# Sarah Interview 2 - 2018

## C

On reflection then are you still content about having left.

## Sarah

Well I wasn't overly content about having leaving but well yeh

## C

Well how do you feel about it looking back?

## Sarah

It is what I needed to do for my family So, I mean it is still a lot I could of done yeh I think that will always be there I definitely made the right decision for me and my family.

## C

So, when you say there is a lot you could of done you mean there is a lot you felt you still could of done within the Air Force.

## Sarah

yeh the jobs I would have liked to have don, promotion etc etc.

## C

So, does that make you feel a little bit, I don't want to put words in your mouth but it is that conflict again between family and work.

## Sarah

yeh Sometimes but the thing obviously I stay in contact with a lot of people that I worked with and I know the state of the branch at the minute So, that although you can almost look at it with rose tinted glasses when you have left but you know things aren't getting better since I left that is for sure.  So.

## C

So, is there anything you would change about your own leaving experience.  Is there anything you would do differently?

## Sarah

I wouldn't have left while I was pregnant.04:51 For a few reasons, Gary!, Sorry baby has just woken up.  One it means that I left on a down grade So, I was waiting for a review on my down grade because I had a permanent down grade as well but I was waiting for a review on my permanent downgrade to upgraded again but because I was pregnant I had to be downgraded So, I couldn't get the upgrade which affects me joining the reserves.  And also, I then didn't have a dining out because there was no point, … it Sounds daft but it is a really big thing, Dining In and Dining Out,

## C

Did you understand the implications of that when you were pregnant and temporarily downgraded?

## Sarah

Now with respect to the reserves no.  Because I So, to be upgraded I have to be upgraded by a medical a military doctor and I can't get up graded by a military doctor because I am now not in the military. You can ask for special exemption but it just makes things So, much more difficult.

## C

So, it is not a complete and utter no but you would have to go through quite a convoluted process and jump through Some hoops (baby crying) that is interesting because it would never of occurred to me either if I had been in the same situation.  And then the Dining Out night, did you have a top table at all?

## Sarah

Yeh I had a lunch but again it was a very Sombre affair.  I was just it was just a bit naff really.

## C

How does that make you feel then in terms of leaving?

## Sarah

I don't know it is just a slight I thought I would have left a bit better.  It’s just.

## C

I had Somebody who was speaking the other day and she said on her last day she literally got up and walked out nobody said anything to her nobody acknowledged the fact it was her last day and she got outside the building and said right! ok well that was that then.  And it is a bit of a deflation isn't it a bit of a ….

## Sarah

the only real, my husband the only reason they realised it was his last day in the Air Force was because I told them that morning.  And it’s not as if it is new

## C

It shouldn't have been news to them, no its very … its very odd that this seems to happen quite a lot actually.

## Sarah

Cause I chose not to have the top table Sorry the Dining Out because I mean it was a training establishment anyway and because I was STANEVAL you know a lot of them didn't know who I was and because I was pregnant as well it would have been just everyone getting drunk around me.  And you know and I would be paying for the privilege of everyone else getting drunk, well obviously your final dining out you know what I mean.

## C

yeh I know what you mean.  A bit of a damp squid perhaps not how you thought it would have been.  So, ideally how would you have liked to have left.

## Sarah

Erm in a position where I knew I could join the reserves straight away and just more of an acknowledgement really, 10 and a half years is a long old time.  Where it not for the guys in my unit and remember I was in a lodger unit So, there was only 5 of us.  There would have been nothing really.

## C

So, if you could go back in time and give yourself Some advice, as you prepared to leave what would that be?

## Sarah

I don't know because I wasn't in that situation So, you know I wouldn't go back and say I wouldn't have got pregnant because and at the same time I wasn't in the same position to stay on and work to do my return of service.

## C

So, if someone found themselves in a similar position to you do you have any advice for them.

## Sarah

yeh don't leave when pregnant.  Stay in the service, work the return and then leave. We were in the, if we were in the position family wise to do that then I would have done.  I wouldn't have left to be honest if we were in a family position that I didn't have to move to another country.  yeh I would definitely have stayed in and taken full advantage of it.  Because it is such a great maternity package.

## C

yeh it is compared to civvi street. yeh.  So, what is there anything in particular that you miss about the military at this point?

## Sarah

I miss a lot of the people. I miss being in the Air Force, I don't miss my job but I miss being in the Air Force and that just sounds a little bit odd again but I liked the structure, you know I liked the opportunities that were there.  I know AT and FD ok it may have taken a lot to get them but they were still there but yeh I don't miss the job that I was in at that time.

## C

Because of everything we discussed last time really, the pressure and the work load?

## Sarah

yeh I just miss being a part of the Air Force I think, a part of something.  That is also, partly because I am still on maternity I am still in 'mummy phase' I go back to university in September So.

## C

And are you really looking forward to that?

## Sarah

I can't wait.  I can't wait.  It’s going to be hard work, but yeh I am definitely looking forward to it.

## C

And have you managed to get child care sorted fairly easily?

## Sarah

It is a bit difficult because we do because its nursing we do 6 weeks in 6 weeks out So, we do 6 weeks in 9-5 and then 6 weeks out in placement could be anything it could be days it could be nights it could be all Sorts So, we have go the children in nursery 3/4 days and then my husband works shifts and his parents can help us out too. But it is certainly not easy because we can't afford to put them into nursery full time.  Its extortionate.  It would be different if I was doing it for a wage but I am obviously not I am going to be a student.

## C

And is there no grants available no support?

## Sarah

No, well there are but my husband earns too much.  I think it is Something ridiculous like anything over £10,000 you don't get any help So.

## C

But they have the same the 15-hr rule over there?

## Sarah

No.

## C

Oh God, that's just England is it?

## Sarah

ummhu, yeh it is an English thing.

## C

Another challenge of being in a different county.

## Sarah

They do have a pre-school here So, they do have they have an extra years learning, they go to nursery school and then they go to primary school but that it is not necessarily full time you can get offered either a morning or an afternoon place. So, my oldest will start there next year and will hopefully get a full-time place.

## C

So, what is it you think that you are most looking forward to then about starting at uni?

## Sarah

everything really, getting back to Something, getting back to education it sounds silly.  Finally learning Something I want to learn you know I should have gone medical from when I left school.  So, finally doing Something I am a little bit more passionate about.  As much as I did like controlling it wasn't it was never a passion to begin with it was just Something I was good at.  And I did enjoy it but medical wise I always should have done it.  So, I just can't wait to get going.

## C

Exciting.  So, would you say is there anything you learnt within the military that is helping you know in your life.

## Sarah

Erm trying not to lose your bat with your children. What is a toddler and a new born when you have looked after 30 SACs?  No, it’s because its, I mean I was military from 25 to 36 So, obviously I grew while I was there, all the things you learnt along the way with maturity and leadership, patience etc.  Is all part of who I am now So, all of that.

## C

What would you say has been your biggest personal challenge then?

## Sarah

Of leaving?

## C

yeh

## Sarah

Feeling of self-worth.  It sounds crazy when you are a mother but when you have had a career and you know yourself you know that is you when you are a mother and you just suddenly become a mother you almost loose a part of your identity you just become a mother.

## C

And that is kind of what people see first isn't it?

## Sarah

mmm oh yeh I am m children's mum to most people especially over here because that is all they know.  So, the big challenge for me moving over was getting my own friendship base and my own interests and stuff like that and with the pregnancy yoga I've still got two good friends from there and you know the challenge of building up your life again and remembering who I am rather than, that I am, that I am not just their mum.

## C

And how have you manged to, you have managed to make friends and make connections and …

## Sarah

yeh just getting myself out there.  I mean I am fortunate in that my character I will talk to anyone So, you know a couple of girls from pregnancy yoga I just said hello and got chatting with them and then going to the gym after having the baby, I went to a fantastic ?@? with babies and one of the girls there you get chatting and you just build up your network again.

## C

And have you found that fairly easy or …

## Sarah

It has just taken time.  yeh it is not that it is difficult it has taken time. I might have to grab the baby.

## C

 No problem19:01

## Sarah

sorry baby going crazy. ……

## C

*discuss weather19:35*

## Sarah

Yeh just building up a life again.

## C

So, what has been the most striking thing about civilian life that you weren't expecting do you think?

## Sarah

erm, nothing really.  I think because I joined a bit older I had already had the civvi life then gone military and going back to civvi.  So, the stuff that is not brilliant, you know having to pay for medical and dental, yeh no nothing really.

## C

Ok, So, although you were in for those 10 years joining later you still had that bit of life experience form outside.  So, what do you think, childcare aside, cause I completely appreciate how difficult juggling that will be when you start uni, what do you think will be your biggest challenge within that university world?

## Sarah

Time management.  Because of obviously have to juggle, nursing, the studying the practically doing the job with home commitment as well.  So, yeh definitely I would say time management because then we have got assignments on top of that it is just not the work when you are in uni it is everything else on top.

## C

So, I hope you don't mind me asking but do you, why have you made that decision to go back to university, it’s not that it is not a quick decision you have given a great deal of thought to it but with still having two small children So, did was there any temptation to say you know what I am going to give it a few years and stay at home with them until they both start school and then do it?

## Sarah

No.

## C

Why do you think that was?

## Sarah

One cause I don't want to start studying in my 40's and two because it is not within me to be a stay at home mother.  A permanent stay at home mother, it is just not me.  It sounds awful doesn't it?

## C

It doesn't, it doesn't at all. I think when you are when you are being a professional, a professional person I couldn't do it that is why I am studying So, I completely get where you are coming at.  So, although my husband will roll my eyes at me for him it has made his life harder for me to go back to study. Cause he has then had to pick up the childcare bits but at the same time he would have been married to some kind of witch.

## Sarah

The same.  Me going back to uni   massively makes my husband’s life more difficult.

23:08 But he knows there is sacrifice and there is compromise.  I moved country.

## C

yeh. (laughs) I think that trumps it every time.  So, you said you still keep in touch with people within your branch and with your friends so do you still see you self as part of the extended military family, do you think?

## Sarah

No, No.  I consider them friends.  I don't know because they do obviously talk about work to the extent that they can but that is just gossip isn't it.  Yeh, no cause they are friends not anything else.  I would say.

## C

And you have not felt any desire to join any of the associations or anything like that?

Sarah

No.

## C

Here is a question, I don't know if this is happening in Northern Ireland but they are talking about putting V for Veteran on driver’s licenses' have you heard about this?

## Sarah

No

## C

I was wondering about it the other day I was wondering about it the other day if it would be automatically be done or compulsory almost, I wondered if you could opt out of it if you didn't want to advertise your status.

## Sarah

Erm I wouldn't want it over here.

## C

No.  That's two things isn't it because from a security point of view it wouldn't work, but how would you feel about being identified in that way.  As a veteran.

## Sarah

Well I am a veteran.

## C

So, you are happy with that?

## Sarah

Yes absolutely.  I mean I have served.

## C

It’s just that difference being with so many people do join RAFFA and the Benevolent fund these charities and associations and these become a longer-term part of their identity post military but you have not got the you don't feel the need to do that.

## Sarah

There is a fighter control association around for things like that. I was part of RAFFA but I cancelled it because I wasn't getting any advantage from it I think.  I ?@?@? the RAF club I will definitely will get my RAF club membership, I think I might actually still be a member of RAFFA.  But it wasn't I joined it before I left, I can't remember.  But it wasn't through any any desire or need to feel a part of it.

## C

So, what would you say is your major motivation today compared to what it was in the Air Force?

## Sarah

Motivation?  I don't know was I motivated in the Air Force?  The motivation for me now is to do something I really want to do and go into a role that I know that I really want to do.  my motivation in the military probably most of the time was a pay check.  Depending on what job I was doing when you enjoy something your motivation was just go to work and enjoy your job but sometimes when you are in a job that isn't that great then it is just a pay check that gets you through every day.

## C

So, the hope is then that the nursing not only will you get that pay check you will really enjoy your job.  what is it about medicine that really draws you to it?

## Sarah

I have always had the desire to help people and with children’s nursing you are looking at the most vulnerable people what can't help themselves and especially as I want to do neo natal nursing its really sever end of the spectrum and it is just wanting to make a little bit of a difference and to help.

## C

Do you think there are parallels there with your desire to join the Air Force in the first place?  That desire to give something back?

## Sarah

No.  I felt like the military was something I needed to do I felt like the military was part of me and that is obviously from the family background.  I felt like that was in my blood it wasn't a case of wanting to do this for my country it was just something that I felt was part of me.  It probably still is you know if I had maybe done the nursing first then joined up you know I don't even know what family situation I would be in at the time but maybe I would still be in.

## C

yeh it would have been a different career path wouldn't it?

## Sarah

yeh absolutely. Cause I am still contemplating If I do join the reserves then I join as a nurse.

## C

You wouldn't want to go back and do anything with ABM?

## Sarah

So, my friend was over a week or so ago and she is just enquiring with the Boulmer Reserves Group about if you need to live local etc etc.  And then I've got the ?@?@?@? too, but I am just putting feelers out at the moment because obviously I would have to go through the medical exemption route.  And also, with my nursing studying I know how many days I have to do it depends on how flexible they are etc etc can I do work on a home laptop and do paperwork and see what is available.

## C

I suppose I am trying to dig into really what appeals about the reserves then.

## Sarah

Cricket.  I'm not even joking.

## C

I love it so to get back into that then.

## Sarah

I couldn't play my last season because I was pregnant.  The season before that I played where I got my colours I was not allowed to play because I was pregnant even though I argued it.  And I played 2 seasons before that.  So yeh (laughing) I already spoke about it I want to play cricket.

## C

So, where this is the last question.  We can wrap it up.  So where do you see yourself in 5 years’ time then?

## Sarah

Hopefully a neo-natal nurse on one of the wards.  Full or part time I don't know it will all depend on the kids and my husband’s shifts etc … but yeh ideally in one of the local hospitals.

## C

And that job I am trying very hard not to put words in your mouth.  I mean I get paid as part of this studentship so they pay me to do the PhD and that was quite important for me because I have worked since I was 14 and I didn’t' like not having my own financial independence.  Has that been a factor?

## Sarah

Not specifically because I could go and get a job if I wanted to go and get a job I could probably walk into a management job over there but my husband’s work in 5 years’ time especially I definitely don't need to work.  But I have actually become a Neal’s Yard organic consultant I don't know if you have heard of them.  And that for me is to give me a little bit of financial independence I only have started in the last few weeks.  But to give me a little bit of income but the actual nursing the motivator is the job not the money because otherwise it is certainly not worth it because nursing money is rubbish.  I don't have to work if I don't want to work.  I am in a fortunate position with my husband.

## C

That is good because you know it is a really strong motivation to going to this.  There is no pressure.

## Sarah

If you are doing nursing for the money you are doing the wrong thing and that is why I know I don't need to work if I really don't want to.  I don't have to work but I want to be a nurse and getting paid is going to a bit of a bonus it will make holidays a little bit nicer.  Or make holidays I should say.35:33

## C

Is there anything else you would like to add about the leaving process and what you feel or about what comes next?

## Sarah

No not really, we have discussed that and financially, sensibly he should have taken a job in Newcastle and I should have stayed in work but that is not what we did so.  You know the decision for me to leave with him over here was an easy one I think there will always be that little thing at the back of my head saying that I didn't want to leave but at the same time I am not sure I could have worked another 10 years for a pension especially given the state of the Air Force, the whole military as it is.  So, it there will always be that thing that I regret leaving as early as I did but I don't regret leaving for the reasons that I left.  And the Dining Out and that if I join the Reserves and I am pretty sure that my friends still in I will go as a plus one to a ball or a Christmas Draw or something like that so.  And everyone is leaving anyway. Our branch is desperate now everyone is leaving, even my Wing Commander has left now although he was Air Traffic.

*Continue to discuss Air Traffic and ABM.*37:57

## C

I don't see how bringing together 2 branches which aren't exactly overflowing with manpower is going to fix any of the problems.

## Sarah

It will get somebody promoted.

## C

So cynical, Sarah

## Sarah

Ahh realistic.  There is no such thing as cynicism just realism.

*Continues in same vein.  Thank you for the interview.39:29*