

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

Meeting 13 Sep 2017

Minutes

1. **Introductions and Opening Remarks:** The Convenor welcomed the Group and thanked everyone for attending; in particular he welcomed the Armed Forces and Veterans Champions from local authorities and hoped that more could be in attendance at future meetings. He felt that significant progress had been made by extending the focus of the Group to include the wider Armed Forces Community. This was endorsed by the members present.

2. **Attendance:**

MSPs	
Maurice	Corry (Convenor)
George	Adam
Liam	Kerr
Gordon	Lindhurst
Richard	Lochhead
Edward	Mountain
Members	
Alex Edmonds	University of Edinburgh
Alex Leith	SPS
Alison Howard	Scottish Veterans Commissioners Office
Barbara Morgan	Veterans Champion, Argyll & Bute
Barbara Spence	SACRO
Barry Henderson	SACRO
Col Charles Wallace	HQ 51 Inf Bde & HQ Scotland
David McAllister	SSAFA
Eric Fraser	Scottish Veterans Commissioner
Gaby Cahen	Scottish Veterans Commissioners Office
Graeme Dalgliesh	SACRO
Heather Wilson	Scottish Veterans Commissioners Office
Imogen Bevan	University of Edinburgh
James Newman	Scottish Veterans Commissioners Office
Jim Wilson	Veterans Scotland & Secretary
Karen Elliot	Association of Wrens & Royal Naval Association
Kate McCullough	Army Families Federation
Lachlan Bruce	Scottish Government
Kenny Warren	Defence Policy Unit
Louise Briggs	RAF Families Association
Lt Col Gordon Mackenzie	HQ 51 Bde
Lucy Heaver	Naval Families Federation

Maj Davey Harvey	HQ 51 Bde
Mark Bibbey	Poppyscotland
Mark Harris	Naval Families Federation
Mark Horsham	South Lanarkshire Council
Martin Gibson	Veterans Scotland
Mary Clare MacFarlane	OAS
Morag Malcolm	DPU
Phil Hall	Help for Heroes
Ross Swinton	Veteran
Sharon Fegan	Veterans 1st Point Scotland
Stephen Elliot	Legion Scotland
Steve Burton	Blesma
Susie Hamilton	SVR
Tony Carruthers	Housing Options Scotland
Vivienne McColl	DPU

Apologies had been received by all MSP members who were not present.

3. **Previous Minutes:** The minutes of the previous meeting, which had taken place on 13 June 2017, were agreed as an accurate record of that meeting.
4. **Matters arising.** There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.
5. **Briefings:** There were two topics presented,
 - Synopsis of meetings 2016/17: Jim Wilson provided a resume of the annual report for the year. This was the fifth meeting to take place since the groups inauguration in September 2016. Topics considered had included Employability, Health, an update on the Scottish Government's perspective and Transition of Service Families (13 Sep 2017). Subsequent discussion highlighted that these are important subjects and that they should be revisited at subsequent meetings. Considering them in the context of the whole Armed Forces Community (ie the Serving, Veteran and Family) was useful as the impact of Service is felt across all of this community and the importance of MSPs being briefed and understanding these matters should not be underestimated.

Subsequent discussion identified the need to continue to develop the Firm Base contact at local authority level in order that the obligations to the Armed Forces Covenant are met. It was noted that Eric Fraser, Scottish Veterans Commissioner, was extended in post for a year which was welcomed. There was some discussion on the Armed Forces visit scheme, which has seen MSP visits to Lossiemouth and Glencorse, with more planned; the Convenor noted that this was made possible by the Speaker of the Parliament.

- Transition – Families Perspective: The three Service Families Federations provided a brief on their study into Transition from a Families

Perspective; this study is funded by FiMT. This was very well received and provided an excellent insight into the subject. The three Families Federations are conducting a study into Transition and this formed the basis for the brief, a copy of their presentation is attached.

Subsequent discussion recognised the value of the brief which brought to life many of the complexities of Transition, both when leaving the Services and returning to Scotland as well as Transition when a serviceman or woman is posted to Scotland and then posted out. Key areas that the study has identified to consider include:

- Housing
- Spousal Employment
- Health and Wellbeing
- Education
- Finance

Whilst this list is not exhaustive, much relies on a good interface between Central and Devolved administrations. Recognition of such complexity goes a long way to alleviate any adverse impact of transition.

It was agreed that it would be of interest to hear a future report on progress from the study as it develops.

6. **Topics for Future meetings:** It was agreed that it would be useful to consider how Scotland is meeting its obligation to the Armed Forces Covenant at the next meeting and that the Convenor and Secretary would develop this and an alternative theme. Other topics suggested were:

- Scottish Veterans Commissioners future Health & Well Being Reports;
- An Operational Update (suggested for April Meeting)
- An Update on the Firm Base
- Employability (by the Veterans Employability Strategy Working Group)
- Education (both for Service Leavers and Families)
- The impact of Welfare Reforms

7. **AOB:** No additional business had been suggested

8. **Dates of Next Meetings:**

- 17 January
- 17 April
- 26 June
- 19 September