

# Cross Party Group on Armed Forces and Cadets

## Meeting Minutes

Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018

Location: Pierhead Building Seminar Rooms

In attendance:

Name	Title
Darren Millar AM	Assembly Member for Clwyd West
Lisa Rawlings	Gwent AFCLO
Brigadier Jock Fraser	Naval Regional Commander
Jeff Madison	AFCLO
Heather Ferguson	Project 360`
David Price	Welsh Veterans Paternship
Mohammad Asghar AM	Assembly Member for South Wales East
Caroline Jones AM	Assembly Member for South Wales West
Ty Harrison	The Royal British Legion
Rhianon Passmore AM	Assembly Member for Islwyn
Nick Beard	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association Wales
Suzy Davies AM	Assembly Member for South Wales West
Mark Isherwood AM	Assembly Member for North Wales
Mandy Jones AM	Assembly Member for North Wales
Peter Evans	Welsh Government
Colonel Lance Patterson	160th Infantry Brigade and HQ Wales
Anthony Metcalf	Royal British Legion
Colonel Nick Lock	160th Infantry Brigade and HQ Wales

Apologies:

Name	Title
Stephen Hughes	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association Wales
Michael Bailey	Veterans Welfare Service
Neil Kitchiner	Veterans NHS Wales
Councillor Liz Roberts	Conwy County Council
Llyr Gruffydd AM	Assembly Member for North Wales
Janette Williams	Wrexham County Council
Sarah Stafford	Right Management (Ministry of

	Defence)
Stephen Townley	Wrexham County Council
Lt Col John Skipper	Retired Lieutenant
Sebastian Hargreaves	SSAFA

Summary of Meeting: Cross Party Group for Armed Forces and Cadets -  
3/10/2018 – Pierhead Building

1. Introductions

2. Updates from previous meeting.

- Darren Millar AM updated the group on the Armed Forces Reservists day discussed in the last meeting. The Welsh Government have agreed to hold a reservists day event during ‘Reservists Week’ 2019. Nick Beard from the RFCA updated the group on planning. Nick Beard also encouraged the group to invite potential employers and employees to the event.
- Barnardo’s had responded to the group to confirm that all cases it had been dealing with concerning its discontinued Veterans Support Service had been passed on to other agencies. They also provided a copy of their evaluation report which was circulated to the group.
- Housing Minister Rebecca Evans AM responded to the group’s letter regarding housing for veterans in Torfaen. The minister confirmed that she had been in touch with Torfaen council to discuss their approach to helping veterans find housing. The Minister also encouraged Armed Forces Covenant liaison officers to liaise with the Welsh Local Government Association. A copy of the letter was circulated among the group.

3. Presentation from Sir Deian Hopkin on Cymru’n Cofio

- The group received a presentation from Sir Deian Hopkin on the Cymru’n Cofio ‘Wales Remembers’ programme.

- Darren Millar AM thanked Deian Hopkin for providing an update on Cymru'n Cofio. Deian thanked the group and recalled that he had given a similar presentation some years ago.
- It was confirmed that the Cymru'n Cofio project had been extended to 2020.
- Since the project started, it has brought communities and organisations together with help from the national lottery fund.
- Despite concerns that interest would wain over time, the public's enthusiasm for the project has continued to grow. Throughout the UK the 14-18 remembrance program had been experienced by 30 million people and 7.5 million young.
- The project will continue to have a legacy beyond the centenary. Projects including the cataloguing of accessible digitised documents and remastered footage of the war being produced by Peter Jackson would be available for years to come.
- Sir Deian Hopkin suggested that work must be done to ensure that Wales Remembers does not become Wales forgets and we must respect sacrifice and the shadow it cast. Sir Deian Hopkin also suggested that the country should continue to reflect on the meaning of the war without resorting to the historical debate of blame.
- Rhianon Passmore AM asked if there were plans to expand the digital services and sources relating to the First World War beyond 2018. Sir Deian Hopkin answered that the project has been extended to 2020 to discuss remembrance following the end of the centenary and noted that digital documents in Wales were generally free in Wales which is not always the case in England. Darren Millar AM suggested the group write to the Minister for Culture, Tourism and Sport, Dafydd Elis Thomas AM to ask what support would be available for the digital archive going forward.

- Mohammad Asghar AM asked how best to ensure that children are taught to remember in the future. Sir Deian Hopkin suggested that projects like the Peter Jackson film would help do this. Darren Millar AM suggested the group write to Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams AM to ensure that remembrance features in the new curriculum currently under development.

#### 4. Update on Help for Heroes by Shelly Elgin

- Shelly Elgin informed the group that Help for Heroes has opened a permanent base in Wales now in Treforest.
- Help for Heroes has been active for 18 months in Wales. Help for Heroes offers sports recovery, welfare support, fellowship, career support and grant support.
- The Help for Heroes Wales team had two referrals in their first month and are now processing twenty referrals a month.
- The group watched a video produced by Help for Heroes showing veterans speaking about the help, Help for Heroes had offered them in their own words.
- Darren Millar AM asked if Help for Heroes Wales partnership programs were mainly focused in South Wales. Shelly Elgin confirmed that Help for Heroes did have one key worker in North Wales and are looking to expand further into the area in future.
- Mandy Jones AM noted that after attending Step Change in Colwyn Bay, she could not find figures for homeless veterans from the Welsh Government or any other source. Shelly Elgin confirmed that Help for Heroes are looking at this. David Price from the Welsh Veterans Partnership said that four outreach workers working across Wales were reaching out to homeless veterans. David Price said he would circulate a report on the issue being written by Phil Hubbard for the group when available.

- Caroline Jones AM asked what organisations were doing to prevent veterans from falling into crime, noting that there was a wing at HMP Parc for veterans.
- Lisa Rawlings said that in her role she had been liaising with Gwent Police on a diversion programme to prevent veterans from becoming criminalised. Gwent Police have a similar programme for women. Another member of the group mentioned South Wales Police have a similar project.
- A member of the group mentioned the SToMP (Support Transition of Military Personnel) project which supports Veterans in the prison service.
- Darren Millar AM suggested inviting HMP Parc representatives, SToMP and others to discuss veterans and criminal justice at the groups next meeting. Mark Isherwood AM suggested that Mark Polin be invited as he has a background in policing and health. This was agreed.
- The group agreed that contact details for Help for Heroes should be circulated among the group so individuals can be referred.
- Shelly Elgin also shared that a team from the UK were competing in the Invictus Games. The group agreed to write to the First Minister to suggest inviting the team to the Senedd following the games.

#### 5. Update on the All Wales Project for Service Children in Education from Lisa Rawlings.

- Lisa Rawlings began with a presentation from SSCE (Supporting Service Children in Education Wales). SSCE mission is to provide educational support for service children in Wales. The main challenge is identifying service children and raising awareness across schools.
- The definition of a service child is any child of a serving member of the armed forces or reservists or a child whose parents have served in the last six years.

- Service Children are more vulnerable as they often move between schools, experience gaps in their education due to moving between different systems and the emotional impact of parents being deployed. Many service children are moved more often than traveller children.
- A study from 2015 showed that 1,500 service children were living across Wales in all 22 local authorities.
- SSCE held a conference in June which was attended by many speakers including Alun Davies AM and representatives from schools and charities.
- SSCE attended Armed Forces day in Llandudno where they met Alun Cairns and used the event to showcase their work across Wales.
- Supporting Service Children in Wales fund was initially allocated £200k. SSCE received 41 applications requesting £600k, following this £50k additional funding was granted by the Welsh Government. The list of successful bids can be found on the SSCE website.
- The MOD education support fund was increased by £3m for 18/19 and £2m for 19/20.
- The Welsh Government are considering adding a question about service children on the Pupil Level Annual School Census.
- Lisa Rawlings asked AM's to encourage schools in their area to apply for service children grants.
- Jock Fraser said he would liaise with the transition service in the Navy to make them aware of the six year rule concerning service children.
- Suzy Davies AM asked if there was specific mental health support for service children. There is no longer specific

support now Barnardo's had its funding cut. Service children now go onto an eight month long waiting list with CHAMS.

## 6. Royal British Legion – Loneliness and Social Isolation in the Armed Forces Community

- Antony Metcalfe gave the group a presentation on loneliness and social isolation.
- The Royal British Legion surveyed on social isolation among veterans. 4% of respondents were from Wales. The research aimed to explore experiences of loneliness and social isolation, specific triggers for veterans and barriers face when seeking support.
- 1 in 4 respondents reported feeling lonely and isolated always or often.
- Triggers for these feelings are varied, and many are shared among the general population, including divorce, poor health and ageing. However, there are different triggers for veterans including, increased volumes of transitions, armed forces culture, long periods of army separation and final exit from service.
- Support for loneliness and social isolation is complex – there is no one size fits all approach. There are concerns that there is insufficient data on loneliness and isolation among current serving personnel.
- The RBL has had an initial conversation with the Welsh Government and MOD which have been positive.
- Darren Millar AM agreed to table a written question to the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, Alun Davies AM on the Royal British Legion report.

## 7. Any other business.

- Lisa Rawlings informed the group that Armed Forces Liason Officers had 12 months left in the post and were preparing to exit post and encouraged members to contact her in the next 12 months. Darren Millar AM expressed concerns that the scheme was ending.
- Darren Millar AM informed the group that there would be a debate on Remembrance Sunday in the Senedd if the Conservative Party is allocated debating time.
- The group welcomed Colonel Nick Locke to his new position and thanked Colonel Lance Patterson for attending his final meeting of the group.
- The group noted that Gavin Williamson has announced that a Cyber Cadet scheme will be set up to develop the next generation of security experts.

**Darren Millar closed the meeting**