



Community Consultation 2025

A report by Tiller Research Ltd on behalf of the SCiP Alliance

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Acknowledgements:

The Service Children's Progression (SCiP) Alliance is a partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children and young people from Armed Forces families.

The SCiP Alliance is built on collaborative action. This consultation was made possible by the many contributions of partners and stakeholders. We would like to thank all those who promoted the questionnaire to ensure that all stakeholder perspectives were represented. We would also like to thank all the consultation participants for being so generous with their time and their expertise.

This consultation has been generously funded by **Greenwich Hospital**. The SCiP Alliance is led by the **University of Winchester** and supported by the **Ministry of Defence (MOD)**.



Executive Summary

The Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP Alliance) is a UK-wide partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children and young people from Armed Forces families. It is hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The SCiP Alliance commissioned Tiller Research Ltd to undertake a consultation exercise with community stakeholders to identify stakeholder views on the role of the SCiP Alliance in providing support and facilitating change in response to community priorities.

Key Findings

- Overall, the SCiP Alliance has built a strong reputation and achieved notable successes with building networks, developing resources, and by influencing policy relevant to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel;
- The SCiP Alliance is broadly perceived to strengthen practice through delivering support that enhances practitioner confidence, and increasing the range and quality of resources. Moreover, this contribution has grown over time;
- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as making a positive contribution towards building an evidence base to support change to practice and policy. This provides positive conditions for delivering outcomes that work towards the SCiP Alliance vision of Thriving Lives for Service Children, although current impact evidence is limited;
- The SCiP Alliance community is an alliance of several sectors and constituencies, each with its own strengths, needs and challenges. These subgroups have an interdependency and shared vision, but not necessarily shared priorities. The SCiP Alliance provides a valuable role supporting each subgroup, and in building connections between different sections of the community. However, there is a risk of being perceived to be favouring some groups over others, and/ or working with multiple groups in parallel rather than truly building connections that enhance the community as a whole. There is a delicate balance to be struck between focussing on subgroup priorities that support collective objectives, and ensuring the community is enabled to function more effectively as a collaborative whole.

Contribution and Impact of the SCiP Alliance

A majority of stakeholders view the SCiP Alliance as having made a significant contribution to effecting change that will lead to enhanced outcomes for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel:

- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as having been effective in **supporting practice and enabling collaboration**. This contribution is viewed as having grown over time, with an increasing proportion of practitioners strongly agreeing that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice;
- Practitioners most value the SCiP Alliance's facilitation of **networking** and professional development opportunities, provision and dissemination of **high-quality resources**, and contributions to **developing the evidence base**;
- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as having made a significant contribution to increasing **practitioner confidence**, enhancing the availability and deployment of **resources**, building the **evidence base**, and **informing policy** related to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel;

- Views on the contribution and impact of the SCiP Alliance vary across the **different sectors that together make up the SCiP Alliance community**, indicating a range of contrasting opportunities, support needs, and priorities;
- There is **scope for enhancing the availability and awareness of evidence** about the impact of the work of the SCiP Alliance.

SCiP Alliance Resources and Activities

The SCiP Alliance has developed a range of resources to support practice, facilitates a range of groups and events, has published several research outputs, and undertakes work to influence policy:

- SCiP Alliance **resources, events, and research outputs are viewed positively**, with a large majority of practitioners regarding the elements that they have used or engaged with to be useful;
- There are gaps in awareness of several SCiP Alliance resources and activities, offering **opportunities for extending future reach**;
- There are **significant variations in the engagement of stakeholders from the different sectors that make up the SCiP Alliance** with specific resources and activities, with different groups often engaging with and benefitting from different activities of the SCiP Alliance. These variations reflect the different but complementary focus, priorities, opportunities and challenges across different parts of the SCiP Alliance community. This indicates, to some extent, multiple communities of support that are often operating in parallel.

Development Opportunities

Consultation participants identified potential opportunities to further enhance the practical utility and strategic impact of SCiP Alliance resources and activities:

- The Thriving Lives Toolkit is a valued resource that stakeholders would like to see **extended for use in different settings** and by a wider range of practitioners;
- Suggested activity developments focus on **extending existing activities**, rather than pursuing a substantively different approach;
- Opportunities for future development include greater engagement with the challenges of the **interaction of devolved and reserved policy areas**, and increasing the **focus on impact**.

The Future Role of the SCiP Alliance

Stakeholders were asked for their views on the future role of the SCiP Alliance:

- **Building connections** - bringing practitioners together to share knowledge and best practice, and to identify collaborative solutions to shared challenges and priorities;
- **Using data to create change** - respondents consider the SCiP Alliance to be well placed to identify evidence gaps and facilitate the identification and resourcing of research priorities. In addition, there were suggestions that an increased focus should be placed on translating the evidence base into effective action;
- **Policy impact** - many respondents would like to see the SCiP Alliance further strengthen its work to influence policy to address key issues such as the impacts of mobility, and by undertaking work to review the impact of policy developments that affect this cohort;

- **Understanding diversity and nuance** - there are multiple subgroups within the overall cohort of children from Armed Forces families. An Armed Forces identity also interacts with other characteristics, for example neurodiversity, with impacts on wellbeing and educational progression a mix of these elements both individually and in combination. A deeper understanding of some of this complexity would assist in developing more nuanced resources and insights to ensure that all young people from Armed Forces families are able to thrive;
- **Raising awareness among non-specialists** - many respondents noted a desire to see the work of the SCiP Alliance extend its reach. A key aspect of this was identified as raising awareness among those who come into contact with the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, but for whom work with this cohort is not the primary focus of their work;
- **Refinement of resources** - suggestions were made for how SCiP Alliance resources could be further enhanced. Suggestions were also made for the collation of information from across the community, including the creation of directories of key contacts and sources of support;
- **Clarity of Purpose** - it was noted that the overall focus of the SCiP Alliance has evolved since inception, in response to needs and opportunities that have been identified. It was suggested that the SCiP Alliance should review and restate its purpose in order to ensure that it remains an effective organisation focused on action that delivers its mission.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the future focus of the SCiP Alliance:

- **Consolidate success** - we recommend that priority is given to building on core assets that extend reach and deepen engagement, with consideration given to increasing the accessibility of resources to extend engagement with non-specialists;
- **Review diversity of community and its implications for effective action** - different practitioner groups have different needs and value different aspects of the work of the SCiP Alliance. This is a strength, but also risks fragmenting focus. Additional challenges exist in relation to working UK-wide in devolved policy areas, and in recognising the diversity of experiences and needs within the cohort of children and young people from Armed Forces families. We recommend that consideration is given to how this diversity can be harnessed effectively in order to increase the overall impact of the SCiP Alliance;
- **Review and communicate overall purpose** - the SCiP Alliance is seen as both a convenor and facilitator of partnerships, and as a direct provider of resources and support. There is a risk of tension between these different elements of activity. We recommend that a review is undertaken of the scope of the SCiP Alliance's activities, and that this is communicated clearly to all stakeholders;
- **Increase focus on impact** - there are opportunities to further enhance the evidence base. We recommend that priority is given to increasing focus on changes for practitioners and outcomes for children and young people, with priority given to actions that are most effective in creating positive change.

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Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

The Service Children's Progression Alliance (SCiP Alliance) is a UK-wide partnership of organisations focused on improving outcomes for children and young people from Armed Forces families. It is hosted by the University of Winchester and supported by the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

We bring together practitioners, researchers, policymakers and funders to build a stronger evidence-base, better policy, and enhanced support for Service children's education and progression, placing their voices at the heart of all we do.¹

The SCiP Alliance commissioned Tiller Research Ltd to undertake a consultation exercise with community stakeholders. The research objectives were to:

- Provide a UK-wide State of the Sector report identifying:
 - the persisting and changing needs of those who support the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel;
 - the policy developments, research insights and practical resources that will enable the community to sustain and enhance their work ensuring the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel are able to thrive.
- Identify stakeholder views on the role of the SCiP Alliance in providing support and facilitating change in response to community priorities, in order to review progress and inform the Alliance's future strategy.

This is the third community-wide consultation undertaken by the SCiP Alliance. Previous consultations undertaken in 2018 and 2022 have been used to identify the practice, research and policy priorities of those supporting the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, and to set the strategic direction of the SCiP Alliance in response to the community's priorities. Previous consultations led directly to key developments in support such as the expansion of the UK-wide Hub Network, and providing evidence to advocate for change with key senior leaders, agencies, organisations and governments.

1.2 This Report

This independent report outlines the key findings related to stakeholder views on the past contribution and future role of the SCiP Alliance. In addition, reflections on SCiP Alliance resources and activities are explored, and suggestions for future developments provided. Findings related to the State of the Sector research are presented in a separate report.

This report provides recommendations for future action that reflect the views of stakeholders on the value and contribution of the SCiP Alliance, suggesting strategic priorities that will be most effective in delivering positive impact for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel.

¹ SCiP Alliance mission: <https://www.scipalliance.org/about/information-page>

Section 2 – Contribution and Impact of the SCiP Alliance

A majority of stakeholders view the SCiP Alliance as having made a significant contribution to effecting change that will lead to enhanced outcomes for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel. The key messages in this section are:

- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as having been effective in **supporting practice and enabling collaboration**. This contribution is viewed as having grown over time, with an increasing proportion of practitioners strongly agreeing that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice;
- Practitioners most value the SCiP Alliance’s facilitation of **networking** and professional development opportunities, provision and dissemination of **high-quality resources**, and contributions to **developing the evidence base**;
- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as having made a significant contribution to increasing **practitioner confidence**, enhancing the availability and deployment of **resources**, building the **evidence base**, and **informing policy** related to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel;
- Views on the contribution and impact of the SCiP Alliance vary across the **different sectors that together make up the SCiP Alliance community**, indicating a range of contrasting opportunities, support needs, and priorities;
- There is **scope for enhancing the availability and awareness of evidence** about the impact of the work of the SCiP Alliance.

2.1 Supporting Practice

Questionnaire respondents were asked to reflect on their connection with the SCiP Alliance, and how this had supported their own practice. Overall, 49% of respondents strongly agreed that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice, with 37% ‘completely’ agreeing that this was the case (fig 1). University and College respondents were most likely to ‘completely’ agree that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice (69%), along with 40% of school and other stakeholder respondents. Early Years practitioners were the only group not to agree that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice, a finding that reflects the limited focus on Early Years within Alliance priorities to date.

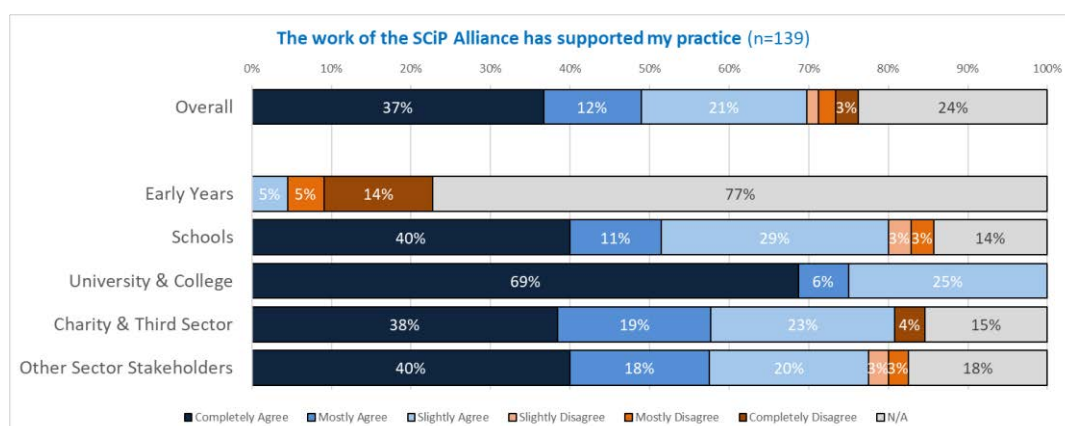


Fig 1: Practitioner views on the extent to which the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice

2.2 Enabling Collaboration

A similar pattern of responses was received regarding the extent to which the SCiP Alliance has facilitated collaboration (fig 2). Some 81% of University and College respondents strongly agreed that the SCiP Alliance has enabled them to collaborate effectively with like-minded professionals, as did 65% of charity respondents and 58% of wider stakeholders. However, no respondents working in Early Years felt that the SCiP Alliance had enabled them to collaborate. Just under 30% of school respondents said that collaboration was not applicable to their role, but a majority of those for whom it was agreed that the SCiP Alliance had been supportive.

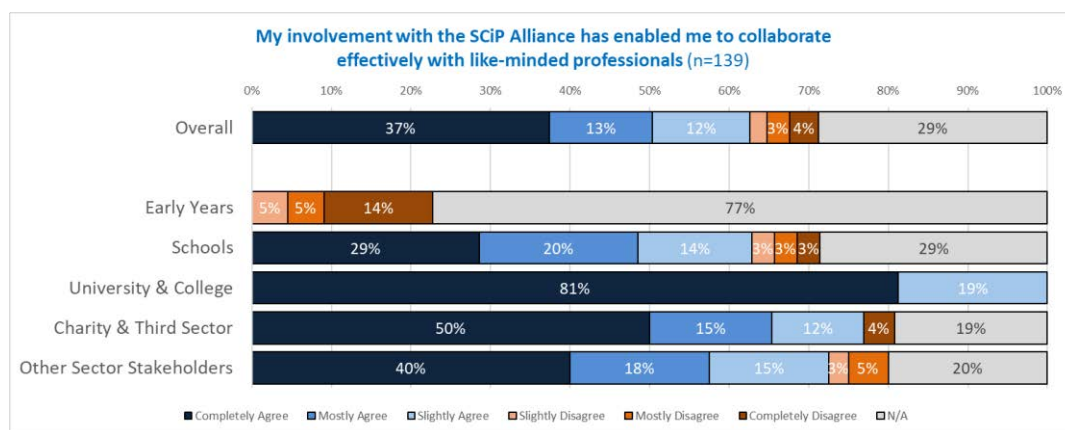


Fig 2: Practitioner views on the extent to which the SCiP Alliance has enabled effective collaboration

2.3 Benefits for Practitioners

Questionnaire and focus group participants were asked how the SCiP Alliance had benefitted their work. Four key areas were identified:

Networking and connection

The most commonly mentioned benefit for practitioners of engaging with the SCiP Alliance was the facilitation of opportunities to connect with others. Those connections led to joint working, increased confidence and/or access to resources and support. University and charity respondents were most likely to identify networking benefits:

"I think that the bringing of different stakeholders together, so for example, through their annual conferences and those network opportunities I've personally found really valuable... making those connections with other stakeholders, knowing what others are doing has been personally valuable to myself and my journey."

University

"The information at the conferences is great but also the networking. I've sorted out grant funding and all sorts of things just by attending conferences."

Local Authority

"[B]eing a part of the hub cluster groups has meant that I've met certain key bodies in other organisations, again building partnerships and then through those partnerships being able to share the programme that we're developing."

Charity

"I think as an organisation, very much around facilitating people's engagement, not necessarily doing themselves but actually facilitation, and I think the idea of the Hubs tends to work quite well. It's that opportunity to work closely with other likeminded people."

University

Resources and guidance

Questionnaire and focus group participants indicated that SCiP Alliance resources are viewed to be of high quality and relevant to the work of practitioners. Tools and examples of best practice were described as helpful for developing understanding and directly supporting work with this cohort, especially by school and university respondents:

"I think the data mapping tool on the website is brilliant. I still use that and I update it every year, our internal document just to say this is how many Service pupils are in secondary schools in our regions... so I think that's really helpful."

University

"I think the SCiP Alliance are really good at recognising the gaps and then doing something about it. The toolkit has been brilliant for schools."

Primary school

"The SCiP Alliance has enabled me to make the argument for working with Service children in our area. The mapping tool, and inclusion of Service children in the [Equality of Opportunity Risk Register] have been particularly helpful."

University

"We have enjoyed using the toolkit, it's a really good reflective tool just to reflect on where you are. We're not brilliant, we don't go to it once a month or something like that but we dip in and out of it, and that's been helpful."

Secondary school

Developing an evidence base

The growing research and evidence banks were viewed as helpful for engaging colleagues with issues related to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel. They are also seen as helpful for informing strategic planning and policy development. The quality of SCiP Alliance outputs is viewed as of particular value:

"So the Diversity meets Complexity research... I have the wider context of the evidence from the research that they invested in to be able to support why our programme is important because we're plugging a gap that the SCiP Alliance have identified and have shown that there is a need."

Charity

"I think for me it was about the evidence, being able to inform the educators, so educating the educators, so as a direct result of the evidence I've got from the SCiP Alliance, I've been able to do a presentation... So that was really powerful to be able to then share that data across [a local authority] network, where everybody was in attendance and raise awareness of the unique barriers that are often faced by our military families."

Independent Advisor

"I think I would probably point to the clear evaluative thinking behind a lot of the stuff that is produced. So, there's a rigour around the evidence base... things like the Theory of Change and the evidence that the SCiP Alliance produces I feel can be quite a compelling argument to convert those unconverted."

University

Learning

A small but significant group of school and university respondents noted benefits of SCiP Alliance events and webinars in developing knowledge and practice. Webinar formats were identified as most accessible:

"Training events are a great place to hear about and shine a light on great practice."
University

"The Webinars are a great place to exchange ideas and keep up to date with current policies and initiatives."
Secondary school

"All contact with [the SCiP Alliance] has been utterly worthwhile for me; it has improved knowledge, it has enabled change, it has sparked curiosity."
Primary school

"Given me more insight into the challenges this unique cohort face."
University

2.4 Comparison with 2022

Agreement that the SCiP Alliance has supported practice has strengthened overall between 2022 and 2025. The proportion of respondents 'completely' agreeing that the SCiP Alliance has supported their practice has increased from 29% in 2022 to 37% in 2025 (fig 3).

The most notable change was observed among school respondents: 30% strongly agreed that the work of the SCiP Alliance supported their practice in 2022, rising to 51% in 2025. Moreover, the proportion of school respondents selecting 'Don't Know' or 'N/A' fell from 45% in 2022 to 14% in 2025, indicating both a significant increase in the awareness of schools about the SCiP Alliance, and the perceived relevance of the Alliance's work to their own practice.

A change of question wording may account for some of these increases, and the self-selecting nature of the sample means it cannot be assumed that the scale of increase is fully representative of the whole community. Nevertheless, the overall indication is that the SCiP Alliance is viewed by practitioners as having made a significant contribution to supporting practice, and that this contribution is viewed as having grown over time.

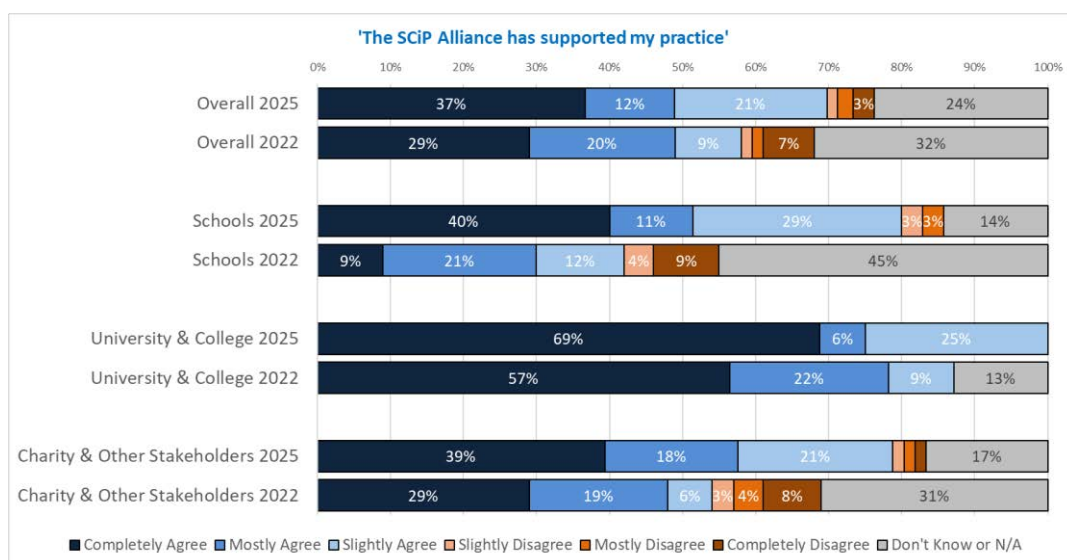


Fig 3: Comparisons of support questions between 2022- 'My contact with the SCiP Alliance has supported or enhanced my practice'- and 2025- 'The work of the SCiP Alliance has supported my practice'

2.5 Outcomes and Impact

The SCiP Alliance's Theory of Change includes the longer-term outcomes and impact that the Alliance's activities are intended to achieve. Questionnaire respondents were asked the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements regarding the impact of the SCiP Alliance (fig 4). Of those who expressed an opinion, a majority either 'completely' or 'mostly' agreed that the SCiP Alliance has made a significant contribution to the confidence of practitioners (72%), research investment and collaboration (69%), the efficient and effective deployment of resources and expertise (68%), and policy development (64%).

Within this overall picture, there are variations in the views of respondents from the different sectors that together make up the SCiP Alliance community, as shown in figures 5-8. With the exception of Early Years, a majority of respondents from all sectors strongly agree that the SCiP Alliance has made a significant contribution to resources, practitioner confidence and research, with University and College respondents showing the strongest levels of agreement. Views on the SCiP Alliance's contribution to policy development are somewhat less strong, but still positive and with only small elements of disagreement.

Notable Gaps

Early Years respondents gave a very different pattern of responses to all other sectors. Nearly three-quarters of Early Years respondents selected 'Don't Know', with the others disagreeing with all statements. This indicates a clear gap in the engagement of the SCiP Alliance with the Early Years sector.

In addition, roughly a third of respondents overall responded 'Don't Know', indicating that there is either a gap in the availability of evidence about the outcomes of the SCiP Alliance's work, or scope to enhance communications about the impact that has been achieved.

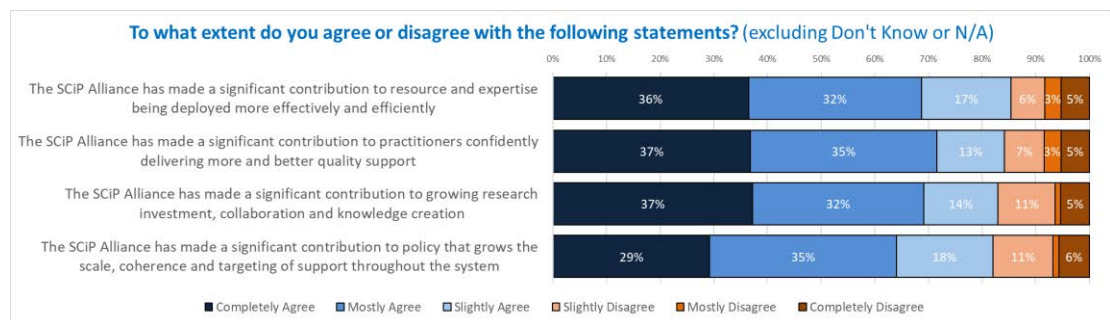


Fig 4: Respondent views on the impact of the SCiP Alliance

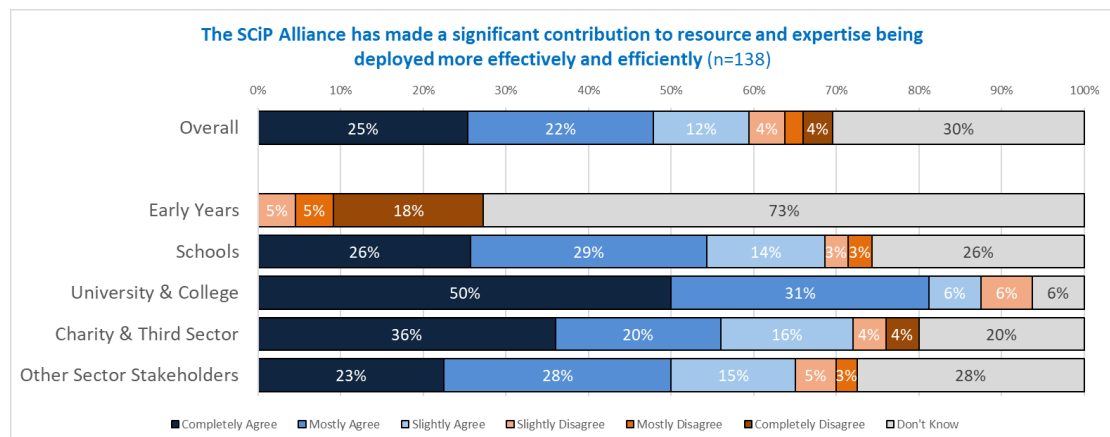


Fig 5: Views on the SCiP Alliance's contribution to resource and expertise deployment, by sector

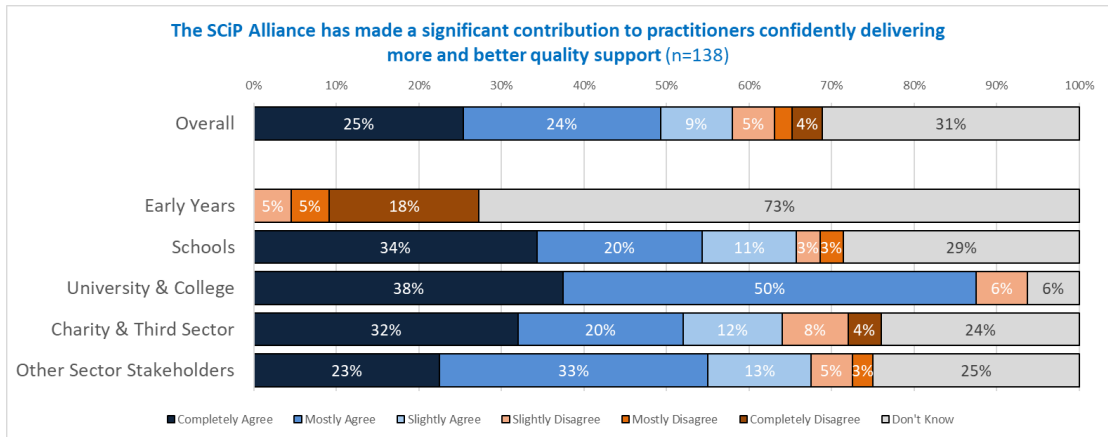


Fig 6: Views on the SCiP Alliance's contribution to practitioner confidence, by sector

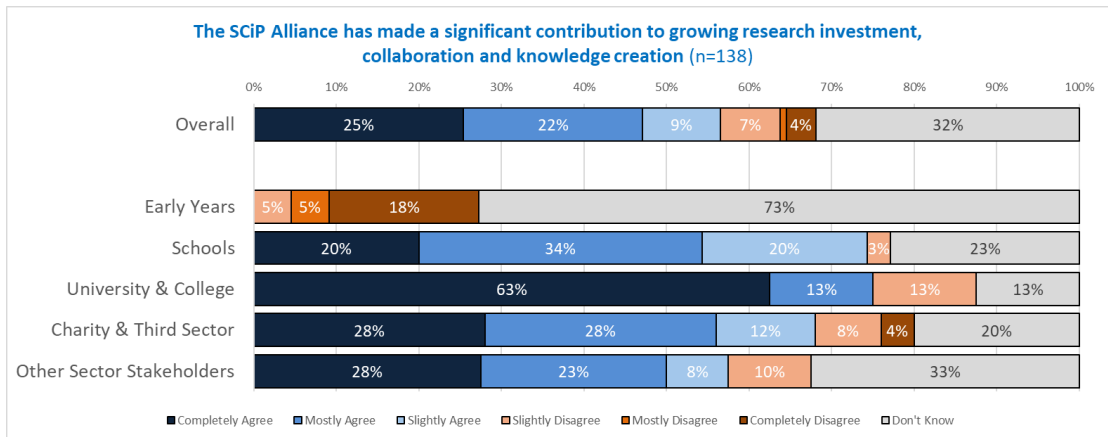


Fig 7: Views on the SCiP Alliance's contribution to research, by sector

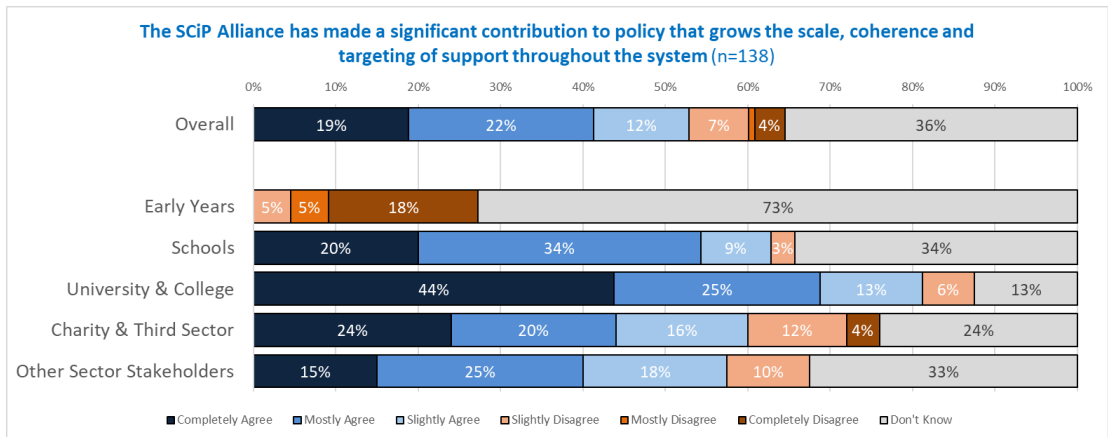


Fig 8: Views on the SCiP Alliance's contribution to policy development, by sector

Section 3 – SCiP Alliance Resources and Activities

The SCiP Alliance has developed a range of resources to support practice, facilitates a range of groups and events, has published several research outputs, and undertakes work to influence policy. The key messages in this section are:

- SCiP Alliance **resources, events, and research outputs are viewed positively**, with a large majority of practitioners regarding the elements that they have used or engaged with to be useful;
- There are gaps in awareness of several SCiP Alliance resources and activities, offering **opportunities for extending future reach**;
- There are **significant variations in the engagement of stakeholders from the different sectors that make up the SCiP Alliance** with specific resources and activities, with different groups often engaging with and benefitting from different activities of the SCiP Alliance. These variations reflect the different but complementary focus, priorities, opportunities and challenges across different parts of the SCiP Alliance community. This indicates, to some extent, multiple communities of support that are often operating in parallel.

3.1 Views on SCiP Alliance Resources

Overall, 86% of respondents (excluding Early Years) reported having used at least one SCiP Alliance resource. This included 81% of charity and third sector respondents, 89% of school respondents, and 94% of respondents from colleges and universities (fig 9).

The pattern of engagement with resources varies across sectors (fig 10). Respondents from schools and universities were most likely to have used a range of different SCiP Alliance resources. Just 19% of Early Years respondents had used any SCiP Alliance resources.

All resources are rated as ‘extremely’ or ‘very’ useful by a majority of those using them. However, the perceived usefulness of different resources varies between sectors, likely reflecting differing priorities, opportunities and needs across the different sections of the SCiP Alliance community.

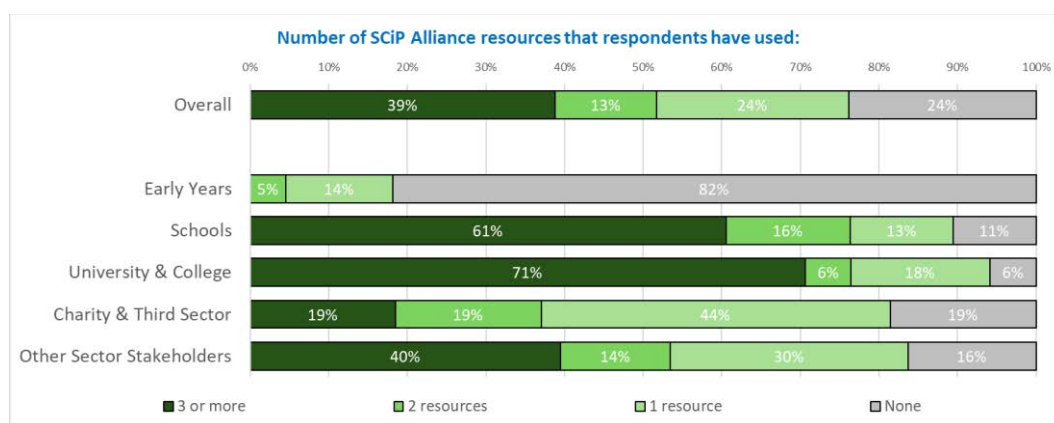


Fig 9: Overall engagement with SCiP Alliance resources

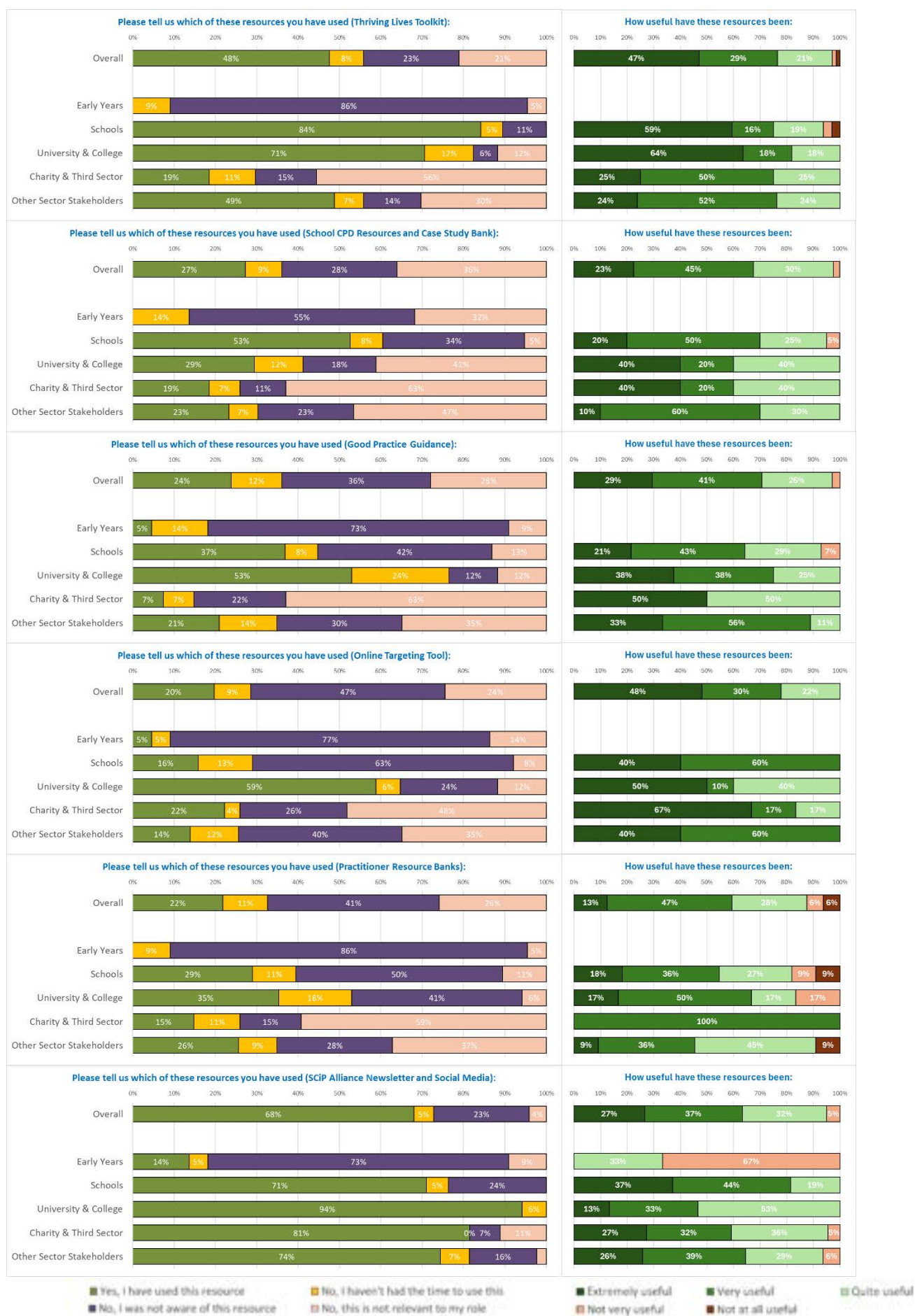


Fig 10: Use of SCIP Alliance resources by sector- with usefulness rated by respondents who have used each resource

3.2 Thriving Lives Toolkit

School respondents who indicated they had used the Thriving Lives Toolkit were asked an additional set of questions. These explored the experiences and benefits of using the toolkit in more detail.

3.2.1 Feedback on use of the Thriving Lives Toolkit

Overall, 87% of respondent schools had started using the Thriving Lives Toolkit, with 62% having undertaken a full self-assessment at least once (fig 11).

Reported usage of the toolkit was typically led by the headteacher or a senior leader, with specialist support staff also taking lead roles in many schools.

Completion was typically undertaken as an internal management exercise, although 27% of respondent schools had included learners in the self-assessment and/or review process, and 25% of respondent schools had involved parents.

For schools that had registered but not yet started using the toolkit, time was the most commonly identified barrier to progress.

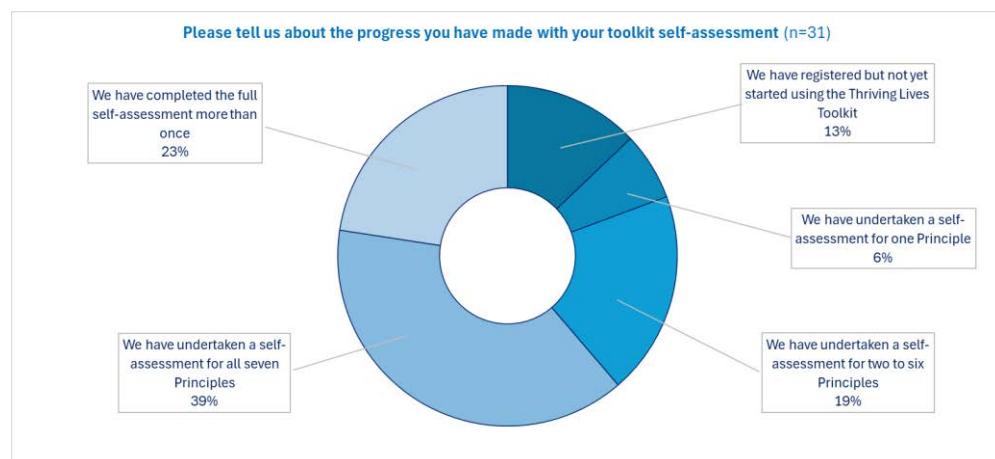


Fig 11: Reported progress made with the Thriving Lives Toolkit self-assessment

3.2.2 Toolkit Resources

Overall, 70% of respondent schools that had started using the toolkit had also made use of at least one toolkit resource (fig 12). The toolkit case studies were the most frequently used resource (63%), followed by the videos and interactive PowerPoints (56%) and the exemplification resource (48%).

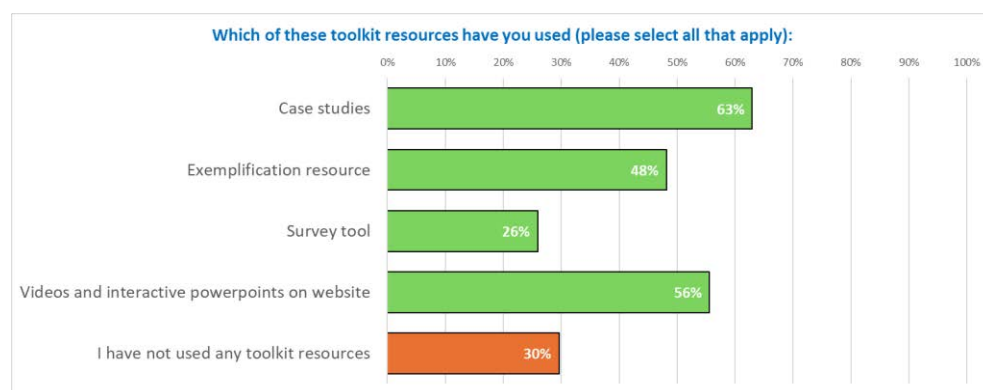


Fig 12: Reported usage of Thriving Lives Toolkit resources

3.2.3 Impact of the Thriving Lives Toolkit

The majority of respondents from schools that had used the Thriving Lives Toolkit were able to identify positive impact for their school as a result. The most commonly identified impacts were:

- Raising awareness of the cohort throughout the school;
- Development of an action plan to provide targeted support for the cohort;
- Implementation of improvements to practice.

When asked about the impact of using the Thriving Lives Toolkit for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, respondents typically noted that the way they work with children and families has changed. This has resulted in children and young people from Armed Forces families feeling heard, and improving their experience of support from the school.

"Helped us to see what we were doing within our setting and how we can improve."
Primary School

"It has moved our school forward in the provision we provide."
Primary School

"Clearer communication of advising school of parents going on deployment/ major changes in their lives."
Primary school

"Improved representation and understanding of the challenges faced by Service Pupils. We are starting to develop processes that will better record the academic progress of Service Pupils."
Secondary school

"We now have an action plan which is helping us to improve our practice."
Secondary school

3.3 Views on SCiP Alliance Groups and Events

Overall, 71% of respondents (excluding Early Years) reported having participated in at least one SCiP Alliance group or event. There were notable variations by sector, for example school respondents most likely to have participated in training activities, but least likely to have participated in all other groups and events (fig 13). The usefulness of groups and events was rated highly by those who had participated. Significant proportions of respondents were not aware of the full range of groups and events, indicating opportunities to further extend engagement.

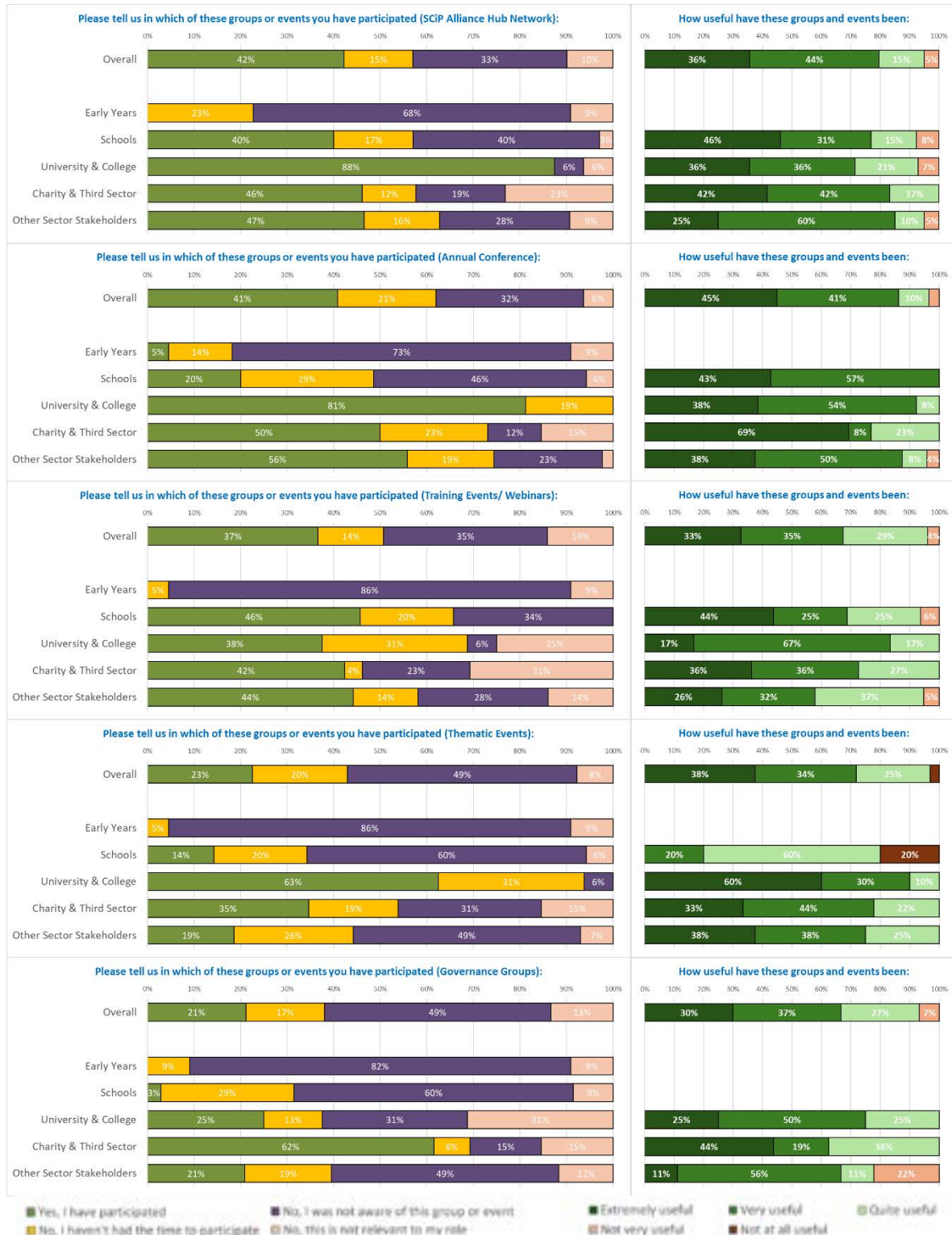


Fig 13: Participation in SCiP Alliance groups and events by sector- with usefulness rated by respondents who participated

3.4 Views on SCiP Alliance Research Outputs

Overall, 84% of respondents (excluding Early Years) were aware of at least one SCiP Alliance research output. Awareness of research outputs varied across different sectors (fig 14), with University and College respondents the most likely to be aware of the majority of SCiP Alliance research outputs. Respondents who were aware of research outputs typically viewed them to be 'extremely' or 'very' useful, though again there was a range of perceptions both within and between each subgroup.

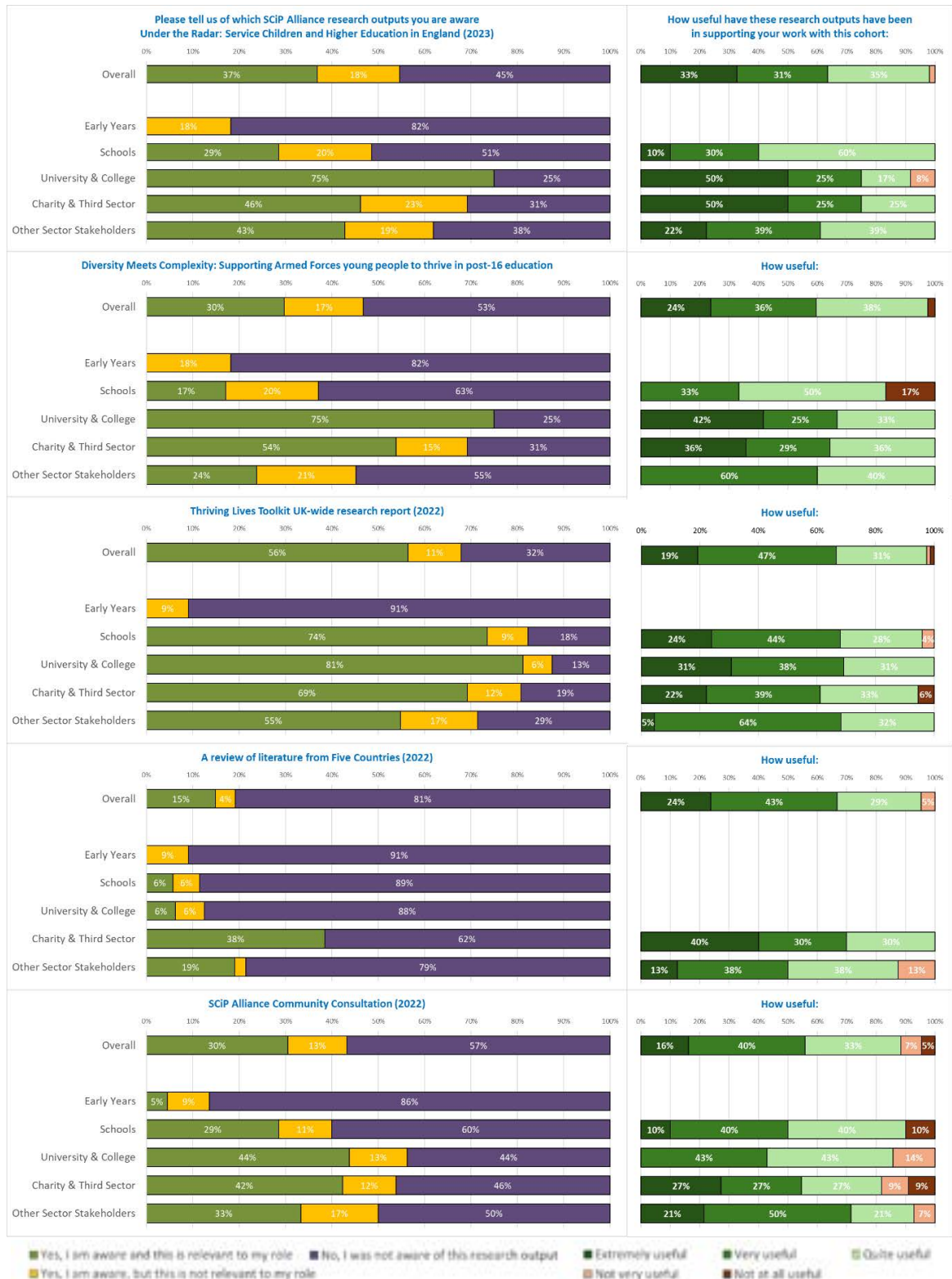


Fig 14: Awareness of SCiP Alliance research outputs- with usefulness rated by respondents who are aware

3.5 Awareness of SCiP Alliance Policy Influence

Questionnaire respondents were asked if they were aware of any successes of the SCiP Alliance in influencing evidence-based policy. The majority of respondents were not able to identify any specific policy developments influenced by the SCiP Alliance, with 83% of respondents either stating they were not aware of any policy influence, or could not recall specific details.

For those who were able to identify specific policy influence, this included a mix of national and local/ school-level policy changes. The most commonly identified areas where the SCiP Alliance were viewed to have contributed influence were:

- Addition of Service children to the Office for Students' Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR), providing recognition of the under-representation of this cohort in higher education;
- Addition of Service child tick-box to the UCAS application form;
- Raising the profile of this cohort with evidence that has secured acknowledgement of children's rights within wider work with Armed Forces families and/or additional policy focus in local authorities;
- The Thriving Lives Toolkit was identified as having been successful in delivering school-level policy change in order to enhance outcomes for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel.

Although awareness of specific policy influence was low, a greater proportion of respondents noted support for the SCiP Alliance's approach of undertaking research and building an evidence base in order to influence policy. This indicates that the SCiP Alliance is viewed as well-positioned to have policy influence, even where knowledge is limited regarding the details of successful policy influence.

"Advocating to include Service children within the [Equality of Opportunity Risk Register] after they were originally left out."
University

"Generally [the SCiP Alliance] has been highly successful at giving a profile to this issue and children's rights."
University

"Several pieces of [SCiP Alliance] work have influenced policy, not least the identification of Service Pupils in educational establishments, the encouragement of schools to adapt their policies and procedures, particularly as a result of the [Thriving Lives] Toolkit."
Independent Advisor

"'Under the Radar' led to [Office for Students] policy change."
MOD

"Thriving Lives Toolkit - a targeted resources / support tool for schools focussing on the Seven Principles which are evidence based."
Local Authority

Section 4 – Development Opportunities

Consultation participants identified potential opportunities to further enhance the practical utility and strategic impact of SCiP Alliance resources and activities. The key messages in this section are:

- The Thriving Lives Toolkit is a valued resource that stakeholders would like to see **extended for use in different settings** and by a wider range of practitioners;
- Suggested activity developments focus on **extending existing activities**, rather than pursuing a substantively different approach;
- Opportunities for future development include greater engagement with the challenges of the **interaction of devolved and reserved policy areas**, and increasing the **focus on impact**.

4.1 Suggested Developments to Resources

Consultation participants identified potential opportunities to further enhance the practical utility of SCiP Alliance resources. The most commonly suggested developments to make SCiP Alliance resources more helpful were:

Thriving Lives Toolkit extension

Opportunities were identified to develop new versions of the Thriving Lives Toolkit that were suitable for work with younger and older age groups, in particular extending use to Early Years and Further Education practitioners.

Thriving Lives Toolkit accessibility

Several suggestions were made for improving the accessibility of the Thriving Lives Toolkit, in order to increase its usage and impact:

- *Simplification*- the Thriving Lives Toolkit is viewed to be a comprehensive, high-quality resource; but is generally regarded as being too detailed for schools with small numbers of pupils from Armed Forces families. It was suggested that a simplified 'essentials' version focussed on a smaller number of high-impact elements would make the toolkit more accessible for schools with smaller cohorts, thereby extending reach and impact;
- *Access for support professionals*- it was noted that the Thriving Lives Toolkit could only be accessed by schools. This was a barrier for wider promotion, with requests made by local authority and charity respondents to extend access to those whose role includes advocating use of the toolkit and/or supporting schools with identifying and implementing actions relevant to the toolkit;
- *Functionality*- a suggestion was made to include a document bank so that evidence could be provided per section rather than per target, in order to make usage more straightforward.

Ongoing updates

It was suggested that SCiP Alliance resources should be continuously reviewed and updated to ensure ongoing relevance, for example in response to policy changes. This included suggestions for user guides, including guidance videos, to be created to highlight key developments, and ensure ongoing accuracy and usefulness of guidance.

Greater diversity

Echoing the specific comments about extending the Thriving Lives Toolkit noted above, suggestions were made for developing variants of key resources to ensure their applicability and accessibility across a range of different contexts. Most commonly mentioned were:

- Suggestions for reflecting the interaction of devolved and reserved policy areas across the home nations;
- Recognising differing priorities of the individual sectors within the SCiP Alliance;
- Creating simplified resources that are more accessible for schools and other practitioners who work with relatively small numbers of children and young people from Armed Forces families.

4.2 Suggested Developments to Activities

The most common ways suggested by respondents to make SCiP Alliance activities more helpful were:

Interactive skills analysis and training

Some respondents were of the opinion that SCiP Alliance groups and events were mostly focussed on information sharing and networking. Although this was viewed as useful, suggestions were made to develop a greater focus on skills development.

Research development

Some respondents suggested that, despite the growing evidence base, key evidence gaps remain. Specific examples include:

- A lack of longitudinal outcome studies;
- Limited research that includes the voices of children and young people;
- Ensuring the ongoing relevance of research in meeting practice gaps;
- Responding to changing policy and practice environments.

Research dissemination

Some respondents suggested that the impact of research could be enhanced by developing more varied approaches to dissemination. Suggestions were made to provide shareable dissemination outputs- such as infographics, bite-sized reports or shareable blogs- that could be used by nationally-connected colleagues to raise awareness among local networks.

Understanding diversity and nuance

Some respondents noted a need to better understand subgroups within the cohort in addition to understanding the overall cohort of children and young people from Armed Forces families.

Policy priorities

It was suggested that the SCiP Alliance has a role in supporting progress towards desired policy changes, ensuring that policy priorities respond to the evolving environment. Policy priorities include:

- Recognising the interaction of devolved and reserved policy across home nations;
- Access to healthcare and support services;
- Improving the administration and experience of transitions related to mobility;
- Raising the visibility of the cohort in university widening participation priorities.

4.3 The Overall Approach of the SCiP Alliance

Several respondents made suggestions for overall principles that the SCiP Alliance could apply across all areas of activity in order to strengthen its impact:

Increased focus on impact

Some respondents suggested that more focus should be placed on creating and evidencing changes that have resulted from the work of the SCiP Alliance, both changes in practice and changes in outcomes for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel.

Examples include:

- Events and groups with more focus on stimulating action by providing examples of research and intervention to drive action and change;
- A move towards critical examination of the data, research and analysis relating to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, rather than focussing on perceptions of outcomes and support needs;
- Policy influence priorities selected by what offers the greatest likelihood of meaningful change.

Greater recognition of the devolved policy context

Some respondents noted that a major challenge of taking a UK-wide approach is that some of the key policy areas affecting this cohort- in particular education and health- are devolved policy areas, and so vary across the UK. Much of the work of the SCiP Alliance is viewed as being specific to England, which provides a barrier to full UK-wide engagement. Suggestions for addressing this challenge included consciously and consistently reviewing how SCiP Alliance outputs interact with devolved policy environments, recognising and embracing differences across the UK alongside acknowledging the transferability of effective practice.

Supporting individual sectors

A significant minority of respondents were of the opinion that the SCiP Alliance is too focussed on a particular area of work, with (primary) schools and universities in particular viewed as benefitting from a disproportionate focus of the SCiP Alliance's efforts. Some comments were also made that too much attention is given to high-level strategy at the expense of direct delivery with children and young people.

The fact that respondents differed in the areas they identified as the focus of attention suggests that the SCiP Alliance is actually quite successful at spreading its resource to benefit the multiple different sectors that make up the SCiP Alliance community. Nevertheless, it also suggests there is a risk that any work to support specific developments for one subgroup within the SCiP Alliance can be viewed as neglecting the needs and priorities of other subgroups. This indicates a need to sharpen the distinction between the role of the SCiP Alliance as a convenor and facilitator, and the role of the SCiP Alliance as a direct provider of resources and support.

Section 5 – The Future Role of the SCiP Alliance

Questionnaire respondents and focus group participants shared their views on what should be the focus of the SCiP Alliance over the next three years. This section summarises the key themes that were identified.

Views on the role of the SCiP Alliance most often focus on enabling and facilitating the effective utilisation of the evidence base to create meaningful change for the children of serving or ex-UK Armed Forces personnel. Consolidating success through a focus on extending reach and ensuring sustainability is generally favoured ahead of developing new areas of work. Concerns were raised about the risk of spreading too thin to be effective, with the majority of respondents favouring high-quality, focussed contributions over breadth of activity.

5.1 Building Connections

Respondents highlighted the valuable role that the SCiP Alliance plays in bringing people together to share knowledge and best practice, and to identify collaborative solutions to shared challenges and priorities. Facilitating networking and partnership building should continue to be a core element of the SCiP Alliance's focus. This work may be further enhanced by reviewing accessibility of forums for different sectors, in order to extend reach and increase engagement. There were some suggestions for additional opportunities to connect within sectors as well as between sectors, to provide effective focus for both practice and policy related issues.

5.2 Using Data to Create Change

The SCiP Alliance is viewed as having made a significant contribution to growing the evidence base related to understanding the needs of the children of serving or ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, and using this to inform effective practice and policy. Stakeholders would like to see continued enhancements to the evidence base, and consider the SCiP Alliance to be well placed to both identify evidence gaps, and facilitate the identification and resourcing of research priorities.

In addition, there were suggestions that an increased focus should be placed on translating the evidence base into effective action to ensure that knowledge and data gathering is part of a process that creates tangible positive impact for children and young people from Armed Forces families.

5.3 Policy Impact

Building on the points above, many respondents would like to see the SCiP Alliance further strengthen its work to influence policy in two key ways:

- Using the evidence base and building connections to influence policy to address key issues such as the impacts of mobility. This might include seeking to identify navigable paths to solutions in areas of policy complexity, such as the interaction of national policy and local implementation, or the systemic tensions between devolved and reserved policy areas.
- Undertaking work to review the impact of policy affecting this cohort, such as reviewing the impact of the UCAS tick box, the Armed Forces Covenant, or the inclusion of Service children within Higher Education Access and Participation Plans.

5.4 Understanding Diversity and Nuance

Considerable effort has been made to build recognition of children and young people from Armed Forces families as a group with specific experiences, needs and opportunities. Attention has been given to identifying and raising awareness of shared characteristics and impacts, and this has enabled the development of resources and facilitated policy changes that are seen as having strengthened support for this cohort. However, not all children and young people from Armed Forces families have the same experience. There are multiple subgroups within the overall cohort, for example related to the branch of the Armed Forces in which a parent serves and/or the parent's rank. An Armed Forces identity also interacts with other characteristics, for example neurodiversity, with impacts on wellbeing and educational progression a mix of these elements both individually and in combination.

Some respondents suggested that a deeper understanding of some of this complexity would assist in developing more nuanced resources and insights to ensure that all young people from Armed Forces families are able to thrive. This would also open up opportunities to extend understanding among- and engagement with- professionals who are not specialists in working with the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel. It is acknowledged that this would risk compromising the clarity of messaging provided by focussing on the cohort as whole. Nevertheless, there is seen to be value in extending the evidence base with some investigation of key areas of diversity and nuance alongside work to deepen understanding of the overall cohort.

5.5 Raising Awareness Among Non-Specialists

Many respondents noted a desire to see the SCiP Alliance extend its reach. A key aspect of this was identified as raising awareness among those who come into contact with the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel, but for whom work with this cohort is not their primary focus. Examples include teachers in schools with small numbers of pupils from Armed Forces families, and healthcare professionals. Developing resources to enable these practitioners to understand key issues was suggested as a good way to raise overall awareness that enhances practice and improves outcomes for the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel.

5.6 Refinement of Resources

Alongside positive feedback on SCiP Alliance resources, suggestions were made for how these could be further enhanced. Examples included a simplified 'essentials' version of the Thriving Lives Toolkit that would be more accessible to schools with small numbers of children and young people from Armed Forces families (see section 4). Tailoring information for different audiences is mentioned above, and is reflected in suggestions for developing resources designed for younger and older age groups to sharpen their relevance to different settings. Suggestions were also made for the collation of information from across the community, including the creation of directories of key contacts and sources of support.

5.7 Clarity of Purpose

It was noted that the overall focus of the SCiP Alliance has evolved since inception, in response to needs and opportunities that have been identified. Although this has enabled considerable progress to be made, it was suggested that there is a risk of losing clarity of purpose as a result of attempts to address all identified gaps. The needs and expectations of practitioners working face-to-face with children and young people are different from those working in strategic roles; and different sectors favour different approaches. It was suggested that the SCiP Alliance should review and restate its purpose to ensure that it remains an effective organisation focused on actions that deliver its mission.

Section 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The key findings of this community consultation are:

- Overall, the SCiP Alliance has built a strong reputation and achieved notable successes with building networks, developing resources, and influencing policy relevant to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel;
- The SCiP Alliance is broadly perceived to strengthen practice through delivering support that enhances practitioner confidence, and by increasing the range and quality of resources. Moreover, this contribution has grown over time;
- The SCiP Alliance is viewed as making a positive contribution towards building an evidence base to support change to practice and policy. This provides positive conditions for delivering outcomes that work towards the SCiP Alliance vision of Thriving Lives for Service Children, although current impact evidence is limited;
- The SCiP Alliance community is an alliance of several sectors and constituencies, each with its own strengths, needs and challenges. These subgroups have an interdependency and shared vision, but not necessarily shared priorities. The SCiP Alliance provides a valuable role supporting each subgroup, and in building connections between different sections of the community. However, there is a risk of being perceived to be favouring some groups over others, and/ or working with multiple groups in parallel rather than truly building connections that enhance the community as a whole. There is a delicate balance to be struck between focussing on subgroup priorities that support collective objectives, and ensuring the community is enabled to function more effectively as a collaborative whole.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for the future focus of the SCiP Alliance:

- **Consolidate success-** we recommend that priority is given to building on core assets that extend reach and deepen engagement, with consideration given to increasing the accessibility of resources to extend engagement with non-specialists;
- **Review diversity of the community and its implications for effective action-** different practitioner groups have different needs and value different aspects of the work of the SCiP Alliance. This is a strength, but also risks fragmenting focus. Additional challenges exist in relation to working UK-wide in devolved policy areas, and in recognising the diversity of experiences and needs within the cohort of children and young people from Armed Forces families. We recommend that consideration is given to how this diversity can be harnessed effectively in order to increase the overall impact of the SCiP Alliance;
- **Review and communicate overall purpose-** the SCiP Alliance is seen as both a convenor and facilitator of partnerships, and as a direct provider of resources and support. There is a risk of tension between these different elements of activity. We recommend that a review is undertaken of the scope of the SCiP Alliance's activities, and that this is communicated clearly to all stakeholders;
- **Increase focus on impact-** there are opportunities to further enhance the evidence base. We recommend that priority is given to increasing focus on changes for practitioners and outcomes for children and young people, with priority given to actions that are most effective in creating positive change.

Appendix A – Methodology

A.1 Data Collection

This report has been compiled using primary data collected between May and August 2025. A mixed-methods research design combined a breadth of responses from an online questionnaire with stakeholder focus groups to explore qualitative themes in more depth:

- **Online questionnaire:** a core questionnaire comprised of Likert-type rating scales and free text response questions. The questionnaire was promoted by the SCiP Alliance staff team and partner organisations through professional networks. A total of 180 usable responses were received between May and July 2025.
- **Stakeholder focus groups:** a total of 30 stakeholders took part in either a one-to-one or small group online interview. Participants represented a range of perspectives, including Early Years, Primary Schools, Secondary Schools, University Widening Participation, Researchers, Independent Advisors, Local Authorities, Charity and Third Sector, and the MOD. Participants were recruited from Scotland, Wales and different English regions, with others undertaking roles that were UK-wide and/or overseas. A semi-structured topic guide was used to explore key themes in more depth. Focus groups were recorded with permission, and transcribed in an intelligent verbatim format prior to analysis.

A.2 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were produced for the quantitative questionnaire responses. Reported percentages are based on the number of responses received to the relevant question. Five subsets were constructed to enable comparison between key groups:

- **Early Years:** Nurseries; Childminders;
- **Schools:** Primary School or Academy; Secondary School or Academy; All through School or Academy; Special School;
- **University & College:** Further Education College; University- Widening Participation or Outreach; University- Student Services;
- **Charity & Third Sector**
- **Other Sector Stakeholders:** MOD; Local Authority; UK or Devolved Government; Researchers; Private Sector Providers; Funding Bodies; Other.

Qualitative data from free-text questionnaire responses and interviews were analysed to identify key themes. These themes were not pre-determined, but were developed during analysis of the data set.

A.3 Profile of Questionnaire Respondents

The analysed sample of 180 responses represented a broad range of stakeholder perspectives. Responses were received from all UK regions, including 12% from the devolved nations and 19% from practitioners with UK-wide roles. The sample provided a good balance of sector representation (fig A) and professional roles and perspectives:

- The majority of respondents had roles related to supporting the children of serving and/or ex-UK Armed Forces personnel (fig B). This was true for all stakeholder groups except for University and College respondents, who were most likely to have a role promoting access to education and future careers;
- Just under a fifth of respondents overall were an Armed Forces family member in addition to their work or volunteer role (fig B). This was higher for charity and other sector stakeholders, and significantly lower for University and College respondents;
- Around half of respondents had a role undertaking regular direct work with children or young people, with 38% undertaking management or strategy roles. However, the nature of respondent roles varied significantly between sectors (fig C);
- The proportion of time spent on work related to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel varied significantly by sector (fig D). Charity and other sector stakeholders were most likely to have a role where this cohort were a specific focus, whereas 63% of University and College respondents said that work focussed on this group makes up less than 10% of their time.

The respondent sample provides a broad range of perspectives reflecting the diversity of those engaged with the SCiP Alliance, though we are unable to assess the extent to which the sample is representative of all those whose work is related to this cohort of children and young people.

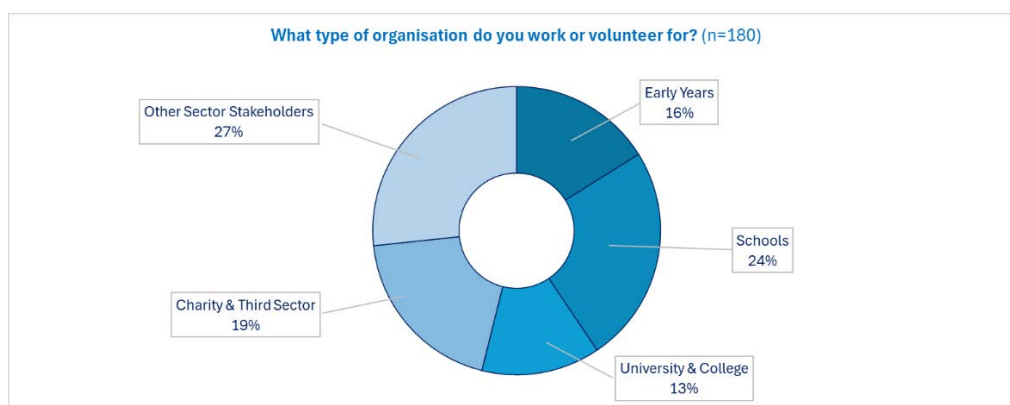


Fig A: Sector representation of online questionnaire respondents

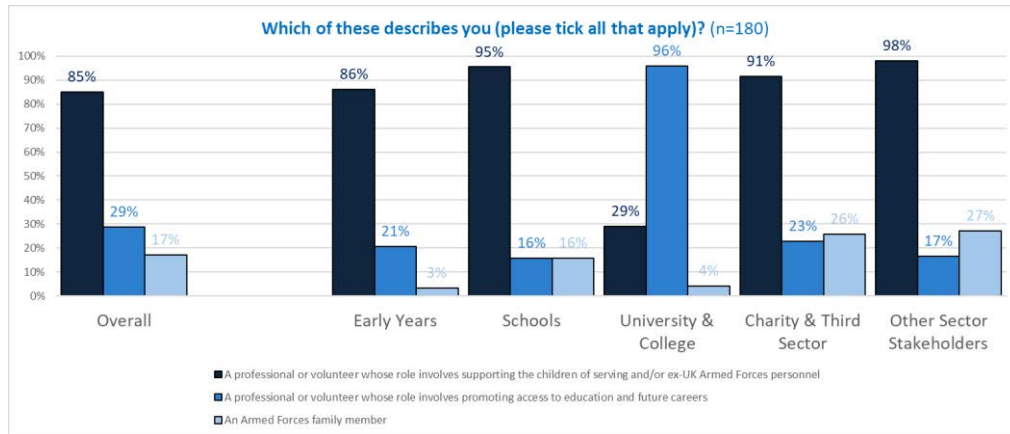


Fig B: Viewpoint of online questionnaire respondents by sector

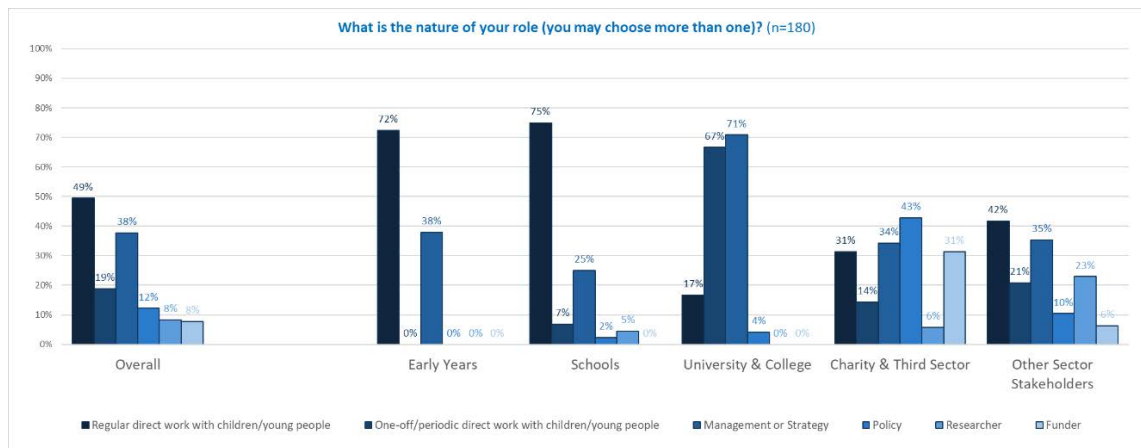


Fig C: Role of online questionnaire respondents by sector

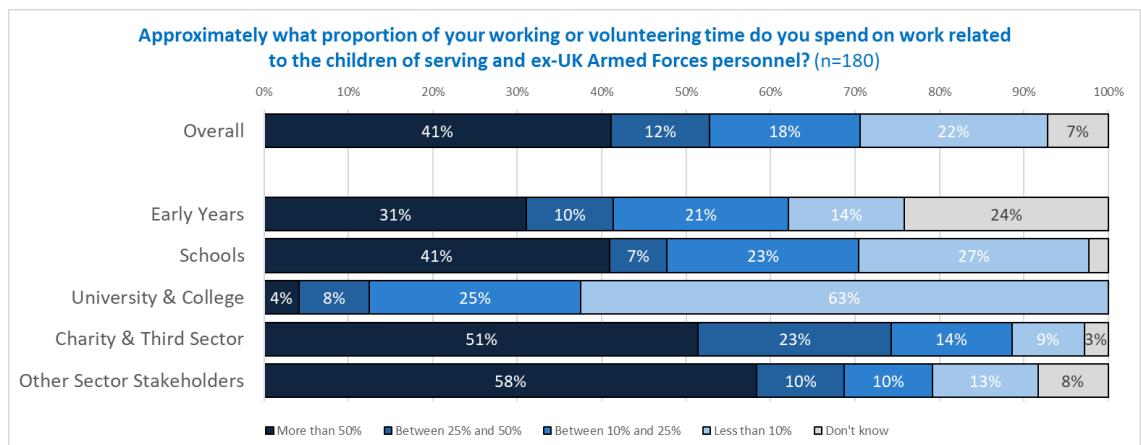


Fig D: Proportion of working or volunteering time spent on work related to the children of serving and ex-UK Armed Forces personnel by sector



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