

Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets

Tuesday 18th March 2014 - 12.15-13.15pm

Committee Room 4, Ty Hywel, National Assembly

Meeting Minutes

1. Chair's Welcome

Apologies where given for:

- Commodore Miller CBE RN is unable to attend - his deputy Commander Tom Herman will be representing him
- Colonel (Retd) N R Beard TD DL (Nick), Chief Executive RFCA for Wales is unable to attend he therefore asked his Chairman, Col Guy Clarke to represent RFCA for Wales but sadly he was also unable to attend

Everyone round the table introduced themselves (full attendance list available on request)

Chair explained the format of the meeting

Brigadier Napier was welcomed to his first CPG

2. Presentation by Dr Neil J. Kitchener and Lieutenant Colonel (Retd) John Skipper

– An update on the All Wales Veterans Health and Wellbeing Service and Veterans Mental Health – This presentation was made with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation

- History of the Veterans NHS
- Explanation that Cardiff is the Hub
- Only use evidence based treatments
- Working with veteran's charities

- All veterans with mental health should be referred to Veterans NHS Wales
- Local networks with veterans organisations
- ABMU has a very high referral rate

The talk was followed by a Q&A session – various matters were discussed including:

- Referral times/waiting times
- Demographic – mostly men
- PTSD isn't isolated – other factors such as alcohol and other mental health issues. This is alongside life style problems such as worklessness. It was noted that alcohol issues are referred and treated elsewhere.
- Patient experience
- Public Health Wales (PHW) review

Concern was expressed that there could be duplication of work with Combat Stress (CS). The Welsh Government fund CS. They operate a 6 week intensive course at 3 centre centres. There was a discussion on the benefits of inpatient and outpatient support - PDST does not need to be treated in an inpatient setting. There was also a discussion about referral between the NHS service and CS – it is not currently done. The NHS service treats people so they can stay at home and operates nearer people's homes than CS can. Dr Kitchener does meet with the CS support groups however.

Darren Millar: Issues with publicity and demand

- Lack of administration help
- It is an opt-in service and therefore there is only so much that can be done

John Skipper: Understanding and awareness

- Hywel Dda – Integrated Health care
- Local champions

- Need for coordination

Brigadier Gamble: capacity issues

- Discussion with Dr Kitchener on veterans coming to mental health Services often 13 or 14 year after serving in the forces

Royal British Legion: PHW review is very late – the Welsh Government should have done this when they first knew. Also noted that more coordination is needed with Combat Stress

Dr Kitchener and DM discussed the importance of publicity but also the need to deal with the current backlog. There was a discussion of more staff, particularly administration staff being needed. Dr Kitchener noted his concerns that the current administration staff are being asked to perform over their hours and above their pay scales.

It was agreed that DM would write to the Welsh Government highlighting:

- Administration staff
- Waiting times
- Welcome the review but ask them to deal with the issues that we know are a problem now eg. administration staff and capacity.

3. Presentation by Peter Evans from the Royal British legion – An update on Council tax changes and Social Care Charges and how those on War Pensions will be effected – A written briefing was provided to the CPG which can be provided on request

- PE discussed the current situation
- RBL have written to all local authorities in Wales asking them if they intend to fully disregard military compensation payment when mean testing for council tax – They have not heard back from all. DM agreed to write to all authorities that RBL had not heard from asking them to confirm their situation.

- The matter will be discussed at the Armed Forces Champion conference in May

Harriet Dean from RBL then provided us with an update in regards to Social Care changes

- There will be a disregarding of the first £10 of the war pension
- Viewing it as a compensation payment and not income
- NO local authorities are disregarding all of it to her knowledge
- They are looking at the extra support available
- This will also be discussed at the conference in May
- Universal Credit –War pensions naturally will be disregarded

4. Presentation by Lt Suzanne Lynch RNR, Dr Hicks and Mr Paul McCann on the Wales at War (W@W) Education programme – a PowerPoint was used that can be provide on request

- Currently the study and reporting of WW1 is basis, only focusing on the trenches and barbed wire, but there was much more to this conflict
- This project was a combined effort of many groups including teachers and professors
- Focus on local memorials
- WW1 is studied at Primary School
- Expanding peoples knowledge of the past beyond the images of the trenches
- Visiting the memorials and learning about them and the people on the memorials and looking at their back stories – Biographies will be collected and saved digitally
- This will create a digital catalogue of all the war memorials
- Key stage 2 and 3 focus
- Delivered digitally to the class room
- Cross curriculum output

- People will be able to access the children's biographies as they visit the memorials
- Recognition that some war memorials are sometimes local village halls etc
- Focus on names and stories – all stored on a mobile App
 - Where they lived
 - Where they fought
 - What they did before the war
 - Link that to future war graves
- Welsh Victoria Crosses etc will be marked on the time line
- Using other sources like newspapers
- They will then be discussing this project with their families and communities
- The importance of adding names to faces – serve as a catalyst for the community
- Older generations can pass on their stories
- Working with the national museum of Wales
- The digital platform makes it worldwide
- Transferable skills
- Giving Wales a WW1 legacy

This presentation was followed by a discussion

- DM agreed that this project was great idea and said that he would write a letter to the Minister and HLF to encourage them to financially support this project
- Currently the project is at a pilot stage
- 5 year funding – to take the project up to the anniversary of 1918 is the aim
- Launch the project on Armed Forces Day

4. There was no AOB