

Cross Party Group on Armed Forces and Cadets

Meeting Minutes

Date: 17th July 2019

Location: Media Briefing Room

In attendance:

Name	Title
Darren Millar AM	Assembly Member for Clwyd West
Commander Steve Henaghan	Naval Regional Command Wales & Western England
Colonel Nick Beard	RFCAs Wales
Wing Commander P Sagar	614 Squadron Cardiff
Major Craig Middle	160 th Infantry Brigade & HQ Wales
Peter Evans	Welsh Government
Heather Ferguson	Age Cymru
Rachel MacManus	Help for Heroes
Jeff Maddison	Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council
Alun Davies AM	Assembly Member for Blaenau Gwent
Lisa Rawlings	Armed Forces Liason Officer for Gwent
Millie Taylor	WLGA
Sarah Court	WLGA
John Williams	The Royal British Legion
David Rowlands AM	Assembly Member for South Wales East
Tyler Walsh	Welsh Conservative AMSS
Mike Bailey	Veterans Welfare Service (MOD)
Ryland Royle	Office of Mike Hedges AM
Alan Vernon-Jones	Torfaen County Borough Council
Bethan Sayed AM	Assembly Member for South Wales West
Rob Nichols	Care After Combat
Mohammad Asghar AM	Assembly Member for South Wales East
Mark Isherwood AM	Assembly Member for North Wales
Rhiannon Passmore AM	Assembly Member for Islwyn
Emlyn Pratt	Office of Rhiannon Passmore AM
Lisa Thipthorp	Tri-Service Working Group for Forces Families Jobs

Andrew Mansfield	Defence Transition Service
Sandra Price	Defence Transition Service
Emma Grant	Wave Radio
Kate McCulloch	Defence Transition Service
Lisa Rawlings	Armed Forces Liason Officer (Gwent)

Apologies:

Name	Title
Janette Williams	Wrexham County Borough Council
Llyr Gruffydd AM	Assembly Member for North Wales
Dai Lloyd AM	Assembly Member for South Wales West
Shelly Elgin	Help for Heroes
Helen Mary Jones AM	Assembly Member for Mid and West Wales
Geraint Jones	CAIS
Stephen Townley	Armed Forces Liaison Officer (Wrexham)
Lisa Leece	The St John & Red Cross Defence Medical Welfare Service
Neil Kitchiner	Veterans NHS Wales
Professor David Rose	University of East Anglia
Air Commadore Dai Williams	Royal Air Force

Summary of Meeting: Cross Party Group for Armed Forces and Cadets -
17/07/2019 - Media Briefing Room

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Updates from last meeting -

- The First Minister did not commit to extending the Cymru'n Cofio campaign but made a commitment to ensure the legacy of the program by maintaining the website beyond 2020.
- Veteran ID Cards had been rolled out to service leavers and plans are in place to enable veterans to apply for their ID Cards by the end of 2019.

- The First Minister committed to look into the guaranteed interview scheme after receiving a letter from the group. An update is expected from the Welsh Government in due course.
- A Reservists Week Event was held in the Senedd on the 24th of June which was arranged by the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association Wales and sponsored by Darren Millar AM and the Welsh Government. The Chair thanked Col Nick Beard and his team for their support.

3. Update from Age Cymru on Project 360.

- The group received a presentation from Heather Ferguson on Age Cymru's Project 360.
- Heather highlighted research that had recently been carried out and shared some of the findings with the group.
- A report with the findings in full will be published shortly. **It was agreed that this should be distributed among the group.**
- Heather highlighted work Age Cymru had been doing around pension awareness to support veterans claiming their war pensions and armed forces pensions. **It was agreed that information on the pensions awareness project should be circulated to Assembly Members to make them aware of this campaign.**
- An update was provided the Armed Forces Community training package which was developed by the Project 360 team and is provided to all Age Cymru staff to train them how to effectively communicate with veterans.
- An update was provided on the grant program which allocated funding to partner organisations to provide support for veterans.
- The Project 360 Conference will be taking place on the 24th October 2019 at Cardiff City Stadium. **Details of the Project 360 conference will be circulated to the group.**
- Darren Millar AM thanked Heather Ferguson for updating the group. Heather thanked the group.

- Darren Millar AM asked if the Armed Forces Community training package could be rolled out to public services. Heather said that resources were not available to train staff outside of the organisation. Darren Millar AM suggested writing to the Welsh Government asking for a similar programme to be rolled out to public services in Wales. Lisa Rawlings confirmed that Armed Forces Liaison Officers were undertaking a training role in their respective local authorities.

4. Presentation from the Tri-Service Working Group on Forces Families Jobs.

- The group received a presentation from Lisa Thipthorp on the work being carried out by the Tri-Service Working Group on Forces Families Jobs .
- The project was born out of research commissioned by the Army Families Federation which made key recommendations around difficulties with retention within the Armed Forces .
- A key recommendation of that report was that an online jobs platform for spouses would improve retention rates in the Armed Forces.
- Lisa showed the group the career website which had been developed and launched for military spouses.
- The website was launched on the 15th July and functions as a one stop shop for career development for military spouses. The website is free for employers to use.
- A launch event in Wales for the service has been planned for September 2019.
- Darren Millar AM thanked Lisa for presenting to the group. Lisa thanked the group.
- Darren Millar AM asked if there had been work to widen guaranteed interview schemes to include spouses of serving military personnel. Lisa said that she would look into this. Lisa Rawlings (Armed Forces Liaison Officer for Gwent) said that four of the five councils she covers already does this. **The Group agreed to write to other**

Welsh local authorities to promote guaranteed interview schemes for veterans and spouses.

5. Presentation from the Defence Transition Service.

- The group received a presentation from Kate McCulloch on the work being carried out by the Defence Transition Service.
- Kate outlined the general aim of the service which forms a part of a defence holistic transition policy.
- The Defence Transition Service will be live and begin supporting service leavers and their families by September 2019. The service will
- There are two regional managers for Wales, Andy Mansfield and Stewart Horton who deal with South Wales and the Midlands, and North Wales and North England respectively. None are based in Wales.
- Kate thanked Peter Evans from the Welsh Government for providing support for their new service.
- Kate outlined how the service will improve the transition for service leavers.
- The service will be collaborating with other services to improve transition.
- The service will include a self-referral and family referral mechanisms to allow family members of the service leaver to refer themselves to the service.
- Darren Millar AM thanked Kate for presenting to the group. Kate thanked the group.
- Rhiannon Passmore AM asked if any consideration has been given to demand outstripping the services capability and if the service would be fit for purpose if demand grew. Kate answered that she believed the service is fit for purpose.

5. AOB

- Darren Millar AM thanked everyone for attending.
- Mohammad Asghar distributed flyers for a career fair he is sponsoring in Newport.
- Peter Evans from the Welsh Government told the group that an update on the mapping exercise carried out by the Welsh Government would be delivered in September. **It was agreed that a future meeting of the group be centred around that mapping exercise.**

Action Points

1. Circulate information on the Project 360 pensions awareness campaign to Assembly Members.
2. Project 360 report to be circulated once published released.
3. Invitation to be circulated for the Project 360 Conference.
4. Write to all Welsh local authority leaders and Chief Executives to encourage them to adopt guaranteed interview schemes for veterans and military spouses.
5. Include feedback on the Welsh Government's mapping exercise at a future meeting.