

## Title

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 6 Chwefror 2018

Petitions Committee | 6 February 2018

## Research Briefing:

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**Petition number:** P-05-800

**Petition title:** Urgent Appeal for a Welsh Veterans Commissioner for the Health & Wellbeing of Wounded, Injured, Sick and Homeless veterans

**Text of petition:** Here in Wales, I was proud that we were first for a Commissioner for both Children & Young People, and Older Persons. Unfortunately Scotland has beaten us to have a Commissioner for Veterans.

We veterans need someone to be our voice and true representation to the Welsh Assembly government. Not what the "chiefs" want you to know.

## Background

The [Armed Forces Covenant](#) was published by the UK government in May 2011. It is a statement of the moral obligation which exists between the nation, the government and the Armed Forces. There is a statutory duty for the Secretary of State for Defence to prepare an Armed Forces Covenant Report annually, and lay it before parliament.

The first meeting of the UK government's [Armed Forces Covenant and Veterans Board](#) took place on Thursday 26 October 2017. The Board is intended to meet twice a year to "drive forward the existing Armed Forces Covenant commitments across all Government departments responsible for delivery".

The Welsh Government has developed policy on implementing the Covenant in devolved policy areas like health and housing in partnership with statutory and third sector partners.

## Welsh Government action

The Programme for Government, [Taking Wales Forward](#) commits the Welsh Government to:

- Provide support and services in line with our Armed Forces Covenant.
- Work with key partners in Wales to promote best practice in identifying the Armed Forces Community, whilst improving sign-posting and take-up of services.
- Ensure our veterans continue to receive healthcare that meets their needs and maintain the valuable national Veterans NHS Wales service, which provides access to evidence-based treatments for veterans with mental health problems.

The Welsh Government issued a written statement on 10 November 2017 on [\*Remembering our Armed Forces – honouring past sacrifices and supporting the Armed Forces community Programme\*](#). This statement outlines some of the steps being taken by the Welsh Government to support the armed forces community.

In his response to this petition, the Cabinet Secretary notes the work of the [Expert Group on the needs of the Armed Forces Community in Wales](#), which he says has previously debated the added value of having a Armed Forces commissioner and he “would not dismiss the appointment of a Commissioner”. He indicates that he will discuss the proposal with the Welsh Government’s Armed Forces Expert Group and also the Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets.

## National Assembly for Wales action

The National Assembly for Wales’ Cross Party Group on the Armed Forces and Cadets recently carried out an inquiry into the impact of the Armed Forces Covenant in Wales. Its [report](#) was published in November 2017. It made a number of recommendations, including:

The Welsh Government should consider the appointment of an Armed Forces Commissioner for Wales to improve the accountability of public sector organisations for the delivery of the Armed Forces Covenant. The Commissioner should be required to publish an annual report to be laid in the National Assembly for Wales on adherence to the Covenant. The report should highlight good practice in Wales, draw on international models of support for service personnel, veterans and their families; and make recommendations for the future.

On 22 November 2017, there was a Welsh Conservatives [debate](#) on support for the armed forces.

In responding to the debate, the Cabinet Secretary for Local Government and Public Services, agreed to attend a future meeting of the All Party Group to discuss the report and its recommendations.

## Other information

The Scottish Government has appointed a [Veterans Commissioner](#) to provide:

...impartial advice to the Scottish Government and other public sector organisations in the form of reports and recommendations designed to improve support for the ex-Service community in Scotland and promote veterans as valued and valuable members of our workplaces and communities.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.