

# CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

25<sup>th</sup> March 2021  
Microsoft Teams



## PRESENT

Cllr Alan Higgs	Caerphilly County Borough Council Armed Forces Champion
Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Kirsty Gronow	The Poppy Factory
Julianne Williams	RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity
Sadie Baldwin	Army Families Federation
Jason Suller	Blesma
Andrew Williams	160 Bde – SO2 Military Civilian Integration
Caitlin Woodland	RSLO
Gordon Hill	Gwent RBL Secretary
Jinty Morgan	Operations Director Hire a Hero
Anthony Metcalfe	Area Manager Royal British Legion Wales
Sean Molino	Director Forces Fitness/Veterans Awards
Kenneth Terry	RBL
Lorraine Lees	Defence Transition Service
Lesley Pheonix	RNID
Anna Schwank	RBL – Admiral Nurse Practitioner
Peter Davies	ABF – The Soldiers Charity
Carl Pugh	Age Cymru – Age Cymru – Hope Project
Finola Pickwell	Hafal – Joining Forces Co-ordinator
Daniel Madge	ABUHB -Armed Forces Lead
Gino Parisi	ABUHB – Person Centred Care and Partnerships Manager
Charlotte McGuin	Royal Air Force Association

## APOLOGIES

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Peter Wilson	RBL - District
Sian Woodland	Woodys Lodge
Danielle Davies	National Probation Service
Kelly 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 10/12/20

- 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:

- Training package and e-learning is not yet completed
- **Future Plans for National Armed Forces Day in Wales Agreed**

In partnership with the Welsh Government, the WLGA has been working with the 22 local authorities in Wales to develop a 5 year timetable for the future hosting of Wales' National Armed Forces Day from 2022 to 2026. The timetable has had to be pushed back by one year due to the Coronavirus pandemic. As a result plans are underway to mark National Armed Forces Day in Wales in 2021 virtually instead.

This timetable will see the National Armed Forces Day event travel across all regions in Wales and to a variety of communities.

Following discussions, these local authorities will be hosting this special event between 2022-2026:

- Wrexham
- Newport
- Swansea
- Monmouthshire
- Carmarthenshire

Armed Forces Day in Wales commemorates and celebrates the Armed Forces community and is a partnership event between local authorities, Welsh Government, the tri services and other partners. The event is supported by funding from Welsh Government.

In addition to the national event, many local authorities also host local events in their communities.

LR advised the forum of the following from Welsh Government

- Armed Forces Bill – Progressing with estimated Royal Assent Dec 21. Will affect housing, education and health to have 'due regard'. Awaiting statutory guidance.

Veteran Scoping Exercise Progress update:

- £120k grant provided to 13 charities / providers to tackle loneliness and social isolation in the Armed Forces community (Community & Relationships)
- Commitment to develop a Wales Resettlement Guide to bring together all relevant information on support available in Wales. (Employment / Finance)
- Working with WLGA, AFLOs and partners, updating the Wales training package for frontline staff to increase awareness of the Armed Forces community and support available. New website potential. (Public perception & understanding)
- Developing a Veteran employer event for 2021 in Wales to promote the skills of Service personnel, veterans and families. (Employment / Ed / Skills)
- Investment in capacity of Veterans NHS Wales - interim funding of £85,700 provided to cover the staff costs from October 2020 to 31 March 2021. Veterans NHS Wales business case under consideration (Health & wellbeing)
- Working with Business in the Community and the Scottish Government, produced the Capitalising on Military Family Talent toolkit. (Employment)
- Established an Armed Forces Prosthetics forum to monitor delivery of the Veterans Prosthetics policy. (Health and wellbeing)
- £50k funding invested in training for prosthetists in Wales following feedback from BLESMA and the limb centres. (Health and wellbeing)

- Investment in the Armed Forces Liaison officer roles to continue their work (Coordination of Veterans' services)
- Participation in the Veterans Rail card and 'Great Place to work for veterans' initiative working with UK Government.

#### Data

In May 2020, The National Survey for Wales included questions related to service in the Armed Forces to identify people who had previously served in the Armed Forces and those with an immediate family or household member Serving, or who had previously served. Of the 3,000 respondents for the month:

- 25% of respondents had an immediate family or household member either Serving or a veteran;
- 5% of respondents identified as an Armed Forces veteran.

Welsh Government has continued to work with the Map of Need through the University of Northumbria, publicising data regarding the Armed Forces community in Wales through our Wales Annual Report.

#### **4.0 GUEST SPEAKER – Sean Molino – Force Fitness – Schools Health and Wellbeing**

SM informed the forum that:

Forces Fitness is a multi-award winning company that provides education and training within the great outdoors. They provide tailor made solutions to support the health and well-being of corporates, teams, communities, schools and colleges. Individuals are encouraged to work together and not only work towards becoming healthy, confident individuals but learn to think creatively, reframe problems and communicate effectively to support each other; through focussed tasks and challenges. When considering opportunities for pupils to build on skills learnt in class, each Forces Fitness session can focus on different aspects of the 12 Pedagogical Principles.

- SM briefed the forum of his background in the Army and is company Forces Fitness
- The team have been running a school program in RCT, Vale of Glamorgan and in Gwent through funds from Welsh Government by SSCE and the Gwent High Sherriff Community Fund

These sessions consist of Multiple-Choice questions around the Health and Well-being tips discussed; 3 x Physical and mental team tasks and Tug of war. Sessions vary in length and can be adapted to school requirements.

- Veterans with an interest in the Fitness industry may apply to attend the Gwent High Sherriff funded sessions. £5000 has been awarded via the Gwent High Sherriff Community Fund to fund these sessions.

#### **5.0 GUEST SPEAKER – Carl Pugh – Age Cymru -Hope Project**

CP informed the forum that:

The Hope Project is a Partnership Project between Age Cymru and local Age Cymru and Age Connect Wales Partners. Hope (Helping others participate and engage) aims to support older people to engage, have their voices heard, understand their rights, make choices, be involved and share experiences. The project is funded under Welsh Government until 2023.

A Wales wide project with regional staff in North Wales, Dyfed Powys, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot, Gwent, Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Bridgend, RCT and Merthyr Tydfil

Aims to:

- Support people at an early stage in their issues or concerns to prevent them slipping into crises
- Help people re-engage with their communities particularly after Covid—19 restrictions are lifted

- Raise awareness of Advocacy

CP detailed what advocacy is and what it isn't and highlighted that they will recruit, train and support volunteers to deliver early intervention/low level advocacy in the community; supporting people 50+ and carers and work with and complement existing services. He discussed the role of the advocate and gave examples of tasks that the advocate undertakes.

## **6.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER**

LR advised the forum of the following:

- Awarded £19440 from Armed Forces Covenant Trust to deliver MHFA Courses within 9 LA's of South East Wales. These will be offered to Veterans, Families, Organisations/persons who work with the Armed Forces Community. These sessions will be delivered by a Veteran led organisation
- Launch of WG small grants – up to £1000 available to organisations/charities
- Work is progressing on WG Employment event – possibly Nov 21
- Update on Veterans Advisory Pension Committee – new chair. Would also like to highlight the work of the organisation
- Workstream activity – Newsletter/ Website/ Update of Directory
- Veterans Legal Link taking referrals
- Veteran Gateway stats are stark in relation to Financial help sought. Supporting people department within Caerphilly LA saw 111 from the AFC seek support – mostly financial
- Spaces available on the monthly Armed Forces Covenant Training
- Caerphilly County Borough Council gave Royal British Legion the Freedom of the Borough for their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- SToMP provision ended

## **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.

### **Sustaining Support for Armed Forces communities**

The £6 million **Sustaining Support for Armed Forces Communities** programme will open in April. This programme will provide funding for existing charitable projects that give help to Armed Forces communities, but which need short term support to continue, as a result of the impact of Covid on charitable income.

Armed Forces charities, and charities that have an existing track record of providing support for Armed Forces communities, will be able to apply for a grant of up to £100,000 for up to one year. Organisations applying for a grant will need to show us they provide support to people from Armed Forces communities, and that it would have a negative effect, particularly on veterans and Armed Forces families, if this work could not be continued. Support for core costs will be available for Armed Forces charities.

### **New rounds of popular programmes**

From April 2021, we'll also be opening Round 2 of the NAAFI Fund: supporting projects within Armed Forces units that improve quality of life for serving personnel and their families.

There will also be further rounds of the Force for Change programme, which provides small grants for local projects supporting Armed Forces communities to become less isolated and engage more in their local area.

### **Two strategic programmes coming soon**

**In Summer 2021, we'll bring two further strategic programmes.**

The **Supporting Veterans in Acute Hospital Settings** programme will work with a small number of NHS hospitals to pilot a new approach of providing targeted support for veterans, which will help to connect veterans to a wider range of services in the charity and health sectors, joining up care. This programme will support work in all four nations and will benefit patients and staff in raising awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant.

The **Strengthening Delivery of the Covenant** programme will provide continuation grants to local authorities under Strengthening Delivery of the Covenant: Sustaining Impact, which builds on the work of local authorities through the earlier Strengthening Delivery of the Covenant programme, to ensure that the learning and the gains from this programme are not lost and that all local authorities have access to the eLearning and support they will need to draw on to deliver their commitments to the Covenant in a post-Covid world.

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

## **8.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS**

### **8.1 Defence Transition Service**

- Recently recruited a new area manager who will be attending these meetings going forward
- LR asked if there was a way of knowing how many people from Wales use their service - Although they can track how many of our Service Leavers are resettling in Wales, they only deal with those service leavers who are identified as being in need of support. This does not reflect the total number of people who are leaving military service and settling in Wales.

### **8.2 Hire a Hero**

- Service still very busy and business as usual

### **8.3 Army Families Federation**

- Business change, less regional leads however they cover larger areas. Sadie will remain covering Wales and the borders (includes Hereford, Beachley and Bristol)
- Extended specialist capacity – more enquiries for issues
- Extended engagement that leads longer than just 9-5
- New database to track trends of inquiries and issues in different areas to identify what needs to have focus

### **8.4 Royal British Legion – Head of RBL in Wales**

- Launched Manifesto back in January with their 6 asks of Welsh Government <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/things-to-do/campaigns-policy-and-research/manifestos/wales-manifesto-2021>
- Working with SSCE to deliver a young person's art and poetry competition for RBL 100
- 15<sup>th</sup> May Official RBL 100 date. Events delayed due to Covid and may slip to late 2021 or early 2022
- RBL has a survey out on unpaid carers in AFC <https://t.co/DDbdJwYkFQ?amp=1>
- There is a coffee table book on the history of The Legion "We are The Legion" that looks back on our 100years can be pre-ordered from amazon
- Caseworkers and advice officers are still working from home. Changed the way services are delivered and some of this may stay virtual. A review is underway.
- Finance – large area of need. Priority debts and homelessness issues. <https://moneyandpensionsservice.org.uk/>
- AM happy to present on Veterans Gateway stats at next meeting

### **8.5 RBL – Admiral Nurse Service**

- Support carers of people living with Dementia. AS covers Gwent, including Monmouthshire

- They are still working from home to support their clients – hoping to get back to face to face in the near future
- Extended their support to more parts of the UK
- Referrals consistent in Gwent – main source of referrals is from the Alzheimer’s Society and services within ABUHB

## **8.6 RBL – Gwent Branch Secretary**

- Looking at the Freedom of the boroughs for the counties in Gwent. Caerphilly has already granted Freedom of the borough and they are in talks with the other LA’s

## **8.7 RBL- Caerphilly Branch**

- Reminded everyone to fill in the Census where for the first time after a campaign from the RBL the veteran question is asked

## **8.8 Royal Air Force Association**

- Due to research conducted because of the pandemic they have changed their welfare offer – loneliness and mental health has come out a priority issues for their beneficiaries
- Support anyone who has served in the RAF, Veteran, reservist or family member. They do not need to be an actual member of RAFA to access their services
- Connections for Life, Befriending calls (2000 calls a week),
- Project Entertain (3 times a week, singing, dancing etc)
- Project Bagdrop, Finding it tough Mental health support, Navigating Dementia all launched this year
- Welfare caseworkers available

## **8.9 ABUHB Armed Forces Lead**

- Interested on how the switch to online has worked to support veterans and if they can use it to innovate services
- Grange Hospital has been opened early – which is a great success
- Due to the pandemic the volunteer and work experience opportunities have had to go on hold but they are keen on restarting this
- Will discuss Veteran Friendly GP Accredited surgeries and the AFCT Acute services grant
- The Health board would also like to thank the Military for their support during the pandemic and it highlights the transferrable skills that would help them into employment in the sector

## **8.10 Hafal – Joining Forces project**

- Main task is to support the Positive Pathways grant funded projects throughout Wales
- She has created an interactive map of Veterans Organisations and support in Wales [Interactive Map](#)
- FP has sent a presentation to GP clusters which discusses organisations that support with Mental health activities
- Digital Skills for veterans – identifying veterans to train as digital champions to support veterans who are digitally challenged to get more from their devices
- Navigating out of loneliness (Mid Wales) – Identify veterans that are lonely or socially isolated; befriend, build confidence and self-esteem; Introduce to other veterans, local amenities and social groups- where they don’t exist establish a group

## **8.11 RFEA**

- Very busy – caseload has increased by 40%
- 104 Live jobs in Wales on the jobs board
- YTD JW has placed 55 people into work
- Online chat available with the MPGS

## 8.12 The Poppy Factory

- The organisation has undertaken a restructure with the loss of the post in North Wales, 2 covers Wales as per a split through the middle of the country. New Manager in Wales and a new Director of Operations.
- Largest referral partner has been from Veterans NHS Wales.
- Currently 4/5 programmes embedded within the NHS (in GP surgeries etc)
- Reflecting on what service delivery will look like post covid

## 8.13 RNID

- LP informed the group that information and awareness is currently virtual
- It can take people a long time to go to the GP; additionally, getting more contact from veterans
- No age criteria required to access the services
- Live well with hearing loss and Job Centres programme
- Due to working virtually she now covers all of Wales at present

## 8.14 Education support for Service children in Caerphilly and SSCE Cymru

- Came into post in Sept 20 as the Regional Schools liaison Officer
- Data Collection –31 schools in Caerphilly with 114 service children in total identified – Continuing to work to collect data from all schools
- April is month of the Military Child – celebration events. Suggested activities guide available for schools
- April – CPD training week for schools to have a better understanding of service children
- Workshops are available with the Forces Fitness Sessions with £10,000 available to Caerphilly LA
- Funding available for case management to support schools who have a service child who may need one to one support

## 9.0 CAFF Activity Programme

Events/meetings that have been attended by the Armed Forces Champion and/or RAFCLO

10/12/20	Newport Veterans Hub
21/01/21	RFEA – Gold Alumni
27/01/21	RBL Manifesto Launch
28/01/21	Veterans Advocacy people launch
11/02/21	Veteran Affairs Pension Committee
17/02/21	Action on hearing Loss Conference
18/02/21	RFCA – Lord Lieutenant Gwent Awards
11/03/21	Partnering with Defence conference
15/03/21	RFCA – Cardiff Business Club
16/03/21	NHS Armed Forces Conference
17/03/21	Cross Party Group
23/03/21	Forces in Mind Trust Conference

## 10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Nil

**11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING:** 10am, 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Microsoft Teams.