



## “..CARING FOR HOMELESS VETERANS...NOW”

**VETERANS AID** - (formerly The Ex-Services Fellowship Centres (EFC) - is a small 75 year-old charity with its head office - a veterans' initial point of contact - near Victoria Station and its 57-room hostel, more like a junior NCO's mess, in Stepney. Its mission is to respond to the diverse challenges of homelessness, to “care for homeless veterans...now”, which means that any street homeless ex-serviceman or woman calling on the charity that day will have a bed and a roof over their head that same night for however long - weeks, months, slightly more sometimes - it takes to regain their self-esteem, find a job and permanent accommodation. In the last 12 months it has provided a total of 19,739 nights of accommodation in Stepney but also several thousand more in other hostels in and around London and throughout the UK - i.e. 58 veterans alone in the last 4 months.

Calls for help at its head office - either in person or over the telephone - come from all over the country, and often from abroad, and last year numbered more than 900. The aim is naturally to avoid these veterans becoming homeless in the first place but most of the charity's work concerns those who are actually already on the street, destitute, and usually in a very worrying condition - alcohol and/or substance dependence, mental health disorders or just thoroughly depressed and broke. They range from 19 to 75 years of age and have held ranks from Able Seaman/Guardsman or Private/Airman to senior officer.

Last year, 73 veterans 'passed out' of Stepney on to new jobs and permanent flats; much of this down to close partnership with Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation, Royal British Legion and ARP/Ex-Service Resettlement Project. Similarly tight liaison with Project Compass on training and employment has proved its worth. SSAFA Central London have one of their staff embedded at head office and partly fund one of the charity staff's almonising work in Stepney. The charity receives the lion's share of its funding from ABF, RAFBF, RBL and SEAFARERS UK but also receives smaller grants and donations from close associates or relatives interested in its work who might not otherwise contribute towards our major Service charities.

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