

Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets

Minuets

Wednesday 29th April 2015 12.15pm – 1.15pm
Conference Room 2, Ty Hywel, National Assembly for Wales

Attending:

Colonel Lance Patterson (attending on behalf of Brigadier Gamble)
Commander Andrew Loring (attending on behalf of Commodore Jamie Miller)
Air Commodore Adrian Williams
Gp Capt, Rgnl Comdt Dick Allen (Air Force)
Lt Col John Skipper – Community Health Councils (CHC) lead for Armed Forces
Dr. Neil J. Kitchiner - Veterans' NHS Wales (attending with student Nurse Rhian Lewis)
Phil Jones – Royal British Legion
Mike Simpson - Regional Manager (South) - DMWS (Defence Medical Welfare Service)
Lisa Leece - Acting Regional Manager (North) - DMWS
Lt Col S M M Hughes - Deputy Chief Executive - Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association for Wales (RF&CAW)
Mark Isherwood AM

Apologies received from:

Brigadier Gamble (represented by Colonel Lance Patterson)
Commodore Jamie Miller (represented by Commander Andrew Loring)
Peter Evans – Royal British Legion (Phil Jones will be attending in his place)
David Rose – Universities in Support of Wounded, Injured and Sick Service Personnel (UNSWIS) Coordinator
Simon Thomas AM

Meeting

Item 1: Chair's welcome and Introduction

Darren Millar (DM) welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Everyone attending introduced themselves. (See above attendance list)
DM introduced Item 2.

Item 2: Presentation: Cadets in Wales (Power point available on request)
Stephen Hughes from the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association for Wales (RF&CAW)

Main points addressed:

- Armed Forces (AF) Covenant focuses on service personnel and veterans but has neglected cadets. This in turn has led to some viewing the AF as a needy community without appearing to give anything in return.
- Generally cadets in Wales are in good health.
- Schools Cadet Expansion Programme in England.
 - Possible implication for the future of Cadets in Wales.
 - There was an early trial in Llanwern and Treorchy but other than that Wales has not been involved.
 - Welsh Government (WG) has not set aside additional resources to promote this.
 - Aberdare Community School has actively expressed an interest in forming a Combined Cadet Force.
- High Level Review of Cadets.
 - 3 Outcomes of cadet movement:
 - Development. Majority of young people who join the cadet forces will not join the Armed Forces. Developing young people only marginally benefits Defence. It does however contribute to wider Government policy and the societal benefit is considerable, hence spending can be justified.
 - Awareness. The UK Government's ability to configure, fund, generate and employ the Armed Forces is strengthened by public awareness of, and popular support for, the Armed Forces. As its size reduces, the challenge increases, and every means available to Defence should be employed
 - Recruiting. The cadet forces are not conduits for entry into the Armed Forces. But recruiting is the outcome from the cadet forces from which MOD derives direct value. The Review therefore recommended that Defence should set recruiting as its required outcome. However the MOD rejected this recommendation, noting that the 3 outcomes are interdependent and a balance between them must be maintained.
- Lord-Lieutenants Awards – Highlight inspirational young people in the Cadets.
- Cadets are more visible to the public than the Regular and Reserve Forces.
- Cadet Forces should be used to promote the good work of the Forces, community engagement and showing the military giving something back to communities.
- Cadets should be Appealing, Challenging, Rewarding, Safe
- Cadet Force 2020 Programme of Work will bring together policies, recommendations and review suggestions cohesively together.
- Youth Outreach.
 - Working with children from challenging backgrounds in collaboration with police and social services.
 - There are programmes with a Military focus currently linked to schools such as North Wales training and the Skills Academy of Military Preparation College.
- School Challenge Cymru – RFCA for Wales is currently looking to see if cadets could support this programme.
- Important for Cadets to be seen as a Youth Organisation not a recruiting tool.

Questions and discussion:

Lisa Leece – How good are the links with north Wales Schools?

- A Colwyn Bay based Company – North Wales Training working with some 40 schools supporting children at risk of falling out of education.
- South Wales – Military Preparation College has a Skills Academy programme working on a similar programme.

Darren Millar (DM)

- 1) School Cadet Expansion Programme. The WG would have received funding via the Barnett Formula into the education budget. If the programme had been funded and organised by the MOD it would have been UK wide. Has there been any discussion to look at this?
 - RFCA have been working with and meeting up with the Department of Education and Skills to discuss this.
 - ❖ ACTION (for Stephen Hughes): DM asked if he could have the figures for how much WG received via Barnett as a result of the School Cadet Expansion Programme in England.
- 2) Recruitment – Recent press stories have given a negative view of Cadet organisations as recruitment organisations. Positive engagement with AMs is important to stop stories like this gaining traction. Could there be more engagement? DM suggested that local Cadet Forces could write to invite their local AMs to invite them on a visit = a good way to further community engagement.
 - AMs do get invited to general events and particular ceremonies such as the Lord-Lieutenants Awards.
 - i. There was general agreement from around the table that invites for AMs to visit Cadets would be a good thing to take forward.
 - ❖ ACTION (for Stephen Hughes): Will discuss this with colleagues at the Joint Cadet Committee on 10 Jun.
- 3) What progress is being made with cadets getting involved in Schools Challenge Cymru?
 - Currently RFCA is meeting with officials to lay the ground work for the meeting with the Minister in the future.
 - ❖ ACTION (for Stephen Hughes): Will update the CPG once he has met with the Minister. (Afternote: the meeting is scheduled for 22 Sep)

Commander Andrew Loring – Cadet Expansion Programme in England. There has been issues with funding, particularly in relation to private schools having their funding threatened with withdrawal. There is also a concern that if a school sets up a Cadets it can affect the other Cadet Forces in the area.

Gp Capt, Rgnl Comdt Dick Allen – there is confusion between CCFs (Combined Cadet Force) and other Cadet Forces. Wales can do it better and learn from the mistakes made over the programme in England.

Lisa Leece – Could Cadets work with a partner school rather than set up a new group? – Partnership could make them stronger. This has happened in some places in England.

- There was general support for this idea amongst the group.

- Commander Andrew Loring added that in his experience working in schools this would be a popular with them as well.

Item 3: Part a) Armed Forces Covenant (Power point available on request)

John Skipper - CHC lead for Armed Forces

Theme of the talk: 'Supporting our Armed Forces in Wales – how are we doing: a veteran's perspective'. There are lots of meetings, forum and groups that have developed – time is ripe to make sure they are achieving what we want them to do. We don't want to run out of steam and waste scarce energy, resources and the enormous good will that exists. Should there be better central coordination?

Main points addressed:

- John comes at his role as an Army veteran of 35 years service and the experience and understanding which that brings.
- There is a constant need to monitor and maintain support for the AF and veterans in Wales.
- Service personnel and ex-service personal are not the only people effected – We need to also look at veteran's and serving families and the families of deceased service personnel.
- Healthcare Inspectorate Wales (HIW) 'Healthcare and the Armed Forces Community in Wales' Review in 2012 highlighted the need to keep things current and not to lose momentum.
- The AF Covenant is full of strong words but it needs to link to action.
- There are excellent foundations in place in Wales, but:
 - WG Package of Support must work on the ground
 - Local authorities were slow to sign up to the AF Covenant
 - AF Champions in local authorities and the NHS are really committed but often lack understanding.
 - The third sector continues to do excellent work and are to be praised for the work they do.
 - This CPG adds a level of scrutiny making sure all the cogs are working well.
 - Do people understand the unique challenges faced by veterans?
 - Clear signposting is key – there is a lot on information out there but people need to know where it is. This has been a particular challenge with the growing number of reserves.
 - We must avoid presenting the AF community with an overly complex and potentially impenetrable mass of information.
 - Non reputable charities – Either claiming to 'cure' PTSD through dubious means or, as an example very recently in Carmarthen, preying on the good will of the public to raise funds that may not benefit veterans.
 - We can do better.
- Are the right structures in place?
 - AF Advocate for Wales– June Milligan – But do people know who she is and what she does?
 - Does the third sector meet the need? Could they work together better?
 - There is a lack of co-ordination – There is a lot of good energy but they don't work together.

- Scottish Veterans Commissioner (Three page briefing on the Scottish Veterans Commissioner's "Transition in Scotland Report 2015", as prepared by the CPG secretary for circulating at the meeting, is available on request). He has now produced a 3 year strategy and a report on AF Transition – worth keeping an eye on from a Welsh perspective. The transition stage is the problem - some veterans struggle.
- Healthcare and veterans
 - Mental Health still a stigma – during service and in retirement
 - Not all veterans' issues are PTSD – accurate diagnosis is essential followed by approved treatment with professional clinical governance
 - Mental health support for veterans must be adequately resourced – especially since the demand will likely increase going forward.
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 - The 2012 HIW Review captured the views of almost 250 veterans – mental health was a prevalent issue..

Part b) Brief update on where **NHS Veterans Wales** is regarding service and capacity (Power point available on request)

Dr. Neil J. Kitchiner - Veterans' NHS Wales

Main points:

- Neil and John have met with the Deputy Minister for Health and Social services to discuss these issues.
- Funding for veterans' health services in Wales is well below that of Scotland and England. The one-off £100,000 payment made in September 2014 ran out in March 2015 (seven months funding).
 - An uplift of £100,000 funding was announced last week but waiting lists are growing again. The uplift is welcomed but will not maintain the current capacity.
- Issues with funding has created a massive level of uncertainty amongst the staff and patients.
 - This is not good for morale.
 - Most of the staff are part time.
- Academy Wales Research indicated a 132 hours per week shortfall in the service before the new staff were recruited following the £100,000 boost. After the boost there was still an 83 hours per week shortfall.
- Neil admitted that original estimates of costing's made by Veterans NHS Wales in 2009 were too small – they under estimated demand.
- The Health Minister announced 22nd April 2015 a £100,000 uplift but Neil estimates that ideally £500,000 was needed so that they could start doing outreach work within Welsh prisons, female veterans, families of veterans and serving personnel sick at home who are going to be medically discharged to the NHS .
- The busiest Health Boards are:

- Bro Morgannwg University (ABMU) Health Board
- Aneurin Bevan University Health Board (ABUHB)
- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)

Questions and discussion:

Darren Millar (DM)

- 1) Better scrutiny is needed – Would an Armed Forces Commissioner address this?
 - a. Two parties now support the idea of an AF Commissioner and both are likely to feature it in their 2016 Manifestos.
 - b. November 2014 saw the Conservatives raise the idea in the Senedd.
 - c. Families are often forgotten when talking about the AF – one of the reasons why the Conservative campaign is for an AF Commissioner rather than just a Veterans Commissioner like in Scotland.
 - ❖ ACTION: Darren asked if those who supported the idea of an AF Commissioner could write to the WG expressing their feelings on the matter.

John: There are issues with operation and co-ordination which an AF Commissioner could help address in Wales. The Scottish Veteran's Commissioner is doing well and has a good understanding of veterans and their needs. There is a need to sustain this momentum. I am speaking to the Scottish Commissioner on 28 May. I think WG would do well to examine how this is working in Scotland. The relatively modest cost would probably be outweighed by the operational benefits accruing.

Mike Simpson: What would the budget and remit of an AF Commissioner for Wales be?

- DM: Similar in terms of cost to the Scottish Veterans Commissioner. There does need to be a discussion on the possible remit of such a post. Their ultimate job would be to hold all public services to account.

Lance Paterson: The AF Covenant Grant scheme is being discussed but has stalled pre-election.

- ❖ ACTION: Lance Paterson will ask for an update on this and what the funding surrounding it is.

Phil Jones: The Royal British Legion have a meeting with the Scottish Veterans Commissioner on 16/17 June which is a positive step and shows that WG seem to be taking an interest.

- ❖ ACTION: Phil Jones will report back to the CPG after the above meeting on any process being made.

Mark Isherwood: Local Authorities are key to ensure the full implementation of the AF Covenant. There is a need for there to be greater scrutiny on them.

- DM used this opportunity to raise some issues highlighted by Mark Isherwood's constituent.
 - Issues with housing in Denbighshire and Wrexham. Both are signed up to the AF Covenant but he had very different experiences.

- Mark has contacted the Minister who is looking into the matter.
- ❖ ACTION: DM to write to the chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee to see if they would be interested to look into the impact of the AF Covenant in Wales.

There was a discussion over how much funding Veterans NHS Wales needs in order to operate at its optimum capacity.

- The initial £100,000 was for 7 months
- The recent £100,00 is for 12 months
- DM: There is a £170,000 gap
- The waiting time target in civilian care is 26 weeks – Veterans are meant to be a priority.
- Neil: We are 83 hours a week short even when we had the extra £100,000 for 7 months. To maintain them it would cost £218,000. If we appointed 2.5 more staff that would require a further £125,000 = £343,000 – the uplift £100,000. Therefore we require £243,000 further funding to meet demand.
- ❖ ACTION: Write a letter to the Minister for Health and Social Services about the funding shortfall. Also point out the varying waiting times across the Health Boards. Some health boards need the funding desperately.

Mark Isherwood asked if Veterans' NHS Wales had managed to find premises without issue.

- Neil said that there was problems at BCUHB.
- ❖ ACTION: Write to BCUHB

No AOB

Meeting closed 1325