

The Impact of Separation and Deployment on Children and Young People

Lisa Thipthorp, AF Covenant Manager (East Midlands), RAF Families Federation

Bridget Nicholson, Director of Evidence & Strategy, Naval Families Federation



I married into the RAF 19 years ago

- In that time I've had **2** children, **4** cats, **13** houses and **7** jobs.
- During that time I've had to find **4** childminders, **3** nurseries and **6** schools for the children, **13** GPs and **8** dentists (I didn't bother for a few years)
- I've given birth in **2** different hospitals
- Had **19** hairdressers
- Moved house.....WHEN we wanted, WHERE we wanted, but also at short notice, completely the wrong time and a location that would have been the last place in the world we would have chosen.
- Moved overseas and moved back again.
- Lived together. Lived apart.
- Kissed him goodbye on deployment **8** times and several months later hello
- Made half a dozen life long friends...And myself and the children have left behind many more good ones along the way.

Postings (Assignments)

- Average duration: 18mths - 2 years for officers; 3-5 years for airmen; varies for other Services but 2 years is common
- Historically families accompany – now an increase in ‘dispersed families’, particularly for RNRM & RAF
- UK or overseas – USA, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Bahrain, Falklands, NW Europe, (SHAPE, Brunssum, Ramstein, Canada, Malaya, NATO)

Deployments

- Anything up to 9 months in duration
- Deploying as an individual (rather than a formed unit – Squadron etc) is common for RAF & RN
- Afghanistan, Iraq, Africa, Falkland Islands, Gulf, counter-terrorism & humanitarian missions around the world & the various other commitments including NATO

UK Armed Forces Personnel Deployed by financial year*

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
All services	256,800	160,640	90,560	56,860	56,900
~ of which unique individuals	65,870	48,960	36,070	23,120	24,210
Amount of separation from family = up to 60%					
Standard deployment lengths of up to 9 months					

* MOD Annual Report and Accounts 2016-2017

Issues surrounding postings/assignments

- Postings are an ORDER
- 90 days notice
- No consideration of school term dates
- RAF has worked hard to make postings longer for stability

BUT

- Postings are due to operational requirements



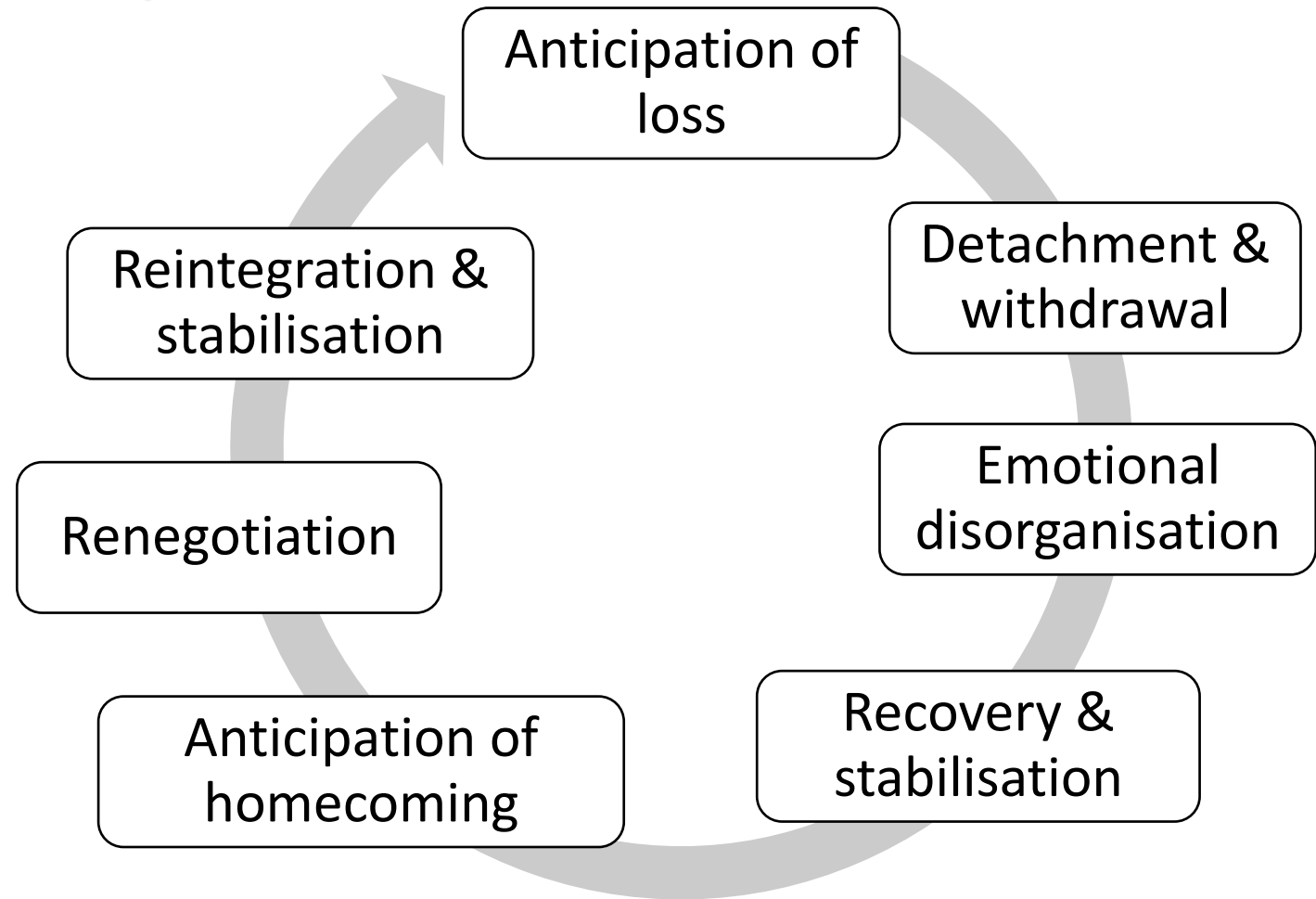
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Other deployment/separation factors affecting families



- Pre-deployment training
- Rest & Recuperation
- Post Operational Tour Leave
- Deployment with no contact
- Deployment with no context
- Short notice changes
- Weekending/geographic dispersal

Emotional cycle of deployment (Vestal Logan, 1987)



Babies and young children

- Attachment
- Need for consistency and routine
- Little concept of time/short attention span
- Looking for 'lost' person
- Confusion
- Memories unclear
- Short attention span
- Fears – immediate threats



Speaking up for Naval Service families

Primary school age children

- Strong feelings
- Sense of the past & future
- Magical thinking, wishing
- Fears
- Ego-centric
- Ideas about cause & effect
- Developing better understanding
- Memories are more permanent



Adolescents

- Quest for personal identity
- Peer relationships
- Testing boundaries
- Developing empathy
- Own views and values
- Sexual identity
- Highly connected



Speaking up for Naval Service families

Experiences & perceptions change
with development

Naval Families
F E D E R A T I O N



Speaking up for Naval Service families

Strengths arising from separation

- Fostering maturity
- Emotional growth & insight
- Encouraging independence
- Encouraging flexibility & adapting to change
- Building skills for adjusting to separations & losses faced later in life
- Strengthening family bonds
- Awareness & understanding of civic duty



Mitigating factors

A child's response to the absence of the deployed parent is mediated by the relationship and capability of the at-home parent/carer in both younger and older children.



What can your organisation do to alleviate some of this stress?

- On families – what are some of the issues they are facing?
- On children – what impact could the above have and how can it be mitigated?

For discussion



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