

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

**13 June 2017**

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

1. Attending:

**MSP Attending (8)**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Maurice	Corry	MSP - Convenor
Jackie	Baillie	MSP
Bill	Bowman	MSP
Keith	Brown	MSP
Jackson	Carlaw	MSP
Liam	Kerr	MSP
Gordon	Lindhurst	MSP
Richard	Lochhead	MSP
Apologies had been received from Willie Rennie MSP		

**Others Attending (40)**

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Euan	Barker	HQ 51 Inf Bde
Bob	Bertram	RAFA
Imogen	Bevan	University of Edinburgh
Mark	Bibbey	Poppyscotland
Tony	Carruthers	HOS
Lynne	Carter	Scottish Government
Alex	Colgan	SAMH
Claudia	Craig	Scottish Government
Graeme	Dalgliesh	SACRO
Alex	Edmonds	University of Edinburgh
Stephen	Elliot	Legion Scotland
Karen	Elliot	Assoc of Wrens/RNA
Colin	Flinn	RCET
Eric	Fraser	SVC
Alan	Hamilton	ASAP
Mark	Harris	NFF
Maj Davey	Harvey	HQ 51 Inf Bde
Anabel	Ingram	AFF
Colin	Jones	RAFFF
Moira	Kane	WWA
Alex	Leith	SPS
Moira	Leslie	RCET
Mary-Clare	Macfarlane	OAS
Lt Col Gordon	MacKenzie	HQ 51 Inf Bde
Keith	MacKenzie	VCC

Carolyn	MacLeod	ADES
David	McAllister	SSAFA
Vivienne	McColl	Scottish Government
Spike	Milligan	Veteran
Trish	Mullen	CTP
James	Newman	SVC
Craig	Peaston	Scottish Government
Cllr Robert	Speirs	Falkirk Council
Karen	Stock	RCET
Sarah	Stone	Recruit for Spouses
Ross	Swinton	Veteran
Col Charlie	Wallace	HQ 51 Inf Bde
Jim	Wilson	Veterans Scotland (Secretary)
Mandy	Winterton	Edinburgh Napier University
Bob	Wright	Edinburgh Napier University

2. Mr Maurice Corry MSP opened the meeting and thanked all those attending. He noted that there were significant numbers of people attending and that he was pleased to see 8 MSP members and local authority Armed Forces and Veterans Champions attending.

3. The minutes of the meeting of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record. There were no matters arising.

4. Mr Corry then invited Mr Keith Brown MSP, Veterans Minister, to update the group from the Scottish Government's perspective. Mr Brown reiterated the Scottish Government's support to the Armed Forces Community (AFC) and welcomed this cross party group's expansion to include the whole community, from his perspective Scotland provides 'above average' support which is described in the Renewing Our Commitments publication.

Promoting the employability of the AFC is a priority and he referred to the Business in the Community 'employers' toolkit' which provides a wealth of information that is being actively promoted by organisations such as SVETS and Salute my Job. The Scottish Veterans Commissioner had issued his report on Employment and had provided 19 recommendations, one recommendation had resulted in the setting up of the Veterans Employment Strategy Working Group. The Scottish Veterans Fund, of £120,000 from Scottish Government and £80,000 from Standard Life, was focussed on employability and the elimination of disadvantage as a result of Service. The Government were pleased to support the Insult to Injury campaign promoting a disregard of Disability War Pensions for social care.

An annual report had been provided to the Scottish Parliament, this helps to raise the profile of the AFC. On physical and mental health, work is being carried out to ensure that the obligation to provide priority treatment for conditions resulting from Service is better understood both by health professionals and by the AFC. A focus is being put on the needs of families and Scottish Government is liaising with UK Government with a view to: reduce moves, provide continuity of the Education Support Fund, promote spousal employment and to recognise the skills that people coming out of the Services have. Scottish Government intends to assist and support this.

Questions put to Mr Brown included some discussion on matters relating to veterans working below the living wage; the CTP were due to deliver information on self-employment and a seminar was due to take place at Lossiemouth on 28 Sep; the concept of 'veterans facilities' (in this case the Veterans Community Café in Edinburgh) making their services open to the wider uniformed service community was discussed and it was recognised that this was a decision for the organisations concerned.

Mr Brown left the meeting at 6:30pm; having been thanked by Mr Corry for his update.

5. Mr Corry thanked the speakers for the subsequent part of the meeting, first inviting the three Service Families Federations to give their presentations. Anabel Ingram from the Army Families Federation spoke on behalf of the three Federations and highlighted some of the key issues facing Service families:

Education:

- Impact on children's education, in particular when the most local school has insufficient space.
- The need to signpost families to appropriate services, when they are unfamiliar with the local area.
- Assistance in transitioning into (and out of) Scotland.
- Families often perceive themselves as unsettled.
- The unfair need to 'go through the same hoops' when moving – especially for the provision of SEN support.
- Perceived imbalance in provision of support between different countries both within the UK and abroad.
- Difficulty in getting school places at the time of posting.

Health:

- Need for consultant to consultant dialogue when a family receiving treatment moves into a different health board area.
- Where an individual is awaiting treatment in one area, they should move to a similar position on the waiting list in a new area.

Employment:

- Promoting the importance of opportunities for spousal employment.

Housing:

- Importance of recognising issues faced by families in the event of divorce or separation.

Mark Harris from the Navy Families Federation highlighted the numbers of Service personnel living in Scotland (approx. 4200) and said that typically only 10% of Naval families live in quarters. Childcare provision and the importance of support in transition were highlighted as important matters to get right if Scotland is to become a posting of choice.

Colin Jones for the RAF Families Federation confirmed that many of the issues discussed were common among RAF families.

Mr Corry thanked the speakers and suggested that it may be appropriate to generate a means of getting local champions to liaise with each other when families, in particular those with special circumstances, are moving between areas.

6. Mr Corry then introduced Colin Flinn from the Royal Caledonian Education Trust who provided an update on the charity, now some 200 years old, which has recently moved into Scotland. The value of the Education Support Fund should not be underestimated for families. Moira Leslie, the Education Manager with RCET, discussed the key issues facing families and Service children in education; many of these revolve around the transition between schools where education systems, curriculums, practices and policies can differ significantly.

7. Mr Corry invited Carolyn McLeod to speak on her work as Transitions Officer with the Association of Directors of Education Scotland. She highlighted a number of key issues:

- Transition can happen on moving into Scotland, moving within Scotland and on leaving Scotland; each move can have an impact on the education of children.
- Information and experience in how to manage such impact is not always being shared among education professionals.
- The needs of individual children moving between schools on a routine basis need to be identified and addressed.
- There is a need to consider issues faced by children of regular service families as a result of trickle posting.
- The needs of children from reservists families lack visibility, RCET are seeking to address this.
- The needs of families in transition out of the Services are important.
- She was pleased to highlight that one of the SEEMIS indicators asks about whether children come from a Service/ex-Service background.
- A film has been made to share across the education community on the impact that Service life has on children. This will be followed up by an Early Years film, due for production in Spring.
- She identified the collaborative work that does take place in Scotland.
- An impact report is being prepared into the effectiveness of the Education Support Fund.

Mr Corry thanked the speakers for their stimulating and thought provoking presentations.

8. Mr Corry invited Col Charlie Wallace to provide a Service update. In summary: HMS Queen Elizabeth is now almost complete and will soon be starting sea trials before taking up her base in the south of England. The RAF, 100 years old in 2018, continues to provide an important component for UK defence from its bases in Scotland. The Army continues to be busy with all four regular units in Scotland being deployed on operations during 2018. He reiterated that the vast majority of Servicemen and women benefit from their time in Service. The positive role that the Cadet organisations play was highlighted. The Firm Base Steering group is now up and running, directing Community Engagement across Scotland. Armed Forces Day and 'Army at the Fringe', which will provide an insight into Service life, was discussed.

9. No other business had been raised so Mr Corry closed the meeting by thanking all for attending, he felt that a number of areas were progressing well and that the cross party group was meeting its remit to brief MSPs.

10. Next Meeting: The next meeting, which will include the AGM, will take place on 13<sup>th</sup> Sep 2017; the focus for that meeting will be Transition.

The meeting closed at approximately 7:50pm