

West Wales Armed Forces Veterans Information

March 2015 Edition - Issue 1

Welcome to the first edition of West Wales Veterans Newsletter

In this first addition we will be looking at some of the new organisations that have opened their doors to helping and supporting veterans within the three counties of West Wales.

We have many veterans in our communities who have received good quality help from organisations such as the British Legion and SSAFA and without them many veterans and their families situations would not have improved. However it is so good to see that in the last two years other third sector organisations have set up various projects to help and support veterans and their families. It has also been great to see that all three councils have signed up to the Armed Forces Community Covenant.



If you have any queries please contact Charles at
West Wales Action for Mental Health on:

charles@wwamh.org.uk / 01267 238 367 / www.wwamh.org.uk

For so many years now our armed forces have been involved in various conflicts and I believe this has taken its toll on many military personnel, whether its a struggle to settle back into civvy street, or someone with various physical injuries or someone experiencing mental health problems due to active service.

So in this edition, we will be introducing some of the organisations that have started to engage with various veterans within our three counties. We will be producing this newsletter three times a year so there will be plenty of opportunity for all to tell us there story or explain the service they provide.

We would love to hear from veterans and organisations as to what they would like to see and read within the newsletter, this is community newsletter so please feel free to get involved.

West Wales Action for Mental Health
Gweithredu dros Iechyd Meddwl Gorllewin Cymru

Working together to improve the standards of mental health throughout West Wales
Gweithio gyda'n gilydd i wella safonau iechyd meddwl ledled Gorllewin Cymru



THE VC GALLERY

Last summer I had the privilege to be invited to the **VC Gallery** in Haverfordwest where I met a gentleman called Barry John. Now Barry was the recruiting sergeant for the Army in Haverfordwest town and whilst he was doing that he found that he connected with veterans and when they finished having boxing lessons Barry would introduce them to art, it took off so well that Barry realised that he needed to create this further, so he left the Army receiving his MBE, and set up the VC Gallery.

The VC Gallery assists in:

- Combating social exclusion, improve social interaction, increase self esteem and self value.
- Improving better understanding of community, communication skills and interpersonal skill.
- Job interview skills and techniques, creating CV's and help in completing job applications.
- Creating ownership of individual time keeping strategies and management
- Improving communication links to mental health and local surgery's for better access.
- Mediating within housing and accommodation issues and sign post to relevant charities and other organisations.
- Post sentence programs via probation Educational Development and Self Development strategies
- Advice of military recruitment both regular and territorial resettlement and careers advice for military personnel. Active military service career course guidance via SLC and ELC.

So if this is a project you would like to get involved with please feel free to contact Barry John through the **VC Gallery** website: www.thevcgallery.com

The main aims and objectives are to help Veterans and the Community using art engagement to create camaraderie and sense of well being.

Since inception in January 2014 The Gallery has gone from strength to strength helping many individuals in the community. With four successful art projects this year we have been able to integrate Veterans into the community helping elderly, the disabled, socially vulnerable and many other groups.





Joined up Linking is a project based in Llanelli which provides a support service for serving and ex service personnel and their families. The aims of the project are to provide the men and the women living in isolation with access to information and activities, this includes information sessions, sports, games, and social activities.

Through a wide range of social contact, welfare and health related activities that promote social inclusion, healthy living and reduce social isolation. The project will provide a safe and non discriminatory environment to meet in and to have someone to understand issues faced on a day to day basis as many veterans from conflicts and struggle to adjust to civilian life.

The Veterans have a group Meeting at the Royal Naval Association the last Wednesday of every month and hold a NAAFI morning on the first Monday of every month at Links.

As a result of information gathered from ex-service personnel in joined up linking, it was found that it would be beneficial if there was a befriending service on offer, as ex-service personnel found it difficult to relate to civilians who had not served themselves; therefore an approach was made to the Carmarthen community covenant for funding of a Befriending Service.



This bid was successful and so The Armed Forces Buddies Scheme came into being. This service offers a one to one befriending service for ex-forces personnel. The Buddies themselves are also ex-service and have experienced the difficulties faced in re-integration into civilian life.



If you would like to know more about **Joined up Linking** and the Armed forces Buddies Scheme please contact Karen Mayze or Chris Hill on:
01554 757 957 / office@links.uk.net

The name TONIC comes from "ton" the Welsh word for a wave and encapsulates the idea that the sea and the sea shore can play an important role in improving health and wellbeing.

The TONIC project is a pilot programme (based on the evidence of the effectiveness of Surf/Ocean Therapy programmes in the USA and the UK) looking to measure the effectiveness of using this approach with adults experiencing mental health problems in West Wales.

The pilot programme is delivered by a partnership between Gofal, Walkin on Water Surf School & Surfable, and is supported by West Wales Action for Mental Health (WWAMH). Gofal will be responsible for managing and risk assessing referrals to the programme. The programme is supported by Natural Resources Wales.



TONIC surf therapy open their doors to supporting veterans experiencing emotional or mental health problems. Last year proved to be a great success and a number of veterans enjoyed the course. TONIC engaged with various organisations within the 3 counties, including Joined up Linking and the VC Gallery. The project is now currently seeking further funding to be able to support and help other veterans this year, and hopefully will be able to put on further sessions throughout 2015.

TONIC provides wet suits and all necessary equipment. The programme is currently available for prospective participants living in Ceredigion and the first sessions will take place on the 21st July 2015.

For further details of the programme please contact Shon Devey on:

ceredigion@wwamh.org.uk
07435 963 647



If you are a member of the armed forces (Regular or Reserve), a veteran, family member or widow(er), West Wales County Councils and partners are committed to providing easy access to the support and entitlements you are entitled to.

There are a wide range of services specifically designed for the armed forces community available from the public sector, the voluntary and third sector.

Contact Carmarthenshire Council on **01267 234 567**

Contact Ceredigion Council on **01970 633 733**

Contact Pembrokeshire Council on **01437 764 551**