



**SOLDIERS, SAILORS,
AIRMEN AND
FAMILIES ASSOCIATION
FORCES HELP**

<p style="text-align: center;">SOLDIERS, SAILORS, AIRMEN AND FAMILIES ASSOCIATION – FORCES HELP</p>
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HISTORY:

In 1885 the Organisation known as The Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association was founded. It has changed its name twice since then:

- In 1919 the Association's title was amended to include Royal Air Force families: the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA).
- In 1997 on amalgamation with The Forces Help Society and Lord Robert Workshops: SSAFA Forces Help.

The Princess of Wales was appointed the Organisation's first President on 1st May 1885. Her personal monogram of the two crossed "As" is the basis of the Organisation's seal. Queen Victoria became Patron within a few months of the launching of the Organisation. In 1924 Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother became President and remained a Patron until her death in 2002. Her Majesty the Queen continues as a Patron and His Royal Highness Prince Michael of Kent is President. SSAFA Forces Help was one of five charities nominated by Queen Elizabeth II to benefit from her Golden Jubilee in 2002.

The organisation currently provides a wide range of services to both the serving and ex-Service communities.

THE EX-SERVICE COMMUNITY:

The voluntary SSAFA Forces Help Branch network depends solely on voluntary contributions. It is estimated that as many as fourteen million people could be eligible for help under the Charter, that is, anyone in need who serves now or has ever served in the Armed Forces, including the Reserves, as well as their dependants. Assistance extends across disabilities, those with personal problems and those needing support and care, short or long term.

SSAFA Forces Help also provide a Residential Care Home for frail elderly people on the Isle of Wight, flats in Wimbledon for Officers' widows and unmarried daughters as well as former female Officers and Warrant Officers, bungalows and cottages for disabled people, temporary accommodation for Service families experiencing marital difficulties and a housing advisory service.

The Branch Network:

The Branch network consists of seven thousand volunteers covering every town and village in the United Kingdom. Caseworkers are trained to assist Service and ex-Service men and women and their families in solving any problem, which troubles them. The vast majority of their work is with ex-Service personnel.

They are trained to obtain all forms of statutory help available to those in need, to locate and tap all available civilian voluntary funds and to act as agents of the Service and Regimental Funds.

The Branches also handle casework for those still serving in the Armed Forces, often with requests for compassionate leave, postings or discharge, or with requests to visit relatives and report back on the situation at home. Reservists and their families are also assisted, typically during mobilisation.

THE SERVING COMMUNITY:

SSAFA Forces Help Service Committees

Our In-Service Volunteers worldwide, which involves some 800 Volunteers within the 3 Armed Forces worldwide, more than 50 fundraising Service Committees, Community Volunteer projects and 2 Victim Support schemes overseas. These volunteer groups offer the means of providing help and support locally to their own community. Their main work lies in publicising the Association's work and raising funds to provide grants for families in need and sometimes to support the wider work of the Association. They identify local needs and support local voluntary projects including SSAFA Forces Help Community Volunteers.

In the UK and British Forces Germany the Association employs specialist staff to support and advise our In-Service Volunteers. All SSAFA Forces Help In-Service Volunteers work to a clear code of confidentiality.

SSAFA Forces Help Community Volunteers

Community Volunteers may be Servicemen and women, family members or civilians. The amount of time they give depends on them. They are selected for the qualities which they have as individuals and then trained in the skills they need for the local project. Groups have been launched in many establishments around the world where a need has been identified. Essentially, they provide confidential low-key befriending and practical support within the serving community.

Groups are sponsored by the local SSAFA Forces Help Service Committee as well as by a member of staff who will ensure that appropriate professional support is available. The work carried out will vary according to circumstance and local need. All Community Volunteers are interviewed, references taken up and CRB checks carried out. All must attend the three-day Community

Volunteer Course, which gives a thorough grounding in the volunteer's role, listening skills and confidentiality. Other training is available to provide on-going support and development.

This flexibility offers the chance to develop valuable volunteer initiatives.

In British Forces Germany and Cyprus, Victim Support groups have been established which are affiliated to the National Association of Victim Support Schemes in UK. They adhere to Victim Support's codes of practice and confidentiality guidelines.

SSAFA Forces Help Family Escort Service:

SSAFA Forces Help has for many years operated a Family Escort Service to assist Service families and dependants who are travelling to, from and within the UK. The service originally catered for wives and children travelling alone from abroad and needing help to cross London. It has developed into a wider service that meets current needs.

Requests for assistance are made to the Family Escort Co-ordinator in Central Office. Family Escort Service volunteers include both Branch and In-Service Volunteers, often in addition to their other work.

Stepping Stone Homes:

There are two "Stepping Stone Homes", situated in Tyne and Wear and North West London. They provide fully furnished, self-catering temporary accommodation for estranged families – service and ex-service wives and children when they need to move out of the family home. The homes offer secure and comfortable accommodation for a total of 35 families, allowing them to retain their independence. All the homes are run by fully trained staff, who help families adjust back into civilian life and offer practical support and help during the search for a new home. Subject to availability, the homes are open to other groups in certain types of crisis. This is combined with support, practical assistance, and care and counselling.

Confidential Support Line:

In 1997 the Army asked SSAFA Forces Help to set up a completely confidential telephone helpline, in order to support the introduction of the Army's Equal Opportunities Policy. Freephone lines operate from Germany, Cyprus and the UK as well as from operational theatres.

Today, we provide the Confidential Support Line to the Ministry of Defence on a tri-service basis, the purpose of which is to offer a confidential, non-judgmental and non-directive service, to all serving and ex-serving military personnel, their families and friends. The Line which has now reached its tenth anniversary, is operated (from 10.30-22.30hrs, 365(366) days a year) by employees of SSAFA Forces Help, who are trained and supervised to provide a skilled listening service. It is also accredited to the Telephone Helplines Association.

THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:

SSAFA Forces Help is unique in that Social Work and Community Health is provided by the same organisation. The Professional service is funded by the Ministry of Defence and employs Nurses, Midwives Health Visitors and Social Workers. It aims to match the best standards of UK Statutory agencies.

SSAFA Forces Help recruited the first nurse in 1892 to work in Curragh Camp in Ireland. By 1897, twelve nurses were employed to work in various Garrisons at home and abroad. As more Service personnel and their families were posted throughout the world, there became a growing need for the SSAFA Forces Help Nursing Service to work in far-flung Commands such as Egypt and Malaya. Following the implementation of the National Health Service Act which made it a statutory obligation to provide a Community Health Service, SSAFA Forces Help was asked to provide a community health service on a contractual basis and the salaries for their nurses were paid out of public funds. Meanwhile the role overseas was extended to include health visiting and a midwifery service that families would normally receive from the UK authorities.

In 1963 the SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service was established to offer social work support to Service personnel and their families overseas, and an advisory service to the Military chain of Command. They also offer professional social work advice to the military at all levels.

Over the years SSAFA Forces Help's Community Health and Social Services has developed to provide a unique and exemplary service to families. The majority of staff is recruited on either an open contract or a two-year contract (initially), to work Overseas and/or in the UK. Social Work and Community Health managers work closely together in the planning and provision of Community Health and Social Care to families.

THE COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICE:

SSAFA Forces Help Community Health Service employs community health professionals to support Service families in various military commands worldwide. It is a dynamic and expanding service in response to changing and developing needs and aligned to UK best practice and Department of Health directives. World wide Commands include British Forces Germany, Belgium, Holland, Cyprus, Gibraltar, Brunei, Canada, Lisbon "Southlant", "Afsouth" Naples and Nepal. Of recent note, in 2002, the service assumed full responsibility for the operation of Midwifery provision in Gibraltar.

The majority of Community Health staff work in Germany, where since 1996 there have been major changes and improvements in the delivery of health care to the Service personnel and their families. These changes were the result of a market test of health services, as a result of which the new provider of the Health Services in British Forces Germany (BFG) was called The Health Alliance (THA). THA was the result of an 'in-house bid' consisting of

Army, RAF and SSAFA Forces Help Health services supported by Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital NHS Trust. The two remaining military hospitals having closed, Secondary Care was provided by five German Hospitals identified as Designated German Provider (DGP). These provide a high standard of medical care with most doctors and many of the nurses speaking English. A Community Paediatric Service continues to be provided directly by British doctors, as does the Psychiatric Service with BFG Mental Health Unit situated at Wegberg.

Further organisational restructure in 1999 resulted in the formation of British Forces Germany Health Service (BFGHS). This service is provided for all entitled personnel serving in BFG (i.e some 60,000) – Service personnel, United Kingdom Based Civilians and all their Dependants. The Health Service is free to all, including prescriptions, except for NHS Statutory contributions for certain dental treatments and spectacles. BFGHS provides Primary Health Care in all Garrisons and Stations similar to the service provided by the local General Practitioner in the UK. SSAFA Forces Help employs a multi-disciplinary healthcare workforce of over 350 personnel including Midwives, Health Visitors, Community Psychiatric Nurses, Practice Nurses, Community Paediatric Nurses, General Managers and Pharmacists to work within BFGHS. The Director of Nursing and Quality Assurance in BFG Health Service holds responsibility as Senior Nurse SSAFA Forces Help worldwide and in 2002 became Operations Director BFGHS. There is a concentrated focus on clinical governance and the delivery of high quality integrated healthcare throughout the service and in line with UK best practice.

Since 1st April 1996, SSAFA Forces Help has provided a comprehensive primary care service throughout the 5 regions of British Forces Germany. This includes community based midwives who work from Military medical centres across the commands in partnership with other primary care workers. They provide a safe and responsive midwifery service, including participation in the German emergency obstetric service. As well as providing a comprehensive health visiting service, SSAFA Forces Help's Health Visitors are also very involved in school health. They are active members of the Primary Health Care Team and liaise with other professionals and military personnel responsible for family welfare.

Visit <http://www.army.mod.uk/bfghs/medical.htm> to view the location of some of SSAFA Forces Help BFG Medical Centres.

SSAFA Forces Help also employs three Health Promotion Officers who are based at the Resource Centre at Wegberg. The health promotion department works closely with UK Health promoting agencies and government directives as linked to identified community needs. A wide variety of projects have been organised on which Community Health, and Social Work staff, as well as volunteers, have worked positively to address issues relating to a healthier lifestyle. The Resource Centre has an extensive range of literature and equipment available. Friendships and good working relationships with our German colleagues have developed over the years all contributing to a

common approach in achieving the highest standards of care for the families we serve

BFGHS has a Training Department in support of continuing staff development and lifelong learning, a 'Nursing Conference' is organised annually for the various nursing disciplines working in BFGHS and with representatives from other commands. A Nursing Advisor Child Protection and Immunisation Co-ordinator are also employed. Based at Wegberg in Germany both specialist posts have BFG wide responsibility and provide advice to other SSAFA Staff worldwide.

The post of Assistant Director, Clinical Governance, Overseas Commands is based within SSAFA Forces Help Central Office in London and is a point of professional contact in the United Kingdom. In the UK forces families have access to National Health Service health care provision.

THE SOCIAL WORK SERVICE:

Mission Statement

The SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service aims to provide a professional, comprehensive, confidential and cost effective range of welfare support services to Armed Forces personnel and their families, thus helping to promote and maintain the operational readiness of the Services.

The SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service was established in 1963 to provide a professional Social Work Service to Service families Overseas. Since then there have been many changes and the service has expanded greatly to include the United Kingdom (UK). There is now a total of forty-six qualified Social Workers (including Social Work Managers) and thirty-eight Personal & Family Support Workers working overseas and in the UK. The Director of Social Work, who is based in London, manages the service. All SSAFA Forces Help Social Workers are fully qualified and if working overseas will have at least three years post qualifying experience in local authority child care teams.

Overseas

There are Social Workers in Germany, Holland, Belgium (known collectively as Western Europe), Cyprus, Brunei and Gibraltar. They undertake a statutory role similar to that in the UK. This includes statutory responsibility for childcare matters, including child protection. With the exception of Western Europe, they are responsible for the registration and inspection of all sessional day care facilities (including child minders, playgroups and other

pre-school organisations). The Social Workers assist the military community in many ways, supporting other welfare agencies, being members of welfare committees, and advising commanding officers on family welfare matters, in addition to personal social work support.

SSAFA Forces Help has a Specialist Adoption Social Worker and is a registered adoption agency offering advice and assistance on all aspects of adoption. The Social Work Service is also responsible for the assessment and registration of foster cares.

Individuals needing help from a qualified Social Worker have access to the Social Work Service. Confidentiality is strictly maintained according to the profession's own codes of practice.

2002 was a period of change for the SSAFA Forces Help Social Work Service in Western Europe. The Service, based in Germany was re-organised to include three Assessment and Family Support Teams and a joint Social Work and Military Police child protection team, known as the Joint Response team, which also offers an out of hours service.

There is a Training and Development Officer who arranges an annual program and assesses individual training and development needs as well as a Quality Assurance Manager.

In Cyprus there is a Social Work Co-ordinator and two Social Workers and Gibraltar has a Social Worker who works closely with the Royal Naval Social Worker. In Brunei there is a Social Worker who co-ordinates the social work and health service.

The United Kingdom

In the UK, Service families have access to the services of the statutory and voluntary bodies working in the social work field. However, the nature of Service life and the diminishing resources of local authorities have necessitated additional welfare support.

The Army

The provision of welfare support to Army personnel and their families in England, Scotland and Wales is the responsibility of the Army Welfare Service.

The Royal Air Force

SSAFA Forces Help operates a Social Work Service for the RAF, which consists of 29 Personal & Family Support Workers and 8 Personal & Family Social Workers based on most RAF Stations in the UK. They are professionally supervised and managed by 8 Area Social Work Managers.

The Royal Navy

The Royal Navy has its own welfare service called the Naval Personal and Family Service (NPFS). SSAFA Forces Help staff liaise closely with NPFS when appropriate.

Northern Ireland

The Personal Welfare Service consisting of five qualified Social Workers provides welfare support in Northern Ireland on a Tri-Service basis. They assist the military community by liaising with and supporting other welfare agencies, advising commanding officers on family welfare matters and providing personal social work support. In addition they offer professional supervision to an RAF Personal & Family Support Worker and Army Welfare Workers.

SPECIAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY ADVISER

In 1990 the Ministry of Defence (MOD) acknowledged that particular difficulties were faced by Service families with a member with special needs or disability and agreement was reached for the funding of a Special Needs and Disability Adviser (SNDA).

Based in Central Office in London, the SNDA's main duties include:

- Ensuring that Service families, where special needs or disability is part of their lives, are aware of and make full use of existing services provided by statutory and other agencies and to link in with these agencies.
- To support and advocate for families moving to and from the UK and overseas and within the UK on aspects of education, Social Service provisions, health, housing, DSS etc.
- To work with service authorities and personnel overseas to develop appropriate support and care for families posted abroad.
- To advise and provide input on the training of military personnel and voluntary staff working in the field of welfare within the services and SSAFA Forces Help and to raise awareness of disability.
- To advise the MOD of current legislation and policies regarding disability issues.
- To organise a Special Needs and Disability Seminar every second year.
- To organise two annual holidays for children with disabilities from service families and one for siblings of those children.
- To ensure that disability is kept on the agenda and the issues highlighted at every opportunity within the military and support agencies.

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