

Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets

Tuesday 7th October 2014 - 12.15-13.15pm

Committee Room 24, Ty Hywel, National Assembly

AGM Meeting Minutes

1. Chair's Welcome

Apologies where given for:

- Brigadier Gamble - 160 (Wales) Brigade
- Crd Tom Herman – Royal Navy: He retired on the 19th September
- Lieutenant Colonel Lance Patterson - the new Deputy Commander of 160 (Wales) Brigade is arriving now on the 15th October
- John Skipper
- Peter Evans – RBL
- David Meilding AM
- Mohammad Asghar AM

Those in attendance introduced themselves:

- Darren Millar AM - Chair
- Commodore Jamie Miller CBE, Naval Regional Commander of Wales and Western England - Royal Navy
- Air Cdre Adrian Williams - Royal Air Force
- Assistant Commander – Colonel Kevin Davies MBE RRC TD - 160 (Wales) Brigade
- Phil Jones - Royal British Legion
- Chris Downward - Veterans Agency and Pensions Committee and SAFA
- Clive Wolfendale - Chief Executive of CAIS
- Geraint Jones – CAIS
- Stephen Hughes - RFCA for Wales
- Dr Neil Kitchener - Veterans NHS Wales
- Trevor Edwards CMgr - Director Operations at the Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)
- Lisa Leece - Service delivery manager DMWS

- Byron Davies AM - National Assembly
- Mia Rees - PA to Darren Millar and CPG Secretary
- Mark Isherwood AM- National Assembly (arrived late at 1300)

2. Annual General Meeting (AGM) Business

Darren Millar AM (DM) was agreed as CPG Chair

Mia Rees was agreed as the CPG secretary

3. Change Step Programme by Clive Wolfendale - Chief Executive of CAIS and Geraint Jones of CAIS

This presentation was accompanied by a Power Point presentation which contains much of the information discussed. The presentation is available on request.

Leaflets were also distributed with information about the service – these can also be made available on request.

What does Change Step (CS) offer?

- ✓ Peer Mentoring
- ✓ Projects in Wales which DM has been involved in
- ✓ They come under the Drug and Alcohol Charity Wales (DACW) banner
- ✓ In 2012-2013 CS held focus groups with Veterans about what they wanted from CS
- ✓ CS is not purely a service that focuses on PTSD – they also deal with alcohol, drugs, employment etc.
- ✓ Focus on reaching out to veteran's who are hard to reach
- ✓ Close cooperation with local services
- ✓ CS acts as both a link and a signpost
- ✓ Working with the Police, prisons and the Courts
- ✓ Prevention of far-right groups attracting and targeting veterans
- ✓ Community events
- ✓ 8 Drop in locations across Wales
- ✓ AF convent links

- ✓ Not just the three forces but CS also works with the Emergency services e.g. Fire and ambulance
- ✓ CS has been focusing on early service leavers which make up a quarter of all the Veterans they help
 - There was a discussion on why early service leavers often needed help including suggestions that some only joined up because they couldn't think of anything else to do or could do
 - With this group there are a lot of issues with employment

Questions were taken from the floor

What is 'General Support'? (This was a category on the chart explaining what sort of areas CS helps people with along with employment, benefits, housing etc.) – Dr.

Kitchener

- These are people with multiple problems who come to CS with the phrase “My life is a mess!”
- They often need help in quite a few areas such as relationships, housing and welfare
- CS refers these people to the various organisations which can help them but at the same time act as a solid base to coordinate everything

Funding

- CS have £1 million over 2 years
- There was a discussion on repeat funding guarantees

Mentors – who are they?

- Ex-army mostly but then the majority of service users are army

What are CS doing in South Welsh Wales? Are they looking to move there? – Byron

Davies AM

- Yes, but they only launched in North Wales a few months ago and Wales wide a few weeks ago
- CS are looking to do more drop in centres in South West Wales – Byron can recommend some locations – CS will communicate with Byron

4. Update from Dr Neil Kitchener - "How we are using recent £100,000 funding to tackle waiting lists in Veterans NHS Wales"

This presentation was accompanied by a Power Point presentation which contains much of the information discussed. The presentation is available on request.

- The aim of the funding was to reduce waiting lists
 - The raised staffing levels with information on who had been employed in which Health Boards and where there were still vacancies was detailed on the Power Point
 - The whole service offers 32 ½ days a week now
 - Everyone gets a hour long slot
 - There has been an increase in both clinicians and admin staff across all Health Boards
 - This has naturally dropped waiting times
 - The £100,000 of funding has in the short term achieved its aim
 - There is still a problem recruiting in Hywel Dda – They are still looking for a Band 7 therapist to be based in Haverford West. To date there has been no applications. The location is likely to be off putting for some but the waiting list is not huge at this Health Board.
 - There has been no funding increase for the service since 2009 apart from the one off £100,000
 - The Welsh Government has not provided an idea about further funding yet – In Questions it was asked how much the service would need each year on top of current funding to run at an efficient level and Dr Kitchener said that £100,000 a year would be needed ideally
- Coasters promoting Veterans NHS Wales have been sent to ever GP practice in Wales and every member of the CPG was also given one - raising awareness of the service is still important
- Public Health report 15 recommendations
 - The Minister has not yet signed the recommendations off
- Currently Veterans NHS Wales can't help the families of service personnel or forces personnel currently at home as they don't have the capacity

- In Questions Dr Kitchener was asked more about this issue and it was commented that Veterans NHS Wales was working with Change Step who did provide a service of mental health support for partners
- In Questions it was also noted that the MOD do have a system where there are those who monitor and regularly visit forces personnel at home

Questions:

- It was noted that a lot of service personnel do not ask for help with their mental health whilst in the services as they worry that it will affect their career progression.

ACTION: DM said that he would write to the Minister regarding the funding year on year for Veterans NHS Wales and publishing the recommendations in the Public Health Report

5. Presentation by Trevor Edwards CMgr, Director Operations at the Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)

This presentation was accompanied by a Power Point presentation which contains much of the information discussed. The presentation is available on request.

Leaflets were also distributed with information about the service – these can also be made available on request.

Introduction on DMWS

- Working in hospitals and recovery centres thanks to Libor Funding
- They are now extending around Wales
- St Johns and the British Red Cross act as parent organisations (although they do not receive funding from these organisations) - DMWS also work with Help for Heroes, the Royal British Legion and SAFFA
- Work in hospitals in war zones
 - Just leaving Afghanistan and going into Sierra Leone
- Work as a MOD contractor
- Staff are made up of many ex-military and ex-NHS personnel

- Working with Veterans is a new area for DMWS
- DMWS are an impartial and independent organisation
 - They do not need to report everything to the change of command – they are confidential
- Most of their work is based around the initial assessment and following up sign posting
- Part of their role is to accompany family to critical care and specialist units to offer them wider support
- Work in Military hospitals
- Leasing with issues around compassionate leave
- They recruit a specialist and Experienced Team
 - Everyone is highly trained, uniformed and deployable
 - DMWS offer a level three Diploma in Welfare studies
 - This includes Red Cross first responder training
 - It is not military specific
- They now have a very small team in Northern Ireland who work with the Irish Republic
- They have a very wide variety of people and organisations whom they can refer to
- Two professionals based in Wales – one in the north and one in the south
 - But they are also looking at volunteers getting involved

Questions:

Veterans help

- DMWS work with a lot of other organisations which they can refer Veterans to
- Location wise DMWS tend to focus on high pick up and return areas

Spread in Wales

- One in Brecon
- One in Abergele based at the Red Cross
 - Both work with main and district hospitals in the Welsh NHS

Funding

- Libor funding will last another 18 months
- DMWS are also looking at more sustainable funding for the future

Level 3 Diploma

- It is available to those outside the organisation
 - Help for Heroes, Royal British Legion and the Police have made use of this qualification

Total Staff

- 47 staff / welfare officers

6. Phil Jones from the Royal British Legion (RBL) – Quick update on the new Cardiff and Wrexham Pop-in facilities

- a. The pop up facility in Cardiff High Street and Wrexham has now opened
 - i. This is a big step in encouraging people to come in and see them
- b. At the Party conferences this year RBL launched their manifesto for 2015. The full manifesto can be found at: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/manifesto-2015> but some of the main points include:
 - i. Armed forces widows keeping pensions if they co-habit or re-marry
 - ii. Free hearing aids
 - iii. Help for early service leavers

ACTION: Ask the Welsh Government about the BRL manifesto and what they are doing to meet its aims and objectives

7. Discussion on the Scottish Veterans Commissioner

- Darren introduced this discussion explaining that he had asked the Welsh Government for their thoughts on a Scottish Style Veterans Commissioner but it had been a week reply
- The easy answer would be to see how the Scottish Commissioner programme goes
- BRL:

- There is missing coordination currently
- Wales could lead the way
- Armed Forces Commissioner rather than just veterans
- DM: Wales has lead the way in regards to the commissioner model
- Assistant Commander – Colonel Kevin Davies MBE RRC TD: Commissioners do have a real voice in Wales

8. AOB

- a. Colonel Davies: Today's focus has been very veterans focused. There has been a lot happening in the cadet world.
 - i. DM told the CPG that he has written to the MOD about the changes in the funding of the cadets service
 - ii. Colonel Davies: There is evidence that all Wales cadet groups will disappear
 - iii. Commodore Jamie Miller CBE, Naval Regional Commander of Wales and Western England: There will be no pay for the staff who run the cadets
 - iv. ACTION; DM: Will discuss this matter at his next meeting with the Wales office and will also seek to meet with the Minister with oversight for cadets in Wales

DM thanked everyone for attending and said that minuets for the meeting would be sent out in due course.