

## Armed Forces Covenant across Gwent

The Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces and their families are treated fairly.

# Victory in Europe Day

**VE Day – or ‘Victory in Europe Day’ marks the day towards the end of World War Two (WW2) when fighting against Nazi Germany in Europe came to an end. Tuesday 8 May, 1945, was an emotional day that millions of people had been waiting for.**

Many people were extremely happy that the fighting had stopped and there were big celebrations and street parties.

In his VE Day announcement, Winston Churchill said: “We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toil and efforts that lie ahead.”

Even after 8 May, many soldiers, sailors and pilots were sent to the east to fight against the Japanese, who had not yet surrendered.

VE Day celebrations were curtailed as a result of the coronavirus lockdown.



### Armed Forces Covenant Training Package

The WLGA, with funding from the Covenant Fund, commissioned Cardiff and Vale College to produce an Armed Forces Covenant training package. The package consists of a face-to-face training resource together with an e-learning resource. Both resources are aimed at local authority elected members and staff and seek to raise awareness and understanding of the Covenant.

**If you would like bespoke training for your department please contact Lisa Rawlings - Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer**  
[rawlil@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:rawlil@caerphilly.gov.uk) 01443 864447 [www.covenantwales.wales/e-learning/](http://www.covenantwales.wales/e-learning/)

# Updates from your local authority

## Blaenau Gwent

**VE Day look a little different to planned due to Covid-19, but was still marked in Blaenau Gwent, including:**

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council raised the Union and Welsh flags at the Civic Centre at Ebbw Vale and laid a wreath at the Ebbw Vale Cenotaph (see photograph).



On 8th May in Ebbw Vale at 10am there was a solo raising of the Union and Welsh flags at the Cenotaph, at 11am a solo laying of a wreath on behalf of Ebbw Vale Royal British Legion and the residents of the town. Also, at 11am Standard Bearer Steve Liversage presented and dipped branch standard in his front garden in recognition of this special day.

In Abertillery a local drama group performed a virtual VE Day concert, shared on the Abertillery British Legion Facebook page. Tredegar Town Mayor laid a wreath at the War Memorial on behalf of Town Council and the community of Tredegar, and the Royal British Legion - Tredegar Branch also laid a wreath. A short service was undertaken by Reverend Elizabeth Jones. Rassau and Beaufort Branch of the Royal British Legion laid a solo wreath at the War Memorial on Beaufort Rise at 3.00pm

Councillor Nigel Daniels, Leader of Blaenau Gwent Council said: "With the difficulties currently facing our country and the changes to our daily lives it is more important than ever that we take time to mark this important anniversary and remember the enormity of the sacrifice made by the World War II generation so that we can live in the world we know today. "It does not matter what you do and how you do it, just please take a moment on the day to think about and recognise their war heroes. But most importantly please remember to stay safely at home. Please feel free to share the photos of you marking the occasion on our social media accounts."

Councillor Brian Thomas, the Council's Armed Forces Champion, said: 'It may stop us physically gathering to pay our respects but the current situation cannot take away the spirit in which we celebrate and recognise their sacrifice for this country. I would like to thank everyone across Blaenau Gwent who had been working hard to organise events and parties to mark this anniversary. Your efforts and commitment reflect the support within our communities for both veterans and current serving personnel. Thank you to you all.'

## Caerphilly

**Welsh Army veteran Jonathan Congreve, 57, from Gelligaer was honoured by Caerphilly County Borough Council at a meeting of full council at Penallta House on Tuesday March 3.**

Mr Congreve has been selected to represent Team UK at the Invictus Games in 2021 and will be competing in archery, swimming and rowing events. Jon served in the army for 22 years, leaving the service as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers. Accompanied by his wife Debbie, Jon was thanked for representing the county by Mayor Cllr Julian Simmonds and Cllr Nigel George, and wished well for his on-going preparations for the competition.

As well as engaging with Help for Heroes' Invictus training camps since his selection for Team UK in October last year, Jon has been supported in his Invictus journey by the charity's Community Recovery Team based in Treforest. As part of the 65-strong team of wounded, injured and sick (WIS) military personnel and veterans taking part in the Games, Jon will be joined by Help for Heroes Wales & Hereford Sports Recovery Coordinator Nick Vanderpump, 24, from Bridgend.

Nick says, "I've seen the difference Community Sports Recovery has played in the lives of the men and women who will be taking part in this inspirational event. Even when someone is affected by illness or injury, sport is incredibly powerful in bringing people together and giving them purpose in life."

Jon says being part of the Invictus Games will have life-saving benefits not only for himself, but for his friends and family. Having been diagnosed with PTSD, sport and Invictus training camps have renewed his confidence and self-esteem to the point where his loved ones say he is nearly "back to normal". On spending time with his teammates, Jonathan said he feels part of a team again, something which was missing since he left the Army, "The resilience they show in not letting their injuries define or restrict them, is really inspiring."

Jon signed up to the Army on 28th October 1989 and served 22 years, leaving as a Staff Sergeant with the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers. His injuries include Cervical Disc Disease, Osteoarthritis and Bilateral tendinitis which affects his hips and back.

More than 350 military personnel and veterans trialled nine sports for one of the 65 places available on Team UK. The rigorous selection process was based on the benefit the Invictus Games will give an individual as part of their recovery, combined with performance and commitment to training.



# VE Day

**VE Day commemorates the formal acceptance of Nazi Germany's surrender by the allied forces at the end of the Second World War in Europe.**

Friday the 8th of May 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. Caerphilly County Borough Council are encouraging all those taking part to undertake the 'Nation's Toast to the Heroes of WW2' at 3pm, from the safety of their own home by standing up and raise a glass of refreshment of their choice and undertake the following 'Toast' –

**"To those who gave so much, we thank you".**

Residents are also being encouraged to celebrate through decorating their windows in artworks that are Red, White and Blue to mark the occasion that is a large part of British history.

Cllr Andrew Whitcombe, Armed Forces Champion of Caerphilly Council said, "I would like to encourage residents to give thanks to those who lost their lives in World War II just as we continue to give thanks to those who are currently working on the front line.

"This year, celebrations have unfortunately had to be scaled down due to Covid-19 however I hope residents will continue to show their gratitude to those who fought during World War II by celebrating from home."

Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer commented, "Today we remember Victory in Europe 75 years ago. A time where we can come together to reflect and honour the brave men and women who fought valiantly to protect our nation.

"As we remember our heroes I would also like to thank the generation of today who are once again pulling together to save lives."

Cllr Denver Preece, who has been a councillor for 20 years or more for the Abercarn/Cwmcarn Ward said, "I was born 8th May 1945, 3 minutes passed midnight in Llanfrechfa Grange Hospital, making myself the first baby born in Wales/England after the war had finished. My parents named me Winston Denver and my cot was decorated by the nurses with Union Jacks.

"A cup was also presented to my mother and father from the Abercarn/Cwmcarn Victory celebration committee along with a six month supply of free baby food and 2 guineas. I hope residents will celebrate safely from their own homes and toast all those who fought valiantly."



# Monmouthshire

**MCC has reaffirmed its commitment to working with our armed forces community, together with our five Town Councils (Abergavenny, Monmouth, Usk, Caldicot and Chepstow) who signed the Covenant for the first time. This makes Monmouthshire the only local authority in the UK to have the principal authority and all town councils signing the covenant in unison.**



The Armed Forces Covenant represents a promise by the nation that those who serve or have served, and their families, are treated fairly. The covenant aims to bring together the armed forces community and the civilian community on a local level, nurturing mutual understanding and raising awareness of issues faced by the armed forces. It is a pledge that, together, we acknowledge and understand that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, should be treated with fairness and respect in the communities, economy and society they serve with their lives.

The signing ceremony took place in the Council Chamber at County Hall during a meeting of the full council. The pledge was signed by Cllr Sheila Woodhouse as Chairman of the Council and Lt Col JPR Gossage RE on behalf of the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia). Signing on behalf of the Town Councils were Chepstow, Cllr Tom Kirton (Mayor), Caldicot: Cllr Dave Evans (Mayor), Monmouth: Cllr Richard Roden (Mayor), Usk: Cllr Christine Wilkinson (Mayor), Abergavenny: Cllr Tony Konieczny (Mayor).

The council currently holds a Silver award in the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and has submitted an expression of interest to gain Gold status this year. The scheme is awarded to employers who pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and inspire others to do the same.

Cllr. Laura Jones, Monmouthshire County Council's Armed Forces Champion said: "It is so very important to recognise the work and commitment of our armed forces colleagues. The signing of this covenant reinforces Monmouthshire's dedication to ensuring our armed forces colleagues continue to receive support and gratitude."

Lt Col JPR Gossage RE said: "These events are incredibly important to the Serving and Veteran's Military Community in demonstrating the continued commitment and support for Service people and their families across the County of Monmouthshire. My Regiment is very proud of our heritage bearing the county name, and we truly appreciate the backing of the Mayors and the Councillors of Monmouthshire."



# Newport

## New support package to benefit Service children across Newport.



Children of Armed Forces personnel in Newport are benefitting from a new package of support to help with their attainment and development, through funding and a dedicated support officer.

It follows Newport City Council's successful bid in obtaining a grant from the Ministry of Defence Education Support Fund to employ a HM Forces education support officer, who works across education and with third sector organisations to raise awareness of the unique challenges the children of military personnel may face caused by the effects of mobility or deployment.

The council's HM Forces education support officer has supported several schools in the city with successful bids to Welsh Government's Supporting Service Children in Education fund, to enable them to support Armed Forces children and ensure they achieve their potential. Newport has punched well above its weight in the 2019/20 funding round, accounting for 25 per cent of all the successful applications across Wales.

### Newport schools that have been successful in the 2019/20 Welsh Government funding round are:

- Bassaleg – funding towards ELSA and Thrive training
- Eveswell Primary – Full funding for ELSA Training
- High Cross Primary – Funding towards Literacy and Numeracy resources and interventions
- Mount Pleasant – Funding towards Literacy and Numeracy resources and interventions
- St Joseph's High School - Support worker / Learning coach and resources
- Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd - Funding towards Elsa Training

The ELSA and Thrive training will help school staff support the well-being of Service children, and literacy and numeracy resources will assist the children in maintaining their educational progress. Caerleon Lodge Hill Primary School has also received funding from the MoD Education Support Fund to support Service children.

The HMF education support officer works across both Newport and Monmouthshire. Funding has been secured through the Welsh Government's grant scheme to extend this work across Gwent for a further term, up until the end of July 2020.

Councillor Gail Giles, cabinet member for education and skills, said: "We are committed to ensuring that all children in our schools achieve their potential whatever their circumstances. "It's really important that we understand how we can best support the children of Armed Forces families and I'm really

pleased that our MoD funded project to create an HM Forces education support officer is improving our support for Service children and is being seen as a model for other areas to follow."

Victoria Lambe, Head of Bassaleg School, said, "We are delighted to have been successful in our application to the fund. The funding will enable us to increase our ELSA capacity, and ensure we are delivering the best possible support to our pupils.

Councillor Mark Spencer, the council's Armed Forces champion, said: "Through its work to support Service children in education the council is delivering on its commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant, and we are pleased to be able to support the Armed Forces community in Newport in this very practical way."

For more information about support for the Armed Forces in Newport visit [www.newport.gov.uk/en/About-Newport/Armed-forces/Armed-forces.aspx](http://www.newport.gov.uk/en/About-Newport/Armed-forces/Armed-forces.aspx)

## VE Day

### For armed forces veteran Tony Clark, VE Day is a day for celebration as well as commemoration.

Newport-born Mr Clark, a lifelong resident of the city, served in Europe from shortly after D-Day until the end of the Second World War and beyond, and he had been born on what came to be VE Day, though when he came into the world on May 8 1924, it was still recovering from the Great War, and people could not imagine that less than two decades later another horrendous conflict would break out.



## Torfaen

**The Royal Welsh were awarded freedom of Torfaen Borough back in 2010, and have requested to re-visit Pontypool, the town where they were awarded the freedom scroll, to march again.**



Torfaen Council were successful in their application to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust for funding to make this a truly family event. Unfortunately, the re-affirmation parade and fun day have been postponed due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Once restrictions allow, we will continue with the planning, which will see the Council, Community Councils, Veteran support organisations, Army, Navy, Air force and Cadets come together.

# Welsh Government **UPDATE**

## Scoping Exercise / Veterans strategy

In January the Welsh Government published a response to the Veterans Scoping Exercise / UK Veterans strategy. The report can be found at the link below.

The new Programme Board and Cross Government group are up and running and met in February to consider delivery against the key recommendations. Action groups are being established to look at key recommendations. Coronavirus has had an impact on progress but the Armed Forces team continue to work with sector partners on delivery and updates will be provided.

<https://gov.wales/veterans-and-armed-forces-scoping-exercise-strategy-report>

[https://llyw.cymru/y-marfer-cwmpasu-cyn-filwyr-ar-lluodded-ar-fog-adroddiad-ar-y-strategaeth?\\_ga=2.243284997.125475862.1586861453-1165475327.1570627919](https://llyw.cymru/y-marfer-cwmpasu-cyn-filwyr-ar-lluodded-ar-fog-adroddiad-ar-y-strategaeth?_ga=2.243284997.125475862.1586861453-1165475327.1570627919)

## Covenant legislation and UK commitments

The Welsh Government continue to engage with the MOD regarding the new Armed Forces Covenant UK legislation that seeks to further incorporate the Covenant in law. Policy teams have fed into the MOD and we await updates on the impact of coronavirus on the progress of the proposed legislation. Welsh Government are also working on the introduction of a Veteran's railcard and a Guaranteed Interview scheme.



**During these challenging times, the Welsh Government would like to highlight the support available for individuals and organisations.**

Please see the links below Covering support from the Welsh Government, UK Government, Armed Forces Covenant trust, Volunteering Wales, Business Wales and the WCVA:

**Welsh Government –  
Coronavirus webpage:**  
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus>



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Welsh Government -  
Support for the Third Sector:**  
<https://gov.wales/coronavirus-support-for-the-third-sector>

**Armed Forces Covenant Trust –  
Covid 19 funding:**  
<https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/covid-19-response/>

**Volunteering Wales:**  
<https://volunteering-wales.net/vk/volunteers/index-covid.htm>

**UK Coronavirus  
Job retention scheme:**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chancellor-announces-workers-support-package>

**Funding Wales:**  
<https://funding.cymru/pages/coronavirus-latest/>

**Wales Council for Voluntary  
Action (WCVA):**  
<https://wcva.cymru/coronavirus-statement/>

**Business Wales:**  
<https://businesswales.gov.wales/coronavirus-advice>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/financial-support-and-grants>

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/covid-19-grants>

# SSCE Cymru Update / May 2020

**Millie Taylor** - SSCE Cymru Programme Manager

## About SSCE Cymru

The SSCE Cymru mission is to provide the best possible educational support to Service children in Wales. This is achieved through the following three areas of the programme mission:

- Gathering knowledge and evidence.
- Producing resources and coordinating activities.
- Impacting policy and systems.

## Service children in Wales

Kirsty Williams AM, Minister of Education, has committed to identifying Service children, however currently there is no formal mechanism for this data collection process. We hope that question will be added to PLASC in January 2022. SSCE Cymru uses various methods to gain an understanding of the number and location of Service children, through various stakeholder engagement and activities with schools.

We plan to write out to all schools in Wales again this year asking them to identify their SC and inform SSCE Cymru. We will be asking LAs and the education consortia to support this activity. This activity will be postponed to later in the year when the schools and LAs have the capacity to support the activity.

## Service Children Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLO)

Funding has been secured for four RSLOs for a two-year project, focused on supporting schools to understand the needs of Service children and embed activities to ensure sustainable support systems.

- Covering 5/6 local authorities each.
- Hosted by four lead local authorities (Vale of Glamorgan, Isle of Anglesey, Pembrokeshire and Newport).
- Welsh speaker in North Wales.
- Experience working in education or with young people.
- All will follow the same workplan and activities – produced and overseen by SSCE Cymru.
- The start date for the RSLOs has now been pushed back to the beginning of September 2020, due to the capacity of the host LAs and ability to hold interviews.

## New resources

- **New website:** one stop shop of information and resources for schools, education settings, local authorities, Service children and Service families.
- **New SSCE Cymru School Toolkit:** including information, advice and signposting to relevant support; broken down into eight sections, including the Armed Forces in Wales, Service children's experiences, Mental Health & wellbeing and Research.
- **SSCE Cymru Tools:** produced in conjunction with the SSCE Cymru School Toolkit; these resources can be downloaded, tailored and used by the school, parents/carers or Service children.

- **Directory of support:** includes details of nearly 100 organisations that are relevant to supporting Service children; with search and filter functions that help users utilise the breadth of information.
- **Welsh films:** celebrating Service children learning Welsh and sharing their new language skills.
- **Case studies:** sharing good practice examples of how schools and local authorities are identifying the need of their Service children and supporting them.

## Recent activities

- Added a Covid-19 support information page to the SSCE Cymru website [www.SSCECymru.co.uk/schoolsandlocalauthorities/covid19support](http://www.SSCECymru.co.uk/schoolsandlocalauthorities/covid19support)
- Listening to our Service children – we have been running discussion groups with over 100 Service children in 14 schools across Wales to gain an understanding of their experiences. The full report on this project will be available on the SSCE Cymru website in March.
- SSCE Cymru Stakeholder Day (17th March) – was due to take place in RAF Valley but on 10th March, in light of Covid-19 developments we amended plans for the event and held the event virtually with a reduced agenda. A summary of the discussions/feedback from the event can be found here.

## Funding update

The MOD have confirmed the Education Support Fund (ESF) will be made available again in 2021. Aimed at supporting schools overcome challenges of exceptional mobility and deployment, affecting Service children in education. Applications will be accepted between 1st June and 7th October 2020.

**For further information see** <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mod-support-fund-for-schools-with-service-children-grant-application-pack>

SSCE Cymru will continue to encourage schools in Wales to consider applying for Armed Forces Covenant Small Grants (up to £20,000), once plans for the new scheme are confirmed. The SSCE Cymru funding guidance advice document will be updated, in light of the funding developments, in early June and circulated to schools in Wales.

[www.sscecymru.co.uk/schoolsandlocalauthorities/funding](http://www.sscecymru.co.uk/schoolsandlocalauthorities/funding)

## Plans for 2020

- Collaborate with organisations across the UK to produce a CPD training package for schools to help them with supporting their Service children.
- Conduct a survey with parents/carers of Service children.
- Produce a new SSCE Cymru Parent Toolkit.

**For further information, contact:**

**email:** [SSCE@wfga.gov.uk](mailto:SSCE@wfga.gov.uk)

[www.SSCECymru.co.uk](http://www.SSCECymru.co.uk)

**ssce**  SUPPORTING SERVICE CHILDREN  
IN EDUCATION WALES  
**CYMRU**  CYNORTHWYO PLANT MILWYR  
YN YSGOLION CYMRU



# The Poppy Factory

As we all continue to be affected by and adapt to the developing coronavirus situation, we would like to reassure our partners across our network that the employability service provided by The Poppy Factory is continuing to operate remotely.

This includes support for both those who are looking for work and those who we have recently supported into employment. We are able to continue to provide one-to-one support for existing and new veterans. At present, this support is provided over the phone and by email, with the potential for video calls where possible.

Our Getting you back to work service helps hundreds of unemployed veterans every year find the right jobs, enabling them to thrive in the civilian workplace. When veterans start their new roles, we offer in-work support to help them and their employers make any necessary changes. We find this method of working means that over 70 per cent of our veterans are still employed in their roles 12 months down the line.



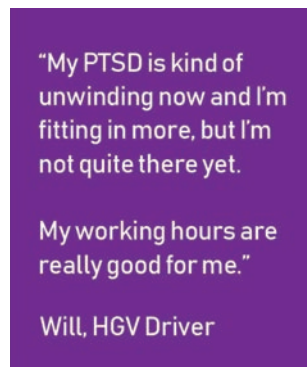
"Picking myself up and asking for help was a massive thing."

The support from The Poppy Factory just kept me going."

Vicki, Logistics Manager

## We provide:

- 1:1 support to prepare individual for work
- Assistance in CV preparation
- Local job searching
- Interview skills
- Guidance on how to share information with employers about a disability or a criminal conviction.
- In Work Support



"My PTSD is kind of unwinding now and I'm fitting in more, but I'm not quite there yet."

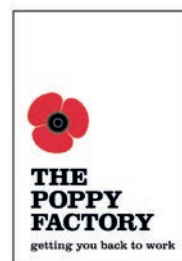
My working hours are really good for me."

Will, HGV Driver



Additionally, whilst we do not fund courses directly, we can potentially access funding for individuals.

The Poppy Factory supports veterans with health conditions into employment around the UK, and we know these uncertain times may present many new challenges and concerns. The Poppy Factory is not an accredited healthcare provider and as such our consultants will not be able to advise veterans on any specific health concerns they may have. Any veterans who have concerns about the virus or their own personal health should follow the latest NHS guidance at [www.nhs.uk/coronavirus](http://www.nhs.uk/coronavirus)



For more information please call 020 8939 1837 / 020 8939 1877 or visit [www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)



Reg Charity No.225348



**Hi, I am Kelly and I joined the British Legion in January as the Benefits, Debt and Money advisor for Wales.**

I have a passion for helping people and will always do my best to find the right solution for my clients. We provide specialist advice, help with debt, benefits and emergency situations, and can support you through grant applications.

At the British Legion, we understand that COVID-19 is causing extra money worries for many in the Armed Forces community, and we're here to help. Our service continues throughout COVID-19, with minimal disruption.

We have a team of specialist advisors on hand to give advice and support when you need to put your mind at rest. Whether it's debts, benefits or balancing the book we are just a phone call away to help you get back on your feet.

**Call us on freephone 0808 802 8080 for advice and support.**

# Get involved...

## Sign the Covenant

Businesses, charitable organisations and public sector organisations of all sizes who wish to support Gwent's Armed Forces Community can join ... in signing the Covenant.

Each organisation can tailor their own pledge to offer the support they want to provide, each pledge can be unique. Options range from ensuring employment policies support veterans, reservists, and forces' families, offering discounts for services/products through the Defence Discount service and supporting Armed Forces Day every June.



To find out more visit

[www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk](http://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk)

# Veterans' Gateway

The first point of contact for veterans seeking support

We 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.

There is a huge network of organisations supporting the Armed Forces community, so finding the right one for your needs can be tricky. We make it quick and easy by being your first point of contact for whatever support you need, whether you are based in the UK or abroad.

Many of our team are veterans themselves so they understand the issues that people face after leaving the Armed Forces. They work with people on a one-to-one basis, connecting them with the right support as soon as possible.

The 24-hour online chat, phone, and text message service brings the Armed Forces support community together in a single place – delivered by a Royal British Legion-led consortium with Poppy-scotland, Combat Stress, Connect Assist, The Ministry of Defence and SSAFA, the Armed Forces Charity.

The service centre, based in Nantgarw near Cardiff, is manned partly by veterans to help ensure that callers can speak to someone who can understand their experience.



**VETERANS' GATEWAY**

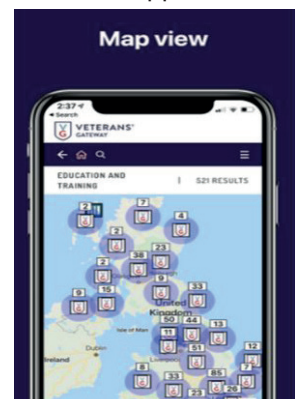
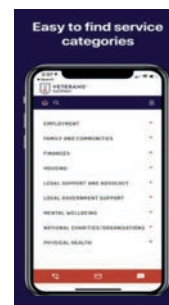
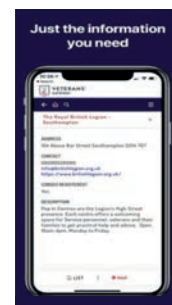
The Veterans Gateway can be contacted by:

- Calling **0808 802 1212** ■ Texting **81212**
- Visiting [www.veteransgateway.org.uk](http://www.veteransgateway.org.uk)

## NEWS: The Veterans' Gateway App

The Veterans' Gateway App has now launched which helps veterans find support organisations in their area using their smartphone or tablet. Click here to download the App & access support from finances to employment

<https://bit.ly/2yWFBqV>



## Virtual Coffee Mornings

Held every Tuesday and Thursday 11 - 1pm

These will be running for the foreseeable over Zoom  
A link via social media is sent the day before.



Gwent Armed Forces  
**Champions**



**Blaenau Gwent** Cllr Brian Thomas  
**Caerphilly** Cllr Andrew Whitcombe  
**Monmouth** Cllr Laura Jones

**Newport** Cllr Mark Spencer  
**Torfaen** Cllr Alan Jones



# ENDEX PROJECT Veteran Story - Michael Allen

**After a tour of Afghanistan I returned a different person causing stress on my family, co-workers and myself leading to a complete collapse of my character, health and marriage.**

I left the Army dishonourably broken physically and mentally and my life spiraled out of control over the following 3 years leaving me in need of mental health treatment which wasn't easily available or appropriate at the time, I became hopeless and homeless for 2 years.

Instead of going begging in the city centres I put my military experience to use and began to build a shelter for survival. What happened next was unplanned but altered the direction that my life was heading. In building the cabin I'd inadvertently created achievable goals and re-engaged with physical activities leading to a sense of achievement and natural endorphins leading to a change in perspective and character.

The shelter soon turned into a cabin with a fire place, dry storage and adequate shelter from any weather. The cabin became my home and from this experience and some feelings of safety I was able to rebuild my identity and reconnect with family and friends that I alienated myself from during my worst times and found employment which gave me the finances to start private mental health treatment. I was living rough but so determined to better myself my wage was being spent on my mental health instead of a proper roof over my head.

After 2 years of living from the cabin with occasional sofa surfing in between I returned from work one day to find all my belongings gone and my cabin which was a good mile from civilisation completely destroyed and buried by heavy duty machinery. This caused me to have a break down meaning I couldn't maintain my well being and I was fired by Bells construction without warning, hope was lost yet again and dark thoughts soon returned. If it wasn't for friends and family at this point I wouldn't still be here.

Luckily a kind hearted farming family reached out to me and offered the opportunity to rebuild on private land. The task of rebuilding was no small undertaking but my own health was falling rapidly and I saw no choice but to rebuild in a desperate attempt to restabilise myself.

In the building of the second cabin I wanted to recreate the well being benefits and share them with other veterans and local community with the aim of suicide prevention. Although the original hope for the second cabin was to create an option of therapeutic accommodation in times of crisis I had to adapt this idea in accordance of health and safety law. Instead the cabin has become a mindfulness/ well being center which has had over 700 visitors over the last 14 months including special needs children, bereaved families and many veterans and their loved ones.

Unfortunately the cabin is a nice day out or a coping mechanism, a short term make safe and does very little to solve any of the long term problems people with suicidal tendencies face. With this knowledge I still wanted to do much more so less people would have to endure the hardships I went through and with this notion I started to build End Ex.



**END EX** was created with suicide prevention as its primary goal, after my own experiences I had a good grasp of the real time issues faced but this wasn't enough, my problems were mine so I spoke with other veterans about the problems they faced to gain a much wider range of opinions then took this forward to subject area experts and discussed practical measures to combat the reasons why people feel that they're life is crashing to crisis moments.

Discussions went far better than expected and the experts became End Ex management team. With this backing and combined wealth of knowledge and experience we were able to put meat on the bones and the project evolved. The main problems we looked to bring about change in was poverty, access to mental health treatment and understanding, living with anxiety, isolation and hopelessness.

So we came to the solution of creating therapeutic work places where veterans work with other veterans in rural areas with the backing of mental health workers and instructors coming on the work site to deliver coping mechanism workshops, holistic therapies and mental health education via multi award winning Noble Training Solutions.

The areas of therapeutic work we've gained is Dry Stone Walling with the Dry Stone Association Of Wales providing the education and Natural Resources Wales having work loads across their 33,000 hectors of managed land across Wales. Also with nationwide plans of billions of trees being planted in the UK over the next 10 years we've got an agreement to take on a healthy portion within the Gwent area with support from Branched out Tree Services Aberdare with a range of necessary health and safety qualifications available to those taking part. We also have plans in the fitness industry with the outdoor gym at the Cabin with 3 ex military PTIs and support of local gyms to make possible. Lastly when we've achieved the above we'd like to be able to bring in animal care in the way of dog walking and kennels but to achieve this land and much more funding would be needed so we've concentrated our efforts on whats achievable and most beneficial and hope to come back to animal care at an appropriate timeline.

We've networked extremely well with in our area and hope all these efforts will make a dramatic difference to the lives and well being of veterans and their families in Gwent and pray the working module will be a success paving the way for further future groups of a similar nature to carbon copy our design across the UK and together work towards putting a serious dent in the amount veterans tragically ending their lives and improve quality of life for them and their families.

# 5 Reasons to employ Veterans in your business...

- 1** Veterans are highly qualified.
- 2** Veterans have valuable attitudes and are adaptable.
- 3** Veterans are skilled workers.
- 4** Veterans make highly effective employees.
- 5** Employing veterans is good for business and society.



## Armed Forces Covenant Trust

**The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust makes grants to support the Armed Forces Community.**

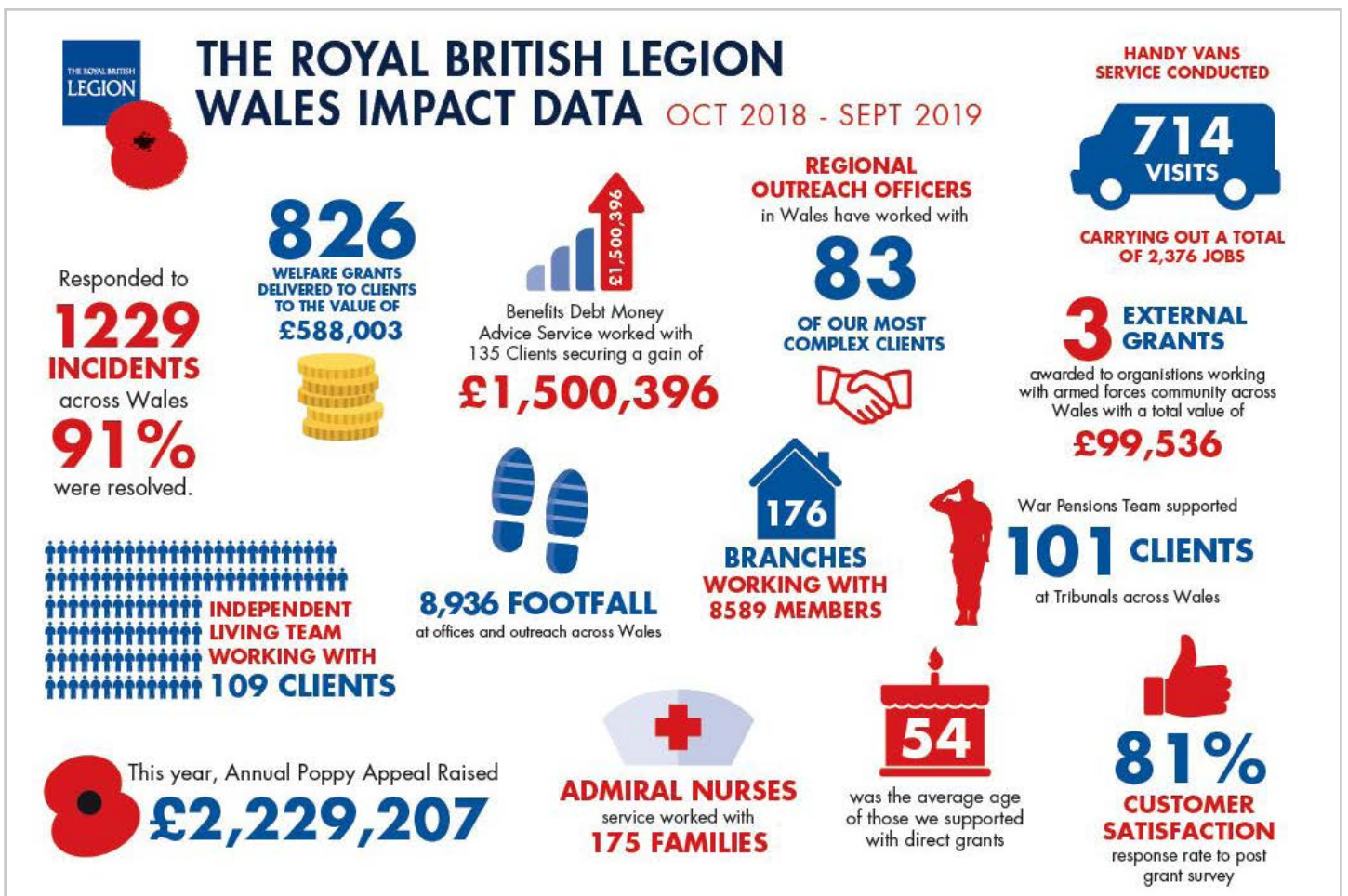
We manage the grant programmes funded by the Covenant Fund. We also run wider funding programmes that support the Armed Forces Community.

The people who benefit from our grants are from the Armed Forces Community. This includes serving personnel, families, veterans and families of veterans. In some of our programmes, the wider community around a base or in an area with an Armed Forces population can also benefit;

as we will support projects on one of our programmes that will help to encourage good relations between Armed Forces and civilian communities.

The popular Armed Forces Covenant Fund Local Grants Programme makes grants of up to £20,000 for projects that meet local needs, or help bring Armed Forces and civilian communities together. We also run the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund and the Veterans Community Centres Programme.

For more information: <https://www.covenantfund.org.uk/>







# VICTORY IN EUROPE

# MAY 8<sup>TH</sup>



# VE DAY ACROSS GWENT

## 75th Anniversary



# VE DAY

75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

A SHARED MOMENT OF CELEBRATION

8 - 10 MAY 2020





CALDICOT



VE  
ACROSS

BLAENAU GWENT



Cwm



Blaina

Steve Pennells



Ebbw Vale



Abertillery War Memorial

*Don McCulloch*  
PAO Abertillery / Vice  
Chairman Gwent County &  
Cllr Perry Morgan  
Abertillery and Llanhilleth  
Community Council





## MONMOUTHSHIRE

11am Friday 8 May 2020,  
St James's Square.

Left to right:

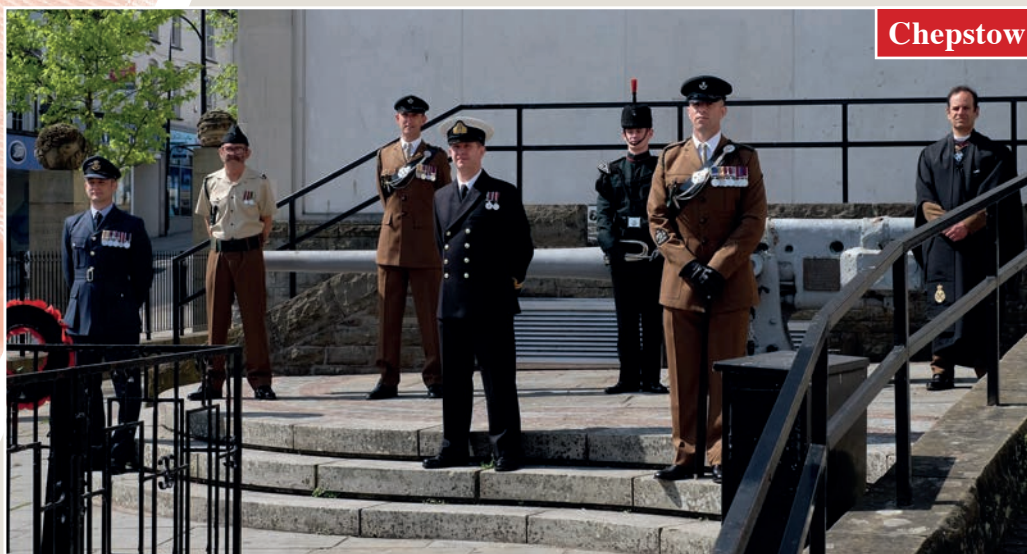
- **Mr Jones** 93 year-old RN veteran, 18 years old on VE DAY
- **Mr Gerry Bright** - Chairman Monmouth Branch Royal British Legion
- **Lt Col Andrew Tuggey CBE DL**, President Monmouth Branch Royal British Legion and President Monmouth Branch Royal Engineers Association

Monmouth War Memorial



# DAY GWENT

Chepstow



Tom Moran - Chepstow, of the RNA, RAFA and 1 Rifles

DAY  
VERSARY  
T OF CELEBRATION  
AY 2020

Newbridge



## CAERPHILLY

Risca



Newbridge





# NEWPORT

# 75

Caerwent



Cwmbran



Caerwent



# TORFAEN

Blaenavon



Pontypool



# TREDEGAR





# Team Rubicon UK

**A disaster response charity made up mostly of veterans, sent 40 volunteers to assist in the construction of the Dragon's Heart hospital at the Principality Stadium.**

The volunteers included over 30 veterans who had recently signed up in answer to Team Rubicon UK's call for veterans to step forward to serve their country again in the fight against Covid-19. They joined existing TRUK volunteers, known as Greyshirts, on a 2-day task on 21-22 April, and again on 29 April.

The volunteers unloaded, transported and assembled a total of 246 hospital beds at the temporary hospital at the home of Welsh rugby, established to help ease the burden on health services. Justin Thomas, one of the recent veteran volunteers, said: "I've actually put together quite a lot of field hospitals on deployments in Italy and Cyprus and out in Poland, I'm able to bring some of my skills from there."



Team Rubicon UK specialises in repurposing the skills of veterans for humanitarian relief but is more used to international deployments. With the growing crisis on home soil, it knew that the UK's veterans represented a vital, untapped resource and that veterans would jump at the opportunity to do their bit. As another veteran volunteer, Simon Kendal, puts it: "Everyone feels like they want to do something and everyone feels helpless sat at home, especially being a veteran, suddenly there's a disaster in our own country and everyone's sat at home twiddling their thumbs."

Since Team Rubicon UK launched its response to Covid-19, Op RE:ACT, on 29th March, it has recruited over 5,000 veteran volunteers, helped distribute over a million items of PPE to nearly 900 healthcare providers, assisted with the provision of over 100,000 meals and 38 tonnes of food to 14 hospitals, 5 food banks and almost 1,500 vulnerable people. It is has live tasks throughout the UK and is working closely with Local Resilience Forums, the military, and the voluntary sector to coordinate and deliver an effective response to Covid-19.



## TAKE YOUR CAREER TO NEW HEIGHTS

### MA in Professional Practice

Using your Military Experience

#### Achieve your full potential

Using your previous military history and experience you can achieve all of the following:

- Post Graduate Certificate in Professional Practice 60 credits at level 7
- Post Graduate Diploma in Professional Practice 120 credits at level 7
- MA in Professional Practice 180 credits at level 7

#### Modular Solution

The British Training Board have partnered with The Wales Academy for Professional Practice and Applied Research to facilitate HE learning and qualifications. You can study at your own pace. Gaining credits from your previous military history using the British Training Board "Skills Translator" and your Certificated learning from your CLM and other courses. Each Award has its own Graduation ceremony

info@britishtrainingboard.org.uk  
www.britishtrainingboard.org.uk

Prifysgol Cymru  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
University of Wales  
Trinity Saint David



# Welsh Veterans Awards 2020

**The Veterans Awards are sponsored by Veterans Employment & Training Solutions (V.E.T.S) and are open to all British Armed Forces Veterans that are based or operate in Wales.**

If you are or you know a veteran that's done some great things since transition to civilian life or your a business/organisation/charity that's gone above and beyond to support our former military personnel then feel free to apply on the following links

[www.veteransawards.co.uk](http://www.veteransawards.co.uk)

Rewarding Veterans in Sport, Fitness, Business and the wider Community! In support of ABF The Soldiers' Charity Wales.

Application Process Opens - **1st March 2020**

Application Process Closes - **1st July 2020**

Shortlisted Filming day - **To be bonfirmed**  
(Firing Line Museum Cardiff Castle)

**The Awards will take place at the Village Hotel and Leisure Club Cardiff on 26th August 2020**



**The Veterans Awards CIC Team**

Tel: **07891 402 326**

Web: [www.veteransawards.co.uk](http://www.veteransawards.co.uk)

Email: [info@veteransawards.co.uk](mailto:info@veteransawards.co.uk)

Twitter: [@AwardsVeterans](https://twitter.com/AwardsVeterans)

Facebook: **Veterans Awards**

# HELP FOR HEROES

## Covid-19 HELP FOR HEROES

### Adapting veterans' services and delivering support to frontline heroes.

While the country continues to come to terms with life in lockdown, Help for Heroes is keen to stress they are still providing support to wounded veterans, serving personnel and their families experiencing a range of physical and mental health challenges across the region; and they have extended their expertise to help frontline workers who may be struggling with their wellbeing at the present time. Help for Heroes has highlighted the need to make sure long-term support is in place for the nation's health workers fighting Coronavirus, because of similarities with the sort of issues faced by members of the Armed Forces on the battlefield.



**Shelley Elgin** The Charity's Community Recovery Manager, said, "We understand some of what they are up against. Help for Heroes has supported more than 25,000 ex-service personnel and families, many of whom have faced similar situations to those our NHS staff are facing around the country right now: challenging environments; working outside of normal areas of work; working with protective equipment; and putting themselves at risk. Many have also been taken away from family, friends and colleagues for extended and uncertain periods of time."

Help for Heroes has been asked to contribute their expertise to a package of support being created for the Nightingale Hospital's staff and volunteers. In addition, the charity has made these resources available on its website to support health workers around the UK in preparing for and dealing with traumatic experiences. The materials are freely available for anyone to access whether they are working on the

frontline delivering healthcare, or simply struggling with the changes to routine brought about by living under lockdown. These resources were designed for, and co-produced with, wounded veterans, but the situations NHS staff are currently dealing with draw many parallels to those veterans will have faced on the battlefield and beyond.

Ms Elgin says, "The challenges faced by those leaving the military due to illness or injury are often complex, and we believe that those who have already embarked on a recovery journey often have the best insight into what will help others."

Help for Heroes' Field Guide to Self-Care is available for all the men and women tirelessly providing healthcare around the UK right now.

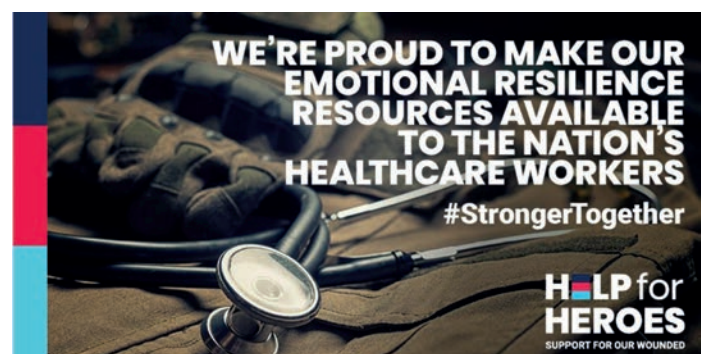
Ms Elgin continues, "It is a resource of tips and tools our recovery teams deliver to veterans who have experienced traumatic events or have been affected by working in high intensity situations. The guide is broken down into three parts; Body, Emotion and Mind and can be worked through in one go or one at a time. We hope this is a useful resource for our NHS heroes, and for anyone else who may be feeling stressed or anxious during these difficult times."

**Everyone can freely access the resource online by searching for: "Help for Heroes Field Guide"**

The Charity is also delighted to have been able to launch a Welsh language version of the guide, with audio materials recorded by acclaimed actor Matthew Gravelle who says, "It's fantastic that the Field Guide is available in Welsh so that everyone in Wales can fully benefit from the tools and breathing exercises, to help us all at this challenging time."

Meanwhile, Help for Heroes Community Recovery Team is delivering an adapted service to support beneficiaries, due to the social distancing measures in place to prevent the spread of Covid-19.

Ms Elgin says, "We plan to resume face to face service delivery across the region once it is deemed safe and appropriate to do so. In the meantime, our beneficiaries can expect the same exceptional level of welfare support and medical assistance they have come to know from our expert team."





# HELP FOR HEROES

## Meet the Team



**Alison Griffiths** is a Help for Heroes' South East Wales 1-2-1 key worker, providing the benefit of her personal knowledge of living in the military community. With strong armed forces connections, and several years' experience delivering welfare support and advice to men and women affected by illness and injury, the support Alison offers includes grant funding, housing, relationship and career advice, and signposting to additional support services within the charity and through partner organisations.

Based in Gwent, Alison is the longest serving member of the Help for Heroes Community Recovery team, having started as a Support Hub Key Worker in March 2016. She works with veterans and Armed Forces personnel across South East Wales, Mid Wales and Herefordshire. Alison says, "I was an Army wife for 16 years, whilst my husband served. I also worked in the Army Education Centre supporting military personnel in their resettlement period, so I know how transitioning and resettlement should work, and how veterans can struggle when it doesn't."

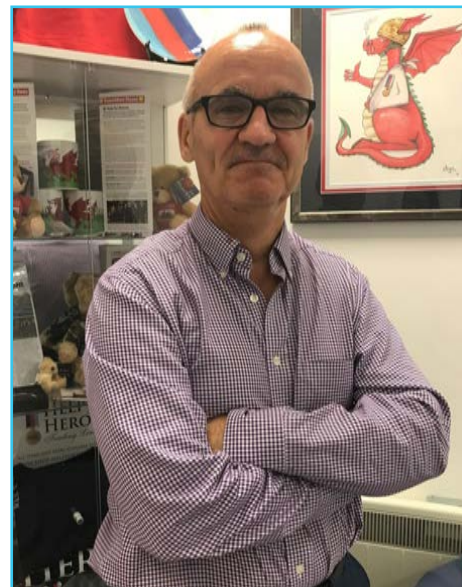
During the current situation, Alison has adapted the support she provides and is contacting beneficiaries with welfare needs. She says, "I check in to see how they are doing and offer support where possible, providing advice and guidance to help them navigate the services they are entitled to."

Alison is passionate about championing the Armed Forces community and says the best bit about her job is, "Being able to help veterans who have served their country and now need support either for themselves or their families. It's inspiring to see the determination of these brave men and women to overcome the challenges they have been faced with." Alison adds that a highlight of her time with the charity is the teamwork which means Help for Heroes can really change veterans' lives for the better. "Working alongside our Veterans Clinical Liaison, we were able to access a grant and seek additional funding for adaptations to a beneficiary's bathroom to allow him to shower without the assistance of his wife. This gave him a great sense of independence and improved his overall wellbeing hugely."

**Tim Penney** is a Help for Heroes' Veterans Clinical Liaison Nurse, supporting Armed Forces men and women who are injured or sick and living across the Wales and Hereford region. In his work, Tim makes a direct impact, improving the quality of life for his clients and their loved ones. He says, "I have been supporting a number of veterans with long-standing medical issues who have been waiting for overdue Consultant appointments."

Tim joined the Army in 1979, aged 16 and a half, as a boy soldier. After qualifying as a Nurse while he was in the Army, he was commissioned in 1993. Having served in Kosovo, Iraq, Afghanistan and Rwanda, Tim has a great deal of operational experience of providing medical support to military personnel in the battlefield. Tim served for 37 years and left the Army in January 2017 Tim brings his wealth of skills and knowledge to his role at Help for Heroes, where he provides advocacy and medical support for beneficiaries to access the appropriate NHS and other physical and mental health services, enabling them to live their lives with purpose once more.

For Tim, a highlight of working for Help for Heroes is "Being able to make a real difference in someone's life and recovery, when they felt that everything has been against them." Having faced the challenges of transitioning out of the military environment himself, Tim can empathise with his clients and the difficulties they can face adapting to life on Civvy Street. Community Recovery is a big part of the unique way Help for Heroes delivers the service to its beneficiaries. Tim says, "Meeting the veterans in a relaxed setting where they feel able to chat with their peers and participate in some activities is excellent. I appreciate, that for some of the veterans, this is a very big step. For some it enables them to forge relationships in the local community and this can play a huge part in their recovery."



**To access support from the Wales and Hereford Community Recovery team please contact:**  
**Wales.supporthub@helpforheroes.org.uk**



## There are some amazing charities working closely with the Armed Forces Community. Here's just some of them....

### ■ Hafal

The Joining Forces Team from hafal, part of the Strategic Partnership Programme has recently been supporting various veteran's charities and other charities working with veterans, to access a pot of money from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust called the Positive Pathways Project.

**This money is to provide activities that support veterans with mental health issues and the activities had to fall in to one of four categories:**

- Sports
- Arts/culture activities such as painting, music or theatre
- Getting outside, for example gardening activities
- Heritage projects such as conservation or archaeology.

I am pleased to announce out of the eleven from Wales that put forward bids to the final round of funding six were successful!

**This gives us a total of thirteen successful projects across Wales that the team will now be working with closely and supporting:**

- The Woodlands Recovery Centre
- Cardiff City FC Foundation 'Bluebirds Veterans Project'
- Care & Repair Veterans Community Hub
- Wintergreen UK 'Veterans in Mind Project'
- Swansea City AFC Community Trust with Ospreys in the Community 'In the Squad'
- Bulldogs Armed Forces Veterans
- 65 Degrees North 'Project '20'
- Cais 'Activities for Veterans Wellbeing Wales'
- Age Cymru Ceredigion 'The Wales Veterans Archive'
- Woody's Lodge 'Our Green Grass of Home'
- The VC Gallery 'Art of Memories'
- Alabare Christian Care and Support 'Awyr Lack / Fresh Air'
- Re-Live 'Coming Home to the Arts'

**For more information on these projects and the areas they cover, please contact**

**Finola Pickwell at:**  
[Finola.pickwell@hafal.org](mailto:Finola.pickwell@hafal.org)  
or Tel: **07970 435817**



### ■ Cardiff City FC Foundation

#### Veterans Matchday Hub

The Hub provides a safe and relaxed environment for Veterans, current and ex-servicemen and women to get together to talk about football and share experiences, helping to combat loneliness and mental health issues.

Located at Block 111 in the Ninian Stand, the Hub is open to all current and ex-servicemen and women as soon as the gates open on a matchday.

#### Veterans Employability Hub

The Veterans Employability Hub provides the opportunity for members of the Armed Forces Community to overcome the hurdles that they may face when integrating back into civilian life, affecting their employment opportunities.

The Foundation recognise that when leaving the Armed Forces, ex-servicemen and women hold a wide range of skills and qualifications. These may not be recognised by potential employers and can affect areas such as self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

The project supports participants to improve their interpersonal and communication skills, CV writing and interview techniques and helps to build self-confidence and resilience. If you or someone you know could benefit from this project, please email: [Michael.Jeffery@cardiffcityfc.org.uk](mailto:Michael.Jeffery@cardiffcityfc.org.uk)



*Cardiff City FC Community Foundation remembered the sacrifices of previous generations on VE Day whilst tackling our generation's responsibility to stay at home, save lives and support those who may be socially isolated.*

*John, a member of the Foundation's Veteran's project that is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant, received a surprise phone call from Cardiff City FC first team player Callum Paterson on VE Day.*

## ■ SSAFA

### Soldiers, sailors, airmen and families association

SSAFA Gwent is part of the national SSAFA armed forces charity which covers the whole of the UK. It helps Serving Personnel and Veterans, as well as their dependants who are in need. Nationally it has over 5000 voluntary case-workers and last year it dealt with over 35,000 requests for assistance. This meant SSAFA was able to help over 82,000 members of the Armed Forces Community, serving and veterans.

SSAFA Gwent is made up of three Divisions covering the whole of the Gwent area. We presently have 25 case workers and we are always on the lookout for enthusiastic people who would like to join the team and work in a variety of posts such as case worker, helper, treasurer as well as fundraiser. Full training is given and all volunteers have full support at local and national levels. All expenses while carry out SSAFA work are refunded.

**If you feel you are up to the challenge and would like to take part in this very rewarding work as well as learning new skills then please make contact with:**

**Alan Denman** MVO MBE,  
SSAFA Gwent, Raglan Barracks, Newport NP20 5XE  
**tel: 01633 246269 / 0207 403 8783**  
**email: alan.denman@gwent.ssafa.org.uk**

Volunteers come from a variety of backgrounds and we welcome applications from those who have not served in the Armed Forces.



## Be a force for our forces Be a SSAFA volunteer

At SSAFA you'll be joining a dedicated team on the frontline of volunteering. You'll be working closely with local veterans, serving personnel and their families to make a positive difference to their lives. You will be part of a team that directly helps our Armed Forces community. Roles available include secretary, treasurer, fundraiser caseworker along with many more.



**Join us today and be part of something extraordinary.**

Call **0800 0325612**

Email [volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk)

Visit [ssafa.org.uk/newrecruits](http://ssafa.org.uk/newrecruits)



## RFEA The Forces Employment Charity



## ■ Royal Air Force Association VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - GWENT

**Could you give a little time to be a friendly face to someone in your community?**

Volunteer Befrienders wanted, flexible around you, to make friendly visits to RAF veterans.

**Could you make a difference to someone's life?**

**PLEASE GET IN TOUCH**

**email: [volunteers@rafa.org.uk](mailto:volunteers@rafa.org.uk) or 0800 018 2361**

**Find out more about our work at [www.rafa.org.uk](http://www.rafa.org.uk)**





# COVID 19

## Changes to Service

### **Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

[www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/emergencies-crime-prevention/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information/](http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/en/resident/emergencies-crime-prevention/coronavirus-covid-19-latest-information/)

### **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

[www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Coronavirus](http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Coronavirus)

### **Newport City Council**

[www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Coronavirus-COVID-19.aspx](http://www.newport.gov.uk/en/Council-Democracy/Coronavirus-COVID-19.aspx)

### **Monmouthshire County Council**

[www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/services/planning-for-emergencies/coronavirus/](http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/services/planning-for-emergencies/coronavirus/)

### **Torfaen County Council**

[www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/Homepage-Stories/COVID-19-Coronavirus.aspx](http://www.torfaen.gov.uk/en/AboutTheCouncil/Homepage-Stories/COVID-19-Coronavirus.aspx)

# Pen-y-Graig Woodland Centre

**Pen-y-Graig Ancient Woodland lies in the heart of the lower Wye valley just outside Monmouth in Gwent Wales on top of the Trellech range.**

It's a place steeped in heritage and mystery having played its part in key periods of Medieval and Industrial revolution history. This involved the training of some of the Welsh Long-bowmen who went to Agincourt in 1415, the production of charcoal to stoke the foundries of Redbrook and the hewing of Mill Stones which were distributed throughout the realm.

The woodland comprises 8 acres of Wild Cherry, Ash, Beech and Oak with a dedicated Hazel Coppice for the production of hurdles and other craft items. Together with a 18th Century stone barn this forms an integral piece of land rich in fauna and flora. It's a magical place of craggy mounds, inlets and shaded glades. A place of timelessness and a place of recovery from the worlds troubles.

**Between 2019 – 2021 the site will host a major pilot programme for the Welsh Government testing the viability of combining woodland regeneration with the use of volunteers drawn from the Emergency Services and Veterans of Gwent who are recovering from trauma related conditions.**

### **Project Aims:**

- Help the participants recover in a safe calm environment overseen by a high quality team of clinicians, therapists and woodland skills instructors.
- Provide training to recognised professional standards which will increase employment opportunities in Forestry related jobs such as tree surgery, horse logging, drystone walling and crafts.
- Increase the health of the woodlands timber stock and bio diversity with a well managed work schedule involving thinning, coppicing, tree planting and under storey care.
- Develop a sustainable funding structure involving sponsored participant bursaries, craft sales and charitable grants.
- Develop a tested and evaluated business model which can be replicated elsewhere in Wales by small woodland owners.

### **Donations & Volunteering:**

**Financial donations and legacies to our not for profit company Pen-y-Graig Woodland Centre would be most appreciated and a donation form can be sent out on application to [james@pen-y-graig.org](mailto:james@pen-y-graig.org) Volunteers are also most welcome to come and help us. Currently we need people who can.**

- Prepare the site before training and therapy sessions.
- Write funding grant requests.
- Help with administration jobs.
- Provide first aid medical cover on training days.
- Help collect and process cut timber.

### **Contact us:**

**Pen-y-Graig Woodland Centre,  
Glyn Road, Penallt,  
Monmouthshire, NP25 4AP  
W: [Pen-y-graig.org](http://Pen-y-graig.org)  
E: [James@pen-y-graig.org](mailto:James@pen-y-graig.org)  
T: +44 (0) 7813 299039**



# COMBAT STRESS

Self help for mental health - Online resources

'Self Help For Mental Health' resources for veterans, now live on the Combat Stress website.

There are a range of self-help video and interactive resources, at the moment focussing on low mood, managing anger and alcohol/substance use. Topics going live in the next week or so are PTSD, anxiety, sleep, grief, physical health, resilience and supporting family members.

Below is the direct link in to the materials, you can also navigate from the CS homepage, by clicking the 'Self Help COVID-19' button in the top navigation menu.

<https://www.combatstress.org.uk/mental-health-support-during-covid-19>

## Heritage Centre

Now Open to Visitors



Wednesdays 11am - 3pm

Saturdays 11am - 3pm

Next to the Old Gatre to Beachley Barracks

Everybody Welcome  
Come and enjoy a significant  
piece of local history

Contact Telephone: 07501 237052

## 614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron RECRUITING NOW IN YOUR AREA 02920 428050

- 20 Different ground based roles
- Competitive rates of pay
- Exciting opportunities
- World class training



## Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club

### ■ Blaenau Gwent

**Combined Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club**  
Brewers Fayre, Victoria Business Park, Waun-Lwyd, Ebbw Vale, NP23 8AN  
Ray Taylor: **07746 043666** Jim Warnock: **07523 582945**  
email: [cafvinc@gmail.com](mailto:cafvinc@gmail.com)

- Fourth Saturday of each Month 09.30 onwards.

### ■ Caerphilly

**Combined Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club**  
Toby Carvery, Corbett Lane, Pwll-Y-Pant, Caerphilly, CF83 3HX  
■ Every Saturday. Tel: **029 2086 7049**

### ■ Monmouthshire

**Combined Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club**  
Brewers Fayre, Westgate, Abergavenny, NP7 9LH  
Tel: **01873 776294**

- Meet 1st Saturday of the month from 09.30 am onwards.

Coach & Horses, Chepstow

Tel: **07539268440** email: [Davefoxfordbrown@gmail.com](mailto:Davefoxfordbrown@gmail.com)

- Meet 1st Saturday of the month from 09.30 am onwards.

Robin Hood Inn, 124 Monnow Street, Monmouth NP25 3EQ

Ray Taylor: **07746 043666** Jim Warnock: **07523 582945**

email: [cafvinc@gmail.com](mailto:cafvinc@gmail.com)

- Meet 3rd Saturday of Each Month - 09:30 onwards.

### ■ Newport

**Newport Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club**  
The Potters Pub, 22-24 Upper Dock Street, Newport, NP20 1DL  
Phone: **01633 223311** (Mark Hayden - Venue's number)  
Email: [Newport\\_AFVBC@outlook.com](mailto:Newport_AFVBC@outlook.com)

- Meet 1st Saturday of the month from 9.00am onwards.

- Meet 3rd Wednesday of the month from 09.00am onwards.

### ■ Torfaen

**Torfaen Armed Forces & Veterans Breakfast Club**  
The Crows Nest, Llangorse Road, Llanyravon, Cwmbran, NP44 8HU  
Phone: **07887 566048** Iain McGregor

- Meet 2nd Saturday of the month from 9.00am onwards.



## Community & Veteran Groups

### ■ Band of Brothers and Sisters Fellowship Hub

One-to-One Advice and Sports Recovery monthly sessions:  
**Newport Sports Village - 2nd Tuesday of every month, 11:30 - 14:30**  
 One-to-One Advice and model-making: Treforest Help for Heroes  
 Community Recovery Office. Fourth Tuesday of the month 10:30 - 13:30.

### ■ Change Step Wales

Change Step offers effective support for veterans in Wales - including dedicated services for those in crisis, older veterans, and people with mental health and substance misuse needs.

#### Drop ins:

**Caerphilly Coffee Morning** is the first Tuesday every month from 10:00hrs-12:00hrs Cedar Tree.

**Tredegar Coffee Morning** is the 3rd Tuesday every month from 10:00hrs-12:00hrs in Tredegar Library.

**Blaenavon Coffee Morning** is the First Wednesday every month from 10:00-12:00hrs in Blaenavon Surgery and Resource Centre.

### ■ CADESA (Cwmbran and District Ex-Services Association)

Ex service personal from all three services who meet every Wednesday evening at the Army Reserve Centre, Ty Coch Way, Cwmbran, at approx. 19:30hrs. **email:** bryncarr@hotmail.com

### ■ Caerphilly Royal British Legion

The Caerphilly and District Branch of the Royal British Legion meeting bi-monthly on the third Tuesday of the month at 7pm at the Caerphilly Visitor Centre, Lower Twyn Square, Caerphilly (next meeting is in January). The branch are always looking for new members... so if you're interested, please do come along!

You can also follow Caerphilly Branch of the Royal British Legion on Facebook by searching 'Royal British Legion Caerphilly Branch'.

### ■ Caerphilly Royal Welsh Veterans Association

We are a VETERANS group which meet the last Monday of every month at 1900 hrs. All arms are welcome, with lots going on so if you have a few hours to spare come along as there is lots going on.

Municipality Club, Market St, Caerphilly, CF83 1NX

### ■ Comrades of the Great War (Pontypool) Club

#### Date and times / location of meetings

Meetings held every 1st Tuesday of the month at 19:30 and generally finish around 20:30. Please contact Secretary - Caroline Coombes for more information, we welcome new members Military / Ex- service men and civilian members. Chairman - Bruce Kilshaw.

**Contact Details:** Ms Caroline Coombes - Branch Secretary.  
 Market St, Pontypool, Gwent NP4 6JNR Tel: **01495 762093**  
 Mobile: **07871974023** email: carolineclues62@gmail.com

### ■ Gwent RBL Contact

Contact: Gordon Hill - Gwent County Secretary  
 Royal British Legion. Tel: **07855 402493**

### ■ Help For Heroes

Help for Heroes Community Recovery Team supports serving personnel, veterans and their loved ones who are wounded, injured and sick in Wales & Hereford. We work with local organisations and other charities partners to ensure that we can support those affected by their military service, across the country. Complementing the facilities on offer at Help for Heroes national Recovery Centres, our expert team delivers tailored holistic support at accessible locations within the community.

**Contact:** 01443 808910 **Twitter:** @H4HWales

**Facebook:** Help for Heroes Community Recovery Wales

### ■ Newport

The Maindee Con Club, 26-28 Fair Oak Terrace, NP19 8FG

Meets on the first Tuesday of every month. We exist to have fun, provide a social and welfare network for our members and maintain great Royal Navy traditions. We welcome current and former Royal Naval Service personnel, their families and friends and anyone who supports our Royal Navy.

Contacts: Ken Lowe, Chairman

Peter Grey, Secretary [admin@newport-rna.co.uk](mailto:admin@newport-rna.co.uk)

Webpage: [Newport RNA](#)

### ■ Newport Veteran

Drop in every Friday 12-2pm. Bar Amber 36A Clarence Pl, Newport.

### ■ Rogerstone Royal British Legion

Meets 1st Friday of the month at 19:30 for a 20:00hrs start, at Rogerstone and Bassaleg Social Club, Tregwilym Road, Rogerstone, Newport.

### ■ Royal British Legion

Pop In Centres are the Legion's new High Street presence. Each centre offers a welcoming space for Service personnel, veterans and their families to get practical help and advice. You will also find representatives from Combat Stress and RFEA in some of the centres to help with your questions or needs.

#### Your local drop in:

18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF10 1PT 10am to 4pm, weekdays.

### ■ Royal Engineers Association (Newport and Cwmbran District Branch)

Army Reserve Centre, 100 Field Squadron (M), Chapman VC House, Ty Coch Way, Cwmbran. NP44 7HB.

**Meetings:** First Tuesday of each month starting at approx. 20:00hrs

### ■ Royal Navy Association (Chepstow & Districts)

RNA Chepstow & District Branch, Conservative Club & RBL, 10 Moor Street, Chepstow, Gwent, NP16 5DD

**Meetings:** We meet on the second Thursday of every month at 8pm. (Except August).



**Follow us on: Facebook Gwent Armed Forces Community & Twitter @GwentAFC** page that promotes the work & events for the Armed Forces Community!



## Reflections of VE Day 08 May 1945

**Edna 'Teddy' Leon -  
Nee LCpl Edna Wills**

Oh yes I remember where I was on VEDay.

I was waiting in Bristol for my overseas posting, hoping for somewhere exotic like Hong Kong or India or Singapore as lot of us girls hoped for. But that day at the NAAFI canteen we were all informed that there was to be a party in Bristol.

Oh it was wonderful all nations together all so very happy, Jamaican, Indian, Canadian, Americans all "whooping it Up" it was a such a sight to see and everyone so kind to each other.

The next day I was informed that I was posted to Bruges in Belgium, The Canadians were also enroute to Normandy and on the same ship, so the captain and I made the decision to keep the two parties apart and there was some Alpha hormones running rife so to elay any problems we kept both parties separate.



**Fisher Robert R.N.D.E.M.S  
JX556053 Able Seaman**

**Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships.**

My two brothers and were called up in the summer of 1939, I joined The Royal Navy as a D.E.M.S Gunner, my other two brothers one joined the Army and the other went into the RAF. Once I was swallowed up by the Royal Navy, I did not have much chance to return home as a lot of my service was in the Pacific.

We had a lot of fun with the Japanese to say the least when one day we were attacked by several Japanese planes, when one dropped a bomb right down the funnel of our ship. "I heard it go ching chong ching" below and then exploded, but I was still firing my gun as the deck lifted. Going up was not to bad but coming back down was a little hairy.

I then returned back to "Blighty" as the war in Europe had finished in the month of May 1945, at the train station at Cardiff as I was leaving the train I met my brothers who were also returning home on the same train on the same day.

We were glad all the shenanigans had ended and so pleased to see each other. So we decided to go for a pint at our local when we went in Dad was in the bar and really surprised to see his boys come home and on VE Day. We got very drunk that day and had a right old knee's up every one enjoyed themselves.



# BLESMA - Service Update

The Limbless Veterans (Wales and West)



**Blesma Wales have stopped all local activities until further notice but are still providing direct welfare support and offering grants to our members and widows to ensure that their needs are met quickly.**

The Support Officer (Tom) is also be dealing with Prosthetics issues and liaising with ALACs as usual in support of our members. The Support and Outreach Officers, along with the help of Blesma Volunteers and Members who are not 'at-risk,' are supporting with essential tasks such as shopping, paying bills, repairs to disability and mobility aids etc and offering befriending calls and contacts through Welfare and wider Volunteers. Blesma are working and collaborating closely with other services, 3rd sector, agencies and local community groups to provide help with War Pension, benefits and other entitlements issues, and are offering practical or emotional support to Blesma members who may be isolated or lonely in communities across Wales.

## Support In Our Area

In all aspects it is, as far as possible, "business as usual" with physical visits by Blesma Support Officers, Outreach Officers, volunteers and Welfare Representatives replaced by phone and video calls, with some staff even organising virtual events to replace physical get-togethers. Blesma has also developed online and video activities, reading groups and many other initiatives – including our **free Making Generation R Digital Resilience Resource** available for all secondary schools: <https://blesma.org/making-generation-r/>

Currently, the Blesma Support Officer will still carry out home visits in essential cases only, unless of course there is a clear risk. Regular contact with our more isolated and vulnerable members is priority. Blesma Wales are also connecting our digitally excluded members by issuing iPads, Samsung tablets and Kindles wherever appropriate.

## Activities and Events

Blesma has postponed all UK and Overseas Blesma Events until at least the end of June. All Activities and Events into July and August are under review. Local events are similarly affected, and Members are being contacted and updated accordingly. The Outreach Officer is carrying out virtual activities with members, including weekly Tea and Toast, Escape Rooms, Quiz's, and online lunches.

## Information for our Members and Supporting Agencies

Please know that Blesma will continue to support its Members in all the ways it can. Ours is an Association founded on a strong sense of community, and this community is more important now than ever.

If members require any additional support at this time or if agencies wish to refer a veteran for Blesma support (or find a Blesma member or widow in need) they can contact the

**Blesma Support Officer:**

**Tom Hall - tel: 077 8016 5085**

**e-mail: [bsowest@blesma.org](mailto:bsowest@blesma.org)**



**More Information here: <https://blesma.org/news-media/blesma-news/> or [www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)**

## Armed Forces Covenant across Gwent

The Covenant is a promise from the nation ensuring that those who serve and have served in the Armed Forces and their families are treated fairly.



**Lisa Rawlings** Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer Penallta House, Tredomen Park, Ystrad Mynach, Hengoed CF82 7PG

**01443 864447** **07717 467341** **@armedforces@caerphilly.gov.uk** **rawlil@caerphilly.gov.uk**

**Facebook** and **Twitter @GwentAFC** page that promotes the work & events for the Armed Forces Community!