
Cross-Party Group Minutes

Meeting Minutes:

Cross Party Group Title:	Armed Forces and Cadets
Date of Meeting:	9 th July 2025
Location:	Hybrid Meeting – Ty Hywel, Conference Room C&D and Virtual via Microsoft Teams

In attendance in-person:

Name:	Title:
Andy Clark	Chairman, Royal Naval Association (Cardiff Branch)
James Cadmore	Head of Veterans Wales
Mike Connolly	Welsh Government
Brigadier Mark Davis CBE	Commander of 160th (Welsh) Brigade, Head of the Army in Wales
James Evans MS	Co-Chair & Senedd Member for Brecon & Radnorshire
James Glass	Age Cymru Dyfed
WO1 Robert Govier	Royal Navy- SO3 Regional Engagement Wales, West England and Channel Islands
Mark Isherwood MS	Senedd Member for North Wales
Peter Kellam	Welsh Government
Commodore Tristram Kirkwood OBE ADC	Naval Regional Commander Wales, Western England and Channel Islands

Adrian Leslie	Public Affairs RBL
Darren Millar MS	Senedd Member for Clwyd West
James Philips	Veterans Commissioner for Wales
Lisa Rawlings	Chair, Wales Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committee
James Garside	MS support staff
Kate Pritchard	MS Support Staff

In attendance Online:

Name:	Title:
Amy D Constance	SO3 Military Civilian Integration
Cllr Glyn Haynes	Armed Forces Champion, Isle of Anglesey County Council
Cllr Teresa Heron	Armed Forces Champion, Caerphilly County Borough Council
Joanna Johnson	Training Manager at Grassroots Suicide Prevention
Andy Jones	Armed Forces Liaison Officer (Powys)
Neil Lawman	Adferiad, Change Step
Col Dominic Morgan OBE	Chief Executive at Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association for Wales
Harriet Mortlock	Military Civilian Integration MOD
Lt Col Taniya Morris MBE	Army Reserve Officer
Lt Col Will Peltor	SO1 Engagement at HQ 160th (Welsh) Brigade
Emma Perrin	AFF Devolved Manager
James Phillips	Veterans Commissioner for Wales

Finola Pickwell	Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer (South West Wales)
Maisy Provan	Armed Forces Lead, Cardiff and Vale University Health Board
Georgina Rees	Scoping and Evaluation Officer, Alabaré Homes for Veterans Cymru
Claire Rowcliffe	Blind Veterans UK
Millie Taylor	SSCE Cymru Programme Manager
Air Cdre Robert Woods	Air Officer Wales
Amanda Yorke	Army Families Federation

Apologies:

Name:	Title:
Alun Davies MS	Co-Chair & Senedd Member for Blaenau Gwent
Owen Dobson	Age Cymru Dyfed
Laura Anne Jones MS	Senedd Member for South East Wales
Neil Kitchiner	Director & Consultant Clinical Lead, Veterans' NHS Wales, Cardiff & Vale University Health Board
Cllr Liz Roberts	Armed Forces Champion, Conwy County Borough Council
Sam Rowlands MS	Senedd Member for North Wales

Summary of Meeting:

<p>Introductions and Apologies: James Evans welcomed attendees to the Group and gave apologies.</p> <p>Chair Update:</p>
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- James Evans has attended a number of events in recent weeks following his appointment as Co-Chair.
- James Evans has recently met with the WRU and Sport Wales to promote the Armed Forces Covenant.
- The Co-Chairs have written to the UK Government to ask that an official attend this group to provide a brief on the Defence Spending Review. To date, no response has been received.

Updates from previous meeting:

- a. Armed Forces pension scheme. Details of constituency case to be circulated with minutes (individuals details redacted).
- b. Response to written question re discussions with UK Gov on a permanent Veterans Commissioner in Wales: Ken Skates MS response was circulated. It states *"The Veterans Commissioner for Wales is appointed and funded by the UK Government. I have met with the Minister for Veterans and People within the Ministry of Defence on three occasions in the last year and I have been clear in my view that the role provides an important voice for raising Veterans' issues in Wales"*.
- c. Response to written question re Welsh Gov's plans for the commemoration of the 80th Anniversary of VJ Day in August: Eluned Morgan MS' response was circulated. It states *"plans for national commemorations will be announced in due course"*. Peter Kellam (Head of Armed Forces Branch) updated the group further by saying they are working towards an event on the 14th August in Cardiff (Alexandra Gardens/Temple of Peace), as well as working with the UK Dept Media & Sport on national events on the 15th August. More details to follow. There will not be an event in the Senedd this August as it is in recess.

Briefing from James Cadmore, Alabaré homes for Veterans and the 'Boots on the Ground' Programme:

- James Cadmore shared the story of a veteran who found himself with no home, no clothes and in prison. A referral to Alabaré changed his life and he is now living in a property, self-sufficient and in control of alcohol and drug issues.
- Alabaré has a 40 bed capacity in South and North Wales. Anyone can make the referral. They offer supporting housing, signposting for services, connect veterans and get them out and about through 'Boots on the Ground' programme and monthly events. Camping experiences in the Brecon Beacons are particularly valuable for sharing experiences.
- In Wales, they operate homes for veterans only. Currently in South Wales and North Wales only. Alabaré is a national charity for veterans, homeless, young mothers & baby, mental health and those with learning disabilities.
- Briefed members on the Self Build project where veterans work on projects, learning new skills, qualifications and on completion, get to live in their build. In England but not in Wales as yet.

- James Evans thanked James Cadmore for his briefing. He noted that there was no capacity in Mid and West Wales and asked what conversations were Alabaré having to address this? James Padmore admitted that the majority of demand was South and North Wales. Conversations are taking place with building companies and Adferiad. Said support from the Local Authority was not forthcoming.
- Darren Millar raised previous visit looking at redundant places of worship and one potential site in Mid Wales. Not sure where we are at with this. James Cadmore said he would seek an update from Andrew. Pleased to announce they are extending their property in Pontypridd.
- Lisa Rawlings raised the question of female places. James Cadmore confirmed they did accept female veterans and all welcome. Higher level of demand amongst males. Lisa praised the self-build policy but cited concerns about cross border co-operation between Local Authorities for such and this is creating barriers here in Wales. Peter Kellam provided an update that there is a meeting in the diary to discuss this with the Cabinet Secretary for Housing. James Cadmore informed the meeting that Alabaré are in discussions around a former nursing home in Llandrindod Wells and bringing that into use.
- **Andy Jones** provided a response to an earlier comment that Local Authority were not supportive. He assured the group that Powys County Council were very supportive and collaborative at all times. The stumbling block to date has been lack of finances. He reiterated the need for a Mid Wales site, stating it was 'no man's land' between the M4 and A55 and difficult to refer veterans from Llanidloes to Swansea for example.
- Darren commented that it would good to get these groups together to avoid duplication and work together well and to have a specific stream on Veteran's Housing on the Experts Group? Mike Connolly agreed to look at this.

Briefing from James Glass on Stronger Futures for Older Veterans eLearning course:

- Apologies from Owen Dobson for missing today's briefing.
- James Glass provided his own background and current work with Age Cymru Dyfed. He relayed a story of a 96 year old WWII veteran who found himself in need, lonely and afraid after a fall. A call to Age Cymru Dyfed changed this. Local veterans community nearby rallied, his needs were assessed and support given. But many veterans are not identified and not receiving the support they need and deserve.
- Have created an online e-learning course to educate Local Authority and Health Service employees to ask three questions. 1. Are you a Veteran; 2. Record this 3. Provide support. Veterans have that common bond and link into local veterans groups like SSAFA, RBL etc, conversations start once connected. Age Cymru Dyfed is working with those aged 50+ but this ethos applies equally to all ages, across all parts of the UK.
- This eLearning programme has potential to make a huge difference to Veterans. Interactive training is bilingual and offers real life videos. James Glass made request to the group to offer any assistance they can to promote the importance of this e-learning to Local Authority, Health Service and third sector staff. Due to be launched on the 16th July. Meeting is scheduled with Welsh Gov on 7th October to discuss in more detail.

- James Evans thanked James for his briefing. He asked how this links with the Armed Forces Liaison Officers and accredited GPs. James Glass responded by stating he has met 7 Armed forces Champions across all the Welsh Health Boards. The e-learning is on the 'Thinky' learning platform which 7 out of the 22 Local Authorities currently use. Hope that more LAs will follow suit in time. With 21million veterans, if this helps reach just 10% of that, it is 21,000 people.
- Maisie Provan (Armed Forces Lead - Cardiff and Vale University Health Board) commented positively about this module. However, concerns that the NHS will struggle to make this mandatory and enforce participation. Struggle to access the content due to NHS firewalls. James Glass responded by saying he understood the difficulties but hopes there will be a ripple effect through 'Thinky' platform on how valuable this could be. Acknowledged NHS is a tough nut to crack but stressed this is a free resource to educate as many staff as they can.
- Air Cdre Robert Woods commented that we need to join the dots and suggested this become part of the Career Transition Programme, so that younger veterans recently leaving the Armed Forces can be aware of this course. Make use of the younger generation and their talents, many of which are entrepreneurs setting up their own businesses, to share this in their communities and with older veterans.
- Lisa Rawlings Commented that the talk is of male veterans. Could utilise groups such as the Female Veterans Alliance to promote this in their social media channels.

Any Other Business:

- Brigadier Mark Davis noted that Veterans deliver a huge amount in Wales. The Defence Spending Review is a fundamental change, with extra funding, investment and support into our defence industry. Huge opportunities here in Wales. Suggested that a Cross-Party group look at the opportunities open to us all and bring people in from industry, see what the Armed Forces can bring to Wales, along with the increases in Cadets. James Evans responded by stating Airbus were keen for a visit, plus another business in his own constituency. We should be advocating for these businesses in the Defence Review. Peter Kellam thanked the 160 Brigade for its contribution to this. Welsh Gov are now chairing the Expert group. Seek update from Welsh Gov on this.
- Darren noted previous concerns raised that the Development Bank for Wales was prohibited to give defence partners funding. Please to announce this restriction has been lifted. Stressed that Welsh Gov and UK Gov need to be scrutinised on their defence Spending Review and suggested this be the sole topic of the next meeting. James Evans repeated that an invitation has been sent to UK Gov to attend but as yet no response received.
- Air Commodore Woods: echoed the previous comments and stressed this is a Veterans and Cadets Cross Party Group. Their contribution in Wales is huge and they must be kept in our vision. Suggested a standing agenda item of Cadets for future meetings. Agreed.
- Col Dominic Morgan: This was an item at the last meeting and the defence Spending Review's decision to increase Cadets by 30% is huge. Concerns raised over the funding of this. Darren Millar noted the last time we had such an expansion, Welsh Gov were allocated money but it was not spent on Cadets. Assurances will need to be sought from current Welsh Gov Ministers that future funding will be ringfenced to Cadets. Welsh Government official noted that Cadets now sits with Ken Skates MS and no longer with Education.

- Milly Talyor Support Service Children updated the group that hopefully the definition will broaden. This is gaining ground and submitting evidence/arguments to Welsh Gov. If anyone has any case studies suitable for this, please contact Milly.
- Col James, Veterans Commissioner updated the group on recent and upcoming meetings.
- Cdre Tris Kirkwood updated the group on his recent work and echoed Rob's comments on Sea Cadets and their importance. 'Project Powerful' is ongoing and HMS Kramer is soon to be up and running providing accommodation and training site for Sea cadets in Cardiff Docks.

Agreed Action Points:

- Self-Build Homes: Letter to Jayne Bryant MS, Cabinet Secretary for Housing and Local Government and Ken Skates MS, to add our weight to calls for this to be facilitated in Wales
- E-Learning: Letter to Jeremy Miles MS, Cabinet Secretary for Health & Social Care & Ken Skates MS to highlight the issues in accessing this training via NHS workplaces
- Opportunities for Armed Forces to work with Welsh industry in DSR/Expert Group: Write to Rebecca Evans MS, Cabinet Secretary for Economy Energy and Planning and Ken Skates MS to ask for an update on this.
- Cadets to be a standing agenda item in future meetings
- Cadets additional funding: write to Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales to seek written assurances that 100% of funding will be used on cadets.
- Defence Spending Review: chase up a response to previous letter requesting officials attend next CPG meeting

Date of Next meeting:

1st October 2025 – further details to be circulated.