

EXPERT GROUP ON THE NEEDS OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN WALES

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2017

Members

Carl Sargeant AM	Cabinet Secretary for Communities and Children
Colonel Lance Patterson	160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales
Air Commodore Adrian Williams	RAF
Commander Steve Henaghen	Royal Navy
Annabel Ingram	Army Family Federation
Colin Jones	RAF Family Federation
Jane Williams	Naval Families Federation
Lisa Gostling	HIVE
Peter Evans	Royal British Legion
Ant Metcalfe	Royal British Legion
Seb Hargeaves	Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association (SSAFA)
Lt Col Stephen Hughes	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA)
Mike Bailey	Veterans Welfare Service
Naomi Alleyne	WLGA
Huw Thomas	Department for Work and Pensions
Peter Higson	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Cllr Brendan Toomey	WLGA
Leeanne Plechowicz	National Offender Management Service in Wales
Ian Barrow	National Offender Management Service in Wales
Paul Mayers	Alabare
Andy Green	Alabare
Bon Westcott	Welsh Government – Community Safety
Jan Jones	Welsh Government – Community Safety
Jason Pollard	Welsh Government – Mental Health
Cerys Gage	Welsh Government – Community Safety

Apologies

Dr Sarah Watkins	Welsh Government – Health and Social Services
Debbie Whittingham	COBSEO
Dawn North	HIVE
Brigadier Alan Richmond	160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales
Col Nick Beard	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA)
James Greenrod	Ministry of Defence Covenant team
Col Chris Downward	Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen Families Association (SSAFA)

ITEM 1 – WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 The Cabinet Secretary welcomed members and thanked them for all their work which informed the Armed Forces agenda going forward.

ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 13 JULY 2016

- 2.1 The Cabinet Secretary invited members to agree the minutes for accuracy. There were no objections to the minutes. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 3 – PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS

- 3.1 The Cabinet Secretary noted that all previous actions had been completed. Colonel Lance Patterson and Air Commodore Adrian Williams were invited to provide updates from their respective areas.
- 3.2 Colonel Patterson updated the members on the Armed Forces Employability Programme (AFEP) that had been progressed further following funding from the Welsh Government.
- 3.3 It was explained that despite new contractual funding arrangements within the Ministry of Defence that are hampering progress, 160 Brigade continues to enhance its relationship with partners, including the Department for Work and Pensions.
- 3.4 Colonel Patterson highlighted the latest attendance figures for AFEP, noting that in 2016 there had been 43 delegates on the Be the Best course and 35 attending the second week of AFEP. 18 people had applied to join the Regulars with 17 applying to join the Reserves. 30 had gained civilian employment.
- 3.5 Whilst numbers attending AFEP had decreased between 2015 and 2016 Col Patterson explained that this was due to only accepting those with the right credentials.
- 3.6 It was noted that funding beyond March 2017 has yet to be secured, although there will likely be an underspend this financial year.
- 3.7 Future areas of interest that 160 Brigade wish to pursue include the STEM agenda, a leadership development course and a fast track AFEP course for those who intend to join the army. He also said he'd like to integrate with the Welsh Government STEM agenda.
- 3.8 The Cabinet Secretary mentioned the Welsh Government PACE and Lift initiatives and suggested that the AFEP may be of benefit to candidates that are harder to reach. Colonel Patterson advised that Communities First is one of the AFEP partnerships, and noted that such candidates would certainly gain something from the AFEP.
- 3.9 Air Commodore Adrian Williams explained that considerable work was underway ahead of the RAF centenary in 2018. A programme of events is

being planned which includes the Sovereign Parade and London Fly Past. Community based events will be held throughout Wales, for example a travelling exhibition with support from the Welsh Government Wales Remembers programme and event to celebrate Lloyd George for his part in the formation of the RAF.

- 3.10 The RAF is also focusing on STEM and young people, with discussions taking place with Welsh Government education officials to promote this area.
- 3.11 The Air Commodore said he would brief the Expert Group on the final RAF centenary programme at the next meeting.
- 3.12 The Cabinet Secretary thanked the RAF and the Army for their updates and encouraged all members of the group to continue to work together to progress these commitments.

Action:

- **The Air Commodore to brief the Expert Group on the final RAF centenary programme at the next meeting.**

ITEM 4 – COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

- 4.1 Naomi Alleyne presented the WLGA communications plan, a piece of work that emanated from the Armed Forces Champions Conference in the autumn of 2016. Naomi explained that a variety of communication issues had been raised at workshops; these included how we can improve communication, avoid duplication and frustrations around contact lists whereby data was out of date which meant that the right person wasn't receiving the information. Feedback outlined the need for more information and communication between organisations and also the Armed Forces community.
- 4.2 Suggestions on a way forward are outlined in the paper. One of these includes having a single website that people can be directed to. It would however need to have a clear structure with information easy to access.
- 4.3 The role of the Expert Group had been raised during the workshops, with uncertainty in place of who to raise an issue with. Regional membership on the Expert Group had been suggested as a useful way of sharing information locally and delivering a consistent message.
- 4.4 Naomi said that the workshops were timely given the timetable for the Ministry of Defence bids for Covenant funding. Two bids have been submitted aimed at improving communication, increasing resources and delivering further training courses to build information and knowledge.
- 4.5 A website for all 22 Local Authorities, akin to a central repository for swapping and sharing information was raised and Mike Bailey suggested that a website for all Armed Forces Champions would be useful.

- 4.6 Members asked whether COBSEO were kept in the communication loop. Jan Jones confirmed that COBSEO were members of the Expert Group, had received all papers prior to the meeting and are invited to attend the Armed Forces Covenant Conferences.
- 4.7 Peter Higson spoke about the North Wales Armed Forces Forum; a strategic group that meets quarterly and is made up of Local Authorities and Armed Forces Champions. Peter offered to share information from the meetings and said that all Local Health Boards should have such a forum for sharing information and discussing best practice.
- 4.8 Jan emphasised the importance of disseminating the minutes from the Expert Group to wider networks and agreed to share the minutes from the North Wales Armed Forum with members of the Expert Group and wider networks for further information.
- 4.9 The Cabinet Secretary noted that the North Wales Armed Forces Forum is a good example of best practice.
- 4.10 The Cabinet Secretary expressed an interest to review the terms of reference and role descriptions for the Armed Forces Champions. After the elections it was confirmed that work would be undertaken to update the role. The Cabinet Secretary would invite the Armed Forces Champions to a meeting to discuss their role and support provided by Welsh Government. Consideration will also be given to review the membership of the Armed Forces Expert Group. This will be discussed at the next meeting in July.
- 4.11 The Cabinet Secretary was interested to hear about the Covenant Funding bids and wished to be updated once a decision had been made. He also wished to see a copy of the bids for information.

Actions:

- **Work to be undertaken after the elections to review the role of the Armed Forces Champions.**
- **Minutes from the North Wales Armed Forum to be shared with members of the Expert Group and wider networks.**
- **Cabinet Secretary to invite Armed Forces Champions to a meeting to discuss their role and support provided by the Welsh Government.**

ITEM 5 – CASE STUDIES

- 5.1 Paul Meyers introduced the case studies tracking the pathway of vulnerable Veterans. Paul explained that one of the common themes that has emerged as part of the research undertaken is the process around transition upon leaving the Armed Forces. Serving personnel recruited into the Armed Forces can be vulnerable young people with limited life skills, and despite the training received they exit the Services with very little idea of what life is like on the

outside. Many have also experienced trauma during their time in the Services and as this isn't always dealt with appropriately they are often left to deal with it individually following transition.

- 5.2 It was noted that upon transition Veterans are not always aware of the services and support they can access. Many of them rely on intuition, given their limited resilience and family support.
- 5.3 Colonel Patterson explained that those who fail the CDT (compulsory drug test) can be discharged rapidly with little support and upon transition revert back to where they were at 16 years. Upon joining the Armed Forces, the young people are often vulnerable, a situation which can be exacerbated further during service.
- 5.4 The members questioned how as a group they could pick up on issues at an earlier stage to reduce vulnerability. It was suggested that perhaps a support pathway developed in collaboration with the Armed Forces community could be considered. Mike Bailey said that support from Veterans UK on transitional issues could help reinforce this.
- 5.5 It was noted that whilst research pertaining to the Armed Forces is vast it would be useful to have something in place to help recruitment and build resilience. Early Service Leavers transit out of the Armed Forces quickly and with limited engagement if any at all. Paul explained that it can often be up to 10 years following transition before Veterans engage and seek support. Further work is needed to identify the location of veterans, improve ways of communication and ensuring services are effective and easily accessed. Peter Higson advised that work on personnel management and early service leavers had been undertaken in Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. Ant Metcalfe highlighted that further work should be given to improving communication and raising awareness of services.
- 5.6 Peter Higson spoke about the recent presentation at the North Wales Armed Forces Forum that was delivered by Ian Langton, Residential Custodial Manager of HMP Berwyn, that is scheduled to become operational at the end of February 2017. HMP Berwyn, which will focus on rehabilitating men in its care, has its own unit for veterans that will be managed by Ian and replicates the HMP Parc Endeavour Unit model.
- 5.7 Ant Metcalfe introduced the case studies provided by the Royal British Legion (RBL) and explained that £500k was spent on welfare support per annum for Veterans. Housing, including adaptations, remains one of the main areas requiring further support as does mobility support and the provision of household brown goods. Contrary to belief that the older Veterans require the most support Ant highlighted that the average age of the Veteran that came to the RBL for support is 55. It was noted that to date around 800 Veterans have been provided with financial support during 2016-17.
- 5.8 Lt Colonel Stephen Hughes said that the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association work on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, offering support for

Veterans. The RFCA has seen an increase in disability cases and Stephen explained that there are always 5 cases being dealt with at the same time.

- 5.9 Ian Barrow outlined the role that SToMP (Supporting Transition of Military Personnel) has played in coordinating services to veterans across the criminal justice system, from police call out through to release from prison, including supporting the development of the HMP Berwyn model. The Cabinet Secretary requested a presentation on SToMP's development of a whole-system approach, to include HMP Parc and HMP Berwyn models.
- 5.10 Ant Metcalfe spoke about the Veterans Gateway, whose contract has recently been awarded to the RBL and other key partners. The Gateway will provide a single point of contact and will include a mobile enabled app. Scheduled to be launched in early spring the Gateway will hopefully identify what additional support is needed for the Armed Forces community.
- 5.11 Annabel Ingram suggested that having heard case studies from ex-Serving personnel it would also be useful to consider case studies from Serving personnel.

Actions:

- **The next meeting to include an update on SToMP, HMP Parc Endeavour Wing and HMP Berwyn Stocker Unit**
- **The Family Federations to present case studies at the next meeting.**

ITEM 6 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 6.1 The Cabinet Secretary reinforced the Welsh Government's commitment to supporting communities affected by any changes that are introduced as part of the Defence Estate Review. He advised members that ongoing discussions were being held with Mark Lancaster, Minister for Defence Veterans, Reserves and Personnel.
- 6.2 Lt Colonel Stephen Hughes informed members that funding has been provided by the Royal Navy to build a new Naval Reserve facility in Cardiff Bay. Built to Royal Navy specification it will provide facilities for the Royal Navy Reserve Unit, the Royal Marine Reserve Cardiff Detachment and the Wales University Royal Naval Unit. Financial approval was secured in October 2016 with construction scheduled to commence in the autumn 2017. It is anticipated that the build will be completed by late 2018 and opened formally in summer 2019.
- 6.3 Colonel Lance Patterson hoped that the facility would be expanded in the future to include the Army Reserves. Colonel Patterson spoke about the Defence Estates Review and noted that should the review proceed as planned then there would be gaps in Wales with the Army headquarters scheduled to be re-located in addition to Cawdor Barracks.

- 6.4 The Cabinet Secretary asked whether or not Woody's Lodge would be re-located to the new Naval Reserve facility and Stephen confirmed that the centre would remain in its current location. It was noted that the Cabinet Secretary had recently attended an event by Woody's Lodge in the Senedd.
- 6.5 Jane Williams spoke about the launch of the Wren's centenary on the 8th March and hoped there would be an opportunity to promote the exhibition in Wales. Commander Steve Henaghen confirmed that the Wrens would be heading up the parade as part of South Wales Armed Forces Day this June.
- 6.6 Colin Jones advised that there continues to be an issue concerning the provision of dentistry in Anglesey. The Cabinet Secretary requested a note from the Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board concerning dentistry.
- 6.7 Seb Hargreaves advised members that SSAFA had been awarded the social work contract on behalf of the RAF.
- 6.8 Jane Williams highlighted that in addition to Warwickshire Council the work of Hampshire County Council was considered as an area of good practice.

Actions:

- **A note concerning the dentistry issues in Anglesey from the Chair of Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board to be provided to the Cabinet Secretary**

ITEM 7 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 7.1 The Cabinet Secretary thanked the members for their important contributions. The next meeting will be held on the 5th July, 10.00 – 11.00 in Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay.