

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

3rd February 2022
Microsoft Teams



PRESENT

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Anthony Metcalfe	Royal British Legion Area Manager
Greg Roach	Senior Employment Mentor - CCBC
Gordon Hill	Gwent RBL Secretary
Kenneth Terry	Royal British Legion Wales – Caerphilly
Kirsty Gronow	The Poppy Factory
Louise Briggs	Defence Transition Service
Tina Foster	TGP Cymru
Bev Garside	Chair VAPC Wales
Paula Blyth	160 (Bde)
Damon Rees	Veterans NHS Wales Peer mentor
Robert Aitkin	Adferiad
John Williams	Royal British Legion Public Affairs and Campaigns Manager

APOLOGIES

Cllr Alan Higgs	Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Champion
Julianne Williams	RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity
Daniel Madge	ABUHB Armed Forces Lead

KP welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for brief introductions.

1.0 ATTENDANCE, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIES

2.0 NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING OF 14/10/21

- The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record.

UPDATE OF ACTIONS

- All actions from previous meeting completed

KP informed the group that Cllr Alan Higgs the Armed Forces Champion for CCBC is standing down at the next elections (in May). The group thanked him for his commitment over the years to the Armed Forces Community.

A new Armed Forces Champion will be selected after the new administration in May

3.0 UPDATE FROM WLGA / Welsh Government

LR advised the forum of the following from **Welsh Government**

Veterans scoping exercise

- Delivery of the recommendations arising from the scoping exercise continues. In November an Employment fair was held in Celtic manor attended by over 150 Service leavers and 48 Employers. The event was delivered by Welsh Government, CTP, 160th (Welsh) Brigade, RFCA, Forces fitness, Officers' Association, Working Wales and supported by AFLOs. Welsh Government continue to engage with the MOD regarding the next Careers Transition Partnership contract to ensure Service leavers and veterans can access courses in Wales when they leave service.
- An updated delivery plan is being developed and this is coordinated with the Officer for Veterans' Affairs (OVA) Veterans strategy 'Action plan' launched 19 January. Welsh Government will be consulting partners on our updated plan during the spring.

Falklands 40

- Planning is underway for a national Falklands 40 commemorative event involving Welsh Government, 160th (Welsh) Brigade and RBL. This will take into account existing planned events across Wales / UK. Partners such as SAMA have been approached to be involved. Details to follow.

Armed Forces Day Wales

- The event is scheduled to take place in Wrexham (subject to COVID restrictions) on Saturday 18 June and Welsh Government will be supporting.

Wales Veterans Commissioner

- The recruitment process for the Wales veterans commissioner is now open via UK Government <http://publicappointments.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/appointment/veterans-commissioner-for-wales-comisiynydd-cyn-filwyr-cymru/> . Welsh Government continue to work with the OVA to support the process as we have done since the announcement in February 2020.

Wales Covenant Annual report

- The Armed forces team would welcome any case study submissions for the Wales Covenant annual report, showcasing best practice across Wales for the period June 2021-May 2022. Please send any suggestions to ArmedForces@gov.wales

JW advised the group that the RBL had released a manifesto last year that called for Resettlement Centre for Wales, and they have written to MPs this week to ask the veterans minister to consider services in Wales

WLGA offered no additional update.

4.0 Guest – Bev Garside – Chair VAPC (Wales)

BG presented to the forum an overview of the Veterans Advisory and Pension Committee:

- The Veterans Advisory Pensions Committee in Wales seeks to ensure that veterans and their families are properly supported. Their priorities are:
- Provide a distinct, identifiable, and independent point of reference for the veteran community and all those supporting it to promote issues relating to Veterans Services, the Veterans Strategy and the Armed Forces Covenant.
- Raise awareness of the Veterans Welfare Service and Defence Transition Services.
- Act as an advocate and promoter of Veterans Services provided by Government, Local authorities, and other stakeholders.
- Report on veteran's services to The Minister, Welsh Government OVA and others.
- Liaise, cooperate, and share information on issues of common interest relating to the delivery of veteran's services.
- Support the six themes of the Veterans Strategy – a designated team within the VAPC to work on each theme

- Our aim is to make Wales the best place for veterans and their families. That they access to the information and services they need, when they need it.

Action: LR to distribute presentation to forum members (Completed)

5.0 GUEST – Greg Roach – Employability Team CCBC

GR presented to the Forum

- There are several Employment programmes administered at the authority – Communities for Work, Communities for work plus, Bridges into work 2, Inspire to work, Working skills for Adults and Nurture, Equip, Thrive (NET)
- The process – Referral, Contact made by CCBC (Triage), Allocation and ongoing support
- Point out this is collaborative and to add value to existing support.
- One to one mentoring, support, and advocacy
- There is a single point of contact to access any of the programmes
- Support with Employment skills
- Access to fully funded training (Accredited and Non- Accredited)
- Ringfenced job opportunities / interviews
- Network of support services
- Business Liaison Officer will work with employers to upskill and recruit candidates
- Working with AFLO to have unpaid work placement opportunities to the Armed Forces Community. 'Launch into Local Authorities' will be trialled in the next few weeks. If you have anyone that would like to trial this opportunity, please let LR now.

Action: LR to distribute presentation to forum members (Completed)

6.0 GUEST – Ant Metcalfe – RBL Wales

AM presented to the forum the latest statistics of support offered by the RBL (Impact Data) Oct 2020- Sep 2021

- 168 Branches working with 8261 members
- Independent Living team working with 59 clients
- 5995 Branch community support telephone calls made to isolated veterans
- Benefits, Debt, Money Advice Service worked with 100 clients securing a gain of £607,130
- Regional Outreach Officers in Wales have worked with 71 of their most complex clients
- 715 Welfare grants delivered to clients to the value of £527, 339
- Reiterates that some grants are in collaboration with other agencies on occasions
- Largest area of money given out to Brown and white goods etc. Big increase in funeral costs as the impact of covid hits and mobility grants
- An increase of £92k from last year's direct grants
- An example of case work showing outcome and collaboration was given
- Admiral Nurse Service covers Bridgend, Caerphilly, RCT, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Newport, Torfaen and Blaenau Gwent. Supports the families of Veterans with Dementia
- Money from the Poppy appeal goes towards those services being provided in Wales. Thank you to the Poppy Appeal supporters who raise funds for the appeal.

Action: LR to distribute presentation to forum members (Completed)

7.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

LR advised the forum of the following:

- AFC Support Officer started work 31st Jan. Will be working on the Directory in first instance
- RBL 100 – 14th May 2022 – Waunfawr Park. CCBC will be presenting the Freedom of the Borough online as well on 24th March
- Newsletter – Deadline 1st April
- Website – nearly ready. When launched each AFLO will have access to the pages to update with local information
- Mental Health Courses – delivered to over 200 participants so far. Last few courses in March
- Caerphilly Veterans Hub - Average 20 Veterans/Family members attend each week that offer support with Housing/Benefits/mental Health. WG funding the food for 12 weeks, Blue Tokens – Tesco (in Risca Extra and Rogerstone) additional Trips to overcome social isolation – The Game Changer project, Arboretum and London War Museum booked. Additionally, a weekend Veterans retreat is scheduled for June.

8.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

8.1 The Poppy Factory

- Still really busy with lots in the pipeline, They are keen to take on new referrals and work in partnership.
- KG going on maternity from 25th March (Returning October). The point of contact in the interim will be Kelly Walker – kellyw@poppyfactory.org

8.2 RBL

- Nothing further from the presentation

8.3 VAPC

- Nothing further

8.4 160 Bde

- Reminded forum that it is the start of the jubilee year, and they will be doing the Royal Gun Salute – 2nd June in Cardiff Bay

8.5 Defence Transition Service

- Continue to work with all partners in Wales supporting service leavers. Currently working with other AFLOs on a particular complex case in their area.

8.6 Veterans NHS Wales

- Currently busy with approx. 26 people on the waiting list after being assessed and triaged.
- Wait time at the moment is 20 weeks (within target)

8.7 RBL - Gwent

- Looking forward to the RBL Freedom of the borough event in May
- New committee in Gwent

8.8 Adferiad

- Low uptake on the Digital programme. Asked if LR can resend and publicise the programme

8.9 TGP Cymru

- Veterans and Family Engagement Service is a 2-year service, running from January 2021, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and provided by TGP Cymru.
- This service aims to provide support for Veterans and their families to help build positive relationships, minimise conflict leading to family breakdown and empower them to seek specialist services when needed
- Our service looks at strengthening the family relationships to make a positive impact on the mental health and wellbeing of all family members. Supporting the family to jointly identify solutions that enable everyone affected to move forward.
- Support veterans and families if they are reluctant to engage with other agencies

Action: LR to distribute current report and VFES Flyer (Completed)

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

LR stated that the Monmouthshire Veterans Hub will start in the library in Abergavenny on 7th March
MPCT will be supporting with Platinum Jubilee activities throughout Gwent
104 RA will be completing 7 marathons in 7 days for the platinum jubilee through Offas Dyke finishing in Chepstow Castle

9.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: 10am, 25th May 2022, Microsoft Teams.