

Voluntary Sector Forum

01 July 2026

Agenda

- 10:00 – 10:15** **Welcome and Introduction:** Cllr Katie Mansfield, Vice-chair Finance, Policy and Resources Committee and Richmond Town Centre Project Lead Member, Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities and the Voluntary Sector
- 10:15 – 10:45** **Shaping Futures: Supporting and Nurturing Youth Talent in Richmond:** Polly Persechino, Head of Economy, Skills and Employment & Rachel Bennett, Strategic Lead for the South London Careers Hub, South London Partnership
- 10:45 – 11:05** **AI and the Voluntary Sector: From Everyday to Strategic Opportunity:** Julie Gavin, Chief Executive Officer, Richmond CVS
- 11:05 – 11:15** **Richmond Borough of Sanctuary:** Aaron Hardy, Head of Refugee Services, Richmond Council
- 11:15 – 11:25** **Trustee Forward: Strengthening Leadership for the Future:** Santiago Torchiaro, Project Coordinator, Richmond CVS
- 11:25 – 11:35** **Protecting Served Communities from Hot Weather Harms:** Fenn Porter, Public Health Lead – Health Protection, Richmond Council
- 11:35 – 12:00** **Open Forum, Q & A and Close**

Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Katie Mansfield

Vice-chair Finance, Policy and Resources Committee and Richmond Town Centre
Project Lead Member, Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities and the
Voluntary Sector

Shaping Futures: Supporting and nurturing youth talent in Richmond

Polly Persechino
Head of Economy, Skills and Employment

Rachel Bennett
Strategic Lead - Youth

Who We Are: The South London Partnership



Voluntary collaboration of five south London boroughs.



Economy and
Growth



Health and Care



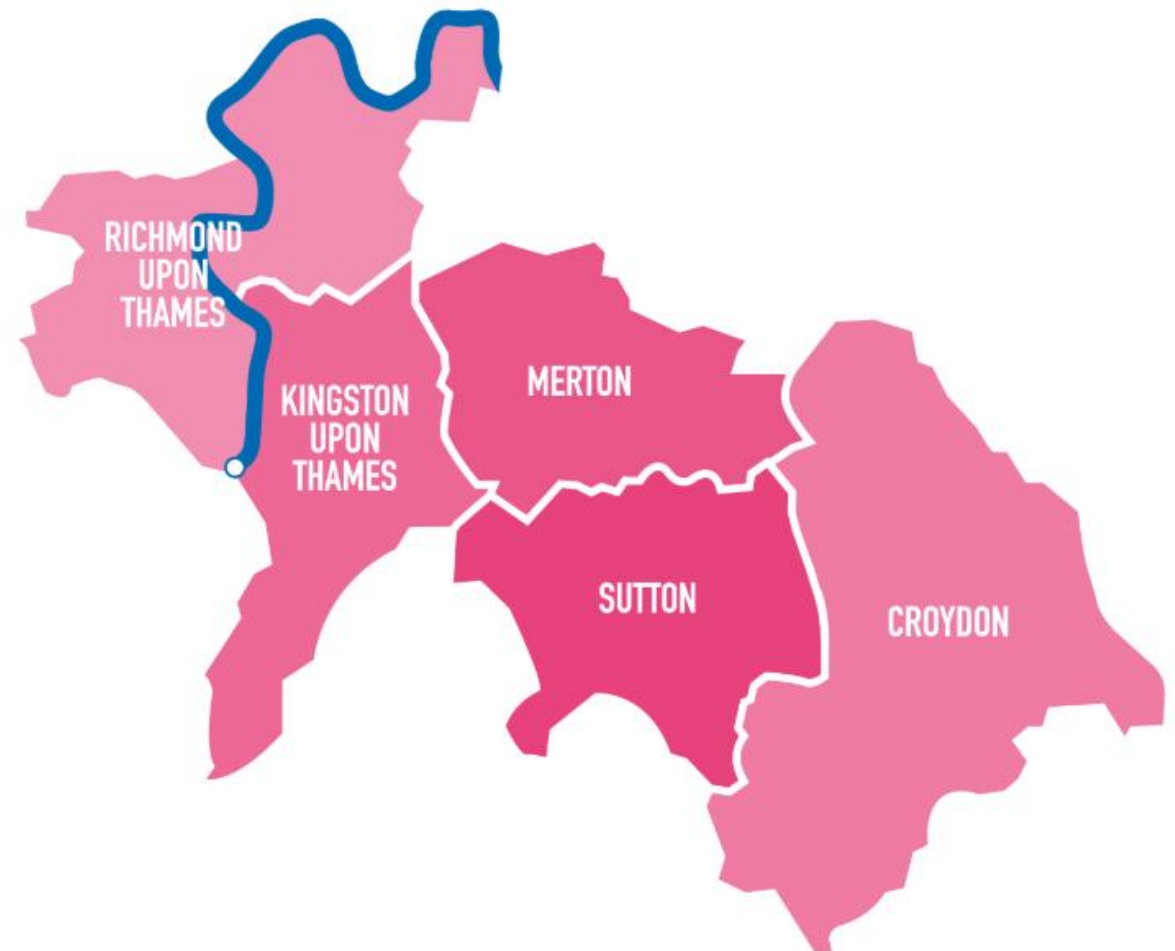
Infrastructure



Place



Skills & Jobs



Why are we here?

Young people are vital to the future economy, success and vibrancy of Richmond

As a major employers, as community anchors and opportunity providers the VCSE can create opportunities and unlock doors for young people

We can help you to create meaningful experiences and nurture your future talent pipeline.



Our young people do not lack protentional, they lack opportunity

The Opportunity Gap

Youth unemployment is increasing, with over 100,000 unemployed people aged 16-24 in London, approaching levels last seen in the pandemic.

- Entering the Labour market is more complex
- Many jobs require experience before young people have had a chance to gain it.
- Professional networks are often inaccessible
- Confidence, wellbeing and cost-of-living pressures can be barriers.
- Some young people face additional challenges and risk being left behind.

“I applied for a part-time retail job. I needed three years' work experience before I could pass the AI bot”.

Why You are Important

YOU

- Reach
- Trust
- Safety
- Opportunity
- Confidence



YOUNG PEOPLE

- Fresh perspective
- Talent pipeline
- Social value & impact
- Organisational resilience
- Widen outreach

You don't need a large HR department to make a life-changing difference. We can help you!

You say... we say

Common Concerns

"We don't have capacity."

"We don't know where to start."

"We're too small."

The Good News!

Opportunities can be:

- Short-term
- Flexible
- Supported by partners



Start small and grow over time.

What could you do?

Join our
Youth
Integration
Network

Career
Talk/Assembly

Workplace
Visit

Experience
Encounter

Placement/
Internship

Apprenticeship

What can we do for you?



Connect

Support

Promote



How we help – getting started



We will support you to make a difference



YOUTH GUARANTEE
Funded by UK Government

- Classroom to Careers
- Teacher Encounters
- Experiences of the world of work
- Networks/Events
- Work Placements
- Employment

How we help



- Free recruitment services
 - Access to a local talent pool
-
- Connect to young people, including Children Looked After
 - Match opportunities with young people in Richmond

What does good practice look like?

Just Starting

Careers talk
Workplace Visits
Mock interviews

Next Steps

2 work placements a
year
Volunteering
pathways agreement
Hosting/facilitation
teacher encounters

Next Level

Hire an Apprentice
Hire an early talent
employee

Discussion: What support would help you do more? What opportunity could your organisation offer? How can we work together to create pathways for young people?

Working with us

Email:

Rachel.bennett@southlondonpartnership.co.uk

Polly.Persechino@southlondonpartnership.co.uk

Online:

- [As an Employer](#)
- [As a Skills and Employment Practitioner](#)
- [As a job seeker](#)



Employer Incentives



Youth Jobs Grant: Employers can claim a £3,000 grant for hiring 18-to-24-year-olds who have been receiving Universal Credit and actively seeking work for six months

Apprenticeship Incentives:

- £2,000 for smaller businesses (non-levy employers) hiring an apprentice aged 16 to 24, available from October 2026.
- £2,000 for hiring a foundation apprentice aged 16 to 21 (22 to 24 for those with an education health and care plan, care leavers, or prisoners and prison leavers).
- £1,000 to support a young person aged 16 to 18 (19 to 24 with education, health or care plan or care leavers) when they start their apprenticeship training.

Rolling out in late 2026:

- **Jobs Guarantee:** Eligible 18 to 24-year-olds who have been on Universal Credit for 18 months a six-month paid job of up to 25 hours a week.

Questions?



AI and the Voluntary Sector: From Everyday to Strategic Opportunity

Julie Gavin – Chief Executive Officer, Richmond CVS
LBRuT Voluntary Sector Forum

Let's start with you- Where is your organisation at with AI?

Join the conversation

- 👉 Go to: www.menti.com
- 👉 Enter code: **3308 5661**



Insight 1- AI use is now mainstream in the VCSE

- 88% of charities report AI being used in day-to-day work*
- Up from 76% (2025) and 61% (2024)

What this suggests:

AI has moved from emerging to embedded in routine practice

**Zoe Amar, Early insights of Charity Digital Skills Report 2026*

Insight 2- Use is moving faster than strategy

- 46% of charities are actively using AI tools
- Only 4% are using AI strategically
- 28% are developing an AI strategy

What this suggests:

Adoption is accelerating ahead of organisational alignment

Insight 3- How the VCSE is using AI

AI is concentrated in administrative and operational tasks

- 71% using AI for admin / project management
- 40% for social media content
- 37% for fundraising
- Only 13% in service delivery

What this suggests:

AI is supporting operations and improving productivity more than mission delivery

Insight 4- There is a growing governance & leadership gap

Only a small proportion using AI strategically

- Increasing need for policies (60% developing one)
- Significant gap between trustee perception and operational reality

What this suggests:

Oversight is still catching up with practice

Insight 5- Skills & confidence are now the primary constraint

- 55% cite lack of skills as top barrier
- 49% concerned about quality/accuracy
- 49% concerned about data/privacy

What this suggests:

The challenge has shifted from access → capability and confidence (and concerns)

Insight 6- Concerns are shifting from “whether” to “how”

Rising concerns about:

- ethics and bias
- environmental impact
- overreliance on AI
- Evidence of tension in how teams relate to AI

What this suggests:

AI is now a cultural and relational issue, not just technical

Insight 7-The sector is negotiating its relationship with AI

- Concern about losing “human heart/human touch”
- Risk of over-reliance
- Changing nature of work and interaction

What this suggests:

The definition of “human” in our work is being actively renegotiated

Local case study: Richmond Borough Mind

- How we are currently using AI
- Building confidence across our team
- Guardrails and policies
- Internal conversations and ethical considerations



What do you need to move forward with AI?

Final question on Mentimeter

👉 Go to: www.menti.com

👉 Enter code: **3308 5661**



Next steps/what support is available

- Full Charity Digital Skills Report 2026 launching in July
- Richmond Trustee Network –AI session, July 6th [BOOK HERE](#)
- Resources and training will be shared after this session

Get in touch for:

- support and advice
- peer connections
- templates and tools




Questions?



Refugee Services & Borough of Sanctuary



An illustration of several hands of different skin tones and sleeve patterns (including plaid, stripes, polka dots, and floral) stacked together in a circle, symbolizing unity and support. The background features soft, abstract shapes in shades of beige and light blue.

**How would you define
a ‘sanctuary seeker’?**



**RICHMOND
BOROUGH OF
SANCTUARY**



A sanctuary seeker is a person who has experienced forced migration in the last five years



**RICHMOND
BOROUGH OF
SANCTUARY**

- Rich history of welcoming sanctuary seekers
- Borough of Sanctuary in 2024





Which countries do you think sanctuary seekers living in Richmond come from?



RICHMOND
BOROUGH OF
SANCTUARY

Refugee Services



- **Housing** – Homelessness prevention, reducing temporary accommodation, procuring properties
- **Resettlement** – Supporting Afghan/Syrian families, ad hoc support for other cohorts
- **Homes for Ukraine** – Administering the scheme and supporting hosts and guests
- **Policy** – Borough of Sanctuary Strategy Action Plans
- **Finance/Data** – Supporting better services



RICHMOND
BOROUGH OF
SANCTUARY

Refugee Services and the Voluntary Sector



- Richmond Sanctuary Partnership
- Borough of Sanctuary Grant Scheme
- Cross signposting



richmond.gov.uk/services_for_refugees

BoroughofSanctuary

@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Newsletter





Questions?

Trustee Forward

Richmond
CVS 

in partnership with
Richmond Foundation

Trustee Forward

Strengthening
Leadership for the
Future

Santiago Torchiaro
Project Coordinator
Richmond CVS





Outline of Trustee Forward

Our first Trustee Forward cohort

- 22 new trustees and aspiring chairs took part
- 63% from underrepresented backgrounds
- Training, mentoring and peer support
- Partnership with Richmond Foundation





Key learnings

Our experience from last year

- Mentoring model as a major strength
- Progress across all outcome measures: confidence, feeling supported, knowledge
- Flexible delivery structure
- Strengthened governance





Current plans

The coming year and beyond

- Continuing the core model of Trustee Forward
 - Cohort 2 – summer 2026 to spring 2027
 - Cohort 3 – summer 2027 to spring 2028
- Alumni programme for ongoing learning
- Exploring how the model can be replicated for CEOs and other senior leader roles – feedback is welcome
 - *Thanks to continued funding from Richmond Foundation*



Applications now open

Join the second cohort of Trustee Forward

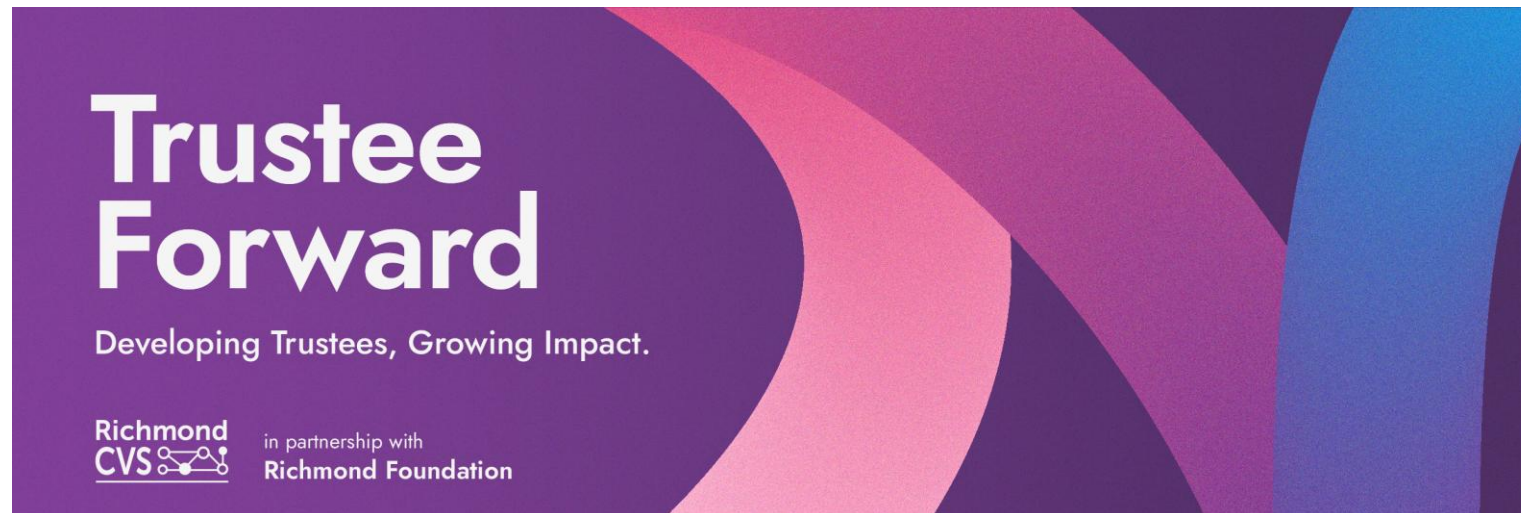
- Participant applications – new trustees and aspiring chairs
Apply by Wednesday 29 July – early application encouraged
- Mentor applications – join our mentor team
Apply by Wednesday 8 July
- Everyone is welcome to apply, particularly those from backgrounds that are underrepresented on boards

Any questions?

santiagot@richmondcvcs.org.uk

07350 508 642

www.richmondcvcs.org.uk





How the VCS can help protect people from hot weather harms

Public Health 

There are four actions you can do to help protect residents from hot weather harms:

- ① Make sure you, colleagues and partners register for Heat-Health Alerts  When necessary, implement local action cards
- ② Make sure you have up-to-date local plans and identify service users who may be at risk
- ③ Spread the word: promote Public Health messages around hot weather harms  Share and display the Public Health Heat Health Infographics
- ④ Register to be a cool space if you can  Complete the Shade the UK Training



PLEASE respond to assurance requests around preparedness and actions taken in response to hot weather events. Public Health or commissioners may request these up until 30th September 2026. Please note: this isn't an evaluation of your performance, but a way to support system-wide preparedness.

1 Register for the Heat-Health Alerts and note the action cards and guidance in accordance with the alertness

The alerts tell people about:

1. The weather forecast
2. The effects of the weather
3. Advice about what to do to stay safe

i [Register for the alert service here](#)

When necessary, implement [local action cards](#)

Heat-Health Alerts	
Green	We will not send any alerts. There is no risk to people's health because of the weather. This is a good time for organisations to plan for hot or cold weather.
Yellow	We expect hot or cold weather. It will not affect most people. It might affect people who are very old, young, disabled or unwell.
Amber	We are expecting very hot or very cold weather. It is likely to affect everyone. Some people are more at risk of being unwell or dying because of the weather.
Red	We are expecting extreme hot or cold weather. Even healthy people are more likely to be unwell or die because of the weather. Lots of things are very likely to be affected.

2 Make sure you have up-to-date local plans and ensure groups more at-risk are identified and appropriately supported

Anyone can become unwell if they get too hot. Some people are more at risk than others.

Groups more vulnerable to extreme heat:

- ☀ Older adults (65+)
- ☀ Young children (especially under 5)
- ☀ Pregnant women
- ☀ People on certain medications (affecting heart, kidneys, cognition, or sweating)
- ☀ Those who are ill and dehydrated
- ☀ People with alcohol or drug dependence
- ☀ People living alone without support
- ☀ Outdoor workers and those doing manual labour
- ☀ Physically active individuals spending long periods outside
- ☀ People experiencing homelessness

People with health conditions – vulnerable due to physical sensitivity or reduced ability to respond to heat:

- ☀ Heart or respiratory conditions
- ☀ Dementia
- ☀ Diabetes
- ☀ Kidney disease
- ☀ Parkinson's disease
- ☀ Mobility issues
- ☀ Mental health conditions
- ☀ Learning disabilities

3 Spread the word: Display and Share Heat-Health Resources Across Your Organisation

- Public Health worked with VCS partners to create five simple infographics.
- Based on UKHSA Beat the Heat, designed for both digital and print use.
- Available on <https://www.richmond.gov.uk/heatwave>

Share summer **water safety** messages by displaying [downloadable posters](#) and encourage conversations about water safety.

If you would like to receive printed versions of the infographics please contact:
healthprotection@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

How to stay cool

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Cool your skin down with water and remove unnecessary clothing
- Wear sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses when going outside
- Plan ahead to avoid the heat

Scan the QR for more information

LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES

ALWAYS FOLLOW THE WATER SAFETY CODE

ROYAL LIFE SAVING SOCIETY UK

Whenever you are around water:

- STOP AND THINK**
Take time to assess your surroundings. Look for the dangers and always research local signs and advice.
- STAY TOGETHER**
When around water always go with friends or family. Swim at a lifeguarded venue.

In an emergency:

- CALL 999**
If you are at the coast, call 999 and ask for the Coastguard. Don't enter the water to rescue.
- FLOAT**
Fall in or become tired - stay calm, float on your back and call for help. Throw something that floats to somebody that has fallen in.

Enjoy Water Safety

Learn basic lifesaving and CPR skills. Visit www.rls.org.uk

4

Help Your Community Stay Cool This Summer – Register as a Cool Space

Cool Spaces are accessible places where people can take refuge from extreme heat.

As climate change increases the duration and frequency of heatwaves, these spaces are more important than ever —especially for vulnerable residents.

If your venue is:

- Open to all
- Free of charge
- Accessible (or stated if not)
- Staffed

If this is something your organisation is able to support with, register to be a cool space [here](#).

Cool spaces are indoor spaces where Londoners can find opportunities to shelter from the sun, cool down and rest to take respite on hot days.

The Climate Change & Adaption team can provide guidance on:

- How to register to be a cool space
- Hot weather preparedness checklist for VCS
- Shade the UK Training

More information:

<https://www.richmond.gov.uk/heatwave>

Training videos: Staying healthy in hot weather

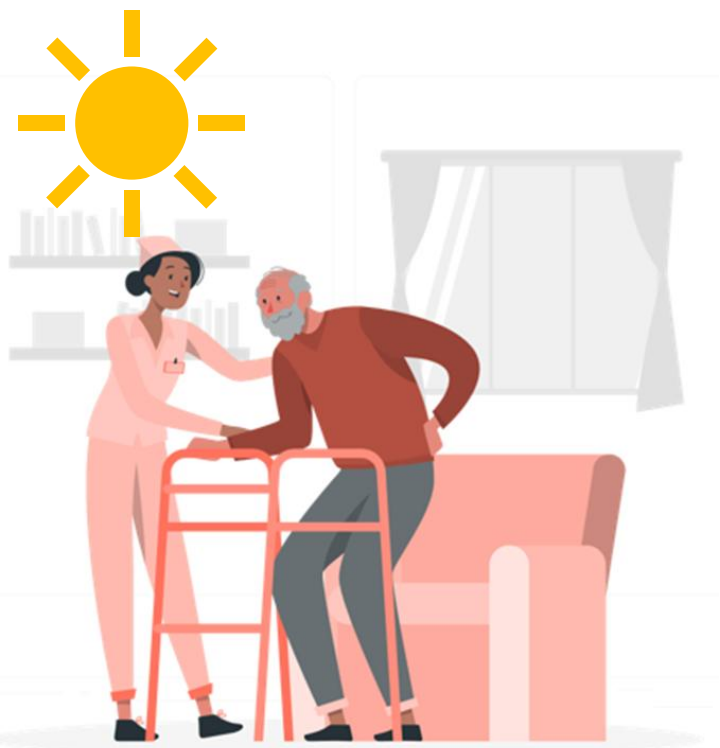


Image credit: Storyset

Could you organise a group training session where you watch the videos together and have a discussion afterwards?

We have partnered with Shade the UK to create a series of training videos to **support people who work or volunteer in community-facing organisations** to protect their own and others' health during hot weather.

The training will help you to:

- Understand the main impacts of heat on our health
- Look after yourself during hot weather
- Identify and support vulnerable people during hot weather
- Prepare for and respond to hot weather to avoid negative health impacts
- Learn about Cool Spaces and create heat safe spaces



SCAN ME

Please contact climatechange@richmond.gov.uk if you have any questions or feedback

A bright sun is positioned in the upper center of the frame, casting a strong glow and creating a lens flare effect. The sky is a deep, vibrant blue, filled with numerous white, fluffy clouds of varying sizes and shapes. The clouds are scattered across the sky, with some appearing more prominent and others as smaller specks. The overall scene is bright and clear, suggesting a sunny day.

Questions?

Open Forum and Q&A

VCS Hub: Civic Centre Shared Workspace Concept



VCS
HUB



Decarbonisation and Improvements to the Twickenham Civic Centre

The Decarbonisation and Improvements to the Civic Centre Project will deliver three key objectives:

- **Workspace improvements;** refurbishment of the Civic Centre, Stable Block and York House Annex. The project will revamp the workspace; delivering a modern, flexible workspace.
- **Consolidation;** changes to flexible working practices mean we require less space, so we're freeing up space across the Twickenham campus for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations, Achieving for Children and generating income through leasing floorspace.
- **Decarbonisation;** improvements to the performance of the building will contribute towards achieving the Council's green agenda.

VCS Hub; creation of a flexible workspace

- Flexible, modern workspace setting
- Bookable workspace and meeting space
- Central location
- Co-location with other VCS organisations and Council Services
- Competitive charging
- Available from early 2027



To find out more or express your interest in using space
contact:

voluntarysector@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

ssafa | the
Armed Forces
charity



In 2025 London Regional Office ...

- **133 cases – members of the Armed Forces community in need**
- **£162,000 pledged by military and other charities in support**

Who are we and what do we do?

Since February 1885:

- Provide practical, emotional and financial support to the Armed Forces community.
- Behind every uniform is a person. We are here for that person, their family, at any time, and in any way they need us.

SSAFA London SW Branch:

- Covering Richmond, Wandsworth, Merton, Kingston, Sutton, Croydon.
- Currently 19 volunteers.
- Casework, recruitment, awareness building, fundraising.

How we work to support beneficiaries

- **Initial contact with beneficiaries:** phone calls or face-to-face meetings at a mutually convenient time.
- **Assessing individual circumstances:** understanding people's support needs and gathering the necessary information.
- **Providing tailored support:** writing case reports to apply for financial assistance and signposting to specialist services.
- **Maintaining communication:** keeping beneficiaries updated on progress.

‘Are you a veteran?’

If so, and they're in need:

- **SSAFA's Forcesline - 0800 260 6780**

London SW Branch:

- **020 4558 7631 or 07483 909656**
- **london.region@ssafa.org.uk**



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Monthly What's On Brochure

FREE page for local charity

[What's On Richmond - July2026](#)

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Thank you!

**The networking lunch will be served
next door**