

# EXPERT GROUP ON THE NEEDS OF THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY IN WALES

## MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 3 JUNE 2015

### Members

Leighton Andrews AM	Minister for Public Services
Col Lance Patterson	160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales
Air Commodore Adrian Williams	Royal Air Force
Phil Jones	Royal British Legion (RBL)
Peter Evans	Royal British Legion (RBL)
Chris Downward	Soldiers Sailors Airmen Families Association (SSAFA)
Col Nick Beard	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA)
Mike Bailey	Veterans Welfare Service (SPVA)
James Franklin	Ministry Of Defence Covenant Team
Annabel Ingram	Army Family Federation
Peter Higson	Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
Ian Barrow	NOMS
Dawn North	HIVE
Huw Thomas	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Cllr Brendan Toomey	Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA)
Mike Hardy	Welsh Government – Offender Health Policy
Dr June Milligan	Welsh Government – Local Government and Communities
Sioned Rees	Welsh Government – Local Government and Partnerships
Janet Jones	Welsh Government – Local Government and Partnerships
Cerys Gage	Welsh Government – Local Government and Partnerships

### Invited Attendees

Major Craig Middle	160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales
Tony Kirk	National Probation Service Wales
Hilary Ryan	First Choice Housing
Richard Lloyd	First Choice Housing

### Apologies

Jane Williams	Naval Families Federation
Sarah Payne	NOMS
Bill Mahon	Royal Air Force Family Federation
Dr Sarah Watkins	Welsh Government – Health and Social Services
Leeanne Plechowicz	National Probation Service Wales
Lt Col S Hughes	Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA)
Brigadier Martyn Gamble	160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales

## ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- 1.1 The Minister welcomed members to his second Expert Group meeting and also welcomed new members to their first meeting. The Minister noted that apologies had been received from Jane Williams, Lt Col Stephen Hughes, Brigadier Martyn Gamble and Bill Mahon.

## **ITEM 2 - MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING 3 DECEMBER 2014**

- 2.1 The Minister invited members to agree the minutes for accuracy, noting that the minutes had been agreed to reflect comments received. The minutes were agreed as a true record.

## **ITEM 3 – PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

- 3.1 The Minister noted that all of the actions had been completed. Jan Jones explained that 3 providers had been chosen to enable the creation of an Armed Forces Credit Union. All three providers are payroll enabled. A soft launch will take place on the 27 July. Further information will be circulated as it emerges.

## **ITEM 4 – PROGRESS ON TRACKING THE PATHWAYS OF EX-ARMED FORCES OFFENDERS IN WALES**

- 4.1 June Milligan provided a verbal update on progress made since the last meeting and explained that a working group had been established to progress the issues raised at December's meeting. The DWP data collection had been interrogated with all avenues explored, whilst discussions are underway with the Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) to ensure that the right re-settlement arrangements are in place. Further work will also take place to build on the current work with the data from the Basic Custody Screening Tool. June explained there are opportunities to work with NOMS and CRC to ensure ex-service offenders were linked up with available local specialist services on release. It was noted that discussions had taken place with Jeff Farrar's Effective Services for Vulnerable Groups (ESVG) programme to help divert the risk of re-offending.
- 4.2 Ian Barrow explained that the report provided detailed findings; notably that ex-Service Personnel are 30% less likely to be in prison than the general population and also that ex-Service Personnel make up 3.5-5% of the general prison population at any one time. The most common reasons for their custodial sentences were as a result of violence (33%) and sexual offences (25%). Ian advised that ex-Service Personnel would be less likely to know who to contact for help on release.
- 4.3 A draft delivery plan has been developed which includes the following strategic objectives:
- Veteran Prison Pathway
  - Identifying what works in reducing re-offending by Veterans
  - A whole system approach.

The plan strongly focuses on the importance of working collaboratively and recognises the importance of partner support.

- 4.4 Expert Group members were asked to endorse the recommendation for a whole system approach and Ian advised that a similar pilot concerning high risk offenders was already in place. Consideration will need to be given to whether or not we are accessing services correctly and also to carrying out a risk needs assessment, which is key to the whole system approach. Members were also asked to agree that funding sources for a Veterans Pathfinder Co-ordinator be explored. If content a meeting would be held before the end of June 2015 to discuss this. Ian highlighted the importance of linking in with the ESGV programme and confirmed that a meeting between NOMS in Wales and Jeff Farrar has been arranged for 17 June 2015 to discuss ESGV programme involvement. An opportunity exists in exploring involvement with Forces in Mind's Probation Institute project and if agreed this would be taken forward. Finally, Ian emphasised the importance of involving the Violence Against Women and Domestic Abuse team in the project.
- 4.5 James Franklin commended the report for being clear and easy to read. James advised that whilst the covenant funding process had changed funding is still available; £2m has also been allocated to the community covenant.
- 4.6 Lance Patterson applauded the finding that ex-Service Personnel are 30% less likely to enter the judicial system than the general population.
- 4.7 The Minister said that despite it being stereotypical that ex-Service Personnel are more likely to be offenders, this isn't always the case.
- 4.8 Phil Jones noted the need for a clear internal communications process with information easily accessible.
- 4.9 June thanked all those who had been involved in the project emphasising that it was a shared endeavour.

#### **Actions:**

- **The Expert Group endorsed the recommendations. A progress report on the project would be tabled at the next meeting.**

#### **ITEM 5 – UPDATE FROM THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION**

- 5.1 Phil explained that the RBL's new delivery model had been in place for 18 months. So far it has been an effective means of connecting with members of the public with the Wrexham and Cardiff 'pop ins' proving to be the most popular. 11 outreach centres are currently in place; with discussions ongoing for additional expansion in Denbighshire and Flintshire. £15m was provided to set up the outreach locations, and this has led to an increase in footfall and enquiries. In excess of 200 enquiries are received each month with the RBL working closely with SSAFA and Change Step to resolve these.
- 5.2 The RBL are keen to increase the number of grants provided to the Third Sector. A minimum of £500k is available in RBL grant funding which is lower than the rest of the UK.

- 5.3 Awareness training on the needs of the Armed Forces community and the services provided by the RBL has yet to be provided to Caerphilly, Newport, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Powys. Discussions were underway with Caerphilly, Newport and Powys, however arrangements for the delivery of training in Pembrokeshire and Swansea were proving to be more of a challenge. Cllr Toomey agreed to write to the named Local Authorities to encourage take up of the training.
- 5.4 Huw Thomas said that more could be done to raise awareness of the benefits system in Wales amongst RBL staff and agreed to work with Phil to deliver this.
- 5.5 Phil advised the members that approximately 1,000 letters had been generated following the launch of RBL's Insult to Injury campaign.
- 5.6 Peter Evans advised that the consultation on the implementation of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 is underway and provides an opportunity to comment on the draft regulations and code of practice. Peter also reminded the members that the Festival of Remembrance will take place on the 31 October 2015.

**Actions:**

- **Cllr Toomey to write to Caerphilly, Newport, Swansea, Pembrokeshire and Powys to encourage take up of the RBL training.**
- **DWP and RBL to work together to deliver awareness training of the benefits system to RBL staff.**

**ITEM 6 – FIRST CHOICE HOUSING**

- 6.1 Hilary Ryan provided a presentation on the provision of accommodation for vulnerable ex-Service Personnel. Hilary explained that strong partnership working had been key in preparing the bids for the Ministry of Defence. Whilst £2.3m was awarded to deliver 56 bed spaces of accommodation the bid for revenue funding was refused.
- 6.2 Richard Lloyd provided more information on the accommodation that had been established. Ex-Service Personnel are initially placed in high support accommodation, before being moved to a low support house to secure employment and integrate into the community. 10 bed spaces are available in South Wales with 8 shortly to be available in Swansea. 3 clusters of accommodation providing 14 bed spaces will be available in each of Ceredigion, Flintshire and Wrexham. Working in partnership with Wrexham a 14-16 flat complex is underway.
- 6.3 Hilary spoke about Ty Dewr, a mix of 12 high and low level support bed spaces that is due for completion in November 2015. It is hoped that the caretaker will be a Veteran. In the grounds there will be a Trim Track which has been funded by Community Covenant funding. First Choice have linked in with RBL to promote the project.
- 6.4 Richard continued to discuss outcomes, explaining that the 'Star Outcomes' model had been used to direct and monitor progress. Richard provided an example of a case study whereby a Veteran has turned his life around from being injured and suffering from Post

Traumatic Stress Disorder to participating in the Phoenix Winter Games to gaining employment as a data analyst.

6.5 Phil applauded the model and its success.

## **ITEM 7 – DEFENCE PRIVILEGE CARD – UPDATE ON PROGRESS**

7.1 An information paper was provided to update the members on the progress made with the Defence Privilege Card campaign. Members noted the excellent progress that had been made since the launch of the campaign.

## **ITEM 8 – UPDATE FROM THE ARMED FORCES IN WALES**

8.1 Colonel Lance Patterson provided an update on behalf of the Armed Forces. Lance explained that 160 Infantry Brigade now had 3 outputs: homeland resilience, contingency operations overseas and defence engagement and up-stream capacity building. The Brigade have responsibility for Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus. To achieve Army 2020 structures the Army had to increase the size of the Reserves to 30,000 by 2017. By 2019 the new Reserves would need to be fully trained as individuals. A recruitment campaign is in place to increase numbers. The Civil Service and Welsh Government had a target of 1% of the workforce to become Reservists.

8.2 An Armed Forces Employability Pathway is being developed to provide those interested in joining the Armed Forces with an insight into the Army. Candidates will attend a one week introduction to military life and outward bound activities followed by a training phase (including accreditation) and work placement with a suitable sector e.g. construction or transport.

8.3 Lance advised that that the next Transition Fair would take place on the 26 June. 75 stands have been booked. 160 Infantry Brigade are scoping a broader Transition/Jobs Fair to include AF Champions meetings and will advise WG once a decision has been made on feasibility.

8.4 In terms of wider engagement, future events include the Queen's Birthday Gun Salute and Reception, 13 June and Cambrian Patrol, 16-25 October.

8.5 Major Craig Middle presented the National Framework for Wales. Craig advised the members that the proposed Framework had been revised following discussions at the last Champions Event, November 2014. Craig explained that despite all 22 Local Authorities having signed the Community Covenant a more structured approach was needed. It was recognised that a mixed reaction to the Framework had been received and that this would be a learning curve for Local Authorities. The Framework would formalise current covenant partnerships focusing more on strategic engagement between the Minister's Expert Group, Champions Events, regional covenant partnerships and clinicians meetings. The Framework would include a delivery plan for each region enabling national issues to be flagged up to the Expert Group.

- 8.6 Craig also spoke about an information leaflet that had been developed by 160 Infantry Brigade which identified where members of the Armed Forces and ex-Serving Personnel could go to if they needed support, for example housing or education.
- 8.7 The Minister noted that Fire and Rescue Authorities would need to be included in the regional covenant partnerships.
- 8.8 Members endorsed the Framework. Phil said that the Framework would help provide feedback on the progress of the Package of Support policy commitments. Annabel Ingram welcomed the Framework as a useful document for families moving into Wales. In agreement with James' comment on the importance of defining our priorities and having a clear understanding of the support that could be provided and included in the Package of Support the Minister said that he would discuss this further with colleagues.
- 8.9 Chris Downward advised that education is one of the areas whereby Service Personnel require additional support; especially for those who re-locate to a predominantly Welsh language speaking region. Support is also required to help understand the difference in the provision of dental support and cross border prescription charging differences.
- 8.10 The Minister emphasised that pre-settlement support is in place for all Service Personnel. Whilst there are cross border issues these will depend upon where the Service Personnel are based. The Minister advised that Health colleagues would take this forward.
- 8.11 Colonel Nick Beard noted also the disadvantages that would be faced when re-locating from Germany, which has many benefits over Wales and the UK.
- 8.12 Lance informed the group that an influx of Service Personnel wasn't expected following withdrawal from Germany and that the Army's footprint in Wales did not alter.
- 8.13 Annabel acknowledged the issues that arose with re-settlement and highlighted the fact that they weren't always Covenant related and could often be solved relatively easily.

**Action:**

- **Welsh Government Health colleagues to consider the support provided regarding dental support and prescription services and identify if it needed to be strengthened to reflect cross-border differences.**

**ITEM 9 – UPDATE FROM THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE**

- 9.1 James Franklin provided an update from the MoD and emphasised the commitment of the new government to the Covenant. Work will be taken forward to raise awareness of the Covenant and its branding. James said that it would be useful to make use of the data available from the Defence Privilege Card to understand more about the Armed Forces Community. The Minister asked whether it would be possible to share the data

from the Defence Privilege Card and interrogate the statistics further to identify the locations of ex-Service Personnel in Wales. June agreed to take this forward.

- 9.2 James confirmed that Big Lottery had been appointed to administer the new £10m grant for 2015/16 and that funding priorities would be set annually by the Covenant Reference Group. A standalone MoD grant team would be in place by mid June to take forward the new fund with new bids being accepted later in the summer. A workshop to discuss the fundamental principles of the new scheme would be held on the 18 June. A Welsh Government representative will attend.
- 9.3 Peter questioned whether regional bids would still be in place and James confirmed that further work was ongoing to explore regional bids.
- 9.4 The MoD are continuing to work with stakeholders such as Local Authorities to deliver the Community Covenant locally. They are also working with Families Federations to create an information toolkit and deliver induction days and training guidance for Armed Forces Covenant Champions.
- 9.5 Replies received in response to a letter from the previous Minister for Defence Personnel Welfare and Veterans regarding delivery of the Covenant have been collated. James advised that this would be shared with other partners to provide a bigger picture of the Covenant take up around the UK.

**Action:**

- **June Milligan to take forward work to interrogate the Defence Privilege Card statistics to identify the locations of ex-Service Personnel in Wales.**

**ITEM 10 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS – ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS EVENT**

- 10.1 Cerys Gage provided a verbal update on the event. The Champions Event had taken place in Wrexham on the 14 May with around 80 delegates attending. Presentations were varied and included an overview by RBL of the training undertaken with Local Authorities and Legion outreach locations that have been set up in partnership with Local Authorities, an update of the Centenary Fields project by Fields in Trust and an outline of the work of Forces in Mind Trust. Presentations from Caerphilly, Wrexham and Monmouthshire Local Authorities provided an excellent example of Community Covenant best practice.
- 10.2 Feedback from the event has so far been positive with delegates welcoming the opportunity of networking to discuss covenant progress. Many attendees also noted that the Champions Event was the best yet.
- 10.3 The Minister said that the presentations were encouraging and welcomed the success of the event.

**ITEM 11 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS – ARMED FORCES DAYS**

11.1 The Minister noted that 2 Armed Forces Days were being held, North Wales on the 20 June followed by South Wales on the 27 June.

11.2 The next 160 Infantry Brigade and HQ in Wales Transition Fair will take place on the 26 June in Cardiff City Stadium.

## **ITEM 12 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS – NAVAL INFORMATION**

12.1 Jan Jones informed the members that Jane Williams from the Naval Families Federation (NFF) had asked for some information to be cascaded to the group in her absence. Information had been provided that detailed the breakdown of naval personnel residing in Wales. The information would be circulated to the members outside of the meeting. Jan asked that members refrain from publishing the information to the internet.

### **Action:**

- **Secretariat to circulate the NFF information to all members.**



