

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

Meeting 23 April 2014 1800hrs at the Scottish Parliament

Minutes

Attendance

Alex Fergusson MSP Scottish Parliament
 Jackson Carlaw MSP Scottish Parliament

Lucy	Abraham	Veterans First Point
Charlie	Allanson-Oddy	Veterans 1st point
Stephen	Baird	RBLS
Maurice	Corry	Argyll and Bute Council
Phil	Cox	SVR
Archie	Dryburgh	Dumfries & Galloway Council
John	Fotheringham	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Des	Gale	Mark Wright Project
Ally	Gemmell	ASAP
Kenny	Gibson	SACRO
Barry	Henderson	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Jim	Lawrence	Combat Stress
Watty	Logan	SPS
Jane	Lorimer	Veterans & Families Support Network
Gene	Maxwell	HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade
Johanna	McGhee	Glasgow's Helping Heroes
Ian	McGregor	PoppyScotland
Alison	McQuillan	SVR
Margaret	Millar	Mark Wright Project
Kenneth	Morrice	SVR
Peter	Poole	Combat Stress
Neil	Robinson	RBLS
Paula	Shiels	Combat Stress
Dave	Stevens	Veterans & Families Support Network
Sheena	Stone	RBLS
Ross	Swinton	
Gary	Wallace	WDRG
Rob	Whealing	SACRO
Steve	Williams	Mark Wright Project
Jim	Wilson	Veterans Scotland

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 on Mental Health for veterans in Scotland.
2. **Minutes of Previous meeting:** The minutes of the previous Cross Party Group meeting, held on 5th February 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:** The Convenor welcomed the speakers who came from a variety of organisations bringing with them a range of experience and knowledge. Each speaker was given the opportunity to provide the group with an overview of their work and their experience. Speakers and topics on which they focussed included:
 - a. Mental Health in the Armed Forces: Maj Gene Maxwell HQ 51 (Scottish) Brigade.
 - b. Combat Stress: Peter Poole CEO
 - c. Veterans First Point: Lucy Abrahams
 - d. Scottish Veterans Residence: Ken Morrice

Following each speaker there was an opportunity to discuss the matters raised and to quiz them on the issue. Common themes included the relatively low numbers of Service Leavers with PTSD (assessed by MOD to be in the region of 4%); the equivalence of mental health issues among veterans and the civilian population (assessed to be about 20% in both populations). The broad range of experience of the speakers encapsulated a range of experience and opportunity for veterans who may have quite differing mental health issues ranging from mild depression to severe psychiatric issues although these affect a small percentage of veterans. According to Combat Stress, Northern Ireland still catalyses the majority of their client group although young veterans from Afghanistan and Iraq are on the increase. Common issues recognised among veterans include drug and alcohol dependency, hostility to authority, clinging to rights and fear of intimacy.

5. AOB: There was no other business identified.

The Convenor thanked all of the speakers for their contributions in particular emphasising how important it appears for vulnerable veterans to be given support and understanding. Many issues can be resolved if identified at an early stage and often such issues, if not dealt with can grow more severe over time.

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:

11th June

(Our Commitments)

Before the Convenor closed the meeting, at approximately 8:00pm, he thanked those attending and contributing to the discussions, he also thanked Gillian Gillies for drawing together the administrative arrangements for the meeting.