

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.

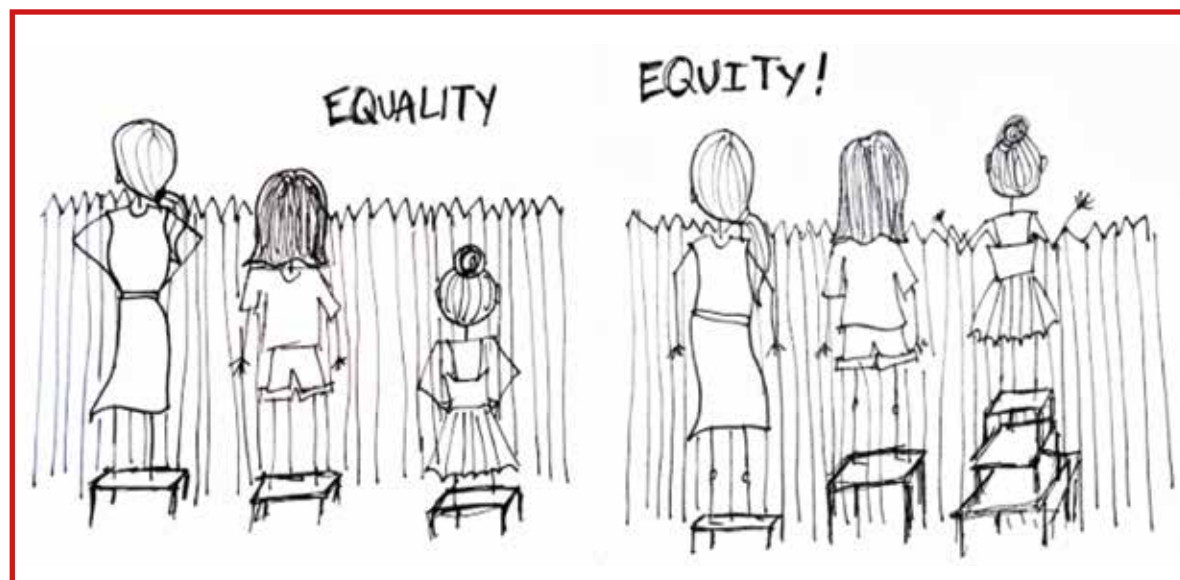
The Armed Forces Covenant is 10 years old!

The Armed Forces Covenant is about fair treatment. Serving in the Armed Forces can often mean short notice changes to plans, affecting many small aspects of day to day life for service personnel, and their families – even after their service.

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.

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

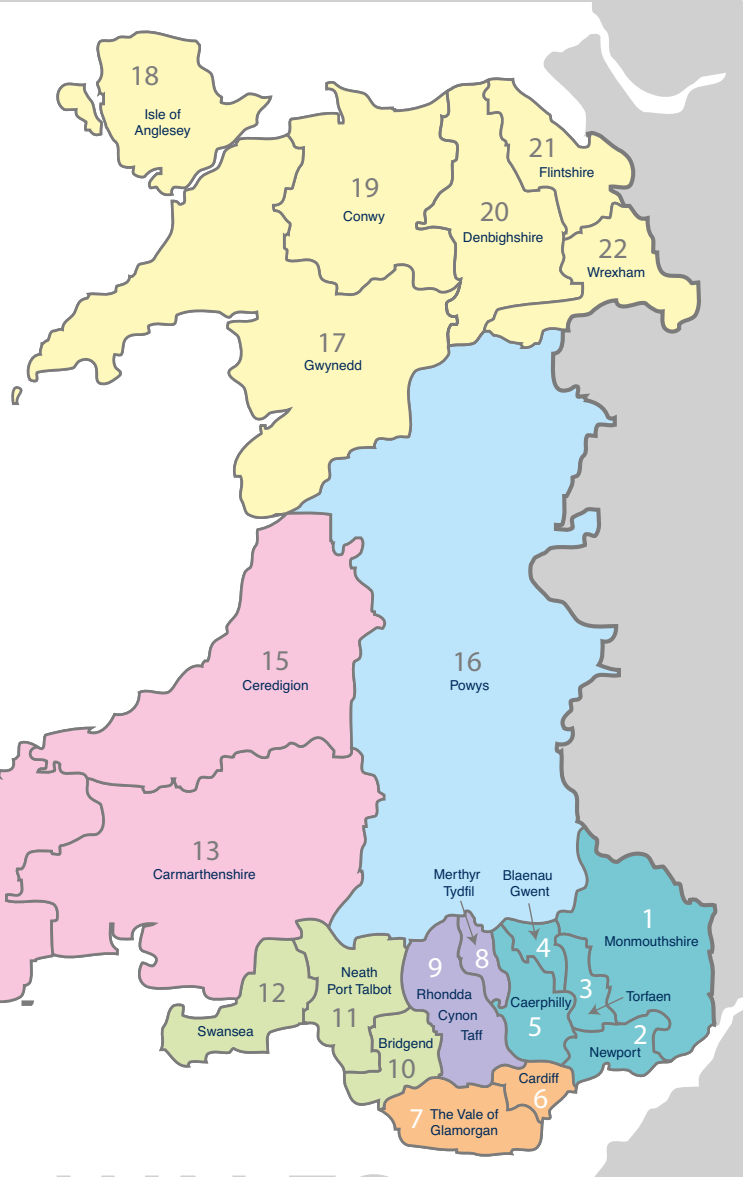
6	Cardiff
7	Vale of Glamorgan
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Abigail Warburton email: awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

8	Merthyr Tydfil
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 Bethan Dennedy email: b.dennedy@npt.gov.uk

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 (Council Leader)
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

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Armed Forces Community.

West Wales

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

Pembrokeshire Cllr John Cole
email: cllr.john.cole@pembrokeshire.gov.uk
preferred email: 9thlancer1915@gmail.com

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 Cllr Jon Horlor
email: jon.Horlor@torfaen.gov.uk

Powys

Powys Cllr Rosemarie Harris
email: rosemarie.harris@powys.gov.uk
email PA in first instance:
karen.southcott@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 David Evans
email: david.evans@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 Cllr Richard Mainon
email: richard.Mainon@denbighshire.gov.uk

Veterans scoping exercise / Veterans strategy

Work continues on delivery of the recommendations of the Veterans scoping exercise which was published in January 2020 following consultation with over 1,000 veterans, families and support organisations.

Outcomes to date include a 35% uplift in Veterans NHS Wales funding, publication of the first Wales Resettlement guide, funding of Armed Forces Liaison Officers to 2023, a Wales Employment event and funding for SSCE Cymru and service children.

Delivery will continue against the remaining recommendations including roll out of GP accreditation in Wales, further work in the criminal justice system and assessing current housing support.

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

Armed Forces Covenant – Wales Annual report

The Welsh Government published an annual report to highlight progress of delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales. You can read the 2020 report here:

<https://gov.wales/armed-forces-covenant-annual-report-2020>

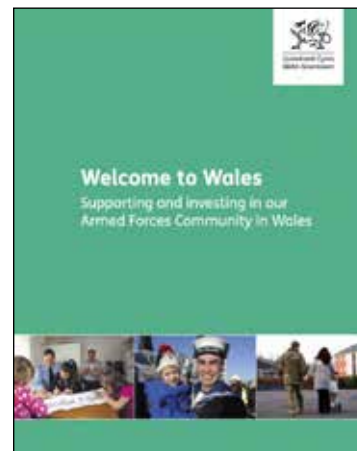
Wales Resettlement Guide

The Welsh Government, working with 160th (Welsh) Brigade and the CTP have produced a new guide for Serving personnel and their families leaving the Services and settling in Wales. You can view it here:

<https://gov.wales/support-serving-armed-forces-personnel-and-their-families-2021>

For additional support, there is also **Welcome to Wales** which provides key information for those military personnel and families coming to Wales, in areas such as childcare, housing and education:

<https://gov.wales/support-serving-armed-forces-personnel-and-their-families>



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



ARMED FORCES
COVENANT
LLUOEDD ARFOG
CYFAMOD

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>



South West Wales

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

Veteran Allotments

Change Step have recently taken over Plot 32 in Laleston, Bridgend. This plot is managed and run for veterans by veterans, and aims to provide a safe space for you to go to and talk whilst being around similar people.



A few of the benefits this will bring:

Good for your health. Being out in the open air, working with the land and exercising is good for your mental and physical health.

Sociable. Be part of a very friendly community. Next year we aim to hold BBQs and coffee mornings on the plot.

Sense of achievement. The satisfaction of eating something you've grown yourself is hard to beat.

If you are interested in joining us at Plot 32 please contact Steffan via email s.sheppard25199243@gmail.com
We look forward to seeing you there!

Bridgend Carers Centre – Veterans and Armed Forces, Reducing Isolation Project

The Bridgend Carers Centre - Veterans and Armed Forces Reducing Isolation Project funded by the Armed Forces Covenant has 2 main strategies. The first is to reduce isolation at home for those caring for someone and those being cared for; the second strategy is reducing isolation through contact with others.

1. To reduce isolation at home, our strategy has been broken down into a number of themes:

Reducing isolation through contact. For this, we call each of our carers or cared-for once a month to have a chat. During that conversation, we check to see if there are any concerns and any support they might need. If we can take care of it, then we will. If not, then we contact the relevant agency or provide advice to solving the issue. We follow up to ensure that the issue is resolved, and if it is not, then we consider what further action is required. Of course, the call is also made to provide contact with someone to provide a connection, have a chat and for clients to know that they are being thought of.

Reducing Isolation through digital connectivity. For those who need or may want digital connectivity we provide tablet devices which include the ability to connect to wifi and the mobile data network, ensuring those without wifi are still able to connect to the internet. The tablets can provide access to our Zoom calls, the Bridgend Carers Book Club, counselling, online grocery shopping, email, connecting with family members, filling electronic forms in, and lots of other options to prevent loneliness and help with everyday life. Reducing Isolation through activities.

We have provided Adult 'Painting by Numbers' kits and craft packs to reduce isolation through projects that take a number of days, but provide a sense of achievement. Also, we have provided resistance workout bands and ankle weights along with an exercise sheet that includes both standing, and sitting exercises for those unable to stand.

2. To ensure the second strategy is achieved we:

- Provide transport to the Porthcawl Veterans Hub once each month with door to door pick up/drop off.
- Visit individuals who are lonely.
- Provide occasional transport to the local hospital in Bridgend and Surgery appointments within the Bridgend area under various circumstances.
- Provide a portable pizza oven that can be loaned for free, for families or military clubs to use to have a social gathering.
- We are currently setting up adult tricycles loans to 4 locations throughout the county.
- We are currently setting up tea/coffee mornings within each valley in the county.

As Bridgend Carers Centre provides services to people other than those serving/have served, we are able to add value to our project by utilising other events and services such as counselling, financial advice, the book club, walking group and lots more. We are proud to have been told that we provide a quality service.

<http://www.bridgendcarers.co.uk/>

Porthcawl Veterans Hub

The Porthcawl Veterans Hub was formed in February 2019. The Hub is open on Saturday mornings where a breakfast club is held, but unlike other breakfast clubs, the Hub would be open for veterans, serving personnel and their families to attend.

The objective of the Hub was to provide a safe, confidential and supportive environment for both serving and ex-service members and their families, of all branches of the armed forces.

During 2019, the Hub went from strength to strength with members playing an active part in local community events such as litter picks, beach cleans and the local carnival. Christmas dinner was held at the hub on Christmas Day in 2019 for veterans and members of the local community who otherwise would have been alone. And in 2020 hampers were given out due to Covid restrictions.

Lockdown put a hold on the breakfast club, but members were kept updated through social media and during the first lockdown, a local Covid support group was organised in the town where our members played a prominent part. They organised and ran a collection and delivery service of prescriptions and medication for vulnerable and shielding members of the community.

Some of our members are now running a local community food pantry part of the FareShare charity, where members collect and distribute food parcels to the vulnerable.

During last summer when temperatures were at their peak, a request went out from the Bridgend branch of Mental Health Matters Wales for an ice making machine. At the time they were helping to run the local field hospital. Members of the Hub purchased two ice making machines and donated them to the field hospital. Also as there were veterans in the field hospital, we helped them celebrate Poppy Day in 2020, by baking cakes and these were also presented to the hospital.

On Sunday 3rd October, some members ran a virtual marathon from Mumbles to Porthcawl to raise money for the hub to purchase a wheelchair for our more vulnerable members. The same member had also enjoyed a weekend of wind and kitesurfing alongside another veteran support group "The Not Forgotten".

During an event at Principality Stadium, our Treasurer received her Welsh Women's Rugby cap, which was presented to her by the legendary Welsh International from the 60's & 70's, Gerald Davies.

Bridgend County Borough Council has supported us with funding made available through the Armed Forces Covenant and from other funds. This funding hired a coach for the Arboretum trip and purchased our Hub standard, which is used at commemorative events. Also, the Hub received funding to start playing outdoor bowls on a Wednesday evening which has been a great success. (Here's looking to next season).

The Hub is always looking to form good working relationships with other local organisations, and we would like to thank both the Bridgend Carers group and BCBC. Without the support from these two organisations, we wouldn't be where we are today.

Bulldogs Boxing & Community Activities

Following another unusual year with restrictions still in place, it brings great pleasure to announce that the Bulldogs were the winners of the 'Health & Wellbeing Award' at the Welsh Veterans Awards 2021. The Bulldogs have been recognised for the excellent work they do to promote, encourage and maintain healthy lifestyles and positive wellbeing for their veteran members. All Veterans that register with the Bulldogs receive free gym membership and access to classes.



The ceremony took place on the 9th September at the Village Hotel Club Cardiff, and was attended by Ceri Stilwell and Tom Greenhalgh.

An example of the excellent work that takes place is the recent opening of the Veterans' Allotment in Baglan. The opening ceremony took place on 12th August and was officially opened by the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan, Mrs Roberta Louise Fleet JP and was attended by a range of partners and other supporters. The hard work that has been put into the allotments has completely transformed an overgrown plot of land into a safe, quiet place to get lost in nature. The Bulldogs have also been successful in securing funding from the Welsh Government to extend their facility to include two soundproof therapy rooms. These therapy rooms will be vital in providing a non-clinical setting to be used by the community and for Veterans NHS Wales therapy sessions to take place.

Cllr Wendy Lewis - Armed Forces Champion Swansea

I was elected as a councillor in 2017 and I am proud to be the Armed Forces Champion for Swansea. My first official event following the signing of the Covenant was taking part in honouring the 157 (Welsh) Regiment of the Royal Logistic Corps with Freedom of the City.



Annually I facilitate the Armed Forces Day memorial events including the flag raising ceremony, and assist with the Swansea Air Show celebrations. This year the Airshow will be taking place on 2nd and 3rd July.

I also oversee the quarterly Armed Forces Covenant Partnership meetings and regularly attend other meetings and events across Swansea Bay. Additionally I work hard to secure funding to help support veterans across Swansea and have recently secured £25,000 from the Leader of Swansea Council. I am also pleased to inform you that Swansea Council have taken over all the private War Memorials in the City to ensure they are maintained without causing any stress or problems to others. Throughout my time as Champion I have worked hard to build strong relationships with the armed forces community in Swansea and endeavour to help with queries from veterans, serving personnel and their families. Please get in touch: cllr.wendy.lewis@swansea.gov.uk

In the Squad

A joint programme between Swansea City AFC Foundation and Ospreys in the Community, our free weekly sessions for veterans are currently running at Meadow View Sports Complex in Swansea (Wednesday 2-3pm) and at the Vernon Place Community Hub in Briton Ferry (Thursday 1.30-2.30) ... everyone is welcome, all ages and abilities. It is an opportunity for physical activity with walking football and rugby and a space for conversation and connection (and a cuppa!) with likeminded people.

We are also able to invite key contacts or relevant groups to join us to share information and resources for example Gareth Thomas, Armed Forces Champion, South West Wales (DWP/Work & Health) who joined in with some walking football and met the group and was able to offer advice and share helpful information (pictured).

We also facilitate a monthly online session via Zoom where we invite a veteran to “host” the session – a safe space to share stories and experiences and boost a sense of connection, to promote positive wellbeing. This concept started through the pandemic and we have continued with it, recognising that there are no barriers to engaging with this, especially not geographical. We have had some great hosts in recent months including Darren Carew, National Inclusion Manager (WRU), Tim Phillips, Military Peer Mentor, The VC Gallery, Haverfordwest and Rob Govier, Royal Navy Engagement, Wales and West of England. So again, everyone is welcome, and free to participate as much or as little as you want to.

To mark Remembrance Day we held our own “Armed Forces Day” on Saturday 23rd October in celebration of all those

currently serving and veterans in the community. It was a great occasion at the Swansea.com Stadium and we watched the Ospreys Rugby in action against Munster. There was lots going on throughout the fantastic day.

We would love to welcome you at one or more of our sessions and if you need more information about anything to do with the programme, just contact Caroline on caroline@swanseafoundation.org.uk or Katie on katie.ruddock@ospreysrugby.com and they will get straight back to you!



Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

Vale of Glamorgan Veteran Advice Service / Armed Forces Liaison Officer Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan Council

The Veteran Advice Service in the Vale of Glamorgan offers free and impartial, dedicated information, advice, and support to members of the Armed forces community and can help with Housing, Benefits, Council Tax, Finances, Adult Social Care, Employment and more. Whether you're currently serving in the armed forces or have previously served you and your family can access our services. The Veteran Advice Service has helped with over a thousand enquires and collects important data to provide feedback and to identify any needs.



This June the Vale of Glamorgan celebrated their 10th year Anniversary of the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant and are extremely proud of their commitment to the Armed Forces Community and that they were the first Local Authority to sign what was then the Community Covenant.

In May the Vale of Glamorgan Council held a commemoration event for the 100th Anniversary of the Royal British Legion at the Cenotaph in Barry. In June we celebrated Armed Forces Day and held a Family Fun event in Romilly Park for Armed Forces Families with the amazing Forces Fitness team, a fun day was had by all and even adults got involved in the fun with some Tug of War.



(Clockwise; Romilly Park Fun Day with Forces Fitness, Cardiff City FC Veterans Hub, Woody's Lodge, 617 Group, Barry Veterans Group, Cardiff Hub and VC Gallery).

Cardiff hosted the opening of the Wales and The Battle of Britain 80th Anniversary Exhibition by Chief of the Air Staff on Thursday 16 September 2021 at Cardiff City Hall, it was an outstanding success with the Red Arrows, additional exhibitors and the STEM event all adding to make it such a good day. There were over 250 visitors that day and on the 17 Sep the exhibition welcomed an additional 150 members of the public into City Hall to view the exhibition.



Had the pleasure of attending a charity boot sale and opening of the Remembrance Garden organised by Paula Massey of UMT Upcycling and Mobility training she collects and upcycles old medical and mobility equipment that would otherwise go to the landfill and turns them into items such as garden planters.

Paula also collects food and clothes which she donates to families in need across Llanishen and Thornhill. Paula has received a letter from the Prime Minister and certificates for her excellent work.



Paula Massey, MP Anna McMorin, MS Julie Morgan, Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Cardiff With Shenkin and Goat Major at Llanishen sports & social club.

Barry Veterans Group

It's coming up to a busy time for the Barry Veterans Group with a sea fishing trip booked in October and through November with the Poppy Appeal and Remembrance events. We shall be

taking part in the wreath laying event at Barry Town Football club on the 6th of November, then on Remembrance Sunday our oldest member will be laying a wreath on our behalf at the Barry Cenotaph, and we will continue our Remembrance Day with a group meal. We are happy to get our Veterans Garden underway and look forward to the final outcome and to be able to grow flowers and vegetables and give back to the community. Then we start our build up for Christmas with raffle prizes to be won and a group Christmas meal that is held at Barry Veteran Group for the Veterans and their Families. We look forward to welcoming new faces and towards our future as a support hub, we have guest attendances from Change Step, the Armed Forces Liaison Officer and DWP Armed Forces Champions, and many more.

Please join us at Witchill Community Hall Dyfan Road Barry Saturdays 10:00 to 13:00.



Vale Armed Forces Partners Group

September was the launch of Vale of Glamorgan's new support hub, The Vale Armed Forces Partners Group. The drop in is open to the Partners of all Armed Forces Personnel, Veterans and Reservists it is somewhere for them to attend and feel connected to others within the Armed Forces community. The hub can give those company whilst their partners are away serving or for those that have lost loved ones it is also somewhere, they can talk to someone and get advice or just a friendly ear, there are private room facilities available.



CLLR Eddie Williams said "It was a pleasure to attend the Vale Armed Forces Partners Group drop in. It is important we do all we can to help the Armed Forces Community in any way possible and continue to support those who need it including the partners and family."



The Group meet every Saturday at the Witchill Community Hall Dyfan Road Barry from 12:00 to 14:00. This follows from the Barry Veterans Group 10:00 to 13:00. There is always support at Vale Armed Forces support Hub from Change Step Mentors and the Vale of Glamorgan's Veteran Advice Service which can offer help with Council tax, Benefits, Housing, Finances, Employment, Adult Social Care, along with guests to offer support or a friendly chat with refreshments and cake!



Please join us at Witchill Community Hall Dyfan Road Barry Saturdays 10:00 to 13:00

Veterans Connected Project

The Vale of Glamorgan's Veteran Advice Service has been successfully awarded funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust: Forces For Change Programme, in conjunction with Rhondda Cynon Taf. A total of 80 tablets, were supplied by Centerprise International who have been supplier to the MOD for over 30 years including the donation of 2 tablets that were gifted to the local Vale's Veteran groups.

The Veterans Connected Project has played a vital role in keeping our veterans socially connected and has helped to improve their health and wellbeing. We are proud that we were able to link veterans virtually during the pandemic by joining Cardiff Veteran Advice Hub's Virtual Coffee mornings and Veterans attended from Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan and Rhondda Cynon Taf. These coffee mornings run on a Monday morning please email awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk if you would like the link.



The Welsh Veterans Partnership

The Welsh Veterans Partnership has been working with Cardiff Council to bring uncultivated allotment land at Leckwith Drove back in to use, as an accessible growing project that will support and enable veterans and their families to integrate with the local allotment community through growing fruit and vegetables.

Thirty-six tonnes of rubble have already been cleared from the site and more than 2000 sandbags filled as part of work to create the accessible raised beds necessary to make the project fully accessible for disabled veterans.



Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure, Cllr Peter Bradbury, said: "Our exservicemen and women deserve all the help and assistance they can get, and this project promises to offer that in spades. Allotments offer an opportunity, not just for locally-grown food, but also for improving the health, wellbeing and skills of our communities, and I'm delighted that we've been able to help make this innovative community project a reality."

Dave Price from the Welsh Veterans Partnership, said: "The project's really gathering pace now, and once all the poly-tunnels are in place it's going to be a really important space for our veterans. Isolation can be a big issue, so getting outdoors, mixing with the allotment community, learning new skills, whether that's cultivating crops or bee-keeping, it's going to be a fantastic opportunity.

"The site's going to be accessible to all our veterans, including those with disabilities, and as well as growing, there's also going to be a contemplation garden, somewhere just to sit and take a little time out. It's quite late in the season so we'll just start out planting some perennials and some fruit trees, but this is a long-term project that's going to improve outcomes for our veterans and service families for years, and we wouldn't have been able to do it without the grant we got from the Military Covenant positive pathways project in Wales, or without the Council's help and support."



Mad Hatters Tea Party

Two other Council projects at allotments are also being planned. Following a successful £20K bid for funding from the Travis Perkins Legacy Fund, a project to bring uncultivated land at Ely Great Farm and Cowbridge Road allotments sites back into use is also due to begin later this year.

The project will see infrastructure improvements made to the sites, whilst also delivering employment opportunities for young people through the UK Government Kickstart Scheme.

A project in partnership with Action for Children is also currently in development. Once up and running, the project will see families where the parents have a learning disability, or additional learning needs, joining the allotment community, and cultivating produce at the Colchester Avenue allotment.

CCFC Challenge Pen y Fan

Earlier this summer CCFC Veterans Hub set out a challenge to walk Pen y Fan with veterans from the hub. We set off from Pont ar Daf Car Park and took a steady walk for the 2 miles to the summit of this iconic mountain, with plenty of stops to rehydrate and take in the magnificent views along the way. The weather was kind to us on the day with perfect walking conditions and a light breeze.

We were also joined by some members of Western Beacons Mountain Rescue Team, who are also veterans and members of our hub. Well done to everyone who took part in the challenge, it was truly a momentous day for everyone. #Strongertogether



Cardiff City FC Foundation

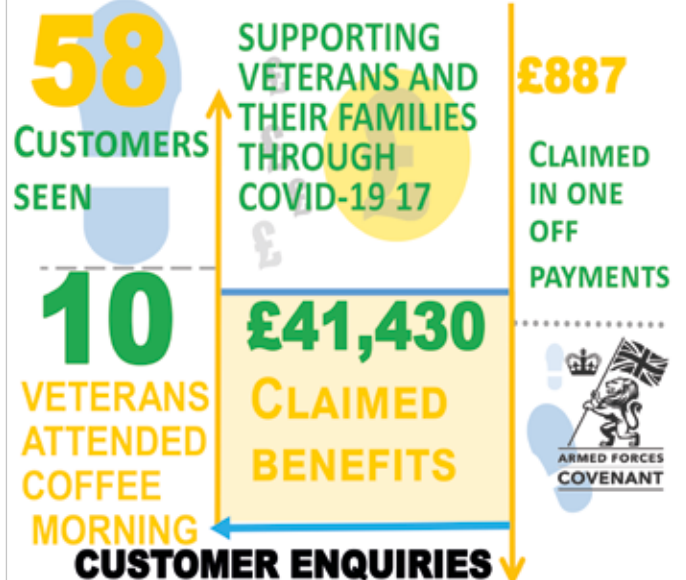
The Foundation recognise that when leaving the Armed Forces, ex-servicemen and women hold a wide range of skills and qualifications. These may not be recognised by potential employers and can affect areas such as self-confidence, self-esteem and motivation.

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.

Positive Pathways is a social isolation project that supports Armed Forces Veterans who are at high risk of social isolation and loneliness. The project uses the power of Cardiff City FC to connect and support veterans around Cardiff, to reduce social isolation, loneliness and improve physical and mental wellbeing. Wales has one of the largest proportions of veterans in the UK with 7% of all veterans currently living here. Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan has a veterans population of around 27,320 and 8% suffer from mental health issues including depression and anxiety. Weekly online and face-to-face sessions provide structure and support for people to get together, connect and take part in a range of activities that improve physical and mental wellbeing.



VETERAN/ARMED FORCES PROJECT SEPTEMBER STATS



Benefits	17
Housing	9
Debt	5
Employment Advice	7
Other/Charities	18



CUSTOMERS SEEN

AUGUST	54
JULY	56
JUNE	76
MAY	58

Veterans Needed for Memorial Garden Project

The Firing Line Museum of The Queen's Dragoon Guards and The Royal Welsh, at Cardiff Castle, has been successful in being awarded a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust to create a memorial garden adjacent to the statue of The Abandoned Soldier.

The Abandoned Soldier, located on Cardiff Castle's Battlement Walk is a place for reflection on the contributions made by the Armed Forces, as well as serving as a focal point for Remembrance commemorations.

The museum is now looking to recruit Veterans from South Wales to join the Firing Line Museum team in helping create this garden which will be a safe and welcoming space for Veterans to reconnect, create new friendships and support groups and to engage through a shared love of gardening.

There will be training opportunities as part of the project, where Veterans will be involved in planting wildflower seeds to create a place that will be preserved for years to come to



recognise the contribution of Veterans in Wales. All project activities will adhere to COVID restrictions that are in place, ensuring that this is a safe project to get involved with.

The museum is keen to hear from Veterans wishing to participate in the project. If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Rachel Adams, the Managing Curator of the Firing Line Museum.

Rachel Adams - Telephone: 029 2078 8370

Email: curatormanager@cardiffcastlemuseum.org.uk

Merthyr & RCT

Cwm Taf Rhondda Cynon Taf & Merthyr Tydfil Plans for Penrhiwceiber War Memorial

Plans are underway to restore the Penrhiwceiber War Memorial to its former glory as part of the Council's ongoing commitment to its Armed Forces community. Rhondda Cynon Taf Council's Deputy Leader and Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Maureen Webber, recently met with local ward Members and Council Officers to discuss the plans.

Made up of stone from the old Aberdare Canal, the monument commemorates the residents of Penrhiwceiber who died in action during the First World War (1914-18), the Second World War (1939-45) and the Korean War (1950-53). The castellated tower, with circular clock faces set on the structure, also includes inscribed brass panels, commemorating the Fallen from the village of Penrhiwceiber.

Restoration plans for the Penrhiwceiber War Memorial include repairing the clock and the cleansing of the dial faces in order for it to function properly, along with the specialist cleansing of the brass panels and surrounding stonework and architecture.



New Armed Forces Breakfast Club

Taff Ely Veterans Group hosts an Armed Forces Breakfast Club in Rhydyfelin, and veterans of all ages are welcome to come along to meet and chat with like-minded people. The Armed Forces Breakfast Club in Rhydyfelin provides a 'sanctuary' for those who would like to chat informally, receive information about support services available and forge new friendships with other veterans.

The Taff Ely Veterans Group meets every two weeks, on a Wednesday, from 11am at Rhydyfelin Community Centre. Tea/Coffee and breakfast rolls are served and there is free parking available. Representatives from the Council's Armed Forces Veterans Service, also attend the Breakfast Club, offering a wide range of information and assistance on subjects such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Housing, Adult Social Care, Benefits, Finances and Employment.

The Taff Ely Veterans Group meets at Rhydyfelin Community Centre every second Wednesday each month and veterans of all ages are welcome to attend the Armed Forces Breakfast Club. No booking is required. For more information, message the Taff Ely Veterans Group on Facebook or call 0774 748 5619.

Keeping Our Veterans Connected

Cwm Taf Veteran Advice service continues to build upon its on-going relationship with the Armed Forces community, past and present, by making mobile tablets available to veterans to allow them to access vital services and keep in touch with each other.

The 'Veterans Connected' project further cements the local authority's commitment to supporting the Armed Forces community having been one of the first in Wales to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant in 2012, a commitment that was reaffirmed in 2018.



As part of the funding, a number of mobile tablets were officially presented at the Valley Veterans group, which meets every Thursday at Ton and Gelli Community Centre, by Councillor Maureen Webber, Deputy Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council, also the Council's Armed Forces Champion.

The donation of 80 tablets, on behalf of the Council, in conjunction with Vale of Glamorgan Council, has been made possible, following a successful bid for funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust: Forces For Change programme. The tablets have been supplied by Centerprise International. Veterans can hire the mobile tablets free of charge at any time by contacting the Council's Armed Forces Team on 07747 485 619 or by email:

VeteranService@rctcbc.gov.uk



Battle Of Britain 80th Anniversary Exhibition

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council are proud to have hosted the Battle of Britain 80th anniversary exhibition as part of the nationwide commemorations marking an important chapter in the history of the Second World War. The Battle of Britain 80th anniversary exhibition opened to the public at Llys Cadwyn, Taff Street, Pontypridd, on November 15-20.

The Battle of Britain, the largest air battle ever recorded, was one of the most pivotal and iconic moments in the history of this country. It marked a turning point of the Second World War when Britain stood alone against Hitler's seemingly unstoppable military power. This exhibition was a perfect opportunity for the many people of Rhondda Cynon Taf to remember the heroism of The Few. The RAF claimed victory in the skies in October 1940 and Hitler called off his invasion plans. Wartime Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

Lets talk Armed Forces, Survey now live

Are you currently serving in the Armed Forces, a Veteran or a member of the public?

We would like to hear from you. Are you aware that the Council has signed the Armed Forces Covenant?

Do you know what services we offer to the Armed Forces community?

We also want to ask you what it is like to be a Veteran or a currently serving member of the Armed Forces while living in Rhondda Cynon Taf. To take part in our survey, please visit: lets-talk.rctcbc.gov.uk If you would like further information please email: Lets-Talk@rctcbc.gov.uk

North Wales

Putting Gatewen Training Services back on the Road to Success

Gatewen was initially set up in Wrexham in 1971 to develop the skills of local people working in the warehousing and logistics sector.



It is currently developing a new portfolio of courses which aim to build on the tried and tested MHE and HGV programmes by

offering an extended specialist provision ranging from first aid and health and safety courses to confined space, fire marshal and working at height.

Gatewen is an ERS Silver Award holder.

For more information please visit www.gatewentrainingservices.co.uk

Mental Health First Aid Awareness Course

In 2020 we were successful in receiving funds to offer those working with and/or members of the Armed Forces Community access to Mental Health First Aid Training. These courses are being run in Coleg Cambria, Northop in Flintshire and are open to those working/living/based in North Wales.

The majority of courses being run have been 'FAA Level 2 Award in First Aid for Mental Health (RQF)' and courses for a 'FAA Level 3 Award in Supervising First Aid for Mental Health (RQF)'. The courses are also regulated by OFQUAL.

In North Wales there are currently over a 120 organisations supporting members of the AFC. Many of these organisations are third sector or voluntary groups who rely on not only members of the AFC but the general public to volunteer their time to help. While many organisations offer excellent development packages in ensuring their staff/volunteers are suitably trained to support those in need, many groups do not have the resources (funds), capacity or access to training to do this.

Over the past 12 months it has become apparent that many who work with some of the most vulnerable have not had any access to any form of mental health first aid training, with many having no knowledge of the course.



Individuals trained in Mental Health First Aid can help to:

Asses, Listen, Give Support, Encourage support from others, and signpost to other relevant services, when someone is in crisis and needs help. It is hoped to also:-

- Break down the stigma associated with mental illness for example - anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and substance use disorders.
- Reach out to those who suffer in silence, reluctant to seek help (reduce isolation).
- Let veterans know that support is available in their community.
- Provide community resource information.
- Make mental healthcare and treatment accessible to those in need.

The training has been outsourced to an organisation of extremely experienced former military personnel (Royal Marines) who have gained invaluable experience over the past 5 years in providing critical and practical training and support in a range of areas including health and safety, risk management, leadership skills, modern day security, corporate resilience and trauma support. The feedback in general has been quite superb and participants in the training have complimented the trainers on their professionalism and clear concise method of passing on the information.

Citizens Advice Denbighshire Advicelink

Citizens Advice Denbighshire receives funding from Welsh Government to deliver the Citizens Advice Advicelink service. The service is delivered across Wales but each region in Wales has different groups that are a priority for the project. Citizens Advice Denbighshire work together with the other 5 local citizens advice to deliver the project, one of the priority groups for North Wales are veterans.

The service aims to help people at an early stage with welfare benefits, debt, employment, education, housing and discrimination advice. The project also provides access to specialist employment and discrimination services and a dedicated team that can help people living in the private rented sector with debts.

Since the project started in January 2020 it has helped over 48,000 people with over 183,000 problems, nationally. Overall, more than 8 in 10 clients said that the service had helped them find a way forward and more than 9 in 10 would recommend the service to others. Citizens Advice Denbighshire has been able to provide a full service to clients throughout the pandemic, offering appointments via the phone, webchat, email and also virtually via our attend anywhere video platform.

Partnership working is an important focus of the project and a huge benefit for our clients. In North Wales we have two funded partners, Shelter Cymru and SNAP Cymru as well as many other partners, who we can refer to directly and who can refer to us, using our dedicated line referral system.

To contact Citizens Advice Denbighshire

Call us for free on **0808 278 7933**

Email us at advice@dcab.co.uk

Click on this link to drop in to our virtual waiting room <https://attenduk.vc/interview-ruthin>

If you live outside of Denbighshire you can contact the Advicelink Cymru number for free on **0800 702 2020**. Relay UK — if you can't hear or speak on the phone, you can type what you want to say: **18001** then **08082 505 720**



News from Gwent



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

Blaenau Gwent

BG award Freedom of Borough to RBL

At the July Meeting of Council, it was unanimously agreed to bestow the Freedom of the Borough upon The Royal British Legion to mark the 100th Year Anniversary of the Royal British Legion in 2021 and to recognise the dedicated charitable work local branches (Abertillery, Beaufort, Blaina, Brynmawr, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, Rassau and Tredegar) do across the County Borough supporting serving and ex-service men and women and their families. The Freedom of the Borough is the highest accolade the local authority can bestow upon any individual or organisation.

The Freedom of the Borough will be awarded to the Royal British Legion at an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Council on 4th November to coincide with this year's Remembrance events. Cllr Brian Thomas, Blaenau Gwent Armed Forces Champion said, 'we are delighted to recognise the invaluable work that the Royal British Legion have done supporting service men and women and their families in Blaenau Gwent over many years.'

Veteran mental wellbeing training & coaching

We are Kelly & Jamie Farr, the founders of YourNorth – we are a husband and wife team and both veterans, with a combined 41 years service in the Royal Air Force. We are based in Ebbw Vale, South Wales and we deliver wellbeing workshops, First Aid for Mental Health and Safeguarding courses and personal development coaching.



We have recently delivered 7 'Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit' workshops to the Armed Forces community on behalf of the Armed Forces Liaison Officers, and have another 7 'toolkit' workshops scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2021. We cover topics such as managing stress and anxiety, building resilience, being present, exploring self-care, building a tribe, challenging negative self-talk and practicing gratitude. We are also founders of a non-profit, YourNorth Veteran Support; a community interest company, providing free mental wellbeing training, support



and signposting for the Armed Forces community. Our aim is to improve wellbeing, reduce loneliness, improve quality of life and establish an understanding community that knows how to support one another. At present, we have our own funding available to deliver 13 'Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit' workshops throughout 2022.



If you are any of the following and would like to attend for free, please get in touch:

- Serving personnel
- Veterans
- Cadets
- Reservists
- Family members of the above
- An organisation that supports or employs any of the above.

In November 2021 we will be releasing 3 more 'toolkit' workshops focusing on mindfulness, communication and mindset. The majority of our courses are run at our training centre in Ebbw Vale, and we are more than happy to deliver at a venue of your choice. If you would like to book on to any of our workshops or would like to discuss us coming to deliver to you and your staff, please drop us an email at info@yournorth.co.uk or call us on **01495 357937**. Group discounts available if you do not fall into the eligibility criteria for funded spaces.

To find out more about how Kelly & Jamie can support you, please visit their website or you can also contact them directly.

email: info@yournorth.co.uk
Telephone: **02922 520712**
Website: www.yournorth.co.uk
Facebook: www.facebook.com/YourNorthUK
Twitter: www.twitter.com/YourNorthUK
Instagram: www.instagram.com/YourNorthUK



Brynmawr Veterans

We are a recently formed Veterans group in Blaenau Gwent and our primary goal is to support one another and bring back the camaraderie we shared when we were serving in the forces, to support members who maybe going through a tough time and suffering from PTSD and generally enjoy each other's company. We also want to have a positive impact in the communities we live and work which includes working with other organisations to build an understanding of the Armed Forces and what they can provide and help organise and support events and charities within the local area.



When Captain Tom passed away, we decided to pay our respects and go to the War Memorial at Brynmawr and lay a wreath on behalf of the local veterans, now known as The Serving and Veteran Association of Blaenau Gwent, and 30+ members turned out in full uniform, much to the delight of the public that were in the town.

At the passing of the Duke of Edinburgh it was suggested that because he was a Naval Officer, we would hold a naval ceremony at the war memorial. Again, a huge turnout of veterans was present and two of which were Acting Bosuns and equipped with QM pipes they piped the salute navy style, something the public that were present had probably only seen in films. A "toast" of rum followed the wreath laying. The response from the public was extremely welcoming to us.

In association with the British Legion, a group of 8 veterans decided to march from St Davids war memorial to Brynmawr War memorial, distance of 119 miles, the miles representing the distance that the Royal Navy carried the ships guns to support the army at the battle of Ladysmith during the Boer war. This was the fore runner of the modern field gun tournament currently held at Earls Court each year. The aim was to raise £2000 for the Hospice of the Valleys and the Royal British Legion. Upon arriving in Brynmawr those not on the march organised a welcome home



party on the main square which was an outstanding success with a huge public attendance supporting us, with the families of all the veterans it was estimated 300 people were in attendance, boosting the donations even more. The total raised topped £6000 which will be given to both charities at the function after the Armistice Day parade on November 14th at Brynmawr R.F.C.

In the crowd September 4th was a retired SAS member, a participant in the Iranian Embassy siege, namely Mr Pete Morrison DCM also known as The Mink. He wanted to do a gentlemen's evening for us to raise funds to enable us to put on other events this took place on 23rd October to a packed rugby club, raising over £800 to enable us to provide entertainment and a buffet at the Armistice day function which I am sure will be another success. Later next year we are planning another event but currently it is in the early stages of planning. This is going to be followed, hopefully, by a party in the park which will be a bigger event than the September 4th welcome home event.

Caerphilly Veterans Hub

Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub was launched in June 2021 to deliver high quality, person-centred support to veterans from the military and ex-military community. It empowers veterans and those in transition from military to civilian life, to help themselves, and to integrate into local communities.



Our Support hub is designed to:

1. Develop a greater awareness of the support and services available to service and ex-service personnel and their families in their local community.
2. Provide individual veterans and service personnel with the confidence, knowledge and skills to access the help they need, where and when they need it.
3. Reinforce people's self-reliance, confidence, esteem and self-empowerment after they leave the services and improve the long-term health and well-being of the ex-services community.
4. Be a place where Veterans feel they "Belong" (comradeship)
5. Offer opportunities to engage with the local community and undertake activities

The sessions are held in the heart of the borough in the Centre of Sporting Excellence in Ystrad Mynach, Caerphilly, CF82 7PG which is easily accessible by car, train and bus routes. It is open every Saturday 1000-1200 to ensure that working members of the AFC can also access the advice, support and courses available. Additionally access to training on issues such as Stress Management, Panic and Anxiety, managing difficult thoughts and mindfulness is available to the Armed Forces Community.

It is a safe space for a brew and banter

Facebook: [Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub](#)

Twitter: [@hubCaerphilly](#)



Supporting People - support with housing, homelessness, debt, benefits, arrears and employment

The vision is "A Wales where nobody is homeless and everyone has a safe home where they can flourish and live a fulfilled, active and independent life."

If you live in the Caerphilly county borough area, are over 16 years of age and struggling to keep your home, at risk of losing your job, need to move or need help with your finances or any type of debt, the Supporting People Team could offer you support. Whether you're a home owner, tenant (council, housing association or private), sleeping rough, or sofa surfing the Supporting People Team are here to help.

Anything that could result in you losing your home we can help you such as:

- Help to set up and maintain a home – such as finding best value utilities and setting up direct debit accounts with energy suppliers, registering people with health services, such as GP and dentists.
- Help to prevent evictions, rent arrears, bedroom tax/council tax arrears, TV licence fines – arranging repayment plans for debts and searching Turn to Us website for grants.
- Help to access services, support and social networks – onward referrals / travel training to attend groups.
- Help to access education, volunteering, training and employment opportunities – referrals and access to return to work programmes, discussions with job coaches regarding barriers to work (e.g. work boots/clothes) and getting funding to cover this.
- Help to claim benefits, maximise income, benefit appeals and grant applications – Turn to Us website for benefit check and completing benefit forms.
- Help with budgeting, managing money and debt management – income and expenditure check and budgeting, searching for cheaper alternatives for things such as utilities and repayment plans.
- Help to read letters and form filling – long term letter reading e.g. Mencap services where no family are present / benefit forms application.
- Help to increase independence – encouraging various things relating to social life, such as cooking independently or going out independently including travel training. Support to understand tenancy agreement and being independent at keeping property maintained to a good standard.
- Help to prevent homelessness – home starter pack, grants, mortgage rescue and working with Shelter Cymru.
- Not a care service – Supporting People are not a care service. We do not provide support with domestic duties, such as cleaning, cooking or advocacy.



Problems managing bills, accommodation or threatened with homelessness?

To make a referral for support contact Supporting People:

01443 864548

Text: housupport to 81400

email: supportingpeople@caerphilly.gov.uk

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/supportingpeople

cefnogipobl
supportingpeople
supporting independence
cefnogi annibyniaeth



ARE YOU A VETERAN OF THE ARMED FORCES?

- Anxious about the future?
- Struggling to adjust?
- Struggling with relationships?
- Need advice, guidance or support?

WE CAN HELP!

VETERANS SUPPORT GROUP

Caerphilly County Borough Council host a weekly support group for veterans.

Get yourself along for a brew and a chat, lets see how we can help each other.

**Every Saturday
10.00am - 13.00pm**

STARTS 5TH JUNE



Centre of Sporting Excellence
Caerphilly Road,
Ystrad Mynach,
Hengoed CF82 7EP

For more information contact armedforces@caerphilly.gov.uk



Monmouthshire

Captain David Bell

Captain David Bell enlisted into the Royal Regiment of Wales (RRW) as a Junior Leader at the Junior Infantryman's Wing Fulwood Barracks at Preston at the age of 15. On closure of the Barracks he completed training at Cwrt-y- Gollen Camp, The Prince of Wales Depot. Having joined 1RRW in 1975, he completed regular service in 1996. Having spent most of his service in the Corps of Drums becoming Drum Major in 1985, he was promoted to CSgt 1989 he then served with A Coy 3 RRW as a PSI then returned to 1RRW as the Unit Families SNCO in Hong Kong in 1990. On promotion to WO2 in 1992 he was appointed Drum Major for a second time and continue to hold this post until leaving the Regiment. During his last two years he also held the posts of CSM HQ Coy, Families Warrant Officer and GPMG SF Co Ordinator. From 1991 to 1996 Captain Bell spent much of his own time working in both military and civilian youth services. He was awarded GOC NI Commendation for exceptional contribution during tour in Ballykelly.

Having accepted the post as Drum Major for Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers (Militia) for his last 6 months service, He facilitated ceremonial requirements for the 100th Anniversary of having Double Royal in its title, he continued service as a TA now reservist as SSM and Drum Major. Captain Bell was commissioned into R Mon RE(M) in 2001 where he served as 101HQ Sqn MTO and Tech QM. In 2003 he attended a UK-US unit exchange to 2nd Company 104 Cavalry where he was recognised for his participation and the direct impact on the training of the newly formed unit Mechanised Infantry Unit. For this he was awarded the first Honorary Membership of 104 Cavalry. He later became 108 Fd Sqn QM before assuming the post of Regimental Operational Support Officer R Mon RE(M) on a 5-year NRPS contract. In 2014 he was appointed the Militia Capitan a role he still holds, until his final day of service in Nov 2021.

Capt Bell lives by the motto service before self and leaves the Army just shy of 50 years reckonable service. He was recently awarded the first of 25 medals struck to recognise the service and dedication to the R Mon RE(M).



The photo is of Lt Col AJ Robinson congratulating Capt Bell "Militia Captain" on his award of the first Militia Medal 01 Aug 21.

Torfaen

The Pontnewydd Branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL)

On the 19th of September 2021, Pontnewydd were represented at both sessions of the Poppy Appeal Seminar held at St Mellons RBL.

The Pontnewydd Branch of the Royal British Legion (RBL) successfully launched an RBL awareness and recruitment event in Cwmbran Town Centre that focussed on recruiting new members and collectors and to raise funds for the 2021 Poppy Appeal and Branch.

The easing of Covid 19 restrictions allowed Standard Bearer Training to restart, with a couple of new recruits under the branch Parade Marshalls stewardship. Pontnewydd were represented at the RBL 100 Year Parade at Hay on Wye, where there were 12 Standards accompanied by 3 Pipe Bands.

On the 12th of October 2021 the Secretary was invited by the Chairman and Trustees of the RBL to attend a Special Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey. The service marks a century of service and achievements to the Armed Forces community, and rededicates its mission of bringing together nations, communities, and individuals to provide better futures for our Armed Forces, veterans, and their families.

Mr Ernie Smith, who had served 40 years on the Pontnewydd Branch had celebrated his 90th birthday and was presented with a RBL Pontnewydd Branch pennant, in recognition of his long service and contribution.

The Branch Community Support Officer (BCSO) has maintained regular contact with 2 individuals in Cwmbran and has established a Branch Social Media page on Facebook to promote branch activities, attract new members and advertise local support services and other volunteer groups. One group in particular use music to help promote individual recovery and provide a social outlet. Guitars for Veterans – Wales provides free mobile Guitar Lessons and are always looking for more groups in different regions to extend their programme. The page has also attracted interest from several Veteran Agencies and Support Groups, and it is hoped that it may encourage other former Service Personnel to reach out for assistance or companionship. The BCSO has also attended a 'Your Mental Wellbeing Toolkit' Course, in Cardiff, which was delivered by 2 former RAF Personnel and sponsored by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. The course was well attended and provided a good opportunity to meet other BCSO's and discuss their experiences with former Service Personnel in their region.

Pontnewydd Branch of the RBL helped to promote and coordinate the Cwmbran 2021 COVID-19 compliant Poppy Appeal which was well received, with collections conducted in the Main Shopping Arcade and at local Supermarkets. A full parade was performed that included the Air Cadets on drums, the Kittiwake Sea Cadets forming a Guard of Honour and the Cwmbran Brass Band playing music at the Cenotaph. A Bugler played the Last Post and Reveille at the Cenotaph.

Veteran awarded for Voluntary Service

A volunteer for the Blaenavon Royal British Legion has won a Community Award at the Welsh Veterans Awards for going above and beyond for his local armed forces community.

72-year-old Cyril Turner, a former soldier with the South Wales Borderers, was nominated for the award by Torfaen Council's Armed Forces Champion for dedicating his latter years to recognising and improving the lives of veterans in Blaenavon.

Cyril is a dedicated custodian of the Blaenavon town clock, a memorial clock to the fallen in the First and Second World War. With the help of volunteers, Cyril has transformed the gardens surrounding the memorial clock, to create a Garden of Remembrance, with flower beds and benches and a tranquil place to reflect.

He was the main instigator in researching and collecting the names of those veterans from the town, whose names did not appear on the cenotaph from other historical conflicts. His work has meant that the names of lives lost during the Boer War, Korean War and the Northern Ireland conflicts are remembered.

Being an active member of the local branch of the Royal British Legion for over 25 years, Cyril, together with his partner Lesley, also manages the Royal British Legion shop in the town, raising vital funds for charity. A Standard Bearer for the Royal British Legion, Cyril never misses an opportunity to raise awareness of the Armed Forces, the conflicts and the good work of the military in protecting the Nation.

Going way beyond the usual, local commemorations, he attends school services, events in other parts of Wales and on the continent, all on a voluntary basis. His work with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Cyril maintains the 7 graves located at St. Peter's Churchyard, Blaenavon.

Councillor Jon Horlor, Armed Forces Champion for Torfaen, said, "It's fair to say that Cyril has gone beyond the expectations of a veteran, spending his spare time in ensuring that all who have served are recognised and commemorated. His tireless work is not going unrecognised, and we feel strongly, that a nomination for the Community Award would be fitting for a man who will go that extra mile, as an ambassador to the Armed Forces within the Blaenavon Community."



How a bin lorry driver from Cwmbran gained the confidence to speak in public – thanks to the Reserves

Despite a dislike of public speaking, 25 year-old Jack Pritchard from Cwmbran is glad he was pushed out of his comfort zone. It was during a training weekend at Bletchley Park that Jack was tasked to give a speech to the rest of his squadron on the wartime code breaker Bill Tutte.



"I hate public speaking and in my civilian job I don't have to do anything like that and I don't think I've spoken to a group of people since school. Even though to many people this would just be an everyday task, for me it was a big deal and I'm thankful to the reserves for pushing me to do something I wouldn't normally do and proud of myself that I managed to do it," said Jack. Jack, who is a member of 614 Squadron, the only Royal Air Force Reserve unit in Wales, had always had an interest in a military career and was inspired to join after spotting an advert for the RAF reserves and thought it would be a challenge that would take him out of his comfort zone.

"It has exceeded every expectation and the skills, experience and the memories I've gained in my short military career I will remember for the rest of my life. I would recommend the RAF reserves to anyone thinking of joining," said Jack, who is a team leader and bin lorry driver for Torfaen Council. His primary role or trade within the reserves is logistics driver, with his typical responsibilities including driving a range of vehicles throughout the UK, Europe and on worldwide operational deployment or field exercises.

"What I do in my civilian career was a big reason why I chose logistics driver as my trade in the reserves. A lot of my skills that I have acquired from my day job are transferable to my military role. And from the skills I've gained from the military, I believe have boosted my performance in my civilian role," said Jack. "The best thing about being a reservist is the opportunity it brings, you can get out of it what you put into it. I've already done some incredible things in my short time as a reservist. Last year I was lucky enough to go to Rjukan in Norway for a week to take part in cold weather training which involved skiing, winter survival and avalanche training.

"I also had the honour last year of being part of Operation Rescript – which was the military's role in supporting the civil authorities in the fight against Covid-19. We were tasked with running a mobile testing unit throughout the Midlands. Personally I feel I gained a lot of valuable life experience and I worked with a team with a wide variety of skill sets, from a lawyer to a photographer. That diversity in roles and skills is the beauty of the reserves, it brings out the best in you. During my time in the reserves I've gained skills in leadership, career management, teamwork and survival skills to name a few."

Today, Jack will be among the 2,170 reserves in Wales celebrating Reserves Day. Throughout the United Kingdom, reservists make up approximately one sixth of the country's Armed Forces personnel. They play a vital role as part of the Defence family, speaking some of their spare time protecting the UK at home and abroad.

Reservists like Jack, who work for Torfaen Council, are supported through the Torfaen Armed Forces Covenant whereby they are granted special leave to fulfill their military duties or training. The covenant is a commitment by the council to support the Armed Forces Community, working and residing within the borough and to recognise and remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces Community. This includes in-Service and ex-Service personnel and their families. In order to ensure that they are not disadvantaged when accessing public services.

Gregor proves he's a Little Trooper

A new club has been set up at New Inn Primary School for pupils whose parents are serving in the armed forces. Pupil Gregor Allan, whose dad serves in the Royal Air Force, came up with the idea for the Little Troopers club after supporting his five-year-old sister Isla when their dad was on tour overseas.

Gregor has now been recognised by the charity Little Troopers, which supports military children, and was named Little Trooper of the Month in April. To celebrate, all pupils at New Inn Primary School marked Armed Forces Week with a Forces Fitness workshop and a visit from the Royal Welsh regimental goat Shenkin IV and Goat Major Sgt Mark Jackson.

Gregor, who is in year 4, said: "The military children were picked to be team captains. I felt proud to lead a team like my dad. Working as a team was fun, we kept going as we didn't want to let our team down."



Faith Lees, who is in year 3, added: "It was the best day ever! I'm so proud of my daddy and now my friends know all about the army and we had fun working as a little army."

Forces Fitness sessions are funded by Welsh Government and available free to all schools in Torfaen with service children. New Inn Primary School, which has 10 pupils from military families, is now hoping to be named an Armed Forces Friendly school by SSCE Cymru, which supports service children in education.

Teaching assistant Ceri Knight, who helps run the Little Troopers club, said "Our first meeting was really heart-warming. They talked with such pride about being part of a military family and agreed that it was great to be able to chat to someone who understood that a parent might be away for important dates, such as birthdays, Christmas or even parents' evenings." "The children have decided to have regular meetings and their next challenge is to design an complete their own assault course and we will celebrate the end of term with a picnic."



Housing development named in honour of a Cwibrân war hero

A new housing development was named in honour of a Cwibrân war hero and unveiled at a ceremony at the site on the 23rd July 2021. Corporal Michael Thacker served with the 1st Battalion of Royal Welsh in Afghanistan and was tragically killed while on watch in June 2012.

Captain Ian Moore and Sergeant Jamie Francis, 1st Battalion Royal Welsh, Deputy leader of the council, Cllr Richard Clarke, Paula Kennedy, chief executive of Melin Homes together with Cpl Thacker's family and friends gathered to officially name the new development at the site of the former Fairwater Infants and Junior schools - Michael Thacker Court.

Michael's brother Matthew said that it means a lot to the family. Especially their mum, who is always going to remember when walking past it. Cpl Michael Thacker was a pupil at Fairwater High School, and also attended the school where the new houses now stand. Michael Thacker Court features 17 affordable homes and a play area.

Torfaen Council is committed to honour the young men of the borough who died in the Afghanistan conflict, and will work with housing developers in the future to ensure that all are remembered.

Newport Veterans Hub

Newport Veterans' Hub (SVH) is a CIC formed 24th August 2021 by a small group of veterans who had themselves experienced mental health difficulties. The Hub operates in partnership with several local organisations to provide mental health and wellbeing support and signposting for veterans and their families.



With the support of Newport County AFC and Newport Live, NVH has the use of a room at Newport Live Stadium. We are now open every Thursday 14:00-20:00 at Our new facilities, our drop in Hub holds coffee mornings where vulnerable veterans can come together in a non-threatening, comfortable environment, allowing our specialist volunteers to identify those most at risk, offer them wellbeing strategies, and signpost them to alternative therapies and treatments.

In addition to these activities, NVH helps raise awareness amongst organisations and the general public of the problems affecting veterans with mental health issues, and how they can help. Demand for our services is expected to grow exponentially and we now seek to extend the range of services we can offer local veterans so that we can not only provide more high-quality activities specifically designed to tackle mental ill-health, but also strengthen and enhance referral pathways to external sources of specialist help.

Organisations supporting people most likely to face increased demand and challenges as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, Medical professionals and recognised support groups have identified the huge impact that the enforced lockdown has had on the mental and physical wellbeing of certain vulnerable groups of people in our communities. Veterans and their families who were struggling with various issues before the pandemic have found that their problems have escalated whilst at the same time seeing a severe reduction in the availability of professional support services.

Many members of the armed forces have PTSD, physical injuries, disfigurements (including amputations) and need help building confidence and developing coping strategies to prevent suicide, substance misuse and depression. With our group's support we can help them to access the support they need as well as provide opportunities to socialise and build support networks. We fully embrace and support The Armed Forces Covenant by ensuring that those who serve or have served in the armed forces – and their families – are treated fairly. We are the only place in Newport to offer face to face interactions for veterans their spouse and children which makes us unique as this can often be a barrier to veterans that need help but are dependent on their partner.

We provide veterans and their families with free match day tickets by creating partnerships with sports clubs charities and work together to provide a wide range of support to the veterans community. We do this by working with the local authority, Gwent AFLO and armed forces champions, Veterans NHS Wales and organisations that support veterans in the region. Children and family can be victims of PTSD often combined with other MH problems and is why it should be across the board that the families and children should also receive our support, It's also important to recognise that not all MH issues are service related and support should still be given as untreated it can often develop into more severe symptoms and can then trigger PTSD symptoms due to added levels of stress. Prevention is far more effective than cure and this fundamentally includes the costings of such support which is often a defining factor to the success or downfall of organisations.

Kind regards,
David Watkins CEO - Newport Veterans' Hub

email: Info@newportveteranshub.org.uk

www.newportveteranshub.org.uk

Contact number: **07735 301163**

 **Newport Veterans Hub**

 **@Hubnewport**

 **NewportVeteransHub.org.uk/contact-us/**

Newport City Council Marks Reserves Day

On Reserves Day 2021, Newport City Council took the opportunity to thank the Reservists within the organisation for their dedication, professionalism and commitment to serving our country. Staff heard the stories of two of the Council's Reservists who have been helping in the battle against the Coronavirus. Lieutenant Rhys Thomas, an Amphibious Warfare (AW) Officer, normally based at HMS Cambria was mobilised for five and a half months last year as part of the COVID-19 crisis.

Rhys was called upon in April 2020 to deploy on Operation Broadshare, supporting the British Overseas Territories response to COVID-19. He subsequently was held at very high readiness, ready to deploy with amphibious platforms for a number of weeks, but ultimately wasn't called on to move to the Caribbean. He worked at the heart of Navy Command Headquarters in Portsmouth as a staff officer in a supporting role within the Navy's COVID-19 Response Cell, preparing briefs for senior officers and getting a greater understanding of how and why the Royal Navy works.

"It was a whirlwind year for me. The days were long and pretty full on at times, but also magnificent in the exposure I was getting to the wider Royal Navy and how things happen at such a high level." - said Rhys. "Many of the experiences I had while working in/for the MOD were directly beneficial and applicable to the role I took on when I came back". Rhys returned to the post of Regulatory Services Manager Environment & Community back in September 2020.

Tony Hampson is an Education Welfare Officer for Newport City Council and has 37 years military experience working worldwide within the sectors of the Regular Army and Army Reserves. Sergeant Major Hampson is a very experienced Army Reservist Warrant Officer and is part of 203 Welsh Field Hospital. 203 Welsh Field Hospital is the sole Army Medical Services Reserve Unit in Wales. Sergeant Major Hampson was selected by his unit and worked within the 203 Field Hospital Command and Control Team, as part of the Covid Support Force for 160 Wales Brigade. He was mobilised to the Regular Army in March 2020 for 9 months in order to support the National COVID Pandemic Emergency.

Sergeant Major Hampson's skill set is a Combat Medical Technician Class 1 (CMT1) within the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC). While being mobilised, he covered a wide range of duties to support the Welsh NHS, in particularly the NHS Field Hospitals. Additionally, Sergeant Major Hampson also worked within the NHS to maintain his clinical currency. In order to ensure Mr Hampson was able to complete his military duties, Newport City Council has a collaborative agreement with the military and thoroughly supported his mobilisation.



HMS Severn Returns

HMS Severn, Newport's formerly affiliated naval vessel, has officially reinstated its association with the city. The ship last berthed at Alexandra Docks and exercised its Freedom of the City in late 2017 prior to its planned decommission.

However, due to Brexit, the Royal Navy did not sell HMS Severn, but decided to keep and re-commission her. Councillor Jane Mudd, Leader of the Council, said: "We enjoyed a long and successful relationship between the city and the Royal Navy and were disappointed when HMS Severn's tenure was to end. "For her to be back in service and her affiliation with the city reinstated is excellent news. We look forward to celebrating with the ship, her Captain and crew."

HMS Severn is a River-class offshore patrol vessel built by Vosper Thornycroft at their Woolston yard. She first entered service in June 2003. With her sisters Tyne and Mersey, she is one of three offshore patrol vessels ploughing the seas around the UK almost every day of the year. It is hoped HMS Severn will return to port in Newport later this year.

Royal British Legion honoured by city



Newport City Council bestowed the Freedom of the City of Newport on the Royal British Legion (RBL) in a special ceremony today. This rare honour was given in recognition and appreciation of the RBL's service to the country as it marks its centenary year. Today also marked the launch of the organisation's annual Poppy Appeal which supports the Armed Forces community, both past and present, and their families.

RBL members and dignitaries, including the Lord Lieutenant of Gwent and the High Sheriff, attended a ceremony in the city centre. Chief executive Beverly Owen read out the Freedom Scroll before the Leader, Councillor Jane Mudd, addressed the parade. The Mayor, Councillor David Williams, then handed the scroll to Lieutenant Colonel MJ Harry DL, President of the Gwent Royal British Legion.

After the ceremony, Parade Commander Peter Colsey requested permission from the Mayor to exercise the Royal British Legion's right to parade through the City of Newport. As they made their way from High Street and through Commercial Street, they were watched by crowds of people who had turned out to witness the occasion and pay their respects to the RBL. Councillor Mudd said: "The Freedom of the City of Newport has been awarded less than 20 times in more than 100 years so this is a momentous day for us all. "Newport is proud of its close association with the RBL and this is a fitting tribute to an organisation that has given such long and loyal service.

"On behalf of the city council and its citizens, it gives me enormous pleasure to congratulate the RBL on its centenary and to thank all those involved, particularly its volunteers in Newport, for all they have done and all they continue to do for service people and their families. "With the launch of the annual Poppy Appeal also take place today today, I am sure millions of people will once again help support the invaluable work of the RBL, wear their poppies and remember all those who have sacrificed so much for our freedom."

Royal British Legion Area Manager for Wales, Antony Metcalfe, said: "The Royal British Legion in Wales is delighted to be awarded the Newport Freedom of the City alongside our Centenary Poppy Appeal launch. "It's such an honour to be recognised for our tireless work that supports the Armed Forces community in Newport and the rest of Wales. The 2021 Poppy Appeal has now begun, so we're encouraging all members of the public to go out and find their local collector to purchase their poppy and wear it with pride."

Powys



At the time of going to press Powys CC are just coming out of emergency operations due to covid. Hopefully in time a more normal SOP will become embedded into our daily routine.

Projects and hubs are going through the early stages of collaboration and mutual support in Powys. There are new hubs being planned across the county and further information is available on the 'Grow in Powys' website www.growinpowys.com/armed-forces

Veterans Charities, Adferiad and Woody's Lodge are in the process of supplying support networks for veterans in the county focussing especially on the challenge of rural areas. Following on from a discussion paper produced by the AFLO for Powys 'The Disparity of Service Provision within Rural and Isolated Areas of Wales' Statutory and Third Sector agencies have now an acute awareness on the additional challenges that isolated Veterans face. It is hoped that in future increased resources will become available to eradicate post code provision.

Unique initiatives such as the Game Change Project www.thegamechangeproject.co.uk and the Riverside retreat www.riversideretreatvc.co.uk both work in deeply rural areas of Powys. Supplying diverse activities and themes, Veterans from all over Wales are encouraged to look at their websites.

Support has continued to be provided on a wide front to veterans in Powys throughout the covid emergency using alternative technology. Special thanks must go to Age Cymru www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/powys/our-services/veterans/# and PTHB who have continued to provide an outstanding service to our Veterans.

Change Step www.changestepwales.co.uk maintained their mentoring scheme and will continue to help post covid.

Powys LA are very fortunate to have friends and partners within 160 Brigade and the Infantry Battle School (IBS), Dering Lines. Continued interservice and community collaboration will enhance all aspects of provision to Veterans and residents of Powys and beyond.

If you have any question about AFLO work in Powys please contact; Andy 'Curly' Jones. Andy.jones@powys.gov.uk

Veterans from across Powys enjoy a day at the 'GameChange' Project



'It ain't raining unless it's raining!'

Based near Newtown in Mid Wales Veterans can enjoy various 4x4 experiences. This activity has been opened up to groups from across Wales.

Check out their website www.thegamechangeproject.co.uk for further information.

West Wales

Ceredigion County Council

To commemorate the 10th Anniversary of the Armed Forces Covenant, on 28 September, Chairman of Ceredigion County Council and Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Paul Hinge reaffirmed the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant by conducting an official signing ceremony at Aberystwyth Marina. The ceremony took place on board HMS TRACKER. To ensure covid-19 health and safety measures were adhered to, only a small number of dignitaries attended the event, including Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Dyfed, Miss Sara Edwards.



Councillor Paul Hinge said: "This is a unique opportunity for Ceredigion to sign the Armed Forces Covenant aboard a Royal Naval vessel. As a County with a deep maritime history, it is fitting that this prestigious ceremony is conducted on a Royal Naval vessel whilst it's berthed in the thriving marina at Aberystwyth. When we were offered the chance of conducting the ceremony on HMS TRACKER we were very pleased to accept subject to Covid regulations. As Armed Forces Champion and Chairman of the Council I'm very pleased that over the term of this council we've been able to hold many ceremonial events on 'dry land' but this one will be special as we don't get to see the Royal Navy here that often, so I'm pleased to welcome the Captain and Crew of HMS TRACKER here to Ceredigion and to Aberystwyth to conduct the ceremony on the bridge of this ship."

Following the short signing ceremony Councillor Paul Hinge and Lieutenant Thomas Reed RN, presented each other with commemorative plaques to mark the occasion. The Captain, Lieutenant Thomas Reed RN said "It is a real pleasure to bring HMS TRACKER to Aberystwyth to support Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant, with Ceredigion County Council's signing of the Armed Forces Covenant. It has been 7 years since the Aberystwyth Marina hosted a Royal Navy Warship and we hope to return more frequently should the Lord-Lieutenant or County require us."

HMS TRACKER is a P2000 Archer Class Fast Patrol Boat. She is based in HMNB Clyde and provides reassurance and protection to high value Naval units as well as contributing to safeguarding UK Sovereign waters, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, all year round. Hayley Edwards, Ceredigion County Council's



Armed Forces Liaison Officer and also a serving Army Reserve Officer said: "It's very poignant that the Royal Navy is here to honour Ceredigion County Council's commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant. We recognise the unique obligations of our Armed Forces Community; serving personnel, veterans and their dependents. Having the Royal Navy here today is really significant for our Armed Forces Community and marks the occasion appropriately. Thank you."

Ceredigion County Council would like to thank The Marine Group for their assistance and support with the signing ceremony. For more information on the Ceredigion Armed Forces: Community Covenant, visit: www.ceredigion.gov.uk/resident/armed-forces-community-covenant/

SSAFA - South West Wales branch

Inaugural Meeting Of SSAFA South West Wales Branch.

During the evening of Friday 24 September SSAFA SW Wales Branch held its inaugural meeting under the Chairmanship of Lieutenant Commander David Griggs MBE, at Capel Dewi Carmarthenshire. SSAFA SW Wales Branch was formed in January 2020 after the previous SSAFA branches of "Dyfed" and "West Glamorgan" amalgamated. The meeting was attended by the Branch President Sara Edwards, Lord Lieutenant of Dyfed and also Louise Fleet, the Lord Lieutenant of West Glamorgan.

Among the many guests were County Councillors Paul Hinge, David Jenkins and Wendy Lewis the appointed Armed Forces Champions of their local authorities, and Hayley Edwards the "Dyfed" Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer. The "assembled" heard briefings from Colonel Stephen Thomas the SSAFA Regional Representative for Wales, and Ms Julie McCarthy the SSAFA National Director of Volunteer Operations, who had travelled from SSAFA Central Office for the event.

Mrs Valerie Griggs, Branch Secretary gave an overview of Branch activity for the year 2020 and explained that the Branch had dealt with 251 veterans and their families in need and had raised from military and civilian charities £248,639 to provide them with assistance. Mrs Valerie Callaghan, Branch Treasurer gave an breakdown of the Branch Finances, and explained that all SSAFA Branches are expected to be self financing. The meeting concluded with an address by the Branch President, who thanked all the SSAFA volunteers for their hard work and dedication.



AGE CYMRU DYFED

"Our Greatest Generation" Aberporth 6th June 2021

A wonderful and completely memorable WW2 Veterans Celebration called "Our Greatest Generation" was held in Aberporth on the 77th Anniversary of D-Day 6th June 2021. It took place on a lovely summer day at the picturesque Penrallt Hotel, leaving all who participated greatly uplifted.



WW2 Veterans Celebration. Aberporth 6th June 2021. Age Cymru Dyfed.

Veterans of WW2 and those who experienced WW2 as children attended, enjoying each other's company as well as evocative music provided by the very 'classy' RBL Band (Llanelli Branch) and an excellent afternoon tea. The Lord-Lieutenant of Dyfed, Sara Edwards, greeted the veterans as they arrived and the 3rd Cardigan Sea Scouts 'piped in' each veteran, providing a key intergenerational link along with the Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet. The Armed Forces Champions for Carmarthenshire and Ceredigion, Cllrs David Jenkins and Paul Hinge who also attended in his role as Chair of Ceredigion County Council. Both of course themselves both being veterans. Dyfed Powys Police assisted and Age Cymru Dyfed staff and West Wales Veterans Archive volunteers.

Serving armed forces personnel also attended from the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Royal Marine Commandos. ITV Cymru Wales News exclusively covered the event. Each one of the veterans attending had compelling backstories: Despite living within just a few miles of each other D-Day Veterans Tony Bird (Royal Navy) and Ted Owens (Royal Marine Commandos) in Pembroke, neither had never met previously and were filmed by ITV Wales exchanging their experiences of D-Day. Ted was badly injured on Sword Beach and Tony's Corvette escorted the Pluto Pipeline and gave covering fire to the landing craft. Also, from Pembroke RAF VHS/DF communications expert Dennis Tidswell served in the Battle of Britain at Duxford before being posted overseas, taking to a lifeboat after a U-Boat sunk the troopship upon which he was being transported, then spending three years under constant aerial attack on Malta. Upon his return to the UK Dennis was badly injured in a V1 attack near London.



D-Day Veterans Ted Owens and Tony Bird sharing their experiences of D-Day 77yrs to day after the event. 6.6.21, Aberporth. Age Cymru Dyfed.

Living in Tanygroes, John Martin, a Wireless Operator on Lancasters was shot down by Luftwaffe night fighter on his 3rd raid on Berlin in early 1944. The Lancaster exploded at 20,000ft. Unconscious and thrown out of the aircraft John only came round 1,000ft from the ground hanging just by one strap of his parachute harness before brutally hitting the ground. Fortunately for the injured John he was patched by a nearby Luftwaffe doctor before being sent to a PoW camp for the remainder of the War. John and his wife Adelaide who herself served as a WAAF Flight Mechanic at Little Rissington are still together 78yrs after first meeting at an RAF dance in 1943.

In Aberporth, Bill Needham became a 'tail-end Charlie' on Wellingtons. Like Bill, towards the end of the War Stan Bartlett also living in Aberporth, trained as a Flight Engineer on Lancasters but earlier as a 15yr old became something of a hero in the Coventry Blitz of 1940, when at great personal danger he doused a roof fire caused by German incendiary bombs, which would have otherwise destroyed a whole row of terraced family houses. Kitty Francis was at school in Bridgend when she and her parents received the news that her older brother Dilwyn, an RAF Navigator, had been killed on operations over Berlin. Alison Carter's father had been a prisoner of the Japanese in first Changi prison and then on the notorious Burma death railway. Nick Carter's father received the DCM for his bravery during the famous 'Channel Dash' of 1942 RN's almost suicidal attempts to try to prevent the German battleships Scharnhorst, Prinz Eugen and Gneisenau from making it through the English Channel to safety. Nick himself served for many years in RN.

Biographies of all the WW2 veterans and several others who have contributed their stories to the West Wales Veterans Archive which can be found in the National Library of Wales, are contained in a Commemorative Booklet "Our Greatest Generation". Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant it was presented to all attending the celebration. This superbly collaborative event involved the Armed Forces Covenant, Age Cymru Dyfed, Ceredigion County Council, Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, RBL (Llanelli Branch), 3rd Cardigan Sea Scouts, volunteers and with transportation for veterans being provided by Pembrokeshire Country Cars and the Royal Voluntary Service.

Finally, feedback from the day included - Dennis Tidswell:
"I found the day to be exhilarating, it raised my morale and confidence." Serving RAF Squadron Leader: "I felt very privileged to be part of it. It was humbling and inspiring to speak with so many Veterans who are the true Heroes." Serving RN Lieutenant: "I had a fantastic day and only wish I'd had longer to speak to everyone, there were far too many amazing stories to share. Absolutely thrilled to have finally met Tony, they say don't meet your heroes, but he thoroughly lived up to it, what an absolute legend." Serving Royal Marine Commando "It was an honour and a very proud moment for me to be able to meet Ted." Paul Hinge Chair Ceredigion County Council: "I felt humbled and extremely proud to be in those D Day and WW2 hero's presence. They all had such vivid stories to tell which were captivating and clear as the day they took place! Thank you once again for my invite, it's an afternoon I will treasure forever."

For further information on the West Wales Veterans Archive or to obtain a copy of the commemorative booklet "Our Greatest Generation" from the day please contact hugh.morgan@agecymrudfyed.org.uk



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.

Royal Air Force Association

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED - GWENT

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

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

Could you make a difference to someone's life?

Please get in touch, contact:

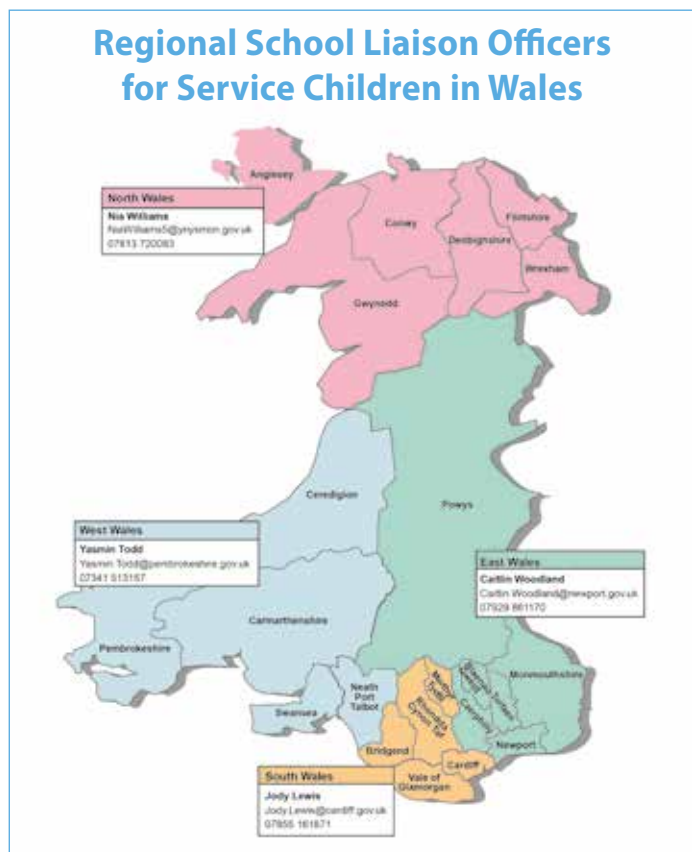
volunteers@rafa.org.uk

or 0800 018 2361

Find out more about our work at www.rafa.org.uk



Supporting Service Children in Education (SSCE) Cymru is a Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) programme funded by Welsh Government. Since the programme began in 2014 SSCE Cymru has worked with schools, children and young people, Local authorities, Welsh Government, education professionals, Armed Forces families and support organisations to gather their views and experiences, build networks across Wales and raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of children of Armed Forces personnel.



In collaboration with 160th (Welsh) Brigade, the Welsh Local Government Association (WLGA) secured funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to appoint four Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs). Hosted by four lead local authorities, the RSLOs work regionally and are each responsible for the activities in five/six local authorities. The RSLOs work collaboratively with the SSCE Cymru Programme Manager to deliver activities linked to the work-plan that was developed in collaboration with the SSCE Cymru Network members; focused on supporting schools to understand the experiences and needs of Service children and embed activities that will ensure sustainable support systems.

Ways that the RSLOs can work with and support schools include:

- Running/facilitating discussion groups with Service children
- Developing an understanding of how a school can utilise the SSCE Cymru Toolkit and Tools
- Identifying good practice that can be shared with other schools in Wales
- Supporting collaboration opportunities

- Identifying actions/activities that a school can carry out to support their Service children and Armed Forces community.
- Delivering training sessions to raise awareness on the experiences of Service children.
- Providing advice and support to access and use funding to support Service children.

RSLOs can work with schools either in person or virtually, depending on national/local restrictions and school requirements.

Case management support

Available to schools that have an individual Service child with a specific need related to the impact of their Armed Forces lifestyle. The impact of mobility and/or separation can have an academic, social and emotional impact on Service children. Challenges may arise that require support outside of the capacity of the school and/or local authority (LA). In these instances, the RSLO will work with the school and LA to identify appropriate support and interventions. For further information, visit the SSCE Cymru website.



Armed Forces Friendly Schools

Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, the Armed Forces Friendly Schools Status aims to:

- 1 Embed good practice for supporting Service children.
- 2 Create a positive environment for Service children to share their experiences.
- 3 Encourage schools to become more engaged with their Armed Forces community.

The RSLOs will work closely with all schools to support them in achieving their status, through activities/actions on the SSCE Cymru School checklist. Schools will be expected to follow three steps throughout the process to achieve the status.

Service children ambassadors



SSCE Cymru is passionate about pupil voice and involving Service children in the activities we conduct and resources we produce. There are many ways that SSCE Cymru and educators in Wales benefit from Service children's involvement. If you have any questions about the work of SSCE Cymru or require further information, please visit the [SSCE Cymru website](http://www.SSCECymru.co.uk) or contact your RSLO.



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

Forces Fitness is a Multi Awards winning Company that includes a Gold Employer Recognition Scheme Award, awarded from the MOD. We provide a number of education and training programs, focusing on health, well-being and building resilience within schools, colleges and universities.

Our current program with SSCE Cymru that has been operating since April 2021 in Newport, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Torfaen, Blaenau Gwent, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Pembrokeshire, has seen us engage with over 3200 pupils including 300+ Service Children. A huge 98% of the attendees would like to do similar activities again with us and 99% said they had fun during our sessions!

As an Organisation we have now worked with over 300 places of Education and 23,000+ learners with this number growing daily!



*"A huge thank you from myself and the five classes and teachers that you worked with today. The pupils thoroughly enjoyed all the activities, they were so much fun and after a difficult 15 months for everyone it felt amazing watching them tackle every challenge with zest and determination. I don't think I saw a single pupil who wasn't beaming during the activities. What was particularly special for me was the pride that our service children took in leading their teams and how Dan engaged with them. Dan made everything so easy and lots of fun and was a big hit with the kids. Hopefully, we'll be lucky enough to work with you again. Thank You!!" - **Teacher Feedback***

*"I really enjoyed doing all the activities and I would like if we have another chance to do it again." - **Pupil Feedback***

*"I had so much fun and would definitely like to do it again in or out of school." - **Pupil Feedback***

*"I Improved my communication because most of the time I took charge I learned to let people speak as well, please come back." - **Pupil Feedback***



We work in partnership with many local authorities, schools, colleges and organisations across Wales on tailored programs to suit their needs. We can conduct sessions for all learners within their place of education and can run specifically-designed workshops for them.

We are here to build sessions around their vision and desired outcomes! The Forces Fitness team of qualified teachers and instructors has gained a reputation for being the lead organisation in Wales to operate within schools to improve pupils' health and well-being whilst providing fun engaging activities.

**For further information, please contact
email: sean@forcesfitness.co.uk or visit
www.forcesfitness.co.uk**



Veterans Advisory and Pensions Committees (VAPC)



Introducing the VAPC Wales

As the Chair of the Veterans Advisory Pension Committee for Wales, it is my pleasure to provide an overview of who we are and what we do for this newsletter. There are thirteen regional VAPCs, nine in England, two in Scotland, one in Wales and one in Northern Ireland.



Our purpose is to provide a distinct, identifiable and independent point of reference for the veteran community and those who support it to raise respond to and promote issues relating to veterans' services through the Veterans Strategies (UK and Wales) and the Armed Forces Covenant.

What does this mean for veterans in Wales?

Our committee, is made up of veterans, veterans' charities and those working to support veterans in Wales. We meet six weekly as a committee but we also have created specialist themed subgroups to tackle the key issues faced by veterans; these are:

1. **Community and relationships**
2. **Employment, education and skills**
3. **Finance and debt**
4. **Health and wellbeing**
5. **Making a home in civilian life**
6. **Veterans and the law.**

Help us to help you

Whilst as a committee, we do not respond to individual issues, we do have members who can help. However, we are keen to identify issues and trends that are affecting veterans across Wales and make representation on your behalf. We will work with Welsh Government, Local Authorities, Service providers and others to make Wales the best place for veterans and their families. We are committed to working towards this and with your help, we will.

We need to know what works, what doesn't and receive your suggestions. The UK owes a debt of gratitude to its veterans and it is our mission to ensure you and your families are not disadvantaged by your service and where possible, we as a society ensure there is the knowledge and resources to meet your needs when you need it. Please get in touch email:

contact@vapc.wales

Ar recovery for all

Is it time to
**TAKE A
LOOK AT
YOUR
GAMBLING?**

Free, confidential
counselling available

Talk to us
0330 1340 286
recovery4all.co.uk

National
Gambling
Treatment
Service

Registered Charity 1002224

Follow us @aragamblingservice

Be a force for our forces Be a SSAFA volunteer

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

Roles available include secretary, treasurer, fundraiser caseworker along with many more.



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

Call **0800 0325612**



Email volunteer.support@ssafa.org.uk

Visit ssafa.org.uk/newrecruits

5 Reasons to employ Veterans in your business...

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



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.

The ERS is designed primarily to recognise private sector support although public sector organisations such as the emergency services, local authorities, NHS trusts and executive agencies are also eligible to be recognised.

For more information please visit
Defence Employer Recognition Scheme



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

Welsh Veterans Awards 2020/2021

Welsh Veterans Awards was a Huge Success!!! 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.



fantastic Paul Taylor MBE be awarded the Leavers to Leaders award for amazing work he has been doing with RE:ACT Disaster response especially during the Covid Pandemic. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Shortlisted Finalists remember it's you who inspire our future service leavers.

Peter Davies, Regional Director Wales, ABF The Soldiers' Charity Said

"It's great to celebrate the success of our Veterans Community and a great night at Wales' national awards for our Armed Forces Veterans and the Companies that support them. It was a fantastic evening listening to the shortlisted finalists and their inspirational stories."

The Veteran's Awards is a 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 Fitness, Business, Health and Well-being and the wider community! This Year the Main Awards ceremony was held at the Village Hotel and hosted by Polly James. The event was supported by the Welsh Government with Hannah Blythyn MS Deputy Minister for Social Partnership in attendance.

Mr Chris Jenkins (Head of Business) from Bridgend Audi (Main Sponsor) Stated: *"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."*

During the evening we heard from Brigadier J Fraser MBE and Brigadier A Dawes CBE, Head of the Army in Wales and the Commander of 160th Infantry Brigade. The event was supported by Royal Navy Reserves from HMS Cambria, 1st Battalion Welsh Guards and the fantastic Corps of Drums of the Royal Welsh and Shenkin IV and the Goat Major!

Founder of the Veterans Awards CIC and Military Veteran Sean Molino BCA said *"What a fantastic evening with so many positives! A great team effort and night filled with smiles, laughter and even some tears!! The atmosphere was great and a lovely night for our Veteran Community! We hope the awards inspire our future service leavers that great things can be achieved when they do decide to leave the Armed Forces."*

The aim of the awards is to celebrate the success coming from within our community and inspire future service leavers that great things can happen when they do decide to leave the Armed Forces. Some of the highlights of the night saw Michael Allen founder of the Endex Project from Caerphilly be awarded the Inspiration of the year award and become our Welsh Veterans Awards Champion and also the

Sponsored by Sinclair Audi – Bridgend Audi and in Support of the ABF The Soldiers' Charity



Brigadier A Dawes CBE



Brigadier J Fraser MBE



Paul Taylor MBE – Winner of Leavers to Leaders Award



Dawn Evans - Winner of Veterans Business of the Year

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

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

Please find below a list of Winners:

Welsh Veterans of the Year Champion

Sponsored by **Endex**



Winner Michael Allen

Role Model of the Year

Winner Mike Smith

Silver Ryan Roberts

Bronze Dai Matthews

Sponsored by
Royal Educare



Inspiration of the Year Award

Winner Michael Allen

Silver Roger Lees

Bronze John Fulcher

Sponsored by **Porters**
Estate Agents



The Community Award

Winner Cyril Turner

Silver Paul O'Dwyer

Bronze Russell Kitely

Sponsored by
RV1 Group



Contribution to Welsh Fitness Industry

Winner Neil Adams

Silver Adam White

Bronze Rob Morgan

Sponsored by
Print Inc



Entrepreneur of the Year

Winner Colin Singer

Silver Eoin Carson

Bronze Oliver Williams

Sponsored by **Pinnacle**
Office Solutions



Lifetime Achievement

Winner Steve Fisher

Silver Peter Webber

Bronze John Thomas

Sponsored by **Hugh**
James Solicitors



Employer of the Year

Winner MPCT

Silver 1940's Swansea & Wagtail

Bronze Newport City Council

Sponsored by
AB Glass



Leavers to Leader Award

Winner Paul Taylor MBE

Silver Arwyn Watkins OBE

Bronze Alan Lowry

Sponsored by
Leavers to Leaders



Volunteer of the Year

Winner Sue Butler

Silver Naomi Anderson

Bronze Jeff Rees

Sponsored by
Pathfinder Magazine



Veterans Business of the Year Award

Winner Ajuda Limited

Silver Foxbury Solutions

Bronze Ollywood

Sponsored by
Educ8 Training



Health and Well-being Award

Winner The Bulldogs

Silver The VC Gallery

Bronze CCFC Foundation

Sponsored by **Bridgend AUDI**
- Sinclair Audi



Reservist of the Year Award

Winner Kieron Long

Silver Bart Wilkins

Bronze James Drake

Sponsored by **Bridgend AUDI**
- Sinclair Audi



Royal Air Force in Wales

Wales and the Battle of Britain Commemoration

During September, as part of the annual Battle of Britain commemorations, a very special commemoration was held here in Wales.



Red Arrows Flypast over Cardiff City Hall.

On 16 September, in Cardiff City Hall, the RAF opened a historical exhibition that was titled "Wales and the Battle of Britain". It was originally planned to be opened in 2020 as part of the 80th year commemorations, but it had to be postponed because of the pandemic. It was therefore a great delight when we were finally able to open the exhibition, with the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, together with Welsh Government Minister Hannah Blythyn MS, doing the grand opening on the day. The opening was supported by a RAF Parade outside City Hall, together with a very special flypast by the RAF Aerobatic Team, the Red Arrows.

One of the reasons we remained keen to stage the event is because the historical exhibition tells a story that has never before been told to a Welsh audience – how Wales contributed to victory in the Battle of Britain. It's a remarkable story and one that I feel sure people across Wales will enjoy hearing about. The exhibition starts by talking about the 68 Welsh aircrew who fought in the Battle of Britain, with our research showing that they came from all areas of Wales. We then dug further into RAF records – the Squadron Operational Records, the Combat Reports of the individual pilots and, in many cases, to the Casualty Cards for those who lost their lives. From this, we built up a good picture of the Welsh aircrew, finding out not just about their RAF service, but also their families and upbringing too. The exhibition now tells these stories - many are extraordinary stories and some, inevitably, are very sad. But together, they paint a remarkable and moving picture of the contribution of Welsh aircrew serving in RAF Fighter Command in 1940.

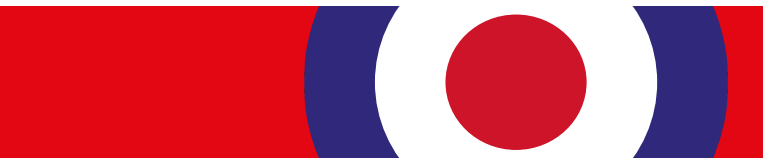
At this point, I thought it might be useful to give you a flavour of what we have in the exhibition. Firstly, we looked at Battle of Britain Squadron Commanders, who of course had the significant responsibility of leading their Squadron in the air and on the ground. Of the 65 RAF Fighter Command Squadrons, 5 of them were led by Welshmen.

I will just pick one example here and he is Squadron Leader Edward Graham from Ebbw Vale, who became the Commanding Officer of 72 Squadron, a Squadron that spent time during the Battle based at RAF Biggin Hill, very much in the thick of the fighting. Graham had been involved in intense air fighting from the very beginning of the Battle, once leading his Flight of 6 Spitfire aircraft in to attack an enemy force of over 100 enemy bombers and fighters, with his Squadron claiming 11 aircraft destroyed for no loss. But apart from his fearless skills as a leader and a fighter pilot in the air, his leadership skills would have been severely tested on the ground too, with 9 of the Squadron's pilots losing their lives during the Battle and the Biggin Hill airfield was also under almost constant attack. Despite all this, Graham continued to lead his Squadron with courage and distinction. And one of the other remarkable things about Edward Graham is that he suffered all his life from a stammer, yet he was able to overcome this to be an outstanding Squadron Commander who, in the high pressure of battle, was still able to give clear tactical instructions to his pilots on the radio as he manoeuvred his Squadron in to attack the enemy. Graham survived the war and stayed in the RAF, rising to Group Captain rank.

The exhibition also highlights the four Welsh Battle of Britain aces, that is those that shot down more than 5 enemy aircraft in the Battle. One such ace was Sergeant Glyn Griffiths from Llandudno. Griffiths went to Ysgol John Bright in Llandudno and then became a Gas Engineer in the town before, with war looming, joining the RAF in 1938 as a pilot. In 1940, he was a Hurricane pilot with 17 Squadron in the Battle of France, shooting down 2 enemy aircraft before then shooting down a further 10 enemy aircraft in the Battle of Britain. The story of Glyn Griffiths is remarkable, telling as it does about someone from very ordinary beginnings who went on to make an extraordinary contribution at the very hour of our nation's greatest need. Happily, he survived the war, but was badly burnt in a mid air collision in 1943.

Then we have some of the Welsh Battle of Britain pilots who went on to have very successful post war RAF careers, four of them becoming Air Marshals. The highest ranked was Air Chief Marshal Sir Frederick Rosier, who was born and educated in Wrexham. He was a Hurricane pilot in the Battle of France, destroying or damaging 2 enemy aircraft, before then being shot down himself, baling out badly burned. A few months later he was back in the air as the Commanding Officer of 229 Squadron in the Battle of Britain. After the war, he had an extremely successful RAF career and, in the 1960s, became the Commander in Chief of RAF Fighter Command.

But of course, in amongst these stories, a number of Welsh aircrew also lost their lives. A total of 17 were killed in action and the exhibition tells the stories of each of them. Young men such as Sergeant Lewis Isaac from Llanelli, who worked in the local Lloyds Bank before the war, then joining the RAF and arriving at 64 Squadron as a Spitfire pilot in August 1940. Tragically, on his first operational mission, Isaac was killed in an engagement with a force of ME 109s over the English



Channel. The history of the Battle of Britain shows that the first few missions for a new pilot were always full of extra danger, and you needed a bit of luck to get through this and settle in. Sadly, for Lewis Isaac, this was not be, but this exhibition does provide an opportunity for us to remember him and honour the many sacrifices that were made.

As well as the people, the exhibition covers other important elements too. One is to highlight the 14 RAF Stations in Wales in the Summer of 1940 and what they were doing. Places such as RAF Pembrey in Carmarthenshire, part of RAF Fighter Command, with Spitfire and Hurricane aircraft defending South Wales. And, in North East Wales, we had RAF Hawarden in Flintshire, the sole RAF unit specializing in the training of Spitfire pilots, a vital role for keeping the front line operational.

And last, but by no means least, this exhibition focuses on what Wales as a nation experienced in 1940 and how they contributed to victory. It talks about the Blitz in Wales, particularly the serious bombing and loss of life suffered in Swansea and Cardiff. But we also talk about other things too, such as how Wales supported "The Spitfire Fund" initiative, with communities across Wales raising money to buy 31 Spitfires for the RAF in 1940, then giving them names such as the Borough of Barry and The Pride of Newport. This is but one example of how Wales supported the RAF in 1940 and a key theme of our exhibition is for the RAF to publicly recognise that contribution.



Minister Hannah Blythyn MS and Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston officially opening the exhibition, assisted by Dr Lynsey Shaw (centre).

Having opened in Cardiff, the exhibition is now going on tour across Wales, and this will continue until September 2022, hopefully giving all communities the chance to enjoy it. You can find information on dates and locations by visiting the Air Officer Wales (Air Commodore Williams) social media account Twitter : @AWilliamsRAF, and we will also ask each Local Authority to publicise when the Battle of Britain event is visiting their area. As an historian, I am particularly pleased that a key element of this tour will be linking up with local schools, so that Welsh children are able to find out not just about one of the defining battles of the Second World War, but also about the extraordinary contribution of Welsh men and women serving in the air and on the ground in RAF Fighter Command 81 years ago.

Dr Lynsey Shaw BA (Hons), MSc, DPhil (Oxon), RAF Air Historical Branch



Noble Training Solutions Ltd – A Soldier’s Story

I set up Noble Training Solutions Ltd in 2008, it was a leap of faith into the unknown as I had no experience in business prior.

I got into training whilst in the prison service after accepting a job role as a training officer and found I enjoyed the interaction on courses between tutor and delegates, passing on experiences to help them help others. I also found forcing myself outside of my comfort zone to talk to large groups of people was helping with my anxiety from childhood and PTSD from my time in the British Army.

When I left the prison service I began working as a freelance trainer for other organisations, those organisations started to seek me directly which eventually pushed myself to go alone. My experiences of working with extreme behaviours within the prison service such as violence, self-harm, suicide and suicide ideation caused organisations to ask me to deliver various courses around those subjects.

As time went on, I become more and more involved with studying the reasons behind these behaviours and studied psychology, counselling and eventually trauma recovery and dyadic developmental psychology (not bad for a kid who left school with no qualifications).

The more involved I got with understanding root causes of mental health issues, the more I began to understand my own previous behaviours of self-harm, anger, alcohol dependency amongst others, my childhood involved abuse, bullying at home and school until i found my escape into the army.

This allowed my company to become a leader in the field of behaviour training and have won many awards such as Best behaviour management training provider Wales, Best Social Care training provider Wales and the most recent Best Behaviour Management training provider UK.

The focus of Noble Training Solutions Ltd is to provide the best training in behaviour that we can, so we can help other organisations and their staff help the most vulnerable of society, people who are struggling with mental health and the complex issues relating to time served in the forces, homelessness, abuse, drug and alcohol dependency, suicide, self-harm, ex-offenders and anywhere or anyone we think we can help.

We now have a bank of trainers that can provide our training courses, some are veterans themselves some aren't. Our cost effective and quality over quantity approach has stood us well with hopefully many more years helping others to help others.

www.nobletrainingsolutions.co.uk

Royal Navy in Wales



SAILORS and Royal Marines today provided the military backdrop and accompaniment as Her Majesty the Queen officially opened the sixth session of the Welsh Parliament, the Senedd Cymru.

Accompanied by His Royal Highness Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall she was greeted by a Royal Navy Guard of Honour as she approached the Senedd building in Cardiff Bay while the Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines Plymouth provided the appropriate soundtrack.

Earlier, upon arrival at Cardiff railway station, Her Majesty was greeted by a 21-gun Royal Salute fired at the Pierhead by 104 Regiment (V) Royal Artillery as she stepped off the Royal Train, while sailors, soldiers and airmen formed a tri-Service Step-Lining Party.

Sailors from Cardiff's own Royal Navy Reserve Unit, HMS Cambria – re-homed in their freshly rededicated headquarters in Cardiff Bay – were among the military personnel taking part.

"I volunteered after it was advertised by the unit, and it was very exciting – a unique opportunity," said Able Seaman Emily Boycott, who was on the door of the Senedd building for the Queen's arrival. The seaman specialist added: "During my four years with HMS Cambria here in Cardiff this is the biggest and most exciting thing I've ever done, I'm sure it's up there with one of the best things I've been involved with."

Able Seaman Isobel Stead said she was proud and excited to be involved with the state occasion.

"It's not every day you get an opportunity like this," she continued. "I've been a reservist since October 2019, and I was aware that there would be opportunities to be involved in ceremonial events in the course of our duties, but never thought it would be this high profile with the world watching. It was really exhilarating, I'm buzzing!"

After taking the Royal Salute, the Queen moved into the Senedd building, where she witnessed creative presentations by participants from all over Wales.

Due to ongoing Covid restrictions some of these were given online and Her Majesty was able to watch a mixture of pre-recorded and live performances.

During the official opening ceremony, the Queen delivered a speech in the Senedd's chamber to the assembly and listened to addresses from Elin Jones MS, the Llywydd (Speaker) of the Senedd, and First Minister of Wales, the Rt Hon Mark Drakeford MS. The ceremonial Mace was also carried into the Senedd and placed in its sconce to signify the official opening of the sixth Senedd.

"It is a tremendous honour for the Royal Navy to provide the Guard of Honour and for the Royal Marines Band to perform today at the State Opening of the Senedd," said Royal Marines Brigadier Jock Fraser, Naval Regional Commander for Wales and Western England.

"Being centre stage as Her Majesty the Queen arrives will be an unforgettable experience for all involved and a special moment for the Royal Navy in Wales."



Armed forces step up to support the welsh ambulance service NHS trust

Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians from Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust (WAST) have been training sailors and airman drawn from Ships, Naval establishments and RAF Air stations, ready to take up duties as ambulance drivers across Wales.

The 50 military personnel from the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force are the second tranche of volunteers, to come forward and will join a previous tranche of 50 soldiers from 4 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps already on task.



Around 100 personnel from the Armed Forces will be on ambulance driving duties and supporting these will be a dedicated team of 29 personnel making a total of 129 sailors, soldiers and airmen committed to assisting WAST across Wales.

During the training sessions, military personnel learnt how to deliver support on emergency callouts and familiarise themselves with vehicles and equipment they will be operating. Military ambulance drivers will assist in patient handling, but not be conducting any patient treatment beyond the help a paramedic would normally call upon from a public bystander, should the need arise.

Lee Brooks, the Trust's Director of Operations, said: "We're proud and grateful to have the military working alongside us once again, who did a superb job of assisting us on two occasions previously last year. Having our Armed Forces colleagues back on board will help us put more ambulances on duty so we can get to more patients, more quickly, while the extreme pressure continues.

"Essentially, they'll work with one of our clinicians on an emergency ambulance responding to the full range of emergency calls. The winter period is our busiest time and having military support will bolster our capacity and put us in the best possible position to provide a safe service to the people of Wales."

Major Alex Wilson, Officer Commanding 60 Close Support Squadron, Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment, 4 Regiment Royal Logistic Corps, said: "Over this weekend we spent time training with the paramedics and emergency medical technicians to familiarise ourselves with the ambulances, equipment and processes to make sure we can assist in the best way we can.

"The sailors, soldiers and airmen are ready to begin the task we have been deployed to do in Wales. It's a privilege to be working with our Welsh Ambulance Service colleagues in supporting the NHS in Wales to ease the pressures that currently exist."

Stepping up for ambulance driving is Royal Navy Chief Petty Officer Adrian Davies from Royal Naval Air Station Yeovilton, Somerset. He's deployed around the world on operations and proud to support the call from nearer home. "We're here to train with the NHS Welsh Ambulance Service and help out in any way we can, in a non-clinical role. It's a very worthwhile cause.

"Working together with the other services here is great, we've come together well, it's a good mix. I will be stationed in Cardigan on the West coast and looking forward to working with the professional paramedics."

RAF Corporal Steven West from MOD St Athan is keen to get to his ambulance station at Welshpool and is excited to have volunteered. "I'm very proud to be doing this and my mum has sent me a message saying how proud she was of me volunteering, which was extra nice.

"It's also a good chance to get to know other people from the three services it's a good group we're with. I'm looking forward to deploying to the ambulance station and know that people will appreciate what we are doing." It is the third time the Military have supported WAST through the pandemic as part of the Military Aid to the Civil Authorities (MACA) arrangement.

More than 200 British Army soldiers have already assisted the Trust's Covid-19 effort by driving and decontaminating ambulance vehicles as part of Operation Rescript. More broadly, around 20,000 military personnel have been supporting public services across the UK during the pandemic as part of a 'COVID Support Force.'



DWP and the Armed Forces Covenant

As part of the Armed Forces Covenant, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has initiatives that help current and former armed forces personnel and your families access Jobcentre Plus services.



**Department
for Work &
Pensions**

This includes having an armed forces champion in every Jobcentre Plus district who ensures that we provide support that meets your needs. This page explains the role of the armed forces champion and the way you and your families can access our services.

Armed forces champion

The armed forces champion provides Jobcentre Plus support to:

- veterans
- service leavers
- serving personnel within their resettlement period
- spouses and civil partners of serving and ex-service personnel

Champions maintain close contact with Jobcentre Plus staff, who make the champion aware of armed forces issues and raise issues with them if you request it. Champions are not always based in the jobcentre.

The role of the armed forces champion is to:

- develop and maintain joint working arrangements between Jobcentre Plus and the armed forces community in their Jobcentre Plus district.
- provide information to Jobcentre Plus staff about specific armed forces initiatives.
- provide an understanding of the issues the forces community face that can be a barrier to employment.

- be the first point of contact for Jobcentre Plus staff and services welfare and families staff to advise on queries regarding individual armed forces cases – including serving personnel, your families and veterans.
- focus specifically on the Jobcentre Plus support available to veterans, service leavers, those within a resettlement period and spouses and civil partners of serving and ex-service personnel – where necessary and appropriate, the champions will work to put support in place.

They also work to raise the profile of the service community in terms of the skills, knowledge and experience they can offer, and work with colleagues to ease some of the barriers to work you face. The champion will tailor their activities to match the needs of the armed forces community in their district. This means some activities may differ from district to district. The role and responsibilities of the champion remain the same regardless of location. Each of the services has appointed points of contacts who form a link with the relevant champions within their area.

Contacts:

Sarah Mallaghan –

Wales Armed Forces Lead tel: 07741 673209

Jackie Barton –

South East Wales tel: 07826 876346

Gareth Thomas –

South West Wales tel: 07553 677929

Kat Graham –

North and Mid Wales tel: 07917 732894

Wales.armedforceschampions@dwp.gov.uk

VETERANS LEGAL LINK

Serving those who serve us

Free legal advice, casework and signposting for veterans and their families.

Also supporting our Blue Light services.

Police Investigations

Criminal Law

Legal Aid Help

Family Law

Military Injuries

Employment

Mental Health

Criminal Injuries



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

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

■ Help for Heroes

Hello, I'm Helen Neve, and my role is Veterans Community Nurse for Help for Heroes covering Wales. I am based in Ceredigion and currently home based and want to share with you an update on our services for Veterans and their families. Help for Heroes believes that those who serve our country deserve support when they are wounded. Every day, men and women leave their career in the Armed Forces as a result of physical or psychological wounds and their lives changed forever. We help veterans and their families to recover and get on with their lives by providing physical, psychological, financial and welfare support for as long as it is needed.



Here at Help for Heroes we have a dedicated Clinical Team of registered professionals offering clinical advice, support, and liaison between NHS and statutory and third sector organisations. Our involvement has been welcomed by our veterans who have struggled to access medical support over the past 18 months during lockdown and Covid restriction and they have been reassured that a clinician is on hand to offer advice and support to help them access the best care available. Working with GP's and NHS networks, we engage with our veterans to minimise the risk of veterans suffering with preventable complications and life-changing injuries in silence and we enable individuals to make decisions about their care. We also provide clinical support for equipment and adaptations and prosthetics which have hugely benefitted our Veterans when they had been facing long waits for statutory services.

Complementing our Clinical service are our Occupational Therapists who are providing our veterans with practical strategies and solutions to daily activities and tasks. We also access a designated Physiotherapy service to assist our veterans with identifying physiotherapy needs, working with veterans to plan interventions and helping to restore movement and function through personalised exercise plans, therapy education and advice. As an organisation we have maintained our support throughout the Covid 19 pandemic with weekly drop-in virtual get together and individual clinical support sessions and have now recommenced community outreach and activities observing Covid 19 guidance.

Our outdoor sports and activities include water sports, hiking, archery, rowing, Pilates, outdoor survival skills and many more. Our monthly Veterans hubs, in Carmarthen, Newport and Bridgend have restarted and these are booked sessions that combine a social venue with an activity such as swimming or circuit training. Our comprehensive Mental health support service, "Hidden Wounds" has expanded to meet the increased needs of our Veterans and families and our team has 22 Clinicians: 3 Psychologists; 12 counsellors; 7 Psychological wellbeing practitioners. We have seen an increase in veterans using our services especially with rekindling of emotions with the recent events in Afghanistan.

Help for Heroes has always recognised the efforts of civilians embedded in the Armed Forces and since 2016 have been supporting wounded, injured and sick embedded civilians and their families and in response to the Afghan interpreter's resettlement programme we have recruited a new team specifically to offer support and increase our capacity to deliver services to those living with visible and hidden injury and illness. We have a Project manager to combat loneliness who is actively reaching out to our Veteran community in Mid and North Wales to offer support and social interaction and opportunities, networking with our partner organisations so that our socially isolated veterans have equity in accessing opportunities in their communities. Our case managers offer practical advice and support and assist planning and co-ordinate options and services to meet our veterans needs in a holistic way, whilst working collaboratively with partner organisations to ensure individual needs are met.

We offer online self-help recovery courses such as eating well, sleeping well managing anxiety and supporting our veterans to develop confidence and empowerment. These are all available on our comprehensive website. We encourage self-referrals but anyone can support a veteran in the referral process. To access support please go to the Help for Heroes website for contact information [Helpforheroes.org.uk](https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk) or call **0300 303 9888**

Helen Neve RN Veterans Clinical Service – Wales

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



■ The Royal British Legion Admiral Nurse Service



Supporting Carers and Families of those with Dementia

What Do We Do?

The Royal British Legion Admiral Nurses offer specialist support, information and advice to the carers of people with dementia. Admiral Nurses are registered nurses specialising in dementia. The service aims to help carers gain the necessary skills to assist with dementia care, promote positive approaches in living well with dementia and improving quality of life. The Service has been developed in partnership with Dementia UK, a national charity which promotes and develops Admiral Nursing.

Am I Eligible?

To qualify for this service the carer or person with dementia needs to be a beneficiary of the The Royal British Legion. This includes anyone who has served in the British Armed Forces and their family and carers.

Contact the Admiral Nurse Service on
0333 011 4497



■ Samaritans launches app

Military veterans are set to benefit from a dedicated new mental health app to help them deal with the long-term emotional challenges of adjusting to life after the Forces.



The free Samaritans Veterans app comes on the back of joint research the leading suicide prevention charity carried out with the Royal British Legion, which found that veterans wanted to understand more about their emotional wellbeing and to hear from people with similar experiences. Those leaving the military and former Armed Forces personnel can access emotional health and wellbeing information, videos, exercises, podcasts, and create wellbeing to-do-lists in the app to help look after themselves and connect with the veteran community.

The new app is part of a programme at the charity that works with the Ministry of Defence and military charities to support serving personnel in the Armed Forces, veterans and their families, and is funded by a £3.5m LIBOR grant.

Samaritans volunteers provide emotional support to the military community with concerns including mental health, isolation and loneliness, family and relationship problems, and most contacts are from veterans. In April 2020, the first full month of the pandemic lockdown, the charity saw the largest volume of military contacts since Samaritans began to record contacts from the military community in 2018 and 79% were veterans.

Samaritans Veterans App will support veterans to learn ways to manage their emotional responses to situations, deal with the new day-to-day reality and help to identify challenges and develop ways to overcome them. The app also has access to volunteering and peer support by connecting people to the wider veteran community.

The Samaritans Veterans App is available to download (Samaritans Veterans) on your phone from the App Store (iOS) or Google Play (Android).

■ Stay connected with Sparko

Do you know someone who served in the Royal Navy and who is feeling isolated from his or her Naval family and friends?

They might live far from loved ones, or have been isolating because of Covid-19, or maybe they can't meet up with old shipmates because they're not as mobile as they used to be.

Maybe you are in that situation yourself . . . If any of this sounds familiar, the Royal Naval Association (RNA) Sparko TV initiative might be just the ticket.



Sparko is essentially a tailored version of the internet, accessed through a TV set from the comfort of a sofa or armchair, which promotes wellbeing and mental health thereby improving quality of life. The Internet and social media make it easy to connect people around the world – so long as you can use the technology. But some people – and not necessarily the more senior citizens – just struggle with the finer points of Skype, Zoom, FaceTime, YouTube and the like. Log-ins and passwords can be a challenge, updating software and other necessary maintenance is not always straightforward, and people can feel vulnerable with regards to online security.

But Sparko makes it easy for an older Naval veteran to keep in touch, perhaps through video links with grandchildren in another part of the country, to join online

classes or talks, and to enjoy entertainment tailored for the senior community, all through a simple, dedicated system. The kit and service are provided by Sparko, a British 'virtual retirement community' which operates through interactive TV equipment. The Sparko TV kit is a small box that plugs in to a standard TV * and comes with a small webcam and a simple remote control.

The package comes with help and technical support, and is set up by a Sparko engineer. Sparko brings people together using simple digital technology – the older person's nearest and dearest can access the system using a free smartphone app, and the whole thing was trialed with the help of Age UK, who welcomed Sparko with enthusiasm.

Perhaps best of all, through the RNA, the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC) – see <https://www.rnrmc.org.uk/> – and the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund <https://covenantfund.org.uk/> it is free for Naval veterans.

Sparko does not interrupt or interfere with normal TV programmes – the camera is only activated for a video call or live activity, and shows a small light when in operation. A privacy slider is included to cover the lens when it is not in use. If you know someone who served and who would benefit from Sparko, an Expression of Interest form (available at <https://royal-naval-association.co.uk/sparkotv/>) should be completed. Then just send it to Lynda Pearson, RNA Welfare Programme Manager, who will respond as soon as possible.

** To use Sparko the TV must have an HDMI port available (most televisions less than 15 years old should have this) into which Sparko is plugged.*



Are you, or do you know someone, who has served in HM Armed Forces?

(Regular, Reservist or National Service)

Change Step supports veterans helping them to:

- re-build old connections and develop new ones.
- become more mentally and physically active.
- have fun and take part in a range of activities.
- meet other retired or ex-service personnel - old and young alike.



Call us on 0300 777 2259 or email ask@change-step.co.uk



THE POPPY FACTORY

Employment support for the Ex-Forces community



SOCIAL ISOLATION
INEXPERIENCE OF CIVILIAN WORKING LIFE
AGE PREJUDICE
HOMELESSNESS
ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE
FINANCIAL AND WELFARE DIFFICULTIES

The Poppy Factory supports veterans with health conditions on their journey into employment, helping them overcome any barriers.

Four out of five of five of the veterans we work with report a mental health condition.

Whatever their situation, and no matter what they are going through, our employment team is on hand to offer one-to-one support.

Veterans are at the heart of our service. We empower them to plan their own future, supporting them into employment that reflects their aspirations, skills and circumstances. Specialist support and meaningful employment can be truly life-changing, significantly improving veterans confidence, financial security and wellbeing.

Our expertise is in helping the most vulnerable in the ex-Forces community. Some come to us years after leaving the Armed Forces. Many have served in recent conflicts such as Afghanistan and Iraq.

"I feel absolutely reborn now, compared to how things were before."

Gary - Veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan



Who we help

Our employment support is available to those who have served for one day or more in the Armed Forces or Reserves, and have any kind of physical or mental health condition that is a barrier to employment. A physical or mental health condition does not have to be attributed to Service.

OUR EMPLOYMENT CONSULTANTS ARE BASED ACROSS ENGLAND AND WALES SUPPORTING VETERANS IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

To be eligible for support, veterans must be unemployed. However, we are exceptionally able to look at individual cases where an employed veteran has been confirmed as going through redundancy, or their current role is negatively impacting their health.

"I didn't have many options, and I didn't have time to sort out a proper transition from the Army. My new job has given me a sense of purpose. For me, the goal is to keep active and keep my mind busy."

Norris - Afghanistan veteran



Support into employment

- ✓ Advice on job opportunities to match each veterans own skills and goals
- ✓ Support with CVs, Job application forms and preparing for interviews
- ✓ Support with training and qualifications when they are needed
- ✓ Signposting and referrals to partner organisations, regular joint working

In-work support

- ✓ Regular contact with veterans after moving into employment
- ✓ Help identifying workplace adaptations so veterans can stay in work
- ✓ Working with veterans and their employers to find creative solutions
- ✓ Contact with health professionals and partners to ensure consistent support



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



Find out more - www.poppyfactory.org