

TRANSITIONAL MENTORING IMPACT REPORT

OUR MISSION

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, exists to relieve need, suffering and distress amongst the Armed Forces, veterans and their families in order to support their independence and dignity. We recognise that behind every uniform is a person – and sometimes that person, or their family, is in need of help.

A MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SPECIALIST SERVICES



Looking back over the past eight years, I am very proud of the positive impact the SSAFA mentoring service has had on the lives of those that we have supported.

The Mentoring team – our volunteer mentors, employees and service delivery partners – continuously pull together to provide life-changing support to those in transition. Many of these cases involve issues with mental wellbeing, which in turn can impact on other areas in their lives such as physical health complications, financial difficulties and housing issues.

We rely heavily on our volunteers; their dedication and expertise help us to give personal, one-to-one face to face support to those in need. This selfless commitment never fails to move me and the positive stories we receive on a daily basis highlight how this commitment changes and, in some cases, saves lives.

I have been particularly pleased with the recognition our mentoring service has received. Last year we received full accreditation from the National Council of Volunteer Organisations, the only military mentoring service to receive such accreditation. This year we have also received a glowing report from our own governance and assurance team, again showing even though the service has changed we continue to meet the highest of standards.

The coming years will be even more challenging, as we expand the service so it is available to all service leavers, and their families, across the UK - no matter what the circumstances.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Williams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "G" and "W".

GARY WILLIAMS

Head of Welfare and Specialist Services

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity

EVOLUTION OF OUR MENTORING TEAM

The SSAFA mentoring programme is supported by a team of permanent staff and volunteers who have been instrumental in ensuring we have become a fully established service. The employed team are a diverse group of individuals; we have a serving officer's spouse, the spouse of a veteran, two veterans – one who has been through the Wounded, Injured or Sick (WIS) pathway and has successfully come through the other side – and a member who has no military ties. Their life experiences and range of backgrounds aid the quality of the service.

The heart of the team lies with our volunteer mentors, who also come from a wide range of professional backgrounds, cultures, religions and genders, with 60 per cent not having directly served, but who do have a military link.

Our full-time team provide nationwide cover and support to SSAFA's mentors and mentees, conducting introductions of new relationships, carrying out the HARDFACTS assessments, completing and maintaining the various databases, evaluations and raising awareness of the service and SSAFA across the serving and veteran population. Our mentors work collaboratively at every level and with a range of organisations. Since January 2018, our mentoring team has conducted over 250 presentations to a range of external and internal stakeholders and works closely with other charities to help support the mentees on their transition from military life.



MENTORING SERVICE

In 2014 SSAFA established a mentoring programme to support the transition of individuals returning from the various theatres of operation who were in some way Wounded, Injured or Sick (WIS) and, because of this, would be discharged from military service. Working with the Army recovery capability, SSAFA developed the WIS mentoring programme. Over the proceeding four years, SSAFA expanded the initiative to become a tri-service mentoring programme for all WIS personnel. The mentoring service provides holistic, one-to-one, face-to-face support through volunteer mentors for up to two years post discharge.

Since its inception in 2014, SSAFA's Mentoring Programme has mentored 560 individuals and their family members. The WIS mentoring programme has provided support to 121 service leavers over the past 18 months. The needs of those accessing the service continues to be complicated and multi-faceted.

In late 2017, following the publication of SSAFA's "The New Frontline Report", SSAFA approached the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to investigate how we could work together to prevent those leaving the services from falling into crisis. The report highlighted the need to address the concerns some service personnel had of leaving the service with nowhere to go or no idea of how to cope in civilian society. The MOD chose Catterick Garrison for a trial of the programme for non-WIS personnel, asking that the Careers Transition Partnership (CTP) would be the only formal referral partner. The programme launched in January 2018.

CATTERICK TRIAL

The trial in Catterick began in January 2018 and offered mentoring to non-WIS personnel and their families. Since the trial's inception it has engaged with 65 service leavers of which 27 have received one-to-one mentoring.

The primary success of the trial has been its partnerships with the Department for Work and Pensions and the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. This intervention programme has seen 47 service leavers access mentoring support, with 60 per cent of those engaging with a mentor. The evaluation of this cohort has seen improvement in all areas of need, in particular the levels of knowledge around seeking support.

During the latter part of the trial period, SSAFA saw an increase in the number of requests for non-WIS mentoring support across the UK. These referrals came from word of mouth and the positive experience of trial participants from across the three services.

In total, the SSAFA mentoring team has received 196 requests for mentoring support from non-WIS service leavers and those who do not fall within the remit of the Catterick trial. Since January 2018, the mentoring service has provided face-to-face mentoring to 139 of these individuals after initial assessment. The service continues to receive requests for support from across the UK, as well as from Germany and Cyprus, as servicemen and women return to life in the UK from overseas.



“I have been fortunate enough to build up an excellent relationship with SSAFA and their mentoring team have been kind enough to visit us on a couple of occasions. The professionalism, flexibility and dedication I have encountered from all the personnel I have dealt with has been a credit to SSAFA at all times and I would heartily recommend them to all other Welfare Officers”

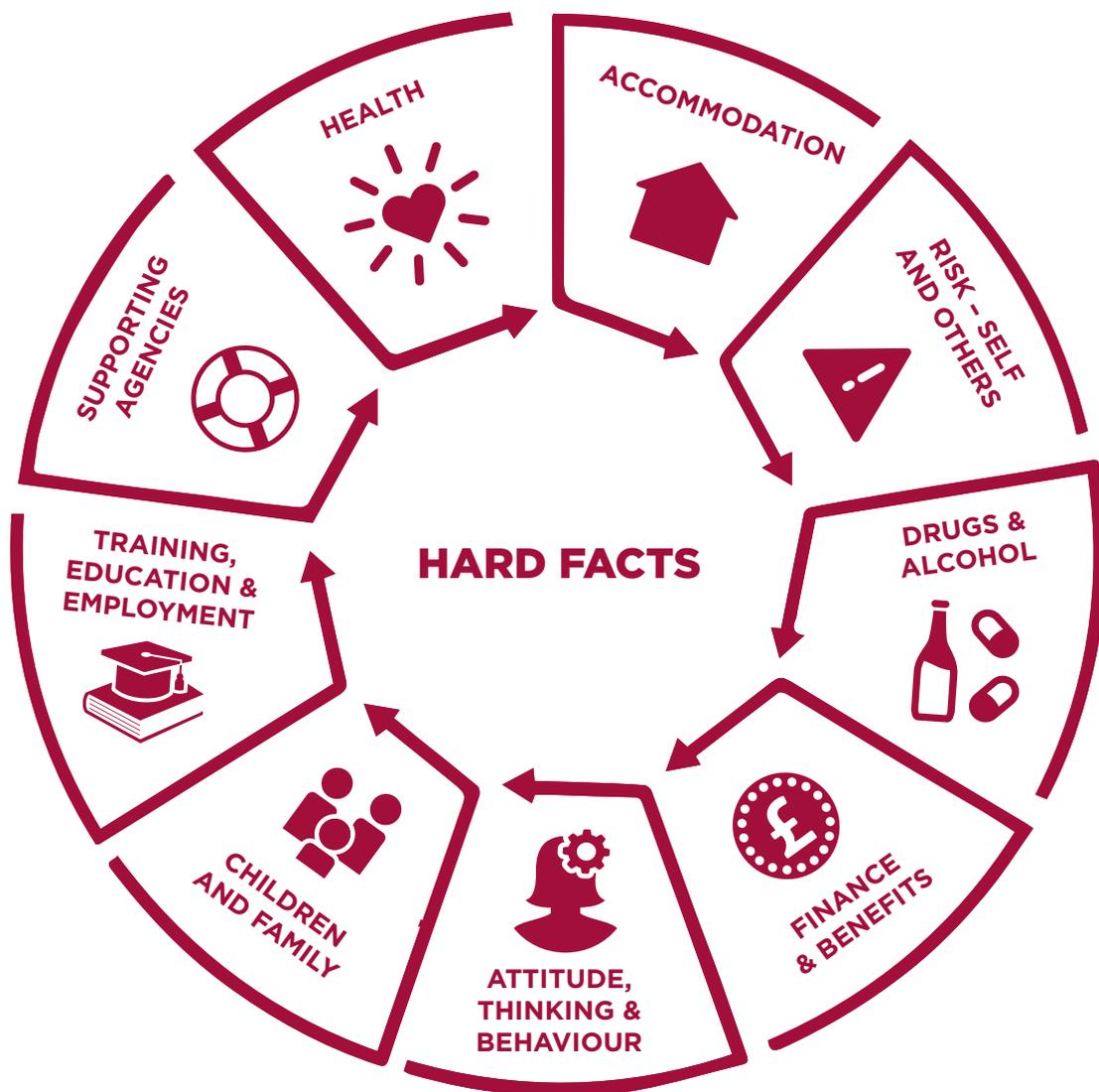
- WO2 Barrow

ASSESSING NEED

All individuals approaching the SSAFA mentoring programmes for support are assessed against the HARDFACTS assessment tool. This assessment tool provides us with the information to identify the needs of the service leaver and to establish whether mentoring is suitable or even required.

HARDFACTS ensures the support given by the mentors is centred around the individual's identified needs. Following the assessment, it may be decided that that the service leaver does not require mentoring and will be signposted to appropriate support.

It is worthwhile noting, that some service leavers decide that mentoring is not for them and choose to leave the military without any support. The offer of mentoring support is currently only available for two years post discharge, beyond this time the mentoring team refer to the local SSAFA branch for support.



IMPACT ON MENTEES

To evaluate the impact of the mentoring service, working groups made up of key stakeholders identified ten clear outcomes from the service and developed questionnaires with these outcomes in mind. The questionnaires were developed to assess mentee wellbeing and experiences at the beginning, end and throughout their mentoring relationship. The questionnaire explores the complex and diverse situations of individual mentees and responses are measured against the 10 identified outcomes. The questionnaires are completed at the point of introduction and every six months thereafter, as well as at the end of the support.

WIS OUTCOMES

Our WIS cohort's responses to the impact questionnaire are shown in Graph 1 [below].

The results show there has been significant improvement or stability in nine of ten areas surveyed, such as a 50 percent reduction in reduced isolation and a 57 per cent increase in mentees being able to make independent decisions. Whilst the responses indicate that the cohort experienced a reduction in self-confidence and self-esteem, this is believed to be a result of increased awareness of the reality of their situation. Informal qualitative responses from mentees through the process demonstrated that they began to realise they have to adjust their lifestyle, that their support bubble is slowly disappearing, or they will soon have to step out on their own.

DISTANCE TRAVELLED OVER 12 MONTHS BY OUTCOMES - WIS - MENTEES

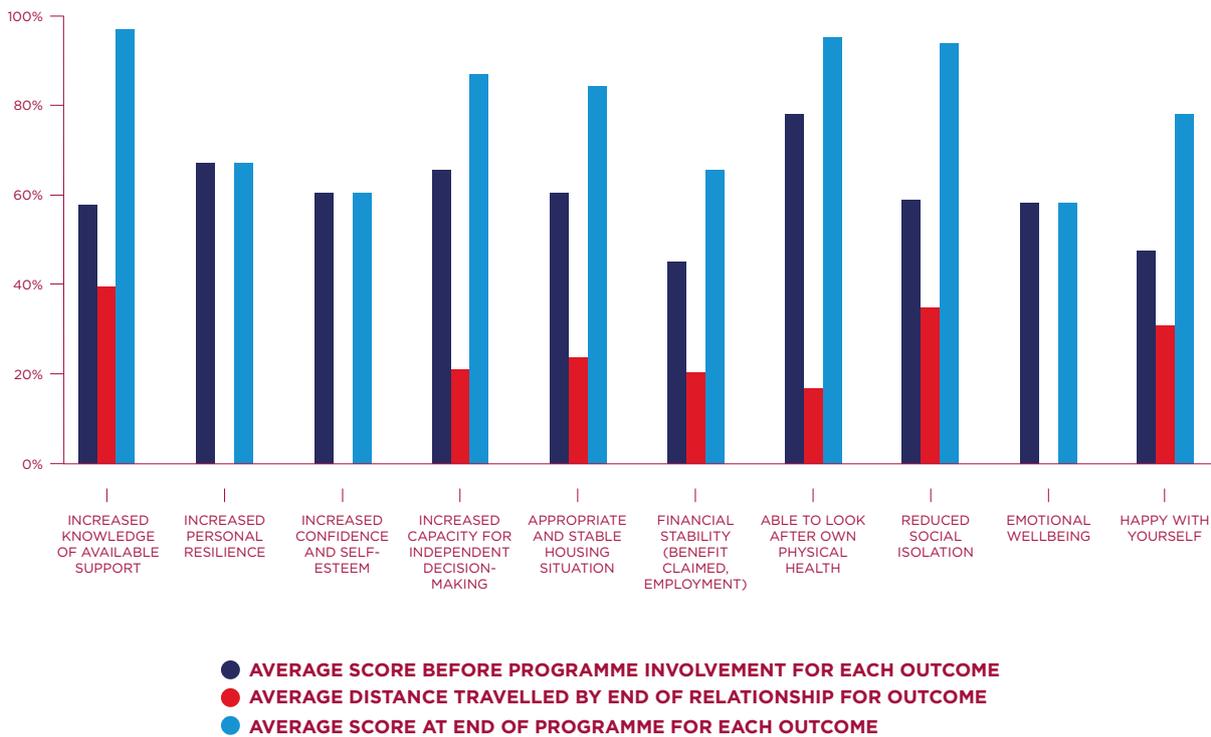


GRAPH 1

CATTERICK TRIAL OUTCOMES

Graph 2 [below] shows the results of the mentee questionnaires completed by the 27 non-WIS service leavers that received face to face mentoring through the Catterick trial. There has been a significant improvement in seven of the ten outcome areas amongst the service leavers on the trial. The results reveal that mentees experienced a 31 per cent increase in feelings of self-happiness, 35 per cent reduction in social isolation, and more than 20 per cent improvement in their financial and housing stability.

DISTANCE TRAVELLED FROM START TO END BY OUTCOMES - TRIAL MENTEES



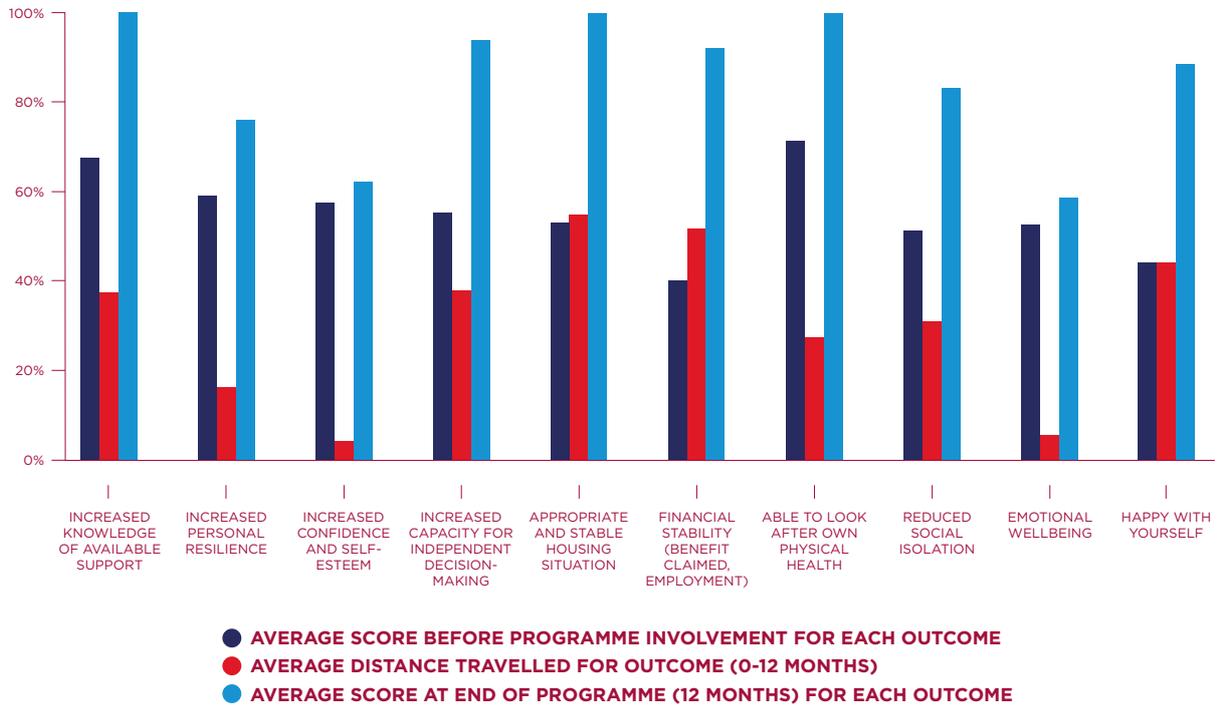
GRAPH 2

NON WIS / NON-TRIAL OUTCOMES

As stated earlier, an indirect success of the trial has been the number of requests for assistance and support for service leavers outside the remit for WIS, and outside of the trial at Catterick Garrison. Graph 3 [overleaf] shows the data gathered from the responses to the outcomes questionnaire completed by the cohort of 139 service leavers that have received face to face mentoring from SSAFA. The results show an improvement in ALL the ten outcomes.

When comparing the questionnaire responses from all three cohorts, it is clear that the highest areas of impact are seen in the following outcomes: increased capacity for appropriate stable housing, independent decision making and happiness with yourself.

DISTANCE TRAVELLED OVER 12 MONTHS BY OUTCOMES - MENTEES



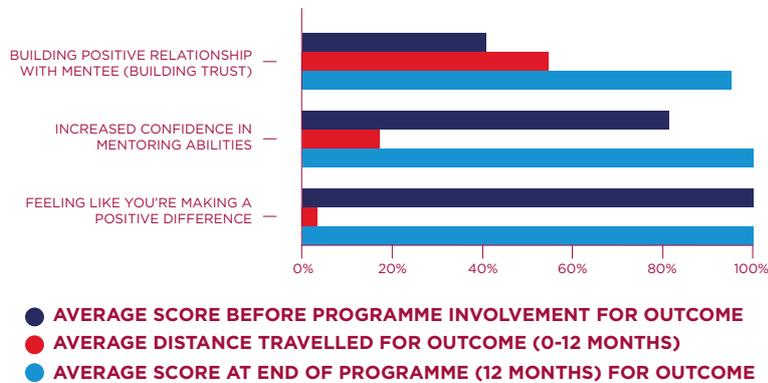
GRAPH 3

IMPACT ON VOLUNTEER MENTORS

As part of a comprehensive evaluation of the service, a questionnaire was also developed to assess the impact the service has on the volunteer mentors. The questionnaires are also completed at the point of introduction, every six months thereafter and at the end of the support.

The questionnaires focused on three outcomes: building positive relationships with mentee; increased confidence in mentoring abilities and the feeling of making a positive difference. There was a marked improvement across these outcomes. The highest score was recorded in making a positive difference which demonstrates the value the volunteers see in the service and their role.

DISTANCE TRAVELLED OVER 12 MONTHS BY OUTCOMES - MENTORS



GRAPH 4

DARREN MAYNE - SSAFA MENTOR

Darren Mayne, 47, has been a volunteer mentor for SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity for five years providing one-to-one support to service leavers making the difficult transition to civilian life.

The idea of volunteering came to Darren, a commercial consultant in the third sector, after attending a management training course. During the course he had been encouraged to consider what motivated him.

“One of the things that came to light when I was reflecting was that I get a lot out of coaching and mentoring – a lot of personal satisfaction out of seeing people I have supported moving on. The day after that course I was driving into work and a representative for SSAFA was being interviewed on the local radio about mentoring. Later that day I filled out the application form and a few weeks later I was on the training course. That was five years ago.”

Darren has successfully mentored four service leavers since then, with each mentee bringing a unique set of circumstances to the relationship. He said:

“It’s so important to be able to listen as a mentor and trust is really key. They need to know you are not going to judge. It’s really rewarding to see someone’s confidence grow and see them taking more responsibility for their own situation and setting themselves goals. They have to learn to make the difference themselves but if I can help them on their journey, I’m very happy.”

Darren, who is currently Head of Commercial at Alnwick Garden in Northumberland, has also been encouraged to think about his own future while volunteering as a mentor.

“I think being a SSAFA mentor has made me a better manager and actually it has been



a spring board for me and taken me in new directions professionally. I have worked with Newcastle Falcons to help them set up a programme of initiatives supporting local reservists and veterans in developing their skills, and now I’m about halfway through a Level 5 Coaching course”

“I would highly recommend being a SSAFA mentor. It is personally rewarding and challenging and the support that you get from SSAFA, both from the regional mentoring coordinator and the training plan is second to none.”

JACK VALENTINE - SSAFA MENTEE



When Jack Valentine was medically discharged from the Royal Navy in 2017, he was left facing an uncertain future at the age of just 25. Jack developed mental health problems just weeks after passing his basic training and saw his long-held dream of a military career slip away from him. Now with the support of his SSAFA mentor, Darren Mayne, and his dog Chief, Jack is back on track and planning for the future.

Jack trained as a Seaman Specialist, he loved basic training and after passing out in February 2016 went on to complete his Phase 2 Seaman Specialist training and was posted to Devonport. He said:

“Unfortunately, within a couple of weeks of being on ship, my mental health really deteriorated. It was a bit out of the blue and I think I thought it was just normal at the time. Things went badly wrong the first night out with the crew drinking after work. I got arrested and woke up in a cell.”

Jack was treated at a psychiatric unit, but the episode marked the end of his Navy career and in April 2017 he was medically discharged. He said:

“Despite everything that happened in that time I made the most of it and got my learning credits and did a couple of courses.”

During his resettlement process Jack found out about the SSAFA mentoring scheme and he has been meeting volunteer mentor, Darren Mayne, regularly since he returned to the North East following his medical discharge. He said:

“Darren is a legend. He has been absolutely brilliant - helping me with writing a CV and interview techniques. If I feel like I can't leave the house, he understands and will let me rearrange. We meet at a coffee shop and sit outside so my dog Chief can come too.

“I had left a lot of my old life behind when I signed up, so I had no stability when I came out the Navy.

“Having Darren as my mentor has been a massive help. Any help I have needed he has always known where to go and he's been so helpful while I have been applying for jobs. I find it easier to speak to someone separate from the rest of my life and he is just so easy to talk to. He has helped me get used to everyday life again and is a great listener. I could tell Darren anything.”

With Darren's help Jack has recently found a new role in the security industry.

Now, Jack has found himself somewhere to live, passed his driving test and taken in Dalmatian puppy Chief - now an important part of his life.



“I felt like I was just spinning around, out of control, until I met my mentor”
- A SSAFA Mentee

SUMMARY

Our mentoring programme evaluation process conclusively shows that regardless of an individual's reason for discharge the need for support during their transition is necessary. The HARDFACTS assessment is designed to identify the needs and often highlights areas of vulnerability that can have a negative impact on transition if support is not available.

SSAFA is providing a valuable service to men and women of the Armed Forces and their families during what can be very difficult and stressful time. Not all service leavers need mentoring, some just need a little bit of advice, guidance or signposting, others just need to know that help is there, should they need it.

OUR APPROACH

SSAFA's inclusive approach has allowed the mentoring service to offer support to military personnel who represent a divergent service length and history. Mentees have served anywhere from basic training to full service in their respective Force. Some of the mentees have been discharged due to failing a compulsory drugs test, others are medically discharged through physical or mental injury, others leave after full service; every mentee receives the same non-judgemental support regardless of the reason for discharge. In some cases, individuals discharged are without a home to return to and have no experience of living on their own. They are not able to readily access any support when discharging and immediately become vulnerable adults.

ADAPTING TO CHANGING COHORTS

With increased requests for mentoring support from a younger cohort, the mentoring team has identified the need to adapt their service to make it more user friendly for this demographic. Unlike the older cohort who respond to face to face meetings, it was found that the younger cohort prefer telephone or electronic support. The majority of this new cohort have reported positive outcomes due to this approach by the SSAFA mentoring programme. The programme continues to be adaptable and tailor-made to the individual mentees needs, providing support in the most effective way for each individual.

OUR FUTURE MENTORING PROGRAMME

In 2020, SSAFA's mentoring service will be expanding to offer mentoring to all service leavers, regardless of the reason for discharge.

The expansion will enable SSAFA to reach those service leavers that require support but have not been aware that mentoring was available to them. Identifying and addressing needs at this early stage of their transition, means service leavers will have a better chance of having success in life outside of the military. This should reduce the need for welfare support and preventing a fall into crime, homelessness and unemployment.

The mentoring service will continue to work with the MOD to make sure no service leaver is left vulnerable after they leave the military. The service will strive to be flexible and ever-changing, to suit the changing demographic and needs of the people it aims to help.

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, has been providing lifelong support to our Forces and their families since 1885. Every year our team of volunteers and employees help more than 82,000 people in need, from Second World War veterans to young men and women who have served in more recent conflicts, and their families.

SSAFA understands that behind every uniform is a person. And we are here for that person – any time they need us, in any way they need us, for as long as they need us.

- Call **020 7463 9204**
- Email **mentoring@ssafa.org.uk**
- Visit **ssafa.org.uk/mentoring**



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