

# Welsh Veterans Partnership

## Coming Home Project



### **Introduction**

*Since its inception in 2015, the Welsh Veterans Partnership (WVP) has been engaged with multi-agency partners in meeting the wellbeing of military veterans and service leavers in Wales. This report outlines the model pioneered by WVP and highlights key findings and baseline data between 2015 and 2018. This information is designed to inform key decision-makers about the importance of the services provided by WVP and highlight the necessity to secure support and funding to continue this vital work. The Report is best read in conjunction with the WVP Business Plan 2017 – 2020.*

### **Background**

*As a civilized nation we have a duty of care to ensure that our veterans and service families have full support to assist smooth transition to civilian life. On leaving HM Forces and returning to Wales, most veteran service leavers thrive and are, as in the past, assets to their communities from which they came. There are however times when 'the system; fails to provide adequate support needs to aid transition. There are some examples:*

- Lack of baseline assessment prior to or on leaving Service*
- Poor planning and lack of whole family centredness*
- Poor communication between service leaver and supporting organization*
- Operational duty commitments*
- Failure to engage by the veteran or family.*

*Ultimately the consequences of lack of support can lead to poor settlement leading to poor quality of life conditions for the veterans, their families and sometimes the host community. These can have devastating consequences such as abuse in various forms, family breakdown, self-harm, custodial sentences, poor mental health or suicide.*

### **The Coming Home Model**

*The WVP has developed the hugely successful Coming Home model which has mitigated negative effects of potentially poor transition situations with a significant number of service leavers. This will be highlighted later in the report.*

*The WVP has been working to a vision that will ensure 'Welsh forces veterans and service leavers can meet their own and their family's self-care needs; transition smoothly and thrive in civilian society.'*

*Underpinning this vision are five aims and associated objectives. The Coming Home Project sits neatly within these aims and over the past two years, the WVP has*

conducted its own action research to identify gaps in services to veterans and military families in Wales. The conclusion is clear that a joined up strategy in Wales is required across vital service areas such as housing, health, education as well as socialization and recreation.

To achieve positive outcomes, the WVP believes the fundamental requirement is for the veteran and their families to be assessed as a whole unit. The WVP assessment examines whole family needs such as: where they intend to live; intended lifestyle choices; work aspirations; education for children and adults and, among other things, how they are planning for future years.

The model adopted assess service leavers in three different categories, each with differing timeframes, priorities and overlaid with individual tailoring to specific requirements. Broadly the table below highlights the separate challenges of each category and considerations within the assessment:

Category	Typical Conditions	Coming Home Assessment Process
Service Leaver, End of Service	End of natural service; Timeframe for planning in-service can be around 6 months dependent upon operational duties.	Identification of contributing factors for decision to leave; Anticipated destination for settlement; Aspirations for self and family regarding jobs, education Sets out a timeplan for services needed as detailed below
Service Leaver: Medical Discharge	Timeframe can be up to one year as internal MOD medical board makes assessment;	Dependent upon injury/condition, assessment using wellbeing tool; Life limiting conditions may impact upon suitable housing/work opportunities therefore assessment includes advice and support to manage expectations; family support conferences may be required; special introductions may be necessary
Service Leaver: No Longer Required	Potentially discharge can be swift – ie within one or two weeks. Drink or drug dependency an identified reason for discharge	WVP recognizes there are often underlying reasons for presented behaviour. PTSD whilst serving, turbulent lifestyles, abuse to self, family members, drug and alcohol dependency can be identified through 121 assessment and working within a short space of time whilst barriers are being removed. The shock and speed of discharge within this category of service leaver – and the impact to society makes them and their families particular priorities within the project.
Coming Home Support activities by WVP: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Makes introductions with statutory authorities, particularly housing teams</li> <li>- Identifies medical (GPs, dentists, etc.) practitioners, local NHS Trust,</li> <li>- Contacts SSAFA</li> <li>- Assists with introductions to the DWP benefits services</li> <li>- Identifies schools and other education in the intended settlement area</li> <li>- Connects with Army Pension Service and advises on pensions and final settlements with MOD</li> </ul>		

The Coming Home project model ensures that veterans' needs are identified through a systematic assessment process which includes referrals to other partners. The model

*works to the spirit of the Military Covenant and WVP is committed to working in partnership to deliver what we see are three pillars towards wellbeing:*

### **Housing**

*Affordable housing is a particularly vital element towards successful transition to civilian life. We are fortunate in Wales to have closer access to decision making processes through devolved housing planning and budgeting. With Welsh Government support to the veteran community, there is great potential to increase effective partnership working using the Coming Home Model. Whilst we recognize there are pressures on current budgets, there is a lack of rural housing and housing density issues in deprived valleys areas, we are keen to work with the Welsh Government to adopt new tenancy processes, increased planning and development of greater understanding of the needs of ex servicemen and women.*

*The WVP is also fortunate to have been able to work with a variety of private, statutory and third sector organisations. WVP is made up of ex-military personnel who can easily interpret and implement the Military Covenant. Our strong partnership with Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taf, Swansea local authorities, and registered social landlords (particularly Taff, Cadwyn and Coastal) means we are able to articulate their requirements and protocols to service leavers whilst working effectively to ensure ex-military staff are identified as a specific category within the housing need assessment process. A true two-way flow which is continuing to be enhanced as more local authorities work with WVP to adopt referral pathways and plan suitable accommodation in their strategic planning for housing.*

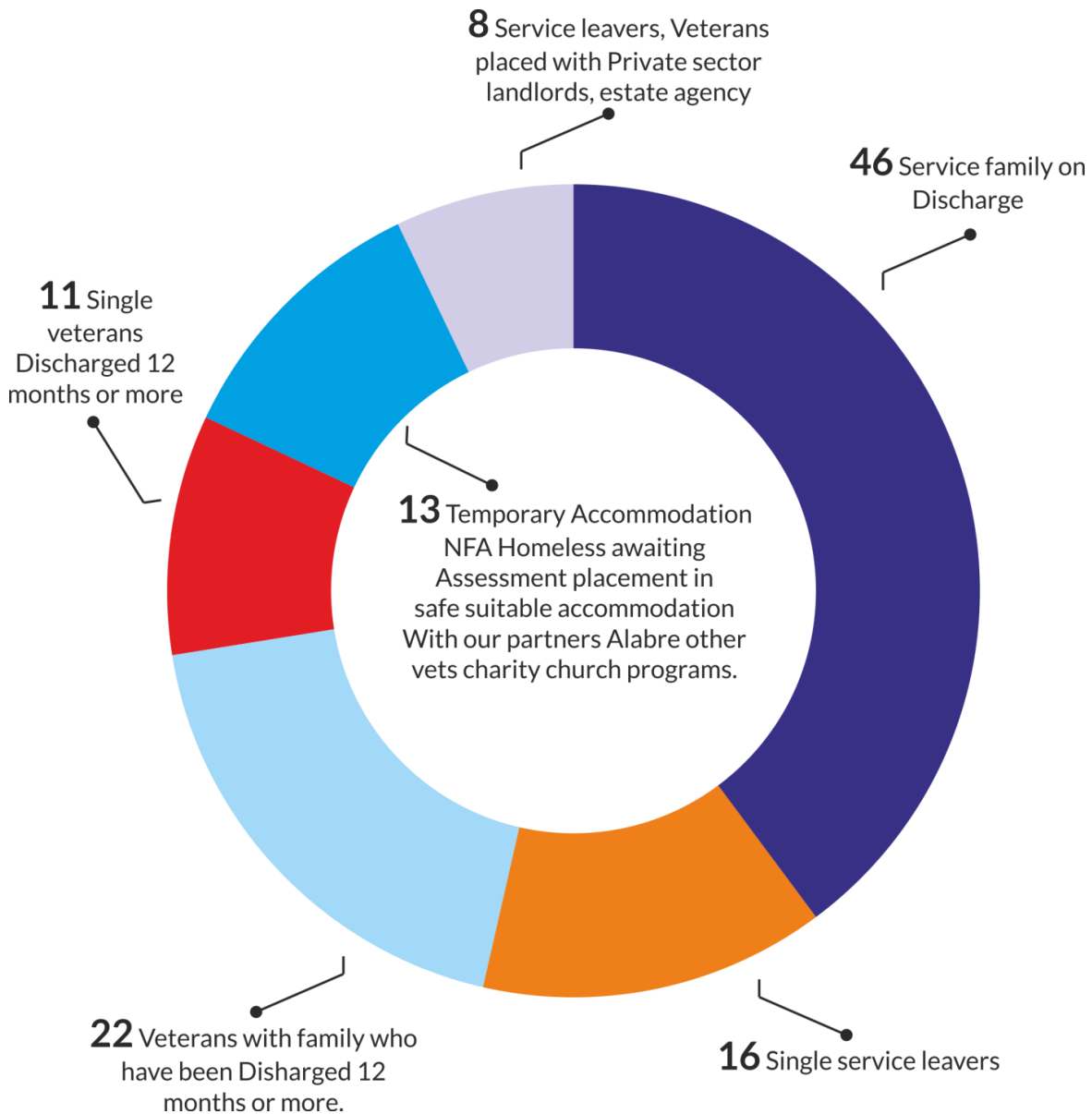
*WVP has helped local authorities achieve their commitments to the Military Covenant by assisting with Homes for the Veteran Community. Property which takes account of disabilities within families and whole of life housing approach is working well, aided by the whole family assessment and intervention approach established through the Coming Home Project.*

### **Results and Impacts of the Model**

*Between 2015 and 2018, 116 veterans assisted to achieve affordable fair rent homes. As the illustration below shows.*

*Socialisation and recreation is also important. The WVP has helped to establish a choir /wellbeing group which meets weekly to help improve connections, confidence and to aid positive engagement.*

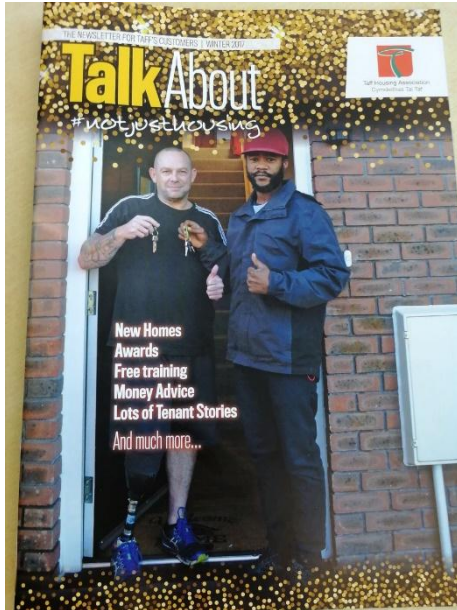
*A commitment to partnership working sees us enjoy working as part of a cross-party group in the National Assembly of Wales. We welcome elected members and Members of Parliament as well as serving Military from Welsh regiments. Most of all the WVP has a growing network of assisted veterans and their families who have successfully transitioned to civilian life.*



## Conclusion

*The Model which specifically champions whole-family unit assessment and intervention is evidenced in having provided positive wellbeing outcomes for veterans and their families. There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence through testimonials from many assisted families. Increased intervention leads to:*

- *More and better engagement of family unit*
- *Increased inclusion, understanding and involvement in the decision-making process related to families*
- *Effective transition*
- *Sustained progress and wellbeing*
- *Greater understanding of authorities to the needs of the veteran community*
- *Reduced medical interventions following self-harm, abuse or antisocial behaviour (not as yet monetised)*



Disabled Commonwealth Soldiers as new neighbours taking delivery of new keys for assured shorthold tenancy WVP in partnership with Cardiff County Council and Taff Housing Association.



Christmas hampers being delivered to a Commonwealth WWII veteran.

## Recommendation

The WVP has tried, tested and adapted the Coming Home Model and would like to extend this throughout Wales. The WVP recommends the opportunity to formalise the service, building from its voluntary (and unpaid) activity towards a small level of funding to test and mainstream the model.

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