

# Personal Story

Sarah Westaby, 46, is a volunteer case worker in South Buckinghamshire and also helps raise awareness and funds for SSAFA

My daughter went off to school last year and I had some extra time on my hands so I started to look for a charity that might need some help.

I'm a lawyer by training and I am already involved with various charities. I deliver meals on wheels for the WRVS and go into elderly people's homes. They have a lot of memorabilia around and you can see their military backgrounds but you can also see what is missing. People would say, 'It's lovely to see you dear, I haven't seen anyone for days' and I would think, 'How do they manage to go to the shops?'

It was a friend of mine who saw the advert for SSAFA in a magazine in the doctor's surgery and I made an application.

With SSAFA you are helping younger people as well as the elderly and I think it is because of the great age range that it is a very satisfying charity to work for. Later I got involved with awareness and raising the profile of SSAFA in my local area.

I have really enjoyed the awareness side of things because it's important to make people who have no obvious service connection aware that there is a charity which supports both serving and ex-serving members of the armed forces and their families.

I'm also a Brownie guider and we organised a lovely coffee morning as part of last year's SSAFA Big Brew Up. The marvellous part was that we had a group of young Brownies supported by their parents giving up time on a Saturday morning to serve coffee, tea and delicious cakes to members of the public whilst learning about SSAFA and its work. It was really successful and we raised £364. It's a question of reaching out to people of all ages.

The personal connection can be really important. Awareness and fundraising go hand in hand and you can

reach out to so many people in different walks of life.

Yes, SSAFA is a serious and professional charity but people can have fun raising the money. I have just done the SSAFA Big Jump and I raised £2,000 plus with lots of support from my Buckinghamshire branch.

I had a big dinner party and I charged friends £10 each for an evening of delicious food and plenty to drink! I really enjoyed that. We had more than 50 people and I gave out lots of SSAFA leaflets so people could see where their money was going. I think that because of my parachute jump perhaps another 500 people now know about SSAFA.

The jump was brilliant and the team were really good. Some of my friends have already said they want to go up too because they have seen my DVD.

People kept asking, "Why do you want to throw yourself out of a perfectly serviceable aircraft?", but I would definitely recommend it to others – it was such fun.

Raising awareness is an ongoing process and you have to keep working at it. I enjoy the more campaigning aspect of it and the public face of it, but I like case working too because I like dealing with people on a one-to-one basis. It's very satisfying.



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