



WHAT
CHILD



As a regular on Civvy Street, I have to be completely honest and say my knowledge of life in the Services doesn't extend much past that shown on Royal Marines Commando or Royal Navy School. However, after spending three weeks working for the Naval Families Federation, alongside drinking endless cups of tea, I have been fully briefed on all the important aspects of Service life; including the highs and lows of weekendening!

Working in the world of education, I didn't think I would need to learn many more acronyms – how wrong was I! From BOST (Basic Operational Sea Training) to SLIB (Second Leave Is Best), it's fair to say I have added quite a collection to my repertoire. I also now know that for completely logical reasons a Minehunter ship is made of fibre glass and not metal. A definite Homer Simpson moment on my part!

So now I hear you asking, why would someone who works in education be working with the Naval Families Federation? Well, the Educational Psychology team with whom I am currently placed were keen to build links with organisations that support the needs of Service families. As an organisation that prides itself on offering Royal Navy and Royal Marines families an independent voice and representation, the Naval Families Federation were also keen to gather some views from children. As an Educational Psychologist in training I was tasked to work with around 40 children in the hope of finding out what they think about being part of a Royal Navy or Royal Marines family. My draft was complete and operation 'what the children think' or as

the Navy would say operation WTCT could commence.

Armed with my brand new hop-a-croc board game and sparkly sea stickers I was fully prepared for execution. I have worked with many children throughout my training, and touch wood things usually go to plan, but I wasn't quite sure what to expect this time round. What if I asked something that set one of the children off? Would I be needing my box of tissues? What if none of the children wanted to talk to me?

Continued over



Child proudly showing off his personalised puzzle

DO SERVICE

CHILDREN THINK?

By Larissa Cunningham

“ a fighting spirit, ‘can-do’ attitude and a great sense of humour oozed from each and every one of them ”



HERE ARE SOME OF THE VIEWS OF THE CHILDREN:

Mum felt lonely when Dad went away, I tried to keep her company.

At military club we get to talk to each other and share our feelings.

When he has to go away on a Sunday it's really hard. We go to the station and then he just goes. I try hard not to cry.

Where I live in a Navy house we all live round in a square. There is a big piece of grass in the middle and we all play together after school.

Other children can imagine what it's like to have a Dad away on a ship for a long time but they don't understand.

I really miss my Dad, I get quite upset because it's just Mum and I worry about her feeling sad.

My Mum's very important to me. She looks after me when Dad is away. I talk to her when I feel upset because I trust her.

My Dad is my hero. I am so proud of him because he goes away and leaves his family to keep our country safe.

The best thing about having a Dad in the Royal Navy is that I look forward to spending time with him when he comes back.

WHAT DO SERVICE CHILDREN THINK?

By Larissa Cunningham