



SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ROYAL NAVY AND ROYAL MARINES FAMILIES

Produced by Larissa Cunningham, Trainee Educational Psychologist

NAVAL SERVICE CHILDREN

Children and young people with parents in the Armed Forces face challenges that may go beyond the experience of the majority of families and children living in the UK (Ofsted, 2011). The families of Service personnel are often highly mobile and can experience prolonged periods of separation which can lead to increased levels of stress and anxiety.

What are the unique challenges faced by Naval Service families?

Naval Service families are independent and resourceful with the majority living in a community of their choice. As a Sailor or Royal Marine does not join a ship and remain part of one unit throughout their career, many families choose to live where they grew up or close to extended family.


The Royal Navy can and does deploy its personnel for 660 days in a three year cycle. Put into a family context, this means that for nearly two years out of every three, serving personnel can be away anywhere in the world. In contrast, Army personnel can expect to be deployed for 498 days over three years and RAF personnel for 465 days over three years.

For Naval Service families one of the main challenges are the **prolonged periods of separation** (up to 9 months); the highest across the Armed Forces. This is an aspect of Service life which is often masked by their 'can do' attitude and resilient approach. Whilst communication with ships and units has improved over the years, mobile devices do not work at sea and, depending on the tasks which are being undertaken, there are times when the ship can go 'silent'.

For serving personnel on submarines, there are even more restrictions. Families are permitted to send a one-way 120 word 'familygram' once every two weeks. All messages are read before being passed on and content not considered suitable is removed. The serving person cannot respond to these messages.

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.

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.

Service families must continually accommodate to the presence and absence of a deployed parent; reorganising and readjusting to changing roles and routines.

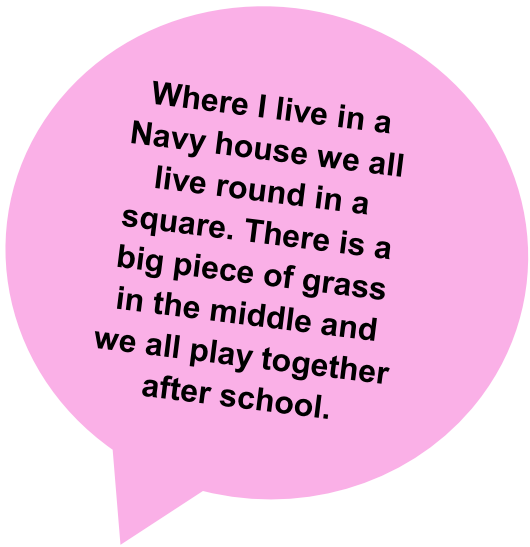
Many children and young people adapt quite well to being part of a Service family. However, multiple transitions and extended periods of separation due to deployment can place a strain on families. The mental health and emotional well-being of a non-deployed spouse or partner may also be negatively impacted which can contribute to increased stress and anxiety among children.

Children's response to separation from an important caregiver and to distress in the non-deployed parent may be expressed through their difficulties with routines and patterns (e.g. sleeping and eating), regression to earlier behaviours (e.g. thumb sucking or bed wetting), withdrawal, irritability or acting out behaviours.

Adolescence is a significant period of change as children transition into young adults. Parental deployment can contribute to additional stressors such as relocation, changes in family roles and daily routines. Adolescents also become more aware of the direct impact parental deployment has on them which can increase the sense of loss. Parental deployment has been linked to several youth outcomes including depression, acting out, poor academic performance and increased irritability and impulsiveness.

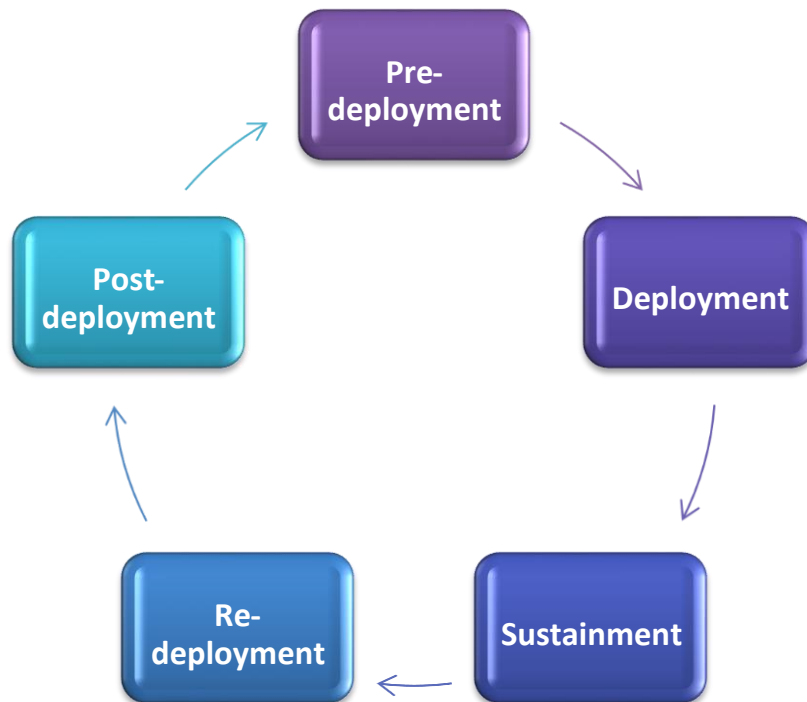
Key Challenges

- Education is not a stable environment.
- Increasing length and number of deployments.
- New curriculum – gaps in children's academic knowledge/repetition.
- A sense of loss/huge sense of responsibility for children when a parent is deployed.
- Some children may end up becoming carers which may impact on school attendance.
- GCSE options do not always match in different schools.



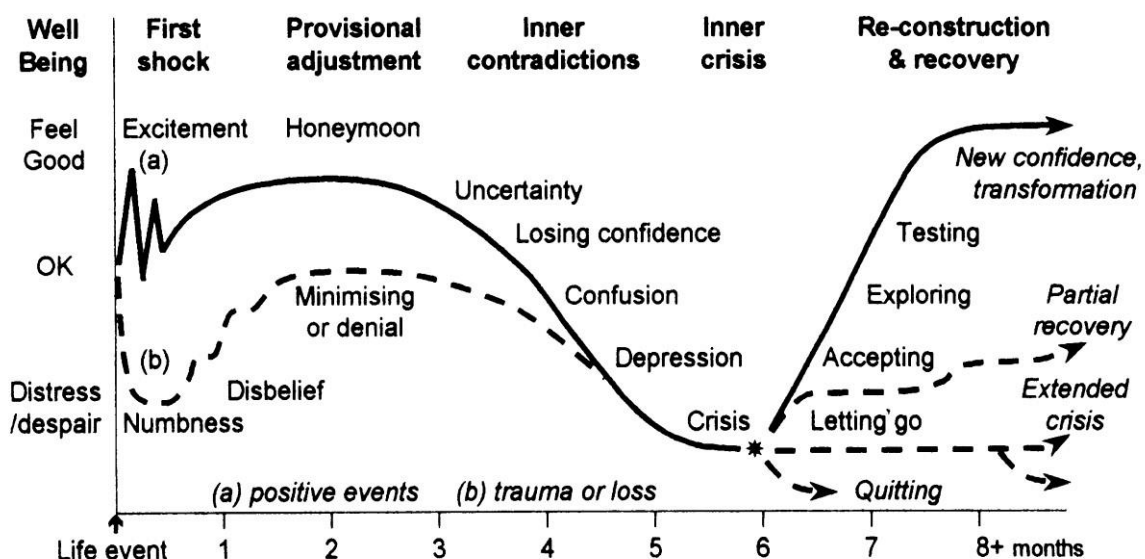
Where I live in a Navy house we all live round in a square. There is a big piece of grass in the middle and we all play together after school.

THE DEPLOYMENT CYCLE



Stage	Feelings / behaviours
Pre-deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anxiety• Anticipation• Denial• Mental/emotional/physical distance
Deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sadness• Loneliness• Overwhelmed
Sustainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• New routines established• Independence (spouses)• Confidence
Re-deployment (homecoming approaches)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Anticipation• Anxiety• Excitement• Apprehension
Post-deployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reintegration• Negotiation of routines

THE TRANSITION CYCLE



Williams (1999)

It can take around 9 months for individuals to adapt following a significant life event, which for children can include moving schools.

During this period children and young people are unlikely to be in a position to learn without the appropriate social and emotional support in place.

What can schools do?

- Use their Service Pupil Premium to support children socially and emotionally.
- Build children's resilience.
- Facilitate good home/school communication.
- Raise awareness amongst staff.
- Good communication with the previous school.
- Buddy/mentoring system.

*At Military Club
we get to talk to
each other and
share our
feelings.*

SERVICE PUPIL PREMIUM

What is Service Pupil Premium?

Funding provided by the Department of Education to State maintained schools, Free Schools and Academies in England who have children of Regular Armed Forces Personnel among their pupil population to provide additional support.

- Pupils in Year R to Year 11 recorded as Ever 6¹ Service Child or in receipt of a child pension from the Ministry of Defence are eligible.
- £300 per pupil.
- Funding allocations are agreed in the summer term following the January school census.

What can Service Pupil Premium be used for?

It is up to schools to decide how the money is to be spent on Service children but it should mainly be used for pastoral support. However, mobile Service children may benefit from targeted educational support in a new school to catch up with their class.

Schools need to show how this money is spent and OFSTED will check up on this.



Sharing stories

Military Club

Reading Force

Diaries

Memory boxes

Treasure boxes

**Personalised
Jigsaw Puzzles**

Travelling teddies

**HMS Heroes
(Military Kids
Connect)**

Scrapbooks

Ipads for Skype

**Emotional
Literacy Support
Assistants**

¹ Children are eligible for Service Pupil Premium for up to 6 years after their parent has left the Armed Forces.

RESOURCES / SUPPORT

Storybook Waves: <http://www.aggies.org.uk/storybook-waves-2/>

- Storybook Waves helps members of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines maintain the link with their children by recording a bedtime story for them to listen to when a parent is serving away from home.
- Children received a personalised CD (with a soundtrack) so that they can listen to their parent's voice whenever they want.

Little Troopers: <http://www.littletroopers.net/>

- Little Troopers is a registered charity supporting all children with parents serving in the British Armed Forces.
- They provide a range of resources (including free deployment packs) and events to ease repeated separation periods and to help keep parents and children connected even when apart.

Military Kids Connect (MCK) Heroes (previously known as HMS Heroes):

<http://www.plymouthcurriculum.swgfl.org.uk/hmsheroes/>

- A national tri-service network of after school clubs, supporting children aged 3 - 18 from Service families aged 3 – 18.
- Members are ambassadors and young advocates for Service families across the United Kingdom.

Reading Force: www.readingforce.org.uk

- A shared reading initiative that uses books to bring Service children and families together.
- It encourages families to read, talk and scrapbook about a book, improving communication and enriching relationships with books and each other.

Service Children's Education (SCE): <http://www.scesschools.com/home.php>

- SCE provides schools and educational support for children of the UK Armed Forces and Ministry of Defence personnel.

USEFUL INFORMATION

- Supporting Service Children in State Schools (SCISS) handbook

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/service-children-in-state-schoolshandbook/service-children-in-state-schools-handbook-2013>

- Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/directorate-children-and-young-people>

- Naval Families Federation

<https://www.nff.org.uk>

- The Royal British Legion

<http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/>

- Royal Navy/ Royal Marines Welfare

www.royalnavy.mod.uk/welfare

- Lauren Halpin (Welfare Information Officer – outreach for schools)

Email: Lauren.Halpin101@mod.uk

Telephone: 02392 722151

- Royal Navy and Royal Marines Children's Fund

www.rnrmchildrensfund.org.uk

- Portsmouth Educational Psychology Service

Principal EP: Liz Robinson (liz.robinson@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

Senior EP: Caitriona Scully (caitriona.scully@portsmouthcc.gov.uk)

Telephone: 023 92 68 8781

