A Guide to SSAFA
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Preface

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, is the UK’s oldest tri-forces charity, with some 7,000 volunteers in its networks of branches, service committees and specialist services providing practical, emotional and financial support to anyone who has ever served and their dependants.

Please note that this guide, produced by SSAFA’s Central Office to introduce volunteer applicants to the spectrum of our work, is regularly reviewed by the Volunteer Advisory Committee to ensure it is up to date. For the latest version always refer to SSAFAnet (see ‘Additional resources’ on page 19 for further details).

All branch and service committee applicants are required to undertake a comprehensive local induction and read this guide before attending a training course at Central Office. This allows them to learn about the roles available and to determine if being a SSAFA volunteer is right for them before the commitment of training costs. It also provides applicants with a common basic knowledge of SSAFA that will allow them to participate fully in activities. The Volunteer Induction Checklist, available on SSAFAnet, should be completed and attached to the training course application form to confirm local induction has taken place. For further information speak to your branch/service committee secretary or volunteer support manager (VSM), or call the volunteer support advisers (VSAs) at Central Office on 0845 658 1167.

The application process for specialist services volunteers is different, though this guide is just as relevant to them. For further information call Client Services at Central Office on 020 7463 9213.
Introduction

Message from Chairman of Council, General Sir Kevin O'Donoghue KCB CBE

I am delighted to welcome you to SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, and would like to thank you for volunteering to help us support the armed forces community. You will play an important role in a team of volunteers and professional staff committed to achieving our object of supporting serving and former members of the armed forces and their families for the rest of their lives.

Some 6.7 million people living in the United Kingdom today have a direct connection with the armed forces, whether they are currently serving, have served in the past or are a dependant of someone who has. We are the UK’s oldest tri-service charity and we understand the unique demands of service life. We believe that those who have played such a key role in the nation’s defence should get the best help when they need it, and that the hardships experienced by their families should be recognised and addressed.

SSAFA provides a wide range of practical, financial and emotional help, and in 2014 we supported 57,000 members of the armed forces community. Our work is underpinned by an ethos that includes: helping clients to help themselves; respecting a person’s dignity; being non-judgemental and always looking for reasons why we can help rather than reasons why we can’t. Our services are continually evolving to meet changing needs and fall within four areas.

- **Welfare advice and support** provided by networks of trained volunteers in local communities and on military establishments across the UK and overseas. They provide vital help for individuals facing issues ranging from financial hardship and family breakdown to homelessness.

- **Specialist services** designed to meet specific needs in the serving community and those returning to civilian life, such as support groups for the bereaved, mentoring for wounded, injured and sick service leavers and prison in-reach for veterans in custody and their families.

- **Housing** to meet diverse needs ranging from a residential care home for veterans to short term accommodation for the families of service personnel receiving medical treatment.

- **Health and social care services** for the armed forces in the UK and around the world through contracts with the Ministry of Defence (MOD). We also operate a small number of contracts for the NHS.

We believe this combination of services gives us a special insight into the needs of our armed forces community. We use the profits from our contracted services, plus generous donations from the public and other charities, to finance our work.

I am delighted you have chosen to give your time to support the armed forces and their families. I hope that you will find it as inspiring and rewarding as I do.

Kevin O'Donoghue
Chapter 1: Our history

Originally created in 1885 as the Soldiers’ Families Association by Major James Gildea (later Colonel Sir James) to look after the wives and children of soldiers who were deploying overseas to form the second Egyptian expeditionary force; later that same year support was extended to include Royal Navy families and the name was changed to the Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Families Association. Much later, in 1918, with the creation of the Royal Air Force (RAF), the name was again changed to the Soldiers’, Sailors’ and Airmen’s Families Association creating the now familiar acronym ‘SSAFA’.

From the beginning in 1885 the Association had royal patronage and Her Royal Highness The Princess of Wales (later Queen Alexandra) became the first President of the charity’s Council, which is the trustee body responsible for carrying into effect the purposes and provisions of the Royal Charter. She also allowed her personal monogram of two crossed ‘A’s to become the charity’s seal. Royal patronage continues to this day with HM The Queen as our Patron and HRH Prince Michael of Kent as our President.

In SSFA’s first year a clothing branch was established to provide warm clothes at overseas stations for service wives, widows and children returning home. In 1886 the Officers’ Widows Branch was formed to provide accommodation for officers’ widows and unmarried daughters. This became the Royal Homes in Wimbledon, a quadrangle of 76 flats, which is still in use today with its eligibility criteria extended to include the widows and daughters of warrant officers, and single ex-servicewomen.

A home visiting service was established to identify service families’ needs and to provide a quick response, and in 1892 the District Nursing Service was formed to care for them at home and overseas. Voluntary representatives were recruited throughout Britain and by the start of the South African War in 1899 there were 2,000 members.

In that same year the South African War highlighted the fact that while SSFA looked after the families of servicemen, there was need for an organisation to be responsible for the welfare of servicemen themselves. The Soldiers’ and Sailors’ Help Society was formed, later becoming the Forces Help Society, to support them not only while serving but for the rest of their lives through convalescent homes, permanent homes for the disabled, and training and employment in Lord Roberts Workshops, which was established for those unable to take up ordinary jobs.

In the First World War SSFA increased its membership with representatives in many towns and villages; for some counties this extended to almost every parish. Between the world wars the renamed SSAFA continued to support the families of former servicemen with the help of money provided by the United Services Fund, an organisation that raised funds from canteen profits but had no branch structure or experience of welfare work to administer them for benevolence.

In the Second World War SSAFA established the Air Raid Enquiry Service to provide a quick response for servicemen overseas enquiring about the safety of their relatives at home. This soon evolved into the Overseas Service, linking servicemen and their homes through the SSAFA branches and with 225 full time SSAFA workers in overseas commands, a service that became crucial to armed forces morale.

As a consequence of German air raids many families in UK became separated and dispersed. SSAFA responded by opening 16 children’s homes around the country, together with a London hotel for service families, and the clothing branch was decentralised to 400 sub-depots. SSAFA developed wider family welfare and advisory services providing general support as distinct from purely financial help. By the end of the war there were 29,000 voluntary workers.
In 1985 the casework and visiting carried out by SSAFA branches and the Forces Help Society became integrated, leading to amalgamation of the two organisations in 1997 and the name SSAFA Forces Help, with SSAFA then standing for Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association. In 2013 an extensive rebranding exercise was completed based on the acronym SSAFA with the strap line ‘Lifelong support for our Forces and their families’, and in 2015 we became SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity.

The following chapters set out the structure and work of SSAFA today.
Chapter 2: Governance

SSAFA is proud that so many of its services are delivered by volunteers. SSAFA’s Council delegates responsibility for meeting local requirements to branch and service committees with the support of Central Office.

Council comprises volunteer trustees who are ultimately responsible for governance of all SSAFA activities worldwide, including specialist charitable services managed by Central Office and Health & Social Care’s professional services.

The object for which SSAFA is established and incorporated is stated in the Royal Charter (see ‘Eligibility for assistance’ at Annex A), which also authorises Council to produce regulations to achieve the object, including eligibility criteria for SSAFA support.

Trustees are selected for the working knowledge they have of SSAFA’s activities and the individual skills they can contribute to the charity’s direction; all are encouraged to become involved in any aspect of our work. They exercise authority only when making a majority decision at a duly constituted meeting of Council, comprising between seven and 17 members.

The national officers of SSAFA, the Chairman (who is also Chairman of Council), Vice Chairman and Honorary Treasurer, are all members of Council. To ensure Council is well informed and supported to carry out the role and responsibilities of trustees, the majority of members are either representatives (usually the chairman) of the volunteer bodies covering each of SSAFA’s functions or specialist advisers on relevant matters such as charity law, investment, property and social care. The special significance of volunteers in the work of SSAFA is also reflected with the inclusion of up to five region representatives (RRs) from the SSAFA networks to provide a direct link between Council and volunteers.

The Chairman’s responsibilities include the crucial primary functions of leadership for the whole charity and representation of SSAFA to the public and other organisations. He is an ex officio member of all advisory committees to Council, nominates to Council for its approval all trustees and chairmen of advisory committees, and confirms the appointment of all branch and service committee chairmen.

The Vice Chairman acts for the Chairman in his absence, and must therefore be closely associated with the Chairman’s duties and have the same membership of Council and its committees and access to discussions as the Chairman. The Vice Chairman has a particular duty to share the burdens of chairmanship and act as a neutral interpreter and adviser to the staff and volunteer body of SSAFA.

The Honorary Treasurer has a personal responsibility to Council for ensuring that SSAFA’s assets and risks are properly managed, reported upon and audited. He is Chairman of the Audit & Risk Committee; the Finance & Investment Committee; and an ex officio member of all advisory committees to Council and the Scottish Resources Committee.

The Controller is SSAFA’s Chief Executive. He ensures compliance with Council policies, and is responsible to Council for selecting, training, organising and supervising his staff to provide the most cost effective and efficient service. He chairs the Management Board and is answerable to Chairman of Council.

RRs are responsible to Chairman of Council for oversight of volunteers and volunteer activities in their region, ensuring volunteers understand SSAFA policies, and that representation from volunteers that affect those policies is reported through the Region Representatives’ Forum (RRF). They encourage a coordinated regional approach to
awareness, fundraising, recruitment and casework, bringing together representatives of all volunteer activities in their region at annual meetings.

Council is supported by advice from a number of committees that help to shape SSAFA’s strategic direction and operations. These include, but are not limited to: the Audit & Risk Committee; the Health & Social Care Advisory Committee; the Finance & Investment Committee; the Public Awareness Advisory Committee (PAAC); the Vice Chairman’s Committee (VCC); the Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC); and the Region Representatives’ Forum (RRF). The terms of reference for these committees are available on SSAFA.net.
Chapter 3: Welfare advice and support

Volunteers are the lifeblood of SSAFA, contributing in many ways to the support of our serving and veterans communities, either with long established volunteer networks or through specialist schemes managed by Central Office.

In line with our motto ‘bis dat qui cito dat’, which translates as ‘he gives twice who gives quickly’, we provide speedy assistance by tackling problems as they are presented to us, without making moral judgements. A client who may have agonised over seeking help will be sensitive to the attitude of a SSAFA volunteer offering support.

The spectrum of volunteer activity includes: management of branches, divisions and service committees; casework and friendship visits; publicity; fundraising and finance; local training; IT; and specialist services such as mentoring service leavers; prison in-reach; support groups; and Independent Service Custody Visiting (ISCV). Specialist services are explained in Chapter 4.

Branch network

The branch network predominantly supports former members of the armed forces and their families, though it also helps those who are currently serving in cases where there are complex welfare and/or financial needs.

There are currently 92 branches with more than 6,000 volunteers, of whom some 4,200 are caseworkers. In the UK there is a branch in each county made up of divisions based on local authority boundaries; there are also branches in Cyprus, France, Germany and Ireland.

Caseworkers are trained volunteers who visit clients in their home, assess their welfare needs and take action to ensure their needs are met. In some cases the task is as simple as making sure they are claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled; in others it involves arranging grants from benevolent funds and other assistance providers, a process known as ‘almonising’.

For eligible clients in financial difficulty caseworkers can often help with a wide range of welfare needs such as the provision of food, clothing, white goods, furniture, housing, training, employment, adapting homes for people with disabilities and arranging the provision of a mobility scooter. In many cases, though, the problem is not a financial one and can be solved by other means, such as signposting the client to a specialist organisation.

In a number of branches volunteer visitors befriend eligible elderly and vulnerable people, keeping an eye on their wellbeing and alerting the branch secretary to any needs that arise.

Most branches comprise a chairman, secretary, treasurer, fundraising organiser, publicity officer, training organiser, IT coordinator, division secretaries, caseworkers, friendship visitors and helpers.

The branch chairman is responsible to Council, through Chairman of Council, for all SSAFA activity in the branch area. The branch secretary is responsible for the routine operation of the branch and through division secretaries and caseworkers the almonising of funds for clients. The branch treasurer is responsible for handling these funds and making payments that have been authorised by the secretary. To ensure financial probity treasurers cannot also be caseworkers and close relatives such as husband and wife teams cannot hold the posts of treasurer and secretary at the same time.

If you decide to join your local branch as a volunteer you will normally be assigned to the division covering the area in which you live and will be introduced to the division secretary, who will be your first point of contact thereafter.

Division secretaries are responsible for allocating cases to caseworkers in their area. They are usually very experienced and are able to offer guidance to new volunteers embarking on
casework. Regardless of your role, you should keep in regular touch with your division secretary and alert them to any changes in your availability.

The division secretary will explain policies and procedures, and provide details of local contacts with whom a valuable working relationship has been established. New volunteers will also be given the opportunity to meet other volunteers in their area who can offer advice and support. Not all branches have divisions; if this is the case in your area your first point of contact will be the branch secretary.

**Service committees and community volunteers**

There are currently 65 service committees at home and abroad supporting serving personnel and their families; these are usually located on Royal Navy, Army and RAF bases. The overseas service committees are in Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Gibraltar, Italy and Nepal.

Service committees have four office holders: chair (as opposed to ‘chairman’ in the branches), secretary, treasurer and publicity officer. The chair is responsible to Council, through Chairman of Council, for all SSAFA activity on the military base where the service committee is located. Most service volunteers are already living within the serving community at the time of their application to join SSAFA.

Service committees raise awareness of the help SSAFA can provide, fundraise for local community projects, pay the local expenses of SSAFA’s community volunteers, and also raise funds to assist clients if no public funds are available.

They can help with needs such as childcare costs, travel costs for parents to visit while a partner is on deployment or funds for separating families who are experiencing financial difficulties. These are usually one-off financial needs; where a client has more complex welfare or financial problems they should be referred to the local branch.

Community volunteers working with families are trained at Central Office, have undergone appropriate checks and are supervised by volunteer coordinators who allocate referrals and provide peer group support. Volunteer coordinators are in turn supervised by VSMs and work closely with their service committee chairs.

Community volunteers provide emotional support, practical help and information to serving personnel and families; they have access to professional advice and can refer to relevant services where necessary. Their functions may include:

- welcoming and giving advice to newly arrived partners of serving personnel who may be unfamiliar with service life;
- befriending those who feel isolated or lonely and need someone to listen to them, especially when their partner is deployed overseas;
- providing support during illness, injury or transition to civilian life;
- giving practical help such as lifts to and from hospital;
- supporting the bereaved;
- supporting separated partners and their families; and
- signposting to appropriate agencies.

For details of roles see ‘Duties and Responsibilities of Branch and Service Volunteers’, available on SSAFA.net.
Chapter 4: Specialist services

Mentoring

SSAFA Mentoring is currently available to wounded, injured or sick service personnel being discharged from the Army or RAF for medical reasons, and provides long term voluntary and confidential support that is independent of the chain of command. The aim is to motivate, encourage and give confidence to service leavers in their transition from military to civilian life, helping them to fulfil their potential outside the armed forces.

Mentors, like all SSAFA volunteers, are carefully selected, trained and supported throughout the mentoring relationship, which usually lasts for up to a year.

SSAFA support groups

All of the support groups listed below are open to families from the Royal Navy, the Army and the RAF including parents, grandparents, siblings and anyone else affected who is considered to be part of the family unit.

Families of Injured Service Personnel (FISP)

This tri-service group offers people the opportunity to meet and talk with others whose relatives have been injured while serving in the armed forces. It meets regularly, offering mutual support and allowing families to share experiences, information and advice. FISP is open to families whose loved ones have been injured either in combat or non-combat circumstances.

Bereaved Families Support Group (BFSG)

Set up by bereaved families, this tri-service group offers people the opportunity to meet and talk with others who have lost a loved one serving in the armed forces. BFSG provides mutual support, information and advice, and tries to resolve some of the difficulties faced after the death of a family member.

Bereaved Siblings Support Group (BSSG)

This group is for over-18s who have lost a brother or sister serving in the armed forces. It meets regularly and offers mutual support, aiming to restore confidence through activities and by giving bereaved siblings the chance to talk about their feelings with others who have been through a similar experience. Age-appropriate support for children is arranged in partnership with Winston’s Wish, the childhood bereavement charity.

Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum (FANDF)

The group was set up for armed forces families with a family member who has an additional need or disability. It examines the existing arrangements for that family member and provides families and service providers with an opportunity to discuss the best appropriate support available.

Further information about these groups can be found at www.ssafasupportgroups.org.uk or on SSAFA’s website.

Prison in-reach (PIR)

In line with SSAFA’s lifelong support for our forces and their families no matter how their circumstances might change, some experienced caseworkers volunteer to undergo special training to engage with and support ex-serving personnel or members of their families in prison and/or on release. Separate support is available for their dependants, and includes practical help such as the provision of essential household items and/or children’s clothing, together with advice and information on matters like housing and resettlement. Neither cash grants nor legal support can be provided to prisoners, but branches may be able to signpost clients to the relevant organisations.
Independent Service Custody Visiting (ISCV)

ISCV provides independent oversight of armed forces custody facilities to ensure the quality and professionalism of staff, transparency of the detention process and, most importantly, that detainees are appropriately cared for with their health and welfare needs being met.

Glasgow’s Helping Heroes

‘Glasgow’s Helping Heroes’ is an award-winning service provided by SSAFA in partnership with Glasgow City Council for current and former members of the armed forces and their dependants or carers who live, work or wish to relocate there. Its dedicated team works with national and local government and third sector providers to resolve clients’ employment, housing, health, financial and/or social isolation issues.
Chapter 5: Housing

SSAFA's Welfare Department can help volunteers to assist clients by advising on local authority responsibilities, evictions and other landlord/tenant issues, and signposting for help with rental deposits and moving costs.

In addition, SSAFA operates a number of housing schemes.

**Stepping Stone homes**

SSAFA's Stepping Stone homes provide short-term accommodation, help, advice and support following the breakdown of a relationship for female serving or veteran personnel, or the female partners of serving or veteran personnel, along with their dependent children. Women without children, or those who are waiting for custody issues to be resolved, can also stay there. There are two Stepping Stone homes: Longside House in Tyne & Wear and Gildea House in North West London.

**Norton homes**

SSAFA owns two Norton homes: one in Selly Oak, Birmingham, and the other in Ashtead, Surrey. The homes provide short-term accommodation for families visiting injured service personnel at the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham and the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre at Headley Court, Surrey. The homes are available 365 days a year, at no cost to the families, and are run by dedicated on-site teams who offer support and advice.

**Fisher House UK**

Fisher House UK, at Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, provides a home environment and support for the families of injured and sick armed forces personnel undergoing treatment there and outpatients. The staff that run this 18-room, 54-bed purpose-built property are managed by SSAFA.

**The Royal Homes**

The Royal Homes is a subsidiary of SSAFA with its own Scheme issued by the Charity Commission dated 24 September 1998. Queen Alexandra’s Court in Wimbledon has 76 self-contained, unfurnished apartments in mansion-style blocks set in four acres of land. Those eligible for admission include women who are the widows, divorcees or unmarried daughters of officers or warrant officers, or retired female officers or warrant officers of all branches of the armed forces.

Applicants are not normally admitted below the age of 60 and must be capable of independent living. The Royal Homes staff look after the wellbeing of residents and maintenance of the estate. Residents pay a standard maintenance charge, but those on lower incomes may apply for statutory benefits and charitable welfare assistance.

**St Vincent’s Care Home**

SSAFA’s care home at Ryde, on the Isle of Wight, provides residential care (not nursing) for older veteran personnel and their dependants in single en-suite rooms.

**Apartments and bungalows**

SSAFA has five one-bedroom apartments for vulnerable widows, widowers or single veterans who are in need of ground floor accommodation but don’t require adaptations, and 36 purpose-built bungalows (in Blackpool, Barnsley, Wantage and Ryde) for disabled veterans and their partners or carers.
Chapter 6: Health & Social Care

SSAFA’s Health & Social Care Department provides direct support to serving personnel and their families in the United Kingdom and overseas. Community health, social work and other services for the armed forces worldwide are delivered through contracts with the MOD. The Health & Social Care Department employs more than 300 staff in countries as far afield as Brunei, Canada, the Falkland Islands and Nepal, as well as throughout Western Europe.

Health services in the UK

As a result of expertise gained overseas, SSAFA provides primary healthcare and urgent care services in the UK through contracts with the NHS. These are open to the general public, and enable us to signpost any families with a military connection to other SSAFA services and local volunteers.

Health services worldwide

Our healthcare professionals work in Brunei, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Gibraltar and Nepal to provide services that meet the needs of military families and entitled civilians, in partnership with armed forces personnel, local health services and other agencies. We ensure families living away from home can rely on the same high quality service they would receive in the UK.

Social work in the UK

SSAFA’s Personal Support & Social Work Service (RAF) meets the diverse and changing needs of members of the RAF, Army, Royal Navy and their families based on RAF stations across the UK.

Social work worldwide

SSAFA also provides social work support to military families in Brunei, Cyprus, the Falkland Islands and Gibraltar, working in partnership with armed forces personnel and local organisations.

British Forces Cyprus: working in partnership with local health service colleagues and SSAFA volunteers, we provide UK statutory services for families and children and a range of services to the wider military community including relationship counselling.

Brunei: in addition to supporting British families, we provide assistance to Gurkha soldiers and their families whose first language is Nepali. With the garrison so far away from their extended families and friends, SSAFA meets their welfare needs together with the local health and education services.

Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands: we work in partnership with the Naval Personnel & Family Service in Gibraltar and also offer a range of social work support to the British military community in the Falklands together with the Falkland Islands Government Health Service.

Adoption

SSAFA is a registered adoption agency with notable success in placing sibling groups and older children with armed forces families. Anyone wishing to adopt who is currently serving in the UK or British Forces Germany, or who has recently left the forces, can seek advice from the Adoption team at Central Office (adoption@ssafa.org.uk or 020 7463 9326). Advice can also be given to step-parents who wish to adopt, and to currently-serving personnel who wish to trace their birth records.

Short breaks for children

Health & Social Care also organises week-long breaks for children with additional needs (such as behavioural, learning and physical needs) and their siblings. These breaks rely on
volunteers who are trained to support the children on a one-to-one basis. The volunteers are supported and supervised by professional additional needs social work staff.
Chapter 7: Central Office

Central Office is responsible for overseeing the delivery of SSAFA’s strategic objectives as determined by Council; ensuring all legal, regulatory and financial requirements are adhered to; managing our contracted services and national charitable services; and reporting annually to the Charity Commission.

In addition to Health & Social Care, SSAFA has four other departments that support our commercial operations, charitable services and volunteer networks. These are:

- Volunteer Support;
- Public Awareness;
- Finance; and
- People & Organisational Development (POD).

Volunteer Support Department

The Volunteer Support Department provides a wide range of advice, guidance and information to SSAFA volunteers both inside and outside ‘the wire’ (the perimeter of a military base) to ensure clients get the best possible service. Its staff are led by Deputy Controller Volunteer Support (DCVS) who has overall responsibility for the implementation of strategic direction and development.

Director Volunteer Operations (DVO) has day-to-day responsibility for support to branches, service committees and community volunteers through Head of Volunteer Network Support (HoVNS), Head of Welfare (HoW), VSAs and welfare advisers at Central Office, and regionally through VSMs. DVO is also responsible for Forcesline.

Director Client Services (DCS) is responsible for SSAFA’s specialist services such as mentoring, support groups, housing, prison in-reach, ISCV and Glasgow’s Helping Heroes. DCS is supported by Head of Specialist Services (HoSS), Head of Housing (HoH) and the Support Groups Team Leader.
**Welfare Department**

Within Volunteer Support, the Welfare Department ([welfare@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:welfare@ssafa.org.uk)), led by HoW, has access to subscription-only information services and can provide expert guidance for difficult cases. Welfare advisers can also help with issues such as housing, benefits, disability rights, debt and prisons; signpost to other service charities, statutory agencies and third-sector organisations; and make grants from ring-fenced funds held at Central Office.

Welfare advisers cannot offer legal advice. If they are unable to answer a query directly they will signpost to organisations that may be able to assist.

**Forcesline**

Forcesline is the gateway to SSAFA services for beneficiaries. It’s a free, confidential telephone helpline and email service that is independent of the military chain of command. Experienced civilian staff provide a supportive listening and signposting service for current and former members of the armed forces and their families. The telephone support line is available Monday to Friday from 9 am to 5.30 pm (UK local time) and can be accessed from anywhere in the world. The Forcesline freephone numbers are: 0800 731 4880 or 020 7463 9292 (from the UK); 0800 1827 395 (from Germany); 800 1827 395 (from Cyprus); #611 (from the Falkland Islands) and +44(0)1980 630854 (rest of the world).

Service personnel who are absent without leave (AWOL) can speak in complete confidence to the SSAFA AWOL Support Line worker on Tel: 01380 738137 from 9 am to 5.30 pm Monday to Friday. There is an answering machine for call back outside these times.

**Volunteer support advisers (VSAs)**

VSAs ([volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk)) handle all volunteer enquiries. They assist with recruitment, ID card, Casework Management System (CMS) and SSAFAnet queries, and liaise with other Central Office departments to find answers to questions on any other subject. Each VSA has an area of expertise as follows.

- VSA Team Leader ensures volunteers receive appropriate customer service and their operational requirements are met.
- VSA Help Desk (0845 658 1167) is the first point of contact for all volunteer enquiries, and refers specialist queries to the appropriate post holder in other departments in order to provide comprehensive answers.
- VSA CMS & Statistics is responsible for annual statistical returns across the volunteer network.
- VSA Recruitment & Database is the first point of contact for all volunteer applicants, assists with national and local recruitment campaigns, and informs branches and service committees when the paperwork has been processed and a welcome letter has been sent.

**Volunteer support managers (VSMs)**

Managed by HoVNS in Central Office, there are seven regional home-based VSMs and one in Germany who also covers the rest of Europe. Their role is to develop, support and help maintain service committees and, through them, community volunteers. They work particularly closely with community volunteer coordinators, offering specialist advice and guidance.

They also provide practical support and advice to branches in need of assistance, and help facilitate close working partnerships with local service committees. Where a branch or service committee has an employee, the VSM acts as line manager on legal employment matters.

VSMs build and maintain relationships with local service representatives, the chain of command and other military, statutory and voluntary agencies in order to promote SSAFA’s
volunteer activities. They help embed best practice standards in volunteer related activities, supporting the volunteer region representatives and working closely with other regionally based colleagues to provide timely help and guidance to branches and service committees.

**Public Awareness Department**

The Public Awareness Department has two teams: Marketing & Communications and Fundraising.

**Marketing & Communications team**

The Marketing & Communications team is responsible for raising SSAFA’s profile with the public, encouraging people to make a donation or become a volunteer, and ensuring those eligible for our support are aware that we can help. Each year the team develops a strategy for securing coverage in newspapers and on radio and television; developing our social media channels and managing our website; planning our national advertising; producing printed information such as the Annual Report; managing corporate reputational issues; and developing brand and media guidelines.

In addition, the team supports SSAFA’s volunteer networks with local marketing and communications. While branches and service committees draw on their local knowledge to manage communications in their area and on military bases, the team provides a framework for consistency, with support and advice readily available to the networks, answering specific queries from branches and service committees. It develops ideas for campaigns suitable for local use, produces leaflets and other informative materials, and ensures that appropriate national campaigns can be adapted for use at local level.

Marketing & Communications works closely with the Volunteer Support Department in disseminating information within SSAFA; using hard copy, the internet and maintaining SSAFAnet as a central source of SSAFA policy information with aids for local awareness activity. Twice each year (summer and winter) a printed magazine, SSAFA News, is posted to volunteers’ home addresses together with issues of Scope, the volunteer network publication of information for caseworkers. There is a monthly SSAFA newsletter sent by email to volunteers and additional single item announcements are also sent by email when the importance or timing is significant. In addition, general information about SSAFA work and the latest news can be found on the website ([www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)), Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

**Fundraising team**

For us to continue helping members of the armed forces family in need it is necessary to raise funds locally and nationally. Each branch and service committee must raise sufficient money to cover its annual running costs and some other local needs. At national level the Fundraising team raises money to cover the Central Office structure that supports the volunteer networks, including specialist services and housing. Each year this team develops a strategy that covers events and activities to gain income from corporate organisations, charitable trusts, foundations, and individual donations. Several campaigns are mounted each year specially suited for use in local communities or military bases, including our tea-making event, the Big Brew Up, the Big Collection, for street collections, and Camo Day, which is particularly popular at local schools in areas with a military presence.

Branches and service committees develop their own approach to fundraising, reflecting the circumstances of local geography, business and socio-economic factors. They are supported by regional fundraising managers (RFMs) who are members of the Fundraising team. Their role is to provide advice for branches and committees in their fundraising activities. They also have a responsibility to protect SSAFA’s reputation by ensuring volunteer fundraisers are aware and comply with relevant regulations and guidance, such as the Institute of Fundraising’s *Code of Practice* and Fundraising Standards Board’s *Fundraising Promise*. Contact details for RFMs are available on SSAFAnet.
We enthusiastically welcome volunteers who would like to help increase awareness of SSAFA, reach out to members of the armed forces family in need or raise funds to support our work locally or nationally. For those without experience in these fields the Marketing & Communications and Fundraising teams run courses; details are available from Central Office.

**Finance**

Trustees are ultimately responsible for all SSAFA funds. The Finance Department helps oversee the smooth running of SSAFA as a whole, including IT services for Central Office and other staff as well as facilities and catering. Director Finance is responsible for the preparation of national accounts and ensuring financial procedures are adhered to. The Finance team provides advice and guidance to branch/division and service committee treasurers.

**People & Organisational Development (POD) Department**

POD is responsible for all matters concerning human resources, learning and development, equality diversity and inclusion, and occupational health. Within POD it is the Learning & Development team with whom volunteers are most likely to have contact.

**Learning & Development team**

The Learning & Development team provides training to volunteers through courses held at Central Office and in the regions. It also organises the Volunteer Conference.

The courses currently available are:

- Caseworker Course;
- Casework Management System (CMS);
- Independent Service Custody Visiting (ISCV);
- Mentoring;
- Prison In-reach (PIR);
- Community Volunteer Course;
- Community Volunteer Coordinator Course;
- Bereavement and Loss;
- Volunteer Management;
- Treasurer Course;
- Financial Management System (FMS);
- Chairmen’s Induction.

The Learning & Development team can also provide tailor-made courses to meet local needs.

New caseworkers, community volunteers, community volunteer coordinators, branch secretaries, division secretaries, branch training organisers, mentors and independent custody visitors must attend the relevant course either regionally or at Central Office before becoming an active volunteer. Treasurers and fundraising organisers are also advised to undergo training. Participation requires prior approval from the branch/service committee secretary, VSM or HoSS.

All caseworkers are required to attend branch/division meetings, annual training days and caseworker refresher training after five years of active service. Mentors and ISCV volunteers are required to attend regional refresher training periodically.

**Additional resources**

All volunteers receive a copy of our newsletters, ‘SCOPE’ and ‘ssafa news’, which provide updates on welfare issues, policies, forthcoming events and news from other organisations.
Once a volunteer’s contact details are on the Central Office database they can use SSAFA\texttext{em}net, a passcode-protected site available only to volunteers and staff through SSAFA’s main website. SSAFA\texttext{em}net enables volunteers to find news, information, policies, practical tools and guidance, and to communicate with each other via the forum.

Stationery and forms can be ordered via SSAFA\texttext{em}net or by contacting the Facilities team at Central Office. Publicity material can be ordered via SSAFA\texttext{em}net or by contacting the Public Awareness Department.

SSAFA uses two specialist software systems for which training will be given to those who need to use it. CMS is used to apply for funding for a client; full training is provided on the Caseworker Course. The Financial Management System (FMS) is the standard accounting system used by branch and division treasurers. Training is provided on the Treasurer Course. Further support is available from VSA CMS & Statistics for matters related to casework.

**Further reading**

A variety of useful documents are available on SSAFA\texttext{em}net. These include: the Casework Handbook, the Prison In-reach Handbook; the Mentor Handbook; Regulations under the Royal Charter of Incorporation and Rules; and policies on subjects such as data protection, expenses, and safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

In addition, a number of helpful guides on subjects such as: the Care Act; benefits; debt; disabled facilities grants; and mental health are available in the Welfare section.

**Expenses**

No volunteer should be out of pocket as a result of activities carried out on behalf SSAFA. Expenses incurred locally such as travel, telephone, stationery and postage should be claimed from the branch/service committee treasurer via the secretary for counter-signature, or, in the case of specialist services volunteers, through HoSS or the regional mentoring coordinator.

All volunteers are encouraged to claim these expenses so that the true cost of volunteering can be quantified.

Expenses for training courses are claimed from Central Office using a form that is issued with the joining instructions. For further guidance see Claiming Expenses from Central Office, available on SSAFA\texttext{em}net.
Annex A: Eligibility for assistance

Eligibility for assistance under the Royal Charter of Incorporation

Article 3 of the amended version of the Royal Charter of Incorporation that came into effect on 14 January 2014 states that the object for which SSAFA is established and incorporated is to relieve the need, suffering and distress of the following individuals:

- members and former members of all ranks of all branches of our land, sea and air forces (‘beneficiaries’);
- any person who is dependent on a beneficiary;
- any person who was dependent on a beneficiary while that beneficiary was alive;
- any person on whom a beneficiary is dependent; and
- any person on whom a deceased beneficiary was dependent.

Eligibility for assistance from SSAFA funds

Trustees determine the eligibility criteria for assistance by regulations. Those entitled to benefit from SSAFA’s assistance are: members and former members of all ranks of the armed forces who have received one day’s pay in one or more of the following:

- Royal Navy, Royal Marines, Army and Royal Air Force;
- Royal Navy Reserves, Royal Marine Reserves, Army Reserves and Royal Air Force Reserves;
- nursing services.

In addition, the following are also eligible for assistance:

- wives and former wives;
- husbands and former husbands;
- widows and widowers;
- civil partners and former civil partners;
- partners who are, or were, in an established relationship with a beneficiary;
- children who are dependent on a beneficiary;
- those who provide, or provided, care for a beneficiary.

Note that other charities have their own criteria for providing funds, and these may be different.
### Annex B: Guide to abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BFSG</td>
<td>Bereaved Families Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSSG</td>
<td>Bereaved Siblings Support Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Casework Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCS</td>
<td>Director Client Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCVS</td>
<td>Deputy Controller Volunteer Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCH&amp;SC</td>
<td>Deputy Controller Health &amp; Social Care</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCMC&amp;F</td>
<td>Deputy Controller Marketing, Communications &amp; Fundraising</td>
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<td>DVO</td>
<td>Director Volunteer Operations</td>
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<td>FANDF</td>
<td>Forces Additional Needs and Disability Forum</td>
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<td>FISP</td>
<td>Families of Injured Service Personnel</td>
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<td>FMS</td>
<td>Financial Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>HoH</td>
<td>Head of Housing</td>
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<td>HoP&amp;A</td>
<td>Head of Performance &amp; Assurance</td>
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<td>HoSS</td>
<td>Head of Specialist Services</td>
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<td>HoVNS</td>
<td>Head of Volunteer Network Support</td>
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<td>HoW</td>
<td>Head of Welfare</td>
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<td>ISCV</td>
<td>Independent Service CustodyVisiting</td>
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<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<td>PAAC</td>
<td>Public Awareness Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>PIR</td>
<td>Prison In-reach</td>
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<td>POD</td>
<td>People &amp; Organisational Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFM</td>
<td>Regional Fundraising Manager</td>
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<td>RR</td>
<td>Region Representative</td>
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<td>RRF</td>
<td>Region Representatives’ Forum</td>
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<td>SCF</td>
<td>Service Community Forum</td>
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<td>SRC</td>
<td>Scottish Resources Committee</td>
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<td>VAC</td>
<td>Volunteer Advisory Committee</td>
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<td>VCC</td>
<td>Vice Chairman's Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSA</td>
<td>Volunteer Support Adviser</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSM</td>
<td>Volunteer Support Manager</td>
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