

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

10th June 2021
Microsoft Teams



PRESENT

Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Helen Neve	Help for Heroes – Veterans Community Nurse
Julianne Williams	RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity
Gordon Hill	Gwent RBL Secretary
Jason Suller	Blesma
Paula Blyth	160 Bde – Engagement Team
Robert Aitken	Hafal/ LL Gwent
Lorraine Lees	Defence Transition Service
Jinty Morgan	Operations Director Hire a Hero
John Williams	Royal British Legion Wales – Public Affairs
Daniel Madge	ABUHB -Armed Forces Lead
Ken Terry	RBL Memberships

APOLOGIES

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Cllr Alan Higgs	Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Champion
Sadie Baldwin	Army Families Federation
Kirsty Gronow	The Poppy Factory
Cailin Woodland	RSLO
Anthony Metcalfe	Royal British Legion Wales
Jamie Farr	Your North

LR 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 25/03/21

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

UPDATE OF ACTIONS

- No actions for follow up

3.0 UPDATE FROM WLGA / Welsh Government

LR advised the forum of the following from WLGA:

WLGA Armed Forces Network

The WLGA Armed Forces Network met on 26 May. The Network is made up of the 22 Local Authority Champions and Lead Officers and is also attended by Welsh Government, 160 Brigade, RBL and all the AFLOS.

National Armed Forces Day 2022-26

Local Authorities have agreed with WG a 5 year timetable for the hosting of a national Armed Forces Day in Wales 2022-26.

2022 – Wrexham

2023 – Newport

2024 – Swansea

2025 – Monmouthshire

2026 – Carmarthenshire

LR – informed the group of the Legislation update and Focus group activity. JW and DM would like an update in relation to the focus group.

Action: LR to email 160 Bde who is co-ordinating for Wales

LR advised the forum of the following from Welsh Government

Annual report

The Welsh Government Armed Forces Annual Report 2020 will be launched during Armed forces week. The report outlines key achievements across the sector in Wales in delivery for the Armed forces community. We would appreciate any help in promoting the report once launched.

Resettlement guide

During Armed Forces week the Welsh Government will be launching, in partnership with CTP and 160th (Welsh) Brigade, a first ever Wales Resettlement guide. It will contain key information and support for members of the Armed forces and their families coming to Wales.

Armed forces week

Welsh Government will be supporting Armed Forces week with a focus on virtual engagement to thank our Armed forces community and pay tribute to their dedication and commitment. This will include video messages from Ministers, paying tribute to our Reservists and also flying the Armed Forces day flag throughout the week.

4.0 Veterans Gateway update

LR informed the forum that AM had to send apologies, but LR will present the information:

- Veterans' Gateway is the first point of contact for veterans' who are looking for support, information and advice.
- The service has been launched in response to Lord Ashcroft's 2014 Veterans' Transition Review which revealed that with over 2,500 military charities supporting the AF community, there was confusion about where to turn to find the right support.
- The review called for the support system for veterans to be simplified by creating:
 - A single 24/7 contact centre, phone number and website
 - Clients to be transferred immediately to appropriate person to ensure that those who need help can find it straight away
 - The key to the VG is collaborative working.
 - All the appropriate charities and organisations who can provide support and advice to veterans and their families are working together as one strong unit
 - The consortium led project currently has over 30 referral partners and many information partners where veterans can seek help.
 - Organisations are invited to be a new partner by completing an application form on the website. After careful vetting, they may become an info, geo or referral partner.
 - The number of appropriate organisations listed on the website is constantly increasing.
 - Once again in Wales – finance is the highest area of need (45% against 31% nationally)

LR asked the group to raise the profile of VG through their network. RA asked for data around examples of when a referral has been successful- HN has had a positive outcome for a client and Blesma has had referrals. JW explained the most significant success has been around pension queries.

Action: LR to distribute

5.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

LR advised the forum of the following:

- Updated on progress of Armed Forces Covenant Training which has been delivered to LA staff, Health Board, DWP and other organisations. Over 400 trained since Oct 20.
- Launch of Caerphilly Veterans Hub 5th June with Change Step. Offered the room for other organisations if wanted to run any events in the afternoon.
- MHFA – Course booked in. Group reminded of spaces available.
- Forces Fitness success in schools delivering Health and Wellbeing sessions to service children
- Armed Forces week will be mainly virtual with a small flag raising ceremony
- Gwent RBL 100 (plus 1) event scheduled for May 2022
- Caerphilly County Borough Council gave Royal British Legion the Freedom of the Borough for their 100th anniversary this will be celebrated at the RBL event
- The Queens platinum Jubilee plans in progress – update provided when notified

6.0 ARMED FORCES COVENANT TRUST GRANTS - UPDATE

LR informed the forum of the following update from Armed Forces Covenant Trust grants:

These programmes are designed to support veterans, Armed Forces families and serving personnel, to recover from some of the wider impacts of the Covid pandemic.

Sustaining Delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant programme

The Sustaining Delivery programme provides funding to enable local authority clusters funded under the Strengthening Delivery of the Covenant programme to conclude their work; delivering longer term changes that enable people from Armed Forces communities to be able to better access services and support in their local areas. **Closes midday 11 June.**

Supporting Armed Forces in Acute Hospital Settings programme

This programme will support a small number of pilot projects that will try better ways of supporting veterans and their families when they are in a hospital setting.

This programme is jointly funded by the Covenant Fund (through the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust) and NHS England and NHS Improvement. **Closes midday 2 July**

The NAAFI Fund

The NAAFI Fund makes grants to UK Armed Forces bases, located in the UK or overseas, for projects that improve the quality of life for serving personnel and serving families living on or near a Forces base or station. **Stage one closes 14 July**

Veterans' Places, Pathways and People programme

This programme will award 10 grants of up to £800,000 to portfolios of projects, which will work regionally to develop better, more joined up lasting support for local veterans with mental health needs. **Attention to apply 23 July**

Armed Forces Covenant Fund: Force for Change programme

This programme will award grants of up to £10,000 for community projects that reduce isolation and promote integration; supporting post-Covid recovery in local Armed Forces communities affected by isolation. **Round 2 deadline 2 August**

Sustaining Support for Armed Forces Communities programme

This programme will award grants of up to £100,000 for existing charitable projects to help charities to sustain activities and services that people from Armed Forces communities use and value. **Round 2 closes 9 September**

<https://covenantfund.org.uk/2021/02/16/new-funding-programmes-opening-in-april-2021/>

7.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

7.1 160 (Bde)

ARMED FORCES IN WALES AWARDS (AFWA)

Nominations for the awards can now be submitted via the [AFWA 21 Nomination form](#) or QR code.

Awards will be made to the nominee that has provided the most outstanding contribution to Defence in Wales within the following categories:

- a. **The Armed Forces in Wales Award:** The individual or group who has provided the most outstanding contribution to the Armed Forces within Wales¹.
- b. **The Cadets Award / Youth Support Award:** The Individual or group who has most contributed to the cadet or youth movements within Wales.
- c. **The Forces Sports Award:** The individual or team that has contributed the most towards sport within the Armed Forces in Wales².

The Covenant Award: Presented to the individual or group that has had the most positive effect on the delivery

ELIGIBILITY

Any individual, whether military or civilian, who by their contribution directly or indirectly to Defence has made a substantial difference within a sphere recognised in an award category is eligible for an award. The Scheme is not an adjunct to the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). Eligible individuals are likely to emerge from the following groups although other nominations would be considered on their merits:

- d. Serving military personnel (Regular or Reserve);

¹ Ranging across the three outputs of defence: Standing and Contingency Operations (including training); Defence Engagement and UK Resilience and the Firm Base.

² Either by the promotion and organisation of sport or by outstanding personal performance including the achievement of Service or international honours.

- e. MoD Civilians;
- f. Civil Servants;
- g. Dependants of Serving Personnel;
- h. Civilians who by their actions support or influence Defence within Wales (including private, public, third sector and local or national government);
- i. Individuals within non-military organisations who by their actions act to enhance the quality of Defence or welfare of the Armed Forces family. (Those aspects not encompassed by the scope of the ERS Award Scheme).
- j. Cadets and Adult Volunteers.

Nominations must clearly show a significant difference made within an award category and how that activity may be linked to the Armed Forces and Wales.

7.2 ABUHB Armed Forces Lead

- Health Board Forum still unable to meet because of pandemic – are now looking to reinstate
- Primary Care engagement to promote Veteran Friendly GP accreditation. Looking to start with a couple of pilot practices
- Services are starting up again and starting to allow visitors back into hospitals (pilot scheme)
- Waiting on the AFC legislation guidance – think they are mostly compliant but working to ensure systems capture the data to evidence compliance
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7.3 Royal British Legion – Gwent Secretary

- Freedom of Boroughs for Caerphilly and Monmouthshire and working with other authorities to clarify their position
- Starting a course for Branch Community Support scheme which will train branch representatives

7.4 Help For Heroes – Veterans Community Nurse

- Continues to take referrals and very busy during pandemic
- Redirected services into the community. Inpatient facilities have been transferred back to the MOD
- Investment from the Headley Court fund to community services – Veterans community clinical team made up of registered nurses and professionals working across the UK. HN is the Community Nurse specialist for Wales and is providing coordinated and evidence-based practice to support veterans moving forward.
- There are 3 OT's which are assisting LA and NHS in providing equipment and services
- Hidden Wounds team expanded – Now 26 members providing psychological welfare, support and counselling services and online supportive courses that veterans can access through their website
- Seeing an increase in referrals coming in based on the impact of the pandemic on waiting lists. Finding that veterans are struggling to see their GP or still on a long waiting list to see a consultant or have an investigation. They are supporting them through clinical involvement with GPs and health boards.

LL asked who is eligible for support through the hidden wounds scheme – Anyone who has a service record and can self-refer or other providers. There are courses that could be of benefit and HN will contact LL separately.

7.5 Blesma

- Continues to support members throughout Wales and currently have approximately 50 members in the Caerphilly Borough

- Noticed that health amputations for diabetes increased with more people becoming double amputees during lockdown. This could be due to long periods of inactivity so more members have become more complicated and more need more care.
- Started to increase face to face activities in line with the relevant government guidelines. This includes indoor, outdoor and online whilst ensuring a robust risk assessment is in place.
- 3 Outdoor activities have taken place in recent weeks including zip wire in Aberdare!
- Asked the group to refer to Blesma if they engage anyone who qualifies for their support including loss of use of limb
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7.6 Hire a Hero

- No major change – still lots of referrals. Carry on as usual

7.7 RBL- Public Affairs Manager

- Part of a team conducting a 10-year review of the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant. If anyone from the group would like to be involved, please let him know. Due to be published this autumn.

7.8 RBL – Membership Secretary

- Nothing further to add

7.9 RFEA

- Busy than normal – referrals increased by 100%. YTD just over 2000 referrals with 1100 being placed into work
- Virtual Employment Fair Wales and the West 29th June – 18 employers recruiting now
- June has slowed slightly

Action: LR to distribute details of the CTP event

7.10 Defence Transition Services

- The service is very busy with a concern of drug related issues of personnel that are leaving
- Housing continues to be the biggest issue
- A new Regional Manager has been appointed – Louise Briggs.
- LL gave an update on the DTS. Can work with service personnel 2 years prior to 2 years post exit. Finding that people are leaving quite quickly. Follow the HARDFACTS route to initiate support.

7.11 Lord Lieutenant

- The people Caerphilly significantly under performs in relation to Queens Awards yet some great work being undertaken
- He urged members to consider nominating and offers support with citations if required

8.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nil

9.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: 10am, 14th October 2021, Microsoft Teams.