

SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service

SSAFA Forces Help – a brief introduction to the assistance we provide and people we help

We provide a statutory social work service on behalf of the Ministry of Defence for serving personnel based overseas and their families.

We (SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service) were set up in 1963 to:

- offer social services to the military community including families overseas and in the UK, and
- give advice to the military staff and the Ministry of Defence about social services.

At the moment our social workers are based in Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Germany, Cyprus, Gibraltar and Brunei.

The social work and personal-support service we provide on behalf of the MOD to military staff and their families is confidential.

Our social workers:

- are qualified
- are registered with the Social Care Councils, and
- have worked in children and families teams in the UK.

Our personal support workers:

- are trained
- bring a range of skills and knowledge to the teams, and
- are supervised by one of our social workers.

All of the teams are supported by trained administrative staff and provide a full and professional service to military staff and their families wherever they live.

We provide services to children, young people and families (whether they are married, have children or are single).

We are a registered adoption agency in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, British Forces Germany, Cyprus and Gibraltar providing a full range of adoption services to the military community.

We carry out all our work in line with UK laws and guidance.

Although the number of people in the military community who need support from a social worker is no higher than the civilian world, they face different pressures.

Many families with young children:

- are away from home for the first time
- are living in a foreign country



The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help

The national charity helping serving and ex-Service men, women and their families, in need.

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The BFSWS is aware that, although the number of cases requiring a social work input is no more prevalent in the military than in the civilian world, the families are under different pressures.

“Following my referral to the Central Referral Team, I felt confident that the team would ensure it was going to be dealt with. I was grateful for feedback and pleased with the support.”

Quote from Health Professional,
Germany

- are away from family and friends for long periods of time, and
- may have to live as single-parent families while one partner is away on deployment.

We have over 100 years' experience of delivering social-care services to the military community around the world and we are committed to working with other agencies to meet the needs of people in the military community wherever they are.

British Forces Social Work Service (BFSWS) – Western Europe

We deliver this social work service to the military community within the United Kingdom Support Command (Germany) (UKSC (G)) area.

We provide the service in line with the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and in line with best practice in the UK.

The services we provide include services for children, young people (including those leaving care), families and people with a disability or other additional need.

Our service is managed by a head of service who works with:

- a service manager (operations)
- a learning and development manager
- 22 social workers, and
- 15 admin support staff.

There are two family support teams based in 10 places, which cover the United Kingdom Support Command (Germany) (UKSC(G)) area, including the smaller military communities in other European countries.

As well as the family support teams, we have a central referral team and a joint response team. The central referral team is the central contact point and deals with all the referrals, consultations and questions. The joint response team is a child-protection investigation team run by Royal Military Police and us. The joint response team also provides accommodation for children outside office hours when there may be a child protection issue.

There are three specialist social workers that deal with:

- adoption
- fostering, and
- additional needs and disability.

Personal Support and Social Work Service Cyprus (PS & PWS Cyprus)

We provide a personal support and social work service to the British military communities in Cyprus.

We provide the service in line with the Children Act 1989 and 2004 and in line with best practice in the UK.

As well as providing services for children and families, we also provide the following services:

- Registering and inspecting day care facilities for children under eight in line with Ofsted regulations and UK laws.
- Providing court reports to military courts martial, UK and sovereign bases (areas in Cyprus which have an administrator instead of a governor).
- Providing reports for the military.
- Supervising people who have broken the law.
- Supporting adults with additional needs or disabilities (or both).
- Providing a counselling service for people who are having relationship problems.
- Representing people.
- Providing a youth justice service.

Personal Support and Social Work Service Royal Air Force (PS&SWS RAF)

To recognise the extra issues families face such as having to live apart and having to move often, we provide extra personal support and social services to military staff and families based in the UK.

We have 46 staff, including:

- qualified and registered social workers
- a learning and development manager and
- personal and family support workers

The Head of Service is supported by a service manager (operations) and five social work team managers who each manage a team in their area.

We offer a full service to the RAF community, dealing with a broad range of social support issues in a confidential and professional way, including issues such as:

- debt
- illness
- relationships
- abuse, and
- equal opportunities.

Our staff take part in local forums, such as domestic abuse (violence, or threats of violence, within the home) and protecting children. They bring a view from the military personnel to these complicated problems and take on work on behalf of local agencies if it is appropriate. They prepare reports in cases where military staff want us to take account of their special circumstances when:

- they move to another job (perhaps in another country), or
- we prepare pre-sentence reports for courts martial.

The Personal Welfare Service (PWS) Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland our social workers work with army welfare workers to provide welfare support to all military staff serving in Northern Ireland and their families. We can also provide support to family members who live elsewhere.

The PWS works with local social services, health boards and trusts and other agencies to help provide the full welfare service, which is available to everybody.

There are five Personal Welfare Service teams based throughout Northern Ireland. Three of the teams (Lisburn, Holywood and Ballykinler) are made up of our senior social workers and an army welfare worker. The RAF Aldergrove team is made up of one of our senior social workers and a social worker and the Ballykelly team has a senior social worker. All teams have administrative support.

The PWS provides welfare support within Northern Ireland and offers services to all service staff and families in the province. Referrals can cover the following:

- Adoption issues
- Providing support for soldiers or family members
- Childcare
- Postings in special circumstances
- Financial difficulties
- Illness
- Mental-health problems
- Relationships
- Problems before, during or after working away from home and being separated from family
- Lack of family support
- Additional needs and disabilities

SSAFA Forces Help offers an all embracing service to the whole of the RAF Community, dealing with a broad range of social support issues in a confidential, professional and sympathetic manner

“My SSAFA worker was thoroughly professional, listened without prejudice and helped me to understand/resolve my difficulties”

Quote from a service user accessing the PS&SW Service RAF

SSAFA Forces Help social workers provide welfare support to all military personnel serving in Northern Ireland and their accompanying families.

“Personal Welfare Service continues to remain an integral and irreplaceable part of our welfare network, supporting almost 4000 personnel and dependants. The service provisions by Personal Welfare Service remains excellent; indeed it far exceeds our expectations.”

**Quote from Northern Ireland
Command Station Officer**

Further Information

For more information on any aspect of SSAFA Forces Help social work services please email info@ssafa.org.uk, telephone 020 7463 9265 or visit our website at www.ssafa.org.uk

We provide a vital link between military families and social services and other voluntary agencies in Northern Ireland. We help local services understand the difficulties military staff and their families face.

Joint Social Work Service (JSWS) - Gibraltar

In Gibraltar the senior social worker and the Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFS) social worker provide a standard social work and community support service.

We offer the same wide range of personal and social services in Gibraltar as in other commands. We provide an approachable, professional service, which aims to work closely with (and give advice to) the command and local Gibraltar government agencies to make sure all military staff receive an efficient service.

In Gibraltar our senior social worker is responsible for providing support relating to:

- fostering
- adoption
- registering and inspecting child-minders and day-care facilities
- arranging police checks and other suitability checks for staff and carers, and
- giving advice to the Government of Gibraltar adoption and fostering panel and Local Safeguarding Children Board

Social Work Service – Brunei

In Brunei, one senior social worker provides social services and community support services to Brunei Garrison to meet the needs of the military staff, their families and civilians who are entitled to use the service. There are many different communities in Brunei Garrison, 68% of children and young people are Nepalese and belong to the families of Gurkha soldiers. Staff in Brunei Garrison have no extended family in the country and face extra challenges because the garrison is so far away from their usual support networks (such as family and friends).

We provide a range of services in Brunei in line with the Children Act 1989 and 2004.

Services include:

- counselling and advice on general problems
- adoption
- foster care
- assessing and delivering services to children in need (including protecting children)
- parenting support, and
- registering childminders and day-care providers.

The senior social worker provides support for our Service Committee and co-ordinates our Community Service Volunteers Scheme. The senior social worker also works closely with the garrison welfare officer and the Gurkha families' officer to give advice on welfare issues, and offers the health and education services appropriate support and advice.

When we provide services we take into account the needs of different cultures and follow best practice in the UK.

