

The Garrison Assist Project Report

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"My biggest challenge was when both of my Serving parents missed my birthday because they were away at the same time."

"I am so proud of my Daddy helping to save the world."

"My biggest challenge was when I moved from Cyprus to the UK because I had lots of good friends and then I lost them."

"My biggest challenge was when my dad went to the Falklands for 6 months when I was 5."



The Garrison
ASSIST Project



The Garrison ASSIST Project

GAP+



About the evaluation

The University of Winchester was commissioned to evaluate the impact of the project with a view to identifying recommendations to support its further development and possible roll out to other areas.

The Garrison ASSIST Project (GAP) ran across the academic year 2022/23 and involved the schools serving Catterick Garrison in North Yorkshire. It was funded through an MOD Education Support Fund grant.

GAP+ then followed across the 2023/24 academic year, funded by an Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust grant through its Service Pupils Support Programme.

The aims of the evaluation

The evaluation set out to explore the following questions:

- What was the situation for school support of Service children with SEND prior to GAP (Garrison ASSIST Project)?
- What are the distinctive experiences of Service children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and of their families and the schools supporting them?
- What is GAP, what did it set out to do and what did it do?
- What has been the success(es) of GAP? What has its impact been?
- What is key to deploying GAP, or elements of it elsewhere?

Data collection

As part of the evaluation, data was gathered from a range of sources. The first step was to gather baseline and contextual data regarding the participating schools, their work in supporting Service children, and their participation in GAP. The aim of this phase was to build a picture of the context for the participating schools, which would help to understand the impact achieved through GAP. Sources for this were:

- Schools' self-evaluations via the Service Children's Progression Alliance *Thriving Lives Toolkit*;
- School websites;
- Ofsted inspection reports;
- Statistical and demographic baseline data for each participating school;
- Records of GAP and GAP+ steering group meetings.

Data was then gathered from staff at participating schools (class teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs)), parents, and children attending the participating schools. The aim was to evaluate different stakeholders' perceptions of support for Service children with SEND in the participating schools and to elicit staff and parental perspectives on the impact that GAP has had. There was an aim to build a richer understanding of Service family life and how SEND intersected. To do this the following methods were employed:

- Questionnaires to parents at all participating schools;
- Focus groups and interviews with parents of Service children with SEND attending participating schools;
- Focus groups with staff at two participating schools;
- A focus group with SENCOs from participating schools and
- Focus groups with children from two participating schools.

This report summarises the baseline data and the findings from fieldwork conducted in June 2024.

The headline themes that have emerged:

- Amongst those who have been engaged directly with GAP and GAP+, for example through training or through parents' forums, a common understanding of the aims and purposes of GAP and GAP+ seems to be emerging.

- The impact of GAP+ has been recognised in terms of:
 - Upskilling staff in the participating schools;
 - Raising knowledge and awareness of particular needs, for example autism;
 - Prompting adaptive and collegiate approaches within schools to responding to Service children's learning needs
 - Promoting collaboration and communication between schools on the Garrison;
 - Promoting a renewed focus on the specificities of Service family life.
- Parents that have been involved in e.g. GAP and GAP+ parents' forums recognise it, although others may not be as aware.
- Systemic challenges relating to access to diagnosis, specialist support and resources have been identified by school staff and parents alike.
- Pupils have reflected positively on practices in school, albeit some variability has been noted. In general, pupils notice the impact of whole-school practices (e.g. the fundamentals of teaching and learning and of fostering respectful relationships), although older pupils have identified the importance of specific practices relating to promoting self-regulation.
- Parents have identified how specific aspects of Service life (notably mobility and family separation) have intersected with the experiences of parenting children with particular support needs. They spoke of the tensions and frustrations of obtaining support and access to diagnoses but praised school staff for their willingness to understand the needs both of their children and the families. They emphasised the importance of fostering positive relationships with school staff.
- School staff echoed the frustrations expressed by parents. They appreciated the opportunities provided through GAP to share expertise and knowledge, as well as the reassurance gained through participating in such networks.



1.



What is GAP+?

The Garrison ASSIST (Assessment, Support & School Inclusivity in SEND Teaching) Project

The Garrison ASSIST Project (GAP) stemmed from the recommendation¹ that Service children should not be disadvantaged by Service life, especially those children with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND). It was a collaborative project involving schools serving the Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire.

Children of Armed Forces personnel (Service children) can experience a range of factors unique to Service life in addition to those common to their civilian family peers. These may include frequent family relocation entailing changing schools; prolonged periods of family separation and subsequent reunification; and the emotional challenges of loved ones being deployed to hostile environments. The impacts of these factors can interact with, and sometimes exacerbate, typical experiences of growing up. For families with children who have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), the effects stemming from Service life can present additional complications. Changing schools can mean discontinuity in support, parents having to re-arrange or re-negotiate Service provision, and having to re-build relationships of trust very quickly. For schools, preparing to welcome new children mid-year requires quickly coming to understand their needs and arranging appropriate support within existing frameworks. This can be exacerbated by such factors as difficulties in communication with other schools, delays to the transition process, and resource constraints. Such challenges are reflected in the Statutory Guidance on the Armed Forces Covenant Duty to which schools, local authorities, NHS bodies and other relevant public bodies are required to have due regard².

GAP+, a one-year project also centred on Catterick Garrison, North Yorkshire, intended to address the Armed Forces Covenant commitment to inform the development of a translatable whole-school approach to supporting Service children with SEND. It was built on GAP that ran during the academic year 2022-2023. GAP+ aimed to enable rigorous understanding of the interplay between Service children's lives and SEND policy and practice, to help schools understand and respond, and to consider how learning can inform the development of a translatable model for future practice.

¹ In Walker et al. (2020) *Living In Our Shoes: Understanding the needs of UK armed forces families*. Recommendation 15. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/living-in-our-shoes-understanding-the-needs-of-uk-armed-forces-families>

² Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-duty-statutory-guidance>

This report discusses some of the emerging findings of the evaluation of GAP/GAP+ and reflects on their implications for informing policy and practice for SEND support for Service children. The evaluation aims to understand the distinctive experiences of Service children with SEND, their families, and the schools that support them. It explores the impact of the programme and aims to draw out key issues to understand the GAP+ approach and recommendations to support the translation of the GAP model to other contexts.

The aims of the project were to:

- upskill school staff, share resources and support systems;
- strengthen support for Service children and their families;
- have an improved consistency of approach; and
- hear and act on the voice of Service children with SEND.

Since September 2022, funding for this project has been provided initially by the MOD's Education Support Fund (2022/23) and then by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust's Service Pupils Support Programme (2023/24).

Chronological development of GAP

Year 1 - GAP

GAP was instigated in September 2022. In the first year the steering group organised a launch day in January 2023 to ensure that all schools understood the purpose of the project. A network for special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) was established and all schools had a member of staff who led on ensuring that Service children have their needs met (Service Children Leads). Parents were also engaged and parent advisory group was established.

The following schools have been part of the project:

- Cambrai Primary School
- Carnagill Primary School
- Colburn Community Primary School
- Hipswell Church of England Primary School
- Le Cateau Community Primary School
- Leeming RAF Community Primary School
- Risedale School (secondary)
- Wavell Primary School

In each school, the *Thriving Lives*³ self-evaluation was completed as well as the *Evaluate my School*⁴ tool.

Workshops were organised for schools and were well-attended by staff:

Workshop	Attendees
Autism	56
Emotion Coaching	88
Building Blocks for Learning	95
Executive Skills	77
Developmental Trauma	67
Total attendances	383

The first Parents' Forum took place on 26th June 2023, with seven Service parents with children with SEND in attendance. Parents were asked to consider:

- What is, or has, gone well with the support for your child?
- What is not going well, or has not gone well in the past, with the support for your child?
- What would you like to see done differently to support your child?



³ The *Thriving Lives Toolkit* is available here: <https://thrivinglives.scipalliance.org/signup>

⁴ For more information about the *Evaluate My School* tool: <https://evaluatemyschool.co.uk/>

This table summarises the responses.

Questions	Parents' responses (in their own words)
<p>What is, or has, gone well with the support for your child?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EHCP [Education, Health and Care Plan] has finally been written and working through the process. • School is regularly supporting with an Education Plan updating it on a regular basis. They provide emotional support as and when required. • School has great comms. • School is documenting where it can't meet need. • Individuality, Reasonable adjustments. Communication. Thinking outside the box for alternative approaches. Transitions. • Watching for high chance of those with a SEN parent may have SEN child. • Supported not blamed.
<p>What is not going well, or has not gone well in the past, with the support for your child?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time scale for waiting – unnecessary / unrelated health tests. • Not enough or no training for teachers and especially TAs. • Communication non-existent, school to parent. • Support staff with skills leave or aren't replaced due to the budget. • Now need to help fight for retention when child and family with needs. • If staff on CP for a child with SEN, it is important a SEN trained worker attends. • Fobbing off – let's see you in XXX amount of time. • Not documenting / sending all files to relevant professionals. • Constantly having to explain why we think he needs assessments. Chasing whether or not things have been done. • No NHS/school support for sensory processing difficulties. • Supporting the environment he needs to be in to be able to access the curriculum.
<p>What would you like to see done differently to support your child?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier intervention – not prolonging EHCP – trust the parents. • More robust assessments and gathering of support. • Reporting clearly the numbers of children schools are unable to meet the needs of, so that the Local Authority is absolutely aware. • Exploring the links when family has additional needs and whether co-morbidities exist. Likelihood if ASD etc signs mean another may. • LA being held to account for failures including not advising schools properly and breaking the law at times. • Pupil Premium usage when not accessing school. • Stop blaming parents. • Consistency. Process of assessment. Documentations by school – no picking and choosing what is suitable – just send it all. • Full family picture is important – get to know parents more than a gate 'hello'

Further monthly meetings were planned for the second year of the project.

The SENCoS were consulted about their views of the first year of the project. At the beginning of the project, not all schools had a focus on SEND in the school improvement plan. As a result of the project, one SENCo responded to say that there had been a focus on SEND in the School Improvement Plan and that the training offered had been good for staff. The tools provided for self-evaluation (*Evaluate my School*) had been helpful to inform ongoing school development. The sharing of good practice through half-termly SENCo network meetings was highlighted as a positive aspect of the project. There was an acknowledgement that staff's knowledge and understanding of neurodiversity had improved and that the classroom environment and lesson content had improved as a result of training. The project's Educational Psychologist had introduced the SENCoS to the *NeuroBears*⁵ materials and this had meant that the SENCoS were able to share this in schools with parents. The SENCoS reported that the opportunity to collaborate was important. One SENCo stated:

Personally, the project, and support network it has provided, couldn't have come at a better point in my SENCo journey. I've never known it this tough. It is hard to keep trying to provide answers and support for teachers and families struggling with kids with high needs. So being able to discuss and reflect on this has been incredibly valuable. Ultimately, it has made me feel less alone in my role! Especially when considering the added complexities working with Service kids and high mobility brings. We've also benefited from the Educational Psychology expertise and access to ideas/continuing professional development etc.

Headteachers were asked about the impact of the project. These were the responses to the following statements:

Prompt	Headteacher responses
<i>Evaluate my school:</i> The information from the <i>Evaluate my school</i> SEND module supported/helped to inform the school improvement plan	100% of headteachers agreed (7 responses)
The <i>Evaluate my school</i> SEND module gave me confidence to discuss changes about SEND with staff in general	100% of headteachers agreed (7 responses)
The workshops attended have helped/improved my staff members' understanding of SEND	4 headteachers agreed and 2 headteachers strongly agreed (6 responses)

⁵ For more information: [Pandas \(pandasonline.org\)](http://pandas.pandasonline.org)

The workshops attended provided information on how to assess children's needs using the chosen resource/tools	1 headteacher was neutral, 4 agreed and 2 strongly agreed (6 responses)
Staff confidence in supporting pupils with SEND has risen in your school	4 headteachers replied 'yes' and 3 responded with 'maybe' (6 responses)
The <i>Thriving Lives Toolkit's</i> self-evaluation has been beneficial	5 headteachers agreed and 1 responded with 'neutral' (6 responses)
The school's Service children lead/advocate found the two network meetings provided to be helpful.	2 headteachers strongly agreed, 3 agreed and 1 remained neutral. (6 responses)

Headteachers fed back that they would like as early notice as possible to plan training sessions into their whole school training plan. One headteacher reported that having a network of people 'is definitely a positive'. Another headteacher noted that some schools had contributed more and been more involved in the project than others.

By the end of the first year, six of the eight schools had completed the *Thriving Lives Toolkit*. All the schools completed the *Evaluate my School* online audit tool. A training package with a particular focus on autism had been implemented.

In summary, this was the progress against the planned outcomes of the project at the end of the first year:

- Strengthened provision and systems for supporting military families. **At the end of the GAP year foundations were now in place and some good progress had been demonstrated.**
- Strengthened provision and systems for supporting learners with SEND. **Achieved.**
- Upskilled workforce across the schools on aspects of the schools' military context. **Two 'champions' had been appointed in two or the schools and training was not yet rolled out in all schools.**
- Upskilled workforce across the schools on evidence-base good SEND practice, especially in the areas of social, emotional and mental health and communication and interaction. **Achieved.**
- Improved induction and ITT training for the schools' context. **It was not possible to evidence this until start of the GAP+ year.**
- Greater consistency across the schools in how they support both military families and those children with SEND. ***Evaluate my School* evaluations demonstrated a significant variation in schools' expertise, but the foundations were now in place.**
- All **relevant** school staff to have a clear understanding of the processes and procedures of how to apply for additional funding for individual children and the

timeline for the application and assessment process for Education, Health and Care Assessment Request (EHCARs). **Achieved.**

- All **relevant** school staff to have a clear understanding of the processes and procedures of how to refer children to NHS Paediatric Services and the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), and who can make such referrals. **SENcos were now generally aware – some written summary guidance was still needed.**
- Overall, staff confidence over supporting pupils with a range of SEND has risen. **Achieved.**
- Parents of children and young people with SEND demonstrate greater confidence in the Garrison schools' processes and provision, and the information they receive. **Engaging parents was deemed to be at an early stage – there were promising signs.**
- The voices of Service children with SEND have been heard and acted on, and overall, they are positive about how provision is adapted for them, and school transitions supported. **This was to be incorporated into SEND visits in the GAP+ year.**

Year 2 – GAP+

GAP+ refined and formalised the model developed through the successful initial GAP year and enhanced it with greater Service family engagement and school leadership elements. These had been identified through the prior project to establish a whole school model for SEND for Service children and resource useful to schools nationally.

GAP+'s aims were to extend the successful model developed through:

1. Refining the understanding of the Garrison ASSIST model, so that it can be translated into an easily accessible programme for other schools.
2. Enhancing the model by formalising the parental-engagement element identified through the project as key to improving further its impact.
3. Adding a new leadership stream to the model that learning from the Garrison ASSIST project identified as key to embedding the new approach within school improvement over the long-term and, therefore, to the sustainability of the work in the project schools and schools nationally.

The four strands of work put in place to realise the aims of GAP+ were:

1. Strengthening staff expertise and SENCO strategic leadership

- Training inputs provided for the staff of the project schools and/or the schools' SENCOs including Nurture UK Principles, and learning from the nearby Dales School, a specialist school for cognition and learning⁶.
- Refinement of the Garrison ASSIST training workshops developed through that project and their testing to confirm the accessibility and applicability of the Garrison ASSIST model in other settings.
- Leadership training for SENCOs to ensure local ownership of schools' change management to embed interventions and training into systems and school improvement processes.
- Translating best practice from the Garrison ASSIST Project into video training materials to enable extended access to the learning and creating sustainability after the funding has ended.

2. Access to external specialist support to support the creation of SEND specialisms within the family of schools, aimed at supporting all schools

- Consultancy delivered by Kieran Rose, the nationally acclaimed Autistic Advocate⁷, to support the development of autistic-friendly school cultures across all project schools.
- Consultancy from Edith Weston Primary Nurture Hub⁸ leaders.
- Training and assessment for a project school to gain the Nurture Award (Nurture UK⁹).
- Training and support to develop specialist provision in a project school for Communication & Interaction (C&I) needs.

3. Supporting parents of SEND learners

- Monthly meetings with a GAP Parents' Forum to provide two-way communication on the project's progress and to shape the support for parents. This would help us gain a greater understanding of their experiences, which can feed into other support activities, including development of policy. This will give a louder voice to parents of the Garrison's SEND learners.
- Writing and running SEND Parents' workshops and developing guidance to assist them in supporting their SEND children.

⁶ <https://www.thedalesschool.org/>

⁷ <https://theautisticadvocate.com/>

⁸ <https://www.rutland.gov.uk/rutland-information-service/directory/xy1g4s23lg7>

⁹ <https://www.nurtureuk.org/>

4. Developing the whole-school SEND for Service children model for roll-out to schools nationally

SEND and Service children subject matter experts worked with the project schools (and with the Project Team and the Advisory Panel) to inform the development of a translatable whole-school model by:

- Capturing a rigorous understanding of the inter-play between Service children's lives and SEND policy and practice, to understand fully the features key to its successful use in different school settings.
- Helping schools understand and respond to quantitative and qualitative learner, parent and professional data from GAP schools
- Reporting on issues and experiences (from 1 above), capturing the learning and outcomes of the project pertinent to its sustainable use in other schools (from 2 above), and informing the development of a translatable model for future practice and wider roll-out.

Intended outcomes (at the end of 2023/24):

- Strengthened provision and systems for supporting SEND learners.
- Upskilled workforce across the schools on evidence-base good SEND practice, especially in the areas of attachment, nurture, SEMH and C&I.
- Improved induction and initial teacher education training for the schools' context.
- Greater consistency across the schools in how they support children from military families that have SEND.
- Overall, staff confidence over supporting pupils with a range of SEND has risen.
- Parents of children and young people with SEND have a good understanding of Garrison schools' processes and provision, and there is an effective system in place to ensure they are kept well informed about the provision on offer.
- The voices of Service children with SEND have been heard and acted on, and overall, they are positive about how provision is adapted for them, and school transitions supported.

Baseline for the GAP+ year

By the start of the GAP+ year, in total, 383 attendees had attended the five workshops led by the project's Educational Psychologist. (These had been professionally filmed so that they could be available to new staff, thereby providing some longevity to the training.) She offered school visits to support how the workshops can be translated in practice. The success of *Evaluate my School* across the schools was variable, with a few quite slow to use it. However,

a couple of schools used it many times to review their SEND provision and drive improvements. Two only completed it in July 2023 and much encouragement had been needed. Nevertheless, all school SENCOs were now fully aware of it and using it. Most schools' evaluations seem to align with what the project Educational Psychologist had seen in the schools. One school gave themselves the top grading across all areas and then did not initially engage in follow-up discussions with the project Educational Psychologist. SENCOs were (and are still) very engaged with GAP+ and positive about the programme of support and collective working. Although some challenges over dedicated leadership time for SENCOs emerged.

The Parents Forum started in the summer term of 2023. Seven parents attended the first session, with two schools not represented. This was seen as a very positive session which illustrated significant challenges some parents face and the need to support them more.

Six parents attended the second Forum. Communication issues came out as a common concern. Monthly sessions continued successfully throughout the GAP+ year, led by the Project's Lead.

The SENCOs shared the following challenges they and their schools are facing at present:

- High pupil mobility and levels of operational deployment, leaving some families particularly vulnerable.
- The lack of stability in the wider education system (industrial action, staffing challenges etc).
- Strain on school budgets.
- Lack of Local Authority support and the rise in parents accessing private assessments to get diagnoses for their children.



Schools had evaluated their own practice relating to supporting Service children using the *Thriving Lives Toolkit*. The table below summarises their self-evaluations and numbers of actions to support Service children identified at the start of the GAP+ year. The Project Lead then supported the schools' Service Children Leads across the year to complete some of these actions, although engagement in these was variable.

School	Current evaluation
Cambrai	Embedding – 5 targets or actions identified or actions identified
Carnagill	Developing – 8 targets or actions identified
Colburn	Emerging – 12 targets or actions identified
Hipswell	Developing - 14 targets or actions identified set
Le Cateau	Embedding – 4 targets or actions identified set
Leeming RAF	Embedding – 17 targets or actions identified
Risedale	Emerging – 18 targets or actions identified
Wavell Federation	Developing – 35 targets or actions identified



2.



What are the distinctive experiences of Service children with SEND and of their families and the schools supporting them?

Year 2: GAP+ 2023/24

Emerging themes from focus groups

The researchers conducted a series of focus groups with school staff (including Special Educational Needs Coordinators), pupils and parents on 17-18 June 2024. The following section outlines the themes that emerged during the conversations.

Parental questionnaires

Online surveys were distributed to all the schools and there were responses from 39 parents from four of the primary schools in the Garrison and 26 parents from the secondary school in the Garrison. Not all the respondents have children with SEND and therefore some of the questions were not applicable for them.

Primary

39 parents across four of the Garrison primary schools responded to the online survey. Of these respondents, two have three children, 13 have two children and 24 have one child.

26 respondents reported that they consider that their child or children to have special educational needs and/or a disability. Of these 26 people, nine people know that their child has a support or individual education plan and six have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and nine are in the process of securing an EHCP.

Of the 39 respondents, eight are aware of GAP. Those that are aware responded that they are either part of the forum (n=1) or via the school (n=7). When asked if they considered that provision for SEND had improved at the school in the last year, three people replied 'yes' but seven said that their child or children have only just started at the school. Half of the

respondents (n=19) reported that their child or children had started midway through the academic year. 29 of the respondents reported that their child or children had already been at another school and of these, five had been outside of the United Kingdom (UK), three in Scotland, eight from another school in North Yorkshire and 13 from elsewhere in England. The remainder of the respondents did not answer this question (n=9).

Two respondents reported that their child or children had been at four different schools, seven reported that three different schools, 17 at two different schools and nine at just one school. Two respondents did not give this information.

One respondent who had moved from another part of England reported that the previous school had refused to initiate statutory assessment due to an upcoming 'military move'.

One parent explained that the transition to a Garrison school had been positive:

I had received fantastic feedback from other parents who had experience of the school and also lots of contact with the SENCO before we started at xxx primary.

Another parent explained that support was provided for her son's disability at both schools that he attended. One parent reported being less satisfied:

We have dyslexia in the family, my daughter had all the markers and they refused to test or investigate in any way, I still feel she shows ADHD/ASD characteristics but they insisted she just needed to concentrate.

Another parent explained that they requested an assignment move from Brunei as there was no support for their child's needs there although they felt the school in Brunei was good. They explained that they hoped that he would receive speech and occupational therapy in the UK. Another explained:

Our son had speech therapy before leaving England, this did not continue abroad but it became clear on return that speech therapy would be needed. Since arriving back the school has been getting to know our son and have since decided to apply for support.

When asked if there was anything else that the respondents would like to add, one parent stated their children were really happy at their present Garrison school. Another described the school as 'supportive'. Staff were described as 'welcoming' by another parent and this really put their child at ease. Only one parent reported that their child's education had 'declined'.

When asked the following: 'Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. I had the opportunity to discuss my child's needs with the school before they started' all but seven respondents agreed (n=11) or strongly agreed (n=19). This was the same response where parents felt their child's needs are understood by the school (seven disagreed or remained neutral). Seven parents disagreed that their child received the support they should, whereas seven remained neutral for this option and the rest agreed (n=10) and strongly agreed (n=12). One parent did not respond. In terms of feeling able to discuss their children's needs all of the parents apart from two felt that this is possible. Only one parent reported that they did not feel able to talk about their child's needs with the teaching staff. On the whole, parents felt confident that the school would contact them if they had concerns about their child's needs (agree: n=13 and strongly agree: n=18).

When asked about their children's progress, only three respondents felt their child was not making progress. All but three respondents agreed their children are happy at school and all but five feel that their children have friends at school. None of the children of the respondents have been suspended from their current settings and only one respondent reported that their child had been permanently excluded from a previous school. This respondent was very complimentary of the support their child now received at their Garrison school.

One respondent was concerned about the behaviour of children with SEND:

I do feel that at times the classroom and lessons can be disrupted with some children with SEN needs, which can upset other children for example the children's projects being smashed and destroyed and laptops thrown and smashed, which can be certainly unsettling for other children.

Another respondent suggested that their autistic daughter finds the school environment overwhelming and that she needs to 'mask'. They explained:

It's hard to chase up the SENCo teacher as she is very busy. I think the school need more support with SEN needs and also teachers need educating that not all children are the same and show the same signs.

Some parents were very happy with the experiences of their children:

My son is very happy there so much so he does not want to leave for secondary. The support and staff has been amazing and we cannot fault it. My daughter starts officially in September and we have every confidence that she will receive the same support in her needs and education.

Another was very grateful to their child's primary school:

My child has had the best primary school years. Started in 2018 in reception and now in year 6 ready for secondary school. Can't thank the staff enough for all their support throughout the years.

Secondary

There were 26 respondents to the online survey for the secondary school on the Garrison. One respondent has three children at the school, five have two and the remainder have one child attending the school. Half of the respondents consider that their child or children have SEND. Six of these parents reported that support is in place for the child or children's SEND with three of these reporting that their child (or children) have an EHCP.

Only four of the respondents are aware of GAP. They had found out via email or because they work in a Garrison school. Four of the respondents reported that the provision for SEND has improved in the school during the past couple of years whilst another respondent recognised the school was trying to do their best to support their child, he has not attended since the start of the calendar year. Only two of the respondents reported that their child had attended another school outside of the UK and three had come from another location in England. Two respondents reported that their child has attended five schools in total and three have attended four different settings. Ten of the parents reported that they felt able to discuss their child's needs with the school prior to admission. Ten felt that the school understands their child's needs. It is important to remember that some of the respondents (n=20) reported that their child or children did not have support needs in their previous setting. 16 respondents stated that they can discuss their child's learning with the school if required and 14 felt able to discuss their child's needs with the school. 11 felt that it is possible to talk with teachers about their child's needs. 14 parents felt that the school would contact them if there were concerns about their child's progress.

Eight respondents felt that their child is making progress at the school and twelve reported that their child is happy at the setting. Only three respondents felt that their child does not have friends at the school. Eight parents reported that their child feels valued by the school. 21 parents reported that they had to raise a concern about their child's progress and/or wellbeing and 19 parents reported that these concerns were partially or fully resolved (partially: n=9; fully: n=10). Three parents reported that the support that their child receives is better than before. One respondent cited the counselling support received, and another explained that their child is no longer sent home 'at the drop of a hat'. There was some criticism of the lack of support from Child and Adolescent Health Services as well as there not being enough support outside of school for autism. One parent suggested that teachers should have more education on SEND.

Eight of the respondents reported that their child has been suspended from the school at some time and six of the respondents reported that their child had been on a part-time timetable.

When asked to provide any further information, one respondent replied:

I believe the discipline set at the school is spot on, more could be done before and after school, as a lot of the children gather and this is when more of the picking and bullying goes on

and another was also concerned about bullying and homophobia. Another parent stated:

The school have been supportive in some ways and changes have been made, but there seems to be an issue with instructions being passed down from above and making sure it's followed up.

Focus groups with school staff

We spoke to a range of school staff at two participating schools, including classroom teachers, middle leaders and learning support staff. We also spoke with SENCOs (addressed in the following section). Our conversations focused on staff members' understanding of GAP, their experiences of working with children and families in the Garrison community, and the impacts they perceived that GAP has had.

Overall, the staff members we spoke with reflected an understanding of GAP as primarily a means of training and upskilling. They noted that the focus of GAP was on developing whole school practice as opposed to developing special interventions for children with additional needs. This reflected an understanding of inclusive practice as reflexive and adaptive to the needs of children.

Discussions with school staff located the need for GAP within a range of systemic challenges. Staff noted that schools had experienced a "perfect storm" of loss of capacity (particularly following the Covid lockdowns and as a result of financial limitations in the school sector) alongside increasing, and more complex, needs on the part of children. Alongside this, staff also perceived that families had greater expectations of the support on offer from schools. This context was identified as a key rationale and driver for GAP.

There was a clear sense amongst participants that demand for formal diagnoses and EHCPs from families was rising. This was leading to increased demands on SENCOs, and potentially also on classroom teachers. It was suggested that the decline in support available to children without EHCPs was an exacerbating factor:

We all know how to work a system. And parents know that, too. And they know that the only way their child is going to get any support is [with an EHCP].

Staff reported challenges arising from constraints in the system of formal assessment of children's needs, for example the length of time required for some children to receive formal diagnoses. They noted that this posed a particular challenge for families who were highly mobile, as there was a risk of families having to relocate during or shortly after the completion of assessment processes, with attendant risks of discontinuity in care and support. Staff recognised the frustrations of Service families in this regard, particularly in terms of navigating the requirements of the system. Some staff reported sometimes going beyond what they would normally be expected to do to support families.

Staff also noted that family circumstances had changed over time, notably through the loss of traditional support networks; this was exacerbated through deployment and family separation. This was a particular challenge for young families. One impact of this was what was perceived as changing priorities around promoting self-care; one participant observed:

We've also got a cohort of children who are just not toilet trained.

Participants questioned whether such challenges around family functioning were genuinely being taken into account.

Some participants spoke of the need for early identification of the needs of children and families, for example through building relationships with parents/carers through an open-door policy or through early engagement with parents prior to their children joining the school. This helped in identifying and pre-empting specific challenges. One participant pointed to attempts to engage with Fijian and Nepalese communities within the Garrison, for example through open days and celebration events.

Another systemic challenge identified related to discontinuities between different local systems for SEN support. This was particularly the case where children arrived in-year with identified support needs. One participant referred to the difficulties of aligning documentation produced in other localities with the North Yorkshire processes, for example where a child's previous local authority would place different weightings on elements of assessment. This was sometimes done under time pressure:

Sometimes by the time you've done that, I've known children to land one week and then a couple of weeks later they're off again.

Inconsistency of approach to assessment, documentation and support between local authorities was therefore seen as a barrier to effective provision at school level.

Clear benefits of GAP were seen in terms of supporting professional autonomy and dialogue regarding responding to children's needs. For example, learning support staff in one school

reported feeling more empowered to explore ways of developing their practice as opposed to waiting for class teachers to make decisions. Another staff member noted that

There's been a lot more discussion in school around trying to then tailor our curriculum to suit our individual children more carefully.

GAP was also seen as enabling conversations between schools serving the Garrison. Benefits here included sharing of expertise, as well as appreciating that some challenges were common across schools:

I think sometimes you can feel like a bit of an island, even though other schools have got the same issues or similar.

Other staff noted that GAP had contributed to updating their knowledge and understanding. One experienced teacher noted that the training had acted as a refresher. Another noted that GAP had prompted staff to reflect on the realities of Service family life and challenges such as mobility:

It's just given us time to refocus our minds on how we can make that whole process easier. It's made us refocus, hasn't it really?

Alongside this, staff noted the importance of GAP in offering practical, usable knowledge to enable them to adapt their practices quickly:

But very quickly it was like, right, so how is that? What's that going to look like that you were saying at the cater for our children because it's a fast-paced school. You know, things are moving and changing all the time and stuff having to adapt to that all the time.

Participants highlighted specific training around neurodiversity as particular examples of this.

However, the need for support in working with children with more complex profiles of needs was also identified, for example through access to external expertise:

Come and have a look at these children and see what the actual situation is on the ground. And then hopefully offer some practical advice that maybe we haven't tried because we won't have tried everything.

The need for schools to have rapid access to specialist expertise in order to provide individualised support was emphasised in the context of delays in formal assessment processes, particularly where families were mobile:

We haven't got 18 months to wait ... for us to find out about and get to know them, put in paperwork, all of that ... we haven't got that time for these children because then they move on again.

Access to specialist educational psychology support was seen as a particular benefit of GAP in this regard.

Some limitations of the GAP model were identified. It was felt that the nature of the programme had led to a lot of training being delivered in a short space of time, whereas some staff would have appreciated more time to consolidate and embed certain aspects:

I think I'd, I'd like to really get my teeth into one aspect and really think about how, how that would then translate into a classroom in everyday classroom practice, what changes I could make and what, you know, procedures could I embed that would really make a difference to that specific area.

The volume of content might also have felt overwhelming for some. Therefore, more opportunities to reflect on and embed practice improvements over time may be a more effective approach.

Another participant observed that the reliance on twilight training sessions might have been a barrier to participation for some members of staff, for example those on school hours-only employment contracts and those with after school responsibilities.

In response to experiences of discontinuity and inconsistency of processes for SEND support between local authorities, it was suggested that GAP might provide the impetus for trialling innovations such as transferable documentation which could alleviate the challenges of ensuring continuity of support when children move schools.

Recommendations and points to consider

- Schools should consider how mechanisms for sharing understanding between schools serving a locality could be built and nurtured.
- Schools should consider how to make training accessible to, and inclusive of, a wider range of school staff, particularly those on school hours-only contracts or those with regular duties after school hours.
- Schools should consider the benefits of pooling resources with other schools in their locality in accessing specialist support and training.
- Local authorities should consider how systems of SEND support can be made more transparent and readily understandable for parents and the professionals that support them.
- Local authorities should consider whether common transfer documentation could be developed to facilitate children's moves between localities.
- Schools should consider the volume and pacing of training offered in order to ensure adequate time to reflect and embed.

Focus groups with parents

We spoke to a number of parents of children attending schools in the Garrison community. Some had been involved with the GAP parents' forum; others had not. We heard many positive things about the approaches to support taken by the Garrison schools. Parents described a number of frustrations with official processes for accessing diagnoses and support but noted where their children's schools had gone above and beyond expectations in supporting them and their children. However, they also noted when support from schools and other professionals was less than optimal, and their apprehension about their children's experiences as they grew older. Parents spoke of the complexities of navigating the system, in some cases describing it as a 'battle' to secure the support they needed. They described the challenges associated with Service life, including the difficulties of parenting during periods of family separation. They expressed the wish for greater understanding of family circumstances on the part of the Army and identified the value of consistent relationships with professionals and welfare officers. They also emphasised the importance of making parents' voices heard.

Members of the parents' forum understood GAP as a means of promoting more holistic support for children with SEND at the Garrison schools. This included upskilling of staff, sharing of resources and promoting consistency of approach. They saw wider potential impacts in terms of influencing SEND support nationally. However, not all parents understood what GAP was; some felt that parents could have been given a more active role in the project, for example through membership of the project steering group. This may have given parents a stronger voice through the project overall. It was suggested that, perhaps, school staff would not have felt comfortable with parents as part of the steering group.

Parents described many positive aspects of provision at the Garrison schools. One parent of an autistic child described the responsiveness of their child's school in making adjustments:

They just did what she needed without any, you know, requirements to have any sort of diagnosis or anything.

Another parent described good levels of communication with the school.

Some parents drew positive comparisons between their experiences at their current school and their previous schools. For example, one parent described how their previous school ascribed their concerns about their child's behaviour to too much screen time, as did their GP. They described the situation as a "battle", and eventually opted to move their child to their current school, noting that they "choose to go above what they're supposed to do", despite recognising constraints around funding.

Another parent expressed frustration with the process of officially diagnosing their child with autism but praised their school for helping them to navigate the system. One parent described their experience of having their EHCP application refused, and their gratitude in being supported by their school's SENCo through the appeals process. Indeed, frustrations

with the official processes of securing diagnoses and specialist support was a recurring theme, with parents using terms such as ‘battle’ or ‘struggle’, or having to ‘fight’ for the support they felt was needed. Some parents described travelling further afield for specialist treatment and care for their children because of delays locally.

However, where parents are particularly knowledgeable and assertive about navigating the support system, this may lead to negative attitudes towards them. For example, one parent suggested that such parents were at risk of being labelled as “pushing [for a diagnosis] for the wrong reasons”. This can lead to parents being subject to negative stereotyping or being labelled as uncaring. This points to the importance of schools and associated professionals taking a non-judgmental stance towards parents.

An associated challenge raised by parents related to the transfer of information about their children whenever the family moved. One parent, whose child was born in Germany on an accompanied posting, described returning to the UK with records in hard copy because they did not trust that the system would transfer the key information across. Another noted that health records sometimes took a long time to transfer to the UK from Germany or Cyprus.

Some parents felt that support for their children was less strong at secondary level than at primary. One parent described not being able to apply for an EHCP for their child in Year 10 and was concerned about their prospects for their GCSEs and their progression opportunities as a result.

Staff turnover was identified as a risk to continuity of care; one parent noted that their child had lost two TAs who had been central to their care day-to-day, but that the school had made arrangements to continue support.

Parents cited the impact of particular aspects of training through GAP, for example around neurodiversity. One parent of a primary-aged child described the positive impact of the *NeuroBears* programme on their child:

He understands that although his mind works differently, and it works differently for every autistic person, they've all got similarities... now he'll be quite happy to go up to someone and say 'I have autism', and that's gonna make life so much easier.

However, another parent discussed how a particular training session had felt rather rushed, and that the recording of that session had placed constraints on how much discussion was possible. This was felt by some parents to have denied them a voice.

Parents also recognised that there was a potential gap between professionals’ theoretical understanding and their appreciation of the concrete situations of families and children, hence the importance of listening to parents to understand their children’s needs. This also emphasised the significance of building positive relationships between schools and families.

However, some parents noted where communication with school was less than positive, and that some parents still felt as though they lacked a voice. One parent observed that

Schools are like, 'we know what we're doing now.' Actually, you don't.

This points to a potential limitation in the GAP model of training, whereby a false sense of security may be generated through participation in training, potentially leading to parents' perspectives being neglected.

Parents' own support needs were also highlighted. For example, where parents struggle with social anxiety and communication, this could be a barrier in engaging with school and discussing their children's needs. Another described the feeling of being "mentally overloaded, physically and emotionally exhausted," dealing with the consequences of children's behavioural needs and disrupted sleep patterns. This points to the significance of a holistic understanding of family circumstances, sensitivity in response to issues such as school refusal, and of schools creating opportunities for parents to communicate in ways that are comfortable for them.

Parents described the challenges associated with mobility, particularly where their children had multiple support needs. These related to discontinuity in professional relationships with schools, and to waiting lists for assessment and treatment. One parent related that the challenges of navigating the system had led them to settle the family in the area:

We couldn't keep moving every two years and have three or four different medical needs and then have autism on top.

The family had therefore opted for the serving parent to be stationed unaccompanied; as a result, they experienced long periods of family separation and 'weekending' in order to give priority to their child's needs. However, it was also noted that not every family would be in a position to make such a choice, particularly due to the cost of housing.

A challenge arising from 'weekending' and family separation was that the care of children inevitably falls to the non-serving parent. There was also the risk of family care needs falling through the net in such situations, as the serving parent's unit welfare support would be focused on the local area where the parent was stationed. Thus, it may be difficult for the family to access support as and when needed.

Parents also identified limitations in the quality and quantity of support available to them via the Army. They emphasised the importance of consistent relationships, but also recognised a lack of staff continuity within Army welfare structures. Another parent noted how it was impossible for the serving parent to take time off to accompany their spouse and child to assessment appointments and called for the Army to take a more supportive stance in this regard. In some cases, support provided was not accessible to families. For example, one parent reported that summer holiday provision on offer was not available for children with SEND, although it was recognised that this was partly down to a lack of volunteers to run the

event in question. This, combined with the serving parent only being able to take a week of leave during the summer holidays, led to added pressure on the family. Another noted that a social evening event had been organised at a time when the serving parent was away on deployment, which was unhelpful given a lack of access to childcare. Parents noted that greater understanding of family circumstances on the part of the Army could help to improve the support on offer.

To alleviate this, parents suggested that better lines of communication with the Army and Royal Air Force (RAF) would have been helpful. For example, one parent noted that there was expertise within an Army carers' group, but because this was out with the participating schools they were not engaged as part of GAP. Engaging other key decision-makers within the Army, for example, might have raised profile and understanding of families' experiences.

Recommendations and points to consider

- Schools should be aware of the potential for negative stereotyping through their interactions with parents and should consider how best to nurture understanding and sensitive, respectful relationships with parents as they navigate a complex system of support.
- Schools should create opportunities to listen to the lived experiences of the families they serve and be open to evolving their practice in response.
- Schools should be sensitive to the support needs of parents in the design of their day-to-day processes and communication routes.
- Local authorities should consider how to ensure continuity of SEND support and transferability of information when parents move between localities, insofar as is reasonably practicable given the constraints that they find themselves operating within.
- The armed forces should consider what more could be done to develop and nurture relationships and lines of communication with the schools serving their communities and find mechanisms for the perspectives of children and non-serving parents to be recognised in operational decision-making and the provision of welfare services.

Focus group with SENCOs

We met with a focus group of SENCOs. They identified GAP as being motivated to meet the needs of highly mobile children with SEND. They emphasised its collaborative nature. The first year of the project was characterised as about identifying barriers, challenges and

systemic issues, and thus developing responses to shared needs. The focus group highlighted the positive impact of specific training, notably around nurture, ASD, emotion, culture and attachment. They reported that benefits were seen in the form of enhanced provision and adaptive teaching practices.

The SENCOs recognised both the commonality of need and the distinctive circumstances of the participating schools. They identified that participating in GAP was also seen as having the potential to inform school improvement plans. For SENCOs, GAP was an opportunity to identify strengths and development opportunities.

The intersection between family mobility and formal processes of diagnosis was identified, particularly given the length of time required to identify needs. The SENCOs noted the importance of developing a holistic understanding of each child and family's needs. They recognised that developing positive relationships with families is key, but that mobility is a barrier to being able to do so.

The intersection of additional needs and unstable family circumstances was recognised as significant, particularly the impact of family separation (notably on children's social and emotional wellbeing). SENCOs noted that families often experienced barriers in accessing support, and often could not rely on e.g. extended family networks. The SENCOs also noted that schools had lost resources to support over time, such as family support workers.

Schools had increased emphasis on signposting to external resources. They noted that North Yorkshire was transitioning to a new model of specialist SEN support, but that resources were still constrained. Administrative processes in accessing support were highlighted as a source of frustration, and the SENCOs noted difficulties in securing engagement from the local authority. They recognised the tension between the pressures of the system versus the imperative of the wellbeing of children and suggested that standard expectations were not always fulfilled (e.g. securing a speech and language referral within 12 weeks).

Where families are mobile, differences in systems and processes between localities is an issue. Parents, understandably, seek continuity of support for their children upon relocating to Catterick. In some cases, families that have moved to Catterick have to make difficult decisions to remain in North Yorkshire with e.g. health provision in their previous localities in order to ensure continuity of provision. However, SENCOs recognised that many of these challenges occurred on a national scale, not just locally.

In this vein, the sense of self-reliance that GAP promoted amongst schools is seen as a positive impact – schools feel more able to arrange their own provision or support in some cases without waiting for external providers. A further benefit of GAP is in promoting the

sharing of information and expertise between schools. This helped to support decision-making and support, as well as providing reassurance to SENCOs.

The SENCOs noted some communication and coordination with the Garrison staff but felt that there was the potential for closer working, for example in coordination around families experiencing Service-related disruption. The SENCOs perceived a change in relationship with the Garrison staff (e.g. engaging at a less senior level than in previous years), but also recognised the pressures and demands on the military more generally.

The SENCOs reported a relatively high level of mid-year churn amongst school populations. The SENCOs highlighted the importance of school staff having a sound understanding of Service life but noted that this was not necessarily a given even in schools with a large Service child population.

Recommendations and points to consider

- Where families have children with complex needs, there needs to be some consideration by Local Authorities and the Services of the impact that mobility can have on families being able to access services and statutory assessment.
- It would be helpful if Local Authority teams responsible for statutory assessment receive advice and guidance on the challenges faced by children and young people with SEND in Service families.

Focus groups with children and young people

We talked with two groups of learners, one secondary and one primary, about what was important to them in their educational setting. The secondary learners highlighted the importance of respectful relationships between staff and pupils, including knowing pupils as individuals and adapting their approach accordingly. However, the learners expressed a concern that sometimes there is perceived favouritism although they were not explicit as to which group of learners this involved or whether it was at an individual level.

The primary learners focused on the importance of caring relationships throughout school, for example in children supporting and looking out for each other, as well as being able to mix with their peers. This social aspect of being in school is important in a climate where there is a high level of turbulence in terms of pupil movement.

The secondary learners were aware of variation in approaches to teaching throughout the school and recognised where teachers were adapting their practice. The primary-aged

learners pointed to practices used in school (e.g. one-to-one and withdrawal), but perhaps were not always aware of why this was done. However, they noted the importance of adaptive and responsive support from teachers. While further investigation is needed to attribute this to the project, it does highlight the importance of GAP focusing on adaptive practice as children do notice when it happens.

The participants interviewed also noted that teaching was less engaging where they perceived inconsistency of approach to behaviour management. The learners in our focus group highlighted the importance of mechanisms for enabling self-regulation and it may be that this would be an area for further consideration.

Both primary and secondary pupils reflected on their experiences of Service life, for example mobility. Mobility correlates with attainment, with the average levels of attainment for those with higher levels of mobility falling below the attainment of learners in stable placements (Ministry of Defence, 2019, 2023)¹⁰. Some secondary pupils reflected favourably on their experiences at Catterick compared to previous schools. One secondary pupil noted that multiple moves were not pleasant and raised issues of bullying. Pupils also expressed sadness at their friends moving away. However, they also noted some of the benefits of mobility (e.g. moving to a new part of the world).

Recommendations and points to consider

- The Garrison schools might explore the relational approaches to supporting children and young people (rather than behaviourist approaches). Frameworks that might be explored are attachment-aware schools.
- An audit of approaches to anti-bullying, particularly at secondary level, is recommended.

¹⁰ Ministry of Defence (2019). *Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2019*. London: Ministry of Defence. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2019>

Ministry of Defence (2023). *Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2023*. London: Ministry of Defence. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-covenant-and-veterans-annual-report-2023>



In summary, to answer the research question, what are the distinctive experiences of Service children with SEND and of their families and the schools supporting them? These are the outcomes:

- Parents and schools alike face systemic challenges in navigating the SEND support systems. Parents have experienced delays and frustrations in, for example, securing official diagnoses of autism. The terms “battle” and “struggle” were used to describe their experiences.
- Some parents and staff also described the dilemmas that could arise for mobile families when seeking continuity of care for their children. In some cases, parents chose to travel long distances to maintain continuity of care, particularly if they felt that transferring care to their new locality would send them to the back of the queue.
- For schools, constraints in resourcing and difficulties in accessing specialist support, combined with an increase in demand and incidences of complex support needs, have created a “perfect storm” of challenges. We heard examples of school staff, notably SENCOs, going above and beyond in order to support children and their families in securing the support needed. Schools have also reported increasing levels of expectation of support amongst some parents.

- We heard from both parents and staff of the complexity and opacity of the systems for obtaining support for their children, as well as delays in securing diagnoses. This was particularly challenging for highly mobile families, who may find themselves moving shortly after securing diagnoses – thus having to restart the process of securing support.



3.



What has GAP and GAP+ achieved?

What has been the success(es) of GAP and GAP+? What has its impact been?

- Specific training opportunities delivered through GAP and GAP+ promoted enhanced provision and adaptive teaching practices. The training provided was felt to offer practical, usable knowledge that enabled rapid practice change.
- The training provided to schools prompted staff to refocus on the distinctive experiences of Service children with SEND and their families. This has supported them in providing empathetic and responsive support.
- The training provided has shown the potential to support professional autonomy and collegiality within schools, for example by supporting TAs to take a more active role in planning and problem-solving.
- GAP and GAP+ have promoted greater communication and sharing of experiences between professionals in schools serving the garrison community. This has enabled schools to develop a clearer perspective on shared challenges, as well as providing another means for schools to seek support in developing their practice.
- Some training has impacted directly on children's experiences in school. A particular example was *NeuroBears*, which one participant identified as boosting their child's confidence in talking about their own support needs.
- Parents have recognised the efforts of school staff to support children and families, and by and large have compared their experiences at the schools serving Catterick Garrison favourably to schools in other localities.
- The successful involvement of some parents in the project. The animated films they have helped to create will be a national resource. Many of these parents, prior to GAP, were very disengaged with the schools. Many have cited this as a significant success.

4.

What is key to deploying GAP and GAP+ or elements of it elsewhere?

- The delivery of GAP and GAP+ was time- and funding-bound, which led to the provision of a significant amount of training in a relatively short time. However, it is important that school professionals have the time and space to reflect on the training they receive in order to embed it more securely into their practice. This will support them in making sustained and impactful changes to practice across the school.
- Ensure that training delivered in school is accessible to the widest possible range of school staff, including TAs. Over-reliance on twilight delivery, for example, might be a barrier to participation for those on school hours-only contracts or those with after-school responsibilities (e.g. wrap-around care).
- Promoting dialogue and collaboration between schools serving a particular locality is important in promoting consistency of provision and a focus on common challenges, as well as enabling school professionals to share in the collective expertise of the professional community.
- Meaningful engagement with parents and families throughout the process is key. Parents need to be confident that their children's needs and their family circumstances are well understood and responded to with sensitivity. Given the potential for Service families to have diverse and complex experiences of the education and health systems, there is a risk that training and provision that is not tailored to the needs of the school community could have less of a positive impact or could create a sense amongst parents that they are not being heard. Therefore, consider how parents can be made aware of the work of GAP and GAP+, and how parental voice could be incorporated more strongly into the development and delivery of GAP.
- Children recognise when teaching is adaptive and responsive to their needs and when it is not. Therefore, ensuring that the views of children are listened to would enhance the development and delivery of GAP.

- Ensure effective lines of communication with the wider Armed Forces community, including local chains of command. For example, schools would benefit from having advance knowledge of upcoming deployments or moves in order to support their planning, while clear lines of communication would help to ensure that families' experiences are recognised by the Services.



The Garrison ASSIST Project