



Supporting Young People through Deployment and Detachment Guide



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Introduction

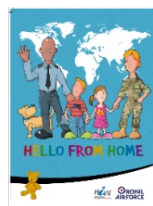
This guide outlines the information and support available aimed at helping you, and your children during deployment.

Service Personnel deploying can be a challenging time for children and young people, and it is important that support is available to maintain their physical and emotional wellbeing during times of separation.

Below is a list of resources aimed at helping you and your child(ren) during deployment. These resources are available for your child/ren provided by the RAF and our military charities. RAF HIVE can provide these resources to you, listen to any concerns you may have, and support you, and your children through deployment. The contact details for your HIVE Information Officer can be found on the last page of this guide.

Young People's Resources

Hello from Home is an activity booklet produced by the RAF HIVE Service containing fun games, secret puzzles, letters, and stickers aimed at children aged under 9yrs to keep in touch and occupied during the Service Personnel separation while on a detachment or deployment. Available in hard copy through your Station RAF HIVE Service.



Detachment Maps – affectionately known as ‘Chuff Charts’ created by RAF Community Support, are maps for children and young people to count down the days until their loved one returns from deployment.



Locations available: Afghanistan, Alaska, Arizona, Ascension, Bahrain, Crete, Cyprus, Estonia, Falkland Islands, Florida, Iraq, Italy, Kuwait, Lithuania, New Mexico, Nevada, Nigeria, Mali, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain, Romania, South Carolina, South Sudan, and South Korea.

Chuff charts are available in digital or hard copy through your station RAF HIVE Service. If your deployment location is not listed above, please contact your RAF HIVE Information Officer who will arrange to create a bespoke map for your specific location.

RAF Association Doodle Packs the Doodle Packs contain a range of fun activities for children to complete and share with their parent before, during and after deployment.



We know how difficult being away from your family can be, for your children and the Doodle Pack is a fun way for them to keep in touch and plan the Service Personnel welcome home!

The Doodle Pack contains:

- Keep your children's pictures close with a pillowcase and wash bag they can customise just for you.
- Keep in touch with a special message card.
- Come home to a welcome home banner coloured in by your family
- The pack also includes a tote bag, fabric pens and a colouring book

To obtain your free Doodle Pack, contact your Station HIVE Service or email doodlepack@rafa.org.uk

RAF Association Storybook Wings audiobook is the RAF Association's initiative for serving RAF parents who spend time away from their children – whether they are away on deployment or working away during the week. Service Personnel can maintain the link with their child(ren) by recording a bedtime story for the child to listen to in their absence.



Service Personnel are given access to a list of approved stories to choose from, record a story then it will be professionally edited with sound effects and music to create a special keepsake.

To record your own Storybook Wings story, contact your station RAF HIVE Service who participate in this project, or email storybookwings@rafa.org.uk.

AIRPLAY was developed by the RAF Benevolent Fund in 2010 in consultation with the RAF after a survey found that keeping young people safely occupied was a big concern for RAF families. Young people in RAF families face unique challenges – long periods separated from at least one parent, moving around the country to new stations (often in isolated, rural locations with minimal facilities), and having to start at new schools and make new friends on a regular basis.



Airplay is designed to address these issues by giving RAF children access to brand new facilities and a safe, stimulating programme of activities.

Also, by rolling out at all main RAF Stations, children and young people will have some much-needed continuity if, and when their family relocates.

The programme is delivered by YMCA in conjunction with RAF Community Support, providing supervised activities through Airplay (for those aged eight and over) and Ben Clubs (for children aged five to eight) on RAF stations.

Children and young people can also access Airplay Connect, a secure digital activities resource, further details through the link <https://airplayconnect.org/>

For your local Airplay programme listing activities being delivered, contact station HIVE Service.

[Airplay Connect](#) is a safe and secure digital resource for all RAF children and young people to access and enjoy. The online platform allows Station Youth Workers to reach children who might live away from RAF stations or even overseas. It is a forum to engage in fun, educational and interactive activities. With the ever-evolving complexities of RAF communities, Airplay Connect has been developed to extend our support to young people.



With digital interactions commonplace, we want to make it as easy as possible for children in RAF families to enjoy Airplay, wherever they are based. For additional information contact station HIVE Service or to register direct visit <https://airplayconnect.org/register/>

[Reading Force](#) a charity supporting forces families keeping connected through free fun shared reading resources and activities. Their shared reading initiative encourages families to read, talk, and scrapbook about a book, improving communication and enriching relationships with books and each other – one page at a time.



If you think your children and family would enjoy doing Reading Force – sharing a book, chatting about it, and scrapbooking – take a look at the Family Stories below and see how military families, with babies and children of all ages, have used Reading Force for fun and to stay connected.

Reading Force is free for all Forces families, Reserves, Cadets, and Ex-Forces families. It is fun and easy to take part. Friends can participate too.



Scrapbooks aimed at toddlers and up.



Reading journals aimed at 11- 19yrs

To join Reading Force and receive your free book and scrapbook visit <https://www.readingforce.org.uk/families/>

Scrapbooks are also available from your Station RAF HIVE Service, contact details can be found on the back of this guide.

[Little Troopers](#) is a charity supporting all children with one or both parents serving in the regular or reserve British Armed Forces.



The charity creates lots of resources and initiatives to support the unique challenges often faced while living military life; deployment resources, a story recording app, separation journals, Crafty Little Troopers activity sheets, Birthday Card scheme and much more can be accessed free from the website.

Little Troopers at School is a project from the charity helping schools and empowering parents with regards to military children in education settings, lots of free resources available such as information sheets and resources for children with additional needs.

[Treasures App](#) - Serving parents need to never miss a bedtime story again! Little Troopers and Harper Collins Children's Books have partnered to bring lots of carefully chosen children's books to military families to enable you to make easy, quick recordings on your tablet devices. Free access for all serving British Armed Forces families. The Little Troopers Treasures App is available on the App Store or Google Play access, or you can download through <https://www.littletroopers.net/treasures/> If you would like to receive any of the resources listed above, please contact your local HIVE Information Officer, whose contact details are listed on the back page of this guide.



Tips to Help Children Deal with Deployment

Preparing children for a separation of their loved one can be a difficult time. Listed below is a list of useful tips that may assist:



- Children need to know that a parent going away won't forget them and will still love them.
- Be truthful. Children sense/imagine situations and may worry unnecessarily so always try to be open and honest about the separation.
- Share concerns. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and share your own.
- Let children help around the house. Encourage them to help with the chores and tell the children that they are making a valuable contribution.
- Maintain routines. Maintaining usual routines, for example regular mealtimes and bedtimes, can help children feel more secure.
- Include children in your communication and correspondence. Any separation is a long time for a child and so much can happen while the Service person is away.
- It may help the time pass when you are looking forward to phone calls or sending pictures and parcels.

Homecoming Tips – Families

Preparing children for reunion from a separation of their loved one can be an exciting time. Listed below is a list of useful tips that may assist on the homecoming.



- Do something special to welcome your partner/parent home - make a welcome banner with your child(ren).
- Adjust the celebration to fit your child(ren).
- Give your partner/parent time to adjust to being home. Try not to tightly schedule activities for them.
- Understand that your partner/parent may need time to adjust to different time changes, food, activities etc.

- Infants and small children may be shy or unsure around your partner at first. Be patient and give them time to become reacquainted.
- Prepare for mixed and intense feelings through adjustment of their return.
- Support returning parent to spend small amounts of one-on-one time with each child(ren).
- Encourage the child(ren) to allow the returning parent to participate in their daily routines.



Additional Resources to Purchase

Listed below is a selection of books tailored to aid and support child(ren) and young people during detachment for the Service Personnel. Books pertaining to deployment and separation for pre-schoolers and primary school children available to purchase through retailers.



My Daddy's an Aviator: In the Royal Air Force – Talual Grey

This book provides an insight into the daily life of a parent in the RAF and, more specifically, the type of work they do when they are on tasks called operations. It answers common questions children may have, like why their parent has to go away and what they do while they are gone.

But that is not all - this book also addresses the challenges that families face when someone they love is away. It helps to alleviate fears around the danger of operations, and lets children know that their parent is always thinking of them, even when they are thousands of miles away.

This book is not just informative, but also helps young readers to cope with the emotions they may feel when their parent is deployed. With beautiful illustrations and a touching storyline, it is a must-read for any child with a parent in the Royal Air Force. With My Daddy is an Aviator, children will gain a new understanding of the incredible

work the RAF does every day and will feel immense pride knowing that their parent is a part of something so important.

The book can also be used as an educational tool for all children to teach them about the role of the RAF and to instil a sense of empathy for other children who have a parent who is deployed. Available to buy <https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0C1J3N539>



My Mummy's an Aviator: in the Royal Air Force - Talual Grey

This book provides an insight into the daily life of a parent in the RAF and, more specifically, the type of work they do when they are on tasks called operations. It answers common questions children may have, like why their parent has to go away and what they do while they are gone.

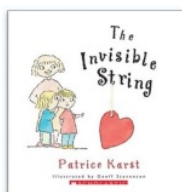
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My Daddy's Going Away - Lieutenant Colonel Christopher MacGregor

Based on his own experiences of going away from home, this comforting book helps to explain why parents sometimes have to go away and shows ways to help children cope. With a foreword by HRH The Prince of Wales and in support of Combat Stress.



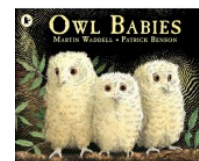
The Invisible String – Patrice Karst

Mum tells her twins that they are all connected by an Invisible String. Mums and Dads feel the tug whenever kids give it; and kids feel the tug that comes right back: the Invisible String reaches from heart to heart. Does everybody have an Invisible String? How far does it reach anyway? A book to help children cope with a fear of loneliness and separation.



The Invisible String Workbook: Creative Activities to Comfort, Calm, and Connect – Patrice Karst & Dana Wyss

For years, tens of thousands of copies of *The Invisible String* have been sold to therapists, caregivers, and organisations who work with populations dealing with separation. Whether its teachers using it around the early days of the school year, military organisations using it for family support, or counsellors using it at grief camps, the book has inspired scores of workshops and creative activities within these groups that are often shared online. The book's co-author, Dana Wyss, is an art therapist who uses the book successfully with her clients, and she and Patrice Karst have partnered to create this workbook to help spread the healing power of *The Invisible String* to the communities that most need it. The *Invisible String Workbook* allows readers of all ages who have experienced any kind of separation or loss to delve deeper into their relationships, to engage in exploratory and healing conversations, and to build healthier attachments.



Owl Babies – Mark Waddell

A gentle tale of three baby owls reassures young children that Mummy will always come home. Three baby owls wake up one night in their hole in a tree to find that their mother has gone. So, they sit on a branch and wait. Darkness gathers and the owls grow anxious, wondering when their mother will return. But, at last, she does, and they bounce up and down with joy, welcoming her home.



Sometimes: My Daddy's Gone Away with Work – Clare Shaw

A beautifully written book aimed at helping children who are experiencing a parent being away from home. It subtly deals with the conflicting emotions that can arise and offers ideas that could help.



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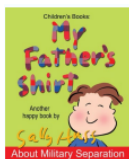
Billie Templar's War – Ellie Irving

Billie Templar desperately wants her dad to come home. He is a soldier and has been away for seven weeks, fighting for 'Queen and country' - but how can the two of them possibly defend their four-year record of winning the three-legged race at the school carnival if he is thousands of miles away? Then, when one of the other soldiers in Dad's regiment is seriously hurt, the stakes get even higher. Billie needs her dad home, sharpish. There is only one person who can help - Her Majesty. She is in charge of the army, right? She can send Dad home!



Lily Hates Goodbyes – Jerilyn Marler

Lily's daddy is deployed for about a billion days. She feels angry, sad, stubborn, and naughty. Her mummy helps Lily understand her emotions and cope with them in healthy ways. Lily finds ways to be happy despite the separating miles. She collects mementos in a box and adds stickers to a calendar to help count down the days to daddy's return. When the big day finally, finally arrives, she jumps joyfully into her daddy's arms. Lily loves hellos! (US spellings and uniforms.



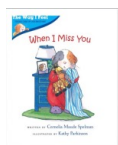
My Father's Shirt – Sally Huss

Many children experience the loneliness created by military separation. The little boy in this story is such a child who describes his struggle with sadness when his father is deployed. But he has a wise and creative father who knows how to turn his son's unhappiness into an opportunity for growth, with the help of his favourite shirt. Touching story.



I Miss You: A Military Kid's Book About Deployment – Beth Andrews

Based on many years of experience as a social worker, who has assisted military families experiencing stress, author Beth Andrews has created an excellent tool for allowing children and their loved ones to deal with the many emotions caused by deployment. The text and illustrations encourage children to discuss their feelings and to draw their own pictures to express themselves. The accompanying parents' guide is designed to validate parents' feelings and give them ways to help their children cope. (US military origin – 'Mum' is 'Mom').



When I Miss You – Cornelia Maude Spelman

Young children often experience anxiety when they are separated from their mothers or fathers. This newest title in The Way I Feel series features a young guinea pig who expresses her distress when her mother and father go away. Simple text. Suitable for toddlers and pre-schoolers.

Books about feelings, including reading which may help children with additional needs:



The Huge Bag of Worries – Virginia Ironside

Wherever Jenny goes, her worries follow her - in a big blue bag. They are there when she goes swimming, when she is watching TV, and even when she is in the lavatory. Jenny decides they will have to go. But who can help her? The Huge Bag of Worries was written by Virginia Ironside, one of Britain's leading agony aunts, and has sold 140k copies to date.

A compelling picture book which can be used as a springboard into what worries children today.



In My Heart: A Book of Feelings by Jo Witek

In My Heart explores emotions--happiness, sadness, bravery, anger, shyness and more. Unlike other feelings books that tend to oversimplify, In My Heart lyrically explains what an emotion feels like, physically, inside. For example: "When I get really angry, my heart feels like it's going to explode! Do not come near me! My heart is yelling, hot and loud. This is when my heart is mad." Toddlers will be empowered by this new vocabulary and able to practice articulating and identifying their own emotions. On the cover and the right side of each spread, a die-cut heart decreases in size, creating a multi-coloured heart the depth of the entire book.



At Times I Get These Feelings

Children can often find it difficult to identify with an emotion. It is not always easy for them to articulate what they are feeling. This brilliantly written book covers twelve main emotions and is packed full of tips and activities to help children with their emotional literacy. From happy to be embarrassed, to jealous or angry, it touches on each emotion offering talking points around some of the trickier feelings.

Separation and deployment can bring challenges, as part of service life for children too. Below is a list of welfare support and wellbeing resources available to access to aid and provide support during these times.

Wellbeing and Welfare Support

Separation and deployment can bring challenges, as part of service life for children too. Below is a list of welfare support and wellbeing resources available to access to aid and provide support during these times.



[RAF Benevolent Fund Growing up in the RAF Report](https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021_Growing_up_in_the_RAF_report.pdf) this report from the RAF Benevolent Fund looks at how this affects their wellbeing, and how they can be better supported. There important new research report is the first in-depth study of the wellbeing of children and young people who have one or both parents serving in the RAF. The report gives a voice to children and young people who are growing up with one or both parents in the RAF. Its insights can:

- help parents, teachers and other professionals better understand the children and young people they are supporting, and
- help policymakers and service providers to develop better policies and services, to support the wellbeing of children and young people.

https://www.rafbf.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/2021_Growing_up_in_the_RAF_report.pdf

[RAF Benevolent Fund Children and Young Persons Counselling Service](#)



The RAF Benevolent fund have a specialist counselling service available for children and young people from RAF families. Offering support for a range of wellbeing and mental health issues such as anxiety, behavioural issues, bullying and academic pressure.

The service, provided through Relate, is available for children and young people aged 11 to 18 and on a case-by-case basis for those aged 5 to 10. The service offers support on a wide range of wellbeing and mental

health issues such as:

- Anxiety
- Low mood and depression
- Behavioural issues
- Managing family separation
- Family change – divorce, separation, bereavement, or new stepfamilies
- Sexuality
- Low self-esteem
- Bullying
- Academic pressure

To find out more, or just have a chat about the service, please give our listening and counselling team a call on 0300 222 5703 or email support@rafbf.org.uk for more information <https://www.rafbf.org/get-support/emotional-wellbeing/youth-counselling-service>



[Kooth](#) Defence has joined forces with Kooth, a leading provider of online mental health and wellbeing support to give children of military family's free access to this important service.



Kooth is a free online counselling and emotional wellbeing platform which is available to young people aged 11 – 18 years. The service is anonymous and accessible at any time through any internet enabled device.

Various tools of support on the platform are:

- Articles - Helpful articles, personal experiences and tips from young people and our Kooth team.
- Discussion Boards - Start or join a conversation with our friendly Kooth community. Lots of topics to choose from!
- Chat with the team - Chat to our helpful team about anything that is on your mind. Message us or have a live chat.
- Daily Journal- Write in your own daily journal to track your feelings or emotions and reflect on how you are doing. <https://www.kooth.com/mod>



The [RAF Families Federation](#) provides an independent voice for all personnel (single, married or in a partnership) and all families. The team provides practical support and advice on a manner of issues, from education and healthcare, to accommodation, benefits, visas, and helping military spouses find meaningful employment. We take issues [reported to us](#), and lobby for change with politicians, the Chain of Command and policy makers in the British Government and across Scotland, Wales, and NI (Northern Ireland).

At the RAF Families Federation, we work hard to improve the quality of life for RAF personnel and their families around the world. Find out how we can help you. Tel: 01780 781650 (Mon-Fri 10am-3pm)

Pick up a FREE copy of the RAFFF's [Envoy magazine](#) at HIVE facilities, or register to receive the magazine, or a digital copy [here](#) <https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/federation/>

Directory - Useful Contacts

Name/ Organisation	Details	Contact
RAF HIVE Service	Key interface and first point of contact for Information & welfare referral for enquiries from both within RAF and the wider service community.	Online: RAF HIVE Facebook - RAF HIVE Twitter - RAF HIVE Instagram
SSAFA	Personal Support and Social Work Service. ForcesLine Confidential support 'Need to Talk'	03000 111 723 24/7 www.ssafa.org.uk Free phone 0800 260 6767 Mon-Fri 09.00-17.00 www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline
Chaplaincy	Chaplains provide spiritual support, strength and guidance to service personnel and their families. They are a valuable source of personal well-being and guidance in times of war and peace.	https://modgovuk.sharepoint.com/teams/24529 https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/units/rafchaplains/
RAF Association	Provides welfare support by charitable means to all serving and former members of the RAF, their families.	www.rafa.org.uk
RAF Benevolent Fund	Children and Young Persons Counselling Service	0300 222 5703 Email: support@rafbf.org.uk for more information www.rafbf.org/get-support/emotional-wellbeing/youth-counselling-service
KOOTH	Online mental wellbeing community.	www.kooth.com/mod
Airplay	Airplay giving RAF children access to facilities and a safe, stimulating programme of activities	https://airplayconnect.org/
RAF Families Federation	Provides an independent voice for all personnel (single, married or in a partnership) and all families.	01780 781650. Lines open Mon-Fri until 3pm https://www.raf-ff.org.uk/contact/

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