



Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres - ASDIC

FRAMEWORK

Concept

There are an increasing number of Drop-In locations around the UK which support veterans of the Armed Forces, merchant marine and the fishing fleet and their families. Some also offer support to the blue-light services. Often called Hubs or Centres, between them they offer their Service Users (SUs) social interaction, general welfare (eg legal, financial, housing and employment advice) and wellbeing, including mental health support. This takes place routinely under one roof, all at the same time and in an informal, relaxed environment. The Association of ex-Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) network aims to link these Drop-Ins together for their mutual benefit and make them more accessible to SUs. It should be noted that there is also a network of ex-Service Breakfast Clubs; these tend to be more social than welfare oriented, but some locations fall into both categories. Whatever the title, benefit to the overall well-being of the SU remains paramount.

ASDIC is strongly supported by the Confederation of Service Charities (Cobseo), and funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT). Previously managed as a Project by Veterans Outreach Support (VOS) in Portsmouth, it has now achieved independence, being incorporated as a Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee, and registered with the Charity Commission. ASDIC is not a regulatory body, but all members are expected to follow a common ethos as described in the code of conduct (para 8) and sign the ASDIC Membership Application and Agreement (at Appendix). However, ASDIC does not seek to take away the independence of Drop-In but rather to empower it by harnessing collective knowledge and experience and broadcasting examples of best practice and initiatives.

ASDIC is modelled on a regional structure. There are presently 20 regions, each with a volunteer Regional Coordinator (RC) based in one particular Centre, and all liaising through the Regional Director. RCs use their own experience and initiative to monitor other Centres within their region, offering advice, support and guidance particularly to newly established locations. They also liaise with a wide range of support organisations within their region, and channel relevant information which helps to provide a regional and national picture of veterans' needs.

Objectives

The principle objective of ASDIC is to help Drop-Ins work together and thereby become more accessible to SUs. A secondary objective is to make it easier for support organisations (ie. state, charity, Service and third-sector bodies supporting Drop-Ins) to work together, extending their reach and giving them more opportunity to offer their services, especially to those with restricted ability to travel. At the same time each Drop-In can retain its individual identity within the context in which it was set up, whether on its own, as an independent charity, CiC, or subordinate to a parent organisation (eg NHS, local County Council).

Governance

ASDIC is governed as a charity by a Board of Trustees under a Chairman. Day to day management is provided by the Chief Executive who is responsible to the Trustee Board through the Chairman.

Membership

To be eligible for membership, Drop-Ins should comply with the following:

- a. Open regularly, at least once per month.
- b. Offer support to SUs without charge.
- c. Have volunteer and/or pro bono component of staff.
- d. Encourage all relevant potential support organisations in their local area to visit the Centre and assist SUs whenever possible, and build a mutually beneficial relationship with ASDIC's Regional

Coordinators and all appropriate representatives of the local community.

- e. Either be a member of Cobseo themselves, or be sponsored by a representative of ASDIC after a visit.
- f. Have been in operation for at least six months.

Drop-Ins aspiring to join ASDIC which are less than six months old, or do not yet qualify otherwise, may join as Prospective Members for a probationary period and benefit from the advice of RCs and other members as they become established. All applications for membership should be made to the Membership Secretary for final approval by the Chief Executive.

Benefits

The benefits of ASDIC membership include:

- a. *Use of the ASDIC membership brand, including the logo, giving national credibility and status within Cobseo and the wider Armed Forces welfare community.
- b. Dedicated presence on the ASDIC website to promote the member's Drop-In.
- c. Mutual support from other Drop-Ins and the RCs to offer advice and mentoring, and to stimulate best practice.
- d. Facility to share relevant codes of practice, governance, conduct, outcome measurement and performance standards.
- e. Conferences and/or regional meetings to share ideas with other members for mutual benefit.
- f. Access to the members' section of the website (presently under development).
- g. Cross-referral when a Drop-In is unable to address the particular needs of an SU or when another Drop-In may be more convenient for an SU to attend.
- h. Contact information and details about the support organisations attending Drop-Ins and the specific services they provide.
- i. Demonstrable collaboration when applying for funding from grants and trusts.
- j. The ability to provide data to compile a more comprehensive national picture of veterans' welfare and needs for the benefit of the whole community

*Prospective members may enjoy the benefits of ASDIC membership but will not be able to use the ASDIC brand, including the logo, until they are full members.

Code of Conduct

Whatever their size or type (public sector, charity sector or private organisation), all ASDIC members will remain independent and responsible for their own conduct and governance. All members will be expected to meet the highest practical standards of overall ethos, culture and conduct. There will be wide variations in the way Drop-Ins are organised, and one size definitely does not fit all. Associates attending a Drop-in will be expected to work cooperatively, and Drop-Ins should agree a similar code with them.

Drop-Ins wishing to join ASDIC will therefore agree to:

- a. Act with kindness and consideration to SUs.
- b. Work together harmoniously to deliver the best possible service to SUs.
- c. Signpost to other organisations when the support required is beyond their capability.
- d. Be covered by appropriate professional indemnity insurance.
- e. Be committed to monitoring standards and improving performance.
- f. Where relevant, conform to statutory regulations for provision of clinical services.
- g. Open at least once per month and publish opening hours. (available on the ASDIC website)
- h. Conform to the highest standards of behaviour in a relaxed and informal setting.
- i. Follow appropriate legislation for data protection, safe-guarding, equality and confidentiality.
- j. Never compete with other members or support organisations and in the event of an unresolved dispute enter Alternative Dispute Resolution (see below).
- k. Share contacts, developments and experiences that may be of interest to other members, either individually or through Regional Coordinators or ASDIC HQ.
- l. Maintain contact with the ASDIC Chief Executive, Regional Director and/or Regional Coordinators as appropriate.
- m. Share contact details with ASDIC and other members for the purposes of giving access to SUs, providing their services and showing their attendance on lists at events.
- n. Display the ASDIC logo provided and use ASDIC and AFCT branding on promotional material.

- o. Provide basic data on numbers and needs as requested.
- p. Provide appropriate training to volunteers.
- q. Attend periodic ASDIC meetings and conferences as appropriate.
- r. Provide certain items of date as requested by the ASDIC Management Team
- s. Not to engage in any overtly political activity

Should it become known that a member falls short of this code of conduct, the Trustee Board will reserve the right to revoke membership.

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).

Should a dispute arise, members agree that it will be resolved initially through ADR mediation rather than litigation, and that a mediator will be appointed within 28 days of notifying the Chief Executive of the dispute. Failing this, the matter will be referred under the Arbitration Act.

Appendix

ASDIC Membership Application and Agreement