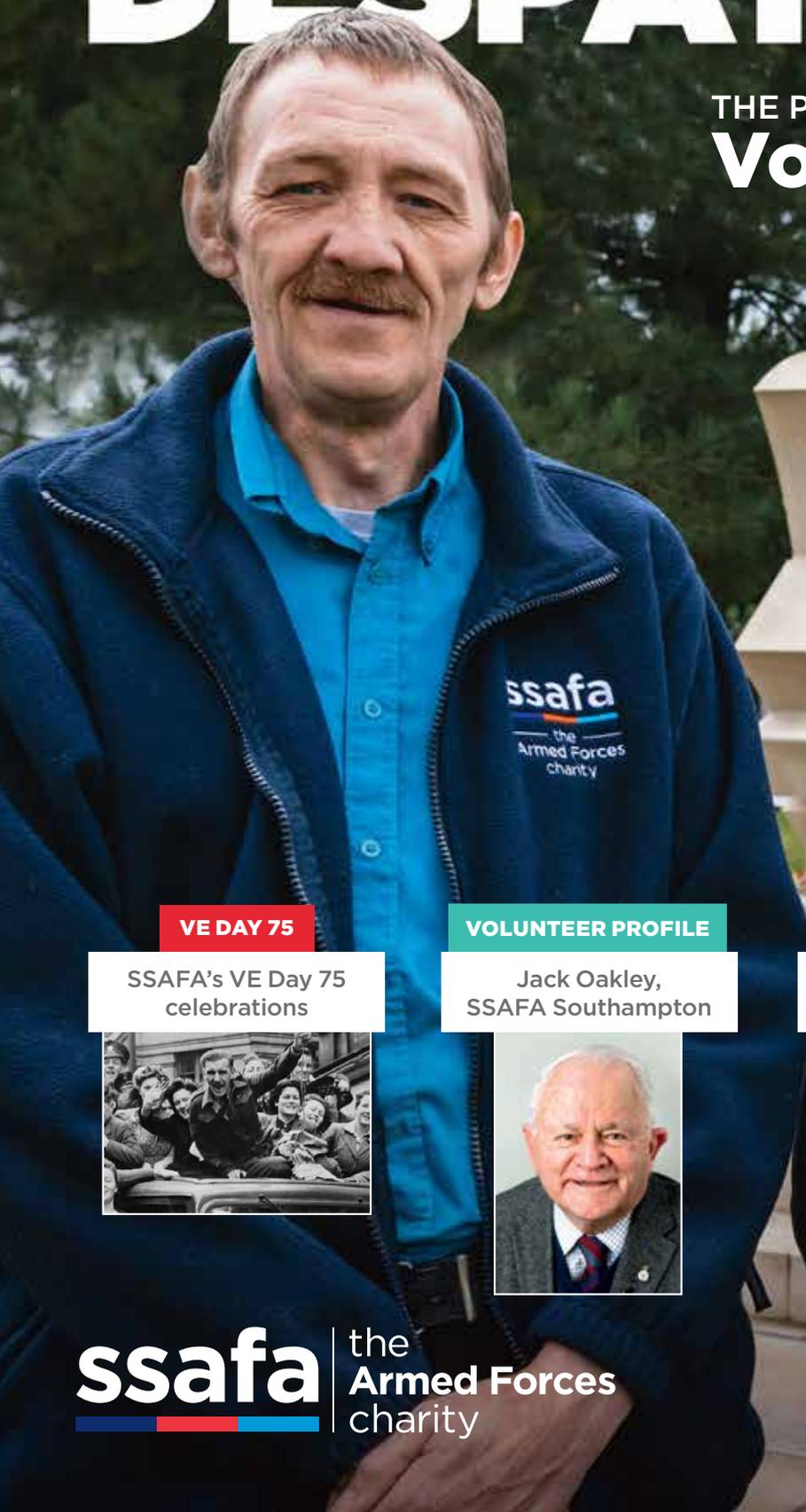


DESPATCHES

THE POWER OF
Volunteering



VE DAY 75

SSAFA's VE Day 75 celebrations



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Jack Oakley,
SSAFA Southampton



RAF

Personal Support &
Social Work Service



CONTENTS

- 04** SSAFA's 135th birthday
- 06** VE Day 75
- 08** The Big Lunch
- 09** Volunteering - making a difference
- 10** **Volunteer profile: Jack Oakley**
- 12** SSAFA@140
- 14** **RAF Personal Support & Social Work Service**
- 16** Case study: Helping Gurkhas
- 18** **Borneo - jungle makeover**
- 19** **Volunteer profile: Gren Morgan**
- 20** **Case study: Keeping Katrina in good health**
- 22** Chris walks the UK
- 23** Cyprus - eRedbook project
- 24** Top mental wellbeing tips
- 26** **Case study: Becoming new parents**
- 28** Working together
- 30** Dates for the diary



If you have any stories for future editions of Despatches, or feedback about our SSAFA magazine, please email tellus@ssafa.org.uk

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from our
NATIONAL CHAIRMAN



I think it fair to say that from the outside SSAFA is in rude good health. We are supporting increasing numbers of beneficiaries; our profile continues to rise; we have kept on the right side of the regulators; have a healthy balance sheet, and; our reputation is as strong as ever. But in some areas, we are struggling to recruit new volunteers, so we have amalgamated branches and in others, we have piloted the employment of paid support hubs. Our streamlined online volunteer recruitment process and associated marketing campaigns are bringing in new applicants and we must all ensure that we respond and bring them into the SSAFA family as quickly as possible. In the longer-term, **SSAFA@140** is looking at a more sustainable volunteer network model and this issue of **Despatches** brings you up to date with the progress thus far.

On the brighter side, our **Adoption team** were recently graded **OUTSTANDING** by OFSTED, we have been awarded the **Community Healthcare** contract in **Cyprus**, and there will be a **SSAFA Garden at the Chelsea Flower Show** for the first time this year. After the show, the garden will be transplanted to our Norton House at Stanford Hall. Eighty-six nominations for the **Sir James Gildea Awards** have been received, reflecting the level of commitment and excellence achieved by so many volunteers and employees in 2019. As ever, reading through the citations I am humbled by the dedication and selflessness of our people, in many cases, sustained over

I think it fair to say that from the outside SSAFA is in rude good health.

decades. We can all look forward to recognising and celebrating the winners at our branch Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and at our National Annual Members Meeting on 16 July. And while we are doing that, we need to think about who else warrants recognition in 2020?

This edition of Despatches focusses a spotlight on **VE Day 75 celebrations**; there is now an opportunity for folk around the country to see the live feed from the Royal Albert Hall Concert on 8 May. We also take a look at celebrating **135 years of SSAFA** and 30 years of supporting the RAF through the **Personal Support & Social Work Service**. There are also **Volunteer Profiles** and case studies about supporting those in need, including **Gurkha Services and Adoption**.

I hope to catch up with many of you at your local AGM or our own National meeting in July. In the meantime, I hope that this edition of **Despatches** will not only inform you about wider SSAFA activity, but stimulate you to even greater heights in support of the Armed Forces family in need.

Lieutenant General
 Sir Gary Coward KBE, CB
Chairman

HAPPY 135TH BIRTHDAY TO SSAFA

As the oldest, tri-service military charity in the country, we are proud to have reached 135 years of service. It's time to celebrate some of our achievements over this time.



1. SSAFA was one of the first charities to recognise the hardships that military families face

Before SSAFA was established, military families had little or no help from the British Government. In the 1800s, men had to ask permission from their Commanding Officer to be married. Without this permission, wives were not allowed to live with their husbands and were refused a military pension if their husbands were killed in action.

SSAFA, formerly known as Soldiers' and Sailors' Families Association, was established by Major (later Colonel Sir) James Gildea for the families of military personnel, after he sent a letter to *The Times* on 23 February 1885. Following his petition, a fund was set up for married women irrespective of whether their marriage was recognised by the regiment or not.

2. SSAFA was the first to set up a 'nursing service' even before the NHS existed

In 1892, SSAFA set up a Nursing Branch to offer home care to the UK families of serving men in large garrisons and seaport towns; a revolutionary idea at a time before home nursing or the NHS were available. The UK's NHS adopted our Alexandra Nurses' practices for the District Nursing Service, which was set up in 1948.

3. UK's first and only Registered Adoption Agency for military families

SSAFA's Adoption service has been running since 2000 and has helped hundreds of military personnel create a family. SSAFA is the expert in navigating military adoption and understands the complex demands of military life. In 2019, our SSAFA Adoption service was rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

4. The first military charity to offer a home for families with loved ones undergoing medical treatment

This started following a campaign led by Major Peter Norton's family, after he was injured serving in Iraq. Norton House first supported the work done at Headley Court but relocated in 2018 to Stanford Hall, nearby to the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre. Norton House provides free accommodation to friends and family of service personnel.

5. SSAFA was one of the first military charities to offer transitional mentoring

The SSAFA mentoring service launched in 2014 to help motivate and empower service leavers in their transition to civilian life. The service first launched for wounded, injured or sick service leavers and has rolled out to all service leavers this year.



Volunteer profile

MEET RICHARD BATEMAN

"CUT ME IN HALF AND I AM SSAFA THROUGH AND THROUGH"

Concerned by what he was seeing in the news and hearing on the streets of Derbyshire about difficulties ex-service personnel were facing, Richard Bateman decided he wanted to act. He joined SSAFA in 2019 and hasn't looked back – already getting stuck into helping serving and former military personnel in need within his local area.

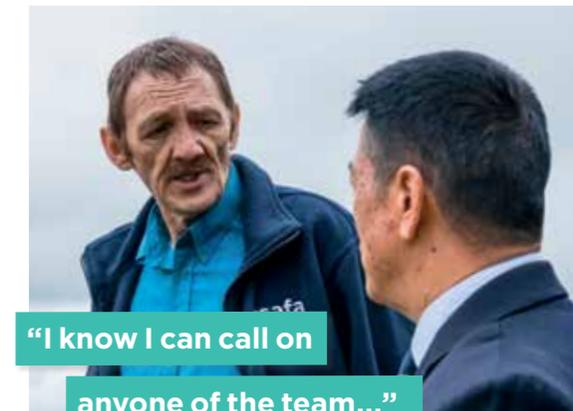
"I joined SSAFA because I recognised more and more, that people in my community needed help. People who served were forgotten or kicked to the curb. SSAFA are the charity that pick them back up again."

If you're a SSAFA volunteer like Richard and wish to feature in our next Despatches magazine, please email tellus@ssafa.org.uk

Richard, a former Private in the 1st Battalion Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment, has a Forces family history dating back to the Second Boer War. Most recently his niece served in Iraq and his grandson is due to join the Army as an Engineer. He believes since joining SSAFA he has found his calling.

"I enjoy it – it's probably selfish really, but I get a massive sense of satisfaction after I have finished a case successfully. I don't think there is anything I could do, apart from joining the Army again, that would give me such an enormous sense of satisfaction. Cut me in half and I am SSAFA through and through."

Richard thinks being a SSAFA Caseworker is a fantastic opportunity and is candid about what it takes to do the job well.

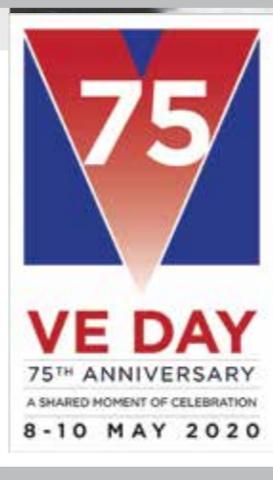


"I know I can call on anyone of the team..."

"You can't be half-hearted as a Caseworker and it's important to remember that, obviously not every case runs smoothly. Here in Derbyshire, we work so that I know I can call on any one of the team for advice and support. I learn so much from everyone in the team."

Richard also supported ex-Queen's Gurkha Engineer Tilak Rai and his family when they moved to the UK. Read how he did this on **page 16**.

Welcome to the SSAFA family, Richard!



SSAFA'S VE DAY 75 CONCERT

We are delighted to be the official charity partner for a special concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 8 May. This high-profile event will feature internationally renowned soloists and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, providing a fitting close to a day of celebrations in London and across the nation. There will also be live streaming of the concert in more than 400 cinemas. To find out which cinemas will be screening this unique concert near you, visit veday75.co.uk.



SSAFA is the **official charity partner** for the VE Day 75 series of events, organised by Pageantmaster, Bruno Peek LVO, OBE, OPR, during the bank holiday weekend of **Friday 8 May to Sunday 10 May 2020**.

There are more than 1,400 events taking place all over the country, registered on the VE Day 75 website at veday75.org. Being the official charity for these events, everyone signing up is encouraged to fundraise for SSAFA. You can see what is happening in your area by visiting veday75.org/listings.

If you are planning an event or working with a local organisation to celebrate VE Day 75, our Regional Fundraising and PR teams are on hand to provide you with any support you need. There is more information and some useful resources on the SSAFA website: ssafa.org.uk/ve-day-75. SSAFA volunteers can access toolkits and posters on SSAFAnet too.

There are more than 1,400 events taking place all over the country...

THE MAIN EVENTS ON FRIDAY 8 MAY:
3pm The Nation's Toast to the heroes of Second World War. This will be a national moment to raise a glass in tribute to all those who sacrificed so much for our freedom. This is being held in local pubs across the nation in association with the British Beer and Pub Association. Local communities are being encouraged to hold their own events in the afternoon to coincide with the 3pm Toast. The wording of the official Nation's Toast is available to download from veday75.org.

Also at 3pm Pipers across the country are being asked to pipe two tunes, Battle's O'er, and a tune specially composed for VE Day 75. The music for the tunes is available at veday75.org.

6.55pm A Cry for Peace around the world will ring out with town criers, and members of the local community being urged to undertake

'The Cry'. The wording for the cry can be downloaded from veday75.org. For community events taking part in the afternoon, this maybe a nice way to draw your event to a close.

In addition, street parties, events, fundraisers, and exhibitions will be held to celebrate this important anniversary.

Our SSAFA Controller, Andrew Gregory, said, **"It is our hope that the nation takes a moment to reflect on the significance of this date, as a milestone that changed the course of history for the whole world."**

Please follow the official VE Day 75 social media accounts on **Facebook**, **Twitter** and **Instagram @VEDay75official** and tag any of your social media posts relating to VE Day 75 to these accounts.

MORE EVENTS

We are working with the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and a number of other organisations (including the Royal British Legion) on supporting the different VE day 75 and VJ Day 75 commemorative events taking place in London and around the UK. Some of these are still to be announced, so we will keep you up to date as more information become available. For more information, visit ve-vjday75.gov.uk.

Let us know what you are doing to commemorate VE Day 75, by sharing on our SSAFA Yammer group at yammer.com/ssafa.org.uk or emailing tellus@ssafa.org.uk. And don't forget to register your event at veday75.org.



BRINGING OUR COMMUNITIES TOGETHER WITH THE BIG LUNCH AND VE DAY



The Big Lunch – the UK’s biggest annual get-together for neighbours – is really excited to be working with SSAFA, to help get the VE Day 75 party started.

This year the Big Lunch want to commemorate 75th anniversary of VE Day on 8 May. So along with our VE Day 75 events we are working with the Big Lunch to spread the joy.

Behind the cupcakes and bunting however, there is a lasting impact. Last year 4.7 million people made a new friend at their Big Lunch, 4.5 million people said they felt less lonely after attending one, and 72% of attendees felt more confident about getting involved in other community activities. Great things happen when people come together.

The Big Lunch is a simple idea. On the first weekend in June, we are encouraging people around the UK to throw open their doors and take to their streets, gardens and neighbourhoods to share food and get to know each other a little better!

This year, VE Day 75 in May offers an extra special opportunity to bring people together. What better way to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe, than bringing communities of all nationalities together with a party on your street and in your neighbourhood, town or village!

Over six million people take part in The Big Lunch each year, and just like the original street parties, it’s a glorious moment of fun that anyone, everywhere can share.

GET INVOLVED
Why not hold a Big Lunch in your neighbourhood or community to meet more people in your local area? You could use your Big Lunch to raise awareness of SSAFA where you live, to fundraise for the charity, or even recruit new volunteers – and all over a bite to eat.

WE’RE HERE TO HELP
Order your **free** Big Lunch starter pack online today at www.thebiglunch.com or get in touch if you have any questions about organising your street, neighbourhood or community parties!
Call: **0800 022 3357**
Email: communities@edenproject.com

Mark a moment on VE Day 75 with SSAFA and The Big Lunch!



HOW CAN YOUR TIME MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

This January, SSAFA launched a volunteer recruitment campaign encouraging members of the public to use their time to make a difference by volunteering for SSAFA and help those in need within the Armed Forces community.

Research shows that volunteering has a positive impact on both mental and physical health. Other benefits include developing a sense of purpose while making a difference to people’s lives. Simply put, volunteering is as good for the people and communities we help as it is for those who volunteer.

We hope to find more people joining our ever-growing SSAFA family, so that we can continue working together to make a difference.

HELP SPREAD THE WORD

- Ask those interested in volunteering with SSAFA to complete our online application form at ssafa.org.uk/volunteer
- Tell your networks about the SSAFA benefits of volunteering with us. And order recruitment materials from the Marketing Hub.
- Share content from our main SSAFA Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and Twitter pages with your own networks and contacts.

If you’re interested in volunteering for SSAFA or know someone who is, for more information and complete our online form visit ssafa.org.uk/volunteer.



10 QUESTIONS WITH...

JACK OAKLEY

I have completed over 170 cases

as a Southampton SSAFA Caseworker.



1

WHAT'S YOUR SSAFA ROLE AND WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

I have completed over 170 cases as a Southampton SSAFA Caseworker. Also, as our SSAFA Division is based in Blighmont Barracks, I also assist our Office Manager every Thursday morning with administration.

2

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN VOLUNTEERING FOR SSAFA?

At our Annual Hampshire Branch Training Day in 2019, I received my 15 year Long Service Award from our SSAFA National Chairman, Lieutenant-General Sir Gary Coward KBE, CB, who, asking my age (88), congratulated me warmly and told me to "keep going," which I shall do as long as possible.

3

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

Meeting the most likeable and ordinary people, then discovering they have incredible histories. Stories such as being forced by the Japanese to dig an atomic bomb shelter, after years on the dreaded railway; being blown out of cruiser's gun turret trying to get HMS Amethyst out of the Yangtze River; or having completed seventy missions and volunteering to fly eight more, despite being a member of the last crew left in the squadron. I could never measure up to some of the things I hear.

4

HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE ARMED FORCES OR HAVE FAMILY WHO HAVE SERVED?

Three uncles served in the First World War, one on the Western Front, one in Salonika and later against the Bolsheviks in Russia, and one as a Chaplain to the Serbs. I have cousins who have served in the Second World War, two in the RAF and one in the Fleet Air Arm. I joined the Royal Engineers in 1949 and served for two years as a peripatetic Personnel Sergeant.

5

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT TO DATE?

Writing a plaintive letter to the Daily Telegraph during the time of the MPs' expenses scandal, when I had just failed to obtain money for a Japanese prisoner of war, who wanted to repair his bathroom window and have a warm bath. Within a week of my letter being on the paper, I received over £4,000 from readers, plus a host of vitriolic letters about the morals of our MPs. The funds allowed us to double glaze his entire house, and it also taught me that injustice rankles highly with virtually everyone, regardless of class, wealth or status.

6

IF YOU COULD VISIT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WHERE WOULD YOU GO AND WHY?

Rome, the Navel of the World. Everything of any importance has a link there. I believe the Italians demonstrate the right attitude to laws and politicians (i.e. they ignore most of them that are crass or don't work, and concentrate on the importance of food, presentation and style).

7

WHICH PERSON (ALIVE OR DEAD) WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET AND WHY?

Possibly Mozart, to try and get some glimpse into the nature of his musical genius, or possibly a centurion from any

8

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?

Studying Italian with a bunch of other fanatical geriatrics at a Sixth Form College, and we have done so since 2008. If you have to sing anything, sing it in Italian: it immediately sounds better.

9

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FILM?

"Casablanca." When I was there, I could not find Rick's Bar anywhere, but I did view the new magnificent mosque.

10

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

If you are being severely pressured by anyone to agree to what they think is absolutely the only thing to think, then take a mental step back and ask yourself "What is in it for them?" Because what is in it for them is most unlikely to be in it for you, and it is most likely to be money.

Thank you to Jack for taking the time to send us his 10 question and a photo of himself, complete with SSAFA tie. If you're a SSAFA volunteer and wish to take part in our 10 questions, we'd love to hear from you. Email your responses to these questions to tellus@ssafa.org.uk

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MEET THE PROGRAMME BOARD



The SSAFA@140 Programme Board oversees the programme to make sure it is; delivered to time and budget; is strategically aligned; and meets agreed aims and objectives.




Evelyn Strouts, Chair of the Programme Board, and one of our SSAFA Trustees, tells us a bit about the programme, “SSAFA will celebrate its 140th anniversary in 2025. During our rich and successful history, we have grown and evolved. To make sure we continue to deliver a consistent and sustainable service to beneficiaries, to offer rewarding opportunities to volunteers, and to enable employees to effectively deliver and support beneficiaries and volunteers - we need to continue to evolve. That is what SSAFA@140 is all about. I am honoured to be chairing this Programme Board and grateful to the volunteers and employees who are working energetically to ensure that SSAFA is fit for purpose for the next 100 years.”

WORKING GROUPS

Our working groups are made up of equal numbers of volunteers and staff, and they work together to come up with recommendations to address issues in specific areas of SSAFA’s activities. So far, we have two working groups:

- **Casework:** review current approaches to the provision of casework at SSAFA and develop recommendations for service enhancements, focussed on SSAFA meeting the identified current and future needs of our beneficiaries.
- **Network Leadership and Management:** improve sustainability in network leadership and management roles, and how these roles might be designed in a network-wide structure to better meet the needs of our beneficiaries.

CASEWORK WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS

We’ve completed the “design” phase of the Casework working group, and the following recommendations have been approved by the Programme Board and Council:

- Introduce enhanced standards for casework - making casework more effective and timely for beneficiaries.
- Better support for caseworkers - relieving the pressure of work on them and allowing them to feel more supported.

Introduce a system for measuring beneficiary outcomes - so we can evidence the impact our casework has on beneficiaries, and so volunteers can see the difference they make to beneficiaries’ lives, not only in their area but across the network.

- Redesign casework roles - making it easier for volunteers to perform their work, and to attract more volunteers into our network, making the service more efficient for beneficiaries and more attractive to volunteers.

We interviewed Caseworker and Co-Chair of the Casework working group, Tony Philips, about his experiences of being a part of our first SSAFA@140 working group. Tony said, “We’ve

“I’ve been really impressed with how the working group have worked together. We’ve been left to our own devices to come up with recommendations as a group”.

always had a strong community presence, which is what encourages our beneficiaries to come to us. But there’s currently no consistency in the services we offer. We should be asking ourselves “What’s the best outcome for the beneficiaries?”

“I’ve been really impressed with how the working group have worked together. We’ve been left to our own devices to come up with recommendations as a group, without influence. We’ve also had support from a consultant at Cass Business School, who has helped us focus our thoughts into a proper process that can be recorded effectively and ensure they’re evidence based. This openness has helped us to drill down to the issues at hand.”

BEING PART OF A WORKING GROUP

We expect the Network Leadership and Management working group to have come up with their recommendations to present at the Programme Board meeting in late April 2020, before going to Council in June 2020.

This Spring, we have the first meeting of a new working group looking at the recruitment, training and retention of volunteers across the network. Look out for opportunities to join.

WHO’S ON THE BOARD?

- Evelyn Strouts, Trustee (Chair)
- Charles Ness, Trustee (Vice-Chair)
- Ian Talbot, Branch Chairman (Oxfordshire) and Regional Representative
- Glenn Haughton, Trustee, and Senior Enlisted Advisor to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, Ministry of Defence
- Andrew McIntosh, Branch Secretary, Lanarkshire and SSAFA beneficiary
- Andrew Gregory, Controller
- Ian Hicks, Director of People & Organisational Development and Chief of Staff
- Julie McCarthy, Director of Volunteer Operations
- Simon Blum, Director of Finance

Find out more about SSAFA@140 on SSAFAnet.



Our award winning RAF Personal Support & Social Work Service

SSAFA's RAF Personal Support & Social Work Service (PS&SWS) team at RAF Lossiemouth in Scotland were awarded the AOC1 Gp Commendation in the Queen's Birthday Honours List. The award presentation took place on 5 February 2020 at RAF Lossiemouth.

A huge congratulations to the team; Jayne Witcher, Agnes Gardiner, Chris Sherwin and Debi Clarke – who were presented with the prestigious award by Jim Walls, Station Commander, Group Captain.

Cathie Johnson, Head of Service for RAF PS&SWS; and Alison Arnold, Regional Manager for North, were both delighted to attend the event and celebrate this great achievement with the team. Cathie said, "I would like to congratulate the team on this award, which clearly demonstrates the high regard with which our service is held within the RAF community, not only at RAF Lossiemouth but all stations across the country."

30TH ANNIVERSARY

The RAF PS&SWS is looking forward to celebrating its 30th anniversary on 18 July 2020. SSAFA have continually held this RAF Personal Support & Social Work Service contract since 1990 and are incredibly proud of the long-standing relationship we have with the RAF to provide welfare support to their personnel and families.

We are in the process of planning local activities to celebrate this milestone – so watch this space and keep an eye out on SSAFAnet for more information.

Find out more about the support SSAFA offers to RAF serving members and their families at: ssafa.org.uk/get-help/RAF.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE

MEET AGNES GARDINER

"I'm part of a great team up at RAF Lossiemouth".

WHAT'S YOUR NAME AND ROLE?

Agnes Gardiner and I'm a Personal & Family Support Worker at RAF Lossiemouth.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN WITH SSAFA?

24 years in September.

WHAT DOES YOUR ROLE INVOLVE?

My role involves supporting currently serving RAF personnel and their dependents with any issues that are impacting on their daily lives. The range is infinite but includes:

Relationship work, bereavement, additional needs, financial assistance, housing, mental health, posting issues, liaising with the RAF Benevolent Fund, etc.

My wider role on Station requires me, on a daily basis, to interact with the key players within the RAF so that we can offer a holistic service (if and when required). This means interacting with employees, doctors, mental health team, Padres and the wider Community Support team.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF

I have a partner, Andy, who is a Maintenance Manager with a large construction firm. I am mum to Sarah, 43, and Gavin, almost 40!

Sarah is a nurse and married to Michael and they have two children Eve, 16, and Alex, 14, who I just love to bits. They live in Inverness.

Gavin, my son, is an Entertainments Manager and lives and works in London. He is single but I am ever hopeful!



WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT WORKING FOR SSAFA?

I love the one-to-one interaction with families, knowing that I can make a difference. I also love working within the military environment – I enjoy its structure! I am part of a great team up at RAF Lossiemouth and that makes coming to work easy.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE HIGHLIGHT OF YOUR TIME AT SSAFA SO FAR?

I was thrilled in 2006 to trial my role for SSAFA in Cyprus. Then served for two years at Episkopi, Akrotiri and Dhekelia as the role developed. However, I think my proudest moment was when I was awarded the British Empire Medal, in the Queen's Birthday Honours, whilst serving with SSAFA at RAF Leeming in 2014.

If you're a SSAFA employee and would like to feature in the next edition of Despatches, please email tellus@ssafa.org.uk



HELPING GURKHAS SETTLE INTO THE UK

“Life before SSAFA was very hard. Now it is so different. I am more comfortable, and my family is so happy.”



Richard Bateman, Caseworker; Tilak; and Laxmi Bantawa, Gurkha Community Outreach Worker.

Gurkha Services provide tailored support for Gurkha veterans and their families who have settled in the UK, visit ssafa.org.uk/get-help/gurkha-services for more information.

When ex-Queen’s Gurkha Engineer, Tilak Rai, arrived in Derby last year with his young family, **SSAFA’s Gurkha Services were on hand to support them.**



For seven months, former Corporal Tilak Rai, 60, was living in his friend’s home when he first moved to the UK in September 2018. Unable to speak English and without a job, he struggled to find a place to rent. Despite his wife having a secure place of work, and having three guarantors, landlords would not accept the family as tenants unless they paid six months’ rent upfront.

Eventually Tilak was able to secure a tenancy. However, with two daughters aged five and three and a third on the way, it was not fit for purpose; completely empty except for an old stove that didn’t work properly. Tilak struggled to get any support until SSAFA’s Gurkha Services Manager, Sheila

Limbu, and Gurkha Community Outreach Worker, Laxmi Bantawa MBE, met with the local Gurkha community and referred Tilak to his local SSAFA branch in July 2019.

Within two weeks, Tilak was receiving support from Richard Bateman, Caseworker (featured on page 5) and Clare Carlier, Divisional Secretary, both of SSAFA Derbyshire. They were able to secure funding for Tilak and his family, supplying them with brown and white goods, as well as toys for his children. SSAFA also helped Tilak with applications for Universal Credit, Council Tax exemptions, and medical care for his pregnant wife, which she wasn’t previously accessing. Tilak is now receiving

English language training and SSAFA have offered to support him in finding a job.

Tilak said, “Life before SSAFA was very hard. Now it is so different. I am more comfortable, and my family is so happy. We have things for the children. Even our new baby son has a cot. It’s difficult to put how grateful I am into words. I can only offer to SSAFA a small thank you.”

Richard, Caseworker, was delighted to be able to help the family, “It’s easy for agencies to ignore someone when they

“Since he met SSAFA, he got the help he needed...”

don’t speak their language. It’s easy not to help someone who is in Mr Rai’s position, but that is no excuse. SSAFA are here to make sure that people get the support they need.

“When you have someone who hasn’t got a great deal, who doesn’t know the system. There is a language barrier – it’s great to know I can offer help. If I can go in there and the client is happy when I am done, then I am very happy.”

“Being called Moustache Uncle by Mr Rai’s two little girls is a privilege in itself. I have been welcomed into a family that isn’t mine, and that’s the sort of reward you get from this role.”

Laxmi, Outreach Worker, who first introduced Tilak to SSAFA, is a former Gurkha Major. He believes the Gurkha Services are essential, “I’ve found lots of hidden problems. Some of the Gurkha ex-servicemen and the community are living in some very difficult conditions. They find it hard to understand and navigate the system. It’s great to see that with the help of SSAFA, they go from nothing to having everything they need.

“Tilak is honest, hardworking, skilful, and an experienced ex-soldier. However, when he arrived in the UK he struggled to settle down. Since he met SSAFA, he got the help he needed in a very short time.”

SSAFA'S JUNGLE MAKEOVER

Our Health Visitors Department in Brunei, on the island of Borneo, receives a jungle makeover.

Thanks to donations from two Garrison charities and work carried out by volunteers, our Health Visitors Department has been transformed. What were once bare magnolia walls in the waiting room and baby assessment areas is now a jungle landscape, providing a relaxing, yet educational setting for babies and toddlers.

The refurbishment was funded by **SSAFA Service Committee Brunei** and the Garrison Thrift Shop. The donations also funded new toys to encourage parents and children to play together while awaiting routine assessments and health checks.

This was part of a two-year renovation project at the Primary Care Medical Facility at Tuger Lines in Seria, Borneo, which is currently home to the 2nd Battalion The Royal Gurkha Rifles, supporting units and Garrison dependants.



The SSAFA Health Visitors and Midwives team.

Around the world, SSAFA health care staff provide health services for military personnel and their families. Visit: <https://ssaf.as/19K>.



Left: SSAFA Health Visitor Jackie Crawford chatting to Commander British Forces Brunei, Lt Col David Pack.

The jungle murals were designed by former SSAFA Committee Chair, Karen Oldfield, who has since moved back to the UK. Karen painted these with the help of Lynda Black, SSAFA Publicity Officer; Angela Bage, Thrift Shop volunteer, and with the assistance from members of the Garrison community.

The design features animals and plants native to the island of Borneo, including an orangutan, clouded leopard, Bornean rhino, pygmy elephant, hornbill, and a crocodile. Palm trees with numbering in both English and Nepali add an educational element, while a sensory board, created by Cpl Carl Leek and LCpl Sean 'Gilly' Gillham, in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Workshops, is designed to develop motor skills.

Karen said, **"It's been a fun project to work on. Although it has taken a lot of time and effort, we are delighted with the end result and hope that it will give the youngest members of the Garrison community lots of enjoyment for years to come."**

Our SSAFA Health visitor, Jackie Crawford, added, "From the health visitors and midwives' point of view, this new facility will make a huge difference to families of small children who come to the department for antenatal, postnatal and developmental checks, as well as for health education. We hope that it will encourage families to play alongside their children as it will greatly benefit their development."

The revamped facility was officially opened by the Commander British Forces Brunei, Lt Col David Pack, and attended by families and members of the Garrison community.

10 QUESTIONS WITH...

GREN MORGAN



1

WHAT'S YOUR SSAFA ROLE AND WHAT DOES IT INVOLVE?

I am the Divisional Secretary for Peterborough and Fenland, which means we cover a large area of the East of England. I am also a Caseworker. My role involves running the office and managing phone calls, as well as opening and closing cases. Along with all other administrative SSAFA matters for the Division that apply to my patch.

2

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN VOLUNTEERING FOR SSAFA?

I have been with SSAFA for nearly seven years as a Caseworker and six months as the Divisional Secretary.

3

WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

As a veteran myself, there is no better feeling than closing a case, knowing that we have been successful and made a difference to a veteran's life and well-being.

4

HAVE YOU BEEN IN THE ARMED FORCES OR HAVE FAMILY WHO HAVE SERVED?

I served with HM Welsh Guards. My father was in the Royal Navy in the Second World War and served most of his time in the Far East. Both my grandfathers served in the First World War and both survived the Somme - I was told some great stories as a kid.

5

WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT TO DATE?

From the life I've led to surviving forty years in the NHS Ambulance Service, to see my 71st birthday in sound mind and good health is an achievement.

6

IF YOU COULD VISIT ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD WHERE WOULD YOU GO AND WHY?

Being Welsh, I would love to visit the Welsh colonies in Patagonia, South America.

7

WHICH PERSON (ALIVE OR DEAD) WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO MEET AND WHY?

I would love to have met Nye Bevin. He was such an inspiration and Founding Father of the NHS.

8

HOW DO YOU SPEND YOUR FREE TIME?

Apart from my volunteer work with SSAFA (which takes up nearly three-days a week), I love walking, travelling with my dear wife, gardening and drinking (in moderation of course).

9

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE FILM?

It's old now but my favourite film is "How Green Was My Valley", quite a poignant drama about a Welsh family and the mining community.

10

WHAT'S THE BEST ADVICE YOU'VE BEEN GIVEN?

The more birthdays you have the longer you live.

KEEPING KATRINA IN GOOD HEALTH

SSAFA secured £10,000 funding for flights and accommodation to make sure Katrina got the care she needed.



AFTER RAISING THOUSANDS AND SPENDING EVERY PENNY ON A LIFE-SAVING PROCEDURE, KATRINA NEEDED HELP TO ATTEND HER VITAL REGULAR CHECK-UPS. THAT'S WHEN SHE TURNED TO SSAFA.

Katrina Brown, 37, a former Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps, was diagnosed with the life-threatening auto-immune disease Scleroderma in 2008. By 2014, her health was deteriorating rapidly and the only way she could survive the condition was through a stem cell transplant in America. Time was running out, but the treatment didn't come cheap.

Katrina explains, **"It was my only option. It was either that or I was going to die. I was going downhill quickly. The risks were significant, but the benefits outweighed the risks."**

After spending £20,000 on tests at a specialist hospital in Chicago, Katrina was told by her doctor she had a maximum of six months to have the transplant to stop the progression of the illness, or her condition would go beyond the point of being treatable.

Katrina adds, "With Scleroderma, you produce too much collagen which makes all your connective tissue go really hard. It makes your skin go tight, your joints are unable to move, your heart becomes tight making it hard to beat, your intestines become hard to move, your lungs...literally everything in your body turns to stone."

The hospital in Chicago would not arrange any treatment until the full cost had been paid. Despite the huge ask, Katrina was able to raise the £125,000 needed through a massive fundraising effort, with help from friends, family and strangers.



After the successful stem cell transplant, Katrina spent three months in Chicago, requiring regular tests and care as her immune system had broken down.

Katrina turned to her local SSAFA branch in Gloucester when she needed help to fund her vital regular check-ups, to make sure the treatment had worked and to make sure she didn't relapse. She needed to go to Chicago once a year for five years, for long periods of time, to see the specialist doctor who treated her.

SSAFA secured £10,000 funding for flights and accommodation for Katrina and her husband, Cpl Martin Brown to make sure she got the care she needed. She added, "SSAFA's support had a huge impact. It's quite a big financial tie for five years to have

to go and pay for medical bills, transport and flights - everything adds up. Without SSAFA, I wouldn't have been able to go back every year. I am grateful to everyone who donates to SSAFA and appreciate, now more than ever that being part of a huge military community is so important - and special."

"But it isn't just the financial support. My Caseworker has been there for us every step of the way. I was emailing him at 9 o'clock at night, calling him on Saturdays... he is really the person who was pushing for me. All my fears and stresses got directed at him and he was supportive throughout."

Roger Wilson, Katrina's Caseworker of SSAFA Gloucester said, "I am very pleased to see the progress Katrina has made, and it is satisfying to know that we were able to meet her needs and make her life better and easier."

Now Katrina's life has improved dramatically. She can work part-time, take part in para-snowboarding competitions, and enjoy being with friends and family.

Contact your local SSAFA branch to find out how we support the Armed Forces community or visit ssafa.org.uk/get-help. If you're interested in volunteering for SSAFA, please go to ssafa.org.uk/volunteer.



IMAGES © CHRIS WALKS FACEBOOK PAGE

CHRIS WALKS THE UK

CHRIS HAS BEEN WALKING FOR OVER TWO AND A HALF YEARS AROUND THE ENTIRE UK COASTLINE TO FUNDRAISE FOR SSAFA.

Chris Lewis, a former Paratrooper, embarked on an epic adventure in August 2017 to raise £100,000 for SSAFA. Chris, 39, from Swansea in Wales, struggled to cope with civilian life after leaving the Parachute Regiment, falling into depression and homelessness. It was SSAFA South West Wales that helped him turn his life around and inspired him to fundraise for SSAFA.

Chris has been walking for SSAFA for two and a half years. He has already raised £90,000 for SSAFA, walked an estimated 12,000 miles and still going strong!

He's also gained over 22,000 fans on Facebook and has even acquired a four-legged friend, Jet, on his journey in Ayrshire who has stayed by his side since. In addition to his dog Jet, Chris has been supported by the kindness and generosity of the general public, who offer him shelter, food and supplies.

Throughout Chris' journey, a variety of SSAFA branches, including Northern Ireland, have all shown their support. In January, Chris' journey took him through the Shetland Islands. The island of Fetlar which has around 60 inhabitants, kindly invited Chris and Jet to their Town Hall for a belated Christmas dinner. Chris and Jet have also been announced as finalists for the Animal Partnership Award at the **Soldiering On Awards 2020**.

Chris said, "The support I have received whilst on my epic journey has been incredible and the money raised so far is phenomenal. It's the least I can do to say thank you for what SSAFA did for me when I needed them."

You can keep up to date with Chris' journey on his Facebook page '**Chris Walks the UK**': [facebook.com/chriswalksuk/](https://www.facebook.com/chriswalksuk/).

STREAMLINING SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH IN CYPRUS

SSAFA is very proud to be part of the NHS England eRedbook Project, providing families in British Forces Cyprus with an online system of recording children's health and development.



The Project has been progressing well, with over 170 accounts set up across British Forces Cyprus (BFC) and British Army Training Unit Kenya (BATUK), thanks to the hard work of our Community Health team. New functionality is being added all the time, with parents and carers now able to upload PDF and Word documents as well as photographs. This in addition to a dedicated section to record milestones, record dental development and the ability to add health contacts. More functionality will be introduced later this year.

Accounts on eRedbook will eventually link to personal digital adult health records as a child grows, meaning that those with an eRedbook will be the first cohort in the UK to have access to their health and development record from childhood.

THE BENEFITS OF EREDBOOK

Access anytime, anywhere

Accounts can be accessed from any device and from any location, providing the parent or carer has their login details and an internet connection.

Local information

The accounts hold information for parents or carers living within the military community in BFC and this content is being developed for BATUK. These are created and monitored by SSAFA employees.

Secure data

The only person able to access the information is the parent or carer, and anyone they have chosen to securely share the record with.

Personal family record

Photographs and notes can be uploaded, making it a personal family record. For example, a parent can upload a photograph of the baby's first solo outing, the first time they sat up, etc. It also provides the opportunity for a parent or carer who is posted away to upload a photograph of themselves to share with their child.

HOW CAN PEOPLE SIGN UP?

The eRedbook app is available in the App Store or at eredbook.org.uk. Registration is quick and easy. Those posted with BFC or BATUK should use the standard format BF1 postcode to sign up.

HEALTH SERVICE JOURNAL PARTNERSHIP AWARDS 2020 FINALISTS

The Cyprus Community Healthcare team were proud finalists at the Health Service Journal Partnership Awards 2020 in February, for the category of 'Health Tech Partnership of the Year'. This is an achievement for their innovative work in developing the eRedbook for military families in BFC and BATUK, in conjunction with industry partners, Sitekit and support from SSAFA.



TOM'S TOP TIPS FOR MENTAL WELLBEING

With the support of SSAFA, Tom Fox, a former Rifleman diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, is now using his personal experience to help others.



SSAFA can help our Armed Forces community access the mental health and wellbeing support. For more information, visit ssafa.org.uk/get-help/mental-wellbeing.

Tom, a father-of-two, from Coulsden, Surrey, joined up in 1990 and served nine years with the Royal Green Jackets. An anti-tank and battlefield engineering specialist, Tom completed two tours of Northern Ireland and served in Bosnia, Belize, Cyprus, and Canada. He joined the Territorial Army in 2000 and in 2002 took up a contract with the US Department of Defence working in Iraq, providing close protection. Since returning to the UK in 2006, Tom carved out a career in finance, then in IT before being diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in 2015.

His experience with PTSD, encouraged Tom to learn about mental health and help others like him. With the support of SSAFA, Tom retrained in Mental Health First Aid. This allowed Tom to set up his own business, Thoughtify, which aims to destigmatise mental ill health and encourage early diagnosis.

Tom shares his five top mental wellbeing tips:

1. GET ENOUGH SLEEP

A study published in 2007 found that “optimal” sleepers reported fewer symptoms of depression and anxiety, and reported higher levels of environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. Optimal sleepers in this study were those sleeping an average of six hours.

2. GET A HOBBY – LEARN SOMETHING NEW OR REVIVE AN OLD PASSION

It's never too late to learn a new skill or take up a new hobby. A hobby can concentrate the mind and help you to forget about your

worries by focusing on the task in hand. You'll get an enormous sense of achievement from completing your project or mastering your first drum solo, for example. If the hobby is something that involves a team or like minded people, it can help you broaden your social circle too.

3. KEEP IN CONTACT WITH FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Spending time alone can be good for us. We all need a bit of “me” time, but locking yourself indoors, not socialising or deliberately avoiding social situations can leave you feeling lonely and affect your self-esteem. Try picking up the phone and chatting with an old friend or close family member. Most regiments have an association, so why not get in touch with your local branch and pop along to their next meeting?

4. CUT DOWN ON THE BOOZE AND SMOKES

Yeah, I know it's boring, but you know it's not doing you any good so why not give it a go? When I gave up smoking, the one thing that helped me get over the cravings the most was when I realised they were only lasting for 30 seconds. I timed them. Once I realised the cravings weren't really such a big deal, I found it pretty easy to get over them. See if it works for you.

5. GET OUT AND TRAVEL – SEE NEW THINGS, GET SOME SUN, LIE ON A BEACH

You don't have to have lots of money to travel. I once packed a Bergham and spent a few day's walking the coastal path around the tip of Cornwall. It was some of the most beautiful scenery I've ever seen and the view from a tent on a cliff overlooking the Channel on a sunny day rivals anything that any five-star hotel has to offer. Not only will it make you feel better mentally, but it's well known that a little light exercise can help protect us from all sorts of other health conditions too.

Visit Tom's website here www.thoughtify.co.uk.

BECOMING NEW PARENTS

Major Andy Wilson tells us about the challenges faced when adopting in the Armed Forces and how SSAFA made his dream come true.



When my wife and I decided we wanted to start a family, finding out I couldn't have kids biologically was the hardest thing to hear. Grief kicked in - grief for the family that wasn't.

At the time, I was posted in Germany, which complicated things. We desperately wanted children, our hearts were set on it and we spoke to a doctor about our options. As I was adopted myself, this was a path we were seriously considering. The problem was, being stationed abroad, we weren't connected to any local authorities, and so we couldn't go through the process like families back home.

SSAFA Adoption services

A lot of agencies are put off straight away by military families wanting to adopt, they think families in the Armed Forces move every few years and this could create a lack of stability for children.

Luckily, our story didn't end there. The doctor on camp told us about the Adoption Service run by SSAFA, who understand the military lifestyle. Their strong network supports families and, unlike many other adoption services, know that not everyone in the Armed Forces moves around regularly.

Discussing our options

Our SSAFA Social Worker, Anna Mitikaru, came to meet us quickly after we made the first call to discuss all our options. We went on a course about adoption and explained who we were and what our values were. We did all the paperwork, SSAFA supported us through everything. We had to do it properly - and to have the best chance of a successful adoption - we had to go through the motions and emotions.

We were told by our Social Worker to wait a year and really think about whether adoption was for us. This was time to consider our options properly, to talk through every possibility, to be honest and to mourn the fact that we couldn't have biological children.

In that time, my wife and I had to consider the impact adopting would have on us and our wider families. We cried a lot and discussed things and didn't agree on things. It was a strain, but fortunately it brought us closer together.

Our family

And now, we've adopted twice. We have Thomas, who is in Year 3, and Molly, who starts school next year*. Both know they are adopted, but it's normal for all of us. We are a family, like any other. The other day my son asked, "What was it like when you saw my face for the first time?" and I was so choked up, it was hard to answer. I feel so many different things, but what I remember most from that wonderful moment was his smile, looking up at me. I knew, right then, that the challenge of adopting - the interviews, the emotions, the waiting - had been worth it.

I don't take anything for granted: being a father is amazing. Every day I wake up a little bit earlier than the kids and go in to give them a kiss. I am so lucky.

I also don't take the help we have had for granted. The SSAFA Adoption Social Work team are the reason my wife, Thomas, Molly and I are a family today. They even continue to help us today, for example by training up staff at the kids' school to help with any additional support they need.

To find out more about SSAFA's adoption service, visit ssafa.org.uk/adoption.

*names have been changed.

WORKING TOGETHER MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Doing more for our beneficiaries with the help of CC Moore & Co Ltd

We were delighted when Mike Brown from CC Moore & Co Ltd, a fishing supply company based in the UK, contacted our SSAFA Corporate team at the end of last year with a wonderful proposal to help our beneficiaries during the cold and wet weather.

Mike explained that he and his team were collecting high-quality items of warm and waterproof clothing from their customers and suppliers, which they wished to donate and distribute to our beneficiaries in need. So far, items have been donated to three SSAFA sites across the country, which have been gratefully received.

Mike explained, "I have worked within the fishing industry since 2003, and in my current role as UK Sales Manager for CC Moore & Co Ltd for eight years. Last winter, I was horrified to see the large number of people sleeping rough around the centre of Bournemouth.

"The following day at work we felt compelled to act and decided to set up our appeal, which we ran on our social media channels. The response from both the angling industry and individuals was fantastic. We received a significant amount of top-quality waterproof and thermal garments, as well as sleeping bags, headwear and footwear – plenty of which were unworn and in perfect condition. This was all distributed directly to various charities throughout the winter months.

"We are delighted to be supporting SSAFA and have received another superb response to our appeal which we ran throughout December 2019 and into January 2020. It is such a worthy cause, and if we are collectively able to help just one vulnerable veteran or homeless person then it is totally worthwhile. Hopefully, we have achieved much more than that!"

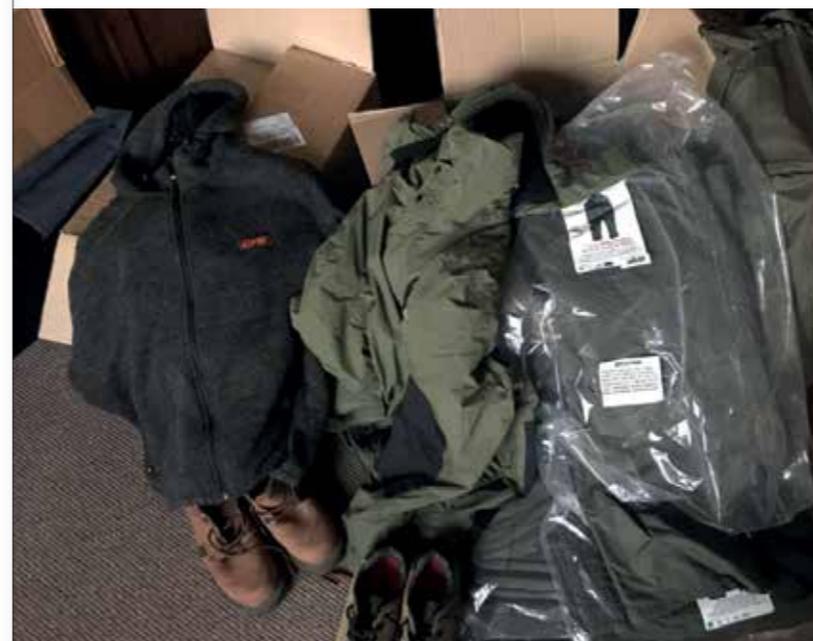


Ash Ashbridge, Branch Publicity Officer at SSAFA Hampshire, added, "What a nice man Mike is. A fantastic selection of kit arrived – quality kit. This will help veterans, including some of our rough sleeping veterans in the area."

Chel Turner-Everett, Divisional Secretary at SSAFA Southend & Rochford, said, "The items arrived in three huge boxes and we will be putting it all to good use. We're feeling very lucky and blessed. Mike has made a huge difference to many people with his kindness."



"The response from both the angling industry and individuals was fantastic..."



"We're feeling very lucky and blessed."

Mike has made a huge difference to many

people with his kindness"

If your SSAFA branch is offered donations of clothing and items, please liaise with the company directly and manage that relationship locally, with support from central office. If you need support, please contact corporate@ssafa.org.uk



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DATES FOR YOUR

DIARY 2020

06
MARCH

RELEASE OF

'MILITARY WIVES' FILM

Inspired by the story of the Military Wives Choirs (MWC), part of the SSAFA family, the upcoming 'Military Wives' film is an exciting opportunity to raise further awareness of MWC's mission to promote wellbeing and bring all women in the military community, not just wives, closer together through singing. **Learn more at militarywiveschoirs.org.**

26
APRIL

POSTPONED UNTIL 4 OCTOBER

SSAFA LONDON MARATHON

SSAFA is proud to have runners taking part in the **London Marathon** this year, with 29 SSAFA places taken, plus a further 21 own places. We look forward to cheering our SSAFA runners on!



08-10
MAY

VE DAY 75

SSAFA is the official charity partner for the VE Day 75 series of events organised by Pageantmaster, Bruno Peek LVO, OBE, OPR, during the bank holiday weekend of Friday 8 May to Sunday 10 May 2020. See pages 6-7 for information about the events, materials available, and how your local community can join in.



08
MAY

VE DAY 75 CONCERT

We are delighted to be the official charity partner for a very special concert at the Royal Albert Hall on 8 May 2020, 75 years to the day since VE Day.

This high-profile event will feature internationally renowned soloists and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, supplying a fitting close to a day of celebrations. There will also be live streaming of the concert in around 400 cinemas across the nation. **Visit veday75.co.uk.**



19-23
MAY

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW

We are delighted to announce that SSAFA will have a garden in the **Urban Category** at the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show 2020. The space has been designed by the award-winning designer **Amanda Waring**, whose son currently serves in the British Army, and the garden will be supported by CCLA Investment Management. Following the show, the fully accessible garden will be transported to our Norton House, Stanford Hall, for families and patients to enjoy, whilst receiving rehabilitation at the near by Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre.



06-07
JUNE

BIG LUNCH

The UK's biggest annual get-together for neighbours is working with SSAFA to commemorate VE Day 75 on 8 May, alongside our VE Day 75 events. **Read more about this on page 8.**



27
JUNE

13 BRIDGES WALK (ARMED FORCES DAY)

13 Bridges is London's premier Armed Forces Day event in aid of SSAFA. One thousand people will start at Tower Bridge and walk across 13 Bridges, finishing after Putney Bridge at Eel Brook Common, where participants will enjoy food, drink and entertainment. **For more information and to sign up, visit ssafa.org.uk/13bridges.**

JULY -
AUGUST

BATTLE PROMS

SSAFA is the charity partner of the Battle Proms concert series, which will take place this summer at stately homes across the UK.

- Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire - Saturday 4 July
- Burghley House, Lincolnshire - Saturday 11 July
- Hatfield House, Hertfordshire - Saturday 18 July
- Highclere Castle, Hampshire - Saturday 1 August
- Ragley Hall, Warwickshire - Saturday 8 August

Pre-discount Adult ticket prices range from £38 to £41. Use **SSAFAPROMS20** discount code on standard advance Adult and Child tickets. Cannot be used with any other discount code and excludes Concert Pavilion tickets. **Visit battleproms.com.**



27
JUNE

ARMED FORCES DAY

SSAFA will be involved in the National Armed Forces Day this year, which takes place Scarborough. Look out on SSAFAnet for more information.

02-06
SEPTEMBER

BELGIUM BATTLEFIELD

BIKE RIDE

Following on from last year's successful D-Day landings ride, this year's ride takes in the battlefields of Belgium as we commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE Day. **For more information visit ssaf.as/19L**

20-26
SEPTEMBER

TREK THE BALKANS

Join us on a beautiful European trek on which you will climb three of the highest peaks in the heart of the Balkans - Kosovo, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia. **Join the trek at ssaf.as/19M.**



ALL
YEAR

CHRIS WALKS THE UK

Look out for Chris and his faithful rescue dog, Jet, as they continue their epic walk around the entire coastline of the UK. You can read more about this on **page 22**.



2020

GIFTS THAT GIVE LIFELONG SUPPORT

Our exclusive range of sportswear, accessories, homewares and toys make great gift ideas for every member of the family.

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ssafastore.org.uk

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We also provide free UK delivery on all orders over £50.

Every purchase helps SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, provide support to thousands of serving personnel, veterans and their families in need.



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