

Factsheet 5: Deployment and Separation

What is Deployment and Separation?

Deployment is the term used when serving forces personnel are required to be away from home either on active service or for training purposes. Even when not deployed, a serving parent may live away from home for much of the time. The three Services each have different 'Harmony guidelines' which stipulate the amount of time a serving person can be separated from their family, which can be up to 50% of the time. This separation can be unpredictable and subject to change at short notice.

Deployment and separation may have a significant impact on a pupil's behaviour and on their emotional and social well-being. Transitions around deployment can result in complex feelings at all stages of the deployment cycle which can be challenging for pupils and families to navigate.

It is also worth considering that deployment and separation have an impact on the person who is the primary care-giver for pupils while the serving person is away. They may be operating as a lone parent for long periods of time, without necessarily having a wider support network, particularly if the family is mobile.

Service children may become Young Carers at time of deployment and will need an understanding of their situation and potentially additional support from Young Carer organisations

Some military bases are in rural and isolated locations, which can exacerbate situations.

How Schools Can Help

It is important for schools to be made aware that a parent may be going away on deployment, especially at key time of the year where in falls over national celebration days (Mother's or Father's Day) or over religious festivals.

Many schools ask parents to notify them of deployment so as to cater with better understanding of changes in concentration levels and/or behaviour patterns. Schools which only have small numbers of Service children may need to make a particular effort to provide appropriate resources to pupils who do not have the benefit of peer understanding and support.

- Ask parents to complete a 'deployment form' when they know they are being deployed. This enables school to have a forwarding address for the parent who is out of area and so that child can send items to them
- Ensure that staff are aware of the up and coming deployment so that any changes of behaviour can be noted and passed on to the person who supports children whilst a family member is deployed.
- Set up a deployment group. Many schools find it really beneficial to have all the children with a parent deployed together for a set time each week. This allows children to talk about how they are feeling and complete activities such as filling shoe boxes to send out for fathers and mothers at special times of year, making cards etc
- If available, speak to the local Community or Welfare Development Officer (CDO) to seek out items such as Story Book Wings and Talking Tins that are resources that the family can have prior to deployment to help with family separation – the availability of these resources may differ from one military Service to another.