



# Young Citizen’s Advice External Newsletter

## November 2023

### A project across the five Somerset CA offices, with Somerset County Council

Welcome to the accessible version of our newsletter. If you have any suggestions of how we can improve the document’s accessibility, please feel free to [email us](#).

To get to any section in the table of contents just press CTRL and click on the heading, or on mobile click on the subject in the table of contents.

If you are reading a printed version, please be aware that it may not be the original, latest text. [Visit our website](#) to ensure you are using our latest version. Always check with a CA adviser if you want to be sure of our latest advice.

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# Latest Updates from Young Citizen's Advice

## Somerset

- Citizens Advice Somerset (CA-S) is now the new charity that has united the previously individual charities of Citizens Advice Mendip, Sedgemoor, South Somerset and Taunton. This will provide a single access point to our service across those areas. Citizens Advice West Somerset remains an independent charity, with links to CA-S as strong as ever. You can find [CA-S](#) at their website, and [Young Citizens Advice Somerset](#) within that site.
- In recognition of Remembrance Day, and the ongoing contribution the armed forces make to the UK, we would like to reflect on the support those in the military community may need, what is available, and how we can best support them in our work in the third sector. This newsletter includes updates and information from the recent Somerset Military Covenant conference held in October.
- New resources are available including how best to access advice from Citizens Advice Somerset, and some guidance on completing the online advice form.
- Recent case law has indicated that a hostel can be considered 'suitable accommodation'. We explain more.

# Somerset's Military Residents

## How well do you know your Somerset neighbours?

These figures are drawn from a range of sources as there is no single central recording facility.

### Veterans

- The 2021 Census told us that there are just under 28,000 armed forces veterans living here in Somerset including around 10,000 in Yeovil and around 8,000 in Taunton, reflecting RNAS Yeovilton and 40 Commando at Norton Manor Camp.
- MoD figures suggest this figure is likely to actually be around 49,000.
- Aged 75+ over half of men are likely to be veterans, with 1-5% of men under 40
- In data put together in 2020 by PNJ tucket, Public Health specialist at SCC, priority needs were housing difficulties and an increased risk of suicide.
- The risk of suicide in ex-Army males aged under 24 years is 2-3 times higher than that of the same group in the general and serving populations

### Current Members and Families

Ministry of Defence statistics from 2017 say there were then 4,670 MoD personnel working in Somerset. 70% were military. The MoD's research suggests that there is approximately one spouse and/or child in Somerset per member, so approximately 3,300-3,900 people including 1,700 to 2,200 children.

In 2019/2020 a total of 1,794 children in Somerset were eligible for the Service Child Pupil Premium paid to schools to raise attainment amongst disadvantaged children. Due to their circumstances,

military children are *all considered disadvantaged*. These figures and more can be found at the [Somerset Intelligence](#) website.

Yeovilton consists of c.4,300 people including members of the Navy, Army and NATO and 1000 civilians. Many do not live on site, meaning people are spread over the area with poor transport links, and children at different schools. Stanchester Academy has developed '[Safe Space and Support](#)' for their Service children. They had 86 students getting Ever 6 premium and 60% being brought in by bus from a diverse range of towns and villages. A safe place and support has made immense difference to those young people.

### **The best way we can start to help?**

- Simply ask if someone is a former or serving member of the services or is part of a military family.
- Know what is available both in the local area and nationally (see pgs 5 and 6).
- A great place to start is signing up for the Somerset Armed Forces Covenant update by emailing [communities@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:communities@somerset.gov.uk)

## A month with 40 Commando

YCA-S attended the Somerset Military Covenant Conference in October, where Major Sandiford of the Royal Marines discussed how work has changed for soldiers and the impact for both soldiers and their families. This clearly exemplified some of the challenges involved in serving in the modern forces both for those serving, veterans and the families of both. April 2023 included:

- Operation Polar Bear in Sudan: Initially meant to secure a safety zone, this operation transitioned to organising the last days of evacuation from Wadi Seidna Air Base. Due to the rapid deployment, the soldiers had no bedding rolls and only two toilets for 1,000 people. Parachute Engineers and 40 Commando Royal Engineers were also engaged in runway repair for the first time since the Falklands. Despite all the challenges, the team evacuated 2000 people in just six days.
- Training troops in Kenya
- The King's Coronation
- Mortar training and jungle training, in different countries

40 Commando soldiers now deploy in smaller groups of 12-250, which can lead to a lack of cohesion/shared experiences for soldiers and their families. Some children may have parents deployed in Sudan or Kenya, whilst seeing other children enjoying having their parents at home. Rapid mission pivots can take a toll on soldiers' mental health.

Previously, a unit would have 600 soldiers, but now it is down to 400, which means that soldiers are being asked to do more with less. Families move every two years with three months' notice, posing various challenges such as relocation. Alongside separation from family, the potential isolation for both soldiers and families, the risk of burnout from the pace of work, it is easy to see how challenging military life remains.

## **How is Citizens Advice well placed to support?**

**Casebook.** Our central client recording system means that we can support families even when they move, as they should not have to repeat their story every time.

**Confidentiality.** We can offer free, independent, confidential advice outside the military.

### **Regularly updated, centrally provided resources coupled with local knowledge**

Our resources are regularly updated, and are mainly open to the public so people can self-help at any time of day or not, as well as ask us for specific support. Examples:

[Housing options for people leaving the armed forces, veterans and their families](#)

[Pension and compensation schemes for the armed forces, veterans and their families](#)

[Benefits and concessions for the armed forces, veterans and their families](#)

### **Our connections with Open Mental Health Alliance Somerset**

We are connected with many agencies across the county to provide wrap around cover.



## What Support is Needed?

There is welfare support for serving personnel in the form of caseworkers. The caseworkers can and do liaise with many local agencies and organisations. Particularly vulnerable moments are deployment and service leaving. The majority of cases include a mental health component.

Major Sandiford asked that anything that can be done to focus on assisting the families of serving members is vital. He shared that the areas that often cause the most issues are around the following. Each is linked to either CA or local information if you fancied a cup of tea and an update read.

SEN and Early Help Assessments: [Somerset's SEND Local Offer, Citizens Advice](#)

Nursery and school placements: [Council information](#)

Medical and dental registration: [NHS Somerset resources](#)

Employment options: [Step Up Somerset](#), [Skill Up Somerset](#), [Somerset Skills & Learning](#)

Integration into communities: [Spark Volunteering](#), [Citizen Advice Somerset volunteering](#)

### Did you know?

Two Armed Forces Hubs are in development in a co-production between Arc Taunton Ark at Egwood and the Armed Forces Project Manager at NHS Somerset. Two workers, one at each location, will build knowledge and become 'experts' in supporting service leavers. They will work to:

- improve well-being;
- collate and improve resources;
- introduce their clients to relevant services more actively than signposting sometimes allows;
- and look to see health inequalities improve.

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The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity has many links for family support here: [How we help | The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity \(rnrmc.org.uk\)](https://www.rnrmc.org.uk)

## Further Reading

[Action research on the presence and needs of the Armed Forces Community in the South West of England Full Report](#), commissioned by the councils in the South West of England

[Veterans and Families Research Hub](#) - source of UK and international discussion, literature and research created by Anglia Ruskin University

# Supporting Staff & Volunteer Well-being in work with Young People

We recently attended the amazing Young Somerset conference which was a day focussing on wellbeing and looking after yourself at work, especially when working or volunteering in a demanding environment, and how to better connect with and support young people. Our top three takeaways were:

- The importance of prioritising ourselves, in order to serve others. We can't help other people if we don't look after ourselves.
- Kelly Hanaghan introduced the MindTools website has lots of helpful resources for stress management and wellbeing such as a Burnout self-test for identifying if you are struggling [Burnout Self-Test - Checking yourself for burnout \(mindtools.com\)](https://www.mindtools.com/pages/newbystrm/burnoutselftest.html)
- Sharing experiences of those in an ever-demanding sector and the combined enthusiasm to ensure wellbeing is a priority for both staff and those we work with.

## Kelly Hanaghan - Mind Work Matters

The first keynote speech was delivered by Kelly Hannaghan who is a Mental Health and Wellbeing Consultant. The speech focussed on 'Rethinking Wellbeing for our Future Generation'.

## Haleem Clift

The second keynote speech was delivered by Haleem Clift who is a Filmmaker and Speaker. His speech focussed on his belief that honesty and openness are the keys to a better world. He takes a look

at the impact professionals can have on young people including his own take on this and what your inner teenager may be thinking.

We highly recommend watching the speeches, Kelly's [here](#) and Haleem's [here](#). You can also go to Kelly's [website](#) and Haleem's [website](#) for more information and resources.

Thank you to Young Somerset for putting together such an engaging conference on a very important topic. To find out more about their work, visit [www.youngsomerset.org.uk](http://www.youngsomerset.org.uk)

## Bite Size Update: Homelessness 'relief duty'

### Can a hostel be 'suitable accommodation'?

**This question has recently come before the Court of Appeal and in short the answer is YES.**

Under s189B Housing Act 1996, a local authority owes a 'relief' duty to any person who is homeless, and eligible for assistance. Under the relief duty the authority must take **reasonable steps** to help the applicant secure **suitable accommodation**. The relief duty can be discharged where the authority is satisfied that the applicant has suitable accommodation available for occupation for at least 6 months (s189B(7)(a)).

In R(Amina Ahamed) v Haringey & Amina Ahamed v Haringey (2023) **the Court of Appeal decided that a room within a hostel was 'suitable' and capable of discharging the relief duty.** Read [this summary](#) for insights into the decision.

The local authority must consider suitability including matters such as any disability and food requirements if food is being provided. If this is duly and correctly considered, a hostel can be suitable accommodation.

### Links/Further Info/Help

- This summer, nationally, Citizens Advice has seen 33% more people coming to us for help with no fault evictions than last summer. That's 50 people per day. The South West is in the [top three affected regions](#). Global majority ethnicities are disproportionately affected.
- [Blog post](#) about how parliamentary action on ending no fault evictions is stalling, and what might be next.

- Somerset Council's homelessness advice and assistance information can be found [here](#). This includes information about both the relief duty and the main housing duty.
- It remains the case that if someone over 18 is deemed to be 'intentionally homeless' this may prevent any Council assistance being received at all. It is best to approach your local council as soon as you realise there may be a risk of homelessness to discuss your options.
- We have a [Housing Resource Pack \(accessible version\)](#) that goes into more detail on the various aspects of the homelessness duties.

## **Housing Emergencies**

If you have an immediate homelessness situation and you have nowhere safe to sleep tonight, call the Council urgently on 0300 123 2224. If calling after 5pm, on a weekend or on a bank holiday, call the out of hours service on 0300 123 2327.

## **Q&A: How does CA Somerset give advice?**

### **Q. How much does it cost to get advice from Citizens Advice.**

A. All our services are free.

### **Q. What sort of advice can Citizens Advice give?**

A. One of our main aims is to help people find a way forward when they are stuck or overwhelmed. We advise on just about every subject under the sun, and if we don't have the information, chances are we can suggest another organisation that does. Sometimes we speak to someone once and that is all that is needed. Other clients we support for longer processes, or even in court or tribunals.

### **Q. How does Citizens Advice give advice?**

A. We give advice in a variety of ways.

- There is general advice available on the [national website](#).
- There are blog posts on [WeAreCitizensAdvice.org.uk](#) . [Here is a recent one](#) about Starting an Apprenticeship, including what a young person might need to know, and all the rights they should be aware of as a new employee.
- Then there is individual advice given via email, telephone, letter, or in person.

### **Q. Do you do everything for a person who needs individual advice?**

A. It depends. When we work together with a client, we offer the assistance that works for them. Some people like to know how to go about the next steps, and do it for themselves. Other people need a little more support. And sometimes this can change for the same person. We will always empower a client to do what they can do for themselves, but are here to help when needed.



## Case Study

Lauren\* (\*not the client's real name) said that the council had written to them but got their name wrong. She tried to contact the council by phone to remedy this without being able to get through. She then sought our help.

The adviser asked what prompted the council to write and it transpired that it was a house move and Lauren was worried about the council tax bill. The adviser went through the possible discounts or exemptions for council tax to see what the Lauren's liability would be and established that she was a care leaver, aged under 25 and as such Lauren was fully exempt for council tax.

Lauren was advised to request backdating for the last 4 years and this was granted and a full refund will follow. Lauren's case demonstrates why we ask questions about the circumstances a person is facing. It helps us ensure people receive good advice, and, in this case, gains the correct benefit from discounts and exemptions

# New Information Resources

## Getting Advice

- We have created a resource which explains the different ways that you can get advice from Citizens Advice Somerset
- This can be provided to young people to help them understand what Citizens Advice do and how they might be able to help.
- Please [click here](#) to go to the full resource, and full size versions follow on the next two pages.
- These resources and more are on our [website](#)

## Completing the Online Form

- We have created a resource which explains how to complete our online form and what information is helpful to include to help us gather the information we need to give advice.
- This is helpful for anyone who is contacting us online for advice
- Please [click here](#) to go to the full resource

## Don't forget!

If you think it would be helpful for us to create a resource on a specific topic for young people you are supporting, please don't hesitate to contact us at [\*\*ycas@casomerset.org.uk\*\*](mailto:ycas@casomerset.org.uk)

All resources will be available as a downloadable or printable pdf, and in a plainer text word document made with accessibility in mind. We welcome feedback on how we can further improve accessibility.

# Getting Advice from Citizens Advice

## Somerset

Did you know there's a county wide service here in Somerset that provides free, confidential advice on just about anything that might be happening in your life. Leaving home? Communicating with an employer? Working out banking? Running low on cash for the meter? That's us. Citizens Advice Somerset. Our motto is that we help people find a way forward.

Our advice is confidential and free. You can even approach us anonymously for advice, although choose a name you'll remember so you can come back for future advice if needed. Just give us an email or phone number.

Contact us on 0808 27 87842 or through our [online advice form](#). On the next page you can see how that form could be filled in, and what would happen next.

In person appointments are available for those who need them.

Our phone line is available during 10am to 4pm on Monday and Friday and 10am to 8pm on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Just a note that there is a high demand for telephone advice so you may not immediately get through but keep trying. Text Relay users should use prefix 18001 and then dial 08082787842

We also have online information. [National Citizens Advice](#) has a huge range of online advice on a wide range of topics which is updated regularly. [Citizens Advice Somerset](#) has resources specifically for young people.

## Stay up to date or get involved!

If you are interested in more information on up-to-date information on issues you may be facing, free training courses and local events, sign up to our Young Citizens Advice newsletter by emailing [ycas@casomerset.org.uk](mailto:ycas@casomerset.org.uk).

View past newsletters and resources on our [website](#).

If you have any questions or might like to get involved with letting Under 25s know about us, please get in touch at [ycas@casomerset.org.uk](mailto:ycas@casomerset.org.uk).

We love to have people review our resources or help us create social media.

# Completing the Online Advice Form

You can fill in the form yourself or ask someone to help you. This is an example of how the query section might be completed. Just say what you need to ask.

**Situation** - Start with an introduction. This helps us see the situation you are dealing with, and can also help us see what support you might be able to get:

I am [age], living at home/supported housing/assisted living. I am an apprentice/unemployed/part or full time employed/a member of the armed forces/in education x days a week. I do/do not have children.

**What is the problem or question and have you taken any steps already?**

Tell us what's going on for you. Are there any particular issues, e.g. is there any discrimination, health issues or other matters that might be worsening or affecting the situation? If this is a dispute, be clear about who the situation is with, and what contact you have had from them, if any.

**Urgent Deadlines and Further Information**

Are you aware of any dates e.g. a deadline for returning

forms, or an eviction notice? This might also include the best

way to contact you, your preferred name or pronouns, the best times to reach you or anything else you would like us to know.

Once you get in touch with us, we try to reply within three working days, so Monday-Friday. Someone may contact you to carry out a full assessment of the problem as well as your circumstances to make

sure we can give you all available options. We cannot decide what you should do, but we can help you see what the choices are.

Depending on the situation, it might be that we can help with practical steps such as filling in a form or submitting an appeal.

Alternatively, if you feel confident, we can give you resources to empower you to take action for yourself.

We keep notes of our cases with clients so you can always return for further advice when/if necessary. You can also ask for these to be deleted at any time.

# Free Continuing Professional Development & Training Opportunities

## Ability Net - Introduction to Digital Accessibility

Get the lowdown on the basics of digital accessibility to see what changes you need to make. If you are creating content for your organisation and not sure where to start in terms of making things accessible? AbilityNet have a free training on 14th December from 1.30-2.30pm

Visit [their website](#) to sign up and access lots of helpful free resources.

## The Diversity Trust: Supporting LGBTQ+ Mental Health Workshop

Join The Diversity Trust for a three-hour online workshop exploring the experiences of LGBTQ+ people. Together, they'll examine the current situation for LGBTQ+ people in the UK, discuss the impacts on community mental health and wellbeing, and work together to identify ways of supporting the community into the future.

The event takes place on Thursday 7th December from 09.30-12.30.

To book your space, sign up at this [web page](#).

## The Somerset Phoenix Project

The Somerset Phoenix Project works alongside professionals and those supporting children, young people and families affected by sexual abuse. It is provided by Barnardo's and Somerset & Avon Rape and Sexual Abuse Support (SARSAS) in liaison with Somerset CC and the NHS Somerset CCG.

SPP has trained over 2500 professionals across Somerset since 2017. They offer pre-recorded bitesize courses to allow for a deeper dive into trauma knowledge, as well as virtual and face-to-face 'live' training days. All types of training are free of charge. Some of the courses may assist those who may advise clients experiencing trauma including shame, self-injury, grounding techniques and understanding the brain & trauma. Pre and further reading is also provided. Visit ['Training for Professionals'](#).



# Volunteering with Young People

There are lots of opportunities to volunteer with young people across the county and we wanted to share some opportunities here.

## **Route1 Independent Visitor/Advocate**

If you are looking for a role supporting children and young people in Somerset then a Route1 Independent Visitor or Advocate Volunteer role may be for you!

Independent Visitors are volunteers who befriend and spend time with a child or young person who is in the care of the Local Authority. This role emphasises building a long term relationship with one child or young person (visiting once or twice each month and sometimes more often) - undertaking a variety of activities together, depending on their interests and the age of the young person.

Advocacy involves short term engagement with each child through the particular issue at hand. An advocate is an independent person who can offer one to one support to children and young people. Advocates can speak up for the young person, give advice, make them aware of their rights, listen to them and represent their views, wishes and feelings.

Find out more at [their website](#).

## **PROMISEworks Mentoring**

PROMISEworks is a local charity based in Somerset, offering mentoring services to disadvantaged children and young adults across the county.

With their training and support, volunteers become fantastic mentors to young, vulnerable children through weekly/fortnightly meet ups across 2 years volunteering.

## Community Updates

If you would like us to share a new service or update with our distribution list, just get in touch.

### Muslim Youth and Mental Health

Kooth, the online mental health portal used by Somerset Council, has produced a collection of [resources](#) aimed at breaking the mental health stigma for young Muslims.

The resources provide an insight in how it feels to be young and Muslim in the UK, as well as the potential for stigma around issues of mental health.

It also introduces the [Muslim Youth Helpline](#), which is available to support on a range of topics by phone, WhatsApp, Chat or email.

### Young Somerset Well-being Hubs

Young people can now access wellbeing support via Young Somerset Wellbeing hub drop-ins across three locations in Somerset. To find out more, please visit their [website](#).

Wednesdays - Taunton Library Cafe - 3pm-5pm

Thursdays - Glastonbury Library & Chard Library - 3.30pm - 5pm

## **Quantock Young Rangers - Free opportunity for 12-16s interested in the environment and countryside**

**A project by Quantock Landscape Partnership Scheme and Young Somerset.** Activities will include practical conservation skills, woodland management, wildlife surveying, map reading, bushcraft and more. One Saturday a month, 10-4, with transport provided from Bridgwater and Taunton. One two night residential a year. There may be opportunities to gain a Level 1 or 2 accredited module, or to progress to a formal apprenticeship in countryside management. A commitment of six months is desirable. Contact Verity on 07399767210 or at [verity.jones@youngsomerset.org.uk](mailto:verity.jones@youngsomerset.org.uk)

## Contact and Thanks

You can reach Catherine D, our Project Development Worker, and Catherine G, our new project worker, at [ycasomerset@tauntoncab.org.uk](mailto:ycasomerset@tauntoncab.org.uk).

Thank you to everyone who has contributed so far, and to Somerset Council both for their invaluable input and funding.

All the Citizens Advice offices are independent local charities who rely on donations to operate. Thank you to all who supports us.

If you are interested in volunteering, more information can be [found here](#).

If you or someone in your life needs help, you can visit our [online advice form](#) to ask for help, and read [this information \[edit with link\]](#) on the situation.

You can also call Citizens Advice on 0808 27 87842 from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday. If Deaf or Hard of Hearing please call the Citizens Advice Text Relay service on 03444 111 445.

