**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:** 08/03/2025 10:00 – 10:30 (18 mins)

**Interview Location:** Online via Teams

**Interviewer:** (“I”)

**Interviewee:** Participant 6 (“P6”), Parent

**Key:**

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

**Interview Transcript**

Parent: Do you want me to move out of the way so he can have a bit of his own thinking time?

I: That's completely up to you guys, what you guys would prefer so I'll leave that decision to to you.

Parent: Do you want me to get on in the kitchen, so I can hear and if you need me I'm there, but you can get on without worrying about what I'm thinking, would that help?

P6: Yeah

I: OK fabulous.

Parent: Shout if you want me ok.

I: OK lovely so I just have to ask some questions first that are called demographic questions and they're just for information to help me remember. So first of all how old are you?

P6: 13

I: So does that mean you're in year 8? Or year 9?

P6: 8.

I: Yeah lovely. And is your parent currently serving in the military or are they a veteran?

P6: Currently serving in the military.

I: Currently serving and do you know which branch of the military they're in? So are they in the army, The Navy?

P6: RAF

I: The RAF lovely.

P6: Yes.

I: And do you know what your parent does in the RAF?

P6: Umm

Parent: He’s a parachute jumping instructor.

P6: He’s a parachute jumping instructor.

I: Lovely thank you. Ok. So, this conversation today is mainly all about your experiences of your parent going away and experiencing separation while they're on deployment or training and things like that. So, my first question is just have you experienced separation because your parent is in the military?

P6: Yeah loads of times.

I: Could you tell me a little bit about what that's like?

P6: So sometimes he goes on different trips and they can vary from 2 weeks to 6 weeks. And he used to go away two to three times every year. And he goes to LOCATION, or he goes on LOCATION, which is where you go for two weeks and you basically live in the woods like survival course. He can go to LOCATION. Yeah.

I: It sounds like he goes to quite a few different places. And I'm wondering when he goes away for that time, what what's that like for you?

P6: Umm. I find it more difficult because when dad 's away, I basically have to do more stuff, I take a bit more responsibility because only mum 's doing only mums here so, or I have to sometimes look after SIBLING NAME or do some of the jobs that mum has hasn't got time to do. On top of my stuff. So it sort of adds to my list of things to do, and I don't like it because obviously my dad's away and I don't really like that and find it more difficult to regulate myself if I get into a situation where I feel upset or angry because I'm just more stressed at the moment or upset so it adds on what I would normally feel.

I: Yeah. So can I check is SIBLING NAME your sister?

P6: Mm hmm.

I: Yeah so some of the things you talked about there is that you you do more jobs and things at home to help out because mum 's got to do all of that on her own, which sometimes is helping with sister. And then also you don't like when dad goes away and also it can be a bit more tricky to kind of do that regulation when you've got dad away on top of other things you're trying to manage. Is that right?  
P6: Mm hmm.

I: Ok. Thank you. When your dad 's going away do you know when that's going to happen in advance of it happening and how long that's going to be for?

P6: Yeah we normally get told about a week in advance or. So we know when he's going away but sometimes he goes at like 5 o'clock in the morning so we don't get too see him when he goes.

I: You've been told that he's going to be going is that right?

P6: Yeah yeah. So it's not just random like you're going right now, it's like we get told prior.

I: Yeah yeah. Thank you. And what is it like for you in the lead up to dad going away? So you found out that dad 's going, what's that like for you when you're waiting for him to go away on on that next trip?

P6: I try and like spend a bit more time with him. And try and persuade him not to go. I don't really like it because I know he's going to go away so it's kind of sad.

I: Yeah I think you trying to persuade him shows how much you love having him around doesn't it. I'm sure he likes that. And then when when dad does go away, you've talked a little bit about this, but could you tell me a little bit more what that's like for you when dad 's away? So that might be what kind of things you do to help yourself feel more regulated or manage while dad 's away?

P6: Normally if I get like really sad or really cross I go to my room and I just shut the door and then I stay there for like 10 minutes until I'm not as angry. And then mum usually comes up and like asks me what's wrong, and then that sort of helps as well because I know that she's understanding, so it helps.

I: Yeah yeah. So having some time on your own is good but also then somebody mum who understands coming and kind of helping you as well. And what is it like when dad comes home? So he's just been away for however long and he's just got home and he's kind of re integrating into the family what's that like?

P6: When he comes home, we get told when he's coming home, we basically ring him like every hour to see when he's gonna be home. And we track his phone to see where he is in England when he lands and then and when he comes home everyone 's like really excited and like NAME runs up at him. All my family is just really happy to see him again and then we go back to normal life basically with with dad being back.

I: Mm hmm. Yeah and is it easy to go back into normal life with dad back?

P6: Yeah.

I: Yeah. So everybody 's just really excited and happy for him to be home.

P6: Mm hmm.

I: Yeah I'm wondering if your experiences of dad going away has changed over time or whether that pattern because you talked about Dad going away for 2 or 3 times a year whether that's always been the same or whether that's changed?

P6: It used to be but because he doesn't like going away either he switched to a different job in the RAF, so he still works there, but he doesn't have to go away as much. So maybe if he has to, once every year. But not really.

I: Yeah.

Parent: NAME think but when you were in reception and you were in TEACHER’S NAME class, reception and year one, when dad went away how difficult you used to find out when you were little. You remember how hard it was and the sorts of things you used to do, I think she would be interested in hearing about that.

P6: Ok now that I'm older I find it easier when he goes away because I know when he's coming back and like because, I know well, I'm sort of like, I know more now because I know where he is, I know why he's there. So for when I was little I thought he was just going away because the RAF made him. And I used to find it really difficult. Like I used to be very sad or when I got any emotion it would be above normal level. So like in year 2 or reception I used to find it really difficult. So my teacher made-up like a system where if I was good in class and regulated my emotions well, I got either like a mum voucher or a dad voucher, and mom voucher means I can get to do something with my mum, and dad voucher which means I get to do something with my dad. And because I wanted to do something with my dad it was sort of harder to get so I had to be good for like 2 weeks straight or I had to get 2 mom vouchers to get a dad voucher. And we did stuff like swimming just me and dad and played outside and then with my mum we played like board games at night. It was fun.

I: So it sounds like as you've got older and you understand more and you know more it's easier to manage when dad has to go away. But when you were younger that was a bit trickier, is that right?

P6: Mm hmm.

I: And when you say it was trickier what do you think was the trickiest thing about it?

P6: Wondering why he has to go away because I was like why can't he just stay at home. Why does he have to go to like far away and for a long time? And I just found it more difficult because I was just really sad.

Parent: Umm do you remember what you used to worry about? What did you used to worry about? What used to, what would happen?  
P6: That he’d have to go away for like forever. And that he wouldn't come home. That’s what I worried about so.

I: That must have been a really big worry for you then.

P6: Hmm.

I: Thank you for sharing that with me. I want to think a little bit about school and how school helps. But first I was wondering if you think when dad goes away it impacts you at school at all?

P6: Yeah, it does a bit which is because I can't concentrate as well as I would cause I'm thinking about dad and worrying about him sometimes. So, I don't concentrate as well or regulate myself as well when I do that.

I: And do you think that's for the whole-time dad is away or do you think it's more when dad first goes away or when you're excited for him to come home? Do you think it changes over that time or do you think the whole time it's a bit more tricky?

P6: Mm hmm. The first couple weeks so if he's going away for like 6 weeks then it probably will be for like the whole time because I don't like him when he goes away for that long because that's like a month and a bit. And then for 3 weeks for 3 weeks, I normally just don't focus for like the first 2 weeks but then on the week I like countdown when he's coming back.

I: Ok. Thank you. And does your school offer you any support to help you during those times?

P6: In primary school, my teacher was really nice and he was very understanding and he sort of like understood me better than most people. So he knew what I needed more than most people. And he knew how to sort of like deal with me without getting angry 'cause most people if I'm in like a I'm annoyed, most people get cross at me, instead of actually helping. And Mr and then my teacher didn't, so that was really nice. And then I also got the vouchers in year two, so they helped a lot. And then in secondary school, I don't really tell people that my dad went away. Only my friends know. But there is someone in my secondary school who I sometimes have private meetings with. He's the SENCo and yeah, he talks to me and understands what's going on in class if something's wrong's happening, so it's nice to talk to him as well.

I: Yeah. Having somebody at school that you can talk to, it sounds like it's really important. And you said then that you don't usually tell people at school when dad's going away, but you do tell your friends. Do your friends help support you during those times?

P6: Hmm. Yeah, they do, because they keep me company while dad's not there so. They make me happy because they're obviously my friends and I like them, and when my dad's away, I can go I can lean towards them to cheer me up if I'm upset.

I: So they can support you in no bit of a distraction, I imagine from thinking about Dad being away. Ok and what about your family? How do they support you when dad's away?

P6: Well SIBLING NAME is confused why dad's away. She's also sad. SIBLING NAME is old enough to know why she he's going away, but she's also a bit sad. Mom's also sad, but she helps me a lot by saying like, oh, he'll be back soon anyway, nearly there, and like being really like nice and supportive.

I: So reassuring you that he's coming home and that you you've nearly made it through that that experience.

P6: Mm hmm.

I: Yeah. Thank you. Is there anything else that you think your school could do to support you?

P6: I mean there probably is, but I don't really want it.

I: Could you tell me a little bit about why you wouldn't want it?

P6: 'Cause I think. I think it's about. I don't want to have special treatment in school. I don’t. I just want to be the same as other people. I don't want to be like the one person who stuck out because my dad goes away, which means I need special treatment.

I: Do you know if there's other children in your school that also have dads that go away for their jobs?

P6: Mm hmm, well one of my friends his dads in the army and he goes away a lot as well.

I: Ok. Thank you. Do you think there's anything important for your school to know so that they could support you when Dad was away if they needed to?

P6: They probably could know how difficult I find it sometimes, I find it hard to concentrate and stuff. So instead of getting cross at me not doing it, they they’d probably they'd know why that I was doing it and not just thinking I was misbehaving.

I: Yeah. So they'd understand kind of what was going on and why that might be affecting you in school.

P6: Mm hmm.

I: I think that would be important for them to know, wouldn't it? Is there anything else that I haven't asked you about your experiences of dad going away that you think would be helpful for me to know or to share or that you would like to share?

P6: I think you covered it all. Do you have any more questions?

I: That was my last question actually, so I'm going to stop the recording now.