

Cross-Party Group in the Scottish Parliament on Armed Forces Veterans

Meeting 11 June 2014 1800hrs at the Scottish Parliament

Minutes

Attendance

Alex Fergusson MSP	Scottish Parliament	Convenor
George Adam MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Annabelle Ewing MSP	Scottish Parliament	
Jamie McGrigor MSP	Scottish Parliament	

Tony	Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland - Military Matters
Jude	Clarke	British Psychological Society
George	Corbett	SVR
John	Fotheringham	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Ally	Gemmell	ASAP
Watty	Logan	SPS
Karen	Ludlow	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Ian	Ludlow	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Gene	Maxwell	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Ian	McGregor	PoppyScotland
Neil	Robinson	RBLs
Aiveen	Ryan	
Ross	Swinton	Veteran
Jim	Wilson	Veterans Scotland - Secretary

- 1. Introduction:** Mr Alex Fergusson MSP, Convenor AFV Cross Party Group, welcomed those attending and indicated that the main focus for consideration at this meeting was to be updated on progress relating to the Scottish Governments 'Our Commitments' paper, followed by a general discussion on matters relating to the key issues of Housing, Health, Employment and Welfare.
- 2. Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group meeting, held on 23 April 2014, were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 3. Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.
- 4. Topics for Consideration:**
 - a. Our Commitments:** Jim Wilson provided an update on matters relating to 'Our Commitments' highlighting much of the good work that had been carried out recently in support of veterans. This was followed by a discussion on the critical areas relating to key issues.
 - b. Housing:** The publication of 'The Scottish Housing Guide' and promoting it through various websites and distributing copies to 'Scottish' units was having a positive effect on transitioning personnel.

It was recognised that communicating information to personnel transitioning into Scotland from units that were not recognisably 'Scottish' but which may have a number of Scottish personnel serving in them (eg various RN and RM units, Royal Artillery, Royal Logistic Corps etc and a range of RAF units) is difficult. This group is likely to form the majority of personnel although statistics are not publicised.

- c. Health: Jude Clarke suggested a number of ways that veterans needs might be better identified through the BPS; there was some discussion on the important role that Mental Health First Aid courses could have in identifying veterans with mental health issues and signposting them at as early a stage as possible. The role of NHS Veterans Champions and how a consistent approach might be found for this role was discussed.
- d. Employment: There was a general discussion on employment of veterans and it was agreed that the great many benefits that veterans bring to employers are not as well understood as they should be, how this might be rectified was briefly considered. Early Service Leavers are the group most at risk of poor employment prospects as many have few qualifications and have a poor educational background. Education and Training during transition is an important factor to improve this.
- e. Welfare: The levels of veterans identifying themselves as such within the prison population was discussed and it continues to be below the 'average' one might expect from a group that represents some 8% of the Scottish population (currently below 2.8% of the prison population claim to be veterans). The matter of financial planning, money management and a military Credit Union was briefly considered.

It was recognised that the need to support individual veterans must be balanced with the need to support their families.

5. AOB: It was agreed that the Convenor would invite Mr Keith Brown MSP, Minister for Veterans to the next meeting.

6. Dates of future Cross Party Group meetings: Future meeting dates were agreed as shown below, the main topic for discussion is shown in brackets:

30 September 2014 (AGM of the Cross Party Group)

Before the Convenor closed the meeting, at approximately 8:00pm, he thanked those attending for their contributions to the discussions.