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Research project to explore the experiences of young people from military families

The [Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research](#) at Northumbria University has received almost £125,000 in funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to broaden the understanding of the social determinants of health among military connected children and young people.

The social determinants of health are defined by the [World Health Organisation](#) as the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes. They

are the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life.

The 'Military Children' Promote, Protect, Prevent project, led by [Dr Paul Watson](#), Assistant Director of the Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research and Assistant Professor in Nursing at Northumbria University, will see the creation of a bespoke Social Determinants of Health (SDH) survey designed to capture detailed information about the experiences of military connected children and young people, to understand how these experiences shape the conditions in which military connected children and young people live, grow and age.

The SDH survey will have three variations, suited to different age groups, and will aim to gather information directly from children and young people on their own experiences of numerous social determinants of health. These include economic stability, educational attainment, access to healthcare, neighbourhood and environment, safety in their communities, housing and living conditions.

Speaking about the project, lead researcher Dr Paul Watson said: “This project is quite unique as previous studies have collected similar information from parents and carers, which ultimately provides us with an adult interpretation of a child’s life. In this instance we will be collecting the data directly from the military connected children and young people based on their own lived experience, so we’re really excited about that.

“We’ve also made the decision to look at all five of the groups of the social determinants of health. Historically the focus of research within this population has been focused on the educational opportunities and attainment levels. We’re hoping through this study to gain a broader knowledge of the experiences of children and young people connected to the military and as a result improve our understanding of how their unique environment shapes their overall health and wellbeing.

“Ultimately, we hope the findings of this project will provide a foundational benchmark to more thoroughly inform the interventions we create and the work we do with government, local authorities and statutory and third-party service providers to support those living and working within the military going forward.”

The project will be delivered through a collaborative partnership that also includes Kings College London (KCMHR), Edinburgh Napier University, The University of Central Lancashire, Anglia Ruskin University (VFi) and think tank RAND Corporation.

Speaking on the project Dr Rachael Gribble, Lecturer in War and Psychiatry within the Department of Psychological Medicine at Kings College London said: “I am delighted to be involved in the project, along with the other members of the research team.

“Previous work at the [King’s Centre for Military Health Research](#) has highlighted the impacts military service can have on children from military families, not only when they are young but throughout their lives and into adulthood. This project will provide much needed understanding of the experiences affecting children from military families, give providers additional insight and knowledge to support families and children, and help improve their health and wellbeing”.

As part of the process, the team will also be holding four individual co-design events to give those who will use the SDH survey the chance to review any prototypes and give their feedback to inform the final product, ensuring it is fit for purpose.

Once developed, the SDH survey will be shared via existing networks across the armed forces sector allowing children and young people to answer questions and submit information about their own lived experiences – providing the research team with unique access to their perspectives.

Speaking on the funding award, Sonia Howe, Director of Policy at the Armed Forces Covenant Trust said: “Our overall outcome for [these awards](#) will be to have added significantly to the understanding of complex problems so that solutions can be developed, and to have funded innovative solutions that can demonstrate positive outcomes for individuals.

These solicited awards complement our wider suite of open programmes in 2024/25, providing a range of funding opportunities for charities, CICs, local authorities and other statutory organisations, and Armed Forces bases/units.”

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust supports the Armed Forces Covenant

by delivering funding programmes that create real change to Armed Forces communities in the UK. The Trust is a charity and a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Ministry of Defence. Find out more by [visiting their website](#).

The Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research is a multi-disciplinary team that conducts translational research in the Armed Forces Community covering health and social care, public health, psychology, social policy, human geography and nursing. The team work to facilitate collaboration across the armed forces sector and work with a variety of organisations including government, local authorities, the NHS and third sector to improve the lives of those they support. Find out more about the hub's work by [visiting their web pages](#).

Northumbria University is dedicated to reducing health and social inequalities, contributing to the regional and national workforce and improving social, economic and health outcomes for the most marginalised in society. Through its new Centre for Health and Social Equity, researchers will be delivering world-leading health and social equity research and creating innovative, evidence-based policies and data-driven solutions to bring impactful change across the region, the UK and globally.☒☒☒

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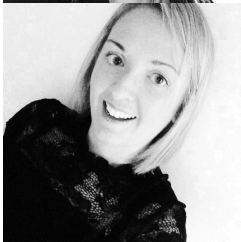
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