

Armed Forces Covenant across Wales

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.

The Covenant at a local level aims to:

- Encourage communities to support the Armed Forces community in their areas and to nurture public understanding and awareness among the public of issues affecting the Armed Forces community.
- Recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the Armed Forces community, including an individual's commitment when serving to potentially be placed in harm's way.
- Encourage activities which help to integrate the Armed Forces community into local life.
- Encourage the Armed Forces community to help and support the wider community, by participating in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.



The Armed Forces Covenant is supported at a local level by a partnership agreement between statutory, military and voluntary sector agencies who work together to honour and implement the national Armed Forces Covenant.

Armed Forces Covenant Training Package

The vast majority of the 2.8 million ex-Servicemen and women living in Britain today have successfully adapted to civilian life, putting the skills and experience they acquired while serving in the Armed Forces to good use. However, a significant minority can be in need of support either at the point of discharge or many years afterwards.

This e-learning has been developed by WLGA. It explains the commitment of the Armed Forces Covenant and how it can be honoured and implemented in the Community. It will help you understand and apply the principles of the Covenant at a local level. It also provides sources of further information and support.

www.covenantwales.wales/e-learning/

If you would like bespoke training for your department please contact your Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer

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

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND 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.

For more information:

www.covenantfund.org.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:

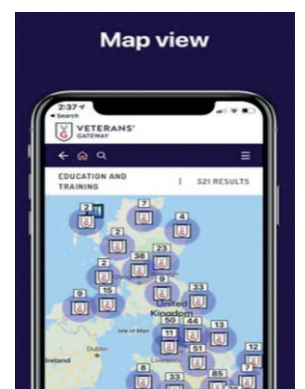
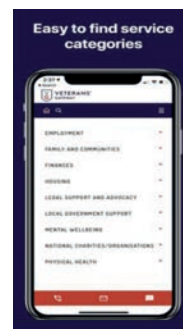
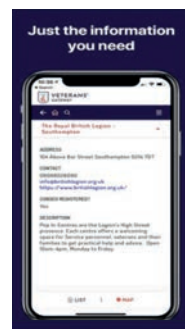
■ Calling 0808 802 1212 ■ Texting 81212

■ Visiting www.veteransgateway.org.uk

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>



AFC Liaison Officers in Wales

	LOCAL AUTHORITY
1	Monmouthshire
2	Newport
3	Torfaen
4	Blaenau Gwent
5	Caerphilly
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Lisa Rawlings email: rawlil@caerphilly.gov.uk

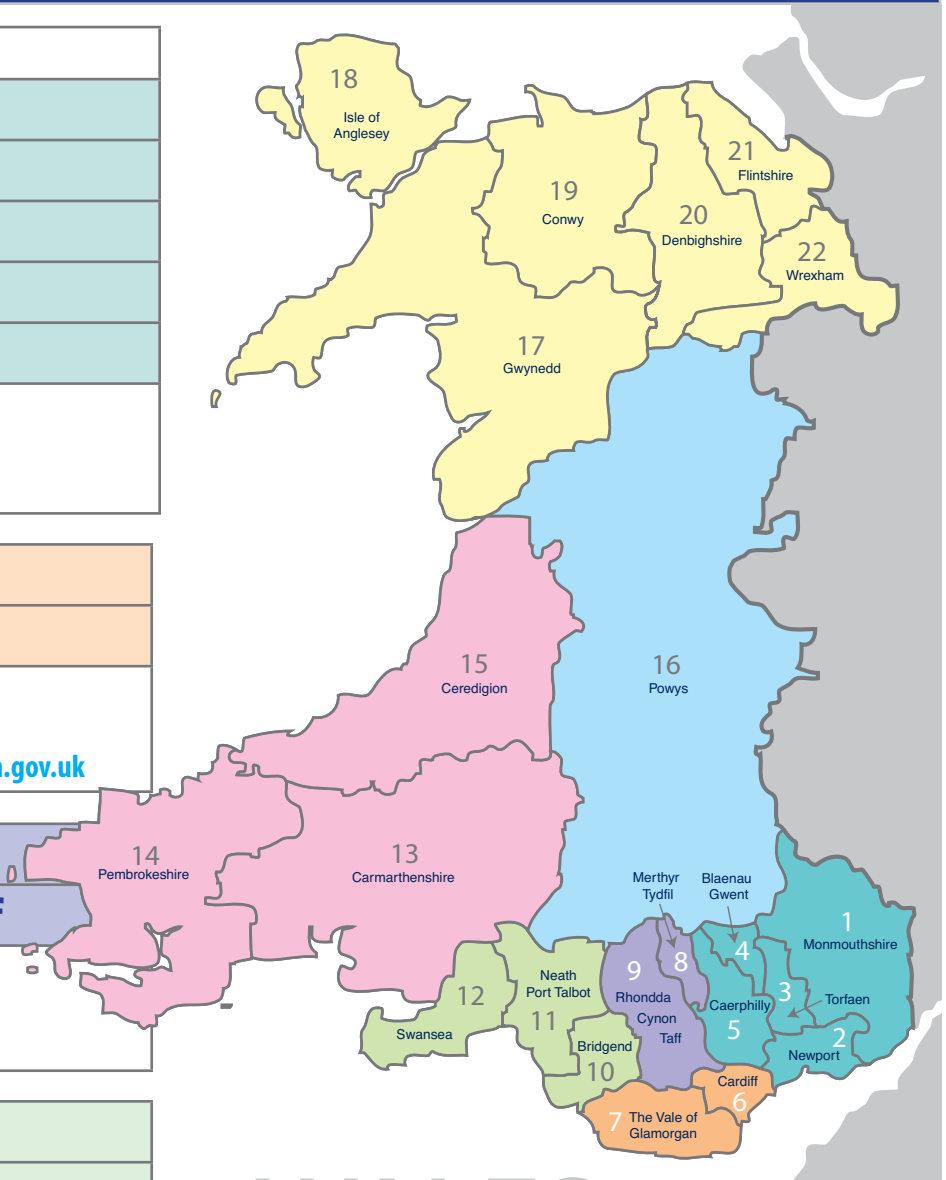
6	Cardiff
7	Vale of Glamorgan
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Abigail Warbrton email: awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

8	Merthyr
9	Rhondda Cynon Taff
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Jamie Ireland email: Jamie.L.Ireland@rctcbc.gov.uk

10	Bridgend
11	Neath Port Talbot
12	Swansea
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer To be confirmed

13	Camarthenshire
14	Pembrokeshire
15	Ceredigion
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Hayley Edwards email: HREdwards@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

16	Powys
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Andy Jones email: andy.jones@powys.gov.uk



WALES

	LOCAL AUTHORITY
17	Gwynedd
18	Isle of Anglesey
19	Conwy
20	Denbigshire
21	Flintshire
22	Wrexham
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Stephen Townley email: Stephen.Townley@wrexham.gov.uk

Armed Forces Champions



Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

Cardiff Cllr Huw Thomas
email: huw.thomas@cardiff.gov.uk

Vale of Glamorgan Cllr Eddie Williams
email: edwilliams@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Merthyr & RCT

Merthyr Cllr Andrew Barry
email: andrew.Barry@merthyr.gov.uk

RCT Cllr Maureen Webber
email: maureen.webber@rctcbc.gov.uk

South West Wales

Bridgend Cllr Richard Young
email: cllr.Richard.Young@bridgend.gov.uk

Neath Port Talbot Cllr Chris James
email: cllr.c.james@npt.gov.uk

Swansea Cllr Wendy Lewis
email: cllr.Wendy.Lewis@swansea.gov.uk

Swansea Cllr Alyson Pugh
email: cllr.Alyson.Pugh@swansea.gov.uk

West Wales

Ceredigion Cllr Paul Hinge
email: paul.Hinge@ceredigion.gov.uk

Pembrokeshire Cllr John Cole
email: cllr.john.cole@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Carmarthenshire Cllr David Jenkins
email: DMJenkins@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Cllr Brian Thomas
email: brian.Thomas@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Caerphilly Cllr Alan Higgs
email: higgasa@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monmouth Cllr Lisa Dymock
email: lisaDymock@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Newport Cllr Mark Spencer
email: mark.spencer@newport.gov.uk

Torfaen To be confirmed

Powys

Powys Cllr Rosemarie Harris
email: rosemarie.harris@powys.gov.uk

North Wales

Anglesey Cllr Richard Dew
email: richarddew@anglesey.gov.uk

Conwy Cllr Liz Roberts
email: cllr.liz.roberts@conwy.gov.uk

Flintshire Cllr Andy Dunbobbin
email: andrew.dunbobbin@flintshire.gov.uk

Gwynedd Cllr Thomas Ioan Ceredig
email: cynghorydd.ioanthomas@gwynedd.gov.uk

Wrexham Cllr David Griffiths
email: david.Griffiths@wrexham.gov.uk

Denbighshire Richard Mainon
email: richard.Mainon@denbighshire.gov.uk

Gwent

Blaenau Gwent

Bomber crash crew remembered

9th December 2020 marked the 80th anniversary of the T2520 wellington bomber crash where six brave young men lost their lives.

Tredegarr Town Council hold a memorial service at the crash site every November and also on significant anniversaries of the crash. Due to Covid restrictions, a small group (Cllr Alyson Tippings, Cllr Sean Rees and Annette Edwards) made their way to Cefn yr Ystrad, high above Trefil village and quarry to pay their respect. A short service was held and a wreath made by the Sirhowy Woodlands group was laid.

The crew had set out from RAF Marham at 17.20 on 8th Dec 1940 in their Wellington Bomber heading towards Bordeaux, France. The raid was noted as a success with several targets being hit. On their return, Bomber T2520 experienced bad weather and thick cloud and was separated from the rest of the squadron. The basic and primitive instrumentation led them off course and running low on fuel, they began their descent but instead of being over the lowlands of East Anglia they were heading towards the Brecon Beacons. The flight ended on 9th December at 3.12 on the rocky outcrop of Cefn Yr Ystrad to the north of Trefil village. There were no survivors.

Those who lost their lives were Sergeant David Ernest Wallace, a Volunteer reservist with the Royal Air Force from Southend-on-Sea; Sergeant Reginald Brown serving with the Royal New Zealand Air Force age 22; Sergeant Stanley Gordon Howard, of the Royal Air Force; Sergeant Hylton Daniel Ellis of the Royal Air Force age 26; Sergeant Pilot David Mills of the Royal Air Force volunteer reserve age 21; Pilot Officer Albert Tindall a native of Australia of the Royal Air Force age 21.



Wreath – made by Sirhowy Woodlands group Service – Service with Garn Felen in the background, Cllr Tippings leading the service and Cllr Res with the wreath.

Cairn2 – Laid wreaths at the main cairn and in the background is another cairn that marks the location of the other crash wreckage.

Veteran mental wellbeing training & coaching

Many people are struggling with their mental health, now more than ever.

YourNorth 
Veteran Support

Working from home, away from friends & family and lack of face-to-face support. In addition, veterans are faced with other challenges and when they leave the Service, this may be the first time where they feel they are truly on their own and have to fully provide for themselves and their families. Military life breeds a high level of resilience which can sometimes work against someone's ability to seek help to move forward in civilian life. It could be argued by some veterans that they never really 'fit-in', and as a result, many servicemen and women experience difficulties with their mental health. This is often as a result of active service or challenges with the transition out of the military. Also, a lot of military trades and skills are not transferrable, therefore they potentially face issues with gaining employment. It's a perfect storm to brew mental ill health.

Kelly & Jamie Farr are both proud veterans with a combined 41 years service in the Royal Air Force. Kelly was an Avionics Technician and left the RAF in March 2020 and Jamie was a Mechanical Technician and left in September 2020. Kelly & Jamie knew they wanted to raise their family in Wales when they returned to civilian life, and decided to settle in Blaina, Blaenau Gwent. During their final years of Service, they embarked on an epic personal and professional development journey which exposed them to the incredible benefits of helping others. They are both certified teachers, qualified mental health trainers, master practitioners in neuro-linguistic programming, coaches, hypnotherapists, and Kelly is also a mindfulness teacher.

Following their exit from the Service they set up YourNorth and launched the business during lockdown in March 2020. They have also recently set up a community interest company, YourNorth Veteran Support. They offer accredited First Aid for Mental Health training courses, 1:1 coaching and wellbeing workshops covering topics such as stress, resilience, happiness, kindness, sleep, mindfulness, communication and goal setting. All services can be delivered in person and also online, which makes them accessible to the people that really need their help.

They are regularly contacted by members of the veteran community who express a need for their services, and through YourNorth Veteran Support, they aim to provide this mental wellbeing training to the veteran community throughout Wales for free. "We understand the potential challenges faced by the veteran community and feel passionately about helping as many as we can, by educating and empowering not just the veteran, also their immediate support network."

They are in the early stages of initiating an outreach programme to engage with veteran hubs and charities within Wales to inform them of the services they provide and to offer support where needed.

To find out more about how Kelly & Jamie can support you, please visit their website www.yournorth.co.uk You can also contact them directly at info@yournorth.co.uk or call 02922 520712

Caerphilly



Council appoint Royal British Legion as Honorary Freeman of the County Borough

Caerphilly County Borough Council have appointed the Royal British Legion as Honorary Freeman of the Borough in recognition of their 100th Year Anniversary on 15th May 2021 and to honour the charitable work of the organisation supporting ex-service men and women and their families.

This has been presented to give public recognition to the recipient as an expression of the high esteem in which they are held by Caerphilly County Borough Council and the people of the County Borough on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Royal British Legion.

A Borough Council can grant the Freedom of the Borough to "persons of distinction and persons who have, in the opinion of the Council, rendered eminent services to the Borough". In order to grant the Freedom of the Borough, a resolution must be passed by not less than two thirds of the members voting at a meeting of the Council specially convened for the purpose.

The tradition of Boroughs conferring the Freedom goes back to ancient times when the Royal Charter Boroughs were almost, if not entirely, self-governing. Originally, such conferment conveyed special privileges of various kinds upon the recipient that could involve the right to vote, property and local taxation benefits. Today, the conferment is purely honorary.

Councillor Andrew Whitcombe the former Armed Forces Champion submitted a nomination form, which has been endorsed by the current Armed Forces Champion Councillor Alan Higgs. The nomination specifically outlines the reasons for consideration of the Royal British Legion on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary which will be achieved on 21st May 2021.

Councillor Andrew Whitcombe wrote, "I formally request that, on behalf of the people of Caerphilly County Borough and elected members of the council, we proceed to recognise and acknowledge the incredible work of the Royal British Legion on the 100th anniversary of its formation.

"The Legion was established to care for those who had suffered as a result of service during the First World War. And they have been helping the Armed Forces community and their families ever since."

Monmouthshire

Residents are being urged to make use of a wide network of help and support on offer by Monmouthshire County Council and its partners.

The support comes as Wales enters a fifth week of lockdown measures, with millions of people across the UK staying at home. The Community and Partnership Development team are reminding residents they are on hand to help anyone who may be experiencing issues from accessing food and essential items to those who may be seeking support for their mental and physical health.

The Community and Partnership Development team, along with key partners, have already played a pivotal role in the COVID-19 response. During the first national lockdown in March 2020, they helped bring together an army of volunteers to support Monmouthshire's most vulnerable residents and people needing to shield. In recent weeks, with the severity of the pandemic increasing and the heightened risks of a new strain of the virus, the need to help people who may be vulnerable or those without a support network is paramount.

It is hoped residents experiencing any sort of issue will contact the team in order for a suitable mechanism of support to be identified to suit their needs. Collaborative working with key partners including GAVO, Mind Monmouthshire and Monmouthshire's housing service means they are able to offer support such as access to food and prescriptions, telephone befrienders, pen pals, a supported online shopping service, help with using digital devices to connect with family or others, wellbeing opportunities and support with mental health. The team will work with individuals to explore the best options and have already helped over 1,200 residents since the start of 2020.

Cabinet Member for Community Development and Social Justice, Councillor Sara Jones said: "Our communities have remained resilient through these difficult times but we know there are many people facing challenging circumstances. With the significant impact on our economy and many people facing job losses, we want to remind people that they do not need to struggle in silence. Our colleagues are ready and waiting to help people whether it be accessing foodbanks, support with mental health or even if someone is unable to pick up prescriptions while we are in lockdown.



“Collaborative working with this wide network of organisations allows us to ensure a person has the correct help and expertise required to support their needs. I would like to thank our partners and our Community and Partnerships team for continuing to go above and beyond in what’s been the most challenging period in a generation.”

Anyone wishing to access help and support is asked to contact: partnerships@monmouthshire.gov.uk or call **01633 644 696**

Torfaen

Remembrance competition

Leading up to Remembrance Sunday, Torfaen schools took part in a Remembrance competition.

Primary school pupils were tasked with creating an art entry, whilst secondary school pupils had to get their creative writing caps on to produce a literary entry.

We can now reveal the winners of both competitions!

Congratulations to Poppy Higgs at Greenmeadow Primary School who has won a £100 WH Smith voucher and £100 for her school.



Llantarnam Grange Art Centre in adjudicating said:

“What a wonderful selection of work – such thoughtful, poignant work from our young people. Creative, innovative use of techniques, beautiful personal tributes to family members. It was a really tough one to choose! But we’ve chosen The winner for it’s beautiful simplicity. We would also like to commend Leo from Maendy Primary School for his work.”



The winner of the Torfaen Secondary Schools competition is Emily Brown from Croesyceiliog School. She won a £100 WH Smith voucher and £100 for her school.

Afon Llwyd Writers in adjudicating said:

“The winning entry was a wonderfully strong poem, beautiful imagery; very touching. We enjoyed reading each of the poems. It’s wonderful to see a new generation of poets emerging in Torfaen and we encourage each entrant to keep writing. We would also like to commend Sienna Whittaker from Croesyceiliog School.”

Both pupils were presented with vouchers by Torfaen Armed Forces Champion and Blaenavon ward councillor, Cllr Alan Jones.

The Competition was funded as part of the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. Torfaen County Borough Council wishes to thank all pupils who sent in entries, Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre, Afon Llwyd Writers and the Trust Fund for making this possible.



Newport Veterans Hub



Newport Veterans Hub is now open every Thursday 12:00 - 18:00 we re-opened this year as an essential service on 14th January.

We have match day Hub's at Rodney Parade Stadium with opportunities for veterans their partner or carer and children to watch home league games free of charge - Newport County - Dragons Rugby. We take a group of veterans or a veteran with their family to watch sport, we support veterans that suffer with mental health one to one and run these days separately.

Newport Veterans hub aims to open up opportunities to veterans to take part in new activities or hobbies they may have not had the opportunity to take part in. We have received funding from the lotto awards for all to run activity sessions that will take place every Thursday 16:00-17:30 with activities catered for all ages and abilities. This will start in April and is not only the veteran but also their partners and children with opportunities for player meets where they can ask questions and also have opportunities for pictures and autographs throughout the year.

Both clubs fully support our initiatives and we have many exciting plans for this year. We would like to thank the Lotto Community fund for providing funding for our Dragons Project.



Our nutritious meals project ran successfully and we were able to provide veterans and carers/partners a hot meal when they attend our hub free of charge 50+ and 2 meals per day that we delivered to vulnerable and shielding veterans and partners or carer at their home address. This was designed to help our members to keep safe from the virus. Meals were provided to our most vulnerable veterans in Newport and surrounding areas until the project finished 29th March, We successfully delivered 600 meals.

After a successful trial last year, We are planning to Offer further training courses to veterans and their partners in mental health first aid and other courses to give them tools to spot the early signs of mental health within their home and to act early we have designed a course specially to support the family unit FASTT Family applied

support to trauma will be available this year. This is available to veterans their partner or care and children 16+. NVH is unique in the fact that we have two teams supporting our initiative giving us the opportunity to use rugby & football to tackle a number of issues, Including, Loneliness, isolation, mental health support, wellbeing, help overcoming a fear of crowded places & noisy environments and we plan to expand on this with the help of other veterans charities and us being able to sign post veterans & their families to them for further support.

People can offer their support by choosing to support our hub via the **Veteransraffle.UK** 55 members through this avenue it will cover our annual costs £3120 for our drop in hub. This is £10pm and will give the opportunity to win up to £25,000 in their monthly prize draw. We are all volunteers and by helping us to secure our annual costs we are able to offer consistency to our members at a sustainable cost of only £60 per week!

Damon Rees Trustee at NVH will provide as a Peer Mentor with Veterans NHS Wales in (ABUHB) in partnership with Newport Veterans Hub will provide Best use of Peer Mentor to support recovery and improvement of mental health needs of veterans currently on the treatment waiting list.

Available to patient group:

Veterans who have been assessed by veterans therapist and have been taken on by the team for treatment for service related difficulties. We offer the opportunity for veterans that struggle in crowded and noisy environments we use our veterans hub open every Thursday 12:00-18:00 to have them within the grounds of the stadium and get them accustomed and familiar with their environment, showing them our seating area and the closest exit points, toilets etc.

This helps to build their confidence to attend our match day hub where we arrive 2hrs before Ko this gives them the opportunity to withdraw from the stadium if they start to feel uncomfortable as the crowds start to come in and it becomes busier.

Veterans and their partners/carers can also access training courses that we will run from our hub with work accredited qualifications in:

- **Mental health first aid lv1+2**
- **TRM with active listening and counselling skills**
- **3 day First aid at work**
- **FASTT**

Info@newportveteranshub.org.uk

www.newportveteranshub.org.uk/contact-us/

Contact number: 07735301163

Gwent Events

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: **07871 974023** email: carolineclues62@gmail.com

■ Gwent RBL Contact

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

■ Newport

The Maindee Con Club, 26-28 Fairoak 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
Webpage: [Newport RNA](#)

■ Newport Veteran

Drop in every Thursday 12:00 - 18:00hrs
Newport Veterans Hub Rodney parade stadium.

■ 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

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!

Gwent

Update from Regional Armed Forces Officer – Lisa Rawlings

Hi! I am Lisa and am the Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer for the 5 local authorities of Gwent. It has been my privilege to work with the LA's over the past few years on implementing the Armed Forces Covenant.



I spent 25 years in the RAF with tours worldwide including Northern Ireland, Germany, Cyprus, Afghanistan and the Falklands. My role was Flight Operations but even had a stint as an RAF Recruiter!

I have been extremely well supported by all at the local authorities and we have achieved so much over the past years however, there is still more to do. We have amended the housing policies to ensure a consistent and fair approach across the region; introduced Guaranteed Interview Schemes and I conduct training to frontline staff on the Armed Forces Covenant (currently online due to restrictions). There are some great projects in the area conducted by local veterans and the armed forces community including the Newport Veterans Hub which has gone strength to strength and a vital source of support. I would like to see more of these in Gwent and I know there are few more in the pipeline.

A vital piece of work is trying to find the service children in our schools to ensure they have the support that they may need. If your child is a service child please let your school know.

Collaboration is key and the public bodies, 3rd sector organisations, military and armed forces community are working hard to ensure that no one faces disadvantage due to their service. I welcome the Armed Forces Covenant being enshrined in law this year but I am confident that we will still work together for this to be the best place for the Armed Forces Community.

If you want to know more or attend one of the training sessions please get in touch armedforces@caerphilly.gov.uk

Gwent Police

Gwent Police has supported the Armed Forces community over the last couple of years, following the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant Pledge in 2018.

Gwent Police has a strong commitment to valuing difference and encouraging inclusivity - both within our organisation and through the service we provide. One of the ways that we can ensure we deliver a service that meets the needs of the public is to have a workforce that reflects our communities. This means ensuring that we attract, recruit and retain a diverse workforce.

We currently employ a number of Armed Forces Veterans, however we want to increase this. We recognise the value and skills you can bring to our organisation and we encourage you to take a look at our current opportunities [Vacancies | Gwent Police](#) and join us.

As part of the national uplift programme, we are increasing the number of police officers we employ in Gwent Police. We have a rolling programme of campaigns and are likely to be opening a recruitment advert for Police Officers in June 2021. We have a broad range of police staff vacancies that are advertised every Thursday on our vacancy page, we also have Community Support Officers and a range of volunteering roles including Special Constables. Our Special Constable campaign will open in March, this is an excellent opportunity to join the police service and be part of the community.



If you have any questions regarding our opportunities or the recruitment process, please get in touch with Clare or Brian from our Positive action Team



**Heddlu
Gwent
Police**

**Positive.Action@gwent.police.uk
We look forward to hearing from you!**

Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Mass Vaccination Programme



We want to pay tribute and say a huge thank you to our Armed Forces colleagues who have provided amazing support to the Health Board throughout the Covid-19 pandemic to a variety of teams and services to ensure our patients and service users receive the best possible care.

We now have members of the Armed Forces at all of our Mass Vaccination Centres across the Health Board area. They have received training and are working along side our existing staff undertaking a range of roles from meeting and greeting patients and staff attending for vaccination as well as delivering the vaccine. Here are just a few of them proudly working in the Cwmbran Vaccination Centre this week.

We are also proud to be able to vaccinate the Veterans who live in our local community:



Two RAF veterans, Ronald Maidment and Ronald Percival, both 93, received their vaccinations at an Aneurin Bevan University Health Board vaccination centre recently.

Mr Maidment joined the RAF in 1945, He said "It was a nice surprise to see RAF here helping give out the vaccine." His daughter Karen added, "Dad was so pleased to see RAF here and it's been very well organised. It's a day to remember in history."

Former RAF Sergeant Ronald Percival, served across the world with the RAF in his 22-year service. He commented, "I really enjoyed my time in the RAF and it was wonderful to see them here today helping people get a vaccine."

South West Wales

Covering the Bridgend, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea Local Authority areas.

Bridgend Carers Centre



Recognising that many of their service users were Veterans and believing that there were more 'Carers' and the 'Cared For' in the Armed Forces Community, the Centre had backing from Bridgend Council and funding from the Welsh Government to run a specific project. This project really proved its worth during the Pandemic as over the last 12 months they have provided a service that we believe is unmatched, as evidenced from the wonderful feedback from the veterans and their families.

During this time they have distributed over 60 tablet devices to keep the veteran Carers and the Cared For electronically connected, resulting in some individuals over 90 years of age being able to communicate with their family. They provided over 50 sets of exercise equipment to keep their clients as fit and healthy as they can be, including one individual that used the exercise bands while confined to bed to keep upper body strength. The exercise bands have also had a positive impact on an individual with COPD and other client's mental and physical wellbeing. The Carers Centre delivered over 50 "Cream Teas" during Armed Forces Week, over 20 Christmas Dinners, and made

over 800 welfare calls. The Centre continues to identify, advise and support Veteran Carers and the Cared For, as well as looking for other opportunities to support the veteran community.

www.bridgendcarers.co.uk

email: enquiries@bridgendcarers.co.uk or Tel: **01656 658479**

Connecting Swansea's Cadets and Veterans



At a recent Swansea Council's Armed Forces Covenant Signatories Panel, one of the topics discussed was the isolation and loneliness of some, particularly older, veterans during the pandemic. It was also noted that many of the cadet community activities had been curtailed.

Therefore, the Lord Lieutenant's Deputy who has been assigned the role of promoting the cadet forces in the area, together with the many organisations that support veterans in our community, decided to collaborate on a project to encourage communication between the older and younger generations of our Armed Forces family. They are now looking at ways to safely, virtually buddy up cadets with older or isolated veterans, as they have a common point of reference for conversations, it was also felt that each could gain from these interactions.

For more info on Swansea Armed Forces Signatories Panel, email: g.c.halfpenny@npt.gov.uk

Neath Port Talbot's Virtual Events



Neath Port Talbot Council did not want their residents to miss out on commemorating and recognising the contribution of our Armed Forces to our Community during the Pandemic. Therefore, their successful annual Armed Forces Festival, the VE Day and VJ Day Anniversaries, Armed Forces Week, along with Remembrance Services, all went 'virtual'.

Live and recorded events, along with a host of community activity, were streamed over the internet and social media. There were contributions from The British Legion, the Royal Marines Sweetheart Kirsten Orsborn and many more performers and community groups from across the County Borough, those virtual events can still be accessed on the Council's web site. Having scored thousands of viewings, it was obvious that by using the internet and social media platforms, that they were reaching out to far more in the community, than just holding our live events with a bit of social media coverage.

Having said that we all look forward to a time when we will once again be able to shake the hand of comrades, pat heroes on the back, and not be embarrassed to shed a tear amongst the assembled crowds at community and commemorative events, however, a greater content on our on-line services will continue to be a facet of those events, to ensure that they are accessible to everyone and remain a feature in the lives of younger and more computer savvy generations.

Events are on the Council's web site www.npt.gov.uk (Search for the Armed Forces Covenant).



Welcome, my name is Abigail Warburton and I am the Veteran advice officer for the Vale of Glamorgan Council and the newly appointed Armed Forces Liaison Officer

for the Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff Council. I am very proud of my role as the veteran advice officer over the past two years and I feel like I have made a positive difference within the armed forces community and hope to continue making progress.

The veteran advice service gives direct advice and support to members of the Armed Forces Community on all the Council Services such as; housing, council tax, benefits, education, employment, food/fuel bank, blue badges, bus pass, social care and leisure. I spend a lot of my time in a front-facing role and need a good presence out in the veteran community but we are living in a challenging climate at present so temporary adaptations have been made for the service to continue to its best ability. I attend various veteran groups and work closely with other Armed Forces Charities and external organisations and by building good working relationships with these groups it ensures that the Armed Forces Community get the help they need.

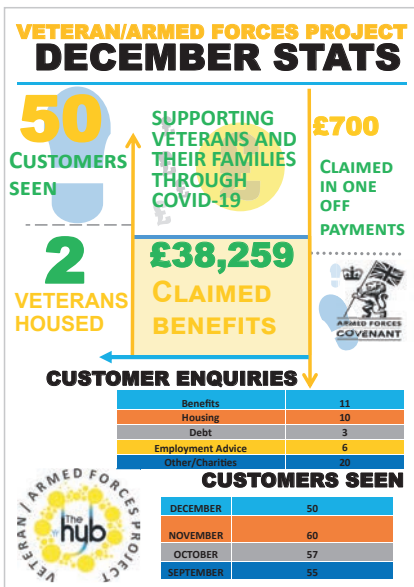
I join in local Team/Zoom meetings to keep in touch with veteran groups that are currently disbanded and am looking to future projects to keep the armed forces community connected. With the help from Digital Communities Wales I arranged for the armed forces community to take part in a Webinar for security awareness online and this was enjoyed by the participants and more are planned. Social isolation help is very important and connection to others is invaluable. Over 250 service users were contacted during the first few months of the pandemic to check if they needed help and to give the important contacts for help while isolating. I am very proud of the service and what it has achieved and all the organisations and charities that are all trying to make a difference to someone's life. Looking to the future I hope to continue making connections and enjoy planning new events and continuing successful ones from before such as Bonfire Cinema Night for veterans and their families. All loved the evening and hoped it would be something that would continue every year. Missing out on Armed Forces ceremonies in 2020 was very hard for everyone so here's looking forward to 2021.

Contact: 07725 704655
awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

Veteran Advice Service Cardiff

Kelsea O'Brien - The Veterans advice team of Cardiff Council are focusing on arranging virtual drop in's for Veterans/those serving and their families. We are linking with the Vale, Merthyr, RCT, Gwent to put this in place. The Veterans advice team can help with Housing, Benefits, Grants, Employment, Council related matters and much more.



Cllr Eddie Williams

Armed Forces Champion Vale of Glamorgan



"The Armed Forces personnel, including Reserves, and their families continue to serve and put everything on the line to help protect their communities. It is important we do all we can to help them in any way possible. To that end, we will continue to support and advocate for those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether regular or

Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, so that they should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services."

Barry Veterans' Group

Change Step Perspective

Change Step became involved with the Barry Veterans' Group to help with various issues that affect veterans in the community.

At that time, the Barry Hospital kindly let the veterans have the use of a room for weekly meetings. Initially this was great, however the Barry Veterans were restricted in terms of being able to host other activities beyond making a brew.

The main instigator for relocating the group was a veteran employed by Change Step, Liam "Mickey" Spillane, who liaised with the local rag to enquire about any agencies who could potentially provide a suitable location. This resulted in the group being offered the facility they now reside in, which was kindly donated by the Barry 2nd and 4th Scout Groups. The Scout Groups welcomed the Barry Veterans to the location with open arms and allow the veterans to use the facility for three hours a week free of charge in honour of the members' service to their Queen and Country. The Barry Veterans and the Barry 2nd and 4th Scout group have developed a great working relationship and forged a positive community hub.

I have seen first-hand a group of men who have created a group from obscurity to one of credibility and care for their members. In my personal opinion the model of the Veterans Club they have developed is easily one of the best veteran groups; I truly look forward to attend. The Barry Veterans Group is now a service user led group who have acquired the Change Step ethos of veteran care. The Barry Veterans is not only a group that meets once a week to pull up a sandbag and swing a lamp, but they also identify the members' specific needs; whether it be mental health, housing, or socio-economic issues that most veterans are normally reluctant to admit to or ask for help for. The group is supported by several agencies who will respond to their needs when required.

Contact **Jeff Rees 07766398219**

Roger Lees Change Step



Cardiff City FC Foundation

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

Remembrance Day Service 2020



At CCFC Veterans Hub we were able to hold a remembrance Day Service on 11th November 2020. We were permitted to use the Cardiff City Stadium Pitch as an open area, and managed to social distance throughout the service. We had representatives from CCFC Veterans Hub, Rhondda Hub for Veterans, servicing soldiers from The Royal Welsh RST, Hafel, and Chaplain Martin Lewis who conducted the service which included the last post being played by a bugler of 3rd Bn The Royal Welsh. We laid wreaths in the centre circle of the pitch as a mark of respect to the fallen from all conflicts which involved service men and women. Later the wreaths were placed at the Cardiff City Memorial Garden at the stadium.

Merthyr & RCT

Rhondda Cynon Taf Veteran Advice Service

The Veteran Advice Service provides free information, advice and support to members of the Armed Forces community within Rhondda Cynon Taf. The service covers a range of areas, including Benefits, Adult Social Care, Finances, Employment and Housing.

Whether you're currently serving in the Armed Forces, or have previously served, you and your family can access our service for advice and support. The Veteran Advice officer attends local Veteran Groups and holds regular Veteran Advice surgeries throughout Rhondda Cynon Taf.

For further information please contact Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer / Veteran Advice Officer Jamie Ireland on:



Tel: **07747 485619**

(Monday to Friday 8:30am to 17:00pm)

Email: VeteranService@rctcbc.gov.uk Or visit

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/veteranadvice to make an online referral



Rhondda Cynon Taf Armed Forces Covenant

Councillor Maureen Webber, Deputy Leader of the Council and Armed Forces Champion

"I am extremely passionate about supporting our Armed Forces community, both past and present, and of course their families who do so much for them. I continue to represent our Armed Forces community at the highest levels, and work to assist the community in any way necessary. As a Council, we have worked hard to ensure that we are doing all we can to help our Armed Forces community here in Rhondda Cynon Taf. Rhondda Cynon Taf has a long association with the Armed Forces and is proud to have been one of the first Local Authorities in Wales to establish an Armed Forces Covenant back in 2012, which sets out the support we offer to serving and retired Armed Forces personnel. I am pleased to say that we have a dedicated Veterans Advice Service. This service has already provided valuable support to those who need it, and will continue to do so as long as is needed.

The Council continues to support the Armed Forces community through a range of events throughout the year, with our Armed Forces Day annual event the biggest of these. Every year attendance at our Armed Forces Day event is growing, and this is something that is pleasing to see. It provides us with a fantastic opportunity to promote and thank our Armed Forces personnel as well as the wider Armed Forces community, but it also allows us to reach out to people within the Armed Forces community who may need further help and support. I am proud of the work that Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is doing to support our Armed Forces community, and I'm looking forward to what we can achieve in the future".

Supporting Veteran Groups

Our Veteran Advice Officer attends Local Veteran Groups to provide help and support to Veterans out in the Community. Valley Veterans takes place every Thursday from 9am until 12pm at Ton and Gelli Community Centre, Ton Pentre.

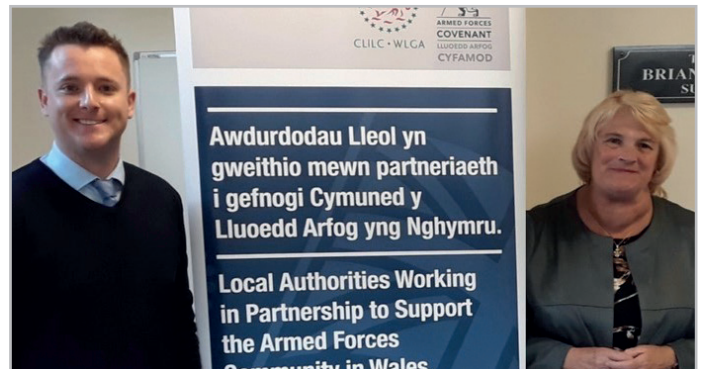
Valley Veterans is run by former Service personnel and meets in a relaxed and friendly environment to share their stories and experiences with others in the Armed Forces community.

The Group offers a wide range of assistance on subjects such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Housing, Adult Social Care, Benefits, Finances and Employment.

Tea, coffee and breakfast rolls are also available, as well as the opportunity to take part in the Valley Veterans Pool Tournament.



The Council continues to build upon its on-going relationship with the Armed Forces community, former and current. Council Leader, Councillor Andrew Morgan, and Deputy Leader and Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Maureen Webber, visited the Cynon Valley Veteran Group, which meets at Fernhill Community Centre every Monday (excluding Bank Holidays) from 10am until 12.30pm.



If you require any further information on Veteran groups in your local area, please contact Jamie Ireland:

Tel: **07747 485619** (Monday to Friday 8:30am to 17:00pm)

Giflach Goch Cenotaph re-dedicated at Ceremony

The The Cenotaph in Gilfach Goch has been re-dedicated to commemorate those from the local area who have served in the Armed Forces and made the ultimate sacrifice. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, in partnership with the local community and Bridgend Council, provided funding to ensure this important monument was future-proofed for decades to come, and will continue to be a respectful monument to those who have perished during times of war and conflict. Improvements have been made to the accessibility and flooring surrounding the Cenotaph, as well as updating the plaques with names of the fallen.



Merthyr

Merthyr Tydfil CBC has a proud record of valuing its armed services, both past and present, and this Covenant is in keeping with such an approach and significantly takes forward the Council's, and the County Borough's objectives to support our Armed Forces Community. The local authority first signed the Covenant in 2013 and were honored to re-sign in 2019 at Red-house Cymru Armed Forces event, the event was attended by members of the armed forces, including veterans and ex-service soldiers from the antecedent regiments of the Royal Welsh and Civic Heads from across South Wales. Music was provided by the Regimental Band of The Royal Welsh. Captain Ian Moore MBE, Regimental Operations Support Officer with 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh, said: "As the Royal Welsh re-establishes a recruiting presence in Merthyr Tydfil, it's a mark of the commitment by the Council to acknowledge their support to not only the Royal Welsh, but the whole of the Armed Forces Covenant and its community. Diolch!"



Merthyr Tydfil CBC were delighted to have hosted last year on 29th February 2020 the annual St David's Day parade by the 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh. The parade was led by the Regiment's mascot Shenkin IV. The Event was a huge success and enjoyed by many in the Community.

"The County Borough Council is very proud that we were selected to host the parade and it was fantastic to see our residents come along to witness it and be part of the celebrations," Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Andrew Barry.



North Wales

Falklands Memorial Wrexham

27 June 2020 Captain Chris Hopkins



Unfortunately owing to the Covid 19 pandemic, this years Falklands Service of Remembrance and Reunion had to be cancelled. However, to ensure our fallen were honoured a small group of local Welsh Guardsmen assembled to pay our respects on behalf of the regiment. A short dedication and wreath laying took place followed by the last post.

On parade were the standards of the Royal Navy Association, the Type 42 Destroyer Association, the Royal Marines Association and the North Wales Branch of the Welsh Guards Association. The latter was carried by John Burns, the North Wales secretary.

After the parade, with the War Memorial Club in lockdown and there being no other hostelrys open, I produced a bottle of Scotland's finest from the boot of my car in order to make a number of toasts. For some reason there were no customers at the "Boot Bar." Then I noticed a queue at the Royal Navy boot where a rum ration was being handed out! In a spirit of friendship toasts were made with both varieties of firewater.

We look forward to next year when hopefully things will be back to normal.

On 4 August the memorial was visited by the Airborne Forces Motorcycle Club. They were touring the country over eight days mapping all of the memorials dedicated to the Falklands war. Henry Vaughan Jones and I met them at the memorial. They looked like a real brotherhood in their club colours, flags, airborne berets and magnificent motorcycles. We sincerely hope some of them will join us in June next year.



Wrexham Branch Royal Naval Association

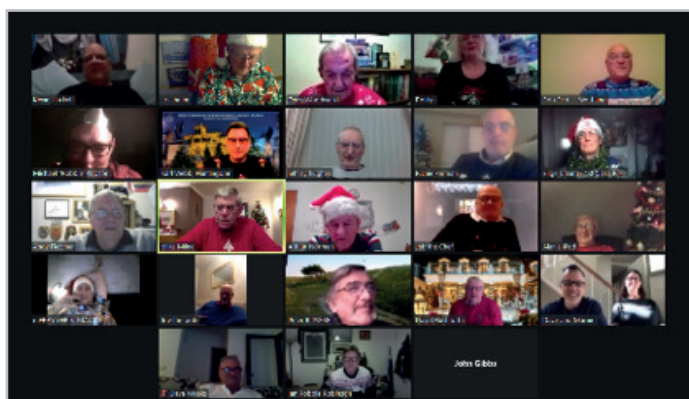
Covid19 and a little thing called 'Tot Time' By Kevin Hackett,
Vice Chair Wrexham Branch, Royal Naval Association.

Hello, a very happy and healthy 2021 to you all.

In March 2020, Wrexham and the rest of Wales, were beginning to hear the phrase's, "Lockdown, Shielding, Social distancing" and a group of friends from the branch began discussing how we could keep our members (shipmates) connected during the suspension of our face to face, fortnightly meetings.

There were obvious things we could do, such as ensuring we had all the up-to-date contact details for our shipmates, but we wanted more. We understood that our shipmates are a proud crew, some with very serious underlying health issues and that they may hide the effects of the lockdown if just contacted by phone, text or email.

So, Eric Holmwood, Jeff Hughes RVM and I got together and decided to start an online virtual meeting, where they could see us, and we could see their responses. It was very basic to start with using Facebook live feed through the RNA community page on Facebook and was meant to introduce a bit of fun into our lives, with the raising of the virtual Tot, hence the name TOT TIME.



After a week, a further discussion took place and the decision move to the Zoom platform for a better interactive meeting was made, although we also continued our live feed through the community page. The meetings took off, we suddenly found ourselves connected not only with our own branch members, but with other shipmates across Wales, the UK and foreign climes. To date, we have held 122 meetings, sometimes 3 per week, over 40 weeks, these included extra commemorations for V.E day, V.J Day, Armistice, Boxing day and New Year's Eve.

We have been joined by Welsh shipmates from, Newport, Merthyr Tydfal, Swansea, Aberbargoed, Abergele, Llandudno, Llangollen and Rhyl. By shipmates from Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, European Branches, Lanzarote and even San Diego, California. We have, unfortunately held commemorations for shipmates who have passed during the year, and even produced 4 videos for different events which have been widely shared online.

Due to the success of Wrexham's 'Tot Time' the Central Office team at RNA HQ, have introduced a weekly 'fireside chat' with lectures from senior naval officers and experts in history, which are also very well attended.

Many other branches of the RNA throughout the UK, have now also moved online, hosting their own virtual meetings.

Through Tot Time, shipmates who have never met, have become firm friends exchanging gifts, holding virtual bake offs, quizzes, highlighting hidden skills such as arts and crafts. We have enabled shipmates to talk about their own mental health and provided support and guidance to assist them, whilst promoting a greater understanding of those who suffer.

Many of those who have taken part have echoed the response, **"I don't know what I would have done if it hadn't been for Tot Time, I look forward to it, it breaks the loneliness"**.

Tot Time will continue for the foreseeable future, with the hope that we shall all meet up in person sometime this year.

In addition to this, we have continued our telephone and face to face contact with our branch shipmates were possible, ably assisted by the Branch Padre, The Reverend Heather Shotton, Assistant Curate for St Mary's, Johnstown, Wrexham.



North Wales Police

North Wales Police continues to support the Armed Forces community and has had a busy year of activity. Following the signing of the AFC Pledge in 2018 by the Chief Constable, NWP achieved the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award, followed by the Silver Award in 2019. It has recently received the Gold Award. Of note, NWP has a positive HR Policy regarding Reservists (up to 0.5% of the workforce, which is an all-Wales police target figure), providing up to 28 days special paid leave every year to support annual training commitments. The policy also provides guidance and support for reservists who are mobilised. We regularly attend Employer Engagement events and we work closely with the Armed Forces to support local events such as the Annual Armed Forces Day. We maintain a close bond with the Armed Forces through regular exercising and training together, particularly with RAF Valley. Senior Officers attend a number of Armed Forces Meetings including county and regional AFC meetings with other agencies. The organisation is represented at the following meetings:

- North Wales Armed Forces Covenant Strategic Forum.
- IOM Cymru-led Supporting Transition of Military Personnel (SToMP) forum.
- SToMP Welsh Police Sub-Group.
- County Armed Forces Community Covenant Forum Meetings

All of our Custody Suites have Armed Forces Veterans Champions. We are aiming to identify Armed Forces Veterans who enter Custody Suites to enable support to be offered and relevant posters are visible in all suites. We produced posters which all Welsh Police Forces were provided with.

We have an excellent relationship with our REED (Regional Employer Engagement Director) and we actively attend events and support the wider activities of Defence. As an organisation, we actively support Reserves Day, Armed Forces Day, Remembrance events and Service Charities.

North Wales Police has a nominated Armed Forces and Reservists Champion, a Chief Inspector, who provides a point of contact for not only all reservists but also works with the HR Department to ensure all Armed Forces Reservist policy and military-related issues are properly considered.

The Chief Inspector Armed Forces Covenant Lead attends numerous Armed Forces Covenant and Employer engagement events throughout the year both in north Wales and across the country. This includes an Employer Engagement event at the Senedd parliament building in 2019 and a celebration of Emergency Services AFC signing at Dering Lines, Brecon also in 2019.

North Wales Police employs a very large number of Armed Forces Veterans and we recognise the value veterans can bring to our organisation. They have high value skills which are often immediately transferrable, such as self-motivation, team working, discipline, physical fitness, positive attitudes etc.



The attached picture shows Chief Constable Carl Foulkes in receipt of the ERS Gold Award (2020).



Ty Dewr Wrexham

Accommodation for homeless veterans

Ty Dewr is a Salvation Army Lifehouse, which provides supported accommodation for homeless veterans. Opened in March 2016, it was taken over by The Salvation Army in June 2017.



The accommodation is nestled in a wooded area in a rural location in Wrexham and is extremely peaceful - with the only neighbours squirrels and the occasional pheasant.

Ty Dewr has 12 ensuite bedrooms, one of which is on the ground floor and is adapted for a wheelchair user. Each room is slightly different with a mix of double and single rooms, all finished to a high standard and where possible redecorated prior to a new resident moving in. In each room, bedding, a towel, bathrobe and basic toiletries are provided, as well as a welcome pack of food so that newcomers can make themselves a brew and basic meal when they arrive. After requests from residents, the rooms now also have a small fridge.

There are two large communal kitchens which are fully equipped with fridges and recently bought extra freezers so that everyone has a space for bulk buy purchases. There is an external gym in the grounds used for rehabilitation purposes. Recently, they bought gym equipment including two punchbags, weight bench and weights, free weights and a running machine. This gym is used on a regular basis as residents enjoy keeping fit. There is plenty of outdoor space and during the summer months, they hold barbecues and events.

There is a growing space where residents enjoy growing their own produce, as well as a new small greenhouse to grow tomatoes and start off seedlings.

To make a referral to Ty Dewr contact the scheme on **01978 355410** and staff on site will send out a referral form. Ty Dewr also accepts self-referrals and out-of-area referrals for those without a local connection to the Wrexham area.

If you would like to be added to the distribution list for when they have a vacancy, please email tydewr@salvationarmy.org.uk

How can Working Denbighshire support you?

Sir Ddinbych yn Gweithio



Working Denbighshire



Working Denbighshire is an employability service, which aims at supporting Denbighshire residents, aged 16 and above, who are at risk of poverty.

We have a variety of projects under our service where you can access 1-1 mentoring support. During the meetings, you can discuss any kind of barriers that you are facing in improving your personal situation. We have supported people from all kinds of backgrounds, such as Armed Forces, care leavers, parents and young people.

Working Denbighshire work closely with many different organisations, including Job Centre Plus, Careers Wales, North Wales Training, Youth Services, Housing, Supporting People and many more.

We offer support with a range of different barriers you may face, like:

- Help with finding a job
- Finding a work or volunteering placement
- Training and further qualifications
- Confidence building and motivational support
- Creating or improving a CV
- Interview skills and techniques
- Filling in application forms
- Developing basic IT skills
- Help to understand your benefit entitlements
- Financial assistance for interviews, equipment or certificates

If you feel that Working Denbighshire can offer the support that you need, please contact us on:

Tel: 01745 331438 / 07342 070635 or

Email: workingdenbighshire@denbighshire.gov.uk





Communities for Work Case Study for 'Mr. L'

Summary

Mr L had been in and out of employment since he left the Armed Forces and went through periods of long term unemployment following this. Mr L wanted to become a Security Guard but did not have the funds to do this. With the support of an employment mentor and funding from the Communities for Work Project, Mr L was able to gain his SIA badge and has now gone into employment in his chosen career.

Background / What is . . . ?

Mr L was referred to Working Denbighshire by his job coach through Job Centre Plus in June 2019, due to being unemployed for a number of years. Mr L was in the Army for four years however was medically discharged and since then has had a number of different jobs with long periods of unemployment in-between. Mr L wanted to return to work and had a particular interest in security work however could not afford the training to gain his SIA badge.

The engagement . . .

Mr L received 1:1 mentoring support from myself, and during his time of mentoring I supported him with improving his employability prospects by writing a professional CV and helping with interview techniques. We spoke about different opportunities and how to search for jobs successfully.

During his time on the project Mr L sourced a volunteering placement with a local landscaper as he understood this could be a good opportunity for current experience on his CV and a reference.

Mr L wanted to pursue opportunities in Security further due to his experiences in the Army, but could not afford the cost of the training. We looked into this further and determined that it was possible for C4W to fund the course however required learners to have ID which Mr L did not have, so we also paid towards a copy of his birth certificate and driving licence which would also help him with other aspects of his life. As the training was not local, we also funded the cost of travel to the course and he received one week's worth of return train tickets.

Mr L was very committed and he completed the full week of training, eagerly awaiting his results from the assessment. Unfortunately, we were advised that Mr L had not passed the assessment and needed to take a re-sit. The Barriers Fund was used again to fund the travel costs of this and this time, Mr L was successful! Together, we completed the online application for his SIA badge.

Unfortunately while we were waiting for his badge to be approved, the UK government enforced lockdown restrictions due to Covid-19. We continued to stay in contact over email and telephone and Mr L still expressed his ambition to go into work, as long as it was safe.

Following correspondence with Rachel, one of the Job Centre Plus work coaches, we discovered there were security positions becoming available in the local hospital Ysbyty Glan Clwyd,

with a local security firm. This information was passed over to Mr L as soon as possible and he took it upon himself to contact Rachel and the security firm to express his interest in the position. After sending over the relevant information Mr L was successful in securing the job.

Rachel, myself and Mr L spoke over telephone and email to ensure Mr L had everything he needed for his start date. He advised he needed work clothes and work boots very quickly, so I made an urgent request to the Barriers Fund for approval.

Good Practice Shared / Lessons Learned / Outcomes

Mr L has shown great determination throughout his time with Working Denbighshire, and with support he has been able to reach his goal to get back into employment. The link between Working Denbighshire and JCP was positive throughout his journey, allowing a coherent approach to sourcing employment for the participant. Both myself as a mentor and Mr L had to adapt quickly to a quickly changing world due to the pandemic, and we ensured that communication was kept open and clear to allow opportunities to still be explored, which led to successful employment.



Citizens Advice Denbighshire

Citizens Advice Denbighshire provided a welfare benefit and money advice service for over 5 years for veterans up until 2014. During that time we worked closely with SAFFA, RBLI and Combat Stress to provide an holistic support service, helping veterans to maximise their income, reduce debt to improve their lives. Through this project we gained an insight and an increased respect for all those who served their country and for those organisations supporting them.

When this project ended we continued to work with those agencies and Denbighshire County Council as a partner and signatory of the Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership. The partnership has enabled us to keep close to the veteran and serving forces community ensuring we're able to try new initiatives for additional support to veterans such as "Advice on Your Doorstep". This project was funded by the national Armed Forces Covenant Fund and for a year we were able to visit veterans over 70 in their homes making sure they were claiming all their benefits and providing advice to sustain their financial health and wellbeing.

Recently we invited our key veteran partner agencies across North Wales to access Citizens Advice services through the Welsh Government funded Citizens Advice North Wales Advicelink project, allowing an easy access route for partners to refer veterans in need of advice and support.

**If you would like more information
on this please contact Tanya Bowyer**
tanya@bowyer@dcab.co.uk

West Wales

Hayley Edwards - Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer

I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and the role I undertake across the three counties of Pembrokeshire, Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion.

The main purpose of my role is to lead on the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant across West Wales. I work with a wide range of public sector, community and voluntary organisations across the region. The Armed Forces Covenant applies to the whole of the Armed Forces Community, which includes regular and reserves serving



Deploying to Sarajevo in the back of a Merlin Heli: 2003

personnel, their dependents; veterans and adult volunteers serving in the Cadets. A big part of my role is increasing the understanding of what the Armed Forces Covenant means across our communities. Each local authority has an elected member as their Armed Forces Champion*. I am here to advise and assist departments on ensuring that the Armed Forces Community are taken into consideration. Training is available for this. Each local authority has an elected member as their Armed Forces Champion. I work very much in partnership with Hywel Dda University Health Board, so that healthcare provision will meet the needs of our Armed Forces Community, and with many third sector organizations like SSAFA, VC Gallery, Penparcau Veterans Hub, Links, West Wales Action for Mental Health and many more charitable organisations help our armed forces.

Finally, as a current serving reservist myself I am very fortunate that my employer is very supportive of serving in the reserves. Help and guidance is available for organisations that employ reservists and opportunities to be recognized as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. It's a great job; one that I am very proud to be undertaking and equally proud to be a serving member within the Army Reserves. If you are a member of our armed forces community or still serving in the Reserves I would love to hear from you.

I can be contacted on:

HRedwards@carmarthenshire.gov.uk

07717 450846

The Royal British Legion South West Wales District

As a part of the larger Royal British Legion in Wales, our members and staff are involved in the broad range of welfare work that we carry out across the region.



Our members carry out crucial voluntary work to support our Armed Forces Community and promote the interests of veterans and current serving personnel on a local level.

As well as our well recognised work throughout the Remembrance -tide period, our staff and members have provided welfare support and help to combat social isolation throughout the year. We have been providing food support and telephone befriending services throughout the challenging and ongoing Covid-19 crisis.

Membership is open to anyone and we have local branches across South West Wales; you do not have to have served to support our Armed Forces Community. If you are interested in joining or would like more information, please contact the area Membership Support Officer.

Contact details are Seamus Brennan, at **SBrennan@britishlegion.org.uk** or you can call the contact centre on **0808 802 8080** for a range of information and support.

www.britishlegion.org.uk

 @PoppyLegion

 OfficialPoppyLegion

Ceredigion Armed Forces Veterans

With the end of 2020 and the prospects of a light at the end of the tunnel and a shift to normality I aim now to start planning for a busy and eventful 2021.



Unfortunately, due to the COVID – 19 pandemic last years planned events to mark the 75th anniversary of VE and VJ had to be postponed, but on the 14th of November with the support of a financial grant from the Armed Forces Covenant the Armed Forces Veterans Hub at the Penparcau Community Hub, was honoured to ask Mr Ben Lake, the Member of Parliament for Ceredigion, to officially unveil the World War Two bench in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Victory in Europe and the Victory in Japan Day.

In attendance was Mr Ben Lake MP, Councillor Paul Hinge - Ceredigion County Council's Armed Forces Champion, Hayley Edwards - Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer - Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire, and Pembrokeshire, Karen Rees Roberts – Forum Manager, Councillor Steve Davies, Dai Pugh – Mid and West Wales Fire & Rescue Service, Kelvin Jones – Forum Veterans Trustee and Colin Jones MBE Veterans Peer Mentor for Ceredigion.



The Armed Force Veterans community throughout Ceredigion received over 160 good will Christmas parcels delivered the week 14th – 18th of December 2021. The project was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant and was supported by Hertz vehicle rental Aberystwyth who kindly donated a rental van for the week's delivery and Morrisons Aberystwyth who donated 60 family packs of biscuits. Colin Jones MBE, the Ceredigion Armed Forces Covenant Peer Mentor would like to thank all the Echo Lima Foxtrot (ELF) volunteers who ensured the success of the Veterans Christmas Parcel project and the local support they received in Cardigan, Woodys Lodge Llandysul, Lampeter, Tregaron and Aberystwyth.



Ceredigion MP Ben Lake delivering parcels in Lampeter.



Woody's Lodge Llandysul receiving 20 Parcels.



Cath Jones Hertz Aberystwyth who donated a hired van pictured with Sapper George Martin Royal Engineers and Colin Jones.



Karan Rees Roberts (Penparcau Community Forum Manager) and Dorothy Jones delivering Christmas parcels to Peter and Enid Lansley.

Some dates for the dairy:

- **3rd April - Barrel and Planks charity event**
 Local veterans raising money for the Bronlais Aberystwyth Children's Ward. 9th June Blindfolded ascent of Snowden in support of Blind veterans UK.
- **19th June - Charity Football match**
 Aberystwyth over 40s v Royal Welsh Veterans.
- **12th Aug - 1st September - The Cycle back from Berlin charity event**
- **2nd - 3rd September - Blindfold walk**
 From Llandudno (HQ Blind veterans UK) to Wrexham (Royal Welsh RHQ North) totalling 47 miles in 24hours.



The West Wales Veterans Archive

Age Cymru Dyfed provides a range of information and advice, befriending, digital inclusion, advocacy, and a home-help service and other services which help hundreds of veterans sustain their emotional well-being and retain their independence.

On 4th January 21, BBC1 Wales and S4C featured interviews with two remarkable WW2 female veterans from Ceredigion, Mary Bott MBE and Jean MacKay. Before joining as a WAAF Jean personally handed bomb-damage reports during the London Blitz to Winston Churchill in War Office, later serving with distinction in the RAF Meteorological Flight. In her late teens Mary worked on five farms throughout Cardiganshire as a member of the Women's Land Army recalling the hardships of working the land during that period but also the local PoW's and Allied troops camped nearby.

Mary and Jean's stories are just two of the many exceptional personal histories being recorded by Age Cymru Dyfed in the West Wales Veterans' Archive' which is located in the National Library of Wales. With the support of the AFCFT Positive Pathways Programme 2020-22, the WWVA is a pioneering learning resource for historians, researchers, schools and colleges and for family historians. Take a listen to the audio interview with Gordon Prime now living in Pembrokeshire who drove a 15 tons truck loaded with high explosive onto Juno Beach at 9.30am on D-Day.

There are also younger veterans such as Mike Evans ex-Royal Navy whose own father (Royal Navy) and grandfather (RAF) also have their histories included on the Archive with Grandfather Eric being a Burma veteran and interviewed by the First Minister for VJ Day last year. There are many more superb accounts from peacetime as well as during wartime and post-war conflicts. In many cases, generations of the same family have been brought closer together simply by learning so much more about each other's experiences shared on the Archive.



The development of the Archive itself is being overseen by a Project Board consisting of academia (History and Law); veterans and mental health charities, archive bodies, and veterans themselves. The health and well-being of all veterans is placed at the forefront of every conversation.

If you have a history which you would like to share with the Archive, or a veteran you feel may benefit from some help or support then please contact Hugh Morgan OBE on hugh.morgan@agecymrudyfed.org.uk

The Charity has a veteran's website detailing some of the support which can be found on: <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/dyfed/our-services/valuing-veterans-project/>
The Archive itself in the National Library of Wales can be found on: <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/44171>.



Our Combined Forces Project has continued to support Veterans over the COVID period.

Links Gift to the Falklands

In November Kimberly's husband Simon (veteran) went to the Falklands to install a mammogram machine into the King Edward Memorial Hospital in Stanley for the company he works for, GE Healthcare. Links members and staff felt it would be a nice idea if Simon could take over a gift (see attached) from Links members for the Falklands community to connect to a place that many of our veterans have served and posted to including Simon who was posted there twice.

Simon gave the gift from Links to the Community Psychiatric Nurse, Thomas Docherty. The gift will embark on a tour of all the civilian and military departments that he visits. To include the Senior Medical Officer at the Mount Pleasant Complex where it will be displayed in the medical centre. Simon also spoke to a lady in the hospital that is doing a similar job to Kimberly over there. She is originally from Ceredigion (small world) and was even more pleased to have a gift from back home in Wales. She was so pleased to hear about what we do for veterans at Links, especially the farm placement, as she has been looking into Farm Therapy.



Other news:

Links has been successful in receiving a grant fund from the Positive Pathways programme for a year. This grant will fund activities including designing and the making of a coin/medal at the royal mint to celebrate Links being open for 25 years. The veterans will lead this project. It also includes a part time job opportunity for a veteran to support the Combined Forces project.

Kimberly Phillips - Combined Forces Project Coordinator, LINKS, Unit 4, The Palms, 96 Queen Victoria Road, Llanelli SA15 2TH
Tel: 01554 757957 Mobile: 07582 717736
<http://links.uk.net/>

ssafa



SSAFA (Soldiers' Sailors' Airmen and Families Association) What makes us unique?

We understand the unique demands of service life, whether it's on UK soil or overseas. Support is available for people at any stage in their military career; from the youngest recruit to the oldest veteran – no one's service is ever forgotten. We have more than 5,000 trained SSAFA volunteers who provide personalised, face-to-face support to those in their local area.

In Our trained welfare advisors and volunteers work with each person to find out exactly what they need. Once we've assessed what is required, we'll help the individual or family access the support they need. This may just be someone to listen to them, but, more often than not, we access financial assistance from statutory and military benevolent funds or foundations that we work with. In addition, we signpost to our other charity partners who can give much needed assistance to help people get their lives back on track.

Whatever they're facing – from debt or addiction to mental health problems – our Forces and their families can rely on SSAFA and our personalised support to help them through it, for as long as it takes to get that person's life back to where they want it to be.

In South West Wales the two Branches of Dyfed and West Glamorgan have recently amalgamated into "SW Wales Branch consisting of 5 Divisions of Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, Swansea and Neath Port Talbot. Each Division has its own coordinator known as the Divisional Secretary. The Branch is administered from an off ice in the Swansea Reserve centre in Alamein Road and is manned part time 1000-1200 Monday, Wednesday and Friday. (NB All our staff are unpaid volunteers).

Telephone No. 01792 653432

Email: swales.branch@ssafa.org.uk

When anyone in our Forces family finds themselves in need, SSAFA is the charity they can turn to. Whether it's financial, practical or emotional, we provide the right kind of support, ensuring independence and dignity is protected at all times.



The VC Gallery runs two drop-in centres, one at the VC Gallery in Haverfordwest and one in Pembroke Dock.

We help and support the Armed Forces Community in practical ways with housing, debt and mental health issues. We offer a friendly, creative environment where everyone is welcome. In recent months we have been busy adapting and trying to safely interact with Veterans and their families during the pandemic.

Friday mornings we hold a Zoom 'Virtual Naafi break', at the normal Naafi break time of 1000-1030hrs. Tim Phillips, our military peer mentor, is the host, we have no agenda and the conversation and bad jokes flow. The first few weeks many Veterans and other Veteran support agencies would log on to say hello and join in with the conversation, as well as being a social activity unintentionally it has the added benefit of being a networking session. We have people logging on not just within Pembrokeshire, but from south and mid Wales and over the border into England. If you fancy logging on one Friday keep a lookout on The VC Gallery's social media pages or email: **tim@thevcgallery.com**



During the summer we adapted to the Covid restrictions by getting outside more with our Walk and Talk groups aimed at veterans. It was not easy getting some back outdoors but slowly we have built up a great group. Tim trained as a walk leader and acquired lots of free outdoor clothing through 'Gift your Gear'. Tim has a personal interest in keeping fit and knows how good for both physical and mental wellbeing walking is. It's now a great social event that everyone looks forward to.



On a Wednesday we walk from our Haverfordwest hub and do a 2-mile gentle walk for those that need to get back into it slowly or have mobility issues. Fridays see us walking locally but striding out for 6/7 miles in the hills, the coastal path,

woodland walks and local countryside routes. This group usually sees about 12 meeting up with our local PCSO joining in too. Again the social element is a massive bonus along with the incredible views and appreciation of our County. New for 2021 see the launch of our 'Dig for Victory' project funded by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust through the Positive Pathways programme. This project will see local veterans create a community garden, horticulture courses and spend time together in the outdoors. A local farmer has donated 3 acres of land which houses WW2 bunkers right on the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park overlooking the sea. It's an incredible location and we have started doing up a bunker and are looking for veterans to volunteer along with a SAAFA Representative under our newly appointed project coordinator Sean Golder, who is a veteran who served 22 years in Royal engineers and is an experienced Adventure Training instructor.

The bunker itself had been used as shelter for cattle but needed a lot of work and is still ongoing. Some of our veterans with DIY experience have turned their hands to fitting windows and doors and laying a hard core path. Other veterans led by our gardening expert a 90 year old Naval Veteran started tending to the land with an ambitious project to try and reap some rewards from the land this year. Those that have taken part so far have benefited from being outdoors, some who live in flats and would not normally get the chance to get those fingers green whilst enjoying a friendly social environment. This project is open to veterans who would like to join in and can sign up by contacting **sean@thevcgallery.com** or calling **01437 765873**.



At the heart of The VC Gallery is always art and we've been running some fantastic online art sessions with some in particular for Armed Forces Families funded again by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. This has seen families on Zoom interacting with other veterans' families and enjoying each other's company. We supply the resources and an experienced artist facilitates the workshops. These have been real fun and brought a real sense of positivity through these difficult times. There are still places available to join in and you can sign up by getting in touch with Steph on **steph@thevcgallery.com** or calling the gallery on **01437 765873**.

It is planned later this year to do a 'Couch to Snowdon' event if restrictions and rules allow for preparation and the event to go ahead. The event will initially be a mixture of Veterans and community getting together to walk up to the top of Mount Snowdon, by bringing the team ethos we will to help each other to achieve this. Some veterans have walked Snowdon back in the day and you can see that they are nurturing those that have never taken on a challenge like this before.

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**
- **Supporting policy and systems**

Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs) for Service children

In collaboration with 160th (Welsh) Brigade, Supporting Service Children in Education in Wales (SSCE Cymru) has introduced new Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLO) in Wales, funded from the Armed Forces Covenant – Removing Barriers to Family Life Fund. Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, four RSLOs are now in post for the two-year project. Focused on supporting schools to understand the needs of Service children and embed activities to ensure sustainable support systems.

The RSLO focuses on supporting schools to understand the experiences and needs of Service children and embed activities that will ensure sustainable support systems. Among other responsibilities, they will be delivering training sessions to raise awareness on the experiences of Service children, promoting the use of the SSCE Cymru Toolkit and Tools, co-ordinating Service children case management to ensure support is given where schools and/or the local authority (LA) may not have the capacity, and providing advice for schools wishing to access and use funding to support their Service children. The RSLO can work with schools either in person or virtually, depending on national /local restrictions and school requirements. Further information about the RSLOs can be found on the SSCE Cymru website, including a map of their regions and an overview of the ways they will be working with schools. Also, regional updates will be shared in the relevant sections of the Covenant Wales newsletter.



Nia Williams
(RSLO North Wales)

Hosted by the Isle of Anglesey
– North AFLO

NiaWilliams5@ynysmon.gov.uk



Caitlin Woodland
(RSLO East Wales)

Hosted by Newport City Council –
Powys and Gwent AFLO

Caitlin.woodland@newport.gov.uk



Annabel Harries
(RSLO South Wales)

Hosted by the Vale of Glamorgan Council –
South Wales East and South West Wales AFLO

aharries@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk



Yasmin Todd
(RSLO West Wales)

Hosted by Pembrokeshire County Council –
South West Wales and West Wales AFLO

Yasmin.Todd@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Case management

The mobility of Armed Forces families can have an academic, social, and emotional impact on Service children. As a result, issues may arise that require support outside of the capacity of the school and/or local authority (LA). In these instances, the RSLOs for Service children in Wales will work with the school and LA to identify support that could be accessed to overcome the barrier/s that the individual child or small groups of Service children are facing.

The RSLOs will coordinate intervention/s, monitor the progress, and measure the impact, following a consistent all-Wales process. They will have access to funding for these interventions when required, which was secured as part of the funding bid to the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. The case management support from RSLOs is available for schools to access at any point of the year. Schools should contact the RSLO for their region to discuss accessing the support.

SSCE Cymru – Service parent/carer survey report

During September-October 2020, SSCE Cymru conducted a 'parents/carers of Service children' survey, which allowed them to share their experiences about living in/moving to Wales, the impact their lifestyles have on their children's education, and the support they have received from schools. There were 121 full responses, which were used to produce the findings report analysis. You can read the report here.

Plans for 2021

- **Develop training materials to help education settings understand the experiences of Service children and the support available.**
- **Launch a new SSCE Cymru Parent Toolkit and other relevant resources.**
- **RSLOs school visits/meetings – focused on helping schools to understand the experiences of their Service children and embed support.**
- **Organise a school conference.**

For further information email: SSCECymru@wlga.gov.uk or visit SSCE Cymru website www.SSCECymru.co.uk



Forces Fitness Gold ERS Award Holders Deliver their Health, well-being, and resilience sessions to their 130th school in Wales!!

Sean Molino BCA is a Former Military Physical Training Instructor within the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and MD of Forces Fitness Ltd. Forces Fitness have this month delivered their Health, well-being, and resilience sessions to their 130th School across Wales. These sessions have now been delivered to over 15,000 participants with fantastic feedback. With the ever-growing rate of obesity in the UK and the huge strain this is putting on the NHS and also the fact that computers and TVs seem to be taking over this generation, he developed this project along with support from teachers in Palmerston Primary Barry and Pencoed Comprehensive school, Bridgend.

In recent Months Glyn-Gaer Primary School in Gwent and Palmerston Primary School in Barry have been successful in gaining Armed Forces Covenant funding for programs that engage their Armed Forces Community and have utilised the team at Forces Fitness and Military Veteran Volunteers to engage their Services Children and pupils within the school and improve key areas such as Health/ Well-being and build resilience. The sessions have a positive impact on the attendees, make children more resilient to A.C.E's (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and have a positive impact on the overall well-being and healthcare of the attendee.

The sessions and workshops have now been delivered to primary school children right up to University students and fit well into the school / college / Uni timetable. They focus on educating the attendee in easy to follow health and nutrition tips. Each session has a mixture of practical and theory and they are mainly conducted in the great outdoors or in a sports hall during extreme weather!

Sean Molino BCA stated . . .

'We really want to improve all the attendees Health and well-being whilst working with them on team building, communication challenges and fitness challenges. We want to engage our Military Community and use our Veterans as role models for the pupils within schools and engaging with services children that are present. Each session and workshop will have key messages that will improve our attendee's lives and ensure they have some good fun along the way. It's an absolute pleasure to have delivered and to continue to deliver sessions to these fantastic places of education.'

Katy Edwards - Head Teacher at Palmerton stated . . .

'We have been working with Sean at Forces Fitness for over three years now, and the children absolutely love the sessions. It gives the children an opportunity to develop the skills and knowledge in what keeping healthy really means. They are seeing and feeling the benefits of being outside in the fresh air, having exercise that is fun, and then wanting to eat the right foods to improve their wellbeing further.' Sean is also an excellent role model for the children. He inspires and motivates them to want to succeed and to not give up when things get hard. There are a lot of smiles and laughter during and after the sessions, which sets them up in such a positive mind set for the rest of the day.'

Lisa Rawlings - Regional Armed Forces Covenant Officer for Gwent

'These sessions are so important for the pupils within schools, especially during the current times we are in. I fully support this initiative, its holds so much value to all involved from the Military Veteran Instructors, teachers, services children and pupils. Brilliant seeing so many smiles on the pupils faces!'

Beverly Pearce - Glyn-Gaer Primary school . . .

'What a wonderful experience for the children. A fun filled afternoon which had the children working collaboratively, solving problems whilst developing their physical fitness. Sean's approach brought smiles and laughter, even to those who can be difficult to engage with. The children are already looking forward to the next session.'

Cllr Rachel Nugent stated . . .

'Having accompanied Mr Molino, his Forces Fitness Team and the children of our primary schools within the Vale Of Glamorgan during the sessions, it is crystal clear that the whole process is a win win. The children enjoy the physicality of it as well as hidden learning such as strategic thinking, planning, communication and thinking of others around them. As previous chairman of the Healthy Living and Social Care Committee I have sat through and scrutinised many presentations about what effects our childrens lives leading to adverse childhood experiences (ACE) and the association with chronic diseases.'

'For me, the investment through education, aligned thinking and gaining positive outcomes for our children is most definitely the way forward. I would welcome Forces Fitness through all aspects of Education. It should be an integrated plethora of our children curriculum starting from our youngest right through to our six form leavers.'

To find out more about the sessions please get in touch with Forces Fitness Ltd

email: info@forcesfitness.co.uk tel: 07891 402 326



AFF

We're here for you

As we all know, life has been a little different for everyone recently.

Here at AFF we have been working hard to carry on providing help and support for Army families around the world.

Life as we know it may have been put on hold, but Army life definitely hasn't stopped. AFF Wales Co-ordinator Sadie has continued to keep in contact with a lot of families and worked hard to help keep spirits high. She has held virtual bingo, virtual coffee mornings, delivered Army&You magazines to families and been there to offer help and support for those serving and their families.

We will help with any issues you have as an Army family. You may have come to a dead-end through your own efforts and are not satisfied with the answers you have been given or perhaps you want to highlight an issue.

Some of the main areas we deal with are:

- Housing
- Health and additional needs
- Education and childcare
- Employment and training
- Foreign and commonwealth
- Army reserve
- Family life
- Deployments
- Money matters

If you would like to get in contact with AFF you can reach Sadie at wales@aff.org.uk or 07527 492868

Aff
army families federation

the voice of the Army community

SADIE BALDWIN
Wales Co-ordinator
wales@aff.org.uk
07527 492868
aff.org.uk

Supporting Army families wherever you live

Use your phone's camera to visit visit to your contacts

Armed Forces Covenant across Wales



The Family Foundation has a full delivery plan for 2021 with ongoing support for Veterans and their families providing mental and emotional support, outreach family support and work focused accredited and skills training.

The Family Foundation has a full delivery plan for 2021 with ongoing support for Veterans and their families providing mental and emotional support, outreach family support and work focused accredited and skills training. Working in partnership with the AFLO, The Poppy Factory, Royal British Legion, The VC Gallery, SAFFA and many others we are providing a complete service to individuals and families that is tailored to meet their needs. All referrals can be made to info@thefamilyfoundation.co.uk or to the Family Support Officer Donna Purnell donna@thefamilyfoundation.co.uk

Our **DIGITAL SKILLS ACADEMY** is open to anyone wanting to try out a new course or keep occupied during lockdown. Its great for families wanting to E-Learn with older teens as the courses are open to anyone aged 14yrs + to adults wanting to spruce up a CV with some new training. It is totally FREE and NO COST to do this training as its all short courses that are unaccredited but you can complete with a Certification of Completion within 1-3hrs. All you need is either a mobile phone, tablet or laptop to do the training and an email address. Just email courses@thefamilyfoundation.co.uk and ask for a course list, then tick the courses you want to do, fill in a few simple details and email it back and they will send you your courses to do in the comfort of your home. **Simple, Quick and FREE!!!**

Defence employer recognition scheme

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same.



The scheme encompasses bronze, silver and gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

Bronze Award: Open all year

Silver Award: Expression of interest deadline 11:59pm on 16 April 2021

Gold Award: Expression of interest deadline 11:59pm on 17 March 2021

For more information please visit **Defence Employer Recognition Scheme**
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/defence-employer-recognition-scheme/defence-employer-recognition-scheme>

Welsh Veterans Awards 2020/2021

In Wales, there are tens of thousands of former military personnel, who upon transition from the armed forces have gone on to contribute immensely to their local community. The Veterans Awards looks to celebrate these true hero's along with the companies that support us.



The Veterans Awards is a fully not for profit organisation that promotes the positives from our military veteran community. It's been put together by Veterans for Veterans, serving reservists and those companies that support us. We reward our community in the areas of Sport, Fitness, Business, Health and Well-being and the wider community! This Year the Main Awards ceremony will be held in Cardiff when current restrictions allow us to do so safely. It will be hosted by Polly James and opened by Brigadier Jock Frasier Royal Marines. During the evening we will also hear from Head of the Army in Wales Brigadier A Dawes CBE and last year's Veterans Awards champion Barry John MBE. The event is supported by the Corps of Drums of the Royal Welsh, Shenkin the Goat along with the legendary Goat Major and the Fantastic 1st Battalion Welsh Guards all in Support of the ABF The Soldiers Charity!

We want to celebrate the success coming from within our community and inspire future service leavers that great things can happen!

Mr Chris Jenkins
(Head of Business) from
Bridgend Audi



"Bridgend Audi wanted to get more involved with the veterans within the local community, the Bridgend area is steeped in history and links to all the armed forces and this was an amazing opportunity to do so. Bridgend Audi has many loyal customers who have served in all of the armed forces and this is an opportunity to give a little back."

"The Awards really drive a robust bridge between veterans leaving their duties and moving back into the commercial world. Not only does it recognise their efforts, it also offers them a vehicle to recognise the true value of the skills and characteristics they have gained during their service."
"Bridgend Audi sells and services beautifully engineered cars in a welcoming dealership, that in a modern age still really drives the family values of the Sinclair Group."

We would like to thank all the team at Audi Bridgend for their support for our Veteran Community and look forward to celebrating the success on the evening itself!

Founder of the Welsh Veterans Awards and Military Veteran Sean Molino BCA said "I would like to thank Chris and team Bridgend Audi for their support, Bridgend is my home Town it's great to see a business as prestigious as Bridgend Audi supporting our Veteran Community and Awards Ceremony! The aim of these awards is to promote veterans that are doing great things on Civvy Street and those companies that support us. We want to promote all short-listed applicants through a series of Video Blogs, Social media releases and our website, so that they will act as Role models for future service leavers."



"These awards are extremely close to my heart. As a former serving soldier, I can understand how difficult transition is, and how we require help and guidance along the way, even at times if we don't ask for support."

"I want our Veterans Awards and social media presence to become a place where serving military and veterans can discover some great advice and tips from veterans, who are doing truly inspirational things upon leaving the military. I hope we can inspire future service leavers that great things can be achieved with help and support."



To find out more about The Veterans Awards, contact info@veteransawrds.co.uk or check out Facebook - Veterans Awards.

www.veteransawards.co.uk tel: 07891 402 326

Veterans Welfare Service

Update from Veterans UK regarding Veterans Welfare Service Support, Defence Transition Services and Integrated Personal Commissioning For Veterans.

To protect our staff and the veterans, Service leavers and families we support Veterans UK have decided to suspend, except in the most exceptional circumstances, all face-to-face meetings with clients. However, urgent advice, information and support is still available via our helpline service

08081 914218 and, for less urgent enquiries, via email to Veterans-UK@mod.gov.uk. Please quote your name, national insurance or reference number and contact details and we will be in touch as quickly as we can. Further information about all our services can be found on Gov.uk.

Service to clients continues in these difficult times. Clients can contact the Service via Email Veterans-UK-VWS-Wales-Mid@mod.gov.uk and they will receive a prompt response from the Veterans Welfare Centre Kidderminster who will refer to a local Welfare Manager. Additionally support continues nationally as detailed below

RAF

Baroness Goldie presents Air Cadet virtual awards

Baroness Goldie, a Minister of State at the Ministry of Defence recently attended an RAF Air Cadet virtual prize giving ceremony to the winners of the Wales and the Battle of Britain 80th competition.

Together with Air Officer Wales, Air Commodore Adrian Williams and Wales & West RAF Air Cadets Regional Commandant, Group Captain Roger Simon, the Baroness praised the dedication and skill of each Air Cadet's winning entry.

Air Cmdr Williams was one of the judges and the originator of this competition. "I wanted to get the air cadets involved in the Battle of Britain 80th anniversary celebrations somehow during the lockdown and at the same time, to learn about the Welsh pilots who fought in the Battle of Britain and the local communities who were involved. I have been amazed at the standard of entries and it was difficult to choose the eventual winners."

The competition was open to all air cadets in Wales (part of Wales and West Region) and gave them the chance to research and prepare a piece of work that fitted within the "Wales and the Battle of Britain" subject.

The judges were Air Office Wales, Group Captain Roger Simon, Regional Commandant Wales & West, RAF Air Cadets, Peter Sinclair, Squadron Leader RFCA North Wales and Tim Jenkins, the Guild of Aviation Artists.



The winning Air Cadets:

Group 12-16 years old

Wales and the Battle of Britain History - Research and prepare a presentation on any one of five topic areas.

■ Cadet Emily Harries, 2480 (Holywell) Sqn, No 2 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Model Aircraft - Build a model aircraft of one 13 RAF aircraft that was flying in Wales during the Battle of Britain.

■ Cadet Luke Unsworth, 1378 (Mold) Sqn, No 2 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Art -

A painting/drawing/sketch from a choice of topics.

■ Cadet Sergeant Mia Jones, 1465 (Gwynedd) Sqn, No 2 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Literature -

Write a poem about any aspect of the Battle of Britain.

■ Cadet Eagle, 1358 (Pontardawe) Sqn, No 3 Welsh Wing

Wales and the Battle of Britain Music -

Research what music people listened to in World War 2 to keep their spirits up.

Joint First

■ Cadet Kevin Titus, 30F (Llandaff) Sqn, No 1 Welsh Wing.

■ Cadet Corporal Ifan Rhys Hughes, 1310 (Eryri) Sqn, No 2 Welsh Wing.

Group 2 17-20 years old (category descriptions as above).

Wales and the Battle of Britain History

■ Cadet Flight Sergeant Thomas Stenson, 2012 (Caldicot) Sqn, No 1 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Model Aircraft

■ Cadet Flight Sergeant O Beake, 1054 (Llanelli) Sqn, No 3 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Art

■ Cadet Sergeant Millie Davies, 30F (Llandaff) Sqn, No 1 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Literature

■ Cadet Sergeant Harry Lancaster, 30F (Llandaff) Sqn, No 1 Welsh Wing.

Wales and the Battle of Britain Music

■ Cadet Corporal C Young, 1358 (Pontardawe) Sqn, No 3 Welsh Wing.

Llongyfarchiadau / Congratulations to you all

ARMY IN WALES



What support are the Armed Forces currently providing to the NHS in Wales in the fight against #coronavirus?

Brigadier Andrew Dawes CBE, Commander Joint Military Command Wales, based at the British Army's Welsh Headquarters in Brecon, said:

"It continues to be a tremendous privilege to support NHS Wales in any way we can during this latest stage of the pandemic response. They have asked us to help crew Welsh ambulances and to deliver the vaccine right across Wales. We currently have around 80 Royal Air Force personnel and 14 Army combat medical technicians deployed as a Vaccination Support Force to support NHS Wales."



"These personnel are operating from 26 locations across the seven Welsh Health Boards, supported by a small team working from the Welsh Government building in Cathays Park, Cardiff. We also have around 100 soldiers, drawn primarily from 9 Regiment RLC, helping to crew ambulances in nine regional ambulance hubs in support of the Welsh Ambulance Services Trust."

"This is in addition to the specialist planners and liaison officers in Welsh Government, NHS Wales and the regional health boards, as well as supporting the regional resilience networks who have been in place since March last year."

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said:

"Defence medics are being deployed in the biggest numbers we have ever seen during peacetime in the UK, supporting the two biggest challenges facing this country - rolling out the vaccine and assisting hospitals care for the most vulnerable."

"Today I spoke with military representatives working in the four corners of the UK, supporting communities as we pull together to combat the effects of the virus. While the Armed Forces are working hard alongside the NHS, local authorities and private contractors, we stand ready to do more when the call comes."



ROYAL NAVY IN WALES

Like so many other organisations the Royal Navy has had to adapt in order to maintain its outputs and that's no different for us here in Wales.

While providing Military Assistance to Civilian Authorities across Wales as part of Tri Service efforts, the standard worldwide 24-7-365 tasks and commitments also remain. Efforts to ensure that training continues safely, without lowering standards has been key in allowing us to continue fulfil these commitments while also being ready to fulfil any additional tasking that may come our way.



Around Wales:

HMS Cambria, the Royal Navy Reserve's new 11-million-pound establishment sited in Cardiff Bay has recently taken receipt of two rigid hull inflatable boats (RHIB's). This will allow Reservists the ability to hone and maintain essential skill in order to support front line operations. Cambria regularly hold virtual experiential sessions. Follow them on Facebook or Twitter if you would like to participate.

The Area and Regional Engagement teams have been busy providing virtual opportunities for many organisations. They have been offering live, fun, interactive sessions with youth organisations, Schools, Colleges, Universities, Sporting and Community based clubs. STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) that fit into the national curriculum have been extremely popular with a younger audience while Nutrition in sport talk is being regularly delivered to Colleges, Universities and Sports Clubs.

Contact robert.govier380@mod.gov.uk for more info.



Our Regional Team are regularly in contact with the RN/RM Veteran community and maintain frequent communication links with the WW2 veterans they are aware of. Prior to the most recent lockdown and in collaboration with the Not Forgotten Association they assisted in the delivery of gift boxes to mark VE75 Day. It pleases us to report that the 5 WW2 veterans that we are aware of, are all well and in good spirits despite the current restrictions. The team are keen to learn of other veterans currently not on their radar.

Contact robert.govier380@mod.gov.uk for more info.



Supporting Transition of Military Personnel in the criminal justice system (SToMP)

Supporting Transition of Military Personnel in the criminal justice system (SToMP) have arranged a Terrorism, Extremism, Contest and Prevent safeguarding virtual workshop, to be hosted by The Welsh Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit on MS teams on the 10th March between 10.00 - 13.00.

The workshop is to raise awareness amongst service charities of the 'threat risk' picture, how to make referrals and of the intervention assets which can be made available to support and safeguard people who may, at different stages in their lives, become vulnerable to radicalising influences. If you would like

to attend, please email wales.stomp@justice.gov.uk (please note there are limited spaces). In conjunction <https://actearly.uk/> was launched last year, if you have any feedback about this website please let us know.

We are looking to develop an ex Armed Service personnel Community Payback initiative by placing Ex-ASP's who are given community payback hours, veteran focussed placements. These individual placements can be positive for future jobs opportunities and is a great opportunity to link them back into the support they need in their life. We are currently scoping appetite from Service charities. If this is an initiative you would like to be involved with please contact wales.stomp@justice.gov.uk

Defence Transition Services (DTS)



Defence Transition Services (DTS) is run by the MOD's Veterans UK. It exists to provide information and support for those service leavers and their families who are most likely to face challenges as they leave the armed forces and adjust to civilian life.

DTS deliver a full range of transition support for you, as a service leaver or family member, working directly with you to provide tailored information and guidance. DTS will facilitate access to the support you need, whether that be from other government departments, local authorities, the NHS or trusted charities.

How we help you

If you are a service leaver, who is recognised by their unit as someone who may need extra support on leaving the armed forces, beyond that which is already provided by Defence and the Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force, you can be referred to DTS. As a service leaver or family member, you can also self refer to DTS. DTS clients may also be referred to us by Defence contractors, such as the Career Transition Partner (CTP) or by third parties, such as charities or local authorities who have been approached for help.

DTS works with you on a one to one basis, building a trusted relationship in order to fully understand your needs, coordinate the right sources of information and simplify your access to the support you need.

For more information including referral forms please visit:

www.gov.uk/guidance/help-and-support-for-service-leavers-and-their-families

614 (County of Glamorgan) Squadron

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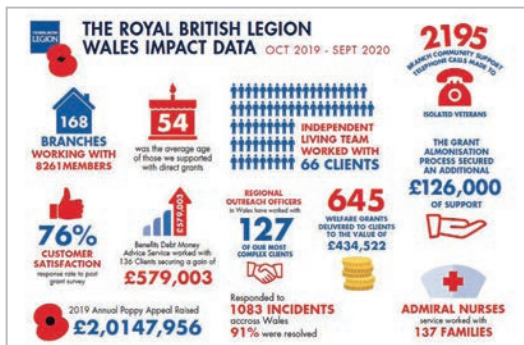


There are some amazing charities working closely with the Armed Forces Community. Here's just some of them....

■ Royal British Legion Wales

Help us celebrate Legion 100

Legion 100 will bring together our nations, individuals, and communities to celebrate both the tremendous achievements of the Legion over the last 100 years and to demonstrate why we are just as important in 2021 and beyond. The British Legion was formed on 15 May 1921, bringing together four national organisations of ex-Servicemen that had established themselves after the First World War. We've been there for first 100 and we'll be here for the next 100.



Telling Our Story

Help us celebrate our centenary year and our people who have made such a difference.

From its very beginnings, in 1921, our members, volunteers and staff of the organisation have been at the heart of the Royal British Legion. We're turning to you to kick start the centenary commemorations by Telling Our Story. We are asking you to delve into the history of our branches, members, volunteers and community work to share related records, artefacts, experiences, personal stories and more. Be it assisting our beneficiaries, commemorating key events and anniversaries, bringing the community together, or simple stories of the day to day events in your area – no story, item or recollection is too small. The items will then be captured in our digital library so that our story can be told for another 100 years.

This is your story. It's about you, your people, your branches, your community, your achievements and connections. We have just over a couple of months to gather stories and artefacts in preparations for our centenary commemorations in May. We are standing by to hear from you. Simply email us your stories and photographs to tellingourstory@britishlegion.org.uk and one of our team members will upload this into our digital library.

■ Woody's Lodge

Woody's Lodge is a social hub, which guides veterans to the help & support they need to re-engage with their families and communities. Our vision is to create an inviting meeting space for those who have served within the Armed Forces and Emergency Services, where they can receive expert support & advice as well as the chance to connect with new and old friends & family.



During the challenging times placed on us due to the Covid-19 restrictions We are at present unable to resume are normal drop-in centre's throughout Wales. However, we are keeping in touch with are veteran's via phone and zoom calls as well as people presenting to us in crisis. When restrictions lift, we will open our 3 major hubs in North, South and West Wales: www.woodyslodge.org/contact/

Woody's continues to maintain communications with Covenant forums enabling us to keep a healthy working relationship with other agencies and charities to assist us in providing the best support for are veterans and their families when restrictions lift. In North Wales we are exploring plans on the possibility of a similar model to Penlan farm based in mid Wales, called Ty Gwalia at Llanynhafal near Denbigh. It has the potential to be an excellent facility and location for veterans and their families to resume a connection to the countryside and all that nature offer's for relaxation and stress-free times. Lots to look forward too when the time comes to revert to a new normal way of life moving forward in the future.

To attend our twice weekly zoom calls please email support@woodyslodge.org for more information, alternatively follow us on Facebook and Twitter.



Our team and beneficiaries before COVID19.

■ Woody's Lodge RNRMC Project

The RNRMC Project team have been busy over the last few months, staying in touch with our veterans during lockdown and making sure they are ok and coping during the lockdown.

We have also been planning for future activities we are hoping to hold later this year (restrictions dependant). We have specifically started drawing up plans for an open day to be held at Amelia Trust Farm hopefully in mid-springtime. Work is still in the early stages, but we are hoping to hold this open day in collaboration with SSCE Cymru and with support from the RN Regional Engagement Officer for Wales and West England. Over the next few months, we are excited to also be working with SSCE Cymru to help support them with some future projects they are hoping to bring to the Forces community later this year. RNRMC Project has also been working with a Volunteer Penarth who is a qualified horticulturist. He has been working hard with our transport officer and some of our veterans on our Peace Garden Project planning and starting work producing a quiet space for our veterans to relax in outside and for those with green fingers the ability to grow local produce and flowers. A lot of work has been done over the last few months in starting to transform an old overgrown space into a fully functional garden. There is still a way to go before the peace garden is completed and ready for our veterans, but we are hoping that once COVID-19 restrictions have eased we will be able to get all hands-on deck and have the garden complete and ready for planting to be started late March to early April.



Woody's Lodge Peace Garden (mid-project) Showing recently installed raised planters and paving slabs that, once complete will give better wheelchair access to the garden.

■ Woody's Lodge Penlan Farm

Woody's Lodge West Wales funded by the 'Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, positive Pathways' is an 11-acre farm based in the Llandysul area.

When restrictions lift, we will open our doors once again to our daily Drop in centre where our beneficiaries can meet like-minded people in a safe environment.

Woody's Lodge was given the chance to apply for a Grant from the Cardigan wellbeing fund, which is a fund that is generated from the Proceeds of crime. This grant is for local community-based projects. We are excited to announce that we were successful in gaining the full amount of £2000 to start our new Poly tunnel project. This project consists of the restoration of our existing polytunnel to make it disabled friendly and accessible for wheelchair users. The project will then move on to allow our beneficiaries to grow their own produce and also spend time with like-minded people. The surplus produce will then be boxed and given back to the community by means of local food banks etc. Every project requires a suitable name, and we will call this "Veterans Veg!"

Spring has arrived at Penlan Farm with all the beauty of the countryside coming to life, which provides an ideal setting for those Veterans with PTSD or other mental health conditions to participate in mindful activities. The group will use farm buildings, a workshop and farmland to deliver a respite, training, drop-in centre and holiday venue for veterans and their families across the UK, mirroring the pilot project at Hay-On-Wye. The current Covid-19 restrictions prevent us from offering such activities for now, but the hard work continues to prepare the area for when freedom of movement is allowed. Once the restrictions are relaxed/removed then we will be able to offer a range of facilities to other Veterans agencies, their service users and families for a secluded and extremely mindful experience. Woody's Lodge looks forward to providing a multi-agency site that can be utilised to improve the quality of life for many.



■ Woody's Lodge West Wales – Green Grass of Home

Virtual Coffee Mornings are 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.



■ Help For Heroes continues to provide support in Wales

Help for Heroes' Wales Community Recovery Team, based in Treforest, continue to provide assistance to veterans across Wales and in Hereford despite the pandemic.

Across the UK we experienced a surge in demand for our services during the first lockdown with a 33% increase in those coming forward for mental health support compared to last year and a 30% increase in referrals to our veterans' clinical services. All our recovery services have been adapted and we continue to deliver remote support through our fellowship, welfare, clinical, grants, Recovery College, sports and psychological wellbeing services to assist veterans in managing their daily struggles.

Tim Penney, Veterans Clinical Advisor, said:

"There have been some staffing changes within Help for Heroes due to the current crisis and unfortunately some outstanding stalwarts of the team have left. That said, a Community Nurse, funded by the Headley Court Trust, joined the team in January and this will be tremendously beneficial in driving the clinical service onwards. We remain committed to working with our partner organisations in the third sector and health providers to help veterans in need."

Key clinical and welfare activity has included:

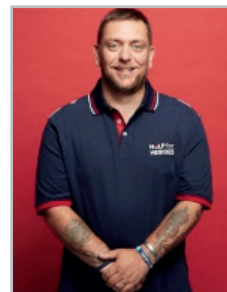
- Working with BLESMA to attain funding for a wet room for a veteran & contributing to the funding of an external lift for a veteran with bilateral below knee amputations.
- Attaining funding from the Royal British Legion mobility fund to acquire active wheelchairs for several veterans with amputations.
- Referring veterans to the Veterans Pain Clinic. These sessions are run remotely and have been hugely beneficial in helping veterans manage chronic pain.
- Referring veterans to the Help for Heroes Hidden Wounds service, which provides psychological wellbeing support to both veterans and their families.
- Undertaking remote clinical assessments and supporting those in need of clinical guidance.
- Regular liaison with Veterans NHS Wales and Change Step to support veterans with mental health needs.

Virtual Recovery

While face to face activity has been understandably limited, veterans have been taking part in virtual recovery activity. It takes a different kind of strength to live life beyond injury and we will continue to give strength to our veterans by the means available to us. Virtual get togethers have been keeping veterans connected with more targeted activity in Wales since January and a variety of sports opportunities have also been taking place online in the last six months. We launched digital home fitness sessions, Hot Topics seminars, and virtual training sessions including Zwift workouts.

A number of veterans join a weekly cycle via Zwift, including RAF veteran Matt Neve from Swansea who took up cycling during the first lockdown in 2020. His sport of choice prior to that had been archery but ranges were forced to close and not being able to take part was having a detrimental effect on his mental health.

"I bought a bike and haven't looked back," said Matt. "I do a mixture of training on the turbo using Zwift and outdoors which means I can still train no matter what the weather is doing. The Zwift rides give me an activity to look forward to. I – generally ride on my own so it's really good to get together on Zwift and Discord to have a chat and a bit of banter while training. Quite often the workouts feel much harder on the static trainer than being out on the road. This is something I never thought I would enjoy but I love it." Matt has since signed up to join the Help for Heroes Big Battlefield Bike Ride fundraising challenge which is due to take place in France in June (Covid-permitting).



Self-Care

Now more than ever Help for Heroes recognises the need to practice self-care, for veterans as well as those working in high-intensity situations. Our Recovery College Self-Help Guides cover many subjects including sleeping well and managing anxiety among others. They can be found at: <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/recovery-college/self-help-guides-to-recovery/>

Contact Us

We're proud to work with Armed Forces advocates across Wales to support our veterans. You can contact the Community Recovery Team for Wales and Hereford at wales.supporthub@helpforheroes.org.uk

HELP for HEROES
SUPPORT FOR OUR WOUNDED

■ All Call Signs

All Call Signs is a peer support network for veterans and service personnel living with mental ill health. Our Case-worker & Beacon platforms support hundreds of at risk members of the armed forces community each year and our marketing channels help millions more in improving their mental health and gaining access to support services.



Veteran's mental health is important. we fight every day to improve your access to mental healthcare:

At All Call Signs our goal is to use technology and the power of community to improve the mental health of servicemen, women & veterans. Our hope is that this will manifest in a healthier, happier life for individuals suffering with mental health issues and will reduce the number of self-harm incidents and suicides in the military community. The RAP process is a technology-led attack against PTSD, depression & anxiety.

■ REFA - The Forces Employment Charity

Business as usual in REFA we are up by 30% from last year with referrals. We have some Supervisory and Lead roles going up for CV19 Test Sites. There are operative roles too, company details not disclosed if you would like to know more details please register on www.RFEA.org.uk Openreach civil's department need to recruit 600+ this year and are very keen for veterans to be a large number of that recruitment. Going Forward Into Employment – specific support for Service Leavers, Veterans and Spouses into roles within the Civil Service, as long as there is a profile match there can be a guaranteed interview.



■ BLESMA The Limbless Veterans

Blesma Wales and West continues to provide direct welfare support and grants to members and widows to ensure that their needs have been met quickly. The Support Officer

(Tom Hall) supports with Prosthetics issues and liaises with NHS ALACs closely in support of 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 urgent bills, repairs to disability and mobility aids, and offering Blesma befriending calls and contacts through Welfare and wider Volunteers. Blesma continue to collaborate closely with other services, 3rd sector, agencies, and local community groups to provide help with War Pension, benefits, and entitlements issues. They are offering practical or emotional support to Blesma members who may be isolated or lonely in communities across Wales and West. In all aspects it is "business as usual" with essential physical visits by the Blesma Support Officer taking place to those most in need. The Outreach Officer has been constantly in touch with members by phone, video calls and virtual events, which have replaced physical get-togethers. The period during the pandemic has been extremely busy with more younger veterans being supported with poor mental health and older members assisted with the purchase and repair of mobility and disability aids. With the reopening of Limb Centres the Support Officer has been in close touch with ALACs to address prosthetics concerns, ensuring that provision requirements have been met and priority appointments offered. Blesma staff and Volunteers are taking every precaution to ensure they are not a potential risk to Members and for all member contact a comprehensive risk assessment process has been carried out.

Activities and events

Blesma have postponed all physical UK and overseas Blesma Events until at least the end of March 2021 but all Activities and Events after this date will be under review with local Covid 19 Rules. Local Wales and West events are similarly affected, and Members are being contacted and updated accordingly. Blesma Wales and West Outreach developed online and video activities, including weekly virtual Tea and Toast, interactive Quizzes, fitness sessions and Amputee Health Discussion Groups. The Outreach Officer is also running events such as virtual Escape Rooms, crafting workshops, and seated yoga which are proving popular amongst the members. Blesma have also continued their Making Generation R (Resilient) sessions online, running communication workshops for members and widows, including recently extending the sessions to Secondary Schools.

Information for our members and supporting agencies

If members require any additional support at this time or agencies have veterans who they wish to refer for Blesma support, or they find members in need, they can make contact with the Blesma Support Officer: Tom Hall - Tel: 07780165085, E mail: bsowest@blesma.org or the Outreach Officer, Jason Suller – E mail: outreachwest@blesma.org

More information: <https://blesma.org/news-media/blesma-news/> or www.blesma.org

The British Training Board

About us

We at The British Training Board are a Community Interest Company which passionate about helping people still serving in the Military and Veterans alike. Our community is the Armed Forces and public services community. Our goal is to make the training and skills you achieved in the Armed Forces and other public bodies recognized by civilian employers and get you the best start on the way to your second career and to help you with your qualifications while still serving.

A recent success

We have recently employed in three Veterans and one Veteran family member into our place of work thanks to a fantastic funding opportunity we had received. This has been a great success because it means that we have successfully given jobs to four more personnel in need of work.

“Training Is The New Time Off”



Our Services

We have a wide range of career development pathways including the UK's only Military Skills Translator. We can take your Military Skills and Qualifications and translate them into Industry recognized civilian qualifications to help Veterans when in their transition phase to get better jobs. The transition is very tough for most Military Personnel which is why we want to make it easier.

Veterans TV

We are a part of a Military dedicated Facebook Page called Veterans TV. This is a page that gives other Veterans an opportunity to see what is out there and also has newsletters of activities and helpful information about Veterans. We also offer a FREE interview for other Veteran owned companies to come on and promote their business to others in order to help support them and what they do.



Contact information

Phone: 01792 709 287 **Website:** www.thebtb.co.uk
email Address: admin@britishtrainingboard.org.uk



CAIS' Change Step project is very fortunate to have a large cluster of passionate supporters who go above and beyond

to fundraise for the service. In recent years we've seen a former army Major and his wife cycle across France and Spain in only 4 weeks, aged veterans abseil down the Great Orme in Llandudno and individuals across Wales taking part in a COVID-safe backyard sleepout, all in an effort to raise funds for Change Step.



Emma-Jane Lees and her partner Scott



Roger "Brummie" Lees

This month saw another incredible sum raised for Change Step by Emma-Jane Lees and her partner Scott who, on the 10th of October, spent 24 continuous hours on a treadmill. The pair ran just 8.8 miles short of 4 whole marathons during the challenge, raising over £900 – an extraordinary feat! The funds will go towards our Peer Mentoring programme which provides vital support services to veterans and their families in Wales.

Emma-Jane, who is the daughter of Roger "Brummie" Lees, one of Change Step's Peer Mentors, cited witnessing first-hand how much some can struggle with adjusting to civilian life after leaving the army as her reason for wanting to raise money for Change Step. "I think, had my father had a charity like yourselves when he left the military, he would have found the transition much easier," she said. "Seeing the work that Change Step do as a whole for veterans I wanted to be involved somehow which is why I decided to run the 96 miles and raise as much as I can as my token of saying thanks for everything you do!"

Emma-Jane is also an avid long-distance runner, having ran the London Marathon numerous times for various charities that she feels a personal connection with. "I thought that this was my body's limit and had made the decision that it was time to give up long distance running due to the impact it was having on my joints," she said. "I knew that I had one last challenge left in me and wanted to make it a special one."

HAFAL

"DIGITAL SKILLS FOR ARMED FORCES VETERANS IN WALES"

Hafal have recently been successful in receiving a 'Force for Change' grant to increase the digital inclusion of veteran's across Wales during these trying times.



We know how prevalent loneliness and isolation can be amongst vulnerable people. This is acutely true for those who live in rural areas where there may be limited access to support networks. Working with partner organisations throughout Wales, we will facilitate access to digital inclusion training and workshops for veterans who feel their skills need improving.

We will do pre-engagement work with veteran's organisations to help veterans understand the benefits of undertaking this training and what their capabilities will be. Following delivery of the training, we will offer a number of digital befriending coffee mornings etc. which will promote social inclusivity, friendly contact, and emotional support.

For more information please contact Finola Pickwell: Finola.pickwell@hafal.org or Tel: 07970 435817

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?

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Find out more about our work at

www.rafa.org.uk



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www.veteranslegallink.org email: help@veteranslegal.co.uk



FIGHTING WITH PRIDE

Between 1955 and 2000, the Armed Forces investigated, tried by court martial and sent to prison many service personnel for the military offence of 'homosexuality', an offence which was struck down in civil law in 1958.

Even though that the offence did not exist in society, these Veterans were recorded as sex offenders and their lives were blighted. The last serviceman to be sent to prison was as recently as 1996. Those who were not jailed, were forced to resign or dismissed, with the record cards annotated as 'Dismissed in Disgrace' or 'Dismissed Services No Longer Required'.

Twenty-one years after the ban on the open service of LGBT+ personnel in the Armed Forces was lifted, Wales and the rest of the UK are now a places of very different values, indeed all UK Governments are committed to ensuring that our LGBT+ citizens feel welcome, safe and can flourish. Our Armed Forces are Stonewall Top 100 employers and LGBT+ personnel serve at the front line of operations all over the world, where they are valued, welcome and their careers thrive. This is a stark contrast to the experiences of our LGBT+ Veterans, who were treated uniquely harshly in the years of the ban.

Fighting With Pride formed, as the only LGBT+ military charity, on the 20th anniversary of the ban, to support LGBT+ Veterans who are struggling with their health, employment, housing and finances. Many were outed to families and friends, most have lost touch with the services and isolate themselves from veterans organisations. Some feel that veterans organisations might be populated by the very people who rejected them so harshly. Today we know that a welcome awaits, but perhaps we might understand the doubt.

FWP is working with organisations that support Veterans across the UK, to develop awareness of the challenges that this unique Veteran community has faced, helping organisations to find and support those Veterans who may be hard to reach and who need encouraging to see the warm welcome waiting. We are a small and new military charity and are looking to establish a support worker in Wales, but in the meantime do please let us know if we can support your teams or communities through awareness building, or if we can provide lived-experience guidance in casework.

The Westminster Government is in discussions with FWP about how we can support recovery for LGBT+ Veterans as we are working with the Cabinet Office on a range of policies which will be announced through 2021. It is our commitment that LGBT+ Veterans who have struggled so much, see hope for a better future. If you would like to know more about FWP we would be delighted to hear from you, and do please encourage Veterans, service personnel and families in your community to get in touch.

[Details can be found at our website](http://www.fightingwithpride.org.uk)

www.fightingwithpride.org.uk

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Join us today and be part
of something extraordinary.

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FORCES
NEED
YOU**

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ssafa the
Armed Forces
charity

Email volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk

Visit ssafa.org.uk/newrecruits

THE POPPY FACTORY

Veterans with health conditions supported into more than 200 jobs since the first UK lockdown.

More than 200 jobs have been secured by veterans with mental and physical health conditions across Wales and England since the first UK lockdown, following employment support from The Poppy Factory.

The charity has been providing one-to-one support to ex-Forces men and women throughout the pandemic, with many moving into essential roles in logistics, healthcare and other sectors. As the UK continues to face severe restrictions in the fight against Covid-19, veterans with health conditions in Wales are encouraged to register with The Poppy Factory for employment support.

Among those who found help is former combat medic and Royal Military Police veteran, Bob, who joined the Ambulance Service as an Urgent Care Assistant and has regularly been moving Covid-19 patients to hospital.

Bob said: "I'd been unemployed for about four years when I first linked up with Kirsty, my Employability Consultant at The Poppy Factory. I'd pretty much given up – every door I was pushing against seemed to be locked on the other side."

"Kirsty helped me to find a door that was open, and I'm proud to have stepped through it and be able to contribute."

Read Bob's story

The Poppy Factory helps veterans with health conditions on their journey into employment and continues supporting them whatever challenges they may face.

Four out of five of the veterans it works with report a mental health condition. Whatever their situation, and whatever they are going through, its employment support team is on hand with one-to-one advice and guidance.

Deirdre Mills, Chief Executive of The Poppy Factory, said:

"With Covid-19 and the lockdown restrictions having such a huge impact on all our lives, I am proud that the veterans we support are rising to the challenge and making a real difference."

"I am equally proud of the hard work and commitment of our employment support team. They stand ready to help many more veterans make progress on their journey into employment in 2021, no matter what challenges they may face."

Veterans with health conditions who would like to register for employment support can visit www.poppyfactory.org/employment or call **020 8939 1837**

Employment support during coronavirus

Supporting veterans looking for employment

As we all continue to weather the coronavirus crisis. The Poppy Factory's employability service is here to support veterans with health challenges on your journey towards work.

Employment support is available to veterans with health conditions.



Find out more - www.poppyfactory.org



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

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

Vicki, Logistics Manager

"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





Sean Molino BCA is a former British Army Soldier serving within the Welsh Guards as a Physical Training Instructor. He runs a Multi Award Winning Healthy and Well-being consultancy that have appeared on Multiple TV series, Forces Fitness Ltd.



As we head into another extended National Lockdown and all Fitness and Leisure facilities are closed it is so important to understand how to stay on top of your health and well-being. Long before this pandemic, we all knew that physical activity boosted our health and ability to resist and overcome illness. That conclusion hasn't changed. In fact, it's more relevant now than ever.

[1] Stay Active

This doesn't necessarily mean beasting yourself in a Military Circuit! My advice is to try and stay active 3 times a week. This could take shape in any forms from walking, jogging, walking up and down your stairs, home circuit or yoga. The important thing is that you are staying active and enjoying it! A great example that I can give you is if you like photography then get that camera out, get out for a walk and do what you love whilst staying active. Whatever your age or fitness level there is an activity you can do.

[2] Embrace the outdoors

It's good for your mind and body - Recent trials have found that outdoor exercise is associated with an increase in energy and revitalization as well as decreased confusion, anger, depression and tension compared to when exercising indoors. It makes you feel better about yourself. Research from the University of Essex confirms that when working out in the green environment it improves your self esteem. Soak up the sunshine benefits. Get that well deserved Vitamin D3 from your outdoor sessions, it's important to your bone health and metabolic function.

[3] Give back and support others

People who support and help others are more likely to rate themselves as happy. You can support and help people in many ways from giving advice to people if you're qualified to do so, listening, having a chat if you see someone is down or even supporting and helping financially like many Fundraisers do!

[4] Give yourself a break from Technology

Social media and modern technology has taken over our lives. It can have a positive effect and also a negative effect and we all need to take a break at times. Whether it's not watching the news or taking a break from Social media especially if you find yourself reacting to it and it putting you in a bad mood!

[5] Keep Learning

It's very important to try new things and keep learning. Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. Every year I try something new and keep learning both through accredited courses, CPD courses or even just learning new training techniques or challenges that can help me.

[6] Surround yourself with people who will help and support you and your life journey

Get rid of those people who constantly put you down and are always on your back, This goes for face to face and online. If there's people on your social media that only pop up to argue or constantly criticize you, get rid of them. They are not worth your time and definitely not worth them having an effect on your mental Health. Have a network of people who you can trust and champion you to others and also support you when you needed them.

[7] A Healthy Diet

A healthy diet can protect the human body against certain types of diseases such as obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular diseases. A good diet has a huge impact on our overall well-being and keeping us feeling fresh and in a good mood! My main top tips are to eat natural as best possible by consuming a High Fibre, low GI Carbohydrate diet including - Protein, small amount of dairy, good fats and plenty of Fruit and Vegetables.

- **Try and drink 2-3 Litres of Water each day.**
- **Aim to eat 7-9 Fruit and Vegetables a day.** (Remember 80 grams = 1 Portion).
- **Choose wholemeal over white when looking at bread, pasta and rice.**
- **Fish is a great source of Omega 3, Good Fats and Protein.** (I try to consume it at least twice a week).
- **Cut down on your Fizzy Drinks intake.**
- **Aim to be good 80% of the time, we are all allowed a treat and also some time out.**
- **Don't let your diet run your life.**

"Lastly there's no magic formula however I've certainly found that over the years the above have definitely helped me in my life journey and I'm sure if you follow the above they can help you too!"



Positivity breeds Positivity

Mr Sean A Molino BCA



So many of us are currently relying on the internet for shopping, staying in touch with family and friends and keeping up to date with the latest news. As you can imagine, now more than ever cyber criminals are taking every chance to prey on the current fears of our communities. Here are a few of the latest scams we are seeing:

Coronavirus Vaccine Scams:

Texts and emails are circulating claiming to confirm vaccine dates and requesting payments for the vaccine. The NHS will only send official letters to individuals regarding the vaccine, anything else is a scam. Please be aware and don't click on links.

Computer Service Fraud:

Phone calls claiming to be from companies such as Microsoft or Tech Support teams requesting that the victims download a piece of software onto their computer for it to be fixed. Never download anything as a result of a cold call, report these calls to Action Fraud.

Bank and Police impersonation:

Members of the community have been contacted by criminals claiming to be from their bank or local police station, asking for personal details or requesting money. You'll never be asked for this information by the real organisations, simply end the call and report these calls to your bank or Action Fraud.

Unauthorised Payment Call:

Criminals are calling requesting that you press 1 to discuss an unauthorised payment on your Amazon account for example. Don't press one, just hang up and ignore the call, as it's a scam.

Never assume that any unsolicited call is genuine:

Remain calm, don't feel pressured into acting on these communications, verify using a trusted source rather than the method you've been contacted on. Tell two others offline and online to protect your loved ones.

Gwent Cyber Protect Officer: Kate Lloyd



the Money Advice Service

Looking for money guidance, but don't know where to begin?

Start with the free Money Navigator Tool from the Money Advice Service.

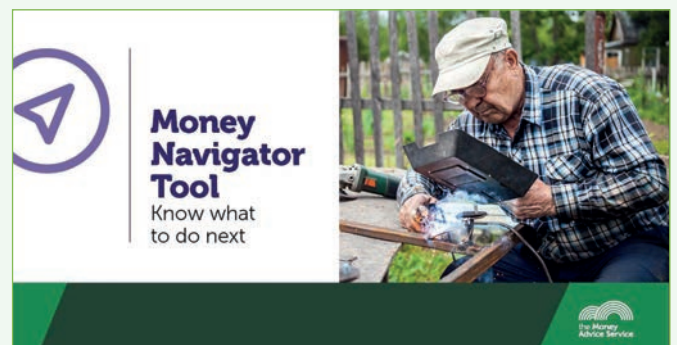
It takes seconds to get money guidance based on your own situation. This tool covers all areas of personal finances.

Whatever your situation, you'll know the money issues to tackle first and where to go for free advice from trusted partners.

Stay on top of bills and payments. Review your finances.

Get help with budgeting. And plan ahead, including making the most of savings and safeguarding your pension.

www.moneyadvice.org.uk/en/tools/money-navigator-tool



HOPE

Helpu eraill i gymryd rhan ac ymgysylltu
Helping others participate and engage

Become a Volunteer Advocate an help others

An exciting new project needs your help to support older people (50+) and carers in your community.

HOPE will enable older people and carers to engage with professionals, participate in their communities, understand their rights as an older person, access information to make informed choices and, at the end of the day, have their voices heard.

HOPE will make a huge difference to the lives of many older people who currently don't know how to deal with their concerns or don't have the confidence to speak up about what they really need. This project will help shine a light on their needs and aspirations so they can live a more fulfilling and dignified later life.

HOPE is recruiting and training community based volunteers all over Wales to provide independent advocacy support to local older people and carers so they can help shape the key decisions affecting their lives and avoid getting into a crisis situation.

Volunteers will be providing the support on the telephone or via video call, where available, due to the current Covid-19 situation. Age Cymru wants to ensure the safety of all its staff and volunteers and is following Welsh Government and Public Health Wales Guidance.

The **HOPE** project is a partnership project between Age Cymru, Age Cymru local partners and Age Connects Wales partners across the whole of Wales.

To find out more about HOPE and how you can be trained to become a Volunteer Advocate and support people in your community,
email: advocacy@agecymru.org.uk

Or go to our website:

www.agecymru.org.uk/advocacy



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: cafvc@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 9.30am onwards.

Coach & Horses, Chepstow

Tel: **07539268440** email: 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: cafvc@gmail.com

■ Meet 3rd Saturday of Each Month - 9.30am 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

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

■ Meet 3rd Wednesday of the month from 9.00am 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.

* **Please note that many may be on hold due to current covid 19 restrictions.**

Coronavirus (Covid 19)

Welsh Government continues to work with the MOD, NHS and key partners to deliver support during the pandemic which includes the vital work of the Armed Forces providing direct assistance to the NHS and vaccination effort.

Please find information below which may be of use to clients and support organisations helping members of the Armed Forces community:

Financial support to help pay rent, mortgage or bills if currently working, self-employed, ill and cannot work, been made redundant or on furlough due to coronavirus:

<https://gov.wales/get-financial-help-pay-your-bills-during-coronavirus-pandemic>

Third sector support:

<https://gov.wales/volunteering-third-sector-coronavirus>

Business and employer support:

<https://gov.wales/business-and-employers-coronavirus>

Covenant Legislation

Officials across the Armed Forces team, health, education and housing policy continue to work with the MOD on the proposed Covenant legislation to further enshrine the Covenant in law. The aim of legislation is to increase awareness of the unique obligations facing the Armed Forces community, and the unique nature of service and to increase understanding of how these can affect the way in which the Armed Forces Community accesses public services.

Bodies subject to the duty will need to have due regard to:

- 1.** The unique obligations of, and sacrifices made by, the Armed Forces;
- 2.** The principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising for Service people from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces ; and
- 3.** The principle that special provisions for Service People may be justified by the effect on such people of membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces.

As we go to press, Welsh Government officials are assessing the Bill and will be providing policy and legal feedback to inform next steps in Wales.

Annual report

The Welsh Government annual report provides updates on delivery of support for the Armed Forces community in Wales. Please publicise across any networks and we encourage any feedback. It is available here:

Cymraeg: https://llyw.cymru/cyfamod-y-lluoedd-arfog-adroddiad-blynyddol-2019?_ga=2.244457219.747731632.1611051885-1616430552.1608399309

English: <https://gov.wales/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2019>

Capitalising on Military family talent

The Welsh Government has worked with Business in the Community and Scottish Government to produce a new toolkit that provides tips and suggestions on how employers can recruit and retain military family members. The toolkit explains how family members of those serving in the military can be affected and what steps employers can take. It discusses the barriers they can experience when applying for work but also the barriers that prevent them from being able to work. The toolkit covers how military family members can be inspired and prepared for work as well as how employers can support them once they have joined an organisation. Please promote to any employers, business forums and networks. The document is available in Welsh and English here:

<https://www.bitc.org.uk/toolkit/capitalising-on-military-family-talent/>

Living in our shoes report

In 2019 the MOD commissioned a review into the concerns raised by Armed Forces families. The report, published in June 2020, includes recommendations across MOD, national and local government and charities to improve the support for UK Armed Forces families and ensure greater recognition for the sacrifices they make to keep the nation safe. Welsh Government are participating in the UK working group to take forward the recommendations and have provided the MOD with a progress update in December 2020. We will be working with the sector to ensure families in Wales receive the support they need in all aspects of their lives.

Conference

On 3 December the Welsh Government held its annual Armed Forces Conference (virtually), bringing together stakeholders and partners from Wales and across the UK. The event was attended by over 100 delegates in a new format which was a great success. Deputy Minister for Housing and Local Government Hannah Blythyn MS gave the keynote address, recognising the support of the Armed Forces during the Covid 19 pandemic and thanking the sector for the continued work to support the whole Armed Forces Community. Other speakers included Fighting with Pride, the Tri Services, VC Gallery, Age Cymru, AFLOs and Help for Heroes. For information, please contact Armedforces@gov.wales

Veterans' Gateway / Map of local support

The Veterans' Gateway Map of need provides information on local support organisations – both within and outside the Armed Forces sector. If you would like your support listed on the map, please contact Peter.evans017@gov.wales

www.veteransgateway.org.uk/local-support/

Armed Forces Expert Group

The Armed Forces Expert group advises Welsh Government on how public services can meet the needs of current and former members of the Armed Forces. It is made up of Service charities, statutory agencies, MOD and other key stakeholders. The next meeting is scheduled for 24 March 2021. You can keep up to date with the Expert group here: <https://llyw.cymru/grwp-arbenigol-ar-anghenion-cymuned-y-lluoedd-arfog-yng-nghymru>

<https://gov.wales/expert-group-needs-armed-forces-community-wales>