



Armed Forces Community Covenant Signatories Panel

14 September 2020

Update from Panel Members

Help For Heroes

Help for Heroes are currently running all services virtually these include:

- Welfare case management support - <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/welfare-service/>
- Clinical Nurse Physical Health support - <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/physical-health-support/>
- Hidden Wounds Psychological support - <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/mental-health-and-wellbeing/hidden-wounds-service/>
- Individual Grants support- <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/financial-support-grants/>
- Virtual Wellbeing Recovery College courses such as, helping with sleep, anger management etc.. <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/mental-health-and-wellbeing/sleep-for-wellbeing/>
- Band of Brothers/sisters virtual get togethers. <https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/get-support/fellowship-groups/>

We currently have no waiting lists for any service. We currently have no confirmed dates for face to face activities or re-opening of local hubs throughout Wales.

You can refer wounded veterans or their loved ones through our website: [helpforheroes.org.uk/getsupport](https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/getsupport) or email wales.supporthub@helpforheroes.org.uk

Blesma

Blesma Wales and West continues to provide direct welfare support and grants to members and widows to ensure that their needs have been met quickly. The Support Officer (Tom Hall) has dealt with Prosthetics issues and liaised with NHS ALACs closely in support of members. The Support and Outreach Officers, along with the help of Blesma Volunteers and Members who are not 'at-risk,' are supporting with essential tasks such as shopping, paying bills, repairs to disability and mobility aids, and offering Blesma befriending calls and contacts through Welfare and wider Volunteers. Blesma continue to collaborate closely with other services, 3rd sector, agencies and local community groups to provide help with War Pension, benefits and entitlements issues. They are offering practical or emotional

support to Blesma members who may be isolated or lonely in communities across Wales and West. In all aspects it has been “business as usual” with essential physical visits by the Blesma Support Officer taking place to those most in need. Outreach Officers have been constantly in touch with members by phone, video calls and virtual events, which have replaced physical get-togethers. The period between March to August has been extremely busy with more younger veterans being supported with poor mental health and older members assisted with the purchase and repair of mobility and disability aids. With the reopening of Limb Centres the Support Officer has been in close touch with ALACs to address prosthetics concerns, ensuring that provision requirements have been met and priority appointments offered. Blesma staff and Volunteers are taking every precaution to ensure they are not a potential risk to Members and for all member contact a comprehensive risk assessment process has been carried out.

Activities and Events

Blesma postponed all physical UK and overseas Blesma Events until at least the end of August but all Activities and Events in September and October are under review. Local Wales and West events are similarly affected, but we are hoping to start some limited Outreach activity soon. Blesma Wales and West Outreach developed online and video activities, including weekly virtual Tea and Toast, interactive Quizzes, fitness sessions and Amputee Health Discussion Groups. The Outreach Officer is also running events such as virtual Escape Rooms and seated yoga which are very popular. Blesma have also continued their Making Generation R (Resilient) sessions online, running communication workshops for members and widows, including recently extending the sessions to Secondary Schools and young people around the UK.

Information For Our Members and Supporting Agencies

If members require any additional support at this time or agencies have veterans who they wish to **refer for Blesma support**, or they find members in need, they can make contact with the Blesma Support Officer: Tom Hall - Tel: 07780165085, E mail: bsowest@blesma.org

More information: <https://blesma.org/news-media/blesma-news/> or www.blesma.org

Citizens Advice

At Swansea and Neath Port Talbot’s Citizen Advice, we have had to stop all face to face services but have been delivering advice via phone and email throughout. We are still developing our plans for a safe way to return to face to face advice, in the meantime our contact details are:

- 1) We have set up an email service: help@citizensadviceSNPT.org.uk, where you can email us your queries. We will try to respond to you as soon as we can.
- 2) All our advisers are still available to give advice over the phone, and where necessary a telephone appointment for this can be made. We now have more advisers answering the phones than we did before, to make this change run as smoothly as possible. You can receive advice from us by telephoning 0300 3309 082.

3) Most of our advice is available online, at www.citizensadvice.org.uk. If you would like help to fill in a benefit form for example, our website has a step by step guide to help with this.

4) Universal Credit claims. Support is available from our Help to Claim team online and over the phone. Go to citizensadvice.org.uk/help-to-claim or phone 08000 241 220. Calls are free and lines are open 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday. This is a national service but whoever you get through to will be able to help you, wherever you live.

The Poppy Factory

Natalie McCombe advises that she is now back with the Poppy Factory after a 4 month furlough. However, the Poppy Factory was still operational and during that time 5 of her clients gained employment. Natalie is now re-engaging with her network to encourage new referrals. Clients are not being seen face to face, although Natalie and her colleagues can offer the full service over Teams, Zoom, telephone, text, whatsapp or email. They are also on facebook, linkedin, Twitter and Instagram. Contact details are available on the web site where eligible Veterans can also register www.poppyfactory.org/register . You can also check a Veteran is eligible on the web site. If you have any queries on referrals or criteria, Natalie says to drop her an email or text and she will ring you or the potential client to discuss the query.

Natalie McCrombe, Employability Consultant:

Telephone 020 8940 3305

NatalieM@poppyfactory.org

Mobile number 07468476407.

Woody's Lodge

During COVID 19 restrictions Woodys has continued to maintain its Welfare and Support Services mainly by Zoom technology, with major support directed at PiPs and UC benefits. Woodys has run bi-weekly virtual "Brew Up" Meetings and has maintained its weekly direct phone calls to 998 veterans across Wales over the last 12 weeks.

Our 3 Main Hubs are now open with Social Distancing/ Cleaning /Track and Trace requirements in place in place, Beside Barry and Colwyn Bay we have now opened our West Wales Farm hub in Ceredigion. 40 minute drive from Swansea.

Working with Local Authorities, we plan to re-open our 12 Urban Drop In Centres across Wales.

Our latest project funded by the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity, commenced in August, is to develop direct links with Royal Navy Community in South East Wales, Swansea included, particularly in support for the older RN/RM veteran and for younger families that require health and welfare support. This project has already been in contact with veterans living in Swansea.

Phone 01446 781793

<https://www.woodyslodge.org/>

Swansea Bay Health Board Veterans NHS Wales

Since the Lockdown on 23rd March 2020 Swansea Bay health board, Veterans NHS Wales has continued to offer a service for veterans with a military related mental health difficulty.

Below are the figures outlining our activity since 24th March 2020;

Referral into the service - 39

Number of clients who opted in - 27

Number of assessments completed - 26

Number of client who have begun therapy- 24

Currant Waiting times from assessment to treatment - 19 weeks

In line with government guidelines, Swansea Bay VNHSW has adapted from face to face interventions to video therapy. Attend Anywhere, is an NHS secure web-based platform for patients with pre-arranged video consultation appointments. This has enabled us to continue to provide both assessments and therapy while those who are unable to access the internet are offered the choice of telephone consultation. We have also begun to offer a limited service of walk and talk therapy.

Veterans and Professionals who work with veterans are able to refer directly, by either completing the on-line submission form;

<https://www.veteranswales.co.uk/how-to-self-refer.html>,

Alternatively they can contact us on 01792 532967 or email;

SBU.veterans@wales.nhs.uk for more information.

Victoria Williams, Veterans Lead Therapist, Swansea Bay Health Board

Victoria.williams4@wales.nhs.uk