

The background image shows the interior of a military transport aircraft. Two people are walking away from the camera towards the front of the plane. The person on the right is wearing a blue t-shirt with the 'ssafa' logo and 'The Armed Forces Charity' text. The aircraft's interior features a diamond-patterned metal ceiling, red cargo straps, and rows of seats. The lighting is dramatic, with strong highlights and deep shadows.

YOUR TRUSTED SOURCE OF SUPPORT

2022-2027 Strategy

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity

Regulars | Reserves | Veterans | Families

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**DELIVERING
ON OUR PROMISES**

Five years on from the launch of our previous strategy, SSAFA is fundamentally in good shape having streamlined our offer and focused on personalised support to our beneficiaries. Since 2017, global challenges have had a significant impact on those we support, our service delivery and our ways of working. Nonetheless, our teams around the globe have continued to provide trusted support to our beneficiaries in their time of need. This strategy refresh will enable SSAFA to build on this legacy and seize every opportunity to become a yet more responsive, efficient, and effective charity.

As the first lockdown began, Forcesline saw an **80% increase** from April to June 2020 in requests for befriending and those struggling with loneliness.

- SSAFA Research Report: Loneliness and social isolation in a time of Covid-19.



We now operate in a more tightly regulated environment, and we have weathered financial insecurity brought about by uncertainty, Brexit and the global pandemic. When the first lockdown occurred in 2020, like others, SSAFA adapted to the new reality. We continued to deliver our existing services, some over digital platforms, and some in Covid-safe Community Healthcare and Social Care settings, along with innovative programmes launched to directly tackle the unique impacts of Covid-19. Our volunteers and employees have been simply brilliant.

The Armed Forces community has also changed in the last five years. Serving personnel are more often living in the wider community rather than on a military base. Our Armed Forces are increasingly UK based, with personnel being deployed overseas, unaccompanied for longer periods. This is changing the needs of serving personnel and their families, something we are adjusting to whilst we also support those veterans living with the legacies of operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, the Falklands and Northern Ireland. Their needs are greater today than ever before.

Looking to the future, beneficiaries' needs will continue to evolve. We have seen increased levels of loneliness and isolation amongst those who ask for help, especially during the pandemic. This has highlighted a requirement for additional community-based welfare support, outside of just financial assistance. We receive requests from younger, more diverse individuals, who want to connect with us in different ways; that is why we launched our online webchat platform to run alongside our existing Forcesline phone and email service.

The nature of volunteering is also evolving, and we need to ensure that our offer suits the widest and most diverse pool of potential recruits.

This new strategy has been developed with the help of many members of the Charity and through listening to our beneficiaries and stakeholders. It articulates a refreshed Vision, Mission and Values and outlines our revised strategic aims, providing a hand-rail to guide the next stage of our evolution. We will craft annual plans around these aims and track performance accordingly, and Council will revisit the strategy in the light of experience every two years, ensuring that it remains relevant and up to date.

In our 137th year, this strategy refresh is well timed, not least as moving on from the pandemic and dealing with the cost-of-living crisis will bring greater hardship but also fresh opportunity. We will build on the previous strategy and our many decades of experience in order to ensure SSAFA can enable members of our Armed Forces, veterans and their families to thrive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Coward', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Lieutenant General Sir Gary Coward KBE CB
SSAFA National Chair

REFLECTING ON THE LAST FIVE YEARS

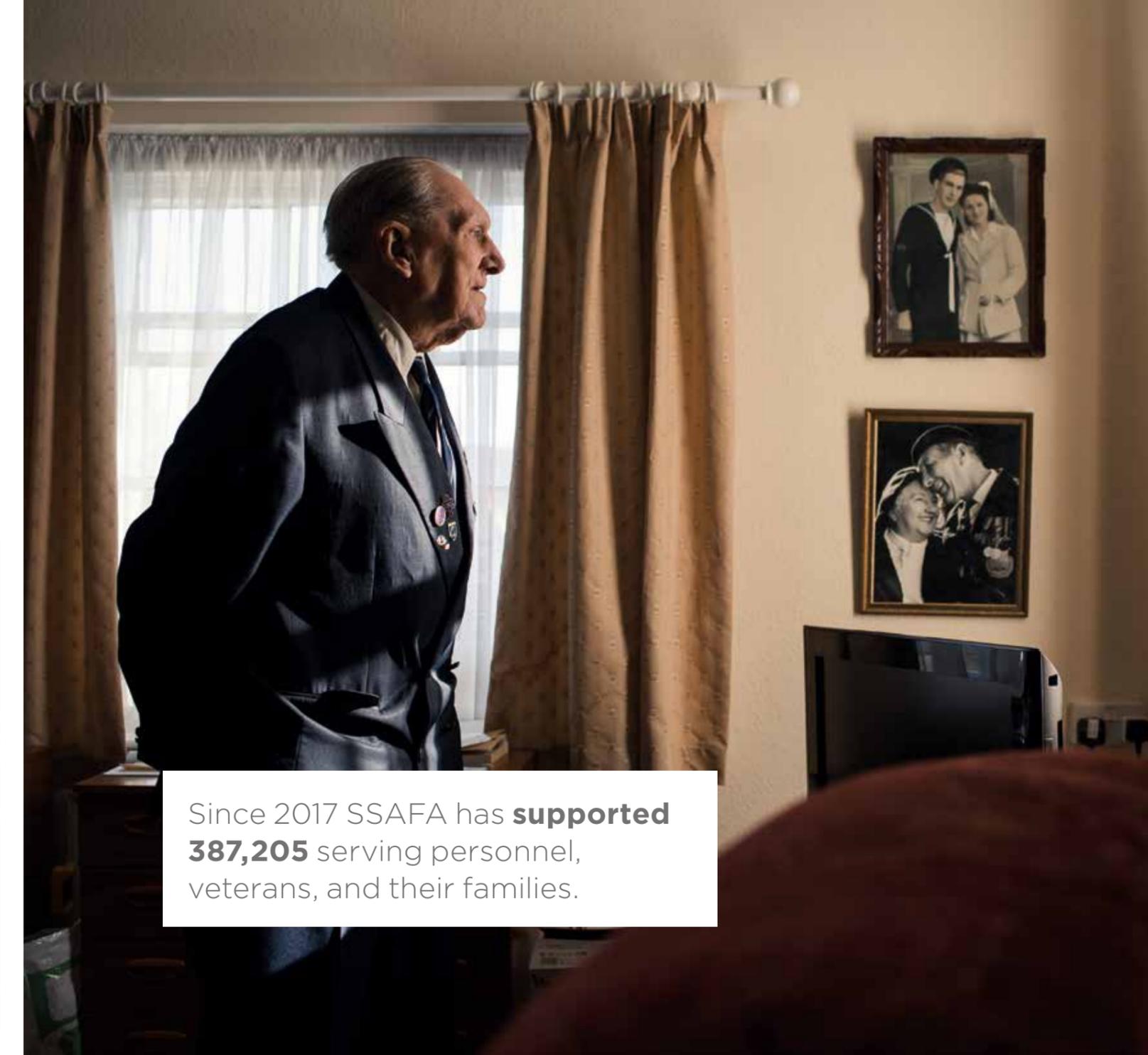
Following the 2017 strategic review, we moved rapidly to effect the changes set out in our strategic aims and have achieved outcomes above and beyond what was initially set out in our plan. We have, for example, adapted our bereavement support groups and short breaks services for families with additional needs, as well as expanding our transitional mentoring programme. We also transferred to other providers some services at various residential and healthcare facilities that were no longer core to our refocused service provision.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of our volunteer branch network and the support they deliver, we invested in a ground-breaking change programme called SSAFA@140. This enhanced regional infrastructure model for our volunteer frontline is in the process of being rolled out; it has raised the consistency of support to beneficiaries, reducing waiting times and enabling faster responses to those in need.

We have collaborated on research projects with a number of academic institutions, focusing on those issues directly affecting our beneficiaries, including food poverty and loneliness and isolation. We raised awareness of the work that we do through innovative media and digital campaigns. We have also developed new and existing collaborative partnerships, working with both those inside the military sector and externally.

We have exceeded what we set out to do, and as pressures and priorities have changed - so have we. We have improved our safeguarding policy and practice, introducing a Single Point of Contact (SPOC) for safeguarding and have made adjustments to reduce our carbon footprint in order to be more environmentally sustainable.

SSAFA is in a strong position as we embark on our refreshed strategy for the next five years, underpinned by a financially strong position with healthy reserves. We have an exceptional range of complementary services, designed to meet specific beneficiary needs and delivered by skilled teams of employees and volunteers. We are on a journey of digital transformation, better utilising technology to reach even more beneficiaries and supporters and sharing knowledge more effectively.



Since 2017 SSAFA has **supported 387,205** serving personnel, veterans, and their families.

DEVELOPING OUR 2022 – 2027 STRATEGY



SSAFA's trustees carefully considered the changing environment we operate within, and the evolving needs of our beneficiaries, volunteers and employees, to establish a comprehensive set of strategic priorities that will be driven by our five strategic aims. To develop this refreshed strategy, a number of key working groups were established to harness the expertise and knowledge of our volunteers and employees, at all levels.

In addition, our trustees felt that SSAFA's Vision, Mission and Values should be reassessed with language that reflects our renewed direction and collective passion for supporting the Armed Forces community. More than 550 volunteers, employees and beneficiaries engaged in surveys and focus groups. The new Vision, Mission and Values have been moulded and refined by those who understand the fabric of SSAFA best and we are proud of the collaborative effort in producing these inspiring statements.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank all participants in the development of this strategy. The hundreds of volunteers, employees and beneficiaries that have helped to shape the future of SSAFA and ensure that we continue our legacy.

“ The word ‘trusted’ is perfect, as someone who’s been in the military for a long time, I know they [SSAFA] are trusted and they are an enduring source of support.”

— Beneficiary focus group participant.



**STRONG PRINCIPLES
GUIDING THE
WAY FORWARD**

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Our new Vision, Mission and Values were developed by our SSAFA family and reflect who we are, what we do and where we want to be.

Through our Mission, we will continuously strive to reach our Vision.

This strategy will be delivered through our Strategic Aims, and every interaction we have with our beneficiaries, supporters, partners and one another will be underpinned by our strong Values.



SUPPORTING THE ARMED FORCES FAMILY TO THRIVE

VISION

A society in which the Armed Forces, veterans and their families can thrive

MISSION

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity is a trusted source of support for serving personnel, veterans and their families in their time of need

STRATEGIC AIMS

Understanding need

Delivering consistent & effective support

Sustaining our resources

Raising our profile & strengthening our brand

Growing collaboration

VALUES

Commitment

Understanding

Integrity

Compassion



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

There are challenges ahead, including the long-term impact of Covid-19, the growing pressures on the cost-of-living and the consequences of the conflict in Ukraine. Our volunteer numbers have dropped in recent years, and we face greater regulatory and technological challenges across the organisation. However, with this strategy, we have the skills and expertise to build on the successes of the past.

The world of volunteering is and will continue to change. Trends in volunteering show that increasingly people are less likely to volunteer through a sense of duty and now look for roles that are manageable, meaningful, and mutually beneficial. SSAFA must consider how opportunities like micro-volunteering and the use of technology can benefit both our volunteers and hence also our beneficiaries.

Working practices have changed considerably over the past two years, with many of our employees and volunteers delivering their roles through a hybrid mix of in-person and virtual support. While this brings benefits, we are also aware of the potential negative impacts, such as digital exclusion; we are committed to the wellbeing of our people.

We must have a greater understanding and be better equipped to support not only our beneficiaries' mental health but also to realise its impact on their overall wellbeing. While SSAFA is not a provider of clinical mental health services, there is a clear intersection between mental health and the other challenges our beneficiaries face.

We will measure the social value we deliver as an organisation, particularly in relation to environmental sustainability, and seek to tackle social and economic inequality. SSAFA is deeply committed to creating a fairer and more sustainable society. Therefore, we have ensured that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) are integral to achieving all of our strategic aims.

SSAFA's financial position is strong, but to deliver on our aims, like many charities we will face greater financial challenges. Every income generation and cost efficiency option has been carefully considered as part of this strategy refresh. We have a plan, including a revised fundraising strategy, to ensure SSAFA's financial sustainability long into the future.

OUR STRATEGIC AIMS

The strategic aims articulated in our previous strategy still ring true. However, the focus and priorities under them have been adapted to reflect the need to be agile as well as our commitment to being a modern 21st century charity.



1. UNDERSTANDING NEED

We provide support to a broad spectrum of beneficiaries that rely on SSAFA in their time of need. We will continue to understand who our beneficiaries are and the challenges they face, by developing insight and research to give an early indication of how our existing services should be adapted and what additional support is required.

We will build on our commitment of the last strategy to become a more proactive organisation, through evidence-based decision-making that leads to more effective and efficient services. Fundamental to this is the way in which we evaluate and measure the impact of our support on the lives of our beneficiaries.

SSAFA is committed to beneficiary involvement in the work of the charity. By harnessing the beneficiary voice and utilising their unique perspective, we will develop our strategic direction and the quality of our services. We will create a culture of co-design with those who use our services and ensure their influence reaches all levels of the organisation.



2. DELIVERING CONSISTENT & EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

SSAFA's unique UK wide and international presence enables us to reach out to those in need, regardless of their circumstances or location, delivering support that is timely and effective. Based on the data and evidence from our research, we will build on our existing assistance to veterans and their families, tackling issues such as loneliness and isolation.

We will ensure the serving community can connect with SSAFA and receive help in ways that work for them. We will promote digital services, being flexible and inclusive. We will continue to evolve to meet the needs of the serving community, including addressing how non-serving family members are also supported.

We will develop robust quality assurance frameworks that create a more consistent approach to measuring and maintaining quality delivery across all of our service areas, learning from examples of current best practice within SSAFA. We will create a culture of continuous improvement through internal and external audits and robust governance.



3. SUSTAINING OUR RESOURCES

Building on our enhanced regional infrastructure, we will ensure that all current and future SSAFA volunteer roles are manageable, meaningful and mutually beneficial; our volunteer offering must attract a diverse range of people with the widest variety of skills and the commitment needed to support our beneficiaries.

Our greatest resource is our people, and in order to recruit and retain the best talent, we will support our employees and volunteers to excel in their roles, recognising and developing their potential. Crucially, we will create a culture of belonging that is free from judgement or prejudice for every beneficiary, volunteer and employee in which they can be accepted and celebrated for their individuality.

Reflecting the current and future pressures SSAFA faces, we will ensure that we have the technical and safeguarding infrastructure and systems to be compliant to all regulations. We will continue to review our carbon footprint, ensuring environmental sustainability is a key consideration in all changes to our estate, building towards achieving carbon neutral and, ultimately, carbon zero.

The fundraising environment will remain challenging; we will maintain a diversified portfolio of income sources ranging from individuals to companies, trusts and foundations who support us through a mix of donations, legacies, grants, sponsorships and fundraising events. We will continue to invest in supporter acquisition, concurrently nurturing our existing supporters through regular communications, campaigns, events and opportunities to engage with the charity.



4. RAISING OUR PROFILE & STRENGTHENING OUR BRAND

SSAFA wants to be the 'go to' organisation for those in need from the Forces family, for those wishing to volunteer their time and for those who want to provide financial support to the Armed Forces community. We need our multiple audiences and stakeholders to know who we are, what we do, how we can help. We want to be the 'expert' voice for media across the tri-service military charity sector and a trusted, passionate, collaborative professional support network for our 120+ service delivery partners.

Continuing to raise our profile and strengthen our brand is therefore essential to drive awareness of our breadth and our wide range of support services that provide this holistic assistance, but we want to be clearer in our positioning around mental wellbeing. As good mental health and wellbeing is intrinsically linked with personal welfare, SSAFA is undoubtedly a 'Welfare and Wellbeing' charity, something that we will continue to demonstrate and reiterate as part of our refreshed strategic communications, planning and messaging.

Whether it's to access support from SSAFA, to fundraise or volunteer with us, we have already evolved our digital offering over the last five years to give the best user experience possible and we will build on this to continue to engage a more diverse range of audiences. We will also continue to highlight our activity at international, national, regional and local levels, promoting SSAFA by sharing key research insights and our beneficiaries' lived experience, across our multiple communications platforms.



5. GROWING COLLABORATION

Despite our extensive offering to the Armed Forces community, we are not the expert in all the challenges serving personnel, veterans, and their families face. Therefore, we are committed to building collaborative partnerships with a range of organisations from both within and outside of the military charity sector and will engage both with those that support and fund the Armed Forces community as well as experts in areas relevant to our service delivery. This includes continuing to be closely aligned to our subsidiary charity and welfare delivery partner, the Military Wives Choirs Foundation.

We will continue to develop our extensive networks and relationships at all levels across Government, especially with the Office for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD), to ensure operational and strategically aligned collaboration. Through these relationships we will ensure our offer is relevant to the needs of today's Armed Forces. We will continue to deliver and look to broaden our contracts with the MOD to support our beneficiaries through health and social care.



**THE WORK
STARTS NOW**



BEING A TRUSTED SOURCE OF SUPPORT

Our refreshed strategy will run from 2022 to 2027; trustees will review its direction every two years.

Performance against the strategy will be monitored by SSAFA's management board and Council to ensure that we are meeting our key performance indicators.

Our strategic business plan will support the strategy, identifying key milestones over the life of the strategy, and guide the operational delivery.

Having incorporated the experiences and perspectives of our beneficiaries, volunteers and employees, we know that all in SSAFA will have a shared sense of purpose in working towards our Vision - **A society in which the Armed Forces, veterans and their families can thrive**. The processes and systems that support this strategy will enable us to deliver our strategic aims, with a clear understanding of what each team and individual's specific contributions will be.

We will look forward to celebrating the many ways in which our people show commitment to our values and their resulting achievements.



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