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THE BARONETS TRUST

- 2015 REPORT -



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Armed Forces
charity



The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help
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A report for the Baronets Trust on the impact of their gift in support of SSAFA's Short Breaks for children with Disabilities and Additional Needs, their Siblings and Young Carers for 2015.

Since 1885 SSAFA has provided lifelong support for those who serve or have served in the Royal Navy and Royal Marines, British Army and the Royal Air Force, and their families.

Our experience of working with the Forces family for over 130 years means that we are uniquely placed to deliver bespoke services for the serving and veteran community, bringing together the expertise of our trained volunteers and our professional employees.

Our vision is that our Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserves), veterans and their families know they can depend on SSAFA for support now and for the rest of their lives.

Last year alone we helped more than 57,000 people through our charitable services.

SSAFA's Short Breaks



The SSAFA short breaks focus on offering new experiences and activities for children and young people from Service families with an additional need or disability, their siblings and young carers. These adventures give children a break away from home, where they can gain independence, make friends and have fun. The breaks offer young people the opportunity to try activities they might not otherwise get a chance to try while, at the same time, providing life-enhancing opportunities for our trained volunteer coaches.

The majority of our volunteers are serving personnel who are fully vetted and attend a selection day and a two day training weekend. All children are assessed by SSAFA social work staff prior to acceptance on the breaks to ensure their needs will be met and we are able to provide a safe and enjoyable break.

In 2015, SSAFA ran two week long breaks in the UK, one for families and one for siblings and young carers.

The Family Break, Exmoor, 1st July - 7th August 2015

The Calvert Trust runs a number of centres around the country specifically to enable people with disabilities to benefit from outdoor activities in the countryside. SSAFA has run breaks for children with disabilities and additional needs at The Calvert Trust in Exmoor – a converted farm in Exmoor National Park – for a number of years.

This year we welcomed 15 families (50 attendees in total) including 15 children with disabilities and additional needs, 25 parents and 10 siblings. All the children were between the ages of eight and 14 years old.

As in previous years, the variety of specialist needs of the children was wide-ranging and included Asperger's syndrome, autism, learning difficulties, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, developmental cognitive disability and sensory issues among others.

During the week, the children took part in activities such as rock climbing, abseiling, kayaking, crate stacking and horse riding. We also took them on a day trip to The Milkyway – a local adventure park offering a range of accessible activities including rides, slides, play areas, sports activities, countryside and craft activities, and live shows including birds of prey displays. Evening entertainment in the evenings include a magician, movie night, a disco and bingo evening.

Overall, the week was a great success allowing families to spend quality time together, build relationships, and enjoy new and exciting activities that otherwise would not be possible due to the children's disabilities.

The Siblings and Young Carers Break, Southampton - 15th August - 22nd August 2015

This is a break for children between 8 and 12 who have a sibling or a parent who has additional needs and/or disabilities. The week gives the young person an opportunity to have a break, and to make friends with others who understand what its like to be a young carer. Some of the time together is spent talking about ways of coping with difficult feelings and managing emotions. They also spend time creating space for 'play' whether that's team games and adventure activities or less structured play like making costumes for the talent show. The week away gives children the opportunity to challenge themselves and gain independence and confidence in a safe and supportive environment.



This break was held at YMCA Fairthorne Manor for 12 children, with six volunteers to support and assist. During the week, the children had the opportunity to participate in sailing, rock climbing and archery, with evening entertainments such as a camp fire, a disco and team games. The group also went to Marwell Zoo, which gave them an opportunity to enjoy the animals at the zoo, plus a bit of fact painting. The children really enjoyed themselves, growing in confidence and building strong friendships.

Breakdown of 2015 children attending a break by service connection:

Service connection	Siblings & Young Carers Break	Family Break
Army	7	10
RAF	4	3
Navy	0	2
Reservist	1	0
TOTAL	12	15

CASE STUDIES

Family A



Johanna (known as JJ) and Michael are both in the Army and have four children: Joseph 12, Jessica 10, Jemima 8 and Jenny 6. Joseph has Tourette's syndrome, a neurological condition affecting the brain. It causes his limbs or head to jerk or move involuntarily.

"On good days, you wouldn't know that anything was wrong, but on bad days, Joseph gets very tired when he gets home from school. It can really take it out of him and he struggles more," explained JJ. "Generally though, he's a bright, sensitive boy who gets on with life."

Like all families, the children sometimes fall out and have arguments. Joseph and Jessica clash in particular – being so close in age. JJ heard about SSAFA's short breaks through her work. "There was a small advert placed in a weekly circular letter that I put out at the recruitment centre. I thought to myself 'why shouldn't I apply?' and we were accepted, which was great."

Jessica and Jemima both attended the sibling and young carers' holiday in Southampton for a week in August 2015. The residential break is for dependent children aged 8 to 12 years who have a sibling or parent with additional needs or disabilities.

"We took the girls to the activity centre and were met there by SSAFA staff. It was very well run and very professional. The girls had a fantastic time and got to do all sorts of new activities like kayaking, climbing and hiking. They were out and about doing different things each day. They didn't have access to phones or tablets and really enjoyed playing in the playground there.

"When they came home, they'd each made a scrapbook detailing what they'd done while they were away. It was a great way for them to share their holiday with us.

"They made new friends too and as soon as they got back, they wanted to borrow my phone so they could get in touch!"

While the girls were in Southampton, JJ and Michael arranged for their youngest daughter Jenny to stay with her grandparents, so that they could spend some quality, one-to-one time with Joseph.

"I don't think we've ever had the opportunity to spend time alone together like that. It was wonderful. We were able to give Joseph our full attention and were able to treat him more like a grown up – going for coffee together and talking about different things.

"We all benefitted from the experience – definitely," said JJ. "We'd love to do it again and the girls have already assumed that they'll be going again next year!"

Family B – JP is 13 years old. He has Global Learning Delay, no verbal communication and is in a wheel chair. He has attended SSAFA Short Breaks before and always enjoys them as they break up the summer holidays and have given him the opportunity to try activities that aren't available to him at home. This year he attended with his mother, LP. Both LP and JP thoroughly enjoyed the break and getting involved in the activities together. LP said:

“It was brilliant for JP and me to be able to do the activities instead of standing on the side lines watching other families have fun. We really enjoyed that it was a family event. It was great to be with families who were in different but similar situations. There was a lovely caring feel – we were happy to help each other.”

Family C –family C had never attended SSAFA Short Break before but attended this year as a family including Mum (SB), Dad (RB), MB and sister IB. MB has Asperger's syndrome and IB experiences anxiety, concentration and impulse issues. The family were extremely enthusiastic throughout the whole week. They tried all the activities on offer and made strong friendships with other families as well.

SB explained that they often find it difficult to take their children on holiday due to their specific needs. She loved the relaxed atmosphere of the break and that their children were able to make new friends. She said what they benefitted most from was: *“time together, seeing achievements we don't usually see, meeting new friends, a break, time to rest and have fun ...no cooking!”*

We are very grateful for the generous support of the Baronets Trust which helped us provide this vital support to Service personnel and their families.

THANK YOU