

Welfare Services

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

We are committed to helping people in need, suffering or distress, regardless of age or condition.

What is SSAFA Forces Help's Welfare Ethos?

SSAFA Forces Help seeks to help and assist both serving and ex-Service personnel and their families by providing welfare support and also by offering choices as to where to go for help.

Each year, more than 50,000 people are helped by SSAFA Forces Help. Who is eligible for welfare support?

Anyone who has served one paid day in any of our three Armed Forces or served one year's service in the Reserve Forces (marked by payment of a bounty where applicable) or one day's service on operations together with their families and dependants, are entitled to welfare support from SSAFA Forces Help. This includes the widows and widowers of those who have served. We can also help those who have completed one paid day in the Mercantile Marine or one year's service in the Association's Nursing and Welfare Service

How is welfare carried out in the ex-Service community?

The vast majority of our work is done through our network of nearly 100 Branches across the UK. We have approximately 3,500 trained Branch volunteers who undertake casework with ex-Service personnel and their families, helping them with their problems and concerns. In addition to our caseworkers, we have an army of volunteers who help with fundraising, public relations, management and accounts,

What is a caseworker?

The role of a SSAFA Forces Help caseworker is to assist clients who may need support by assessing their problem and then helping to find a solution. The problem may be of a practical nature, such as the inability to go shopping, or an emotional problem such as loneliness or worry, or it may be a financial problem, such as the need for help with unpaid bills or debt advice.

How do we help those with financial difficulties?

SSAFA Forces Help is a caseworking organisation, not a benevolent fund. For those clients in need of money, we check that they are receiving all the benefits from statutory sources they are entitled to. If they are still in need of help, our caseworkers will seek funds from other sources which include service, corps and regimental benevolent funds, other charities and industry benevolent funds. This method of raising funds for the client in need is called 'almonising'. The client is always made aware of where the money has come from.

Other welfare assistance

As well as financial assistance, we also provide housing advice and facilities to the ex-Service community, friendship visits and practical support, such as providing wheelchairs and stair lifts to those who have difficulty moving around and are in need.

What about the serving community?

Our caseworkers who deal with the ex-Service community also handle casework for those still serving, often with requests for compassionate leave, postings, discharge or with requests for news of relatives back at home. As well as caseworkers, serving personnel and their families can turn to community volunteers. Community volunteers, themselves often serving personnel or family members, befriend families and colleagues going through periods of isolation, loneliness, illness, bereavement, depression and other difficulties (there is a factsheet available on community volunteers).

What training do the caseworkers receive?

SSAFA Forces Help was one of the first charities to insist on training for its volunteers. The Caseworkers Course has been mandatory for those joining since January 1986 and is strongly recommended for all those who joined before that date. The course is held over three days, and provides SSAFA Forces Help volunteers with an understanding of the issues they may encounter in order to provide 'the ready help of friends to friends'. At the end of this course, the volunteers should have an understanding of the work of the Association, a specific knowledge of the duties and responsibilities of a caseworker, financial casework procedures, eligibility criteria for help and an understanding of state benefits.

How to become a volunteer for SSAFA Forces Help

Volunteers join us from all walks of life and are of all ages; many are ex-Service personnel, many are not. Becoming a volunteer for SSAFA Forces Help can help build up skills such as communication, listening, organisation and management. Volunteering is a uniquely rewarding experience with plenty of challenges and plenty of choice. By giving time to support the work of SSAFA Forces Help, volunteers can make a real difference to the serving and ex-Service community and their families in need.

To find out more about becoming a volunteer, contact our Recruitment and Branch Development Assistant on 020 7463 9273, or email info@ssafa.org.uk

For further information on our welfare services please contact 0845 658 1167 or 020 7463 9223 or visit www.ssafa.org.uk



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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