

CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

Thursday 7th December 2017
Penallta House (Ebbw Room)

PRESENT

Kathryn Peters (Chair)	CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)
Cllr. Alan Higgs	CCBC (Armed Forces Champion)
Lisa Rawlings	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer
Tiffeny Davies	CCBC (Supporting People)
Keith Sutcliffe	SSAFA (Gwent Area)
Bryan Tansley	SSAFA (Gwent Area)
Rob Cummings	Change Step
Peter Wilson	Royal British Legion
Ken Terry	Royal British Legion
Axel Rees	Hire a Hero
Peter Bevan	Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)
David Lancaster	Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)
Kirsty Gronow	Poppy Factory
Natalie McCombe	Poppy Factory
Steve Keenan	GAVO
Daryl Harries	GAVO
Mike Jones	Job Centre Plus
Paula Mitchel	Help For Heroes
Lt Cdr Ruth Fleming	Royal Navy (HMS Cambria)
Michelle Williams	Veterans UK
Caroline Hawkins	Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Gwent

APOLOGIES

Ceri Pritchard	Job Centre Plus
Anthony Metcalfe	Royal British Legion
Mandy Keenan	CCBC (Corporate Policy)
Shelley Elgin	Help For Heroes
Alison Griffiths	Help For Heroes

KP welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for brief introductions.

1.0 PREVIOUS MINUTES

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

2.0 UPDATES OF ACTIONS

- No actions required from previous meeting

3.0 UPDATE FROM ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

Lisa Rawlings has been in post for 10 weeks and covered the following:

- LR Congratulated Caerphilly Borough County Borough Council on attaining the Defence Employer Recognition Bronze Award which was present at full council 21 November 2017
- After investigation it was identified that the criteria for free Bus Pass for injured personnel is incorrect. This has been flagged to the Transport department of the Welsh Government and will be included in the consultation paper due by 12 Jan 2018.
- Education – the new RBL Best Practice to Education published. Sent to all Chief Education Officers and Education Advisory Service within Gwent. A brief has been given to EAS Governors on the difficulties that children may encounter and the Armed Forces Covenant Local Grants scheme. Additionally, she supports the RBL with the inclusion of the question around service being asked on the PLASC issued in January.
- Housing – Caerphilly Housing policies are robust. A question has been added to the Homelessness questionnaire around military service to ensure that they are signposted correctly. New requests will now enable someone to apply for housing and a 'pause' will be in effect until they receive their discharge papers.
- Criminal Justice System – Gwent Police have agreed 'to ask the question'. Literature has been placed in every custody suite to signpost to the Veterans Gateway. A diversion programme is currently under review.
- E – Learning Package – Commissioned by the WLGA from Covenant Fund. Will be ready to roll out to local authority staff in January 2018.
- Veterans Gateway – LR asked all third sector parties to look at their own information on the sight to ensure it is correct and up to date.

4.0 UPDATE FROM WELSH GOVERNMENT ARMED FORCES TEAM

KP advised the forum the following:

- Wales secured 9% of the Covenant Funding – above expectations as it only accounts for around 4% of the Armed Forces population – New funding streams will be identified in the new year.
- Employment of 4 Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers – West Wales in progress and the remaining authorities are compiling bids – except for Powys
- Commissioned of the e-learning package designed to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and to provide training to local authority staff and elected members
- Commissioned Media company to video best practice which should link into the e-learning package
- Armed Forces Conference – held in Wrexham
- Creation of an All Wales Network sitting twice a year with representation of all 22 Local Authorities

5.0 FEEDBACK FROM GWENT ARMED FORCES FORUM

KS reported the latest from the forum:

- Disappointed at the non-attendees of guest speakers – will try to re-engage and invite again
- Noted that there has been non-attendance from Newport Local Authority for some time
- Updated on the success of the Ffrind i mi scheme. Funded through the Health Technology Wales Scheme and 1,000 Lives, Ffrind i mi (or Friend of mine) is a new initiative that Aneurin Bevan University Health Board and its partners are developing to try and make sure that anyone who feels lonely or isolated are supported to reconnect with their communities.
- KS offered an open invitation to today's attendees and is always looking for other locations to host the meetings

The next meeting is being hosted by CCBC at Penallta House 7th Feb 2018

6.0 PRESENTATION FROM TIFFENY DAVIES (CCBC – SUPPORTING PEOPLE)

Tiffeny Davies gave a brief presentation outlining Supporting People scope and activities

- TD talked through the team members that make up supporting people
- Services and Projects

- Housing related Support
- Debt and homelessness
- SP contracts - 36 providers and 86 projects/schemes
- Floating Support providers
- Current Projects
- New projects planned

The forum was interested in discussing some referrals after the meeting and TD agreed to return. She confirmed she would email the presentation for information purposes to the forum

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

AH wanted to take the opportunity to thank the local ward councillors and Armed Forces community for successful Remembrance events throughout the Caerphilly. AH advised that he was standing down as the Armed Forces Champion at the end of the year (or until a new incumbent has been appointed). KP thanked him for all his hard work and dedication over the past 5 years on behalf of CCBC and the Caerphilly Armed Forces Forum. A true hard act to follow, he has agreed to act as mentor to the new Gwent Armed Forces Champions for the near future. AH informed the forum that he was honoured to be presented firstly the ERS Bronze Award at full council and a framed certificate and Welsh Dragon memento from 203 Field Hospital to thank him for his dedication and support. Other members of the CAFF (including RBL, SSAFA and Veterans UK) wanted to personally thank him for the support, enthusiasm and commitment to the Armed Forces Community.

8.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

8.1 SSAFA

- KS informed the forum that a Gurka Resettlement Officer has been funded by London. There is currently around 350 Gurka's living in Cwmbran alone.
- Newport County Football club signed the Armed Forces Covenant at Rodney Parade, Newport on Nov 10th.
- There is still a growth in requests re funding for funerals as well as providing funding for people who have been made bankrupt.
- A Royal Marine has approached them for support to fund a 'man-bike'. He requires this for current neck injuries. He has raised around £3000 so far but needs to raise over £8000. H4H has offered to discuss these issues with SSAFA.
- SSAFA informed the forum about the Christians Against Poverty (CAP) charity and agreed for LR to distribute the details to the forum
- SSAFA have case worker currently going into prisons. They are currently working with 3 veterans offering support and guidance.

8.2 Royal British Legion

- RBL Risca branch distributed 374 of the large poppies for lampposts over the remembrance period. However 30 of these were stolen and/or damaged. One perpetrator was identified and under investigation by the police. They have raised over £23,500 over this remembrance period.
- RBL Risca looking to fund a gentleman who uses a Landrover to deliver food parcels to homeless veterans
- 'Count me in' Campaign continues to be successful however there is time to offer your support for the campaign.
- Education – Best Practice Guide for Education has been produced and distributed. This is Bi-Lingual and very informative

8.3 Change Step

- The organisation is finally 'restructured' and it would appear as though Change Step funded by Help for Heroes
- Employing 5 new peer mentors working alongside VNHS Wales, 2 crisis intervention workers – 1 in Swansea and 1 in Cardiff (RBL) and an aged veterans coordinator in Cardiff. One peer mento per health board and Powys divided between the 5.

- Main areas of work are mental health, substance misuse and criminality. There is also a focus on 'Aged Vets'.

8.4 Hire a Hero

- Attended a job fair in Caerphilly. Not particularly well organised. At first suggested a sign to be placed on the ground floor to redirect interested parties and that a change of location to Ground Floor would be beneficial in the future.
- Attends Job Fairs in Catterick where they talk to Welsh Servicemen and women to discuss employment options after leaving the service
- Informed the forum that he works closely with CTP/Right Job to get suitable vacancies uploaded onto the system
- Hire a Hero visits prisons regularly and takes suitable employers (i.e. Network Rail) in to speak to veterans currently incarcerated. Bridgend has a veterans only wing.
- AR stated they are currently looking for career coaches to join their team.
- The college in Nantgarw will currently pay the individual to undergo training opportunities.

8.5 Royal Welsh (Caerphilly Branch)

- Thanked the Forum for their inclusion
- Have utilised information from the forum for referrals

8.6 GAVO

- SK confirmed that this was his last meeting and introduced the forum to DH who will attend in the future.
- SK thanked the forum for their involvement and that the input has been invaluable. The forum thanked him for his hard work and support.

8.7 Job Centre Plus

- MJ informed the group of the developments reference Universal Credit. There is two sectors live and full. The full service is due to go live May 18 however now pushed back to at least September. Back to the legacy benefits. People on the current new system will stay on for ease and continuity
- Blackwood and Bargoed branches are re-locating.
- MJ is part of the Cadet Force and informed of the Grand Opening of Newbridge Cadets new premises on 13th December. Local MP and AM has been invited to attend.

8.8 Help For Heroes

- Employment of a new Key worker so the areas will be split South East, South West and North Wales.

8.9 Royal Navy (HMS Cambria)

- Lt Cdr Ruth Fleming stated that it was refreshing that this forum did not concentrate on Veterans but the Armed Forces Community as a whole.
- RF reminded the forum that Royal Navy families tend to move in isolation and their families are left in one location which is not necessarily near a base.
- The RN contention in Wales is only about 100 personnel strong
- Families are supported by the Naval Families Federation however they often do not identify themselves.
- Although she would not be attending this forum regularly as Caerphilly is partnered by 203 (Field) Hospital she is happy to attend events
- This year is the 100th anniversary that females have been (formally) allowed to serve in the Armed Forces.

8.10 Veterans UK

- Continuing to support veterans and their families as much as possible on a day to day basis.
- Reminder to members that the support offered is life-long.
- They also attend prisons to offer support to veterans.

- It is noticeable that many who are entitled to claim a portion of their pension at aged 60 do not do so. Recently they have come across two veterans age 61/62 who have not yet claimed.
- Where there have been overpayments they have negotiated a good scheduled repayment plan to support the identified parties.
- There are 4 new welfare managers in the region which lightens the load for the support centre.

8.11 Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner - Gwent

- Investigation underway to introduce a diversion from custody programme for veterans
- All custody suites now 'ask people to identify themselves as ex-armed forces
- There is a poster in every suite and materials to signpost to veterans gateway
- They will be holding a stakeholder event in February and are looking for attendees to input their ideas and experiences.
- They engage with the SToMP programme and Connect Gwent
- They have a Keep Safe scheme - A card designed to make vulnerable people more aware of their personal safety, to encourage reporting of a crime – especially hate crime – and to seek help if they need it
- There is currently a Samaritans in cell call system however they expect a face-to-face consultant to be in place in the new year

9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

KS provided a brief update:

- RBL Risca Branch attended the National Arboretum
- Families of Welsh Armed Forces veterans struggling to cope with civilian life are to get support from a new service being launched by Barnardo's Cymru

KP advised that as CCBC will not be hosting Armed Forces Day in 2018 consideration will be given to the CAFF attending next year's Big Cheese. Forum members are encouraged to express their interest to the AFLO.

11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING: Thursday 7th March 2018, Ty Penalta.