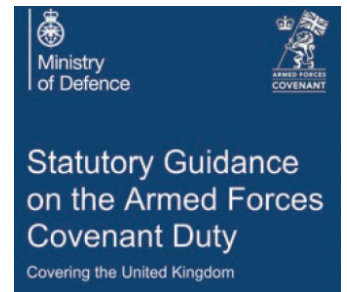


Armed Forces Covenant Duty toolkit available now!

The Armed Forces Covenant Duty is a legal obligation on certain public bodies to pay due regard to the Covenant principles when exercising certain functions.

The following resources provide information about the legal Duty aspect of the Armed Forces Covenant. The purpose of this guidance is to assist the specified bodies comply with their legal obligations, by providing information about the Duty and those people within the Armed Forces Community who are beneficiaries of the Duty. It highlights the issues these people can face as a result of Service life, and illustrates good practice in the areas of healthcare, education and housing.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1116148/Armed_Forces_Covenant_Duty_Statutory_Guidance.pdf



LAUNCH OF COVENANT WALES WEBSITE!!



A dedicated website for members of the Armed Forces Community in Wales has been launched to share news, events and legislative knowledge. If you would like to share information about your organisations or events that you have ongoing or planning in organising, please get in touch via the contact page.

[Covenant.wales](https://covenant.wales)

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.

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 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.



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.

Welsh Government



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Armed Forces Expert group

The Welsh Government Armed Forces Expert group, chaired by Deputy Minister for Social Partnership Hannah Blythyn MS, met on 22 March. The group discussed the impact of the current cost of living challenges on the Armed Forces community and support providers, and also heard an update on delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans strategy in Wales. Tri Service leads for Wales provided an update on current engagement and the latest update from the Armed Forces Liaison Officers was considered. To see the minutes of the AFEG, please visit:

Veterans Survey figures

Welsh Government has worked closely with the Office for National Statistics and the Office for Veterans' Affairs on the first UK Veterans' survey which closed in February 2023. Over 30,000 responses were received across the UK with 1534 responses from veterans in Wales which represents 5.2% of responses. The data is being analysed by the ONS and Welsh Government is working with the OVA to assess key messages and lessons to help inform future support in Wales. We are grateful to all veterans and family members who contributed.

Cost of living

The increases in the cost of living are having an ongoing impact on many people in society, including Serving personnel, veterans and families. There is a range of support provided at Welsh and UK Government level for those in need of assistance:

<https://www.gov.wales/help-cost-living>

<https://www.gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/cost-of-living-payments-2023-to-2024>

GP accreditation

Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW) have launched a new Veteran friendly GP scheme for Wales. GP

practices are required to complete a Veterans' Health and Wellbeing module and undertake training on the Armed Forces Covenant in order to be designated 'Veteran friendly'.

[\(insert link when live\)](#)

Employment event November

As part of the delivery of the Wales Scoping Exercise / UK Veterans' strategy in Wales, a Veterans Employment Event is again being arranged for November 2023 to bring Service leavers, veterans and families and employers together and promote the skills of the Armed Forces community.

[Insert link/contact when available](#)

Etherton review

The LGBTQ+ Independent Review, sometimes referred to as the 'Etherton Review' after Lord Etherton who is leading it, is considering ways and means to address the needs of those who were affected by the criminalisation of LGBTQ+ activity in the Armed services prior to 2000.

It is an independent review making recommendations to UK Government but will also make suggestions elsewhere where action to assist those affected might be considered. The Deputy Minister for Social Partnership, who leads on both Armed Services and Veterans Matters and on the LGBTQ+ Action Plan within Welsh Government, has committed to work with other ministerial colleagues to respond to the report. The report is expected to publish its recommendations and suggestions late May / early June this year.

Housing support

Welsh Government are working with the Office for Veterans' Affairs and Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to ensure veterans and support providers in Wales are involved in the Op Fortitude homelessness scheme.

The Welsh Government Expert panel examining homelessness legislation reform have met with representatives of the Armed Forces sector in Wales, and held a written consultation with the All Wales Armed Forces charity group. This work will inform planning for changes to homelessness support in Wales.

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

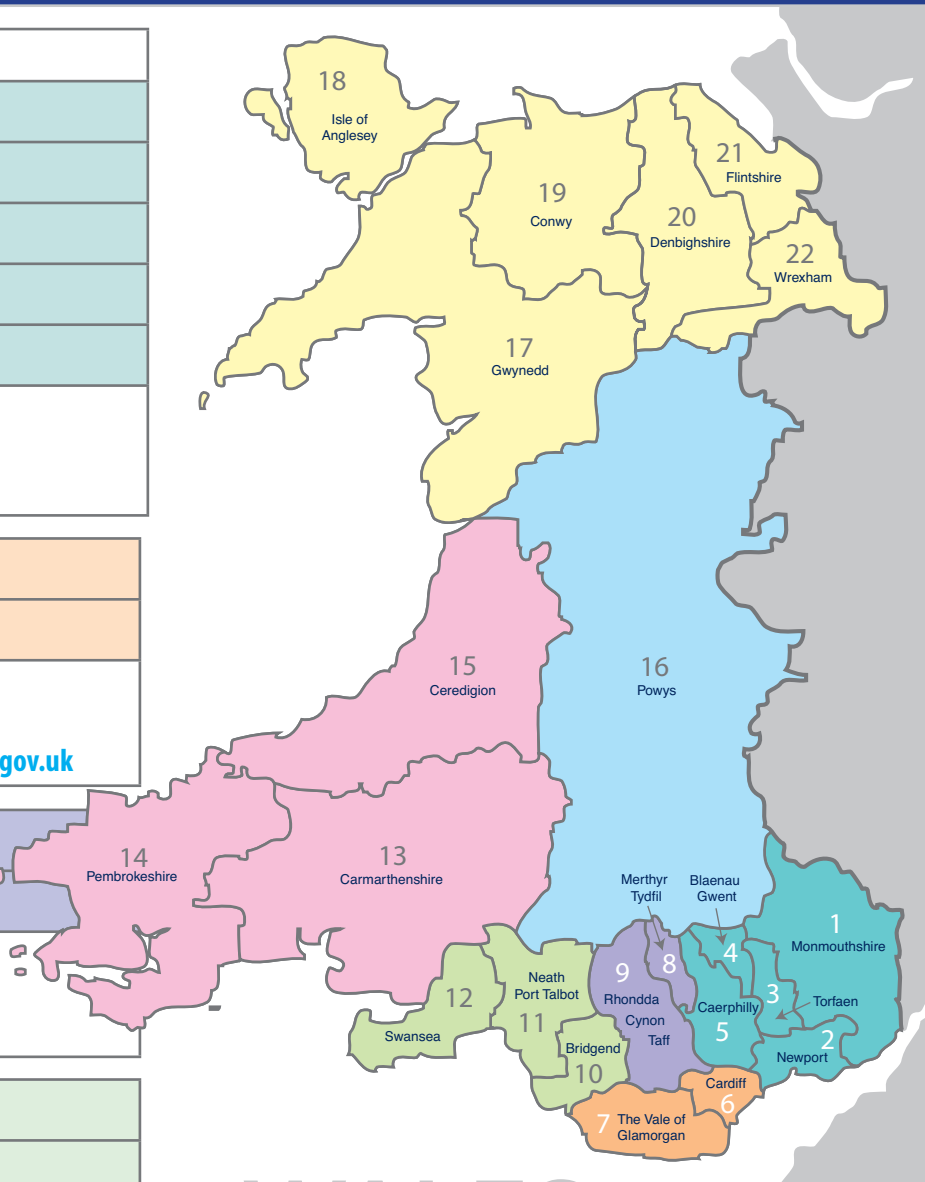
6	Cardiff
7	Vale of Glamorgan
	Armed Forces Liaison Officer Abigail Warburton email: awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

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	Carmarthenshire
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

Vale of Glamorgan Cllr Ian Buckley
email: ibuckley@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 Martyn Jones
email: cllr.martyn.jones@bridgend.gov.uk

Neath Port Talbot
Cllr Wyndham Fryer Griffiths
email: cllr.w.f.griffiths@npt.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 Elliott King
Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Armed Forces Community.
email: cllr.elliott.king@swansea.gov.uk

West Wales

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

Pembrokeshire Cllr Simon Hancock (Dr)
email: cllr.simon.hancock@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Carmarthenshire Cllr Phillip Hughes
email: PMHughes@Carmarthenshire.Gov.uk

Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Cllr Derrick Bevan
email: Derrick.Bevan@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Caerphilly Cllr Teresa Heron
email: heront1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monmouthshire Cllr Peter Strong
email: PeterStrong@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 Matthew Dorrance
email: cllr.matthew.dorrance@powys.gov.uk
email PA in first instance:
karen.southcott@powys.gov.uk

North Wales

Anglesey Cllr Glyn Haynes
email: Glynhaynes@ynysmon.llyw.com

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

Flintshire Cllr David Evans
email: david.evans@flintshire.gov.uk

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

Wrexham Cllr Beverley Parry-Jones
email: david.Griffiths@wrexham.gov.uk

Denbighshire Cllr Julie Matthews
email: Julie.Matthews@denbighshire.gov.uk

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

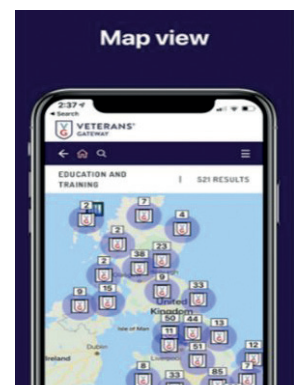
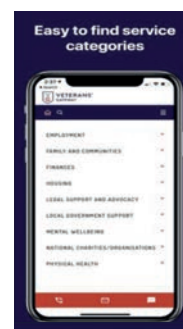
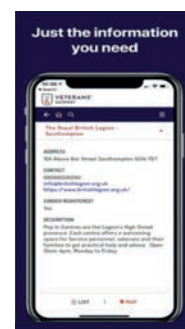
The Veterans Gateway can be contacted by:

- 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>



Veterans' Commissioner for Wales - first 12 months in post.



How time has flown! By the time this edition of this incomparable newsletter is published I will have been the Veterans' Commissioner for exactly a year. What a privilege it has been to serve the 115,000 veterans, who along with their families, have chosen to call Wales home.

This year has seen some significant milestones for veterans. £33 million in new funding for a start, on top of the £8.55 million already allocated to the Op FORTITUDE, ending veteran homelessness initiative.

We have also seen veteran-specific data published from the 2021 England and Wales Census – hence my confidence in the 115,000 figure above.

Along with the results of the first Veterans' Survey that was completed in February this year, we should begin to get a better picture of the laydown of the veteran population in England & Wales. This is important because with accurate data and evidence we can target support more effectively and argue convincingly for resources.

For example, did you know that veterans form 4.5% of the adult population of Wales but only 3.8% in England? So, the density of veterans living in Wales is higher than in England – we can use that information to lobby politicians in London and Cardiff, and they will have to listen.

The Armed Forces Covenant – the agreement between the nation and its serving and ex-serving personnel and their families, that there should be no disadvantage from their military service, has also been further protected in law.

From last November, all statutory bodies, such as national and local government and public service providers have to give "due regard" i.e. formally take the covenant into account, when dealing with members of the Armed Forces Community (serving, ex-serving personnel and their families) in the areas of Health, Housing and Education.

All veterans should be aware of this and ensure that covenant consideration is taken by officials making decisions about the provision of services in these three discrete areas.

For example, when prioritising veterans for treatment of service related medical conditions, when providing veterans and their families with social housing or when veterans are applying for school places for their children.

Another major event has been the Etherton Review into the historic ban, only lifted in 2000, on LGBTQ+ service personnel. This illegal and damaging discrimination cut short promising careers and ruined lives. It is a stain on our Armed Forces and the Review will make recommendations

to the Government on suitable action and restorative justice to bestow dignity and honour to those ex-service personnel wronged before the ban was lifted.

There is more to tell on progress that is being made to ensure that Wales is the best place in the world to be a veteran and there is more to do. I welcome the review of welfare services provided by Veterans UK (part of the MOD that deals with pensions compensation and welfare support) and I hope that it will result in improved compensation scheme processes.

I am also pleased that the Office for Veterans' Affairs (the area of Government that oversees Veteran policy) has been better resourced and look forward to seeing how this drives forward real improvement on the ground.

My assessment is that Wales in 2023 is not a bad place to be a veteran, but we can still make it better. Although I am the Commissioner for Veterans in Wales, I do not have a monopoly on good ideas.

If you think you know what would make a difference and what could improve the lived experience of veterans in Wales, then please do get in touch at vcfw@cabinetoffice.gov.uk

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

For more information contact info@caerphillyveteranshub.org

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



Follow us on: Facebook Gwent Armed Forces Community & Twitter



@GwentAFC page that promotes the work & events for the Armed Forces Community!

South West Wales

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

The Bulldogs

The Bulldogs are a registered charity, funded by the Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Foundation to enable us to support the wellbeing of our Armed Forces Community.



We are a central hub for Veterans to meet at and have a chat over a cuppa, hosting two veteran drop-ins a week (Change Step on Tuesdays and SSAFA on Fridays – 10.00-1.00).

We provide:

- **FREE** food and drinks at our Cosy Corner - 10.00 - 1.00
- Organised Social Events
- **FREE** access to our gym classes (also applicable to those still serving)
- One-to-One Support
- Weekly Walking Group
- Employability Skills - e.g. CV Writing / Job Searching and Volunteering Placements

Overall - we have supported 115 Armed Forces Veterans in the past 2 years, helping them feel fitter, giving them volunteering placements, sourcing training courses, assisting in getting employment and generally providing a 'safe place' for them to meet up.

We have had several social events this year including Quiz Nights, numerous trips including visits to Museums, local parks, beaches, and the local Golf Range. We are looking to organise more lady's veteran activities and one of our lady veterans has kick started this with a Ladies Afternoon Tea.

Our new extension is underway which will provide a larger Lounge Area for our Veteran Drop-in as well as two quiet rooms that can be used for counselling/therapies.

Paul is an Armed Forces Veteran – ex Royal Artillery and has been attending The Bulldogs for the past 3 years.

Paul was referred to us by SSAFA and has told us that he has never looked back. Paul loves the banter and the 'forces feeling' of the drop-in, in his words

"We are like a little Army here at The Bulldogs".

Paul has stated that coming here has brought him back into the social world that he missed for many years.

"I feel a lot more confident now, coming here has improved my mental health no end. The drop in is amazing"

Bulldogs Community Development Centre,
Fenbrook Close, Baglan, Port Talbot, SA12
7PA 01639 820 103 - Charity No: 1156591



South Wales Admiral Nurse Service

The Legion works with Dementia UK to provide Admiral Nurse support - a service that supports their beneficiaries, which can be the carer or the person living with dementia, who have served in the UK Armed Forces. The focus of the service is to maintain independence and improve the quality of life for carers and families and to provide the practical advice they need.

Admiral Nurses have the experience to facilitate the service every step of the way, offering: skilled assessments to determine the needs of family carers and the needs of the person living with dementia; information and practical advice for carers and their families on supporting those with dementia; to work with carers and families to provide emotional and psychological support throughout the caring journey; advice on how to care for someone with dementia and help to develop skills to encourage positive approaches to living with dementia.

Regional South Wales Areas Covers:

Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Vale of Glamorgan, Merthyr, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot Newport, Swansea, Torfaen, and Blaenau Gwent.

Telephone: 0333 011 4497

Email: ANSsupport@britishlegion.org.uk

National Admiral Nurse Service

If you live in an area of Wales not covered by the above

Telephone: 0808 802 8080

Email: ANSsupport@britishlegion.org.uk

Referral Criteria:

Carers and people with dementia who have served in the UK Armed Forces for at least 1 day as a Regular or Reservist (including National Service), their families, and carers. Armed Forces Liaison Officer / Veteran Advice Service Vale of Glamorgan and Cardiff.



Cardiff & Vale of Glamorgan

Cardiff Veteran Advice

Resigning of The Armed Forces Covenant

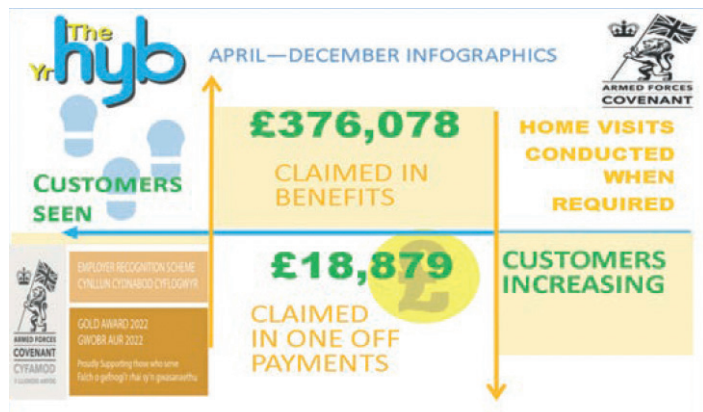
On the 14th November 2022 Cardiff Council reaffirmed their commitment to the Armed Forces community and Reservist and Cadet Adult Volunteers by signing the Armed Forces Covenant rather than the community covenant. The leader (Cllr Huw Thomas) signed. This was followed by a gun salute to mark King Charles birthday.

Veterans Christmas Dinner

The Veterans Advice Team in conjunction with Change Step cooked Christmas dinner for 25 Veterans who would be on their own at Christmas. Food was provided by Asda, and they all had a lovely few hours celebrating Christmas with each other.

The Yr hyb APRIL—SEPT STATS

	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	TOTAL
CUSTOMERS SEEN	64	45	39	42	79	52	35	32	30	415
BENEFIT ENQUIRIES	19	11	10	13	24	15	11	10	9	122
HOUSING ENQUIRIES	17	12	11	11	20	15	12	9	9	116
DEBT/ BUDGETING ENQUIRIES	1	1	1	1	6	2	3	3	3	21
HELP INTO EMPLOYMENT	6	5	5	5	10	6	5	4	4	60
OTHER ENQUIRIES E.G WAR PENSIONS	20	16	12	12	19	14	4	6	5	108
BENEFITS CLAIMED	£47,889	£49,800	£43,800	£44,000	£51,556	£41,551	£33,862	£0K32,100	£30,700	£376,078
ONE OFF PAYMENTS	£7,776	£1000	£1,000	£1000	£3770	£1210	£1,163	£800	£1000	£18,879



Cardiff City FC Foundation

Cardiff City F.C. Veterans Hub support veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing, with focus on isolation and loneliness. We have been busy over recent months with trips and events to engage veterans and their families. We've continued the work at the Cardiff City Stadium Memorial Garden and plans are under way for the veterans to help build a memorial wall, which will give fans more room for plaques to remember

loved ones by family and friends. We have been on several trips, including Clay Shooting, a visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum Yeovilton, Royal Mint, The Waterfalls at Pontneddfechan, The Firing Lines Museum Cardiff Castle and our monthly breakfast club meetings at the Toby Carvery. The Photography sessions at the stadium have been popular, with members learning new skills on how to take great photos. Also, we have had some great guest speakers at catch up, like: The Mental Health Foundation, The Veterans Commissioner for Wales James Phillips and SAS Legend Robin E Horsfall. Everyone is welcome to join us on our weekly catch up meetings and events.

Go to our Facebook Page for more details:
@CardiffCity F.C. Veterans Hub.



Royal Mint



Waterfalls Trip



Clay Shooting



Veterans Commissioner for Wales



Fleet Air Arm Museum

Barry Veterans Group

Barry Veterans Group currently meet in 5th Barry Sea Scout Hall CF63 4PW on the corner of Everard Street, with ample parking and it is wheelchair accessible. Over the last four months we as a group attended Barry's remembrance parade then afterwards, we went for a lovely meal in the Cwm Talwg which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Then before we knew it, we were having our annual Christmas dinner kindly cooked for us by Claire C we spent the Friday evening decorating the hall to make it feel as festive as possible for our veterans and families that might only have our Christmas dinner. We had a wonderful raffle with over a 105 raffle prizes which ranged from afternoon tea for two, a days course fishing, Spa day for 2, all our members won a prize which is what counts.



Several of our members then attended Barry football club for a Christmas dinner from Barry round table they all were very impressed with it. The next event that we planned was a boat fishing trip with Escape charters which was a very hard days fishing with only 1 ray being landed, we have another trip planned for July. We have planned for a darts evening in Ty Newydd Inn if it goes well we will try make it a regular evening.

One of our members is creating us a website that we can improve our methods at gaining new members. We will be starting on our veterans garden with help of the local community, schools and cadets very soon. We are planning another trip to the National Memorial Arboretum with an overnight stay to spend a full day looking around. We also have arranged upcoming trips to The Tank Museum, The Fleet Air Arm Museum, National Army Museum and London and Royal Hospital Chelsea.

We have also planned to have a BBQ/Party for His Majesty King Charles III. Also as several members are keen course fishing members we arrange a days course fishing in the area for those who are interested.

If your local to the area pop along one Saturday and you can have an egg banjo and friendly banter with our members ranging from late 20s to the 90s from across all the services we also have members of the family to those who have served within the forces.

For more information, please contact
awarburton@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

372 Barry Squadron Royal Airforce Cadets

I am Jason Horton and I work at the Vale Council and am also the commanding officer of 372 (Barry) Squadron, Royal Air Force Air Cadets for the last 13 years.

The RAF Air Cadets is a National Uniformed Youth Organisation; parented by the Royal Air Force, to 1000 squadrons and 48,000 RAF Air Cadets across the UK.

The RAF Air Cadets offer young people exciting opportunities for personal and professional development. Cadets can take part in the following activities: cyber, space, sports, flying, gliding, shooting, drill, volunteering and adventure training. Joining a squadron allows young people to make friends, gain skills for life and develop personal confidence and leadership skills. Cadets will also develop personal pride as they learn about "standards" and are encouraged to "bull" their own shoes and iron their uniforms (parental assistance is strongly discouraged!!!). Cadets will also improve their own "personal admin."

At 372 Squadron, whilst cadets undertake many opportunities and gain qualifications or life skills for themselves, I am keen that each cadet gives something back to their community, through volunteering. In a typical year the cadets undertake approximately 1500 hours of volunteering, supporting numerous charities in their community.

Recently 372 Squadron returned from a 5 day trip to Krakow, Poland where the cadets learned about the "Holocaust" and can look forward to trips later this year to Belgium/France (learn about World War 1), Edinburgh (Royal Military Tattoo) and also RAF Coningsby for an annual camp.

The RAF Air Cadet is about the "next generation" of young people, and for any young people who join whether for 6 weeks, 6 months or 6 years; each person will walk away better prepared for their adult life.



Group 617

Group 617 said farewell to its President, Sqn Ldr George "Johnny" Johnson MBE, DFM, in December 2022, just after his 101st birthday. He was the last surviving crewmember of the Dambuster Raid on the Ruhr dams back in May 1943. He will be sadly missed by Group 617 members, who are service veterans. Many of those veterans carry physical and mental injuries from their time in the forces. Their motto is, "Group 617 – Veterans Making a Difference".

Established in 2011, after it was identified a need to help veterans in and around South Wales. Group 617 aim, to facilitate immediate and consistent support for the veterans and their families who appear to "fall through the cracks". That support has proven greater than expected. In the past 11 years, the group has gone on to help some 100 veterans locally and has now ambitions to spread further afield.

It was Johnny Johnson's dying wish, that the sacrifices his fellow Dambuster crewmembers made during World War II is not forgotten. Through the Dambuster presentations given by the members, funds are raised not only to support our service veterans but to remind future generations of the sacrifices made during that memorable raid on the dams. A time in history which should never be forgotten.

As part of the remembrance of that raid, homage is paid every year to the leader of that raid, Wg Cdr Guy Gibson VC, who was killed later, during a Pathfinder Raid in September 1943. His body, along with that of his navigator, Sqn Ldr James Warwick, are buried in the local cemetery, in Steenburg, Holland. Group members join the homage paid annually at the grave side on 19th September, along with the local school children and dignitaries, to mark the thanks of a grateful nation.

Group 617 welcomes service veterans, young and old, to its ranks. Many of those veterans found themselves isolated during the Covid 19 outbreak. The group has brought them together, which provides a sense of purpose, not only to providing help to other veterans but also to carry forward the message of the daring deeds carried out by 133 airmen, on the raid in May 1943, where 56 did not return.

Group 617 chairman, Russ "Taff" Kitley, invites service veterans, who want to "pull up a sandbag and have a brew", to come along to the meetings, every Tuesday, in the Penarth Pavilion from 1000-1200 hrs. Russ Kitley can be contacted 07785 363692. All will be made welcome.



Sqn Ldr George "Johnny" Johnson MBE DFM with Group 617 Chairman, Russ "Taff" Kitley

Whitchurch Parish War Memorial Rededication, 16th July 2023

A special event will take place in the Library Park and Gardens in Whitchurch on Sunday 16th July 2023 at 11am. The Parish War Memorial will be rededicated, one hundred years to the weekend after the original ceremony in 1923.

Then, just four years after the formal end to the Great War, several thousand people packed the park and gardens, with hundreds more outside of the gates watching on as the Earl of Plymouth unveiled the monument of the brooding soldier, assisted by Sir J. Herbert Cory M.P. The memorial was dedicated by the Bishop of Llandaff, Joshua Pritchard Hughes.

Council members and other local dignitaries attended, plus church leaders, ex-servicemen, the Whitchurch Boy Scouts, the Melingriffith Cadets and the band of the Glamorgan Royal Garrison Artillery.

The names of 116 of the fallen were listed on two sides of the monument, together with the inscription: "In Proud & Honoured Memory of the men of Whitchurch who laid down their lives in the Great War, 1914-19. Semper Fidelis (Always Faithful)."

Between both World Wars, there are now some 280 names on the memorial, covering service and sacrifice across the globe, on land, sea and air. A century on, the time has come to rededicate the memorial for the Whitchurch citizens of tomorrow.

A working group was set-up at the start of the year, including Father John Davis of St. Mary's Church, Whitchurch, with others representing the Royal British Legion, the Earl Haig Club, AWEN at the library, council representatives, service personnel and schools.

Father John said: "In these current times of war in Ukraine the importance of a place of remembrance within each local community needs to be recognised. The very real, local and tragic cost of war, paid with the lives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom should never be forgotten."

He continued: "Our Whitchurch War Memorial not only reminds us of the tragic human cost of wars past, but for 100 years it has stood as a powerful reminder of the hopes and aspirations of those who fought so bravely for the peace they entrusted to our care. My prayer for the future is that we learn from the lessons of the past, and pursue peace always as the hallmark of our community, our city and our country."

Local historian and AWEN trustee, Ceri Stennett said: "Whilst I was researching and writing the book on the First World War casualties from the Whitchurch Parish with colleague Gwyn Prescott ("In Proud & Honoured Memory") in 2018, I realised that the centenary of the monument would be with us in 2023 and felt it was important that the date was marked accordingly".

The service of rededication will begin at the war memorial at 11am on Sunday 16th July. During Ceri's research for his book, the original order of service was found and much of that will be incorporated into the 2023 version.

Members of AWEN at the Library will be on hand to help host the event. The Tongwynlais Temperance Band will be playing, with students from Whitchurch High School participating in the service. Many ex-servicemen are expected to attend from the Royal British Legion, the Earl Haig Club in Penlline Road and further afield. It is planned that members of the armed services and cadets will be able to parade to the memorial.

The organisers hope that people will come and be part of this unique occasion and give thanks to those who made the ultimate sacrifice in two World Wars.

Further information from: Ceri Stennett on 07848 109901 or email: ceristennett@gmail.com



Re-live

Re-Live is a Life Story Arts charity based in Wales, supporting the health and wellbeing of under-represented voices in our society. We co-create Life Story arts projects with veterans and families, people living with dementia, older people, and people at the end of life. Our Life Story process can be therapeutic, cathartic and life-changing. Our work builds creative communities, which help to reduce isolation and loneliness.

Re-Live co-created *Abandoned Brothers* (2012), a Life Story theatre performance featuring military veterans and their families appearing on stage to share their lived experiences of post-traumatic stress, moral injury and the difficulties of transitioning back to civilian life. Re-Live's creative engagement with veterans has developed through several projects under the umbrella of 'Coming Home To The Arts', including the Coming Home Choir and our site-specific veterans theatre performance at St Fagans National Museum of History, *The Return/Y Dychweliad*.

In 2021, Re-Live founded two new Coming Home Choirs at The VC Hub in Shotton (North Wales) and The VC Gallery in Haverfordwest (West Wales). All three choirs came together for the Forces Festival Wales, a pan-Wales celebration of veteran arts and creativity, supported by veteran organisations and charities from across Wales.



2021 also saw the co-creation of veterans' mental health comic, *Coming Home*. Our veteran storytellers worked with professional comic illustrators to explore and share their mental health stories. Issue 1 of *Coming Home* was published in November 2022 and released through comic shops in UK, Ireland, USA and Australia. We are now working on issue 2 of the comic, to debut in 2024.

For more information, please visit:
www.re-live.org.uk

Merthyr & RCT Cwm Taf Rhondda Cynon Taf & Merthyr Tydfil

LGBTQ+ Armed Forces Veterans Group Launch.

The Council is launching a new Armed Forces Veterans LGBTQ+ group on Friday (March 31), in partnership with the charity Fighting With Pride.



It will be the fifth Armed Forces Veterans Group based in Rhondda Cynon Taf – the others being Mountain Ash Veterans, Aberdare Veterans, Valley Veterans, and Taff Ely Veterans, all of which meet on a weekly basis in their respective areas.

The LGBTQ+ Veterans group will also meet on a weekly basis, alternating between Cardiff Castle and the Bowls Pavilion at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd.

Councillor Maureen Webber, Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council Deputy Leader and Armed Forces Champion, said: "We have a wonderful network of Armed Forces Veterans Groups located across our County Borough

and I am delighted and proud that we now have an LGBTQ+ Armed Forces Veterans Group.

"For so many years, the LGBTQ+ community was stigmatised within the military while serving their country. It is therefore fitting that comradeship and support is now provided while at the same time we reflect, recognise and remember those who did not enjoy the freedoms we are privileged to have today."

Latest data shows that more than 7,500 Armed Forces veterans live in Rhondda Cynon Taf, the third largest population of veterans per local authority in Wales.

The Council is working in partnership with Fighting With Pride, the LGBTQ+ veterans charity which was created on the 20th anniversary of the complete lifting of the ban on LGBTQ+ armed service personnel. The charity supports the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ Armed Forces veterans, service personnel and their families – in particular those most impacted by the Armed Forces LGBTQ+ ban prior to January 2000.

New Veterans Support Hub Launch

Rhondda Cynon Taf Council is continuing to support its Armed Forces Community by launching a new Veterans Support Hub.

In conjunction with Woody's Lodge, we are delighted to announce this extra support for our Armed Forces veterans and community. The new Woody's Lodge Veterans Support Hub will be open at the Bowls Pavilion at Ynysangharad War Memorial Park, Pontypridd, every Saturday, from 10:30am until noon.

All members of our Armed Forces community are welcome to attend every Saturday.

Woody's Lodge

In 2012, Royal Marine and member of the Elite Special Boat Service, Paul 'Woody' Woodland lost his life in a training exercise, before he was due to return for a second tour of duty in Afghanistan.

Woody, born and raised in Penarth, had always wanted to be a Royal Marine, and once he had completed his Armed Forces career, his dream had been to build a log cabin where he would be able to live peacefully with his family.

Woody's Lodge, which was established following his passing, is a social hub, which guides veterans to the help and support they need to re-engage with their families and communities.



Cwm Taff Veteran Advice Service

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

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

For further information, please contact the Veteran Advice Officer:

tel: **07747 485619**

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

email: **VeteranService@rctcbc.gov.uk**

24/7 online referral:

www.rctcbc.gov.uk/veteranadvice

www.merthyr.gov.uk/veteranadvice

Veteran Support Groups in Cwm Taff Valley Veterans

Valley Veterans is a veteran-led organisation based in the heart of the Rhondda Valley. Founded over 10 years ago as an informal support group for Veterans with PTSD, Valley Veterans is now a vibrant hub with more than 140 active participants. Current organised activities include a weekly breakfast club that is hosted in the Ton Pentre Community Centre and attracts up to 60 veterans every Thursday 10:00am till 12:00pm. Valley Veterans also provides daily equine activities at the adjacent yard that attract up to a dozen regular daily participants.

Website: www.valleyveterans.org/

email: enquiries@valleyveterans.org

Phone: **07733896128**



Taff Ely Veterans

Taff Ely Veteran Group meets 10:00am till 12:00pm every Wednesday at Rhydyfelin Community Centre, Pontypridd.

All members of the Armed Forces Community and retired members of the emergency services (Blue Light) are welcome to join us for a chat, breakfast roll and hot drink. We work with Armed Forces charities and Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Veteran Advice service to provide free advice and support to all our members. Our group offers a range of activities including walking, allotments, and social trips.

Phone: **07913355911**

<https://www.facebook.com/TaffElyVeteranGroup>



Cynon Valley Veterans

Cynon Valley Veterans group meets 10:00am till 12:00pm every Monday at Darran Las Community Centre, Mountain ash. All members of the Armed Forces Community are welcome to join us.

The group is run by Veterans for Veterans. Various Armed Forces charities attend our group to provide support to our members. The group is supported by Rhondda Cynon Taf Council Veteran Advice Service, who provide free advice and support to members of the Armed Forces Community.

Phone: **07960411039**



North Wales

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Following successful funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT), Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) has established the North Wales Veteran Healthcare Collaborative (NWWHC).



Through this programme of work, and several associated projects, BCUHB's dedicated Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Healthcare Collaborative Lead (Army Veteran) Zoe Roberts has achieved a number of successes since her appointment in post in April 2022.



Communicating Information

In efforts to underpin the Health Boards' pledge to the Armed Forces Covenant, BCUHB has established a dedicated (internal) Hub of information for their 19,000 (circa) staff members, outlining the available support for the Armed Forces Community (AFC) to ensure that they are not disadvantaged in terms of access to Healthcare. Similarly, BCUHB has communicated a wealth of vital information to the patient population of North Wales in relation to accessing appropriate Veteran healthcare services. Part of this work has involved mapping out healthcare access via dedicated Veteran pathways. In addition, BCUHB is supporting efficient two-way communication with both Patients and Staff through the establishment of two dedicated shared mailboxes:

BCU.VeteranHealthcareCollaborative@wales.nhs.uk

BCU.ArmedForcesChampion@wales.nhs.uk

Identifying our Armed Forces Community (AFC) - Workforce

In efforts to ensure efficient Workforce planning, BCUHB employs a continual process of identification of AFC personnel and recording of "AFC status" on the organisations' workforce system, Electronic Staff Record (ESR). By capturing such details, BCUHB has established a dedicated Armed Forces network, which supports awareness raising of the duties of the Health board under the Armed Forces Covenant. Furthermore, engages in acknowledging and communicating the health inequalities associated with the AFC, and outlining the support services which are available both internally at BCUHB and also, within the voluntary / public sector, to assist in combatting potential disadvantage which the AFC face.

BCUHB also seeks the support of the wider workforce in the establishment of an Armed Forces Service Champion Army and offers a thorough education and training package to facilitate holistic support for the AFC (staff and patients).

Supporting Employment of AFC Personnel

As a Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award holder, BCUHB supports Defence and inspires other NHS organisations to do the same. BCUHB is fortunate to employ a significant number of serving military personnel (Reservists / Cadets / Adult Volunteers) and through application of policies such as the (All Wales) WP38 Reserve Forces – Training and Mobility Policy, supports time off work for serving personnel to attend annual deployment exercises.



In addition, BCUHB support the AFC in accessing career opportunities within the National Health Service (NHS) by pledging to the MOD's "Step into Health" recruitment programme (in June 2022) and offering guaranteed interviews for all AFC personnel seeking employment.

BCUHB has sustained and maintained successful working relationships with the third sector charitable organisations and local (Reserve and Cadet Forces) Armed Forces Units. Having recently collaborated with 203 Field Hospital in Bodelwyddan, BCUHB has delivered vital Undergraduate Nurse Training Recruitment events, in a plight to secure a future Nursing and Midwifery workforce for BCUHB and potential future recruitment into the Medical and Nursing Reserve Services. The events have been a huge success and BCUHB is excited to host the Reserve Units on a quarterly basis, in efforts to assist in the facilitation of NHS staff being recruited to the Reserve Forces.

BCUHB Poppy (Veteran Identification) Programme

Ahead of Remembrance Day, BCUHB implemented a new process, which seeks to identify those patients from the Armed Forces Community across North Wales. The Poppy Programme ensures that all patients entering Secondary Care admission areas are asked whether they have served in HM Forces and their Armed Forces status is recorded on the Hospital's electronic Patient Administration System. For those AFC patients who are admitted into hospital, a palm-sized Poppy magnet is placed a their bedside, allowing Nursing teams to discuss appropriate onward referral to external Veteran Support Services and charitable Veteran organisations, prior to their discharge.



To mark the start of the programme representatives from the Royal British Legion attended SAU including George Rogerson, chairman of the North Wales District and Adrian Lesley, public affairs and campaign manager, and Stephen Boswell, regional operations support manager for Wales from the Armed Forces charity, the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSFA).



Having starting with a pilot on the Surgical Assessment Unit (SAU), the Poppy programme is set to be implemented across all acute admission areas across the Health Board, including the East acute hospital Wrexham Maelor, the Central acute Hospital Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and the West acute hospital Ysbyty Gwynedd.

VCHA Accreditation

BCUHB is striving to become an exemplar of the best care for, and support to the AFC, and is working toward Health board wide "Veteran Aware" accreditation from the Veteran Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA). Having appointed dedicated Clinical and Operational Leads across the three Acute Hospital sites (Ysbyty Wrexham Maelor, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Gwynedd) to progress Veteran Support Services (locally), BCUHB is extremely proud to announce that our three acute hospitals have (ahead of planned schedule) been accredited as "Veteran Aware" by the VCHA.



Following this success, BCUHB plans to have all three Integrated Health Communities (IHC's), with the inclusion of Mental Health & Learning Disability (MH&LD) division, "Veteran Aware" accredited by November 2023, and plans to support HMP Berwyn (prison), North Wales Care Homes and Hospices, to achieve VCHA accreditation by no later than 2024.

AFCFT Evaluation Team - Site Visit

Professor Alan Finnegan recently met with BCUHB's Armed Forces Lead Zoe Roberts, alongside Management Lead for the Central Area; Colonel Mark Andrews. The team discussed all progress to date, particularly related to the Armed Forces in the Acute Hospital Setting mixed method study and associated Veteran Support Service activity within BCUHB,

alongside the national barriers to effectively identifying the Veteran population (in general). This Site visit was a fantastic opportunity to gain some valuable insight into the difficulties and successes experienced by other participating Trusts, whilst relishing an opportunity to absorb the knowledge and lived experience of Professor Alan himself.

Remembrance / Armistice Services

On 11th minute of the 11th hour of the 11th day, BCUHB remembered the Armed Forces, and their families, from Britain and the Commonwealth, the vital role played by the emergency services and those who have lost their lives as a result of conflict or terrorism. Led by the Chaplaincy Services, Executive Board Members and key personnel of the BCUHB's Hospital Management Teams, Hospital sites across North Wales held Armistice Services and paid respects to all the fallen heroes by taking part in a national two-minute silence.



This opportunity provided BCUHB Staff, Partners and Patients with a physical reminder of all those who have served and sacrificed, with British and Commonwealth soldiers, sailors, airmen and women represented, together with members of the emergency services and civilians, ensuring that no-one is forgotten.

In a collective show of respect, and to pay tribute to those who have lost their life during conflict and acts of terrorism, pupils from our local Junior and Infant schools, alongside Patients from our Acute Mental Health Units, completed artwork for inclusion in a dedicated Remembrance display at our central Acute Hospital. The beautiful display was a huge success and received a great deal of positive feedback from Staff, patients and the public.



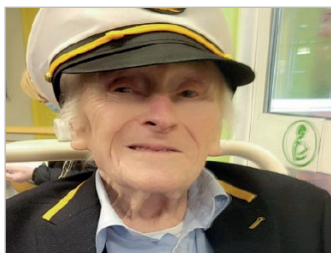


Furthermore, as a show of support for the Veteran Healthcare Collaborative here in BCUHB, and to celebrate all of the wonderful ongoing work to progress Veteran Support Services, one of our dedicated Armed Forces Advocates handmade and donated a Horseshoe Poppy Cross for the display and onward donation to Canon Ian Day (below) for permanent display in the Hospital's chapel.

Veteran Celebrates 100th Birthday at Ysbyty Wrexham Maelor

In late November 2022, BCUHB's AF Lead had the pleasure of visiting Veteran (former British Army; Royal Army Service Corps & former Merchant Navy Seaman) Steven Harvey in our "Veteran Aware" East Acute Hospital Wrexham Maelor, and sharing in his Birthday celebrations.

Joining the celebrations were BCU Veteran Support Service Colleagues Dr Paul Hughes (Anaesthetics) and Matron Amy Hughes (Theatres), alongside colleagues from the Royal British Legion (RBL), Adrian Leslie (Public Affairs & Campaign Manager), and George Rogerson (North Wales District Chairman), and Army Reserve Sgt John Currie from 157 (Welsh) Regiment Royal Logistics Corps (Queensferry). The Team chatted to Mr Harvey and his family about the recent roll-out of the BCUHB Poppy (Veteran Identification) Programme, and they were thrilled to hear of the support available to the Armed Forces Community, and in particular, our Veterans across North Wales!



Veterans' Commissioner for Wales raises first ever "Veteran Aware" flag at BCUHB

National Veteran leads have congratulated Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) for its commitment to improving NHS care for Armed Forces Community (AFC) across North Wales.

The Health Board's three acute hospitals Wrexham Maelor, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd and Ysbyty Gwynedd recently received accreditation as Veteran Aware hospitals, which means we are raising veteran awareness, identifying veterans being referred for treatment, and striving to improve the recruitment and retention of veterans across the Health Board's workforce.



The Veterans' Commissioner for Wales Colonel James Phillips visited Wrexham Maelor Hospital to showcase the support available to the AFC, and he raised the hospital's new Veteran Aware flag, commending it for being the first in Wales to achieve accreditation with the Veteran Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA).

The National Lead for the VCHA, Professor Tim Briggs CBE, who formally approved BCUHB's initial Veteran Aware accreditation, has also congratulated the Health Board for its "remarkable efforts". The Health Board's Armed Forces Lead, Army Veteran Zoe Roberts was acknowledged by the VCHA for her dedication to the hard work, having submitted evidence of a "very high standard" to achieve the Veteran Aware accreditation for Health Board's acute hospitals. Zoe said: "I am delighted to be the VCHA pathfinder for Wales. Leading the Health Board through the VCHA accreditation process and achieving "Veteran Aware" status for our hospitals, makes me so proud."

Zoe added: "To be recognised by the VCHA for my high standards of work will only spur me on to strive for even better outcomes for the North Wales Veteran Healthcare Collaborative and our Support Services programme. Knowing that the work we are doing within BCUHB and across North Wales is positively impacting the lives of the AFC members makes me truly happy. Becoming Veteran Aware accredited will ensure that those who serve, or who have served within our Armed Forces, including their families, will feel appropriately supported and allow us as a Health Board, to offer some much-deserved recognition for their Service to our country."

Colonel Phillips also saw the hospital's new Poppy Programme in action, which aims to identify in-patients who are from part of the AFC to ensure they receive appropriate onward referral to external veteran support services and charitable veteran organisations, before they are discharged.



Overcoming Physical and Mental Health Issues to find Happiness

Mr P served in the British Army from 1999 until 2008, completing five tours of operational duty, including in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2008, his physical health started to deteriorate and over the next few years, he suffered with dehydrated discs and disc bulges of the vertebrae, disc erosion and fibromyalgia. Mr P was dependent on a wheelchair for three years due to the pain. In 2015, he was diagnosed with PTSD.

Mr P referred himself to Working Denbighshire to help explore his options. He was interested in a support role for veterans but due to his health and being out of work for a lengthy time, Mr P and his mentor investigated volunteering options initially.

Mr P's mentor contacted different organisations who support veterans to source volunteering opportunities, including SAAFA and The Armed Forces Charity but to no avail. Mr P then went to visit Woody's Lodge and spoke to the organisers about his desire to support the group as a volunteer and thankfully, they welcomed him. In his new role, he supported veterans who attended the group and made them feel comfortable and supported them to address any issues they had. Mr P found this rewarding and led to him wanting to pursue a career in support work.

Mr P needed to complete various training courses to increase his knowledge of the area and to increase his employability prospects. He attended several courses, all funded by Working Denbighshire. Through attending the courses and with extensive mentoring support, he felt ready to start applying for paid jobs.

Mr P and his mentor began to search for a number of job opportunities, and attended a Working Denbighshire Jobs Fair, where they spoke to CAIS about a Tenancy Support Worker vacancy. After completing the application form, he was offered an interview and was successful in securing a full time support worker post in a new supported housing project for people who have experienced homelessness and drug or alcohol misuse.

Mr P engaged very well with Working Denbighshire and has been incredibly determined to move forward in his life back into paid employment. Mr P already had many skills however the deterioration of his physical and mental health led to Mr P's confidence being extremely low. He overcame so much both mentally and physically and is proof that people can obtain the future they desire.



Working Denbighshire are committed to offering employability support to men and women who have served in the Armed Forces. If you reside in Denbighshire and require support, please contact us on **01745 331438**, email us at workingdenbighshire@denbighshire.gov.uk or self-refer at working.denbighshire.gov.uk

Sarah Atherton MP for Wrexham visits Tŷ Dewr Veterans Life House

On Friday 24th February 2023, residents and staff warmly welcomed Sarah Atherton MP for Wrexham and her team to The Salvation Army's Tŷ Dewr Life House.



Sarah met veterans who live at the Tŷ Dewr centre to hear about their experiences of homelessness and also spent time enjoying the artwork and models made by residents. Veterans spoke about their positive experience living at Tŷ Dewr and also highlighted how challenging it can be to gain employment and housing, in today's difficult economic climate. Discussions also focused on the importance of good healthcare and well-being support for veterans.

Sarah currently sits on the Defence Select Committee in the UK Parliament and is a passionate advocate for issues relating to veterans and their families. As a British Army veteran herself, Sarah is the first female Member of Parliament to have served in the regular Armed Forces, and also has a background in social services and health care.

Catherine Docherty, Salvation Army's Assistant Regional Manager for Wales and the Southwest said "It has been an absolute pleasure to welcome Sarah to Tŷ Dewr. Tŷ Dewr is a wonderful, calming, safe space. It enables veterans to take the time that they need, to develop the resilience and skills to move on independently. I am thankful to Lee Jones, Service Manager and his team for the support that they provide here, and to our landlord and delivery partner First Choice Housing Association".

Tŷ Dewr Life House is a purpose-built veterans' accommodation project based in the tranquil countryside, just outside of Wrexham city centre. It is a project delivered in partnership with First Choice Housing Association and The Salvation Army. It offers 12 ensuite bedrooms in a spacious, high-quality building. Residents have access to local gardens, gymnasium equipment and welcoming spaces to relax, share meals and socialise.

The project was co-designed with veterans and developed by First Choice Housing Association, who provides quality accommodation solutions for veterans as well as people with disabilities and additional complex needs across Wales and Shropshire.

Tŷ Dewr is currently raising money to purchase a minibus, to enable more activities and day trips to take place from the centre.

For further information about how to donate to our Tŷ Dewr fundraising campaign, or to refer people to the project who might benefit from its services please contact tydewr@salvationarmy.org.uk or via telephone on **01978 355410**.

The Royal Artillery Association – Wrexham Branch

(Affiliated to the National Reserve HQ at Woolwich Garrison).

Are you a Serving or Veteran Member of the Royal Regiment of Artillery? Are you a family member of a Serving or Veteran Gunner?

We invite you to link up with comrades and friends at the Wrexham Branch RAA and join the Wrexham Gunner Family. We meet on the 2nd Tuesday of each month 19:00hrs for 19:30hrs at the Wrexham War Memorial Club, Farndon Street, LL13 8DE, just off the Tesco roundabout. We provide comradeship and support to members and facilitate access to a number of dedicated local and national Gunner events.



Armed Forces Day in Wrexham

To find out more about our activities and membership, find us on Facebook at: **The Wrexham Gunners RAA** or Email us at: secretarywrexhambranchraa@gmail.com

The Wrexham Gunners is a local branch of the Royal Artillery Association. The Association's HQ is based at Larkhill in Wiltshire, registered charity number 238197.



Further information about the Royal Artillery Association can be found on the main website: <https://www.thegunners.org.uk/>

Once a Gunner: Always a Gunner



We've struck gold with the employer recognition scheme

We've received the prestigious Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for the outstanding support we give to the armed forces community.



It's awarded by the Ministry of Defence and formally recognises organisations that employ and actively support those who serve in the Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

To win the Gold award, organisations must provide 10 extra paid days leave for Reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, Reserves, and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers, as well as spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces.

Organisations must also advocate the benefits of supporting those within the Armed Forces community by encouraging others to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and engage in the Employer Recognition Scheme.

CIlr Beverley Parry Jones, Armed Forces Champion, said, "It was a very proud moment to receive the award on behalf of the council. It's a credit to all the hard work that has gone on behind the scenes since we signed the Armed Forces Covenant with our partners back in 2013. We will continue to work with our armed forces community in recognition of the service they have given to our country."

Council honoured by the Ministry of Defence

Denbighshire County Council is delighted to be one of 12 Welsh employers amongst 156 national organisations honoured with a prestigious Ministry of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award for its outstanding support towards the Armed Forces community.

Representing the highest badge of honour, the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award is awarded to those that employ and support those who serve in the Armed Forces, veterans and their families. The 12 winners based in Wales will be invited to receive their award later in the year at a special event in the Principality.

To win an award from the Ministry of Defence, organisations must show that they provide 10 extra paid days leave for reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, reserves, Cadet Force adult volunteers and spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces. They must also advocate the benefits of supporting those within the Armed Forces community, by encouraging others to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and engage in the Employer Recognition Scheme.

Councillor Julie Matthews, Cabinet Lead Member for Corporate Strategy, Policy and Equalities, and who is also the Armed Forces Champion, said: "This is truly a great honour for Denbighshire. We have made a firm commitment in the Council to support our armed forces communities and we are thrilled that our approach to creating a supportive and inclusive environment where people feel supported has been recognised by the Ministry of Defence. We have signed the Armed Forces Covenant as a declaration that the Council will ensure that those who serve or who have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly. We look forward to strengthening and developing our links with armed forces individuals, communities and organisations and continue to be a supportive and inclusive organisation".



Armed Forces

Directory of Support
South East Wales



Directory of Services – South East Wales

A new directory of services has been created for the nine Local Authorities of South East Wales.

The directory includes information on housing and education policies as well as local and national support agencies.

Gwent

Blaenau Gwent, Caerphilly,
Monmouthshire, Newport
and Torfaen

Blaenau Gwent

Blaenau Gwent Council presented the Freedom of the Borough to the Royal British Legion at the General Offices at Ebbw Vale on 9th March 2023. The Freedom of the Borough Scroll was presented to Kenneth Terry, Membership Council Representative, of the Royal British Legion by Councillor Chris Smith, Blaenau Gwent's Presiding Member. The Freedom of the Borough was awarded to mark the 100th year Anniversary of the Royal British Legion in 2021 at an Extraordinary Meeting of the council on Thursday 4th November 2021, which took place online due to Covid-19. The presentation marked this award in-person with representatives of all seven Royal British Legion branches in Blaenau Gwent (Abertillery, Beaufort, Blaina, Brynmawr, Cwm, Ebbw Vale, Rassau & Beaufort and Tredegar) and was followed by a reception at the Ex-servicemen's Club in Ebbw Vale.



Cllr Derrick Bevan, Blaenau Gwent Council Armed Forces Champion said: "The Freedom of the Borough was awarded in recognition of the dedicated charitable work undertaken by volunteers in local branches which supports serving and former service men and women and their families. Also, in recognition of the wide range of people across Blaenau Gwent who raise funds every year to support the Royal British Legion and Armed Forces Community."

Former soldier from Gwent credits charity Blind Veterans UK with saving his life



A blind veteran from Tredegar has credited Blind Veterans UK, the national charity for vision-impaired ex Service men and women, with saving his life after he reached out to the charity when he was at his lowest.

Dean Twaite considered taking his own life when he was told he had lost his sight but after joining the charity he now has a life after sight loss. Dean enlisted into the British Army in 1975 and served for nine years with the Royal Corps of Transport as a driver. He spent five years in Northern Ireland and was also stationed at Aldershot and Belize. Around 2008 Dean's eyesight was seriously damaged in an industrial accident and within two years he was completely blind in his right eye and had very little vision in his left eye.



Dean said: "I didn't take the news well and I got to a stage when I thought I would kill myself as I couldn't cope but Blind Veterans UK helped to turn that around. I've been provided with magnifying equipment so I can enjoy building and painting military models which is the only hobby I have. I've been on courses at the charity's Llandudno Centre which got me back into cooking and arts and crafts. I've been provided with a hearing aid which has been a god send to me, a talking watch and given a mobile phone after being shown how to use it."

"There are people you can talk to who understand and are ex-military so you have that in common and there are no words to describe the staff, they go above and beyond. I didn't think I would get out and about again but now I use my long cane and I go out walking and meeting people."

Dean hopes that more blind veterans can be supported by the charity and given the same opportunities as he has had. He said: "Contact Blind Veterans UK and get support from them as soon as you can. If you're feeling as low as I was don't let it get on top of you. You need to talk and Blind Veterans is there. I owe everything to the charity, if it wasn't for their support I wouldn't be here."

While Blind Veterans UK initially cared for veterans blinded in active Service, today they help veterans no matter what caused their sight loss. Blind Veterans UK supports thousands of blind veterans across the country, but knows there are tens of thousands more who still need its support to rebuild their lives after sight loss. Their campaign, proudly supported by Specsavers, is to find and recruit these men and women.

If you, or someone you know, served in the Armed Forces, including National Service, and are now struggling with sight loss, then please get in touch. Call **0800 389 7979** or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/support](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/support)

Caerphilly

Supporting People Team



Help finding housing and work. Support with form filling, debts, benefits, eviction notice, rent/ mortgage arrears.

Contact Supporting People:

01443 864548

Email: supportingpeople@caerphilly.gov.uk

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/supportingpeople

Text: housupport to 81400



Supporting People Team are here to help residents with any housing related support needs that include:

- Setting up and maintaining a home
- Preventing evictions / rent arrears / bedroom tax / council tax arrears / TV licence fines / help for people who are rough sleeping
- Arrears with Gas / Electricity
- Accessing education / volunteering / training / employment
- Claiming benefits / maximise income / benefit appeals / grant applications / PIP applications
- Budgeting / managing money / debt management
- Preventing homelessness
- Requiring a foodbank

Referrals can be made via our website – the form can be found on the right hand side of the page in the “contact us” section.

www.caerphilly.gov.uk/supportingpeople

Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub

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.

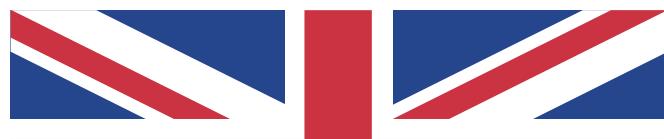


The hub is going from strength to strength and has on average 40-60 Veterans and their family visit each week. Outside agencies such as Citizens Advice, DWP, Cornerstones and Woody's Lodge attend periodically to offer support and guidance. Guitar for Heroes Wales attend to offer free guitar lessons (and supply the guitar) to help combat PTSD. The hub has arranged many trips including a visit to the Imperial War Museum, National Arboretum and even a weekend Veterans Retreat to combat loneliness and isolation. The hub ensures that it has a family feel and enjoy peer to peer support.

It is a safe space for a brew and banter

Facebook: [Caerphilly Veterans Support Hub](https://www.facebook.com/CaerphillyVeteransSupportHub)

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



CAERPHELLY VETERANS SUPPORT HUB

Every Saturday 10-12

Loads of Support and Services Available:

- **Housing**
- **Benefits**
- **Mental Wellbeing**
- **Guitar lessons**
- **Cuppa & a chat**



Find us at:

Dragon Suite, Centre of Sporting Excellence, Ystrad Mynach, Caerphilly CF2 7EP



Second World War veteran receives medal days before 98th birthday

Dennis Stevens

Second World War veteran, who will celebrate his 98th birthday on Saturday 4 March, has recently been presented with the Dutch Liberation medal for his service in the Netherlands.



Dennis Stevens, who resides in Trafalgar Park Care Home in Nelson, travelled to Woody's Lodge, Amelia Trust Farm in Barry to be presented with his medal where a presentation and speech that depicted his time during the war was given by Colonel Richard Piso, Military Attaché.

The Dutch Liberation medal is presented as a token of gratitude from the people of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to those men and women who contributed to the liberation of the Netherlands during WWII.

Dennis Stevens served in D Company 1/5th Battalion Welsh Regiment after signing up in 1943. After months of training and exercises, Mr Stevens landed at Gold Beach in Normandy in June of 1944. As 1/5th Battalion in the 53rd Division, Mr Stevens was part of the battle of Falaise pocket, South of Caen, in August 1944 in what historians call: The divisive engagement of the Battle of Normandy in the Second World War.

From there, Dennis fought his way up in the North West Europe Campaign until reaching the Dutch borders. Here, he became involved in operation 'PHEASANT' which was designed to clear the Scheldt, a river but also a very large Delta area, which was the part of the Netherlands that allowed the port of Antwerp to be used by allies for supplies.

Operation 'PHEASANT' was broken down into two smaller sub-operations, codenamed 'COLIN' and 'ALAN'. Operation 'ALAN' tasked the 53rd Division and the 7th Armoured Divisions to clear the city of 'Den Bosch'. Dennis' battalion was then tasked on 22nd October 1944 to clear the northern part of the city and to capture the River Dieze Bridge; the only remaining bridge as the rest were blown by the Germans.

It was there, that Mr Stevens had to face the 712th Wehrmacht Infantry Division in the morning of October 24th. The bridge Dennis helped capture got blown off and he was then forced to surrender to the Germans.

On October 27th, Den Bosch was finally officially liberated.

In his medal citation, Colonel Richard Piso, Military Attaché said, "Although there were English, Scots and Irishmen within the ranks of the 53rd Division, The battle of Den Bosch was largely a Welsh one. For us Dutch, it was Operation Alan where the Welsh soldiers distinguished itself, there in the Liberation of 'Den Bosch'.

"The reason we are here today is because of your contribution, dear Dennis, in the liberation of the Netherlands and for the moments you gave the Dutch hope, hope to be free again one day as happened on May 5th 1945 until this day forward! The people of the Kingdom of the Netherlands will forever remain grateful and will never forget the brave men and women who took part in the liberation of the Netherlands."

"I salute you!"



A small gathering was organised on Friday 3 March at Mr Stevens' care home, where he was presented with a birthday gift from Caerphilly Council representatives. Cllr Teresa Heron, Caerphilly Council's Armed Forces Community Covenant Champion commented, "It was a pleasure to meet Mr Stevens at Trafalgar Park Care Home to celebrate his 98th birthday. I'd also like to share how truly humbling it is to hear of Mr Stevens' bravery during the Second World War and how his contribution led to the Liberation of the Netherlands."

Armed Forces Covenant into Law

The Armed Forces Covenant has come into law for Housing, Education and Health. Staff will have to apply 'Due Regard' in respect of the Armed Forces Community. CCBC have added 'The Armed Forces Community' to their Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that the cohort is given 'Due Regard' in these circumstances.

Armed Forces Covenant Training via Microsoft Teams to Local Authority staff

The training provides an overview of the unique challenges of Service life and how staff can help support the Armed Forces Community. It will help staff understand and apply the principles of the Covenant at a local level. It includes sources of further information and support.

It includes sections on:

- What the Covenant is
- Who the Armed Forces Community are and what challenges they face
- How the Covenant is applied in real-life scenarios
- Armed Forces Covenant legislation – What is Due Regard?
- Sources of Support

To book a space email armedforces@caerphilly.gov.uk

Monmouthshire

Monmouthshire Veterans' Support Hub

Abergavenny is the latest town in Gwent to see a Veterans' Support Hub available to all former and current military personnel, providing advice, guidance and support regarding some of life's challenges.



Monmouthshire Veterans' Support Hub was launched in March 2022, with the aim of delivering high quality, person-centred support to veterans from the military and ex-military community. The Hub aims to empower veterans, and those in transition, from military to civilian life, integrating into local communities.

Monmouthshire Veterans' Support hub is designed to:

- Develop a greater awareness of the support and services available to service and ex-service personnel and their families in their local community.
- Provide individual veterans and service personnel with the confidence, knowledge and skills to access the help they need, where and when they need it.
- Reinforce self-reliance, confidence, esteem and self-empowerment after leaving the services and improve the long-term health and well-being of the ex-services community.
- Be a place where Veterans feel they belong.
- Offer opportunities to engage with the local community and undertake activities.

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.

Lisa Rawlings, Regional Armed Forces Covenant Liaison Officer, said: "As the Regional Armed Forces Officer for the 5 local authorities of Gwent, and a veteran myself, it is important to widen the access to services and information for the armed forces community. Having opened a successful hub in Caerphilly in June 2021, I wanted to strive for a Hub in each local authority on different days of the week. Therefore, a veteran on any given day in Gwent could access support."



The sessions are held in the heart of Abergavenny which is easily accessible by car, train and bus routes. If you are a veteran of the armed forces, Monmouthshire Veterans' Support Hub in Abergavenny can provide you with advice, guidance, and support on topics such as housing, benefits, debt and health and wellbeing.

Equally, if you are anxious about the future, or struggling to adjust, just talking to other veterans may help you through your journey. Every Monday from 10am – 12pm, you can join other Veterans in Monmouthshire at Abergavenny Hub, St John Ambulance, Abergavenny Fairfield Car Park, Abergavenny NP7 5SG.

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 HUB
A weekly informal peer-support group for Veterans

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

**Every Monday
10:00am - 12:00pm**

**St John Ambulance Hall,
Fairfield Car Park,
Abergavenny, NP7 5SG**

For more information contact ArmedForces@monmouthshire.gov.uk



Big Brew Up for armed forces charity

One of the most popular and well-established – not to mention tastiest – fundraising initiatives of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity is the Big Brew Up (BBU).

Scores of them take place annually across military bases and other locations in the UK and overseas, with tea adding to the fundraising tally and coffee adding to the charity's coffers, while cakes and other bakes make up the balance.

James Powell, Branch Fund Raising Coordinator SSAFA South East Wales, said: "Our Big Brew Up won't just be an opportunity for budding and experienced bakers and cake makers to display their talents, but also a chance for people in Monmouth to learn a bit more about SSAFA, to have a chat with our volunteers and discuss current volunteering opportunities.

SSAFA South East Wales* is hosting a BBU on Saturday, April 8 at Tŷ Price St Thomas' Community Hall in Monmouth, with the very seasonal theme of Easter.

"Monmouth's not just an historic town, but also a town rich with military history and is still the regimental home to – sorry HAC – the senior reserves regiment in the British Army, the Royal Monmouthshire Royal Engineers, raised in 1539. Sappers from the regiment saw active service as recently as Bosnia, and appropriately enough in the twentieth anniversary of the invasion, the Iraq War."

SSAFA cannot claim to be that old, but it is the oldest tri-service charity in the UK and is approaching its 140th anniversary. Throughout this time, it has serving men and women – regulars or reserves – veterans and their families providing support when, where, and how they need it.

James added: "SSAFA's Monmouth Big Brew Up is open to everyone, just as our volunteer roles are. You don't have to have a military background to volunteer, and we're especially keen to see younger volunteers come our way, so pop along on Saturday, April 8 for a cake, a brew, and a chat to find out what's on offer."

The SSAFA South East Wales Big Brew Up will be held at Tŷ Price, St Thomas's Community Hall, Saint Thomas's Square, Monmouth, Wales, NP25 5ES between 9.15am and 11.45am on Saturday, April 8.

Nearly a third of veterans in Monmouthshire over 80

SOURCE: *Abergavenny Chronicle*

- Nearly a third of military veterans living in Monmouthshire are over 80 years old, census data shows.
- The 2021 census was the first to ask people about whether they had previously served in the armed forces.
- Figures from the Office for National Statistics show there were 4,212 veterans living in Monmouthshire in March 2021 – around 1,330 (31.6%) of whom were over the age of 80.

- At the time of the census, 31.8% of veterans were aged 80 or over – compared to just 5.1% of the non-veteran population.
- The high proportion of octogenarian veterans is a product of the War Service and National Service that ran in the UK between 1939 and 1960, the ONS said.
- National Service was a system of conscription that required healthy males aged 17 to 21 to serve in the armed forces for between 18 months and two years.
- It was phased out in the late 1950s, meaning the last surviving people to have taken part in National Service will now be well into their 80s.
- There were around 260 veterans over 90 years old in Monmouthshire as of March 2021.
- Meanwhile, just 4.4% of veterans in the area were younger than 35.

Rich Pereira, head of demography at the ONS, said: "Today's data gives a greater understanding of our veteran armed forces community."

He added that the figures would be "crucial" for support and services for veterans.

While most veterans in England and Wales were born in the UK (94%), around one in six (17%) said they did not currently hold a passport.

Veterans across the two countries are also overwhelmingly male, as a result of conscription policies and cultural attitudes.

In Monmouthshire, just 15.1% of all veterans – including those who did not give their gender – were female.

The Royal British Legion said the figures were the result of a campaign by the charity to have a question relating to military service added to the Census for the first time in 2021.

Hannah Pearce, director of campaigns, policy and research at the charity, said: "The information will significantly improve our understanding of the Armed Forces community and ensure that we can deliver the best support possible to serving personnel, veterans and their families both now and in future years."

Ms Pearce added the data provided "new insights" into diversity within the veteran community.

"For example, despite the ban on LGBTQ+ personnel serving in the military until 2000, there are no notable differences in sexual orientation data between veterans and the general population."

Some 91% of veterans identified as straight or heterosexual, with 0.9% as gay or lesbian and 0.5% as bisexual – with little difference from the population at large when accounting for age, sex and location.



Newport

Newport will host the Wales National Armed Forces Day event and more details about the programme can now be revealed. Taking place on Saturday 24 June, the day will begin at 10am with military displays along the riverside between The Riverfront and the University of South Wales city centre campus.

Organisations such as the Royal British Legion, the Royal Naval Association, Help for Heroes, SSAFA, Help for Heroes, Newport Veterans Hub, GAVO, Alabare, Blind Veterans UK, Woodys Lodge, Fighting with Pride, Blesma, St John Cymru and GAVO will also have stalls inside the theatre and arts centre.

In the morning, there will be a parade in the city centre led by the Regimental Band and Corps of Drums of The Royal Welsh and including representatives from the armed services and veterans from across Wales.

There will be much more going on during the day including the Tigers Army Parachute Display Team who will “drop in” somewhere in the city centre.

City centre activities will finish at 3pm but there will be a free, ticketed concert in Rodney Parade from 4pm to 6pm (booking details to follow). The Regimental Band and Corps of Drums of The Royal Welsh will be among those performing.

Councillor Jane Mudd, Leader of Newport City Council, said: “We are determined to make it a very special day to demonstrate our appreciation and gratitude to those who serve or have served our country.

“We’ve already got a wonderful programme planned, some of which can be revealed now but there will be more thrilling news to come over the coming weeks and months before the big day itself.”

Councillor Mark Spencer, the council’s armed forces champion, said: “It will be a great day out and we hope many members of the armed forces, their families and veterans will join us so we can show them how much their service means to us and our communities.”

Armed Forces Day in Wales is a partnership event between councils, Welsh Government, the tri-services –Royal Navy, Army and RAF – and other partners.

It is an opportunity for people to show their support for the Armed Forces community including veterans, those currently serving, cadets and their families.

A decision was made in 2021 that the annual event would travel across all the Welsh regions and last year it took place in Wrexham.

Newport will officially hand over to Swansea, next year’s hosts, before a military ceremony at sunset ends the day’s events on 24 June.

More guests and acts will be announced in the run-up to the big day. For more information visit www.newport.gov.uk/armedforcesday or following the council on Facebook and Twitter.

Wales National Armed Forces Day 2023

NEWPORT CITY – 24th June 2023

**DIWRNOD Y LLUOEDD ARFOG
ARMED FORCES DAY**
DEWCH I GEFNOGI
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

**Save the date
Cadwch y dyddiad**

NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL
CINGOR DINAS CASNEWYDD

**Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government**

Wales National Armed Forces Day – Newport
Diwrnod y Lluoedd Arfog Cenedlaethol Cymru – Casnewydd

Saturday 24 June 2023
Dydd Sadwrn 24 Mehefin 2023

We look forward to welcoming you to the city.
Rydym yn edrych ymlaen at eich croesawu i'r ddinas.

Your Pool Wants You!

Members of the armed forces and veterans can swim for free all year round at public swim sessions at any Newport Live pool. To be eligible for free swimming you must possess a Defence Privilege Card, which needs to be presented at any two of Newport Live swimming pools; you will then be issued with a Newport Live's Leisure Card.

For further information on the scheme and to apply for your Defence Privilege Card visit
<https://www.defencediscountservice.co.uk/>.

For information on **FREE** swimming at Newport Live including pool times <https://www.newportlive.co.uk/en/sports-wellbeing/pool/public-swimming/free-swimming/>

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE ARMED FORCES
Your pool wants you to enjoy free swimming

GWYR A GWRAGEDD Y LLUOEDD ARFOG
Mae'ch pwll am i chi gael nofio am ddim

01633 656757
newportlive.co.uk

NEWPORT LIVE CASNEWYDD
newportlive.co.uk

Torfaen

Torfaen Veterans' Support Hub

**Opening 21st June 2023
at Woodland Road Sports & Social Club.
Every Wednesday 10-12**

Pledge to support Armed Forces

Torfaen's Town and Community Councils have today pledged their allegiance to support the borough's armed forces community.

Representatives from Blaenavon, Croesyceiliog & Llanyrafon, Cwmbran and Pontir Town and Community councils, together with members from the Armed Forces Community, signed the national Armed Forces Covenant at a meeting of the full council.

Henllys and Pontypool Town and Community Councils are set to sign their covenant scrolls at a later date.

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

Leader of Torfaen Council, Councillor Anthony Hunt, who presented the item at full council, said: "In 2013, Torfaen Council signed the armed forces covenant in recognition of the sacrifices made by our military and in order for us to provide them with the appropriate support.



"Signing of the covenant re-enforces that pledge and has meant that we have been able to progress that support to a higher level and ensure that they are not disadvantaged.

"It is an honour to witness the town and community councils of this borough in their first signing of the covenant today."

Major Oliver Stuart, Executive Officer of the 104 Regiment Royal Artillery, said: "It is both a symbolic and a real commitment that shows a deep connection between local communities and the Armed Forces."

A framed copy of the covenant scroll will be on display at each Town and Community buildings.



Hwb Cymorth i Gyn-filwyr
Torfaen
Veterans' Support Hub

Torfaen Veterans' Support Hub
Woodland Road Sports & Social Club, Woodland Rd, Cwmbran NP44 2DZ

Hwb Cymorth i Gyn-filwyr Torfaen
Clwb Chwaraeon a Chymdeithasol Woodland Road
Woodland Rd, Cwmbran NP44 2DZ

Every Wednesday 10:00am - 12:00pm
Bob dydd Mercher 10:00am - 12:00pm

- ✓ Peer-to-peer support
- ✓ Cuppa & a chat
- ✓ Benefits & housing advice
- ✓ Mental Health support
- ✓ Learn new skills
- ✓ Regular events
- ✓ Cymorth rhwng cyfoedion
- ✓ Paned a sgwrs
- ✓ Cyngor ar fudd-daliadau a thai
- ✓ Cymorth Iechyd Meddwl
- ✓ Dysgu sgiliau newydd
- ✓ Digwyddiadau rheolaidd

TCBC armedforces / CBST lluoeddarfog: armedforces@torfaen.gov.uk



Veterans Services, part of Veterans UK, provide one to one support to service personnel, leavers, veterans and their families.

Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides holistic support to serving personnel, veterans and their dependants with an enduring welfare need, including assistance with injury and bereavement compensation claims, transition support for personnel being medically discharged and confidential help and support for those who have life limiting illness.

www.gov.uk/guidance/veterans-welfare-service

Defence Transition Services (DTS) provides holistic support to Service leavers and their families who are most likely to face challenges as they leave the armed forces, assisting them with adjusting to civilian life by simplifying, coordinating and streamlining access to support across a range of topics, including housing, finances, employment and access to healthcare. Help for service leavers from Defence Transition Services -

www.gov.uk

Want to contact us?

Defence Transition Services:

DBSVets-DTS-Wales-Mid@mod.gov.uk

DBSVets-DTS-North@mod.gov.uk

Veterans Welfare Service:

Veterans-UK-VWS-Wales-Mid@mod.gov.uk

Veterans-UK-VWS-North@mod.gov.uk



Veterans UK helpline -
0808 1914 2 18

Powys

New Chair for county's Armed Forces Covenant Regional Partnership

A partnership that supports the county's Armed Forces community has a new chair.

Cllr Matthew Dorrance, Powys County Council's Armed Forces Champion, chaired his first meeting of the Armed Forces Covenant Regional Partnership Powys last month (February) at Brecon's Infantry Battle School at Dering Lines.

The partnership, which sees the county council, charities and service providers develop the provision and promotion of local services for the Armed Forces community in the county so that they don't face disadvantages.

The overall aims of the partnership are to:

- encourage local communities to support the armed forces and to understand and be aware of the issues affecting the armed forces community;
- recognise and remember the sacrifices faced by the armed forces;
- encourage activities that help integrate the armed forces community into local life;
- encourage the armed forces community to help and support the wider community, whether through participation in events and joint projects, or other forms of engagement.

"It was an honour to chair my first meeting of the partnership as Armed Forces Champion as we look to support those who serve and those who have served. I thank Lt. Col. Rupert Anderson for hosting the meeting at the Infantry Battle School in Brecon," said Cllr Dorrance.

"It was a positive and ambitious meeting with a team that want the best for our Armed Forces community. My grandfather, father and brother all served in our armed forces so I look forward to working in partnership with our Armed Forces communities to make a real difference for our veterans, our service personnel and their families."



Powys Covenant team meet at the Infantry Battle School, Brecon.

Helping veterans fulfil their potential outside the Armed Forces

A guaranteed interview scheme for armed forces veterans has been launched by Powys County Council.

The scheme is designed to help military veterans fulfil their potential in civilian life by helping to remove barriers in finding civilian employment.



Powys County Council Deputy Leader and Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Matthew Dorrance said: "The County Council has long been a supporter of the armed forces but this scheme goes above and beyond our Armed Forces Covenant with practical help for veterans. We know that finding a role in civilian life can be a challenging experience and I am delighted that we can guarantee an interview for veterans as part of our normal recruitment process.

"Veterans offer a wealth of talent with transferable skills at a time when the council is looking to strengthen its workforce. We can help veterans find meaningful employment and attract candidates for our vacancies - it is a win-win situation. We have recently been in discussions with the Career Transition Partnership to support this initiative and all appropriate vacancies are now advertised on this site," he added.

THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT FUND TRUST **RADIATEARTS**

FREE RESIDENTIALS FOR VETERANS 2023

Join us for a relaxing getaway in rural Mid Wales; take part in activities promoting physical and mental wellbeing, connect with other veterans and take time out from everyday life.

- THURSDAY 2ND TO SATURDAY 4TH MARCH**
Cooking and Nature
- MONDAY 20TH TO THURSDAY 23RD MARCH**
Photography and Hillwalking
- MONDAY 8TH TO THURSDAY 11TH MAY**
Cooking and Nature
- WEDNESDAY 14TH TO SATURDAY 17TH JUNE**
Art and Cyanotype
- SATURDAY 22ND TO TUESDAY 25TH JULY**
Cooking and Nature
- TUESDAY 22ND TO FRIDAY 25TH AUGUST**
Photography and Hillwalking

"All expectations were exceeded and I had a wonderful time. The hospitality, food and accommodation was outstanding, met some great people and the location is perfect"

Our residential experiences are free of charge, including accommodation and meals provided by Hafren Forest Hideaway and Caffi Clywedog. Peer mentors / buddies are welcome to accompany any veteran.

CONTACT
If you would like to take part or contact us on behalf of someone, please get in touch at office@radiatearts.co.uk, 07860 609991 or www.radiatearts.co.uk

Address: Clywedog Creative Hub, Clywedog Dam, Y Fan Llanidloes, SY18 6NU, WALES

West Wales

Carmarthenshire

Charity partnership sees new Veterans' drop launch

Armed Forces charities Alabaré & Links combined Forces have teamed up with The Trussell Trust to provide a great new venue for members of the ex-forces community in Carmarthenshire to get together in.

The team at Alabaré and Links were delighted to support this new venture and to work collectively offer a monthly NAAFI morning, offering the chance for local people and veterans to come together for a brew and informal hub providing advice and access to other services. Both Alabaré and Links are part of the Armed Forces Covenant Trust's; Places, Pathways & People Programme which aims to enable veterans charities to work together and improve mental health provision and reduce isolation

To make the venue warm and welcoming the inside of the building needed a coat of paint and some refurbishment. Volunteers from Alabaré's Homes For Veterans Cymru and The Trussell Trust came together to give it a full make over in time for the opening. Four Alabaré residents and Alabaré Boots on The Ground Project Manager, Mel Watts slept over in order to get the job done.

Mel said afterwards:

"We are incredibly proud of the hard work the lads have put in and very grateful for all the volunteer hours they have given." The Trussell Trust manager Miriam Jones was thrilled with the work completed and was on hand with chocolates and a thank you card to acknowledge their efforts.

The opening event saw fellow portfolio members The VC Gallery and ICARUS attend. The VC Gallery are based in Pembrokeshire and offer an array of services to veterans and the wider community, with ICARUS offering specialist mental health support throughout the UK. In addition to local veterans, the opening also welcomed from senior staff and volunteers from ABF; The Soldiers Charity and Aged Cymru's Veterans in View project. The partnership all agrees on the need to do more to combat isolation in rural areas and offer the same opportunities that can be found in more populated areas. They hope to see the NAAFI morning become well attended and thriving - their message to veterans in Carmarthenshire is that the door is open, and the kettle is on!

Alabaré's resident volunteers were keen to lend further assistance to the work that The Trussell Trust is doing and have kindly offered to return and do more renovations. They now plan on refreshing all the office spaces, which will save The Trussell Trust vital income and allow that money to be spend on the local community. The Boots on The Ground Project that they all attend is rooted in the 5 ways to wellbeing, part of which is the benefits of 'giving back', an ethos these veterans have clearly taken to heart.

The NAAFI morning will run every third Wednesday of the month, find us on Merlins walk Carmarthen, upstairs between Poundland and Ty Hafan charity shop.

For more information or to arrange an interview call Claire Sime on 07500 113971

Notes: At Alabaré we support people to overcome the barriers of homelessness, mental ill-health and learning disabilities in-order to have a home, health, choice and independence.

Alabaré Christian Care and Support provide the highest standards of accommodation and support to disadvantaged and vulnerable people in our communities in order that they can have a home, health, choice and independence. Since 1991, Alabaré have been working with people facing disadvantage through homelessness, mental ill-health, learning disability or a combination of these. We provide housing and personalised support based on the individual needs and aspirations of each person, tackling underlying causes and giving them the skills and confidence to move forward with their lives.

Alabaré's Boots on the Ground and veterans mental wellbeing services provide support for veterans who have struggled in their civilian lives. The Alabaré team provide opportunities for veterans to take part in outdoor activities, building confidence, self-esteem and team endeavour. Each activity improves mental and physical wellbeing and provides the chance to share experiences and camaraderie with others. Alongside Boots on the Ground our veterans Buddy to Buddy and Brew and Banter coffee mornings again provide opportunities for veterans to benefit from peer mentoring and spending time with others who have shared experiences, towards building better mental health and wellbeing.

Alabaré's Homes for Veterans provides accommodation and support for Veterans who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. We have 19 Homes for Veterans across the South and South West of England and across Wales, which can collectively house over 100 Veterans at any one time. Our first Home for Veterans opened in Plymouth in 2009 and today we are the largest provider of supported housing for homeless Veterans of working age outside of London.

Alabaré's Veterans Self Build was initiated to help forge a permanent solution to Veteran homelessness and unemployment. It provides veterans with an opportunity to gain skills in the construction industry whilst building a home that they can live in. Support is also provided to help each veteran overcome challenges they have faced in their civilian lives and gain skills to live successful independent lives once more.

www.alabare.co.uk a fitness room, a multi-purpose dining area and short-term accommodation as well as a rope training area and a parade ground.



Ceredigion

Veterans Commissioner Visits County

On Monday 13 March, Colonel James Phillips, the Veterans' Commissioner for Wales was visiting Ceredigion and took the opportunity to meet with Age Cymru Dyfed at their office in Aberystwyth. Colonel James Phillips visited to explore the charity's work with older veterans in Ceredigion, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.



Age Cymru Dyfed gave an overview of the projects they've organised since 2019. A number of the projects discussed were; Valuing Veterans, Veterans Never To Be Forgotten, Veterans' Digital Life Links & Easier Access to Services, West Wales Veterans Archive and Veterans in View.

The Veterans' Commissioner was introduced to the needs of older veterans in the Dyfed area. Clips were shown from the ITV Wales, Greatest Generation film and the West Wales Veterans Archive and there was an opportunity to discuss the events that have taken place since 2021; D-Day WW2 Veterans day in Aberporth in 2021, the RAF Battle of Britain Exhibition in the National Library of Wales in 2022 and the forthcoming Gordon Prime Memorial Ride in Pembrokeshire on Sunday, 16 April 2023.

Councillor Paul Hinge, Ceredigion County Council Members Champion for Armed Forces, said: "A heartfelt thank you to Age Cymru Dyfed for facilitating this meeting which was very informative in the light of the 2021 census figures that have been released regarding numbers of Veterans in Wales and in Ceredigion in particular. Age Cymru Dyfed were able to provide further granular evidence to a very interesting meeting. It was good to have Colonel James Phillips present and for us to have a round table discussion on many topics of concern. Age Cymru Dyfed are doing fantastic work with the Veteran Community and we as a Armed Forces Covenant Forum appreciate their willingness to engage and help us to deliver on the needs of the Veteran Community."

Colonel James Phillips, Veterans' Commissioner for Wales, said: "I was delighted to have the opportunity to meet with Age Cymru Dyfed at Aberystwyth during my visit to Ceredigion. I welcomed the wide ranging discussion on issues affecting older veterans and Age Cymru Dyfed's work to support them. I was particularly struck by their initiatives

to tackle loneliness and isolation and their work on recording veterans' stories for the West Wales Veterans Archive. Our older veterans have given so much during their service and it is gratifying to see Age Cymru Dyfed and other Ceredigion-based charities doing so much to assist them."

Simon Wright, CEO Age Cymru Dyfed, said: "We were delighted that Col James Phillips, Veterans' Commissioner for Wales was able to visit the charity's Aberystwyth office and to hear first-hand how the charity has been able to support several hundred older veterans across Dyfed during the past four years. We have delivered several support projects including some outstanding and memorable events for older veterans and are now looking forward to the Gordon Prime Memorial Ride on 16 April to raise funds towards a national memorial to Despatch Riders, of which Gordon as a D-Day veteran was one. Age Cymru Dyfed trustees and the recently expanded veterans support team – two of whom are veterans themselves – are firmly committed to continuing to support older veterans through their latest project, Veterans in View."

Hugh Morgan OBE, Veterans Coordinator for Age Cymru Dyfed, said: "Since 2019 Age Cymru Dyfed has operated specific projects providing support to older veterans in Ceredigion and throughout Dyfed. Five projects have received funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT), Veterans Foundation and Welsh Government. Of particular note is the nationally award-winning and ever growing West Wales Veterans Archive held on People's Collection Wales in the National Library, Aberystwyth, featuring unique interviews with veterans throughout Dyfed, ensuring that their recollections of military service can be heard and enjoyed by schools, researchers, historians and others for decades to come. The 2022 ITV Wales film 'Greatest Generation' developed from the West Wales Veterans Archive.

The charity currently operates a new project called 'Veterans in View' which is designed to identify and provide welfare support to 'harder to reach' older veterans. 'Veterans in View' is funded by the AFCFT (2023-2025) and driven by Age Cymru Dyfed's two Veterans Welfare Officers, Neil Davies and Owen Dobson, both of whom are keen to hear from older veterans or their families. They can be contacted on Neil.davies@agecymrudyfed.org.uk or owen.dobson@agecymrudyfed.org.uk

Results from the 2021 Census show that over one third of all veterans living in Wales today are aged 80yrs+. Specifically, two thirds of the several hundred veterans supported by Age Cymru Dyfed are aged 80+. For more information on Age Cymru Dyfed visit: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/dyfed/





Woody's Lodge

Over the last year we have been developing and growing further into the community, supporting veterans and emergency services and their families. It has been a successful year in regard to establishing new Drop in's running activities and developing new projects which benefit our beneficiaries. All this would not have been possible without the grant support from the RNRMC, AFCFT, and the VPPP which has enabled us to build the infrastructure to do this.

The last twelve months have seen our satellite drop-in sessions grow into a necessity within the region, which has seen over 216 attendees during this time. There is a verity of beneficiaries that attend these sessions from all branches of the armed forces, all emergency services and we have also had family members attend.

The sessions are based in 2 of the regions within West and Mid which are Powys and Ceredigion, and we help support help for heroes at their drop in, in Carmarthen which covers the Carmarthenshire region.

The sessions are held once a month and on the first week and last week of the month.

Penlan Farm Llandysul farm site (Ceredigion)
Monday – Thursday weekly 09:00 - 15:00

Lampeter is held at the university cafe (Ceredigion)
1st Tuesday 10:00 - 13:00

Aberystwyth is Held at the football club (Ceredigion)
3rd Saturday 09:30 - 12:00

Brecon is held at the Royal Air Force Association (Powys)
last Tuesday 10:00 - 12:00

Machynlleth is held at the rugby club (Powys)
1st Thursday 10:00 - 12:00

These sessions will continue to function as long as the need is there and that we can continue to support our beneficiaries like so many have been so far.



AGE Cymru DYFED

"Age Cymru Dyfed (ACD) have appointed two new Veterans Welfare Officers, Neil Davies and Owen Dobson. Funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, Neil covers Ceredigion and North Pembro, and Owen Carmarthenshire and South Pembro. Both veterans themselves, Neil and Owen are already making a big impact with their work with older veterans across the region and on 28th March Neil and Owen took a group of veterans respectively to the Pembroke Dock Heritage Centre and the VC Gallery. Included in the group was 100yr old WW2 Royal Navy veteran Neville Bowen from Ammanford and 91yr old Army veteran and wartime evacuee in the Rhondda, John Hubbard, from Aberystwyth.

During January ACD lost one of its WW2 D-Day heroes, Gordon Prime, but are working in partnership with the Vintage Motorcycle Club to hold the Gordon Prime Memorial Ride on 16th April which starts at the Carew Cheriton Control Tower Museum. This tribute to Gordon who was himself a RASC despatch rider during WW2, is the launch event for the VMCC's UK campaign to raise funds for a national memorial in the National Arboretum to military, police and NHS bikers, who have given their lives in service to the nation. For further details or to donate to the VMCC's memorial campaign visit: The Vintage Motor Cycle Club - Duty to Ride (vmcc.net)."



Neil Davies and John Hubbard in the Sunderland Flying Boat Flight Simulator, PDHC.



WW2 RN Veteran Neville Bowen meets with WW2 Royal Marine Commando Veteran Ted Owens in the VC Gallery.

Retreat - Refocus - Reconnect

Free camping with outdoor activities for the Veteran community. Located in Llanddeusant, Western Brecon Beacons National Park, within the Geopark at the foot of the black mountain, Llyn-y-fan, Lady of the Lake legend. The camp is 40 minutes from Brecon, Ammanford and Carmarthen respectively. The Riverside Retreat Veterans Camp is located within a 5-acre site bordered by woodland and the river Sawdde. The veteran's camp has its own secluded access. Wildlife is abundant here, from salmon and trout, otters, bats and tawny owls to red kites, buzzards, rabbits, and field mice.

The veteran led campsite team facilitates a calm, relaxing and therapeutic environment that supports the veteran's community to retreat, refocus and reconnect. We believe that the outdoor natural environment plays a huge part in well-being and harnessing this is part of the service we provide in a tailored support package for the beneficiaries. The safe and tranquil setting enables the veteran community to relax or interact through 1:1 support sessions; mentoring and engagement in outdoor activities aimed at increasing confidence and self-esteem, reduce social isolation, and enhance mental well-being. This project is veterans-led, tailored by what the veterans would like to achieve.

The activities on offer include green woodwork, painting, photography, astronomy (stargazing and meteor showers - we have dark skies status), fishing, walking, horticulture, farm animal husbandry, bushcraft, wild camping, campfire stories, woodland management, metal detecting and black-smithing. New for 2023, we have partnered with outdoor activity organisations to offer further land and water-based pursuits around the national park.

Individual veterans continue to camp throughout the winter months and veteran charity groups have stayed on a regular basis, including: Woody's Lodge, Bulldog Boxing, Swansea Veterans hub, Fighting with Pride, REGROUP, HM Forces Tredegar Group and Newport Veterans hub. Regular personnel are also staying. We recently experienced a Gurkha community food festival with dancing under the parachute which was great fun. We didn't need to eat for the rest of the week!

The Welsh Rugby Union Academy (WRU) have visited and plan to commence activities later in the year. Youth and cadet groups are also planning adventures with us. This will fund the activities for veterans so they can continue to stay for free.



Riverside Retreat Veterans Camp welcomes self-referrals and group bookings.

For further information, please contact Alan and Michelle.



✉ riversideretreatvc@gmail.com

Facebook [RiversideretreatVC CIC](#)

☎ 07379 795622

📧 sulked.cheesy.grins



Registered CIC No: 12339357

Llanion Cove

Llanion Cove, Pembrokeshire was proud to host our Monthly Veterans breakfast. We have held successful Breakfasts in February and March with over 20 veterans attending each one, they went down a treat with the veterans and full complements going to Katy and Owain in the Kitchen. As we all know a well fed veteran is a happy veteran.



We have also been working with the Families Federation and so far we have run an indoor climbing session and a canoe trip with more events in the pipeline to run over the course of this year. So if you fancy a good breakfast with great views come along to our next monthly breakfast.



SSCE Cymru mission

Knowledge and evidence

Coordinate research and compile evidence on the experiences of Service children in education to ensure their needs are well understood.

Activity and resources

Collaborate with members of the SSCE Cymru Network to conduct activities and produce resources that will help support Service children throughout their education.

Supporting policy and systems

Work with organisations to provide evidence and impact policy relevant to supporting Service children in education.

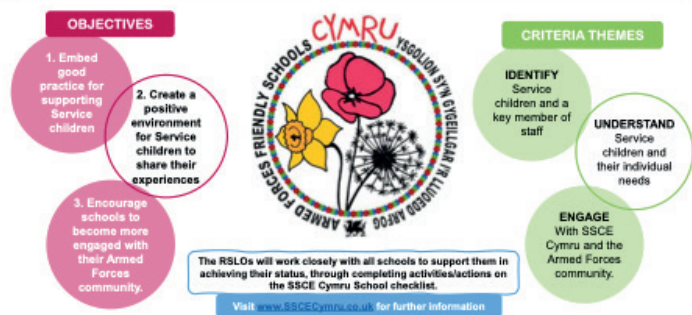
Forces Fitness Ltd!!



Forces Fitness have now delivered to over 650 places of education that includes over 45,000 learners. We have worked within every Local Authority in Wales and Multiple Local Authorities in England. This year saw us deliver to multiple Sports Clubs and Corporate organisations on our Team Building events that have received recognition from the Welsh Government. All our programs we run can be delivered in the mediums of English or Welsh and we have received some fantastic press and media coverage. From large scale sports/ team building days to regular Health and well-being workshops, we are here to work with you and your needs!



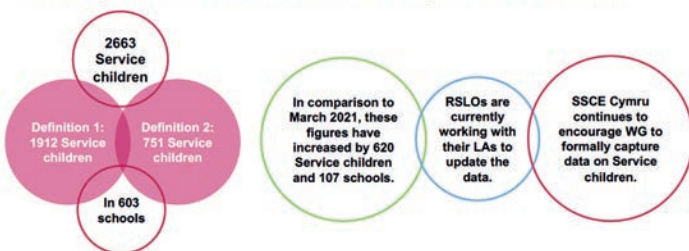
Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru



Forces Fitness is a multi-award-winning company that includes the Education Award at the United Kingdom's National Fitness Awards, GOLD ERS Award holders received from the MOD, Business Growth Wales Awards Winners (Health & Lifestyle) and The Children's services and Activity awards Wales winners for Health and Wellbeing program and Business of the Year. They provide a number of services from Employability Bootcamps/ retreats, Health and Well-Being workshops, Team Building sessions, school programs and Full Board Residential Boot camps and retreats for groups or individuals. They also work closely with many businesses, Local Authorities, organisations, sports clubs, schools, colleges, and universities.

Service children data

SSCE Cymru's latest data collection* activity shows that there are:



SSCE Cymru team

Regional School Liaison Officers (RSLOs)

- Can help schools with...
- Understanding the experiences and needs of Service children
 - Implementing the SSCE Cymru checklist (RSLO)
 - Using the SSCE Cymru School toolkit and additional tools
 - Running Service children discussion groups
 - Identifying and sharing good practice
 - Making connections with the Armed Forces community
 - Accessing funding to support Service children
 - Achieving their Armed Forces Friendly Schools Cymru status.

Participation Lead Officer (PLO)

Works with schools to...

- Listen to Service children
- Set up Service children clubs
- Facilitate opportunities for Service children to come together to share their experiences
- Celebrate Service children's experiences
- Share the voices of Service children.



Welsh Veterans Awards

The Veterans Awards CIC is a Not for Profit Charitable Organisation that promotes the positives from the Veteran Community and those organisations that support us. It's been put together by Veterans for Veterans in what has become our home nations national awards with three separate award ceremonies taking place in England, Scotland and Wales, we also support the Northern Irish Awards.

During our awards evenings we fundraise for the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity alongside the ABF The soldiers Charity. Any money above and beyond costs is then distributed via a small grants scheme to smaller CIC's and Charitable organisations who work at grass routes level within the veterans community and have a turnover of under 100k per annum!

This year has seen our organisation promote and support hundreds of people / organisations from our community who are having a positive impact, whilst issuing grants to multiple Charitable Organisations that support our community across the UK, from 30 places on an all inclusive retreat for Military Veterans, events that bring veterans and their families together, health and well-being training and also supporting local breakfast hubs that are the beating heart of our community!

We would like to say a massive thank you to all our Sponsors, supporters and more importantly the people and organisations that are moving forward in a positive way, please keep doing what you are doing for our community!

If you know a veteran or an organisation that is going above and beyond for our Military Community then please get in touch, our team would love to hear from you!



To find out more about The Veterans Awards, contact Rhia on: info@veteransawrds.co.uk
or check out the website www.veteransawards.co.uk

Veteran Business Base

Those of us interested in Starting a business whilst either Working From Home or at Home because we're Unemployed, have an advantage over those having to work in an office.

Why? Because over 70% of new businesses are started from home.

It's all too easy to be overwhelmed by all the advice you can receive online or in lectures about Starting-Up a business.

The essential requirements for those seeking to Start-Up is to:-

- **Have an idea for the service or product you will sell**
- **Work Hard**
- **Don't waste time!**

Many businesses are set up because the owners' wanted to increase their income, or were fed up with the job they we're doing, or were unemployed and struggling with debts. So you could be forgiven for thinking that MONEY is always the sole motivation for Starting-Up a business. However, there are many examples of businesses that are Started-Up because the owners had no money. Repeat NO money! What they have is drive and dedication. Yes, they probably suffered sleepless nights, fearful of the unknown when making the leap into Self-employment. You can overcome your nervousness by asking questions of existing business owners, research your product or service on the internet and observe those already trading in your business sector. Be curious. Take notes and keep your eyes and ears open. Think of the opportunities that may open up for you when Starting-Up; don't just focus on the barriers. Feet on the ground, not head in the clouds!

Many veterans I've worked with were eager to Start-Up because the corporate culture did not suit them. Many veterans have a distinct advantage over those in "civvy street" as regards running your own enterprise. You have worked in countries outside the UK, experienced difficult working conditions, met a variety of people, you've had to complete a job and worked non-stop until the job was done, all of which come in useful when operating your own business. Resilience is key and most veterans are resilient. Add to this determination, focus and a need to be in control of your working lives.

How to plan and prepare to Start-Up?

Lengthy Business Plans are not required! What is required is a brief, well-researched outline of your Business Idea, say two pages long. Try and work out the cost of running your business and the sales/income to compile a basic financial

plan. Keep it simple. Don't over-think it. While you must observe the "regulations" dictated by law when you operate a business, it is essential that you "understand" how a business operates. So much of this information you can obtain by talking to people already in business and researching your competitors' websites.

AND most important: Have an open mind, be prepared to amend your ideas in the light of experience.

While others complain about the challenges of "cost of living" while sitting at home, in reality there are huge opportunities to Start-Up a business providing the goods and services that consumers require. Try and avoid inventing the wheel, the Ancients Greeks have beaten you to it. Better to make improvements to an existing product or service from which the consumer can benefit.

How can we assist you? We use our commercial experience and professional contacts (Accountants, Solicitors, Business Insurers, Web-designers etc) who will provide Veteran Start-Ups with professional advice, without charge or obligation. We can arrange to meet you to explore your ideas for a Start-Up. We are discrete, we do not charge for our services and want you to succeed.

Finally, remember to believe in yourself and your well thought out ideas. Be brave. Sir Winston Churchill gave good advice when he advised us that " Failure is not fatal, success is not permanent - the key is to keep going".

Bridget & Malcolm Jones

Joint Founders of:

www.veteransbusinessbase.org.uk

Email: malcolmjones47@yahoo.co.uk

Mobile: **07956-941900**

your **SKILLS** your **FUTURE**

Heads of Place
Penarth/Lie

- Are you a Service Leaver, Veteran, or relevant family member?
- Do you want to continue your Public Service? You can do this by joining the Civil Service or wider Public Sector.
- Need support to apply for a post? Join Civil Servants and Public Sector staff for a 2-day workshop, which will give you the opportunity to explore **Your SKILLS, Your FUTURE!**

5TH & 6TH JUNE
9:00 - 16:00
TY PENALLTA
YSTRAD MYNACH
CF82 7PG

If you would like to know more about this exciting opportunity please contact:
SARAH.MALLAGHAN@DWP.GOV.UK **#YourSkillsYourFuture**

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



The Forces Employment Charity

The Forces Employment Charity provides free, personalised career coaching, world-class training, expert mentoring and job sourcing to veterans, reservists and their spouses and partners, helping them succeed throughout their working lives. We are formed from two of the UK's largest and most respected military charities; RFEA – The Forces Employment Charity and the employment services of the Officers' Association, and we are now working together to provide life changing support through an unrivalled range of programmes.

Our support includes:

- Personalised career consultations.
- Career advice, such as CV help and interview techniques.
- Support if you have health issues, have been out of work for a long time or if you have other problems such as debt or housing issues, working collaboratively with the network of military charities.
- Access to the RightJob Jobs Board who have thousands of vacancies from employers looking to hire veterans and military spouses.
- Networking opportunities, such as employment events, with companies looking to hire people with the skills and experience gained from a life in the military.

We are here for all veterans, regardless of rank, length of service or reason for leaving, and their spouses. Find out more and register with the Forces Employment Charity today: www.forcesemployment.org.uk



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.**



DWP and the Armed Forces Covenant



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Adran Gwaith
a Phensiynau

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.

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: **07741673209**

Jackie Barton -

South East Wales: **07826876346**

Gareth Thomas -

South West Wales: **07553677929**

Kat Graham -

North and Mid Wales: **07917732894**

Wales.armedforceschampions@dwp.gov.uk

Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Wales

Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association for Wales supports the Ministry of Defence's Youth Movement the Cadet Forces.

RFCA for Wales has a duty to deliver first class support services directly to the Royal Naval Reserve, Royal Marines Reserve, Army Reserve, Royal Auxiliary Air Force and their cadets.

RFCA for Wales provides a link to the local community to raise awareness of the rewards of part-time soldiering to Reservists and employers.

RFCA for Wales also engage with young people to educate them of the practical and academic skills they can gain by

joining a Cadet organisation. There are also fulfilling roles for Adult Volunteers who guide the development of the next generation.

Detachments can be found across the Principality and further information can be obtained through our website.

RFCA for Wales

Maindy Barracks, Cardiff CF14 3YE tel: 029 2037 5747



RFCA

Reserve Forces' & Cadets' Association for Wales
Cymdeithas Llwoedd wrth Gefn a Chadetiaid dros Gymru

Hugh James

Hearing loss following military service is a serious concern.

At Hugh James, we deal with various types of military injury claims and are specialists in our field. We currently act for over 4,000 serving personnel and veterans suffering with noise-induced hearing loss that could have been prevented by the MOD.

The Royal British Legion estimate that 300,000 ex-armed forces personnel in the UK suffer from noise-induced hearing loss (NIHL) and tinnitus. We provide specialist legal services to current and ex-military personnel suffering with hearing loss as a result of hearing damage caused by a failure to provide adequate ear protection against noise from:

- gun and artillery fire
- mortars
- explosions
- pyrotechnics
- aircraft noise
- vehicle engine noise

Common symptoms associated with hearing loss include finding it hard to hear conversations in places such as pubs or restaurants, turning up the TV or radio at home, struggling to hear people on the phone, asking people to repeat things and feeling that other people are mumbling when they speak.

Our clients often inform us that their hearing loss leads to feelings of isolation and embarrassment. Those with tinnitus (usually described as a ringing or buzzing sound in the ears) may also find that their sleep is affected, leading to feelings of tiredness and irritability.

We also find that some of our clients face difficulties in accessing certain types of civilian employment. For example, their hearing loss may prevent them from accessing the jobs where a hearing test is required as part of a routine medical.

Unfortunately, for many service personnel this may have already occurred if they were discharged from the Armed Forces because of their hearing loss.

If your hearing problems are due to long-term exposure to excessive noise whilst in service, you might be entitled to compensation. NIHL and tinnitus caused by military equipment can be debilitating and can affect all aspects of life, but it is avoidable.

Any hearing loss is worth investigating. If you are a serving member of the armed forces or ex-military personnel and suffer from an injury or illness as a result of service, such as NIHL, and have either been medically discharged, or you or members of your family have noticed symptoms of hearing loss, you may wish to obtain legal advice in relation to making a civil claim.

We also represent claimants in War Pension and AFCS claims.

If you've suffered hearing damage during your time in service – past or present – our team is ready to listen. Get in touch with our specialist Military Team today. We can help you take the next steps in investigating whether you have a civil claim for your injuries. Our initial advice is free, and we could even represent you on a no win, no fee basis. Find out more at

<https://www.hughjames.com/service/military-legal-services>

Telephone: 029 2267 5840

Hugh James are holders of the MOD Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award and are proud to serve the veteran community.

Royal Air Force in Wales



The Winter period was dominated by activities around Remembrance, with the RAF supporting a large number of events across Wales in the 2 week period up to Remembrance Sunday.

In amongst these events, there was strong attendance at the opening of the RBL Wales Field of Remembrance in Cardiff in early November. 2022 was brought to a close with the Armed Forces recognising the support to the Armed Forces Covenant of a number of organisations and employers across Wales, ranging from Local Authorities providing support to Veterans, to employers having Armed Forces Reserves on their payroll. Well done to everyone and keep up the great work!

In previous reports, we have highlighted that we have had a "Wales and the Battle of Britain" historical exhibition touring across Wales. Well, it has now finally concluded its tour, with its final slots being with the Welsh Parliament in November last year and also with the UK Parliament in January this year. Since the launch of the exhibition, it has been to some 27 places across Wales and been visited by over 15,000 people, with extensive TV/ Radio and social media coverage adding to this.

The exhibition highlighted not just how Wales helped Britain to victory in 1940, but also the strong historic connections there have always been between the RAF and Wales, and that these connections remain positive and vibrant today. There have also been some important legacies that have come from the Wales and the Battle of Britain tour, which include today's aircraft at RAF Valley being named after Welsh Battle of Britain Pilots.

A further legacy from the exhibition was the opportunity for Air Commodore Adrian Williams, Air Officer Wales, to meet with the family of a Polish airman who had been killed on 25 October 1940, flying out of RAF Pembrey, during the Battle of Britain. At a ceremony at the Polish Embassy in London, Air Commodore Williams said he was honoured to meet the relatives of Pilot Officer Stanislaw Piatkowski.



A painting of a Sunderland, Flying Boat by Guild of Aviation Artist Tim Jenkins.



Wales National Service of Remembrance in Alexandra Gardens, Cardiff in November 2022.



Air Officer Wales presenting a painting, by Guild of Aviation Artist Tim Jenkins, to Pilot Officer Stanislaw Piatkowski's relatives at the Polish Embassy in London.



Conclusion of the Wales and the Battle of Britain Exhibition in the UK Parliament with Baroness Goldie, MOD Minister Lords.



He also presented them with a painting, drawn by aviation artist Tim Jenkins, which depicted Pilot Officer Piatkowski at the controls of his Hurricane flying over Worm's Head, which is a key landmark very close to RAF Pembrey. It was a very moving day and a timely opportunity to recognise the contribution made by Polish Pilots to the crucial victory of RAF Fighter Command in the Summer of 1940. on the ground, in that fateful Summer of 1940.

In looking at the next few months ahead, the RAF in Wales has a busy programme, which includes being at the Wales Armed Forces Day at Newport (24 June), the Wales Airshow at Swansea (1-2 July) and the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show at Llanellwedd (24-27 July), all of which will have a strong RAF presence, both in the air and on the ground. There will also be a tri-Service Gun Salute in Cardiff on Coronation Day.

We will also be commemorating other important anniversaries, which include the 80th anniversary of the RAF Mountain Rescue Service, which was formed at RAF Llandwrog (now Caernarfon Airport) in 1943, and has since helped to save countless lives on UK mountains. This May, we will also be holding a major Battle of the Atlantic 80th anniversary event at Pembroke Dock (formerly RAF Pembroke Dock), once the biggest RAF flying boat base in the world, and a significant contributor to victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. Alongside all that, we will also continue to do many other things, which includes running our successful RAF STEM programme, which visits many Welsh schools to highlight the benefits of studying science and the opportunities it can provide later in life.

So, hopefully, we have something for everyone! We look forward to seeing you somewhere over the next few months.



Aircraft at RAF Valley named after Welsh Battle of Britain pilot, Flying Officer Harold Bird-Wilson.

Royal Air Force Association

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

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



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

Royal Navy in Wales



HMS CAMBRIA - The Maritime Reserves in Wales

Men and women from the Royal Navy's home in Wales recently marched through the heart of the capital for the first time.



Although HMS Cambria – home to Reservists of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines – has been associated with the Cardiff area for three quarters of a century, only now have the city's leaders bestowed their highest honour upon the unit.

Cambria – based in a brand-new £11m facility in Cardiff Docks since July 2020 – joins a pantheon of just 62 individuals and 11 organisations, including Nelson Mandela, Dame Shirley Bassey, HMS Cardiff and HMS Dragon granted the Freedom of the City of Cardiff.

The Rt. Hon. The Lord Mayor of Cardiff, Cllr Graham Hinchey, said: "I am honoured to be part of the

celebration and to recognise the outstanding service, dedication, and commitment to duty of the men and women who serve as the Ships Company in His Majesty's Ship Cambria.

"In conferring the Freedom of the City upon HMS Cambria, we recognise its long and distinguished history as the Royal Navy's home in Wales, and its pivotal role in training and deploying Royal Naval Reservists to support the Royal Navy at sea and ashore, at home and abroad.

"The event reinforces the strong maritime bond between the Welsh capital and the Royal Navy and celebrates HMS Cambria's distinction and eminent services to the City and County of Cardiff."

The honour permits personnel from Cambria to march through Cardiff parading the Freedom Scroll with Colours flying and bayonets fixed, led by the Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines – embodied today by musicians from the Commando Training Centre at Lymington, near Exeter.



Royal Navy in Wales



Since it was established, HMS Cambria has been based at several sites throughout South Wales. In 1978, after its Cardiff base was earmarked for demolition, it was relocated to ex-army premises overlooking the sea in Sully and in subsequent years a number of attempts were made to bring it back to Cardiff.

However, it was not until 2018 that a site could be found and in July 2020 it moved into its current home in the heart of Cardiff Bay. Every week up to 80 Royal Navy and Royal Marines Reservists use the state-of-the-art facilities, including training and classroom suites, a fitness room, a multi-purpose dining area and short-term accommodation as well as a rope training area and a parade ground.

Staff at HMS Cambria support Reservists and Student Naval Cadets studying at universities in Cardiff who, during the pandemic, helped the Welsh and UK governments in their response to Covid.

"HMS Cambria has had a long association with the City of Cardiff over 75 years. Reservists from the Unit have been actively mobilised in the local community throughout the decades, assisting civil authorities," said Commander Carolyn Jones, Cambria's Commanding Officer.

"To be granted the Freedom of the City is a great honour and we look forward to strengthening the relationship with the City in the coming years."

Commodore Mel Robinson, Commander of the Maritime Reserves, said:

"It's an honour for HMS Cambria, and the whole Maritime Reserves family, to be recognised with the Freedom to parade through the great City of Cardiff.

"Maritime Reservists from across Wales, have mobilised in support of the Royal Navy and Defence in recent years, providing support to the Government's response to the pandemic, to sailors onboard Patrol Vessels around the UK or serving ashore in the Middle East. We continue to generate operational capability from our Welsh sailors and officers, and I hope that the Cardiff community will be as proud of their relationship with HMS Cambria as we are of our partnership with the Welsh capital today."

Around the Fleet

HMS Dragon, Cardiff's affiliated Warship is currently undergoing a period of refit in Liverpool. The work now close to completion will see Dragon back modern and ready for global operations. Watch this space for further news.

HMS Express, has recently completed a period of maintenance in Holyhead, Anglesey. The Aberystwyth affiliated unit is now preparing to host members of the Royal Navy University units on a summer deployment. The deployment gives university students the chance to experience life in the Royal Navy and offers CV Enhancing opportunities alongside its members studies.

RFA Cardigan Bay, a highly agile platform continues to support efforts in the Middle East. She is part of a Royal Navy led task force that pounced on a suspect fishing vessel seizing £6.4m of drugs that wont ruin lives or fund criminal activities. The 1.6t of narcotics was the second seizing within a month.





160th (Welsh) Brigade

Ceremonial

On the 06 May 2023, we look forward to marking the Coronation of His Majesty King Charles III with a Royal Gun Salute in Cardiff Castle.

We are also currently preparing for the Armed Forces in Wales Awards (AFWA), which will be held in conjunction with Armed Forces Day (AFD) on Saturday 24th June 2023 in Newport. Please submit your award nominations to 160X-MCI-AFWA-GroupMailbox@mod.gov.uk.

New Commander in 160X

Brigadier Nick Thomas has now assumed command of 160th (Welsh) Brigade, after we recently bid farewell to Brigadier Andrew Dawes.

Brigadier Nick Thomas commissioned into 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards (The Welsh Cavalry) in 1997. Early regimental service included time in both the Armoured and Armoured Reconnaissance roles and appointments training soldiers at the Army Foundation College and the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre Bavaria. This period also included operational deployments to Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Iraq.



Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 2014, he attended the Advanced Command and Staff Course, and then served as the Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of the General Staff. He then commanded the ARRC Gurkha Battalion, which included periods as the NATO High Readiness Force Land Headquarters and an exchange deployment with the 101st Airborne Division in the United States.

Following command, he assumed the appointment of Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff Commitments, in the Land Operations Command, covering the period of draw-down in Iraq and Afghanistan, a new UN deployment in Mali and the initial response to the COVID Pandemic. He was subsequently Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff

Personnel Services, in the Army Headquarters, overseeing conduct and inquiries within the Army.

He was selected for promotion to Brigadier in 2022 and assumed command of 160 (Welsh) Brigade in 2023.

He is married and has three sons.

The Army in Wales has been conducting Community Engagement with the diverse population of Wales. This has included high profile events such as Holi in Cardiff Castle, which you may have seen covered on both the BBC Wales & ITV Wales News coverage. Holi is a popular and significant Hindu festival celebrated as the Festival of Colours, Love and Spring. It celebrates the eternal and divine love of the god Radha and Krishna.

We have also been at grass root events focussing on young people developing their resilience through the 7 C's of Resilience (Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping & Control) and how a career in the Army can help develop resilience.

Currently, we are developing our knowledge and understanding of Ramadan, by building strong relationships with Mosques and Islamic Centres, in particular the Muslim Council of Wales (AFC signatories) Dar Ul Isra Mosque and the Bangladesh Association of Wales (will be signing AFC in September).



Patti Flynn Purple Plaque Unveiling at Wales Millennium Centre.



Army in Wales



HarMINDise Project Launch in Swansea Multi-Cultural Hub.



NWAMI (Networking for World Awareness of Multicultural Integration) - Senedd Cymru / Welsh Parliament.



Bangladesh Independence Day - Bangladesh Centre Grangetown Cardiff.



160th (Welsh) Brigade at The RWAS (2022).



Holi - Cardiff Castle.

The Brigade delivers a range of activities to help young people understand the Army in Wales. The Youth Engagement Team within 160th (Welsh) Brigade had a very busy period in 2022. The team engaged with schools, colleges, Scouts, Guides, Cadets, YFC and more - reaching 25,377 individuals face to face and 7520 virtually.

The Youth team conduct their engagement events through STEM activities, Leadership exercises, Health and Fitness - with a fun and informative approach maintained throughout.

Upcoming events include:

Armed Forces Day - Newport
Saturday 24th June 2023

Royal Welsh Agricultural Show -
Llanelwedd 24th -27th July 2023

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

■ Fighting with Pride

Update from Craig Jones MBE (Executive Chair) and Caroline Paige (Chief Executive).

The Forces Pensions Society brief to veterans during our Town Hall at the end of February was very well received, answering many questions and helping identify one pension to be followed up on, and we know there will be more. It is estimated that around 17,000 former members of the Armed Forces qualify for military pensions but are not receiving them. The Forces Pension Society has now created a role for one member of its team to specifically handle enquiries in regard to LGBT+ Veterans. The Society is a membership organisations, but we hope to secure funding soon to enable gratuity memberships, so if you have any questions do please get in touch.



On the 6th of March, we signed the Armed Forces Covenant, with Sam des Forges, MoD's first-ever Director of Diversity and Inclusion signing on behalf of the Ministry of Defence. The event was held in the fabulous Queer Britain Museum and the museum staff did a fantastic job hosting us. As new signees we become Bronze Members of the Employers Recognition Scheme, though we are looking to step up to Silver quickly, to demonstrate our commitment. We are delighted that Blind Veterans UK have stepped forward to be our mentor in this process. Once our signatory progression is complete we will display our Bronze Award logo and covenant pledges on our website. There are now 10,000 signatories to the AF Covenant, and as a member, FWP will be connected to organisations that can learn from us, just as we can learn from them. Three days later, we attended the annual Armed Forces Covenant Conference in the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre where we met with hundreds of other members.

On the 13th March, our Town Hall was joined by serving LGBT+ junior ranks of each service, and Admiral Jude Terry OBE and we heard accounts of what it was like to serve today from a gay, trans and non-binary perspective. It was reassuring to hear such positive stories but not without moments of reflection on the loss that our community suffered on the journey of inclusion. FWP is committed to ensuring that future generations of the Armed Forces know the history of the ban and the damage done. We will continue our work to record the history of our community, celebrate your service and enable restorative justice. We are looking at future opportunities for LGBT+ veterans who served pre-2000 to be able to tell their stories to serving personnel and we will let you know as soon as we have a date. One good way for our generations to mix is through London Pride, so if you haven't expressed an interest in that yet but would like to march, please do get in touch. We are delighted that this year we will be joined in the march by Vice Admiral Philip Hally CB MBE.

On 14th March we travelled to Edinburgh for meetings with Ministers in Holyrood. Later in the year, FWP will hold an event in Holyrood for Members of the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Members of the UK Parliament, to further raise awareness of the impact and consequences of the ban and to build support for the recommendations of Lord Etherton's.

Report, ahead of key debates in the Palace of Westminster. We need every member of Parliament to know about the ban, and its lifetime impact and to be committed to full reparations.

We have been informed by the LGBT Veterans Independent Review team that they will be launching the Review's Report on 8th June at an event in London. There are a limited number of places for FWP LGBT+ Veterans, who served prior to January 2000, to attend this event in person. Please get in touch with an expression of interest if you would like to attend. If attending might be difficult for financial reasons, please let us know. The report will be made available as soon as possible afterwards and we will advise how to access copy.

On 28th February Fighting With Pride hosted a reception, in partnership with Stonewall in the House of Lords for MPs and Members of the House of Lords. Those attending heard from former Royal Navy officer Duncan Lustig-Prean about the challenging years of the ban and our host Lord Cashman reaffirmed his commitment to a better future for

LGBT+ veterans. We spoke about the importance of this campaign and the need to make sure that every single recommendation that Lord Etherton makes is adopted.

We'd like to end this newsletter with a recent press statement from James Gray MP, Member of Parliament for North Wiltshire and Chairman of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Armed Forces (APPG AF). James invited us both to speak to the APPG AF last year and following that he raised the issue of LGBT veterans' rights in the House of Commons with the Minister for Defence People and Veterans last year. [James Gray MP - LGBT Veterans]. Commenting after FWPs and Stonewalls reception in the House of Lords on 28th February, James said:

"I was pleased to hear speeches by LGBT+ veterans and reiterate my commitment to ensuring the historic injustices experienced by those veterans are corrected." He added "I look forward to reading Lord Etherton's recommendations in the LGBT Veterans Independent Review when it is published and will continue to hold the Government to account over this matter.



We are meeting again with James this week and will also aim to revisit the APPG AF to galvanise the support of this highly influential group of MPs in Parliament.

We were thrilled to hear last week that Dougie Morgan, FWPs Veterans Community Worker in Scotland has been shortlisted in the Scottish Veterans Awards for both a Lifetime Achievement Award and also in the 'Inspiration of the Year' category. We are incredibly proud of the work that Dougie and our Veterans Community Team are doing. It is amazing what has been achieved in these 3 short years since we were founded.



YN FALCH O FOD WEDI GWASANAETHU **SERVED AND PROUD**
Grŵp Cymorth a Chymdeithasu | Gyn-filwyr LHDTG+ Veterans Socialising and Support group LGBTQ+

YN FALCH O GEFNOGI'R RHAI SY'N GWASANAETHU
PROUDLY SUPPORTING THOSE WHO SERVE

DYDD LLUN/MONDAY 12PM - 2PM

Amgueddfa Castell Caerdydd, Castell Caerdydd, Caerdydd Firing Line Museum, Cardiff Castle, Cardiff	Pafiliwn Bowlio, Parc Coffa Ynysangharad, Pontypridd Bowls Pavillion, Ynysangharad War Memorial Park Pontypridd
Dydd Llun 27 Mawrth 2023 Monday 27th March 2023	Dydd Llun 3 Ebrill 2023 Monday 3rd April 2023
Dydd Llun 24 Ebrill 2023 Monday 24th April 2023	Dydd Llun 17 Ebrill 2023 Monday 17th April 2023
Dydd Llun 22 Mai 2023 Monday 22nd May 2023	Dydd Llun 15 Mai 2023 Monday 15th May 2023
Dydd Llun 5 Mehefin 2023 Monday 5th June 2023	Dydd Llun 12 Mehefin 2023 Monday 12th June 2023
Dydd Llun 19 Mehefin 2023 Monday 19th June 2023	Dydd Llun 26 Mehefin 2023 Monday 26th June 2023
Dydd Llun 3 Gorffennaf 2023 Monday 3rd July 2023	Dydd Llun 10 Gorffennaf 2023 Monday 10th July 2023

Am ragor o wybodaeth cysylltwch â:/For further information Please Contact:
 07725 704655 / 07747 485619
E-bost: Veteranservice@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk / GwasanaethiGynfilwyr@rctcbc.gov.uk
Email: Veteranservice@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk / Veteranservice@rctcbc.gov.uk

Albare Homes

The charity Alabaré Homes for Veterans Cymru, who have seven homes and a range of wellbeing activities for vulnerable or previously homeless veterans across Wales, are passionate about ensuring that veterans get the individual support and access to opportunities that they need to rebuild their lives.

One veteran who has recently benefitted from this help is Rhys. Rhys is in his mid-thirties and is a Royal Navy veteran who found himself homeless. Rhys was sofa-surfing until he came into Alabaré's Homes for Veterans Cymru. Now 12 months later, Rhys says he is thriving, having made the decision to put his past behind him and seize the new opportunities he has.

Having settled into Alabaré's home in South Wales, Rhys was happy to work with the Alabaré team to create personal support plan that met his needs. He agreed to join Alabaré's Boots on the Ground programme which runs a series of wellbeing activities primarily held in the outdoors and supports veterans' mental wellbeing.

Although initially tentative, with support Rhys took part in some fishing and hill walking activities with increasing enthusiasm. As Rhys spent more time with the Alabaré team his confidence grew, and he began to encourage and inspire other residents to get involved. He took the lead in motivating a group to help build a local memorial garden and even transported others to get to the site. As a volunteer Rhys has set up veterans' coffee mornings in local retirement homes and helped other veterans to make scrapbooks of their military history, listening with empathy and understanding to their personal stories.

Rhys has become a brilliant champion for his fellow veterans and for Alabaré. He was recently awarded an Alabaré Inspire Award.

Rhys says:

"A year ago I was in such a difficult place. Others might have given up, but Alabaré gave me a home and a chance to build a future. I was completely honest with them, and they did not judge me, but gave me the support and opportunities I needed to move forward with my life. Alabaré's Boots on the Ground team have helped me gain skills, confidence, and the ability to lead – they have made me a better person, and I am so grateful to them all. I hope that all veterans in need can benefit from Alabaré's support if they ever need it."



■ 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

■ The Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion asks: have you been discriminated against as a result of your military compensation?

Across many benefits, War Disablement Pensioners, War Widows Pensioners, and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme recipients are facing discrimination as a result of their service.

Military compensation is paid by the government in response to pain and loss of amenity due to injury or bereavement in the Armed Forces.

When benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and many others calculate eligibility for support, they frequently consider military compensation as an income source.

However, civil compensation is not treated as income.

When designing Universal Credit, the government ensured that it never records any military compensation as income for means tests, in recognition that it is unacceptable for those who served and their families to be treated less favourably.

In 2017, in response to RBL's Insult to Injury campaign, the government military compensation is no longer taken to cover injured veterans' social care costs.

Across Wales, veterans and their families are not able to apply for and receive the financial support they are entitled to, because of the injury or bereavement they have suffered in the Armed Forces.

RBL are campaigning to address this. But we need to hear from you to do so. Please get in touch if you or anyone in your family, or you know of who has been in receipt of any form of military compensation and have applied or tried to apply for any benefits, including:

- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Discretionary Housing Payment
- Council Tax Reduction

By telling your stories, we can demonstrate the impact that this prejudice has on members of the Armed Forces community.

Please contact: Aleslie@Britishlegion.org.uk

Campaigns and Policy Manager Wales



■ BLESMA The Limbless Veterans

Blesma, is a Membership Association and a Service



Veterans Charity since the First World War.

The charity supports all service and veteran amputees, those with loss of speech, sight and hearing from their service, those with loss of use of limb from service and through traumatic incident outside of their service. Blesma Wales and West continues to provide direct welfare support and grants to members and widows to ensure that their needs have been met quickly. The Support Officer (Tom Hall) supports with welfare, advocacy, prosthetics issues and liaises with NHS and other agencies closely in support of members. The Support and Outreach Officers (with the help of Blesma Volunteers) are supporting with essential tasks such as access to GP appointments, paying urgent bills, repairs to disability and mobility aids, and offering Blesma befriending calls and contacts through Welfare and wider Volunteers.

Blesma continues to collaborate closely with other services, third sector, agencies and local community groups to provide help with War Pension, benefits and entitlements issues. They are offering practical and emotional support to Blesma members who may be isolated or lonely in communities across Wales and West. It is "business as usual" with priority visits by the Blesma Support Officer taking place to those most in need. Blesma staff have been constantly in touch with members by phone, video calls and virtual events, which have replaced physical get-togethers. The period up to October 2022 has been extremely busy with veterans being supported with poor mental health and members assisted with the purchase and repair of mobility and disability aids. The Support Officer has been in close touch with Artificial Limb and Appliance Centres to address prosthetics concerns, ensuring that all provision requirements have been met, and priority appointments offered.

Activities and events

Blesma runs informal social groups across Wales, including lunches, weekly virtual Tea and Toast, health sessions and Amputee Groups. Blesma, in collaboration with the Drive Project, also continue their Making Generation R (Resilient) sessions both physically and online, running communication workshops for members and widows. This includes sessions to secondary schools, young people around the UK and emergency services.

Information for our members and supporting agencies

If members require any additional support at this time or agencies have veterans who they wish to refer for Blesma support, or they find members in need, they can contact the Blesma Support Officer, Tom Hall on Tel: **07780 165085**, Email: bsowest@blesma.org or the Outreach Officer, Jason Suller at Email: outreachwest@blesma.org
More information: www.blesma.org

■ Royal Marines Association- Cardiff & South East Wales Branch

The Branch aims to support former Royal Marines and their families whenever the need arises in our Branch area. Our support also extends to serving Royal Marines and their families.



The Branch, formally known as the Glamorgan Branch, was renamed this year to enable us to be more active in our expanded area of Wales and to encourage past members to contact us should they need help in any way.

This could be in the form of disability needs and grants and help with accessing suitable housing. We also assist with access to benefits and can provide companionship in the form of our regular Branch meetings held in Cardiff together with home visits by our members.

We also recognise the service these veterans have given by attending and/or organising funerals and memorials whenever requested. We aim to ensure that a more significant number of our veterans know what services are available to them locally by expanding the Branch profile. We aim to do this by going out into the community and holding meetings, where we would encourage veterans and their families to attend, enabling them to know where we are based and what can be done to support them.

You are encouraged to contact the Branch, in the first instance, by calling Ken Paine on **07836 794622** or by email: ken@kpaine.com

Currently, the Branch meets at the United Services Mess (USM), Westminster Building, Wharton Street, Cardiff CF10 1AG on the 1st Monday of the month or 2nd Monday should the 1st be a Bank Holiday. You will receive a very warm welcome from the members with whom you may have served.



■ REACT- Disaster Response

Two devastating earthquakes on Mon 6 Feb in south eastern Türkiye affected more than 13.5 million people, displacing an estimated 1.3 - 1.6 million.

For the next 24 days, under the banner of Op ANATOLIA, 33 RE:ACT Responders, including Pix Rodbard-Hedderwick from Carmarthenshire, Hay-on-Wye resident Paul Taylor and Monmouthshire's Nigel Jones, were deployed in Hatay province to provide situational awareness and unmet needs analysis on behalf of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team, and to distribute aid to some of the hardest to reach communities.



Pix Rodbard-Hedderwick arrives in Hatay Province with other RE:ACT Responders.

The response to the earthquakes was led by the Turkish Government, coordinated through the country's existing Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD), the Turkish Red Crescent (TRC) and other national partners. RE:ACT's response focused on addressing short terms needs in the main urban centres of impacted areas, including the clearance of debris and establishment of containerised villages.

Deemed hardest to access by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Hatay province was severely affected by the initial quakes, with the situation further compounded when it became the epicentre of the 20 Feb 6.4M quake. An estimated 345,000 people were displaced in the region with few available shelter solutions, particularly in the outlying villages.

Many facilities were once more evacuated during the second earthquake and the area was one of the last to regain access to electricity. At the time of writing there was still a widespread lack of access to washing, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities, including running and/or drinking water. In temporary tented or container sites, running water for latrines and bathing was also in limited supply. Shelter, heating, food and non-food items, WASH, and health including psychosocial support, were still the priority, at least in the short-term.

With the emergency response phase concluding and the majority of the larger relief organisations well established, Türkiye began its transition into an early recovery phase.

After consulting with our UNDAC partners, RE:ACT withdrew to monitor the situation remotely. All Responders and Staff were safely recovered via our Chilmark HQ.

At the end of our deployment, RE:ACT had:

- Prepared more than 37,000 kg of mixed aid for distribution on behalf of AFAD
- Distributed over 14,000 kg of aid to prioritised locations on behalf of IOM
- Conducted 79 detailed observations on behalf of UNDAC
- Observed 15/15 districts in Hatay province, and were the first to visit 5 of those districts after the earthquake
- Conducted 50% of all UNDAC observations in Hatay Province
- Covered 12% of priority affected area

As our Responders prepared to head home, the UNDAC team reiterated its thanks for their professional, humble and 'can-do' approach, and for adding considerable value in key operational areas including situational awareness, coordination, and information management in both the immediate aftermath of the disaster and the subsequent response phase. Many of our Responders are military veterans, repurposing their skills and experience to help others.



If you would like to join us, please check out our website at: www.re-act.org.uk



Nigel Jones (far right) discusses the day's plans with other RE:ACT Responders.



After a busy day, a RE:ACT Response team reviews their activities.

■ South Wales Royal Navy Association

South Wales Royal Naval Association report that they have opened two branches in Torfaen and Caerphilly.

RNA Torfaen was commissioned in January, with guest of honour RH Lord Paul Murphy cutting the commissioning cake with branch President Lt Lloyd Jones RN. RNA Caerphilly will be commissioned later in the year. The RNA currently has 2 other new branches in the pipeline, within Bridgend and Swansea. RNA Rhondda has arranged a celebration birthday party for an ex-RN Veteran celebrating his 100th birthday. RNA BUILT WALES will be hosting RNA Wales Uckers competition early in June with most of our 14 branches taking part.

End of May Shipmates will be heading to Liverpool to attend National Conference and viewing the unveiling of Battle of The Atlantic memorial. Highlight of the year will be to attend the Army v Navy Rugby match at Twickenham and cheer on the Royal Navy.

■ Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity

Residential Leadership Weekend - The Weekender is an activity and leadership weekend for young people from Royal Navy Families, based at world-class Loughborough University, which will take place in August, 2023.

14-17s are a group with specific challenges and being from a Royal Navy family adds additional and unique challenges. Royal Navy families often have to move location, and this creates a lack of stability for friendships, school, and community – the Weekender will bring together often dispersed and isolated 14-17s and our belief is that there will be a number of positive outcomes for those attending.

To learn more and express your interest, visit rnrmc.org.uk/kings-weekender





Activity Camps for Children and Young People

Sports and activity camps for children and young people aged 5-14 during school holidays. Exclusively for children from Royal Navy families at 10 venues across the UK. Places are subsidised by the RNRMC to make camps affordable for as many families as possible.

It's the perfect service to enable children to get active and having fun during their school holidays, and it provides parents with a fantastic childcare solution.

If you don't live near to any of the venues listed on the link, you may attend any of the Kings camps across the UK, which are also subsidised for Naval Families. Check out Venues for a full list of camps which are open to the public throughout the year or call Kings Camps Membership Team on **0114 2632160**.



Visit rnrmc.org.uk/activity-camps to find out more.

■ Woody's Lodge Partnership

Woody's Lodge was founded in 2016 in memory of Paul "Woody" Woodland, a Royal Marine and member of the Elite Special Boat Service who lost his life in a training exercise in 2012.

Based in Wales, Woody's Lodge is a social hub, which guides veterans to the help and support they need to re-engage with their families and communities. Woody's Lodge offer support to veterans with financial issues, housing and employment and healthcare referrals.

The RNRMC have given over £100,000 of funding to the Woody's Lodge Project over the last 3 years. With support from this funding, Woody's Lodge transport has been a lifeline for 97-year-old Royal Navy WW2 veteran, Gerald, helping him get out of the house and socialise with other veterans. During the COVID-19 lockdowns, Gerald's essential transport needs were taken care of, and he also received regular food parcels and twice weekly phone calls from the Woody's Lodge team. By working closely with Woody's Lodge, the RNRMC can

respond to the needs of veterans in South Wales effectively. The local knowledge and connections of regional organisations allows the RNRMC to maintain an agile and proactive approach, providing naval communities with a helping hand right across the country.

For more information on Woody's Lodge, please visit woodyslodge.org



The Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines – St David's Hall, Cardiff

Following their sell out performances at London's Royal Albert Hall in March 2023, The Massed Bands of His Majesty's Royal Marines are taking another spectacular show on their first ever UK tour in September 2023. This world-famous Band will be live in concert at St David's Hall, Cardiff on Thursday 14 September 2023.

With over 100 musicians on stage and the world-famous Royal Marines Corps of Drums, these concerts will showcase the outstanding musicianship and versatility of the world's finest military bands. Complete with special lighting effects, this spectacular concert provides audiences with an opportunity to enjoy the traditional Naval Sunset Finale which, once witnessed in the magnificent St David's Hall, Cardiff, will be remembered for ever.

This is a fundraising concert for Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charities and tickets are only available from the box office at St David's Hall, Cardiff and are priced at £25.00, £31.00 and £37.00.

Tickets are available online from www.stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk/whats-on/orchestral-choral/the-massed-bands-of-his-majestys-royal-marines/.



■ Woody's Lodge South Wales hub

It has been a very busy period for Woody's Lodge South Wales, over the beginning of 2023.

We have welcomed been fortunate enough to welcome some new staff, Christopher Adams joins our support team, and Former Royal Marine, Alan Jones as our RN/RM Project Officer, both have already made a positive impact in a short space of time.

Our staff and volunteers have been working hard to improve on the work and activities we conduct for our veterans, with activities happening almost everyday of the week, Monday's we hold our Memory Monday's, where we conduct various different activities aimed at helping those who struggle with their memory, have been diagnosed with Dementia or Alzheimer's. These activities have proven very popular and have been welcomed by the veterans, their spouses and family alike.



RAF Veteran Dennis using "Memory Lane Games App" during one of our Memory Monday's sessions.

We have also recently started Woodworking on Monday's in conjunction with the RNA Woodworking interest group, this has been a great opportunity for those veterans who have a keen interest in woodworking, and for those who are just starting. The woodworking team have been working together to make some benches and raised planters for the veterans memorial garden within Cardiff Castle. Two benches have already been delivered with another three to be made along with a total of 5 raised planters.



Woody's Lodge Activities Officer Keith Taylor and RM Veteran Clark working on a planter for Cardiff Castle.

On Tuesday's we greatly appreciate "Models for Heroes" come in to and conducting Model Building with our veterans and staff who have all found this a very enjoyable activity. Wednesday's we have a more chilled out day where our veterans pick and watch a film, with some popcorn and light refreshments. By far our most popular day is Thursday's, which is our social day with a "Butty and Brew" for all.

Looking to the future we are hoping to expand on the activities we provide with more local trips out, and increasing our joint activities with our West and North Wales hubs and the veterans that attend in those locations.

Our Support team have been working tirelessly on behalf of our veterans over the last year, assisting with PiP, Attendance Allowance and War Pension applications along with finding the correct support for our veterans and their families by making referrals to third party organisations and NHS departments that are better equipped in support those with complex issue's. During the last 12 months South Wales Support team alone have assisted, and supported, 1,245 veterans, they have also helped draw down £647,736.61 in benefits and pension payments for our veterans during this period.

This is a massive achievement and testament to the dedication support the whole team provide to our veterans, but also and more importantly a much needed financial boost for those veterans and their families, during a particular difficult time the whole of the UK is facing with the cost of living.



■ SSAFA the Armed Forces charity

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity is a trusted source of practical, emotional, and financial support for serving personnel, veterans and their families in their time of need.

In 2021 our teams of trained volunteers and employees helped more than 66,000 people, from Second World War veterans to those who have served in more recent conflicts, or currently serving, (both regulars and reserves), and their families.

Since 1885 we have provided welfare and wellbeing assistance that is tailored to our Armed Forces community, we know about the unique demands of service life, whether in the UK or overseas. We continue to meet the demand for support and to enable the entire Forces family to thrive. SSAFA understands that behind every uniform is a person. And we are here for that person and their family, any time they need us and in any way they need us.

Regional Office Wales News –

Since the Regional Office (RO) “go live” date last May, enquiries from the Armed Forces community to the RO in Wales have steadily grown. Monthly enquiries are currently numbering around 500 each month with 15 - 20 % becoming applications for financial assistance. The remainder of the contacts are non-financial support, Volunteer support / notifications and general enquiries / signposting.

In 2022, SSAFA the Armed Forces charity in Wales assisted almost 500 families or individuals spending over £708,000 on support, priority debt, housing, and other support services. This was an all-time high in terms of the number of cases and money spent.

If you know someone who needs help or if you would like to speak with one of our Team, please call or email on the following contact details -

Case referrals – Please contact the Wales Regional Office
Email: wales.region@ssafa.org.uk Tel: 02922 941004

Every year, SSAFA is there for the Armed Forces community when they need us most. But we can only do it with your help – please get in touch to help fundraise or be a Caseworker volunteer.



ssafa | the **Armed Forces** charity

VETERANS **RESERVE** **GIG** **NEW** **WELSH**

Have you ever served in the UK Armed Forces as a Regular, Reservist or through National Service?

Please let your medical practice know.
 You may be eligible for priority treatment.

© 2022 SSAFA the Armed Forces Charity



In partnership with



Find a new way forward for your Forces family.

Supporting a veteran with a health condition can affect the whole family. If someone close to you has served, we'll help you on your journey into employment, no matter what challenges you face.

How we can help

- Skills assessments
- Confidence building
- Encouragement
- Advice on volunteering
- Training support
- Introductions to services
- Help accessing healthcare
- Job application skills
- Interview preparation
- In-work support
- Advocacy with employers
- Flexible working requests
- Parent and carer networks



In partnership with



Overcoming barriers, new opportunities

Supporting a veteran with a health condition can add an extra challenge to the relocations that are part of military life.

The free **Families Employment Service** is available to any adult family member supporting a member of the Armed Forces community who has, or has recovered from, a health condition. This includes 'chosen family', separated partners and parents of veterans.

Our Employment Specialists empower people to overcome obstacles and find work that suits their circumstances, with support delivered by phone, email and video call.

We'll be with you as long as it takes.

EMAIL: familiesinfo@poppyfactory.org
CALL: 020 8939 1837
REGISTER/REFERRALS: poppyfactory.org/families



Registered Charity No. 225348

SAMARITANS

■ Samaritans

If you are struggling to cope and need someone to talk to, Samaritans will listen.

You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on **116 123** (free from any phone) or email: jo@samaritans.org.

You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line (free from any phone) on **0808 164 0123** (7pm–11pm every day).

Did you know Samaritans have a Welsh Language Line?

They know how important it is to access support in your first language & Samaritans volunteers are there to support you. You can call them for free between 7pm & 11pm 7 days a week on 0808 164 0123. Please don't struggle alone.

Free-to-call

Did you know that you can call Samaritans for free, in English or Welsh, and it won't show up on your phone bill? You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 116 123 (free from any phone) or email jo@samaritans.org. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line (free from any phone) on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day).

Reasons to call

People contact Samaritans with all sorts of concerns and what might be a small issue to you may be huge to someone else. You could be going through something new, you may be struggling to cope or you may be feeling suicidal. Samaritans are always there to listen if you need to talk.

You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 116 123 (free from any phone) or email jo@samaritans.org. You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line (free from any phone) on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day).

How can I contact Samaritans?

On the phone

This number is free to call from both landlines and mobiles, including pay-as-you-go mobiles. You do not need to have any credit or call allowance on your plan to call. You can contact Samaritans 24 hours a day, 365 days a year on 116 123 (free from any phone) or email jo@samaritans.org.

Call 116 123

You can also call the Samaritans Welsh Language Line (free from any phone) on 0808 164 0123 (7pm–11pm every day).

Via email

You can email Samaritans at jo@samaritans.org. They aim to respond within 24 hours.

jo@samaritans.org

Response time: 24 hours

By letter

Sometimes writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you better understand them. You can write to Samaritans for free, in English or Welsh at **Freepost SAMARITANS LETTERS**

What can I talk to Samaritans about?

People contact Samaritans with all sorts of concerns and what might be a small issue to you may be huge to someone else.

You could be going through something new or have been struggling to cope for some time, either way, Samaritans are there if you feel you need some extra support. If what's getting to you isn't on this list, please still get in touch.

Common reasons people contact Samaritans about are:

- relationship and family problems
- loss, including loss of a friend or a family member through bereavement
- financial worries
- job-related stress
- college or study-related stress
- loneliness and isolation
- depression
- painful and/or disabling physical illness
- heavy use of or dependency on alcohol or other drugs
- thoughts of suicide
- sexuality or gender
- Samaritans won't make decisions for you and will support the decisions you make.

Are Samaritans religious?

Samaritans are not religious. The link between their name and any religious text is completely coincidental. Their listeners will never impose any personal attitudes or beliefs on you.

Charity News

SAMARITANS

What if I'm d/Deaf, hard of hearing or have a speech impediment?

Callers who are d/Deaf or who have hearing or speech impairments can contact Samaritans for support by email by using jo@samaritans.org or by using the Next Generation Text (NGT) service.

Next Generation Text is not specific to Samaritans and can be used on any telephone number. You can contact Samaritans in this way using your local branch telephone number which can be found at www.samaritans.org/wales/branches

What if I'm under 18?

You can still get in touch with Samaritans if you're under 18. Samaritans are there for you, whatever your age. Their first responsibility is to you, not your parents or guardian.

You can talk to Samaritans about whatever is on your mind and they will listen. This might include how you look, problems at school or college, how people are treating you, and worries about exams or money.

What if I have mental health issues?

Samaritans provide the same support to people with mental health issues as they do for anyone else.

If you have a mental health diagnosis, you can talk about it with Samaritans, or you may want to talk to them about something else that's troubling you, and that's fine too.

Samaritans know that people with the same diagnosis may have very different experiences. They will explore what living with your mental health issue means for you. Your experience is the most important thing to Samaritans, not the label.

Because Samaritans volunteers aren't trained mental health professionals, when you talk about your diagnosis or medication, they may not always be familiar with the medical terms.

Shouldn't I talk to friends and family instead?

Some people do not have the support of friends or family. Others do have friends or family to talk to but find that talking to someone neutral can also be beneficial.

Samaritans keep conversations private, so they can't pass the information you give us onto anyone else and they won't judge or insist on giving advice.

military wives
Choirs
Cardiff
Caerdydd

Open to
all women
with a military
connection




Cardiff Military Wives Choir

When? Every Thursday night at 7pm – 7.30pm Coffee/Tea.

7.30pm - 9:15pm Rehearsal

Where? 203 Welsh Field Hospital, Gabalfa Avenue, Llandaff North, CF14 2HX

No experience or audition necessary

 cardiff@militarywiveschoirs.org

   @cardiffmwchoir

Part of the Military Wives Choirs Foundation, registered charity in England and Wales (1148302) & Scotland (SC045217).

Heritage Centre

Now Open to Visitors



Wednesdays 11am - 3pm
Saturdays 11am - 3pm

Next to the Old Gate to Beachley Barracks

Everybody Welcome
Come and enjoy a significant piece of local history

Contact Telephone: 07501 237052

■ The Poppy Factory

Employment support for the ex-forces community.

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



Four out 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.

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

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.



**THE
POPPY
FACTORY**

getting you back to work

Find out more - www.poppyfactory.org

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

2023 grant submission deadlines are:

- **Grant Application Submission Deadline 7 August for the September Trustee Meeting**
- **Grant Application Submission Deadline 23 October for the December Trustee Meeting**

Veterans Foundation

Funding opportunity: Grants from The Veterans' Foundation

The Veterans' Foundation has established a substantial grants programme to support charities and organisations that provide support to those in need among serving armed forces personnel, veterans, operationally qualified seafarers and their immediate families.

The broad range of charities and organisations supported by the Veterans' Foundation is extensive and covers every aspect of social care including: homelessness, employability, poverty, disability, welfare issues, mental health, marriage guidance, care during old age and confidence building.



VETERANS' FOUNDATION

Two grants are available:

- 1) Grants of any sum up to a maximum of £30K may be awarded. Trustees will also consider a bid for a spread grant up to a maximum of £30K, i.e. £30K as £10K for each of the next two or three years.
- 2) Grants of any sum up to a maximum of £40K for the exclusive use on salaries over a two-year period may be awarded i.e. £40K as £20K for each of the next two years. In some cases, the grant award may be limited to one year and grantees will be asked to reapply at a later date for the second year of funding.

The grants are competitive, and the VF gives priority to charities and organisations who can demonstrate that they are directly involved in the provision of support to those in need, as well as well-run organisations of low to medium wealth.

Instructions, guidance and the application process for all grants can be found online here:

<https://www.veteransfoundation.org.uk/grant-application/>

If you have any queries, please contact
grants@veteransfoundation.org.uk