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Supporting your child during deployment

The deployment of a family member brings change, planning and new routines. Among all the preparation, one of the hardest parts can be explaining what is happening to young children.

This guide shares simple, practical ideas to help you support your child, maintain connection and promote resilience during periods of separation.

Practical ways to help your child

Create a photo book

Print photos of family members, your serving person in uniform, pets, grandparents, your home, nursery and other familiar places. Laminate and tie them together to make a small book your child can look at for comfort and connection. This is especially helpful for very young children and great to share with childcare providers.

Talk to your childcare provider

Let your nursery or childminder know about the upcoming deployment or posting. Share this sheet and any other resources, they can offer extra emotional support and consistency.

Comfort items

Some families choose to have a cushion or pillowcase printed with a photo of the serving parent so the child can keep it close.

Use play to explain

Use small world toys to play people, cars, a house, a pet, and an aeroplane or helicopter. Play alongside your child, telling a simple story about the family member flying away and coming home. It's a gentle way to explain complex events to little ones.

Staying connected while apart

RAF Association Doodle Pack

Doodle Packs contain activities for a child to do with the family member before they leave, such as decorating a pillowcase the parent can take with them. It helps maintain connection throughout the separation.

Station Community Hub / HIVE

Your station hub or HIVE has up-to-date information, advice and practical support, from what to do about housing issues to social events like teatime clubs. It's a great way to meet other families going through the same experience.

Reading Force

Reading Force will send you a free book to share with your child and the deployed parent. Reading the same book and talking about it, either during calls or messages creates a lovely shared activity and builds connection.

Little Troopers

Little Troopers offer downloadable craft activities like "Send a Hug", countdown calendars, map journeys and more. They also provide storybooks about deployment, certificates, birthday cards and online workshops supporting military children.

RAFAKidz Military Champions

Every RAFAKidz nursery has dedicated Military Champion who can support you with advice, reassurance and signposting. Please speak to your nursery team if you'd like help at any stage.

Need further support?
Visit **rafakidz.org.uk**