

**Aneurin Bevan University Health Board
Armed Forces Forum**

**Draft Notes of the Meeting of the Armed Forces Forum
on Wednesday 16th July 2014 at 10.30am
held in the Executive Room, Blaenau Gwent County Borough
Council, Civic Centre, Ebbw Vale, NP23 6XB**

Present:

Keith Sutcliff gwent@ssafa.org.uk – Chair
Brian Mawby brian.mawby@torfaen.gov.uk , ABUHB Champion
(Independent Member)
Peter Cathcart petercathcart@hotmail.com representing ABUHB
Community Health Council
Alan Higgs HIGGSA@CAERPHILLY.GOV.UK Champion – Vice Chair
John Elliott Elliott@caerphilly.gov.uk Support officer
John Prosser JohnProsser@monmouthshire.gov.uk Champion
Will McClean WillMcLean@monmouthshire.gov.uk Support officer
Max Bergmanski Max.Bergmanski@wales.nhs.uk ABUHB Community
Veterans Service (VH&WS)
Capt Gareth Dibble 104RA-RHQ-ROSO@mod.uk 1034 Regiment Royal
Artillery (Volunteers)
Capt David Bell RMONREM-RHQ-ROSO@mod.uk
Steve Rees steve.rees@wales.probation.gsi.gov.uk
TyHarrison(RBL) tharrison@britishlegion.org.uk
Nick Jones 160X-MCI-SO3@mod.uk
Mike Harrison mike.harrison@remploy.co.uk
Angela Barr angelabarr@hmpps.gsi.gov.uk
Andrew Parker andrew.parker@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Huw Lewis huw.lewis@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk
Ron Palmer ron.palmer.gwent.ssafa.org.uk

Apologies:

Denise Llewellyn Denise.Llewellyn@wales.nhs.uk , Executive Lead Armed
Forces ABUHB
Fiona Trolley Fiona.trolley@blindveterans.org.uk
Clare Hughes CLARE.HUGHES1@DWP.GSI.GOV.UK Dept for Work and
Pensions
Kirsty Moore Kirsty.Moore@wales.probation.gsi.gov.uk
Vanessa.Bailey@wales.nhs.uk and Rob.Johnston@wales.nhs.uk ABUHB
Community Veterans Service (VH&WS)
Mike Bartlett Mike.Bartlett@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk Champion
Tara.Gardner@torfaen.gov.uk Support officer
Col. David Hammond Reserved Forces and Cadets Association wa-emp@wa.rfca.mod.uk
Howard Rees REESH4@CAERPHILLY.GOV.UK

Mark Spencer Mark.Spencer@newport.gov.uk Champion
Sarah Holden sarah.holden@newport.gov.uk Support Officer
Pete.Smith@remploy.co.uk

Michelle Williams SPVA

Nic Davies, David Bebb and Anthony Luke, Wales Probation Service

1. **Welcome** – Keith Sutcliffe (KS) welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.
2. **Notes of meeting held on 17th Sept 2013** – these were accepted as an accurate record with minor amendments as follows in the following sections: -
 3. **Terms of Reference** – Brian Mawby (BM) informed the group that the Terms of Reference were an organic item that is constantly evolving. It is available to the Board and would be taken to a full Board meeting to be agreed. Brian, in his role as Independent Member on the full Board, would take items to the Board if members felt this was a requirement at that time. Brian invited members to pass issues on to him to go the Board when and if required. **Action: BM** to take to Health Board for approval and to gain greater clarity.
 4. **Welsh Government Policies and Procedures** – Brian Mawby (BM) informed the group that if there were items that required posting onto ABUHB intranet he would take this forward and ensure that it went onto the appropriate page of the intranet in a timely fashion.
 5. **'Pathway for Growth'** Representatives of RBL had commented that they didn't agree with Keith Sutcliffe's comments made at the last Forum meeting. Keith stood by his remarks and expressed the hope that improvements would be made. He reassured the group that he in no way wanted to rubbish the British Legion.
 6. Huw Lewis reassured the Group that Homelessness of veterans in Blaenau Gwent was not the issue as described in the last meeting. Their policy does fit with the National Guidelines and is not a problem. Veterans at risk of becoming homeless are given high priority and all cases are dealt with on an individual case by case basis.

2.1Angela Barr gave an overview of how Veterans in Custody works at HMP Usk and Prescoed. All prisoners are asked on admission into the establishment if they have ever been in the Armed Forces. This information is volunteered and then a note is then made of their answer and logged onto the computer system.

They are then asked a second time by the Prison's Induction Orderlies (prisoners). Those that are ex-servicemen are given a ViCS Information Booklet and leaflet that gives them a lot of information about the help and support that is available to them by many external organisations e.g. SSAFA, RBL, COMBAT STRESS. They are also given the names of the ViCS staff that they can contact if they need any more information, or would like to sort out a visit from RBL etc.

Brian Mawby asked Angela if a visit would be possible. Should anyone require a visit the ViCS Officer will contact the organisation and arrange for someone to come to the prison to visit. This visit will not count as part of a prisoner's normal visits allowance as it is dealt with in the same way as a Legal Visit (from a Solicitor, or Probation).

Angela informed the group that prior to a prisoner being allowed a visit by an organisation they must first complete a form that asks for his Armed service number, Army Regiment / Navy Branch / RAF branch, D.O.B., Length of service, Date of discharge and reason for discharge, and Operational theatre e.g. N Ireland, Falklands, Gulf, Iraq, Afghanistan etc. This information is used to verify that the prisoner was actually a member of the Armed Forces.

The group asked Angela a number of questions, as follows: -

- 'What type of prison is Usk'? – 'it is a sex offender establishment',
- 'What category prisoners are there'? – 'at Usk they are Category C and at Prescoed they are Category D. Prescoed is an open prison and is 3 miles away from Usk, their offences range from robbery, burglary, theft etc'.
- 'Do many come from the local areas'? – 'yes most prisoners are local but we do have a few that are from England'.
- 'Do they have accommodation to go back to? – 'yes, nearly all Welsh prisoners are housed before their release. There are some exceptions, eg if a prisoner has been recalled and ends up being released at the end of his sentence, than he isn't under an Offender Manager (Probation Officer) so has to find himself accommodation (but these are far and few between and as yet I have not come across a veteran that has had nowhere to live on his release). We try and contact housing authorities and usually manage to get the prisoner an appointment but that doesn't

mean he will then get accommodation straight away, especially as some of these men are well known and have already burned their bridges with their local housing authorities.'

The Chairman of the group thanked Angela for her informative presentation and invited her to stay for the remainder of the meeting.

2.2 Review of Terms of Reference. Brian Mawby informed the group that the Terms of Reference could be reviewed on a regular basis and were not set in stone.

2.3 Review of Membership and purpose of the group. Brian Mawby asked the group if there were other people who should be included in the membership to inform him. Brian did state that there were exceptions to this and Keith stated that "Healing the Wounds" group would not be included in the membership of this group. In relation to the purpose of the group the suggestion was made that a regional group was the best course of action enabling us to look at issues more effectively. Brian commented that the group should be mindful that if the Labour Welsh Government implements its proposals to re-organise Local Government then there would be changes eg Caerphilly may no longer be part of the Gwent area However, it could be 3 or 4 years before we know so we may need to wait for that. Lesley Griffiths had confirmed that all 22 LAs have their own covenants, at a very local level. It was suggested we could not do away with local arrangements but to keep an eye on making changes through this group and ensure the purpose of the group is not just health but also the wider public services agenda.

Cllr John Prosser stated that it was important that all covenants are monitored and that we need to make sure that they are adding value in helping service personnel. How will the services offered be monitored? Brian stated that we needed to ensure that this is not just a talking shop. Cllr Alan Higgs stated in his view this was the best talking shop he was a member of, because it was doing good things. Cllr John Prosser and Andrew Parker reassured the Group that they were not criticising this forum but wanted to ensure that we work closely and make positive changes. Ty Harrison suggested that support groups should be set up in the form of a one stop shop in localities. On leaving the forces ex personnel want a basic place to meet up to have a "chat over a cuppa" and when in times of need they can find support from each other and find out where they can go to access services. For example, if a family was moving back from Germany this support group would be invaluable and Ty has set these groups up in Merthyr Tydfil, Caerphilly, Blaenau Gwent and the plan is to set them up in Torfaen and Newport Boroughs.

Mike Harrison representing Remploy informed the group that they were in a transitional period and all ex-personnel should be referred to Remploy if appropriate, stating what training is required. Mike stated that he was passionate about support groups and would ensure that all personnel would be supported

2.4 Reports from Local Authority Community Covenants :

Caerphilly – Cllr Alan Higgs (AH) reported on the successful show in Ystrad Mynach this year it was taken out on the road so that everyone could see what was going on. There was a very good atmosphere everyone enjoyed it around 400 turned out to support the event including ex veterans, shoppers etc.

The Maesycwmmmer Village Partnership has sponsored a small garden in the shape of a poppy and containing poppies. The garden is set to be dedicated on Sunday 10th August, the closest date of the centenary of the break out of World War 1. The Guard of honour will attend and the Cadets will participate in a parade.

Lewis Boys School – Friday 18th July 2014- A talk is to be given to the pupils by veterans about their postings in Iraq.

“Heroes Welcome Scheme” This scheme is an effective way in allowing business to show support and gratitude to the Armed Forces communities for all they do and have done for their country. Businesses can apply to give a welcome to their businesses by offering discounts on purchases from them. This organisation has been going since 2008 and an event took place at Cardiff City Stadium on 8th May 2014. Caerphilly is the first authority in Wales to become a member but hopefully other Authorities will follow their example. The website is as follows <http://www.caerphillyobserver.co.uk/news/939774>

- Ty Harrison, (RBL) informed the group that he had received a positive letter from Lesley Griffiths about their work.
- Ty also raised an issue with the group in relation to service personnel families with children of school age who need to attend local schools when moving into an area, especially within mid-term times. There is a fund available in England called The MOD Education Support Fund which was launched in 2011 to assist where children are given automatic right to attend local schools disregarding the admission numbers of the schools. BM referred to a particular case where a redundant serving officer couldn't get his child into the local school. He requested that ex service personnel should be given the same priorities, as existing personnel, for their first move following redundancy. **Action: BM** to take this issue up with WGA and Welsh Government.

Monmouth – Cllr John Prosser (JP) reported on raising the flag etc. Communication is right, various other things. John raised an issue with regards to memorials such as where they are situated, their condition and who is responsible for their maintenance. John asked was there a central register of the memorials and informed the group that grants were available for the maintenance of memorial monuments. Cadw's grant scheme is designed to help with projects for the repair and conservation of war memorials in Wales.

Cllr John Prosser informed the group that a Victoria Cross grant is available next year to local authorities. John informed the group that he had received a letter from the Minister thanking him for his good work.

- Blaenau Gwent – Huw Lewis was pleased to announce that Blaenau Gwent Heritage Forum was successful in securing a grant for £7000 to deliver the project "We Will Remember Them". The project will culminate with a showcase event that will bring the Armed Forces and wider community together in August 2014. Huw informed the group that Blaenau Gwent had received confirmation that their application for the VC Commemorative Paving Stone for Mr John Henry Williams VC was successful and they await delivery of the stone four weeks prior to the 100th anniversary of when the medal was awarded in 2017. Geraint Price, who served in Bosnia and Iraq gave a motivation talk at Blaenau Gwent's Equalities Forum.

Geraint was an excellent rugby player, representing the army at both rugby union and league; however he developed a condition which now severely limits his mobility and had to leave the Armed Forces.

Geraint spoke how difficult he found it having to leave the occupation he loved. Geraint now represents Wales in both wheelchair basketball and rugby. He has also been accepted on Prince Harry's Invictus training for injured and disabled soldiers.

Geraint is a fine example, where the Armed Forces community demonstrate the added value they can bring by engaging with the wider community and sharing their inspirational stories.

Huw Lewis informed the group that there was an Equality Forum set up in Blaenau Gwent. The policy does fit with the National Guidelines and this is not an issue. Huw stated that along with the support groups and the work that Blaenau Gwent was doing housing was not an issue. Huw reassured the group that homelessness was not an issue and every case was dealt with on an individual basis and priority was given to ex service personnel.

Blaenau Gwent CBC asked the group what help is provided to Ghurkhas. Keith Sutcliffe informed the group that there were over 300 in Cwmbran and that they get snowed under with requests. There is an event in August and the Ghurkhas have their own Forum. Torfaen was looking into funding for the high number of Ghurkhas in Cwmbran and to look at services to include translation services. Torfaen was not represented at this meeting. However, Tara Gardner, Support Officer for Torfaen Council would be picking up the Ghurkha issues.

Captain David Bell informed the group that there was an Armed Forces day in Cardiff. He informed the group that he would put an invitation out to members of the group for the next event.

- **Reports from other organisations:**

- a. Max Bergmanski spoke about the activity of the local Veteran NHS Wales – The All Wales Veterans Health & Wellbeing Service was re launched and re branded to Veterans NHS Wales by Mark Drakeford AM and Leslie Griffiths AM at an event at the Welsh Assembly on the 26 June 2014. In the launch Mr Drakeford announced extra funding for areas that have long waiting times for treatment. This funding will help provide more therapists to address waiting times. The Service in ABHUB currently does not have a waiting list for assessment or treatment. To date the service has received 45 referrals for Gwent and South Powys area. The majority sourced from Primary Care and self referral via the Veterans NHS Wales web site.

The Welsh Government is currently reviewing services via Public Health Wales which is being led by Phil Chick. The review will be completed and recommendations would be made in July 2014.

10 self referrals were made without the need for a GP appointment. A large amount of referrals were had been received from other services as follows: -

16 from Caerphilly; 9 from Monmouth; 5 from Torfaen; 1 from Powys

Patients referred to the service receive treatment 2-3 weeks following assessment. Referrals to the service mainly relate to PTSD, Bullying, Stress and Anxiety, depression with Substance misuse and adjustment to civilian life. Max stressed the importance of getting clients assessed to ensure that PTSD is clinically diagnosed.

b. Ron Palmer spoke from a SAFFA perspective about how they financially help a lot of people. The financial situation of SAFFA is comfortable but they are always looking for extra funding. Gurkkas require help with housing and brown goods. Spoke to Angela regarding an initial visit to Cardiff prison. He suggested Newport City Council will need to establish a relationship with Usk and Prescoed prisons. SWS issue with computer relating to clients in Gwent areas. Lots of problems with RBL refusing to receive manual forms and insisting everything goes on CLS System. Keith Sutcliffe is doing a lot more inputting in CLS System and they are getting to grips with it.

Mike Harrison from Remploy informed the group that the organisation is currently in a transitional period and funding levels for clients have been reduced. Remploy have launched I-REMPLOY to support people with disabilities in relation to preparing for interviews, discussing plans with advisors and developing CV's in an online environment, Access to this is through the Remploy website www.remploy.co.uk and is available 8.00-24.00 Monday - Friday and 8.00 - 16.00 Saturday and Sunday.

7. Next Meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting in Penallta House, Caerphilly on Wednesday 15th October 2014 at 10.30am.