

SSAFA NEWS FOR SUPPORTERS

AUTUMN 2021

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DARKEST
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charity

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THANK YOU

As we approach the end of 2021 with over 42 million* of the adult population fully vaccinated it is important to remember the team effort of everyone involved. And that is what you - our supporters - are, a team working together to make positive changes to the lives of our Armed Forces community. Without you these services would not be possible!

Did you know last year, because of your contributions, our Forcesline helpline was able to help 27,761 people through calls, emails and online chat to ask for the support they desperately needed? That's enough people to fill Lords Cricket Ground!

It is thanks to your continued generosity that veterans, struggling to adapt to civilian life, are helped by

our mentors through one-to-one support. Last year 747 people, aged 17-50 years old, were supported through mentoring programmes, 94% more than 2019.

This time you will hear from Haydn about the devastating accident which changed his entire life, and how turning to SSAFA for support helped him cope with his grief. After our wordsearch we are back with another challenge; this time, a quiz on the Armed Forces. So, get your thinking caps on and remember no Googling the answers!

Our Armed Forces still need your ongoing support, so they have somewhere to turn when they require help. After serving their nation we should be there for them in their time of need. * At time of print



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FUNDRAISING PROMISE

- We commit to high standards
- We are clear, honest and open
- We are respectful
- We are fair and reasonable
- We are accountable and responsible



CONTACT US

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VOLUNTEERING FROM EAST TO WEST

Our volunteers are key to supporting the Armed Forces and now you can hear from two of them.

East: Meet Dave

Dave is no stranger when it comes to serving the general public. From Army to Police to council and now a SSAFA Branch Secretary for Cambridge and Bedfordshire, he fits volunteering around his full-time job. "Being a good listener is key and that leads to being an effective communicator. You need empathy and a degree of warmth because you may be the third or fourth organisation the beneficiary has called for help, but the only one that's able to offer them any support.

"There is no better feeling than giving something back"

"And we have support from the SSAFA network too. We've got a really good relationship with SSAFA Head Office and with the team who runs Forcesline, our charity helpline.

West: Meet Alex

Alex volunteers as Divisional Secretary for SSAFA in Salisbury and the surrounding area. As well as working full-time, she manages a team of caseworkers to help serving personnel and veterans in need. "We're all volunteers. I manage the caseworkers and the cases that come to us by phone, email or through referral. "My role is to have a chat with the client and see how we can help them. We help lots of different people from those who've just come out of the Forces to those who served in the Second World War. Some may only have served for a short period; some, for decades. We help them all: individuals, couples and families.

"The work we do is extremely varied."

"It's very humbling to know that we can make a difference to people's lives, and sometimes it's just the small things that matter.

"We're always looking for volunteers. There are lots of different roles they can perform ranging from caseworkers to divisional secretaries, treasurers, mentors and fundraisers.

"You don't have to come from a military background. Anybody from all walks of life is always welcome to come and find out more about SSAFA, what we do and how you could make a difference."

To become a volunteer visit: ssafa.org.uk/volunteer

GINA'S NEW WHEELS

Knocked over in a hit and run, Gina was taken to hospital, and the bike she was riding was written off.

Riding was her only coping mechanism to deal with her brother's terminal illness and, without it, she was lost. Thankfully SSAFA stepped in to help.

"I've been in uniform since I was 13 when I joined the Army Cadets. After my A-levels I did 11 years, mainly in the Royal Signals, serving on the frontline across the globe from Bosnia to East Timor - often first on the ground as conflict broke out.

"After leaving in 2006 I was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Whilst receiving support, my brother was diagnosed with cancer,

"Getting in touch with SSAFA is the best thing that's happened to me this year"

so I temporarily moved to be near him and help with his care.

That's when I started cycling. I needed something to take my mind off things.

"When Covid hit during the first lockdown his treatment came to a halt and I was told he had little time left. The day before he died, I was knocked off my bike in a hit and run with another cyclist, who was travelling on the wrong side of the cycle path. The impact catapulted me off the bike. Luckily, I was only badly bruised, but my bike was completely trashed.

"Following my accident, I got in touch with SSAFA.

"Graham, my SSAFA caseworker, was brilliant. He went through the forms with me and then wrote to my different regiments

asking if they would fund a new bike.

He kept pushing, but I didn't expect much.

However, together the regiments donated the full amount to buy me a fabulous new bike!

"I love my new bike, it's good for my mental health. No one has ever done anything like this for me before.

"I knew about SSAFA, but it wasn't until I was supported by them that I realised the extent of everything they do for the Armed Forces.

I am now fundraising for SSAFA, to thank them for their support."



To hear from Gina scan the QR code.

KEEP CALM AND GET CONNECTED

Thanks to a grant from The Department for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) the 'Keep Calm, Get Connected and Carry On' project can continue.

The project aims to combat loneliness and isolation amongst those most vulnerable in the Armed Forces community. Thanks to a grant extension from DCMS, we were able to extend this project throughout 2021. In June last year, the Government announced that they would donate **£5 million** to national organisations to help them tackle loneliness. As a result, SSAFA has now received a total of **£950,000** from DCMS to help combat loneliness and isolation amongst veterans and their families. The grant has helped support those most at-risk during the COVID-19 pandemic across England, from adapting services, such as

Forcesline, our specialist helpline, to delivering breakfast bacon rolls to those isolating in rural communities. The scheme creates social connections for lonely veterans and their families, co-ordinated across England, delivered through SSAFA's branches in local communities, and supported by more than **4000 trained volunteers**, to support more veterans at risk of loneliness, whilst our one-to-one mentoring service has managed to reach out to those who would have been previously isolated and cut off from their community. It aims to facilitate a technological adaptation of services, enabling them to be delivered online and remotely, where required, providing a positive impact beyond the grant.

"She honestly was the strongest, most amazing woman I had the pleasure of knowing and will be missed by everyone."



HONOURING HER MEMORY

Earlier this year, 9-year-old Jack Chadwick took on a pogo-stick challenge in memory of Marisa Tomkins, a veteran and dedicated SSAFA volunteer, after she passed away at age 63.

On February 26, 2021, Marisa Tomkins sadly passed away suddenly and peacefully. Young family friend Jack was inspired to fundraise in her memory, and continue to support her favourite charity, by attempting to complete 200 pogo-stick jumps every day throughout March. This amounted to a total of 6,200 jumps.

Marisa served in the Army Reserve from 1985, including military operations in Baghdad, Iraq. She received the Iraq medal in 2006. She also obtained her 5-year and 10-year Service Medal, and her Jubilee Medal. Marisa was very well respected and retired from the Army Reserve at the age of 60. In 1992 Marisa joined the police force and served for 18 years alongside her continued TA commitments. Once retired she volunteered to support the Armed Forces community in the Bury area with SSAFA.

Jack said: "I feel really good and happy that I can help people."

Beth Chadwick, Jack's older sister tells us: "Jack tries to raise money for charity every year. So, this year, Jack decided to do something a little out of the norm and complete 200 pogo-stick jumps each day in March to try and raise £200. He had yet to choose a charity when our lovely family friend Marisa Tomkins passed away. Marisa was a much loved and dear friend to everyone.

"If Marisa had to live by one line, it would be to "live life to the full" and she certainly did that!"

Jack has already smashed his target of raising £200 and has raised an amazing £3,000 so far.



You can create a Facebook in memory fundraiser by visiting: [facebook.com/SSAFAOfficial](https://www.facebook.com/SSAFAOfficial)

LET'S GET QUIZZICAL



Do you know all there is to know about SSAFA and the Armed Forces? Well now is the time to find out in our brand-new quiz! Get those pens out and your thinking caps on in our latest brain teaser challenge

Fill in the answers below to these questions and test your knowledge today. Answers can be found upside down at the bottom, but no peeking please!

1. In which year was SSAFA established?
2. Which three colours make up the three services in SSAFA's logo?
3. Which military base is situated next to a famous natural beauty spot on the Jurassic Coast in Dorset, England?
4. How old must you be before enlisting in the Army as a soldier?
5. In which year was the RAF founded?
6. What does SSAFA stand for?
7. Name Britain's first nuclear powered submarine, commissioned in 1963?
8. In which English county is RAF Benson?
9. How many trained volunteers does SSAFA have?
10. Which British military regiment has the following motto: 'Ready for Anything'?

ANSWERS

1. 1885, 2. Red, Light Blue and Dark Blue, 3. Lutworth, 4. 16 years old, 5. 1 April 1918, 6. The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association, 7. HMS Dreadnought, 8. Oxfordshire, 9. 4,000 10. Parachute Regiment

“SSAFA came at just the right time”

THE DAY HAYDN'S LIFE CHANGED FOREVER

Devastated by the deaths of his three-year-old daughter Isla and unborn child, following a crash on the A34, Flight Lieutenant Haydn turned to SSAFA for support.

“I initially trained on the Harrier and then moved onto helicopters, which I always wanted. I've been flying the Chinook since 2013 and have travelled, carrying out exercises and deployments, all over the world, from

the Middle East to the Falklands.”

Haydn was on a posting in the Falklands when a harrowing call came in to tell him that his family had been involved in a crash with a lorry and were seriously injured.



“I spent the next couple of hours trying to phone the hospital, to find out what had happened. I eventually got through to the ward, and I spoke to my wife Collette. She'd broken her neck and at that stage Isla and our unborn baby were alive but at serious risk, with Isla sustaining head and neck injuries. I needed to get home and the RAF were incredible at getting me back - but each hour was torture.”

Upon arriving at the hospital Haydn discovered their unborn child had died and was shortly told afterwards their daughter Isla would not pull through. Haydn then had to break the news to Collette.

Haydn tried to come to terms with what had happened, the devastation of his tragic loss eventually caught up with him. It was then he got in touch with SSAFA.

Haydn says: “It was two years after the accident, I got pretty sad.

I knew I had to speak to a professional so I got in touch with SSAFA. I met Jenna, a SSAFA social worker, and she allowed me to tell her the whole story and I bawled my eyes out for at least an hour. “Jenna arranged for me to see a licensed counsellor, paid for by the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. I had five or six sessions and felt so much better.



“Even after Jenna had organised the counselling I still went back once a week to chat to her. She was very easy to talk to, and she really listened. I was allowed to accept how I genuinely felt in each moment.

“Even though life is difficult at times, I know that I have wonderful friends and family, a great support network and Collette. Nothing could ever happen that would break our relationship and we know that now.

“I have recently returned to Odiham and have become an instructor preparing frontline crews for operations.”

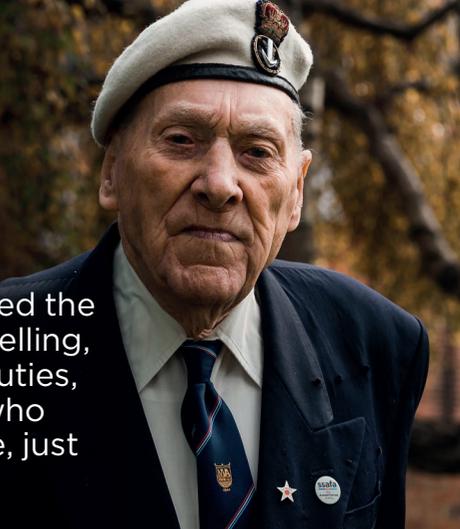
Though the pain can't be taken away, Haydn thanks the charity for giving him an outlet for his grief and being there for him when he needed them most.

“I've got massive respect for what SSAFA does and I would encourage other people to use them. I appreciate the people who support SSAFA and donate to them too so people like me can access help when we need it most.”

If you need support, please visit:
ssafa.org.uk/raf-personal-support

COMING BACK HOME

Bill, a 96-year-old Second World War veteran and all-round adventurer joined the Navy at just 14. After a lifetime of travelling, being on Arctic Convoys and special duties, Bill is now saying thank you SSAFA, who helped him get home to the UK to live, just as COVID-19 took a grip on the world.



“Supporting service veterans is very important. They’re not to be forgotten.”

After many years in New Zealand after the Second World War, Bill settled in France aged 77, and lived there for 18 years, until the draw of home became too much, and he wanted to move back to the UK. And this is when he turned to SSAFA's branch in France for help. They then reached out to their colleagues at the Wiltshire branch.

“I was told there was a gentleman in Normandy, a Second World War veteran in his 90s, who wanted to return back to live in ‘Blighty’”, Alex, Divisional Secretary for SSAFA in Salisbury, explains.

“I knew of a local care home that was suitable and we discovered luckily that there was a space there for Bill.”

After many hours of careful planning, SSAFA's Branch

Secretaries in France and Wiltshire co-ordinated Bill's return home.

“Once he'd settled in, I got in contact with Bill and went round there with a few SSAFA goodies to check he was okay and had everything he needed.”

Bill later decided he wanted to move to Southsea, a place he grew to know during his Navy days. It was a challenging move, midway through the pandemic, but one that has made him feel more at home after years away from the UK.

Since the move, Bill has been helped with a wide variety of issues from signing him up with a doctor, to getting a mobility scooter and chasing hospital appointments.

As Bill tells us: “The people from SSAFA are like my relations, they've done so much for me.”

If you know of an older veteran who needs support visit ssafa.org.uk/supporting-older-veterans

“ SSAFA understand the military way of life.”

BECOMING A FAMILY

After unsuccessful attempts at IVF and a miscarriage, Royal Navy Reservist Ann and her wife Emma began their adoption journey in June 2018, when they made an initial call to SSAFA's Adoption Team.

Ann Miller-McCaffrey joined the WRNS in July 1987, aged 18. Working in the education support branch of the WRNS, she worked regularly with the Royal Marines deploying with them to Norway. Following the merging of the WRNS and Royal Navy in 1990, Ann volunteered to go to sea, serving on board HMS Roebuck and HMS Somerset.

After 24 years of full service, Ann joined the Royal Navy Reserve. Currently, she is the last standing member of the Royal Navy who wears the Educational and Training Services, (ETS), epaulette.

Ann married Emma, a charity worker and former teacher after proposing in uniform at Liverpool Pride in 2016. The couple was keen to start a family and took the stability offered by a posting to RMA Sandhurst to begin their journey.

“We want to see a reflection of us, and we got that with SSAFA.”

At the start of 2020, just a few weeks before the Covid crisis hit, the couple saw the profile of a 13-month-old little girl who they wanted to be theirs.

By June 2020, they were matched, and in July they were able to bring their daughter home, with the formal adoption order arriving in December.

Throughout the process, Ann and Emma were supported in their quest for parenthood by SSAFA adoption social worker Roger, who they describe as their 'rock', for not only facilitating and guiding their adoption journey, but for supporting them as they attempted to adopt during the Covid crisis, and multiple lockdowns.

In total, 409 households were supported by our Adoption services in 2020, and nine new households were approved to adopt. 55.5% of those were same sex couples, far higher than the national average for adoption.



To find more about adoption within the Armed Forces visit: ssafa.org.uk/adoption and to hear from Ann and Emma scan QR code.



SAVING JOHN FROM DEBT

After suffering from Pulmonary Embolism in his lungs, John Druce's livelihood was stripped from him. Within two weeks, the former Trooper was facing crippling debt and his health started deteriorating.

Eventually the struggle became too much, and he had to reach out or face dire consequences. John was put in touch with his local SSAFA branch in Gwent - and from there his problems began to disappear...

John initially joined the Royal Military Police before transferring to a Welsh tank regiment, The Queen's Dragoon Guards, where he served in Northern Ireland before heading over to West Germany, where he

saw the fall of the Berlin Wall.

After leaving the Army in 1995 John spent 10 years in Canada before moving back to the UK where he became a bus driver. Then John's life took a turn for the worse.

"I lost my bus driving job because I suffered from pulmonary embolisms. Both my lungs filled up with blood clots. I nearly died and was in intensive care as my heart went down to 10% function.

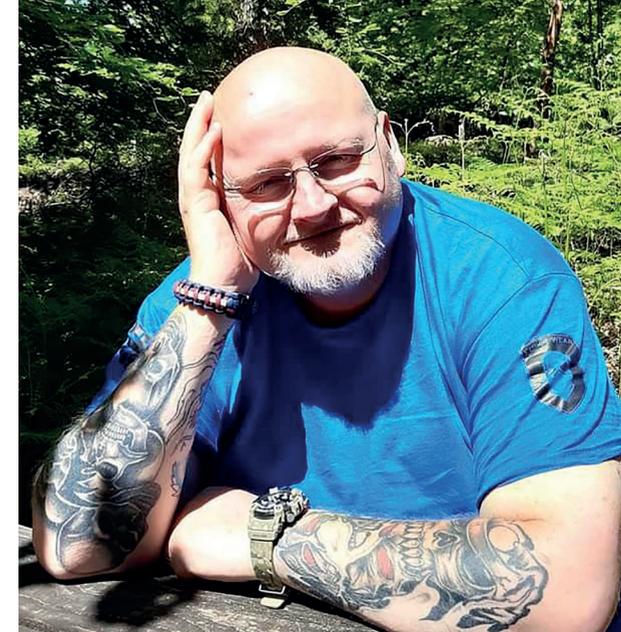
"Speaking to Trevor was like being thrown a life raft when I was drowning."

"As a result, I couldn't go back to work, which put me into severe debt and triggered Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Because of the stress I was under, I started having nightmares about my time in Northern Ireland.

"By the start of the pandemic the debt became crippling. After being put in touch with SSAFA I was assigned to caseworker Trevor Scott. He was brilliant. I never got to meet him face to face because of covid restrictions, but from the first phone call where I explained my situation he said, 'Leave it to me. I'll see what I can do.'

"He sorted everything out in order of priority and made me feel so assured. I didn't even have to make a phone call to my landlord or housing agency, he did all that for me as well.

"There was no judgement from Trevor, he just wanted the facts and told me every step of the way how he would try to find the funding to help me.



"He also asked about my wife and her needs, which I didn't think was something that would happen. I assumed that it would only be ex-military who got support. SSAFA took care of my whole family which was amazing.

"Because of the support I'm completely debt free. SSAFA encouraged me to apply for Universal Credit, because my physical condition means it's hard to find work, so this has reduced my stress levels too.

"I'd love to shake Trevor's hand and tell him that he was my light at the end of the tunnel during the darkest point.

"To anyone else who needs support: get in touch! I know if I ever have issues in the future I will pick up the phone to SSAFA."

To find your local branch visit:
ssafa.org.uk/local-branch

VETERANS IN EUROPE

Following the UK's departure from the EU, SSAFA France helped couple Jan and Des apply for French residency.

Jan was married to Des, a former RAF Pilot, for over 25 years. Following his 35 years' service and Jan's retirement in April 1991 they decided to move permanently to France.

Des suffered from Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and dementia along with other health problems. This led to Jan taking the difficult decision to place Des in a care home.

On the 31 October 2019, the UK left the EU under The Withdrawal Agreement. Under the terms of this agreement, UK Nationals living in the EU at the end of the transition period could continue to live and work in their host country by applying for a new biometric residency permit.

SSAFA was appointed by the UK Government via the UK National Support Fund (UKNSF) to assist Armed Forces veterans in at-risk groups with their residency applications. Jan needed to apply for Des's new residency card on his behalf, but it

“Keith and his co-workers were extremely understanding.”

proved difficult due to his disability. After seeing an advert in *The Connexion*, an English publication distributed in France, she decided to contact SSAFA and ask for assistance.

She was put in touch with caseworker Keith who immediately got on to their case and helped sort through all the necessary paperwork.

As Jan says: “They were very good to me. I think Keith realised it was all mounting up on my shoulders. I didn't know which way to turn, because I wasn't getting guidance from anywhere.

“I would definitely recommend anyone who needs support to get in touch with SSAFA, they were fantastic.”

Sadly, Des passed away from his illnesses earlier this year.

17,274 people have accessed our UK National Support Fund from across Germany, France and Cyprus. That's more than the number of people who joined the UK Regular Armed Forces in 2020.

If you need support and are based in Europe visit:
ssafa.org.uk/veterans-in-europe

Stanley, 99, has been recognised for his military involvement in the Liberation of France during the Second World War.

Legion D'Honneur

After joining the RAF as an apprentice at the age of 17, Sqn.Ldr Stanley Booker MBE RAF (Rtd) trained as an Observer in Wales and then joined 10Sqn as a navigator flying Halifax Bombers.

On 3rd June 1944, his Halifax was shot down in flames and crashed near Dreux, in France. His pilot and wireless operator were killed but Stanley was able to escape by parachute.

Stanley was hidden by members of the French resistance but was betrayed by a Belgian Gestapo spy. He was captured and tortured and then sent to Buchenwald Concentration Camp, rather than a prisoner of war camp, where he witnessed many atrocities. He was eventually liberated after the war ended.

Stanley's harrowing experience led to a lifelong campaign for

recognition of the Allied Airmen and SOE agents who were tortured and incarcerated in the camp.

Despite his harrowing experience, Stanley continued his career in the RAF and worked as a spy, moving to Germany with his family, where he saved thousands of people in the Berlin Airlift and worked on intelligence operations during the Cold War.

In 1951, he was recruited to work for British Intelligence in Hamburg and Berlin and undertook secret intelligence gathering of Soviet activities during the Cold War. He was later awarded a MBE by the Queen for his work.

Barry Dickens (Air Commodore Ret'd), Chairman of SSAFA Berkshire, said:



“He packed more into the first 20 or so years of his life than most would in their whole lifetime. Modest and unassuming, his survival after bailing out of his stricken aircraft is a testimony to his courage, fortitude, and strength of character.

“Stanley has the greatest respect for the work that SSAFA does. He has made few calls on SSAFA but knows the charity is there for him if needed.

“His award of becoming a Chevalier in the Ordre National de la Legion d' Honneur is richly deserved.”

To read more about Stanley visit:
ssafa.org.uk/stanley

PROVIDING FOR THE FUTURE

Every year many loyal supporters like you pledge to leave a gift in their Will to SSAFA. Will you join them?

Leaving a gift in your Will is an amazing way to ensure the people and causes you care about the most will never be forgotten.

By choosing to remember SSAFA in your Will you are ensuring our services will be there for our Armed Forces family for generations to come.

We recognise the importance of protecting the people we love, and we know that your own family and friends will always come first. However, like so many other people who remember our Armed Forces family in their Will, we hope that you will also find room to include SSAFA.

Alexandra Walmsley, a valued supporter of SSAFA, told us:

“I’d like to leave a legacy to SSAFA to mark my time on this earth and help those who have put their lives on the line for us all to live in a safe and independent country.

“My husband served as a submariner in the Royal Navy for many years. I have a lot of friends who are still serving, or who

have served in the Armed Forces both here in the UK and Overseas.

“I have a strong conviction that those who voluntarily join the Armed Forces to keep the rest of us safe should not be denied the support they need, if required during their lifetime. Nor should the families of those service personnel. SSAFA is the one charity that meets both of those requirements.

“I think SSAFA does an amazing job – and has done for such a long time.”

“It is a remarkable charity, whose work will never cease being important. It is so good people can get help decades after leaving the Forces.

“I believe those of us who are able should contribute – in whatever way we can – to help those who are less fortunate.”

To find out more about how to remember SSAFA in your Will visit – ssafa.org.uk/mylegacy or call 020 7463 9225

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Regulars | Reserves | Veterans | Families

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