

**Scottish Parliament Cross-Party Group on
The Armed Forces and Veterans Community**

13 Dec 2016

This meeting took place in The Scottish Parliament, starting at 6:00pm.

Attending:

Maurice Corry MSP (Convenor)	MSP
Adrian Peters	Career Transition Partnership
Alex Colgan	SAMH
Alex Leith	Scottish Prison Service
Alistair Gemmell	ASAP
Bob Bertram	Scotland & NI RAF Association
Bruce Smith	Lothians Veterans Centre
Capt Chris Smith RN	Royal Navy
Col Charles Wallace	Army in Scotland
Cynthia Fry	BITC Scotland
David McNeill	Help for Heroes
David Riddell	SACRO- Veterans Mentoring Service
Deborah McKinnon	Help for Heroes
Douglas Ross MSP	MSP
Eric Fraser	SVC
Gary Gray	Poppyscotland
George Adam MSP	MSP
Gordon MacDonald MSP	MSP
Greame Dalgiesh	SACRO- Veterans Mentoring Service
Jackie Baillie MSP	MSP
James Newman	SVC
Jenna Austin	SAMH
Julie Lowe	Army Families Federation
Karen Elliot	Association of Wrens & Royal Navy Association
Kevin Gray	Legion Scotland
Lachlan Bruce	MSP Staff
Mark Harris	Naval Families Federation
Martin Gibson	Veterans Scotland
Michelle McEarnan	Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce
Nadine Milne	Scottish Government
Oxana MacGregor-Gunn	SAMH
Pat MacKinnon	Thistle Foundation
Richard Hellewell	Scottish War Blinded
Ross Swinton	Veteran
Sqn Ldr Nobby Clark	RAF
Sandra Cheyne	Skills Development Scotland
Sarah Muir	Veterans First Point Highland
Sharon Fegan	Veterans First Point Scotland
Shaun Caluvin	Veterans Scotland
Stephen Elliot	Legion Scotland
Vivienne McColl	Scottish Government
Jim Wilson (Secretary)	Veterans Scotland

1. **Introduction and Opening Remarks:** Mr Maurice Corry MSP, Convenor, opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and thanked all for attending, in significant numbers. Apologies had been received from Jackson Carlaw MSP and Edward Mountain MSP.

2. Mr Corry reported that he had had a meeting with Mr Keith Brown, MSP, Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for veterans who had indicated that he was keen to engage with this Cross Party Group and would like to be invited to attend and take questions.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** The minutes of the meeting held on 21st Sep 2016 were agreed and accepted as an accurate record of that meeting. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

4. **Scottish Veterans Commissioner:** Mr Corry welcomed Eric Fraser, the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, and thanked him for his report into Employability, Skills and Training for veterans. The Commissioner provided background behind his report and the key priorities he had identified in the report. This was then discussed and it was agreed that employers, in particular SME employers, could be better informed on the benefits that Service leavers and veterans could bring to their organisations. There was a role here for SDS, Colleges and Universities in assisting in the re-training/skilling of Service leavers and that information should be easily accessible for those choosing to settle in Scotland. The Commissioner was thanked for his comprehensive and thorough report.

5. **Wider Employability:** Discussion moved to the wider employability of the Armed Forces Community and it was the consensus of the meeting that there was a political will to ensure that the value of the community is recognised and that service leavers, veterans and families all have skills and abilities that are valuable. There is a role for many agencies in recognising this and assisting in the process of transition. It was suggested that a Parliamentary Debate could take place on the Commissioner's report which would raise its profile, and that a response from the Scottish Government could be made at the next meeting.

6. **AOB:** The Firm Base network in Scotland was discussed, identifying it as a two-way communication medium for the Armed Forces Community and the wider community. It was recognised that such fora should generate real communication between the various interested organisations.

7. Next Meetings: 8 March 2017

The meeting closed at approximately 8:00pm