**Interview Details**

**Project Title:** An exploration of service children with SEND’s experience of separation and deployment throughout education, from the perspective of service children, their families and school staff.

**Interview Date and Time:** 09/10/2024 13:15 -14:00 (45 mins)

**Interview Location:** Online via Teams

**Interviewer:** (“I”)

**Interviewee:** Participant 1 (“P1”)

**Key:**

[*inaudible*] = inaudible word due to interference on the recording

**Interview Transcript**  
I: So thinking today, we obviously don't have parental consent to talk about any specific children so if we just try to be a bit more general about the children you support so no names and things like that. But it would be helpful for me just to get a little bit of background information first. So first I just want to check what you would like me to call you during the call? Are you a NAME or a NAME?

P1: umm I'm a NAME.

I: NAME and your pronouns are?

P1: errr she her.

I: Perfect. Thank you. And what's your job role?

P1: erm I'm mental health lead, home school link, ELSA, and safeguarding.

I: Just a few then.

P1: Yeah, just a few.

I: All sound like big jobs as well. Ok, thank you. And thinking about the children that you do support, are they, do they have diagnoses of autism? Are they on pathway for diagnosis? Do they self-identify? A mix of the lot?

P1: Ok and this is specifically just my service children that I support?

I: Yeah, yeah.

P1: Umm currently one has a diagnosis. Umm I would say there are two that we may put things in we may put some things in place as if they were but I would have thought diagnosis is maybe will never need to happen. It's just that we they're certainly on the SEN register and they have kind of umm SEMH needs, but not specifically around a diagnosis but they need sort of some of their provision is similar as if they did.

I: Yeah, that makes sense. Thank you. And do you know that the parents of those children are they currently serving in the military or the veterans? You might not know but.

I: umm currently serving, one parent. One parent is currently serving from all those families.

I: Yeah. And thinking about the where they are in your school, are they across different year groups?

P1: Yes. So one in five and one in four and two in three.

I: ok, so towards the towards the key stage two end of school mostly then.  
  
I: Yeah, I think they are and I think that's what we're probably going to see. It was very unusual for us to see any SEND service children. But recently we've, I mean we've had an increase in SEND in general but so they have we have more service children. umm but still less than our kind of lower percentage than of our whole school.

I: Yeah, yeah. OK, perfect. And are they both genders or?

P1: Yes. Predominantly boys though. I mean only one is female so.

I: OK. OK. Perfect. Thank you. So thinking about these children that you support, these service children. Have they experienced while they've been at your school those times of separation and deployment because their parents been away in the military?

P1: Yes, yes, they they haven’t all, but some of them have. Yeah and different types of separation. Most of them will have experienced a week or say and some of them have had that long block of time away. One of our children with a diagnosis actually has also been through parental break up, so there's been other kinds of separation that he's been getting used to as well.

I: Yeah. And thinking about those separations due to the parents role in the military. Do you, as a school, ever get the context around that? So if it is for a deployment or if it is for training, or if they're just a way for the week?

P1: I try really hard engaging with parents to get them to let me know ahead of time because we have resources that go home with the children. We have little knitted time rabbits and the child has one, the deploying parent has one and there's a book, umm the time rabbit book, but also a book called sometimes that is kind of more interactive that the children can use and it's got a calendar and things in it. So I encourage the parents to let me know so that that can be done ahead of time.  
Sometimes the child just comes in and says my dad's gone away.

I: ok

P1: And then I will usually chase that up to find out, because often they don't know. Or they might say he's gone away for a really long time, but actually he's going to be coming back on Friday, but feels like a really long time and I think by trying to get the parents to talk to me, it's easier to support the child, whether were looking at something really long, or whether it's just helping them to understand that you know this is Monday to Friday.

I: So what I'm hearing is that it's really important to have that communication between school and home so that you're on the same page and you can approach and support knowing a bit more about it.

P1: Yeah, definitely and it's really helpful if we can do stuff on the run up to it rather than otherwise it's very much first aid when it's happened, umm rather than we can, you know, be building up to it. We can talk with other children that are the same. We meet every week as a big group so that you know we can bring in or you know remember, someone's dad was away, and they can sort of it’s that peer support as to how that felt works really well.

I: I'm going to come back to that a little bit later but that's really helpful. Thank you. And you mentioned there a little bit that sometimes the children are unsure or their perception of the separation is much longer than what it is going to be. Do you have a sense of whether that's because they haven't been told how long it's going to be or it just for them that feels like a really long time?

P1: umm I think there's a mixture. Say, you know, maybe our child that is quite autistic, I guess unless you're very, very explicit, well, you know, a week could be a really long time to to him. umm but often and unfortunately, it seems to be that they just don't really know. If there's milestones like Easter or Christmas that come over the deployment that seems to make it easier, and they do generally know if that is something or a birthday. But often they they are quite unclear what it's really gonna look like.

I: Yeah, must be difficult as well that uncertainty

P1: Yeah, really hard for them, yeah.

I: I'm wondering if there's anything that you've noticed that these children do to help themselves manage during those times when their parents are away. I'm going to ask you a little bit later about what school does, which you've already mentioned a few things and what their peers might do to support them, but I'm wondering for themselves, is there anything that they do for themselves?

P1: what sort of independently of anything that we would give them?

I: Yeah.

P1: umm they do something, we notice them maybe wanting to bring a toy in a couple of them have got home has made a little toy out of a photo of the deploying parent. Those are quite helpful. Umm those are really the only things we see. Or a little thing, something of the deploying parents that they might carry with them.

I: so it's almost that that holding that connection object,

P1: Yeah, but generally they don't tend to be given very much.

I: Yeah. Ok and thinking about when those child are going through those periods of separation, whether that's deployment or training or whatever that looks like. Do you see any differences in those children kind of in the lead up to that happening? Obviously, if you're aware that that's going to be happening, but what kind of differences might you see in that child?

P1: Yes, certainly a child with certainly some the SEN children, but not exclusively we will see them a bit them a bit wobbly.

*\*\*\* paused interview for participant to respond to someone at their door.*I: That's OK. No problem. Yeah. So we were just talking about whether you see any differences in the children in the lead up to that separation from their military parent?

P1: Yeah. So sometimes we've had, you know, a bit out of character behaviour, you know, more tearful, maybe ermm a bit of refusal. And then we've made a phone call home and that's how we find out that someone's deploying. For other children it is it is only on the day and then afterwards that we see sort of tearful, a sort of a drop in their resilience to to schoolwork and things, but they do generally pick up.

I: So it's almost like that in that time where they're waiting for it to happen. That's when you're seeing more of the behaviours, is that? Is that what you're saying?

P1: Yeah, we do. We do sometimes. Some parents, I think, don't tell them. So they don't have that, whereas other parents might might do and sometimes they know and they're looking they're waiting for it for a really long time so then it tends to kind of build up.

I: And is that similar when the parent is actively away as well? Are they do you see similar behaviours or does it settle during those times?

I: Yeah, it definitely settles. We see that sort of transitional period where they might be more tearful. I can think of quite a few where I will bring them in and they'll be given handed to me in the playground and I'll bring them into class in the morning. They don't want to walk in by themselves. Umm maybe a bit more withdrawn in class, but generally that that kind of picks up and they become very settled. Until then, sort of the time where if it's a long deployment, the unsettling comes again towards the very end.

I: so it sounds like it's in those transitional periods between the parent going and the parent coming back that's the more unsettling times.

P1: Yeah, yeah, which I think is, you know, when they're away, it's definite, isn't it? Even though they might not like it, they know where they are with it.

I: And thinking about having a diagnosis of autism or having the traits or identifying as being autistic. Do you feel like that has an impact on those service children's experiences of separation and deployment?

P1: I think it maybe it's because they're understanding we have to be really careful how we are wording things to them and we're sort of conscious of that all the time. But you know, parents especially often parents are quite upset over what's happening, aren't they? And it's a difficult time for them and maybe some of the conversations aren't as clear and sort of child friendly as as they could be. And so I think a lot is around the understanding and trying to make sure we've got concepts in place that they understand for what that deployment will look like to them?

I: So about communicating to them what is happening and in an accessible way for them to understand.

P1: Yeah, yeah, definitely.

I: Is there anything else that you think or in any other way that being autistic might impact their experience?

P1: ummmm I suppose for some of them it's really hard to express their emotions so they their relationships, you know, with their parents, they probably won't be sharing how they feel. So parents will certainly probably see more so maybe than we do sometimes some quite the more aggressive behaviour we don't tend to see that in school from these children, but I think maybe at home they take out that frustration or that confusion by by being a bit more violent, either verbally or physically. And I think that is just about their understanding again and how they sort of take out that frustration.

I: Yeah and that links back to what you were saying before, I guess about being able to sometimes in school you're noticing the behaviours and the changes in them without anybody saying what's going on or that this track this change is happening. So I guess that the way they're communicating those emotions from what I'm hearing is through their behaviours and things like that.

P1: Yeah, because I think I would say of most of our autistic children, they haven't got the language. That's not always the case. We have some that are really articulate, but for our service children their vocabulary is more limited, so sometimes it's easier to sort of physicalize it for them, maybe than it is to to use their words.

I: Yeah, I'm thinking about what you said as well about those points of transition being more difficult. Is there anything do you think that's again linked back to being an autistic service child? Or do you think just generally that's a difficult point?

P1: I mean, I think. Yeah, I think that's a difficult point for all our children. But I guess our service children find that harder to maybe rationalize to understand, to have the concepts of time. So it's it is probably more distressing to them because they're more confused by it that's kind of probably what we would see.

I: Yeah, but again, that's linking back to what you were just saying about the communication and the understanding isn't it? So it seems like that's more of the barrier around it.

P1: Yeah.

I: OK, thinking then a little bit about what these experiences are like for these children and how they might impact them. I'm wondering about how they impact different parts of their lives. So in terms of how it impacts both their learning and their education during the times of separation and deployment. But then I also want to think about socially and emotionally as well. But if we just think about impact, how does separation and deployment experiences impact these children who are autistic and a service child on their learning and education?

P1: So a lot of our, I think most of our children in that category are quite low SEN children, which is different to the majority of our service children, who tend to be quite at the other end. So we would see probably them less able to concentrate because they're even if they're not physically distracted by other things, they're clearly sort of mentally being distracted, and they find it harder to focus.  
So they're not doing as much work, and we sometimes have to be careful with teachers that that's not they don't then get kept in, maybe to finish it because that's not really it's addressing the kind of the distress issue, isn't it? And then the work will come will come back in. umm and I think that's we don't see it for the entire deployment, again with that will will settle. umm but we might need to adapt strategies to try and sort of keep them on task. But generally that settles as they sort of become accepting and understanding of what's going on. But certainly with those children, I think any change at home, we definitely see at school. umm whether that is, you know, a deployment or a new baby. All those things impact them for a little while and generally make them more unsettled so we're more likely to just see them umm maybe have a bit of a wobble, say some of our children who we think are, you know, they're really settled but if something changes at home those maybe older behaviours that we saw, you know that the throwing the work, the finding things really frustrating comes back.

I: Yeah, yeah. And you've naturally led us into then kind of the impact on them emotionally. But if you could just tell me a little bit about what that's like for the children that you support.

P1: I think for some of them, I don't know whether they understand. They don't always understand what's made them feel, they know that they're feeling really wobbly or and sometimes it's, you know, I want I wonder you know if you're a bit upset because Daddy has gone away and then they'll be like, you know, yes, I I think I am. And then that sort of helps and we can work work with that. Definitely they are they're just less settled. It feels that, you know, I think they've just a bit overloaded in their head maybe you know the concentration isn't there. They might might cry a little bit more and they tend to umm seek out their more trusted adults, and I guess some children, the way they know they're going to get the attention of some of those trusted adults who might not be in the room with you is by behaviours that will bring one of those adults down to them, so potentially they'll know if they're they're struggling, they're really refusing another adult might be called. And sometimes that is probably because then that adult might go down and the reactions very different, because there's that relationship or there's that, you know, they've worked with them a lot before and they're able to settle them. So I suppose they're seeking those attachments to other adults around them.

I: So during those times, they're looking for those people that they also have secure attachments to

P1: yeah, yeah, definitely

I: and also those people that maybe have wondered with them before about what might be going on, what might they be feeling because what you're saying before about sometimes they need help to recognise what they're feeling and why that might be.

P1: yeah which is why, if we know about it, we can be mindful of that and try and make sure that is in there without them having to kind of seek it in a not such helpful way.

I: So the more proactive support, I guess.

P1: Yeah.

I: Yeah, which makes sense. And thinking similarly again do you think that these these times have an impact on the children socially? So in their interactions with their peers and things like that?

P1: Yeah. So for some of them, they they become more withdrawn. I think for a lot of them they find it much harder to deal with, you know, because their resilience is probably lower, friendship disputes will be more common. They'll get frustrated with other people. Umm and occasionally we see them kind of pushing everybody away a bit. Umm [*3 sec pause*] but generally the most common is that you know the the amount of friendship disputes go up because they just can’t really cope with any kind of kind of upset, I suppose, or kind of a challenge from other people. And for most of them, that's quite tricky anyway but it's more so if they are a bit upset.

I: Yeah. So their tolerance for those things is is a bit lower than usual.

P1: Is much lower. Yeah.

I: OK. Yeah. And linking into that which you kind of started to talk about before was around how peers support them during these times of separation and deployment. So I know you mentioned is it a club that you have a lunch club? Could you tell me a little bit about that?

P1: Yeah. So yeah, we have SCHOOLNAME heroes, which I've been running since I came as an ELSA here I think so it's about 7 years I've be running that here. And it started with five children, and we now have, like, the 36 that are now service children here. So quite a big group. But I think that by meeting every week there is that really strong peer support and we talk about things and when somebody's dad's gone away so even if they're not experiencing it, they're kind of hearing that language and being able to think about what's helping other people and how they're feeling and it's definitely since doing that I think the experience of children has definitely improved because they know that every week they kind of got that safe space where they can talk about how they feel and that people understand them. And there's a lot they don't have to explain because everybody just knows what that like and sort of within that we’ll do we do sort of arts and crafts lots of team games, lots of umm sort of circle time games, but also, you know, respond we know lots of parents are going away we'll do some stuff about time rabbits we'll use the invisible string we do sort of things like that with them as a whole group. So they've got strategies that they can go back to if they need them. And I think, yeah, I think that the support of peers is equally as powerful as the support that adults can give.

I: Yeah, and that's support is support from peers who have a similar experience to them

P1: yeah

I: I’m wondering as well about peers that maybe don't have that experience, whether they show any understanding or support their peers in any way.

P1: I think some of them try and sort of through, you know, month of the military child assemblies and things we try and help a whole school understanding of what it might be for these children. umm and I think, yeah, if they've got good friends and they've shared how they're feeling with them then their friends are generally really supportive. Sometimes they haven't shared, but they've just shown maybe rather unkind behaviour, and sometimes it's about getting them together with their friends and saying, actually, this is why they're really sad at the moment and then things sometimes change.

I: Yeah. So kind of making that that shared understanding of what might be going on for the child and although they're not able to communicate or comfortable to communicate that verbally at the moment, this is why you might see something different from them.

P1: Yeah, yeah.

I: And you've talked about the bunnies and invisible string and things like that so their resources that you draw upon as a school?

P1: Yeah, yeah, we use those. The invisible string I use loads bereavement and separation and all sorts of things. It's really, really helpful for them and they often have some string or something. The time rabbits book they don't really they're not that keen on the story. It makes a lot of them sad, but what they really love is the physical rabbits and they know it links to someone being being away and not being and but it has that connection so. And they are really helpful so when parents are deployed and they're small enough, they'll have them in their pocket. And also then let's other people know umm that child's got an adult that's that's away whether it's for a short time or a long time at the moment so people are sort of mindful that so it's like a nice little silent signal to everybody.

I: Yeah. Yeah. And I assume that that's probably quite well understood in your school if it's something you're using often as well.

P1: yeah.

I: I wonder if you have any thoughts about what it is about the story that they don't like. I've not seen the story myself, but.

P1: Yeah, I I think it makes them feel sad. So I think it brings back those memories of deployment and it maybe isn't, I think, the invisible string has got a more positive feel to it. I think the time rabbit kind of dwells maybe a bit more on parents being away, and I've just they have they say we don't like it so, you know, sometimes I say, you know, you can take it home if you want to read it and look at it. Umm you know, we do read it sometimes because I think it does have some important messages in as a group and then if we're sad, we can kind of talk through that with each other, but it isn't their it's not their favourite book, and I think it just brings up things that sometimes maybe at school, they don't want to be dwelling on too much. They you know they love their interactive book that has a calendar, and they mark off and those kinds of things I think are helpful. But I think you know, we talk about it enough in shared experience and stuff. I think that's that seems to be more helpful than reading a book that makes everyone cry.

I: Yeah, of course. So it sounds like the most the ones that are the things that I'm looking forward and ahead to that separation ending, are things that are more helpful than thinking about the separation in the moment, is that right?

P1: Yeah well sort of yeah just kind of dwelling on that bit because I think once they've gone away, you're just a lot and a lot of what they find really helpful is putting those milestones in so sometimes it's a really long time to just look for look at to the end but if they've got the calendars, you've got oh, look, you know this is happening then and this, and we encourage parents to put things in as well that give everyone those things to look forward to in kind of manageable chunks.

I: Yeah. Yeah. So that's something that's shared between home and school.

P1: Yeah.

I: So obviously there's there's the group where you SCHOOL NAME heroes right, where you you have this. Is there any other things that you do as a school to support your autistic service children?

P1: I mean some of it I guess comes under our whole school supports so what we would do for all our autistic children within, you know, individual provision in class. Ermm we have, I think is specifically for service children when we have sort of SERVICE NAME and stuff come in with STEM activities. The service, the autistic children tend to really do well at those. So it's a time for them to to pair up with a friend and kind of be a bit of a leader. And so that's been really helpful. Because they, you know, it's a time for them to be really able and that's been really lovely and I think it's just about you know about raising awareness of what it's like to be a service child. We've done quite a lot around that. And I suppose just through our well-being we do we do touch on autism in sort of a child friendly way we talk about people's brains working differently. Umm so I suppose they're supported through that whole school approach and you know and it's it's meeting with parents as well sometimes it's it's engaging the parents is the best way to support the child trying to keep, you know, trying to encourage those parents to go into the coffee mornings and things. Or, you know, there's obviously there's a lot of those children also have other ELSA interventions across the year as well that are what they need.

I: I'm going to pick your brains on a few of those things that you've just mentioned. So when you said about creating general awareness about what it's like to be a service child, what kind of things is it that you've been doing to help support that?

P1: So we do, obviously they always run our Remembrance Assembly, but we do assemblies across the year so month of the military child they've been talking about their experiences. Sometimes we invite umm some of their parents in to talk about what it's like as a parent and then the effect, you know how family life is for them. So it's kind of having different people, so it's not just me telling them, so actually they see it from you know other serving personnel or veterans come in and

I: And the children get involved with that as well?

P1: They do. Yeah, they like to share what it's like to be a military child. umm we did a lot around the dandelion umm song and things for month of the military child so they can share that we have an armed forces parade which kind of celebrates them. So it's kind of giving them that identity because they are really proud as well as finding it really difficult sometimes it's something they really proud of.

I: Yeah, definitely. And you mentioned coffee mornings as well. I wondered if if that was specific for your service parents or is that just a general coffee morning for parents?

P1: I mean, we do have general ones, but I hold umm ones that are specific for service parents because I find that they attend those they're more likely to attend those, and sometimes you get like naval charities in as well to come because they sort of can talk about the support that they can offer.

I: Yeah. So are those sessions around bringing parents together and sharing information?.

P1: Yeah, a bit about sharing information and maybe sharing experiences or knowing that sometimes as parents that quite new to the area and we're on the the maybe the parent who is either serving or on a base somewhere is socialising and everything, but actually that usually mum is can be quite isolated. We had one recently and then she found actually she lived really close to two of our other parents but she didn't know that. So then that kind of started you know, a friendship and those links so.

I: So supporting the families to build their communities as well for support

P1: Yeah, yeah.

I: Perfect, it sounds like you're doing a lot.

P1: We try. We try like everything I think there's more if I have more time, there is more I could do. But there's there's a lot that is really embedded into school now, which is good that just it just happens as part of what we do. So it is really good that those things are kind of in place. Yeah, it's a bit of data we're trying to explore at the moment the change in how they they look at those children not grouping them with our free school meals, you know they need to be put they're very, very different.

I: And if you did have in ideal world, if you did have more time or more capacity, what other things might you be doing as a school to support them?

P1: Umm and I suppose to say I run well-being walks across our school to try and get parents and children walking, and they come out together. I would do one things like that specifically for service families, I think umm if I had time, but obviously they're open and sometimes they come to the whole school ones, but I feel for whatever, sometimes they they feel a bit safer or prefer to be with a group. Umm I'm hoping we last year we did a stargazing night, through some links in the dockyard and that was dads that came and that was really lovely. That was dads and granddads that came over so kind of involving trying to involve the serving parent a bit more as well. A lot of the time it's it is the mums, but actually the children really enjoy serving parent coming in. So we try and get them in or get them in in uniform to some of our assemblies and things and engage them them more. I work quite a lot with the veterans charity who come in and work with the children, and that's been a really lovely project ermm that the children love, and that's kind of like I determined that that stays sort of protected that we carry on doing that despite you know lots of other things going on.

I: Yeah, it sounds like support needs to come from lots of different avenues for them to make sure they're getting what they need during those times.

P1: Yeah. Yeah. And I do think we as a whole school may be a little bit more than it's not just what they do with me is getting the teachers to understand that actually making sure that that's in place in the classroom is really important. And umm you know, I'm not a massive data person, but making sure that we are separating that data so that we are sort of monitoring them in that way to make sure that they are, you know, doing as well as as they could and that the handover all that is really important if they do move to another school to make sure all their information is really tight, because otherwise there can be a real gap in their provision as they move to another school which we don't see too much but we did have at the end of this year, we had a child, I’ve been working with for quite a long time and she she was autistic, was diagnosed while she was with us umm and it was a real panic to get her EHCP in place, because if she moved area they'd have to start from scratch, and obviously she came to us when nothing had been put in place. It's kind of a two year process, so we managed you know it was done and she's gone off and she's, you know, she is supported and we check in and it's all been been good. So you know as well as all that emotional side is making sure that the kind of the learning and the recording of everything is is is really well done so that it's all there to hand over if if need be.

I: so it's not just about supporting them when you're at your school, but also setting them up for if they have to have one of those bigger transitions elsewhere to their provision is appropriate for them.

P1: yeah definitely.

I: And it sounds like you keep that communication to check in how that transition has gone as well.

P1: yeah, for a little while, not necessarily for ages but yes, we do. Or, you know, send a card from the rest of the group, especially if they leave mid-year and stuff. We tend to, you know, we'll, we'll send a postcard and that sort of thing. And often I've, you know, some of the parents I've known for quite a while so you know they'll they'll get in touch in it let me know how they're doing?

I: And you said something about how it's really important not just for these things to come from you, but also to come from the class teachers and across the school as well so really emphasizing that need for the whole school ethos and approach I guess to be in line.

P1: Well, definitely, yeah.

I: But I wondered what kind of things is it that you'd want your teachers and your support staff in the classroom to be doing to support those children? If that makes sense.

P1: I suppose the first thing is making sure everyone's really clear who their service children are, so you know not to make sure they know who they are. Umm if I if I know about any deployments, I make sure the teachers know so they can be supporting with that sort of behaviour for them to understand that if they're bringing something in actually that no, maybe the general rule is you can't but for those children that might be really important that may make all the difference that they can. And it's thinking the things like if they're not completing the work, it's thinking, well, don't go straight for the keep them in a break, but it's maybe, you know I can see you you know, maybe you're finding this really tricky today and giving them a bit of a now and next type thing, which a lot of our our SEN children would have anyway. But kind of need to do that that thinking and if we know the deployment's coming, then we we can do that which usually do that together and think about how we're going to support umm that child and a lot of it's about relationships so making sure that the staff in the classroom take the time with those children to, you know, maybe play a game or do those things so the children have got kind of an adult in there that they they build an attachment with because that's often the key thing to getting them back to being settled.

I: Yeah. So that that attunement and that key adult is really important.

P1: Yeah, and ideally you want them to have more than one key adult. You know you want them to have, you know, a number of adults that they they feel happy with and can talk to and can calm them, which is.

I: I think it kind of links to what you're saying, but thinking about if a school was to have a new child come in, that was an autistic service child, what would you say are the most important things for that school to know about that child? Around separation and deployment.

P1: OK. So I guess to make relationships with the parents, so they encourage them to know what's going on. To get to know the child, what they like, what they don't like. If they can identify what helps them because often sometimes you know they can. And to make sure they make some of those trusted relationships really quickly. And to involve them in some kind of peer support so bring them into something so they're not feeling isolated when they arrive.

I: sounds like a lot of key areas. Is there anything else around these children's experience of separation and deployment that I haven't really asked you about that you think is really helpful to know or to share?

P1: umm no, I don't think so. I mean, there's things about obviously and there's nothing we can do that sometimes the deployments change. You know they can be a lot longer and then you know, and then all suddenly Dad comes home and weirdly, that can cause as much upset as it being, in fact sometimes more, which is, you know, because I guess they're not staying in that period where it's kind of calm and static, isn't it when when the serving parent is away, if they suddenly return they think, oh, well, I’ll surprise them and actually it all goes wrong for everybody. Umm but I think now I think we've covered, you know, the communication I mean, all the meetings I go to, this is what we're always saying and we still haven't fully got all parents to tell us what's going on.

I: I wonder if you have any thoughts about what the barrier might be around that.

P1: I really don't know. Umm you know, we've tried. We've tried all sorts, we tried offering all different types of [*inaudible*] we’ve try different times of day we've tried different events umm and often the take up isn't great. You know the star one is good umm but this isn't, across our school a lot of it is they don't really parents don’t massively get involved, but then you hit on something like the walking and it amazes you and they're they're all wanting to come. So I I don't know whether some of them, I think in the past, maybe some of them have felt or by coming in you're saying you need support and then like, but I don't, you know, like no we it's not saying in any way you need any support. I said it's just like the children actually, you might not need support for ages, but suddenly something happens and you do. And then you know where to go. Because actually sometimes when you're in that place, it's harder to to think about what to do but if you've already got a plan and know what to do, so I think sometimes that's a barrier that they're like, we're fine we don't we don't need anything but umm they're very keen for their children to have the support, they’re very supportive of that. Sometimes I guess they're busy you know the serving parent is often really busy. Umm I would say for one or two of ours at the moment, I worry that there are maybe some sort of mental health issues in at home so the the non-serving parent is quite reluctant to engage with anything and potentially doesn't probably go out and socialise very much.

I: which I guess that makes it difficult for them to access or engage with some of the things that you're offering as well.

P1: But we do you know, we send a lot of things home, so there's the hope that they they might read it at home and engage with it if they needed to.

I: Yeah. so keeping up even those families that maybe aren't coming in for those active involvement things but keeping up with communication and resource sharing with them anyway.

P1: Yeah. Definitely because they're all in, you know, sort of one e-mail group. So there's lots of things that that they get sent out and offered and they might ignore it, ignore it, but you never know there might be the day where they think no oh I might do that. Sometimes there's events in the local area we kind of work with the secondary schools that might be, you know, sometimes there's ACTIVITY centre name that for really cheap, you know, opportunities for the children and that sometimes can help draw them in. I try to do a picnic every year family picnic and like the children write the invites and it the children really want the parents to come, so that tends to encourage the parents to come. It's just finding different ways to try and get them.

I: Yeah, yeah. Trying different avenues to access them. OK, if there's nothing else that we haven't covered, then that kind of brings us to the end.