



SUPPORTING THE HEALTH AND  
WELLBEING OF THE ARMED  
FORCES COMMUNITY AND  
CIVILIAN FAMILIES IN  
CORNWALL



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## *Promoting the Connections Between Military Couples During Deployments*

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### **The Partner at Home**

Understand that your deployed partner's routine may mean they are heavily restricted as to when they can contact you by phone or get mobile signal. Try to show your appreciation rather than annoyance by their (always imperfect) timing!

'Small things often': Studies by 'The Gottman Institute' (gottman.com) found that those who engaged in simple, consistent attempts at positive communication feel more connected as a couple. Sometimes the shortest emails or messages letting your deployed partner know you are thinking of them can mean the most, regardless of distance.

Try to keep the bad news to a minimum. Things always go wrong or break during deployments, each time they hear about something else it can leave your deployed partner feeling more guilty and powerless.

Involve your deployed partner in your daily routine whilst they are away. Making a habit of something like taking a selfie over breakfast with everyone to send to them as a 'good morning' message will help you both feel included in each other's lives.

If possible, send goody parcels to your deployed partner including their favourite treats from home using the '**Enduring Families Free Mail Service (EFFMS)**'. (See <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/british-forces-post-office-services#enduring-families-free-mail-service-effms> for weight/size limits).

Consider how stressful your deployed partner's trip has been when planning any homecoming parties. Sometimes they may need a few days quietly adjusting back into family life before having a houseful of relatives and friends.

Looking after yourself is important so plan some 'Self-Care', something for yourself to look forward to as a treat while they're away: a night out/spa day/minibreak, especially if it's a special date or anniversary. You deserve to celebrate even if they can't be there with you!

Don't be afraid to ask for support, saying 'yes' to help isn't always easy but can be very necessary during a period of separation. You're juggling the house, children, pets and jobs singlehandedly. Delegating some of the 'To Do' list to friends and family will help you feel supported and better able to cope with the stresses of deployment.



## The Deployed Partner

Establish the easiest mode of communication with your home as early as possible. Share your military email address with your partner, let them know which apps get best signal where you are and give them the BFPO address.

Find out about support resources for any younger children before you leave (Little Troopers separation packs, My Daddy's Going Away/Mummy's Home! Books, Huggable Heroes and either Storybook Wings, Storybook Waves or Storybook Soldier depending on your branch).

On a practical level, try to ensure all your accounts and important paperwork are in both yours and your partners names. This saves a lot of time and stressful messages when you've changed energy suppliers and the company won't accept a reading from your partner in your absence (been there!).

If children are old enough, make sure they know how to send you an email and then they can share news with you as well. 'INmail' allows you to upload letters, photos and drawings which are securely printed & sent for you.

Try to turn homesickness into an opportunity for appreciation. Instead of getting into a negative mindset, show gratitude to your partner by sharing with them all the things you didn't expect to miss and make plans to do them together on your return.

Be clear in your need to hear from your partner and let them know how much it means while you're away. Facing disconnection while separated can lead to feelings of insecurity in your relationship and resentment. Connection and communication are pivotal in maintaining closeness even when apart.

(Surf Action Therapist and Royal Naval Parent, Victoria Culshaw: July 2020)



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