

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

Friday 3rd March 2017
Penallta House (Ebbw Room)

PRESENT

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Cllr. Alan Higgs	CCBC (Armed Forces Champion)
Keith Sutcliffe	SSAFA (Gwent Area)
Rob Cummings	Change Step
Lisa Rawlings	Remploy
Michelle Williams	Veterans UK
Ken Terry	Royal British Legion
Peter Wilson	Royal British Legion (District Chairman SE Wales)
Edward Watts	Seafarers Mission
Shelley Elgin	Help For Heroes
Alison Griffiths	Help For Heroes
Jennifer Lilley	Hire-A-Hero

APOLOGIES

Brian Mawby	Torfaen CC
Hayley Lancaster	CCBC (Communications)
Mandy Keenan	CCBC (Corporate Policy)
Ceri Pritchard	Job Centre Plus
Suzanne Ledsham	Poppy Factory

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for brief introductions as there were some new faces.

1.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a correct record (it was recognised that some spelling corrections were needed).
- JL wanted to express her personal thanks to SSAFA re the support they provided to a Royal Marine who was attacked in Benidorm that was discussed in the last meeting (the soldier in question is her partner).

2.0 UPDATES OF ACTIONS

- All other actions completed.

3.0 PRESENTATION FROM ABUHB – ‘FFRIND I MI’ PROJECT

Tanya Strange and Claire Jordan showed a short video and gave a brief presentation outlining the Ffrind I Mi project.

The project was started approximately 18 months ago following discussions at a GP conference and has become something of a ‘social movement’ to bring together any relevant agencies to battle loneliness. The project had a ministerial launch in January 2017 and is funded by the Health Technology Challenge (HTC). It was initially set up to support older people and veterans but has since expanded to include anyone who may benefit. It is important to stress that the project hasn’t replaced anything, it is ‘filling a gap’ in provision.

Ffrind I Mi so far:

- BRFM campaign to raise awareness of the project.
- Set up a bi-lingual (English & Welsh) Scrabble club.
- Approximately 160 ABUHB staff took part in the 'Count Me In Challenge' (staff freely give 1 hour of their time to visit someone).
- Encouraging older people in care homes to interact with the outside world e.g. via Skype
- Libraries and UK Reader Organisation event in Torfaen CC.
- Assistance from British Sign Language re engaging with the deaf community.
- Consideration of appropriate housing for veterans e.g. Half Way Housing (Gwalia and Supporting People).
- Active Plus (veteran project currently only run in Cornwall but looking to set up in Wales).
- International Forum in April 2017.
- Twitter account (@ffrindimi) and website (www.ffrindimi.co.uk)

A major initiative of the project is to recruit as many volunteers as possible and any assistance the CAFF can offer would be greatly received.

KP suggested that Ffrind I Mi should be brought to the attention of the CCBC's Public Service board and will look into this.

PW advised the forum of a similar project (Woody's House) that is run by veterans for veterans. It is currently based at HMS Cambrian. PW suggested a representative from Woody's House should be invited to the CAFF.

4.0 UPDATE FROM WELSH GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES TEAM

KP advised the forum that there was no update.

5.0 ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND – MOD FUNDING PROPOSAL

KP advised the forum that the bid had been submitted but the indication was that there would be no response until the end of March 2017.

6.0 FEEDBACK FROM GWENT ARMED FORCES FORUM

KS advised the forum that unfortunately he had missed the last meeting as he had another engagement and had so far not received a copy of the minutes. KS advised that he was aware that Gareth Gale was able to attend this time and gave a presentation about the Gurhka Welfare Trust.

KS suggested it may be worthwhile inviting Gareth Gale to the CAFF and would provide contact details.

7.0 SOUTH WALES ARMED FORCES DAY

KP advised the forum that Armed Forces Day would again be held in Caerphilly CBC on 24/06/2017.

KP advised that the CAFF was looking to arrange a stand at the event and asked anyone interested in taking part in the event to notify MK as soon as possible for arrangements to be made. The following confirmed their attendance:

Veterans UK
Change Step
SSAFA
Royal British Legion
Help For Heroes

KP advised that CCBC's Armed Forces Day will be held in Blackwood on 19/06/2017. A small parade will march through the town and culminate with a ceremony at Blackwood Miners Institute. KP advised that CCBC's Communications Team is currently awaiting the result of an MOD funding bid before finalising the details.

8.0 UPDATE FROM CLLR. ALAN HIGGS (CCBC ARMED FORCES CHAMPION)

AH advised the forum that since the last meeting he had attended the Royal Gun Salute at Cardiff Castle on 06/02/2017. As part of the event Huw Williams received an award for services rendered. AH will be attending a St David's Day dinner at Caerphilly castle this evening after receiving an invite from the Royal Welsh Regiment.

9.0 UPDATE FROM CCBC ARMED FORCES COVENANT

KP advised the forum that Major Fowler-Smith has proposed that a recruitment event for reservists be held at Penallta House.

10.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

10.1 Royal British Legion

- The 'Count Them In' campaign is going very well (campaign to get the UK census altered to allow individuals to indicate that they are a veteran). KP advised forum that 'Count Them In' campaign is to receive backing from CCBC.
- The 'Veteran's Gateway' project is also going well (project to provide single point of contact for veterans). Staff are currently receiving training. The project is based in Nantgarw and will be officially launched on 22/05/2017.
- The 'Priority Treatment' campaign has been positively received by NHS Wales (campaign to get veterans who have health problems linked to injuries etc received during service seen as a priority by GP's and hospitals).

10.2 SSAFA

- Received very positive response from Newport, Chepstow and CCBC but no response at all from Blaenau Gwent.
- Still recruiting case workers and they are doing well.
- Receiving more and more requests for assistance with funerals and bankruptcy of veterans.
- Dealt with 350 cases and were able to raise £142,000 in grants in the Gwent area last year.
- Barnardo's has won contract to support veterans families.
- Veterans NHS Wales are moving to new premises in Abergavenny.
- Gwent Police now has a mental health specialist working in its contact centre. They have had a very positive effect and funding is now being sought to expand the team.

10.3 Change Step

- The organisation is currently 'restructuring' so no real update.

10.4 Remploy

- Recently had a case of a veteran who was homeless and thankfully was able to find accommodation for him.

10.5 Veterans UK

- MW advised she has only recently taken over from Mike Bailey so is still 'finding her feet'.
- Veterans UK will be attending Armed Forces Day 2017
- Advised that Veterans UK automatically receive a referral if a veteran makes enquiries about releasing their pension early so that they can offer advice and support.

10.6 Seafarers Mission

- EW thanked the CAFF for the invite.
- EW advised the organisation has funding to assist individuals but struggles to make contact with those who need the support.
- The Seafarers Mission is happy to help the CAFF or any of its members in whatever way it can e.g. it has a venue in Newport docks for use.

10.7 GAVO

- KP provided brief update from Steve Keenan; organisation still looking at cuts.

10.8 Help For Heroes

- Recently been audited by the Charity Commission following allegations in the press; happy to report no issues were raised.
- Moving into new premises in Treforest at the end of March 2017.

10.9 Hire A Hero

- Currently very busy; lots of fundraising events being held.
- Liaising with an organisation called 'First Structure' re training for veterans.

11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: TBA week commencing 12/06/2017