



# Monmouthshire Armed Forces Forum Minutes

Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> May 2018 – County Hall, Usk, NP15 1GA

Present	Lisa Rawlings – CBCC, Joe Skidmore – MCC, Beth Watkins – MCC, Ian Bakewell – MCC, Sean Gane – The Warrior Programme, WO Stephen Perham – RAF, Sergeant Sarah Blackford – RAF, Antony Metcalfe – RBL, Jackie Steven – Veterans Gateway, Alison Griffiths – Help for heroes, Andy Jones – Stomp, Axel Rees – Hire a Hero, Kirsty Gronow – Poppy Factory, Keith Sutcliffe – SSAFA Gwent, Cllr Laura Jones – MCC
1. Welcome & Introductions	<p>Lisa introduced herself to the group and explained her role as Covenant Liaison Officer. The group went around the table and introduced themselves.</p> <p>Lisa explained how she hoped to help bridge connections between the network and the public, she then gave a brief an update on what the current focuses are, which include looking at service children in education.</p> <p>Lisa is also hoping for Wales to have more of a focus with its training (bilingual options etc.) as England has much more options/more of a focus.</p>
2. Apologies	Peter Evans – RBL, Chris Robinson – MCC, Tom Hall – Blesma
3. Minutes from the previous meeting and matters arising	As this is the very first of a newly formed Armed Forces Forum, there are no previous minutes to review.
4. Update – Cross Party Group Meeting	<p>The CPG meeting held during February included a discussion on the appointment of an Armed Forces Commissioner – of which Alun Davies was sceptical – office resources and engagement of colleagues. Alun also voiced concern over current justice policy and the need for strategic direction from the Welsh Government.</p> <p>Since the last CPG meeting, Welsh Government have decided not to go forward with an Armed Forces Commissioner instead they would prefer to utilise the money at a local level.</p> <p>The date of the next CPG meeting is scheduled for 23rd May 2018.</p>

<p>5. Update – Welsh Government Armed Forces Team</p>	<p>The Armed Forces training packages are complete and are currently being put onto branded USBs, the hope is to launch the pack by the end of the month. The website containing good practice/information films is ready and will be launched alongside the training pack.</p> <p>A bid is being written to create a toolkit for the local authority’s front line staff – no update on this to date.</p> <p>Commissioned the e-learning package which is designed to raise awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant and to provide training to local authority staff and elected members – Still waiting for the platform to which it will be based. Face to face training has begun.</p> <p>WLGA Network meeting – 4th July 2018 Armed Forces Conference – held in Cardiff, scheduled for 17th October 2018</p>
<p>6. Guest Speaker – Beth Watkins (Hidden Sentence)</p>	<p>Beth updated the group on the role she plays in providing Hidden Sentence training and the benefits for front-line services; this involves taking practitioners into the prison environment and subjecting them to the same security checks and trepidation that visiting families would be subjected to during each visit. The training focuses on what each family has to go through during visiting, how the separation impacts on the family and covering how support is provided to prisoners as they come up to release.</p> <p>Beth also explained what the Flying Start Programme is and how it is part of the Welsh Government’s early years programme for families with children under 4 years of age living in disadvantaged areas of Wales. Beth confessed that she’d never really considered the difficulties faced by Armed Forces families, but could see a strong link in the separation of families to those who are incarcerated.</p> <p>Monmouthshire has two prison facilities and there is a considerable number of incumbents who are ex-services.</p> <p>The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) agenda is one of high priority currently and it is recognised that those families who have a family member incarcerated will already have experienced multiple ACEs.</p> <p><b>ACTION: If any partner would like further information on the Hidden Sentence training, please contact Beth (<a href="mailto:BethWatkins@monmouthshire.gov.uk">BethWatkins@monmouthshire.gov.uk</a>)</b></p>
<p>7. Guest Speaker – Darren White (Action on Hearing Loss)</p>	<p><b>Darren was unable to make this meeting and this item will potentially be rescheduled.</b></p>
<p>8. Housing – Ian Bakewell</p>	<p>IB spoke about the current housing allocations policy and that there isn’t a specific focus on Armed Forces. From time to time they do get applications from Veterans.</p> <p>There are also some homeless applications from veterans, but this generally is a small proportion of the Monmouthshire demand. If such applicants are ex-offenders or are considered to be a risk (e.g. alcohol abuse), it increases the challenges of re-housing. A risk assessment process exists in relation to re-housing.</p>

	<p>Lisa brought up that the impression many people have, including housing associations, is that they don't think that many Veterans or serving military personnel live in the area. There is also the thinking that veterans don't know where to go when looking for housing. MCC is happy to work with forces support arrangements e.g. SAAFA.</p> <p>Due to a shortage of social housing, there is a push on privately rented houses but a lot of tenants do not want to help very often. MCC is actively promoting the private rented sector.</p> <p>Housing associations are seemingly more selective with regards to tenants, it was brought up that the general public thinks of service leavers as having PTSD or having complex needs. The safeguarding, suitability and affordability assessments will be relevant in this regards.</p> <p>There seems to be more of a focus on older veterans rather than younger individuals who have left service and they could be struggling just as much to re-adjust to society. It can be easier to accommodate older veterans due to the property profile of the social stock. Shared housing within the area for single people could be great for single leavers.</p>
<p>9. Group comments.</p>	<p>An opportunity for groups/organisations around the table to update partners on current activity, barriers/challenges or upcoming promotions/events.</p> <p>A question was posed to the group as to what would make these forums beneficial and meaningful for future attendance.</p> <p>Sean Gane – The Warrior programme (<a href="http://warriorprogramme.org.uk/">http://warriorprogramme.org.uk/</a>) The Warrior Programme runs an intensive personal development programme, with ongoing support for a minimum of 12 months, for Veterans, Veterans' families and families of Serving Personnel. Sean would like to signpost and promote the programme.</p> <p>WO Stephen Perham – RAF It's beneficial to have the knowledge of the most relevant and supportive services available currently for signposting purposes. The RAF has been trying to push for female engineers within the RAF and also to become more prominent within the forces. Stephen would like to have updates and connections to the right places for anyone who needs help.</p> <p>Sergeant Sarah Blackford – RAF Sarah was in agreement that it can be hard for families who are in the military to find the support as she herself had to seek support for herself.</p> <p>Antony Metcalfe – RBL (<a href="https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/">https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/</a>) The Royal British Legion provides lifelong support for the Armed Forces community - serving men and women, veterans, and their families. Antony would like to see more support services working together.</p> <p>Jackie Stevens – Veterans Gateway (<a href="https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/">https://www.veteransgateway.org.uk/</a>)</p>

	<p>Veterans Gateway put veterans and their families in touch with the organisations best placed to help with the information, advice and support they need – from healthcare and housing to employability, finances, personal relationships and more. Jackie is also seeing the trend of the decreasing age demographic.</p> <p>Allison Griffiths – Help for heroes (<a href="https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/">https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/</a>) Help for Heroes supports serving members of the Armed Forces, ex-Servicemen and women and their families through physical and emotional rehabilitation and recovery. Alison would like to establish a more localised base (potentially Abergavenny).</p> <p>Andy Jones – SToMP (Support Transition of Military Personnel) A project designed to help veterans as they go through the criminal justice system, who look to organise community days in prisons so that veterans can have family contact. Andy has been seeing the really good rate of non-reoffending once individuals are released from prison. Andy stated that these meetings are great opportunities for networking with others and sharing knowledge.</p> <p>Axel Rees – Hire a Hero (<a href="http://www.hireahero.org.uk/">http://www.hireahero.org.uk/</a>) A UK based charity who provides support to service leavers with employability and preparing them for meaningful employment (demilitarising CV's, interview skills etc.). Works in collaboration with the CTP. Support is provided, in some cases, many years after the individual has left the service.</p> <p>Kirsty Gronow – The Poppy Factory (<a href="https://www.poppyfactory.org/">https://www.poppyfactory.org/</a>) The Poppy Factory supports ex-Service men and women with health challenges into fulfilling careers.</p> <p>Keith Sutcliffe – SSAFA (<a href="https://www.ssafa.org.uk/">https://www.ssafa.org.uk/</a>) SSAFA have been receiving a number of requests recently assistance with paying funeral costs, electrical bills and general costs. Keith has also noted a decrease in the average age of those needing support. SSAFA have been working in collaboration with the Ffrind i Mi/Friend of Mine (<a href="https://www.ffrindimi.co.uk/">https://www.ffrindimi.co.uk/</a>) project which looks to reduce loneliness and isolation.</p>
<p>10. WWI 100 Centenary event</p>	<p>Monmouth Town Council has submitted a bid, on behalf of a steering group of partner organisations who are looking to hold <i>“a week's program of events leading to the 100th year anniversary of the end of the First World War. In order to commemorate and honour the lives lost and families affected in the community, Monmouth has worked collectively to create a Remembrance in 2018 that all can partake in.”</i></p> <p>The project will aim to: <i>“Commencing on Friday 2nd November 2018, Monmouth will produce a series of events and activities that enhance understanding of the involvement of Monmouth and its residents in WW1. The program actively encourages the involvement of residents of all ages, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds to commemorate the anniversary of a War that we all shared. The events have been put together by a steering group of representatives from established sections of our community. Drawing on expertise, research and empathy for a subject which has annually captured certain sectors of Monmouth, a town with a rich history and current relationship with the armed forces. Culminating in the annual Remembrance</i></p>

	<p><i>Parade, the week will see the town alive with music, plays, exhibitions and performances from The Male Voice Choir, local schools, Monmouth Museum, local walking groups, community organisations, the RBL, and the choirs and Pastors of Monmouth churches. Primary school children will enjoy an 'off-timetable' enrichment week and take part in the activities, exhibitions and competitions that draw them closer to the relationship between WW1 and Monmouth. The special relationship between the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (RMRE), the Royal Naval ship HMS Monmouth, and the town of Monmouth will have the opportunity to renew its commitment and support, with the younger and newer residents of Monmouth gaining an understanding of the important link, framed with a joint focus on the War that we all share as part of our collective history."</i></p> <p>The established steering group is multi-agency and comprises of third-sector organisations, town council, MCC, and volunteers to name a few. For any organisations who are not already involved with this piece of work and would like to do so, please get in touch with Joe Skidmore.</p> <p>Abergavenny Town Council is in the process of developing an application for Covenant funding during the next round for the purposes of staging a WWI based community play called 'The Last Post', which features a warm and heart-wrenching story interspersed with music, singalongs and sketches. There will be open auditions for the major roles within the main story and there will be opportunities for local amateur groups to contribute self-contained sketches.</p> <p>Local choirs, musical groups and community groups will be invited to take part and the History Society has been engaged to provide an exhibition and programme materials. This is an evolving project and further details will be distributed when available.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Partners to liaise with Joe Skidmore for involvement in any centenary events or notify of any other events taking place across Monmouthshire who may require support</b></p>
11. AOB	<p>The group agreed to bring literature on individual projects for the next forum so that we could have a library of resources available for individuals to take away.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Partners to bring any relevant literature to the next meeting</b></p>
12. Date of Next Meeting	<p>A further forum has been scheduled for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tuesday, 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 – 10 am – 12 pm</li> </ul> <p>This will be held at the headquarters of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Castle, Monmouth, NP25 3BS</li> </ul>