

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

14th October 2021
Microsoft Teams



PRESENT

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Sadie Baldwin	Army Families Federation
Julianne Williams	RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity
Gordon Hill	Gwent RBL Secretary
Jason Suller	Blesma
Caitlin Woodland	RSLO
Kirsty Gronow	The Poppy Factory
Louise Briggs	Defence Transition Service
Jinty Morgan	Operations Director Hire a Hero
Kenneth Terry	Royal British Legion Wales – Caerphilly
Gino Parisi	ABUHB
Jamie Farr	Your North
Trevor Scott	SSAFA Gwent Branch
Beth Lowden	Blind Veterans
Captain Huw Williams	203 Field Hospital
Lisa McKenna	HMPPS
Simon Firth	Head of Veterans Services Change Step Wales

APOLOGIES

Cllr Alan Higgs	Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Champion
Anthony Metcalfe	Royal British Legion Wales

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 25/03/21

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

UPDATE OF ACTIONS

- All actions from previous meeting completed

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

Veterans scoping exercise / Veterans strategy

- Work continues delivery of the recommendations of the Veterans scoping exercise which was published January 2020. Outcomes to date include 35% uplift in Veterans NHS Wales funding, publication of the first Wales Resettlement guide, funding of AFLOs to 2023, Employment event 25 November and funding for SSCE Cymru and service children.
- Welsh Government will now be updating the delivery plan to focus on recommendations that are yet to be completed. This reflects similar activity at UK and Scottish Governments. Area to be focused on include roll out of GP accreditation in Wales, further work in the criminal justice system and assessing current housing guidance.
- Welsh Government have raised the issue of transition services for service leavers and veterans in Wales with the MOD and will be pursuing as part of the next CTP contract discussions.

Covenant Legislation

- Partners in Wales have provided input into development of the statutory guidance to accompany the Covenant legislation which is now progressing through the House of Lords. Local authorities, AFLOs, LHBs and charity partners have been involved in this work. We await second draft of the guidance from MOD. Senedd will also be considering the issue – expected this autumn.

UK Armed forces annual report – due to be published this autumn.

Wales Covenant conference

- Takes place virtually on 20 October – invite to be circulated. All welcome to attend.

UK Armed Forces families strategy – due for publication during October. Welsh Government supporting and will take forward via existing networks.

- *In March 2021 we agreed total recurrent funding to Veterans NHS Wales from 2021 onwards of £920,000 per annum. This demonstrates a 35% increase in the government funding of this highly valued service for veterans in Wales.*
- <https://gov.wales/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2020-html#section-73385>

4.0 UPDATE – RSLO

CW presented to the forum an overview of mission and current ongoing work:

- Data of service Children in Wales (Currently 208 in Caerphilly Borough)
- Activities & Impact – School Meetings, CPD Training
- Service Children Ambassadors
- Armed Forces Friendly School status
- LA Action Plan

- MOD LAP/SCiP Alliance
- MOD Education Support Fund (ESF) currently available
- WG funding £10,000 allocated to schools in Caerphilly 20/21 and £14,000 21/22. Funds to be spent on Forces Fitness and Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit for Service children
- Events – Little Troopers Virtual workshop 10th November, SCiP Alliance Thriving Toolkit 7th & 14th December

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

5.0 GUEST – YOUR NORTH – JAMIE FARR

JF presented to the Forum

- Organisation started within the last 12 months (March 20) as seen a need for their services with both the Armed Forces and civilian community. Husband and wife team who served in the RAF over 40 years between them. Delivered CPD during their service.
- Also set up Your North CIC to deliver addition free training
- Adapted training online during Covid
- Mental Wellbeing training is offered and more recently through funds gained from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust. Received excellent feedback and will adapt the course to also deliver to service children and into Parc Prison for veterans.
- Offer MHFA accredited courses and 'Your Mental wellbeing toolkit', Mindfulness and Communication
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6.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

LR advised the forum of the following:

- Employment Event - 25th Nov South-East Wales, 2 parts – 1 side Employer plenary & 2nd side Employers who have active live roles only. Open to Service Leavers, Veterans, Reservists and Spouses. Marketing details for promotion out – please share
- 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 with Change Step. Started June 2021 – Change Step in CSE Ystrad Mynach. 5-15 attend per week average with DWP, Cornerstone, Woodys Lodge in attendance monthly. Attained £10,000 AFCT grant for MH Training, Events & Publicity. Courses (30th Nov/16th Dec). Looking to turn it into a CIC.
- MHFA/Wellbeing Toolkit – Courses. Group reminded of spaces available.
- £25,000 AFCT grant for a Project Support Officer
- RBL 100 – 14th May 22 (5 Joint Freedom of Borough at event)
- 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 and online Caerphilly 7th April 22
- Veteran Friendly GP accredited surgeries
- Newsletter – Deadline 15th Oct 21
- Website – under construction
- Directory – work starts in Oct – any new entries please send information
- The Queens platinum Jubilee plans in progress – update provided when notified
- White Ribbon Campaign – Military support required
- AFC into Law – due to Royal Assent Dec 2021
- RBL - Fields – VIP opening 3rd Nov – open to the public until 18th Nov (Cardiff Castle) 10,000 wooden crosses. Need Volunteers for the Poppy Appeal. Appeal for attendees at local events – Caerphilly Town Remembrance Service is at 3pm
- Cllr Higgs attended RFCA AGM at HMS Cambria and in addition would like to encourage attendees to their local remembrance services

7.0 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.

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. **Last deadline for this year 19th November**

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

8.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

8.1 Army Families Federation

- Back to meeting families and military commanders face to face
- Work alongside all tri-service to offer support and happy to help with anyone from the Armed Forces Community

8.2 Blind Veterans UK

- Back out into the community shortly
- Volunteer recruitment has reopened
- Still offer remote services where appropriate and reviewing what is the best model/practice going forward
- Hasn't restarted the lunch club in Caerphilly but does have the remote talk and support club every two weeks – volunteer led. Telephone companions available

8.3 Defence Transition Partnership

- Regional Post just refilled covering South Wales and Midlands since 2021
- Support service leavers 2 years prior to leaving and up to two years after
- Current caseload 133 cases of which 20 are service leavers coming back to South Wales
- New assistant is from Cardiff and will stay based in Wales

8.4 ABUHB

- Nothing to update

8.5 RBL – Gwent Secretary

- Seeking volunteers for standard bearers for the Newport Freedom of the City 28th Oct – proceedings starting at 12pm. Please contact Gordon Hill if you can support

8.6 203 Field Hosp

- Busy time due to 2 consecutive annual training camps
- Hoping to be allowed to go out to recruit shortly

8.7 Blesma

- Continue to support all members throughout Wales.
- Issued grants with SSAFA lately

- Looking for new members and happy to receive applications direct
- Activities continued as normal – out in the community (has 15 Christmas dinners booked!)

8.8 RFEA

- Business as usual
- Referrals up 30% but expected to rise with the end of furlough
- Working on Wales Employment on 25th November

Action: LR to distribute details of the CTP event

8.9 RBL – Caerphilly Branch

- Some branches have resumed face to face meetings with the first meeting of South East Wales District scheduled for 16th October
- Attended Westminster for the RBL 100 service
- Caerphilly Remembrance Service is 3pm 14th November as not to clash with local services

8.10 The Poppy Factory

- Two sides of the organisation. Busy time of year to fill the poppy orders and starting the preparations for the Westminster field of remembrance
- During the pandemic the factory underwent a substantial refurbishment – now opened and tours resumed
- Year end (Sept) 98.9% achieved
- New member of staff Kelly Walker starting shortly
- Will expand to GPs and community mental health for referral partners

8.11 HMPPS

- Collating information to feed back to the Armed Forces Champions within the Prisons

8.12 Change Step/Adferiad

- Attended a meeting with AFCT, Chester University and other partners across the UK on the suicide prevention work. An average of 3 adverse experiences at point of referral (for example financial, mental health, substance misuse, long term health conditions etc) – the evaluation team ascertained that if you have removed one of the 3 things then the effect that it has on the family or individual is notable and key to engagement to support with other issues. Collaboration is key and if you have helped with any one of those things you have made a significant impact to those people.
- Currently those that are the highest category of risk are in South Wales and several in Caerphilly borough. 16 on register at the moment but suspect that there are more that need the support

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nil

10.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: 10am, 3rd February 2021, Microsoft Teams.