

# CAERPHILLY ARMED FORCES FORUM (CAFF)

6<sup>th</sup> December 2018  
Penallta House (Sirhowy Room)

## PRESENT

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| Kathryn Peters (Chair) | CCBC (Armed Forces Lead)                       |
| Lisa Rawlings          | Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer |
| Craig Singler          | CCBC (Senior Allocations Officer)              |
| Shelley Elgin          | Help For Heroes                                |
| Axel Rees              | Hire a Hero                                    |
| Karen Barnes           | Solas - Pobl Group                             |
| Tim Parr               | Solas - Pobl Group                             |
| Keith Sutcliffe        | SSAFA (Gwent Area)                             |
| Brian Tansley          | SSAFA (Gwent Area)                             |
| Ceri Pritchard         | DWP  |
| Michelle Williams      | Veterans UK - VWS                              |
| John Williams          | Royal British Legion Public Affairs Manager    |
| Millie Taylor          | SSCE Cymru Project Officer                     |
| Andy Jones             | SToMP  |
| Peter Wilson           | Royal British Legion                           |
| David Lancaster        | Caerphilly Royal Welsh Veterans                |
| Peter Bevan            | Caerphilly Royal Welsh Veterans                |
| Liam Spillane          | Change Step                                    |

## APOLOGIES

|                        |                                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Cllr. Andrew Whitcombe | CCBC (Armed Forces Champion)         |
| Edward Watts           | GAVO (CEO)                           |
| Kirsty Gronow          | Poppy Factory                        |
| Julianne Newsham       | RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity |

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

### 1.0 ATTENDANCE, INTRODUCTION AND APOLOGIE

### 2.0 NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM MEETING OF 13/09/18

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

#### UPDATE OF ACTIONS

- CCBC Comms Team Presentations sent to CAFF members
- LR circulated pension forecast request link
- LR circulated complete list of Armed Forces contacts

### 3.0 UPDATE FROM WLGA

KP advised the forum of the following:

- In 2017 the WLGA received funding from the Ministry of Defence's Armed Forces Covenant Fund to undertake a national project which aims to:

- raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and the issues affecting the Armed Forces Community in Wales;
- improve the availability of information about the Armed Forces Covenant for the Armed Forces Community in Wales;
- improve communications relating to the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales made by/between local authorities; and
- promote and share best practice.
- There are some funds left from this grant which will be used to produce a toolkit for local authority departments and possibly the production of Fact or Fiction films as suggested by the AFLO's
- All Wales Network meeting well attended – discussion on WG funding the AFLO posts. Alun Davies AM attended and reassured the LA's that the funding should ensure a seamless transition and continuity of services throughout Wales.

**ACTION: LR to update the forum on the details of the 500k Welsh Government fund for Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officers when available**

#### 4.0 UPDATE – ARMED FORCES LIAISON OFFICER

LR advised the forum of the following:

- Congratulations to Caerphilly County Borough County Council who were awarded the Silver on the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme at the All Wales Awards 22<sup>nd</sup> November. The local authority are honoured to be recognised and will strive for Gold!
- Human Resources – LR has approached all Local Authorities to consider introducing the guaranteed interview scheme for Reservists, Service Leavers and spouses. At present Torfaen County Borough Council has agreed to implement the scheme
- Education –Letters have been sent to all schools within Caerphilly Borough. At present 13 schools have responded with a total of 60 service children have been identified. Monmouth and Newport local authorities have been successful in applying for the MOD Education support fund to employ an Armed Forces Education Officer. This will lay the groundwork for all of Gwent and a great addition to support available.
- Housing – There will be updates available during this meeting from Caerphilly Housing Team and Pobl group on the housing support available for the Armed Forces Community.
- Gwent Police – LR has had confirmation that Gwent Police has received funds to roll out the Diversion project for Armed Forces by next April/May 2019
- Covenant Local Grants applications submitted by midday 17<sup>th</sup> December 18 will be decided before the end of Feb 19 [www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/covenant-fund)
- Please follow Twitter @GwentAFC and Facebook account for the Gwent Armed Forces Community
- Newsletter deadline 21<sup>st</sup> December for submissions. Next edition released January 2019
- The first ever UK-wide strategy on the delivery of support for veterans has been published. The government are seeking views on how the Strategy could be implemented across the UK except for devolved matter in Scotland and Wales. <https://surveys.mod.uk/index.php/948951?lang=en%20>
- Welsh Government has launched the Employers' Toolkit and Employment Pathway in support of service leavers and veterans

#### 5.0 UPDATE FROM GWENT (ABUHB) ARMED FORCES FORUM

KS advised that he and LR attended a meeting with Geraint Evans Aneurin Bevan UHB – Executive Board). The health board will reinstate the Armed Forces Forum and the next meeting is 20<sup>th</sup> December - Committee Room, Grange House, Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital. If you normally would attend this meeting and are not on the distribution list please contact – [Claire.Barry3@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:Claire.Barry3@wales.nhs.uk)

#### 6.0 PRESENTATION FROM CCBC HOUSING TEAM

Craig Singler gave a presentation outlining the CCBC housing policy:

- Definitions and context setting;
- The assessment process; and;
- Responses to the Forum's questions.

A Common Housing Register is a system that enables people to apply for social housing (council and/or housing association) by completing a single application form and to receive joined up information and advice about their housing options. The application and assessment process was discussed along with a summary of need. CS informed the forum of the HomeSearch website for Caerphilly which is a new way of allocating council and partner housing association properties for rent and shared ownership properties for sale.

CS answered the following questions from the forum:

***Is there any policy for someone with no local connection to be eligible and be placed on the CHR?***

Yes. However, unless special circumstances apply then they would only receive a band 3 award.

***Is there a laid down standard for the state of a property on re-let?***

Yes. However, this is not covered by the CAP; each landlord will have their own re-let standard.

***How do applicants move up the bands?***

Applicants are placed in a band commensurate to their level of housing need (high, medium or low). A significant change in circumstances may result in a change in band but not always. Applicants can go up or down the bands depending on the nature in the change in circumstances.

***Is there a good stock of warden / supported housing within the borough?***

The level, type and size of accommodation varies from ward to ward. Sheltered housing is generally let to older or disabled people and there are over 3,500 homes. There are various supported accommodation schemes throughout the borough, although, none specifically for AFV.

***What sort of priority does someone get in the private rented sector to be able to make the transition into social housing?***

In response to the increase in standards and management in the PRS through WG legislation and CCBC enforcement, the CAP does not award priority solely for living in the PRS. Although, priority may be award for poor housing conditions.

***Single accommodation availability?***

The Council realises that the level of single person accommodation does not reflect the level of identified need. The Council is working with partners to increase the level of provision through new developments and stock reclassification.

***Do they apply local connection criteria points to separated and divorced spouses applying for social housing in the area if moving back after a marriage breakdown?***

The CHR is a band system so no points award. There is detailed residential criteria within the CAP which we use to establish a local connection. A local connection is not required to be eligible for housing.

***The specific needs of AFV and/or their bereaved spouses are considered under:***

- Residential criteria;
- Financial resources;
- Priority award;
- Property related criteria;
- Effective registration date;

**Action:** LR to distribute a copy of the presentation to be sent to members

## **7.0 GUEST SPEAKER – SSCE CYMRU – Millie Taylor**

Millie Taylor briefed the members on the Supporting Service Children in Education Project

- Definition of a 'Service Child'  
A child who has one or both parents currently serving in the armed forces; A child whose parent/s have served in the armed forces within the last six years (Veteran) or; a child whose parent/s are currently servicing as Reservists
- 5<sup>th</sup> year if WLGA project to provide the best possible educational support to SC in Wales
- Main Challenge is to have better knowledge on the number and location of SC in Wales, to be able to support schools in the best way possible

- <https://www.sscecymru.co.uk/ssce-films>

**Action:** LR to distribute presentation

## 8.0 UPDATE FROM CAFF MEMBERS

### 8.1 Hire a Hero

- Recently attended Job fairs at Catterick and Telford attended by over 800 service leavers – a proportion were from Wales and discussed the AFC newsletter being available to the bases both electronically and hard copies.
- Attends prisons and works collaboratively with SToMP for referrals.
- Attended a families day at Parc Prison
- Current vacancies in care work and engineering
- Where appropriate signpost to other agencies

**Action:** LR to liaise with AR to circulate AFC newsletter to Army bases in England that will have troops from Wales.

### 8.2 Solas – Pobl Group

- Successful in obtaining a grant from POBL Group to hire Veteran Support Worker – full time for 2 years. The incumbent will work with outside agencies to ensure an all round support is offered and to find suitable accommodation for the Veteran
- Currently there are approximately 12 properties that are available.
- They would like to work with the forum members on the development of the role and to work collaboratively on cases

### 8.3 JCP

- Universal Credit went live in Caerphilly Borough 5<sup>th</sup> Sept. Although not currently rolled out to all cohorts there are currently 1000 live claims. 50% are active in the job centre and some are on legacy benefits. Currently processing new claims for families with 2 children. The transfer of all claimants is estimated to be complete by Autumn 2020.
- Forum members asked who they should contact if they had a query on a case. CP stated that there are Armed Forces Champions within each Job Centre however, she is happy to take queries direct.

**Action:** LR to liaise with CP to distribute contact details of partnership managers within SE Wales

### 8.4 Help for Heroes

- SE reminded the group that the nearest drop in is in Newport International Sports arena the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of every month
- Activities coming up are walking cricket/football and currently wheelchair rugby is on offer
- Very successful Pathfinder course in their building – there are more planned later in the year
- X Forces Business experience course due Feb 19
- Course to support setting up own business
- Band of Brothers and Sisters has a very active activity programme including airfix modelling which has proved popular ( A member of the forum asked what is the criteria to join BOS and BOB – it is - the wounded injured or sick veteran or family member.
- H4H is supporting the Walking Home for Christmas Campaign on 16<sup>th</sup> December in Pontypridd

**Action:** LR to circulate poster of WWTW event

### 8.5 Royal British Legion – Public Affairs and campaign manager

- Introduced himself to the forum having been in post a few weeks
- Thanked the forum and its members for the activities and support for this years Remembrance
- The RBL has been asked to formulate a response around the question of an Armed Forces Commissioner or utilising the funds for the Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer posts

## **8.6 SSCE Cymru**

- Presentation was given to the forum
- Happy to work with LA's to advise on the new Armed Forces Education Officer post

## **8.7 RBL – SE Wales**

- All branches ran a successful Poppy Appeal – total figures still to be announced

## **8.8 RBL – Risca Branch**

- Raised over £26,000 in the Poppy Appeal
- Children designed a badge through a school competition. Two were chosen with 500 of each commissioned
- Disappointed at the lack of availability of the Lamp post poppies and had to buy privately which meant the RBL lost out on funds
- Many events were attended over the remembrance period with over 3-400 in attendance

## **8.9 Change Step**

- Indicated that their hot topics is one of housing and benefits. Despite having issues resolved quickly in Caerphilly LA they struggle to get issues resolved in Cardiff LA. It has been suggested to contact the AFCLO that covers the area to help support
- The team has had their area of coverage extended to cover all of South Wales. There is currently a drop in in Caerphilly library the first Tuesday of each month and a new drop in has been established in Tredegar starting 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019.

## **8.10 SToMP**

- Cover all prisons in Wales
- Funding ends in March – a bid has gone in – Hopefully will know by Feb 19 whether the project will continue
- Dedicated prison Pathway for veterans
- Currently 26 Armed Forces Champions within the prisons which have been trained on veteran support
- Sub Group in co-ordination with the Police as IOM Cymru

## **8.11 Veterans Uk**

- Covers the Gwent region as a caseworker
- Surprisingly still veterans who have not claimed their military pension. Most recent case is of a 64 year old who has missed out on 4 years of their pension.

## **8.12 SSAFA**

- Continues to have case workers embedded within the prisons and advises without prejudice
- Still busy with requests for funeral payments – unscrupulous funeral directors charging over £5000
- Current casework of members of the Gurkha regiment who once in receipt of pension would like support with funds to return home to Nepal. They estimate 300 Gurkha's in Torfaen alone.
- KS now on the ABUHB stakeholders board
- Recruited many new caseworkers especially in the Newport area
- KS informed the forum of the Well at home project produced by Melin Homes Pontypool

**Action: LR to circulate details of Well at Home project**

## **9.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

NIL

**11.0 DETAILS OF NEXT MEETING:** 10 am 7<sup>th</sup> March 2018, Ty Penalta.