armyparent12,417-420
				Supports child at nursery/school	non-armyparent12,122-125; non-armyparent12,133-141; non-armyparent7,45-47

Protective factors for children living in non-army families					
Themes	Subthemes	Categories	Prevalence	codes/subcategories	Data Extract
School systems and contexts	Home-school communication	Presence of communication parent-practitioner when concerned	7	Practitioner- parent communicate (practitioner takes on board parent's comment and makes changes)	non-armypractitioner4,233-235(8); non-armyparent7,63; non-armyparent9,103; non-armypractitioner4,423-424(9); non-armypractitioner4,467-471(9); non-armyparent7,63; non-armyparent8,254-255
				Good communication (if there are concerns)	non-armyparent10,64; non-armyparent10,167; non-armyparent10,169; non-armyparent8,451-452; non-armyparent10,226-228; non-armyparent11,131-136
		Effective communication strategies	7	Nursery environment favours communication, more flexible	non-armypractitioner3,907-903
				Behaviour management system (sad and happy faces/certificates) promotes communication	non-armyparent12,367-368; non-armyparent10,170-171; non-armyparent8,479-483
				Effective strategies (parent evening, morning, practitioner taking time to talk, induction meeting	non-armyparent7,165; non-armyparent7,179; non-armyparent7,178-180; non-armyparent12,465-471; non-armyparent12,713; non-armypractitioner3,896-898
				Working together helps	non-armyparent11,284; non-armyparent11,256-258; non-armyparent11,138-139; non-armyparent11,140-143; non-armypractitioner3,51(10);
				Important to promote communication (role is to link with parents; parents value run down of the day)	non-armypractitioner3,895-896; non-armyparent11,277-278; non-armyparent11,287-288; non-armypractitioner3,835-839
	Support strategies and supportive school ethos	Whole nursery/school and individualised strategies are appreciated and effective	5	Parent likes teaching methods (learning is fun);	non-armyparent9,281-286; non-armyparent7,275-278
				Positive transition practices (parent reassured during home visit, funding offers flexibility with transition practices)	non-armyparent7,287-291; non-armyparent12,771-775; non-armypractitioner3,85-90; non-armypractitioner3,844-non-armypractitioner3,865; non-armypractitioner3,785-789; non-armypractitioner3,800-801; non-armypractitioner3,806-808; non-armypractitioner3,818-821; non-armypractitioner3,821-825 non-armypractitioner3,811-813
				Whole school/nursery practices (outdoor play, out of school activities and Forest school, effective behaviour management system)	non-armyparent7,284-285; non-armyparent7,272; non-armyparent7,315-317; non-armyparent8,479-483

			Specific strategies to support children and parents	3	Communicating with children	non-armypractitioner3,7-8(10); non-armypractitioner3,1001-1004
					Pairing a calm child with one having difficulty	non-armypractitioner4,383-385(9),
					Effective to be positive about children with behavioural issues (Positive message about child impact on parent)	non-armypractitioner4,579-581; non-armypractitioner4,641-644; non-armypractitioner3,930-932; non-armyparent7,36-37
					Identifying vulnerable children by observing their behaviours and look for signs (paperwork does not mean child has difficulties, important to observe and get to know the children)	non-armypractitioner4,646; non-armypractitioner4,648-649; non-armypractitioner4,651-652; non-armypractitioner4,690-693
					Extra staff	non-armypractitioner3,988-990
					Important to model appropriate ways to respond to children	non-armypractitioner4,581-583; non-armypractitioner4,701-707
					Make suggestions to parents and reassure	non-armypractitioner4,581-583; non-armypractitioner4,600-601; non-armypractitioner3,888-893
					Support specific to issues, depending on crisis, often behaviour (CC support)	non-armypractitioner4,587-590; non-armypractitioner3,879; non-armyparent11,72-75; non-armypractitioner4,622; non-armypractitioner3,916-920
					Long-term engagement in the school helping supporting families	non-armypractitioner3,907-912
			Positive and supportive school ethos	6	Positive comments about school system	non-armyparent9,278-279; non-armyparent8,423-426; non-armyparent9,300-302; non-armyparent8,456-457
					Friendly, nice, caring (teachers look after the children, lovely) and supportive (headteacher present to offer support; school doing all they can	non-armyparent9,20-21; non-armyparent9,291; non-armyparent7,34-35; non-armyparent12,712-716; non-armyparent10,222-224; non-armyparent7,270; non-armyparent7,271; non-armyparent7,273-275
					opportunities for staff, parents and children to meet in the community helps	non-armyparent12,471-472; non-armyparent8,200-202;
					Deal with crises well	non-armyparent8,430
					No racism	non-armyparent8,438-442

Appendix 14 - Coded Transcripts

Coded risk factors are in red (army group)/pink(non-army group)

Coded protective factors are in blue (army group)/green(non-army group)

Interview with Practitioner O for child N – non-army group

129 P   So tell me about Sofia[22]'s experience of preschool.

130 X   Sofia's had quite a limited experience of preschool compared to other children, because her attendance has been really quite poor poor attendance impact on nursery experience. And to being with she found settling very, very difficult, adaptation difficult for child because she's not been left with anybody else, and even nanny had problems, mum hadn't left Sofia with nanny I don't think, because sometimes when mum wanted to leave she got nanny to come here, and nanny would say Sofia's not usually happy with me being with her. So that was quite a tricky one, it took a long time to do that. I don't ever tell the parents to go, I always say it's far better for the them to wait for the child to say right, you can go now. Because I've had, one little boy that I see in my nightmares, hanging on the gate screaming, because his mum said – oh but my mother-in-law said it's better for the child if I go separation impact on practitioner. So that's never…you know, they always stay as long as they need to. But I think they get to a stage where the parents feel that they are the only ones, and then they feel they need to take it into their own hands. And I think the fact it wasn't very consistent inconsistency impacted child's adaptation either didn't help Sofia either, because sometimes it was mum, sometimes it was dad, and then Sofia was told it might be mum and it was nan. I mean that's just life sometimes, sometimes think happen like that really. But she's suddenly had a massive developmental spurt really, she's so much…she's much happier, she's aware of what's going on, she's really happy about coming and all of that, so, you know. Child development progress

149 P   That's great, yeah. How about her friendships with other children?

150 X   She does tend to be, she used to be very much on her own, because if you don't feel happy in yourself you maybe wouldn't necessarily feel confident enough to link up with anyone else confidence and feelings impact on friendship, which I think must be the first place as well. But because her attendance hasn't been very good, and really isn't very good up until now even, family holidays and ill health impact on attendance she does apparently

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[22] The name has been changed

have chest infections, but also I don't know whether mum and dad's health, I'm not sure, but my understanding is that neither mum nor dad work, so they should have time attendance not a priority for the family, but for some reason, they go away on long weekends, which is great, so that cuts out a little bit of the attendance as well. But Sofia does have bad chest infections, I know, so that's impacted on her attendance too. And also friendship, making friendships really attendance impacted in child's ability to make friends. She's only just beginning, I think, to, in this last term, to actually feel she can link up with people, and apparently be quite bossy towards some of the younger boys bossy, difficulties making friends, so…

162 P Yes, that's something I observed on that day. Yes, that's interesting. Have you observed behaviour like that?

163 X I haven't, but after I mentioned it to some of the others lack of observation in the setting, the other staff, someone did actually pick up that she wasn't being very nice to one of the new boys. Difficulties making friends Yeah. But generally I don't think, I haven't heard any…none of the children have come up to me, which is a bit worrying, and said Sofia's bothering them, or haven't heard parents saying, some of the parents do come in and say that their child has said there's a problem, practitioner rely on parents and children to talk about a problem and then we get them to point out who it is, and then we have a quiet word with the children together. But no, so it might well be a little bit, I don't know, sneaky, do you know what I mean? On the quiet, so that nobody can see. You know, Sofia might well, I don't know of a situation, I can't remember a situation that you saw with this other boy, it might well be away from…hopefully it's not. I don't think, I'm pretty confident it's not a general thing. Lack of knowledge of child

175 P What about her problem solving skills?

176 X I think because she's more confident now she is quite willing to sort of get what she needs independent, for anything she wants to do, she knows where to go and what to get, so she's quite confident now confident. But that's taken a long time to get there . I would still probably say it's only this term that she's managed to get there. Although she is very young in her year as well, she's a summer birthday, so she is quite young in her year. Mum's a Guide leader opportunities to socialise outside school, I think, or a Brownie leader, and so Sofia has been, from a young age, has gone to some meetings, so she is quite an independent child independence skills. And I know the way that mum talks to Sofia comes across she is expecting her to be quite an independent one, but on the other hand I think also, because she's an independent child, there is a little bit of mothering, slightly over-

mothering, overmothering family relationships which is understandable too. And I think now Sofia does know, she is far more confident in what to get, and do things. And she can be quite a strong minded little girl as well. I mean if she is in the middle of doing something, or wants to do something, and you are trying to maybe ask her perhaps to go and do something else, or just talk to her about something, she'll tell you no, I'm doing this. So I think she's quite confident. confidence Actually most of the children we've got are quite confident. LAUGHS

193 P How would you say is her independence? How would you describe her?

194 X I think she is quite independent, she does link up if she needs something like a coat doing up, or if somebody is bothering her I think she would come up. But generally she is quite independent independence I think, much more so than she was before. But that's all being settled isn't it, I think? I mean today, for instance, it was induction, and she'd left her scarf, and mum said…either her hat or scarf, where's your hat? And she could tell me where it was, where in the past she wouldn't necessarily have been able to remember where it was. Certainly not to be able to think about where to locate it out of the nursery. She would have been quite panicky about even thinking about going out of the nursery, but it was all fine.

203 P How would you describe the trust she has built with adults here?

204 X I think she's quite…she's quite happy now with us positive relationship with staff. She wasn't happy before, when we were trying to get her to stay and she wanted really to go, took a long time to build a relationship with staff but I think now she's, she is very happy because to go into a different situation, like into a new classroom today child settled now positive adaptation, although friends were in there, so there were two familiar faces, instead of the new teacher, she was quite happy, she was perfectly happy to come in and go off I think. And as I said, if she has any problems or needs something doing she'll come up to us and ask us, whereas perhaps some of the younger children, or the ones who haven't completely settled, will wait and then tell their mum that their needs haven't been met. Ways to elicit children's feelings preschool practices. She is a confident one. I think she, you know, she'll trust us and she knows our names, whereas before it was teacher and whatever, but I think generally she knows who we are, and who the other children are, so I think she's managed that in this half-term, which is really good.

216 P And how would you describe some of the areas of self-regulation?

217 X She knows she can usually she can stop herself self-control, she's quite a chatty girl, but she knows that when we are having sort of like a story or a large group activity to begin with she can usually stop herself and focus on what we are asking her to do. It may well take perhaps a reminder or something, but she's not one of our children that we'd have to necessarily sit next to, and stop. So in that respect she's quite well, you know, self…what sort of areas are you thinking?

223 P Control her emotions, strategies to..?

224 X I think she would have the confidence to tell somebody if she wasn't happy coping with emotions/confidence with what they were doing. A child particularly, I think she would now be able to say no, I don't want you to do that, or that's not what you do. Whereas she wouldn't necessarily have done that, well she wouldn't have done that in the past. And she's certainly in control of her emotions now, child protective emotional she doesn't cry for mum or things like that. I think she's got beyond that now, with needing somebody to be there. coping with emotions/confidence I'm not sure I'm answering that…

231 P No, it's fine. In terms of exploration is she a little girl who wants to explore different things, or is she..?
233 X She tends to have her areas specific areas/interests she explores, you know, she'll like the gluing and the painting, she quite often goes towards the gluing and Playdough, she likes being outside though explore , she's often got her wellies on, so she is an outdoor girl. There's nothing I could say she wouldn't be interested, if you wanted to show her anything, or, you know, like a spider in a spider's web or something, she'd be quite happy to come over and look. explore And I have taken her out on a walk and she's been quite happy to look at road signs and things around her, explore and chat about that as well, so I think she is a child that's interested in different things, although she would have her areas first explore of all to come in, I think she quite often comes in and goes on the Playdough, plays with the Playdough if the Playdough's out, but that's possibly her own routine as well.

243 P Yes, are there things that she doesn't like in nursery?

244 X Um…I'm not sure she would necessarily go to the construction, or jigsaws, unless there was an adult there. specific areas/interests she explores I haven't personally seen her wanting to, you know, go over there, but if there was an adult who said come and build this model with me need adult to explore unfamiliar activities or I'll show you what to do, come

and put the wheels on, she would do it. she kind of …is she's OK at getting her hands dirty. I don't think so. I think you might have to wait, which is fair enough, she might want to do her own thing first of all, but I think when she's finished and you ask her, she's probably going to be likely to come and do it. She's not one of these children that says no way I'm not going to do it at all. will try…

253 P What about her behaviour, is there anything else you want to say?

254 X Generally it's fine. She's showing that she's settled, in respect, you know, she'll certainly turn around and say if she's not necessarily wanting to do or somebody's doing something, she's generally settled, quite a small minded little character, which is quite good really positive adaptation.

258 P How is her relationship with parents like? Does she talk about home?

259 X She talked about her mummy going to the hospital at the weekend, because she missed Monday I think, and she was talking about they went on the bus and then they went on the train, because mum had already told me that she wasn't going to be there, because she was going for a pre-op. But Sofia just amazed me really, because the sentence she used, and the length and the preciseness, she's just developed so much language communication child Whereas before her speech was quite immature, but she explained it all in really good detail, and the fact she had to go to the station, and then they stayed in a hotel first, it was the order of the speech which was good as well. My memory of these children is not always going to be like this practitioner feels the need to memorise nursery/school. So yeah, she spoke about that, she also speaks about, sometimes mum prompts her and says tell Mrs D about Legoland. She does talk about, she likes going to Legoland, that's one of her favourite holidays. She's often talking about, she used to relate, and she still does sometimes, to colours, that's nanny's car colour, or that's mummy's car colour. Apparently mum, I don't know if this is relevant, but as it's confidential I'm sure it's fine, the operation that mum's going in for is going to be a gastric band fitted, and one of the reasons she's doing that is because Sofia's been calling mum fat, so, you know, I'm not sure who necessarily leads who, you know, in the family pack family relationships, child in-charge. Sometimes I think possibly Sofia is the one that tells sort of others what to do, and others the other way around. It just, I might be completely wrong, but I just wonder sometimes. Certainly when she was settling in the fact that it lacked a bit of consistency, inconsistency impacted on child's adaptation to nursery it might have been fairer to Sofia, but harder to mum and dad, to have maybe kept the same person that was coming and

going, coming and going, so Sofia had some sort of a…rather than trying to involve poor nanny to give mum a break, because mum didn't want to see Sofia so upset parent has difficulties coping with child's adaptation to nursery, that sort of thing. I don't know. I might have got it completely wrong, but that's just my personal impression. And it's not…yes, it is an observation, and I know children say things without, because that's the joy of working with young children, that they just say what they think, they maybe haven't got the constraints that we maybe have when we are older, but to actually say to mum that mum is fat, and mum won't be able to run, or mum can't do this, is, you know, seemed a little bit harsh to me. Child communicates difficult messages to mum, family relationships

290 P What kind of things does she do with other children?

291 X She runs around outside with them, but to think about, for me to actually name a special friend, I don't think she has a special friend, she's quite happy to stand next to children, but I don't think, she's not one of our children that's got a particular, special friend. No special friendship/parallel play friendship She's happy to play with the Playdough next to them, or be outside, mix with the children, but as far as playing with them, I don't know how much joint play there is.

297 P What about outside preschool? Does she talk about (friends)..?

298X   No, she doesn't. doesn't talk about friends friendship I think she has got cousins, or I think mum has said there are children outside the family, or maybe mum's friends, or family children opportunities to socialise. She strikes me as being a child that is used to adult company, rather than child company, and I think there's nanny, and mum and dad, and no other children in the family, although mum, as I said before, does, I think it's Guides, presence of social support so Sofia would have sort of experience, but then again Guides to her will almost be adults as well. So that could perhaps account for some of the reasons why she maybe being the younger child, that she is less tolerant because less tolerant with children friendship she doesn't really under…I don't know.

Interview transcript of Parent F – army group

313 P And how would you describe your involvement with school?

314 X As a parent?

315 P Yeah, as a parent.

316 X I certainly get involved, come to breakfast club as much as possible, and go to gardening club as well. Parental attitude getting involved at school, show school is fun I talk to other kids in the playground, talk to other parents, and that kind of thing, and have a chat with the teachers parent communicate with teachers as we are arriving or leaving, and then we attend any sort of school open days, or they had a festival in the summer. We try to go with everything that's going on, just because we like to be involved, and just so that we, so he sees us enjoying being at school, so maybe he can see it's a fun place to be.

323 P What kind of things do you do with your child with other children, outside of school?

325 X We tend to go to the soft play pretty much every week. We tend to swim more or less every week as well, and obviously he interacts with other kids there. opportunities to socialise outside nursery/school In summer time we go to the beach and we normally take a school friend with us, or in separate cars with their parents, so they can play together. Most of the stuff we do is in summertime, we sort of go for picnics, go to the park, go to the woods, you know, different weekend things that you do as a family. But in the winter there's really not so much we can do, so in the winter it's the soft play and swimming. Sometimes we might have friends around for, you know, have some pizza together, and play with each other's toys. We try to do as much as we can with him. Promote activities together family relationships

334 P You mentioned about him meeting other children outside of preschool.

335 X Yes.

336 P What do you do together at home? What type of activities do you enjoy together?

337 X Just me and Mark?

338 P Yes, or as a family.

339 X Me and Mark mostly just like to wrestle all the time, which is mostly what he wants to do. We try and keep it quite controlled, and keep it to a time limit, promote because if he could he would do it all day. But we just, you know, at the right time we have a bit of a wrestle, a bit of a fun fight, a play. He likes watching telly, we watch some telly together. He likes helping me create, you know, cooking as well, and he'll…you know, make some scrambled eggs together, he wants to help me all the time if ever I'm in the kitchen. Spending time together/activities together family relationships He'll help me in the garden, as well, in the summertime. We have a little vegetable patch at the end, which he is meant to help me with, but he is not really much help. But just whatever I'm doing he likes to help me mow the lawn in the summertime, and we grew a lot of tomatoes, and he helped a lot with the tomatoes, and things like that. Activities together family relationships He just wants to do whatever I'm doing, even if it's…he just helps me around the house, that's what he likes to do. And as a family we all try to have a meal together, and we try and include the baby as much as we can, family relationships meals together because we want them to be close brothers together, so we'll sit them down together a lot of the time, rolling a ball between the three of us as well, which the baby can manage, he can manage doing that. And if I'm cleaning the house a little bit he's got a mini Hoover, and he will help with that, but a lot of the time anything like that his attention's quite short. So he'll do that for a few minutes. And the teachers have mentioned he likes making things a lot at school, which we are not really, me and my wife aren't very keen on, because it makes a lot of mess, but as it was his birthday recently we made a few plaster of Paris models, you know, by pouring the liquid in. We made them, and painted them, and did that as a family, and he enjoyed that. He likes to do anything really. Making things together/activities together family relationship

362 P What type of things do you do to help him learn?

363 X To help him learn? We read to him every night, there's a story every night, and in the past I've tried to point out where it's a the and a, and just easy words, but he's got no interest in it at the minute. You know, he gets a bit bored with it, so I've laid off that Sometimes I'll point out numbers to him, and ask him which number is which, and that kind of thing. But he doesn't really have a big interest in it, so I just tend not to really do anything like that positive attitude to learning. I tell him things about, like his environment around him, about types of bird, or what it means if there are black clouds, it might rain, things like that. A lot of the time he'll ask questions, child curious and I'll just answer whatever questions he asks, as best he can. A lot of the time I don't know the answers, so we'll look it up on the internet together, and we try and find out. So I tend just to let him ask me what he wants to know, and then I'll try and answer him. Parent promoting curiosity family I've got him a couple of reference

books, just for him to be flicking through, but I don't really want to pressure him into learning things in any rush at the minute. I was thinking about getting some of these study books, where he could sort of trace the different letters, and the numbers, but I think he's got time to do that, maybe in six months time, when he does it at school. I'd rather leave the educating to school, parent attitude to learning/rely on school because I don't want him to start learning that sort of thing just yet. That's my opinion. I know some parents sort of school their kids at home a little bit as well, but I don't think he's ready for it yet.

382 P And what would you say is a typical good day at home with Mark?

383 X For his behaviour or what sort of thing we would do?

384 P Behaviour, yeah.

385 X At the moment I'd say, obviously it would be nice for him to wake up a bit later than normal, so if he could get to about seven o'clock. He tends to know that he should go to the toilet as soon as he gets up, and then if the baby is still asleep, and we are still asleep, then he just puts his light on and plays quietly in his room, and sometimes he will do that really well, and then whenever the baby wakes up then what we'd normally do is all sit in bed and watch a bit of telly together. Sometimes he will sit really nicely for that. And then normally we'd go down and have some breakfast, and most of the time he eats his breakfast really nicely, and he'll help me take the spoons to the table, and take the cereal to the table, and that kind of thing, and eat his breakfast. He'll dress himself, on, obviously, a good day, he will do all that the first time you ask him to do it. But obviously sometimes he plays up. But on a good day he will do what he's told the first time, and he'll play nicely with his brother as well. If he's behaving well we'll go for a day out, and just behave nicely really, doing things when we tell him to do things. And general good behaviour really. And then at night-time he'll eat all of his meals, help out, clearing up afterwards, and then when he goes to be he just behaves himself, no nonsense when I'm around at night. A lot of the time he does all those things. Some days he just likes to misbehave a bit.

403 P What would be a typical bad day then?

404 X A bad day would be maybe wake up and find he's been colouring in the walls in his bedroom, and, you know, he'll come in at half five, being wide awake, or he'll get up and bang around a lot in his room, deliberately, to wake up the baby, or smash the toilet seat down really loud, and stamp around, just so he wakes up the baby, because he knows when

the bay's up then we have to get up. And then, you know, we might say go to the toilet Mark, no I don't want to. It will be one of those days where we have to tell him everything all the time, and then after three or four times he'll get timed out, and then he'll have to go, and you might find that he's been under his bed at night, and torn up a book, or something like that, and he'll be quite intolerant of his brother, you know, his brother might hit him and he might feel a bit cross about that. One of the worst things he does is when me and my wife are talking he'll sit in-between us, and talk, trying to interrupt us, and that's quite frustrating. And so that's most of the bad stuff he'll do upstairs, and when he goes downstairs he probably would not want to help out, not want to eat his breakfast, and then just shout a lot, interrupt a lot, disobey us if we ask him to help with something, or to do something, get cross about different things. General…all that stuff probably go on throughout the day.

421 P So how do you handle it?

422 X Give him a few warnings probably, you know, I'll say give him two warnings, and on the second one I'll say if you keep being rude you'll be timed out. Positive management behaviour strategies clear boundaries in place family And if he's in a bad mood then he'll carry on being rude and get timed out. Some days he'll be just back and forth on the step, you know, because whatever reason he's in a bad mood. And at night time, if he's misbehaved, then he'll answer us back, we'll say can you tidy up? And he'll say no, I'm not going to do it, that baby made mess, or things like that. He will…he will…sort of not eat his dinner, or when you bring him his dinner say it's yuck. And he'll talk about poo and wee all the time as well, and just talk about things like that. We try not to laugh, because it is funny, but we say we don't want to talk about that all the time. And he'll carry on doing it. Then obviously at bedtime if he's behaving badly he'll not want to go to the toilet again, or he'll interrupt us all the time, mess around in the bath, and then when he goes to bed he'll just stay up, won't go to sleep, be running up and down all night, he'll be under his bed, he'll be getting toys out and crashing around, that sort of thing. So sometimes he's like that. LAUGHS.

437 P That's a typical bad day is it?

438 X Yes, that's a bad day. And he doesn't usually behave badly all day, because we try and deal with him, and stop him when he's behaving badly, but any of those things can happen at any time of the day. He might be good all day and bad at bedtime, or bad all morning, and good in the afternoon.

442 P Yeah.

443 X And also sometimes he'll…

Brief interruption

444 X Sometimes if he's doing badly he'll misbehave on the way to school, as well, and he won't want to hold…he tends to misbehave with my wife a lot more than me. I don't know why, but he plays her up a lot, and he won't listen to her, and he won't hold her hand, and this sort of thing. So that's the sort of thing he will do, on the way to school he won't want to hold anyone's hand, or he'll try and be, what he used to do a lot, but he doesn't do much anymore, is when you collect him out of school he'll run off in the other direction with one of his friends, and you'd shout at him and he wouldn't stop, all this kind of thing. But he mostly does that with my wife, so you'd be better to ask her. He generally behaves quite well for me.

453 P So how do you promoted positive behaviour at home?

454 X Verbal encouragement positive behaviour management strategies/parental attitude. Tell him he's good whenever he does something good. On a Saturday he gets some pocket money, so in the morning we'll say remember it's pocket money today, so make sure you are good today, and that usually keeps him good. Or we might say, if we are going to the shops and things, we'll let him choose a chocolate mousse, or a special pudding, and I'll say if you are good all day one day you can have that as a treat. So we bribe him with a treat, mostly, and then also sort of threaten him, if you are not good then you'll be timed out. But I tend to talk, that's what I use, a bit of threat and a bit of bribes. And then encouragement when he's been good.

463 P The study is about how we can promote well-being and resilience in preschool, so have you got any ideas or other suggestions of things that could be happening for the children here?

466 X To promote their wellbeing? Uh…I've not really thought about it. I don't know if they could maybe go on any school trips, I don't know if the young kids do, maybe these kids are a bit young to maybe go on a school trip together, to the zoo or something, but I think they are doing what they should do. appreciation of nursery/school practices

474 P In terms of being an Army family, and how that affects, in terms of maybe different support or similar support to other families, how does that have an impact? I don't know, the fact that you are in the Army, how can we, how can school, help you with your role in the Army?

478 X I think what they do is good, because there's a letter writing club for dads and mums who are away. Support at nursery/school letters supporting parental absence And I know, obviously because a lot of the kids in the school are from Army families, I think all the staff understand that when their dads go away some of the kids need a little bit more attention, or a bit more one on one playing or whatever, because they might be missing their dads Staff understanding of family circumstances But because of my job I don't really go away that much stability family, it doesn't really affect my family so much. But from I see what the school does for the kids whose parents are away, I think they do a lot, which is nice. appreciative of nursery/school system

486 P And how, as a family, do you like to be supported, in terms of staff understanding of your situation? How do you like to be…is it different? Is it a different culture, is it a different..?

489 X Yeah, I think it's a small community in the Army, which is quite nice sense of togetherness community ethos family relationship with community, because I think if we weren't in the Army we would really have nothing in common with the other parents, and the other kids. Some things we'd have in common, but if we were all working in different places, in different jobs, whereas the fact that most people here do the same job, and the kids all live in the same house, because obviously it's all Army housing so they all, I thing they are all quite the same as each other, which I think is nice, and that's something that I like about living on this estate, is everyone, it is a community, which I think is important, and it's quite rare these days, because people live now a lot more isolated from each other. But living here I think is quite nice. appreciative of army community - community protective relationships

499 P So you feel that the school is responding well to this kind of situation then, you feel you are a bit different?

501 X Yes, I think so. I think a lot of the teachers have been here a long time, and they understand that it's a little bit different to a regular school, where there's not so many Army people. School ethos understanding different from other schools I just think they know how to deal with the kids, because it must affect the kids when their dad is here and gone and then here and gone. But because there's so many kids in the same boat together same boat sense of togetherness then it's just normal for them, so they don't see it as being a problem. normalising circumstances I think that's where I would say it is.

507 P That's quite helpful for them in that way.

508 X I think so, because they support each other, and the school, I think, does everything they need to support. Supportive ethos

510 P Is there anything else that you feel that the school can be thinking about?

511 X Um…

512 P In terms of the Army situation.

513 X Personally I know they have criteria as to who can get into the school and who can't, and I believe it's all on postcodes, and the way they've moved, they've sold a lot of the Army estate off to non-Army people, like the building site that is over the other side of the fields, in my opinion that should just be priority for Army people who live on this estate, but I'm a bit biased on that. But I think that would be nice, if that was a priority, then we could keep all the kids together, and they'd understand that we are from similar backgrounds. Whereas Army kids that didn't get into this school, and maybe have to go to a school where there was no-one else from the Army, then any changes with their dad or mum going away might be a bit harder for them to deal with. But I think they can't do that because it's unfair on the civilian people who live nearby. New housing development and admission policies prevent access to support for army group children and families

524 P It's understandable, I understand your point.

525 X I think it would be nice to do that. I think it's nice to have some civilian families as well. I hope he gets to stay here.

527 P Are you assured a place?

528 X No, not yet, no, because we live about half a mile away. But because there's such dense housing around here even that might be too far away. When they finish the building site there will be another extra hundred houses, and that's only five hundred metres away from the school, so they will obviously all get in, and people who live any further away might not. So I think that could be a big problem. Because anyone who doesn't get in will then be moved to different, maybe St M's, or even further out. So it'll be interesting to see what happens on that one.

536 P So from your perspective, as part of the Army, you like the feeling of a community around here.

538 X I think that's nice.

539 P You think that's really helpful.

540 X Definitely. appreciative of community ethos and relationships, Because, especially for the wives, as well, of the husbands that go away, they have little groups of friends, who all understand, exactly the same thing, they are all in the same position, and they can understand each other, which I think is nice for them. And they've all got kids a similar age, live in the same house, they earn about the same money, so they've got a lot in common with each other, and they tend to support each other, which I like that, it's good.

546 P Good, anything else?

547 X No, I don't think so.

548 P That's great, thank you.