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EVENT REPORT

Veterans
Health and Wellbeing Event

A collaborative event with Llais North Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB)

Friday 26 June 2026
St Asaph



Stronger voices.
Healthier communities.

FOREWORD



On Friday 26 June 2026, Llais North Wales and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) hosted a joint Veterans Health and Wellbeing event, here in North Wales.

The Director of Llais North Wales has strategic responsibility for Armed Forces portfolio work across Wales. Given the previous success when partnering with BCUHB's Armed Forces portfolio Lead to support the Armed Forces Community of North Wales, we decided to join forces once again to deliver an event that would bring together a diversity of Stakeholder and raise awareness of the needs of Veterans and showcase the Healthcare pathways open to Veterans, including the associated support services that are on offer, here in North Wales.

The event, which took place on Veterans Day as part of Armed Forces week celebrations, was a collaboration between Llais North Wales and BCUHB. Over 20 organisations attended the event, showing the range of support that is available not only to Veterans, but also the wider Armed Forces Community.

Llais North Wales is proud to have jointly hosted this event with BCUHB and looks forward to developing the partnership to host future co-produced events.

ARMED FORCES
COVENANT
CYFAMOD
Y LLUOEDD ARFOG

EVENT OVERVIEW

Held on Friday 26 June, to coincide with Veterans Day as part of the Armed Forces Week celebrations, more than 85 attendees, including Veterans and members of the wider Armed Forces Community, (current serving personnel and Reservists, their families, healthcare professionals and third sector organisations), attended and supported the event held in St Asaph.



The opening address was given by the Cabinet Minister for Health and Care, who stated the Welsh Government's ongoing commitment to the Armed Forces Community. The wider agenda included speakers from BCUHB specific pathways including: Orthopaedics ; Audiology, Ophthalmology, Mental Health, recovery and rehabiitation. The majority of the the key guest speakers, were members of the Armed Forces Community themselves , and were able to provide personal testament as well as make the presentations relevant to the many veterans in the room. Third sector Veteran support services included presentations from RBL Recovery Services; SSAFA; BLESMA; Woody's Lodge and Help 4 Heros.



NHS WALES GIG CYMRU
Bwrdd Iechyd Prifysgol Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

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HIGHLIGHTS



Mabon ap Gwynfor, Cabinet Minister for Health and Care delivered the keynote speech, highlighting the debt of gratitude owed to veterans ,the continuing contribution they were making to the life of the nation and the potential to bring the values of their life in the armed forces to their civilian endeavors.

Colonel Guy Benson provided an overview of the work of the Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA) and its aim to develop and drive the implementation of best practice, that will improve armed forces veterans care, whilst raising standard across the NHS for all users.



Stephen Townley, North Wales Armed Forces Liaison Officer, demonstrated the difference the right support can make to veterans, service families and reservists.





Anne Forsberg from Blind Veterans UK played an inspirational video that showed how blind Veterans were supported to return to active life, maximising their potential.

Debbie Eyiato, BCUHB Executive Director of People Services and Organisational Development highlighted BCUHB's commitment to meeting the healthcare needs of veterans.





Martin Speight spoke about how BLESMA had helped and supported him following limb loss.

Ted Shirley, Army Sniper and Author, spoke about his experiences on the front line in Afghanistan where he did two tours of duty. Towards the end of his second tour, Ted explained how he had started to feel the effects of what would later be diagnosed as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). With no cure, Ted took control of his life and found his own solutions to overcoming PTSD.



NETWORKING

Around 25 organisations hosted stands and provided take-away information around health and wellbeing support. It was also an excellent networking opportunity for organisations who might work with each other, but don't necessarily get the opportunity to meet face to face. Some of the organisations were centred in North Wales, but many of them worked pan-Wales, meaning that Llais colleagues in attendance were able to make connections to inform their work going forward.

During the networking opportunity, discussions were held around the potential for establishing a North Wales Recovery Centre, similar to RBL's Battle Back Recovery Centre. Llais looks forward to being involved with the development of a North Wales based programme, which will be led by Steven O'Brien from the Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre.



NEXT STEPS

Since the 26 June event, a group of around 15 organisations and stakeholders have met to discuss how a ‘Recovery Centre’ could be established and taken forward in North Wales. The driving force behind the proposed centre is Steve O’Brien, Head of Centre, Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre. Discussions were positive, with a proposal to use Plas Menai as a hub to offer bespoke, enjoyable, and challenging activities in the heart of North Wales.

Llais colleagues from across Wales have reached out to stakeholders and partners to see how they might be able enhance their work with veterans in their region. This demonstrates the value of events such as this, where connections were made and conversations were had that will enhance Llais’ work with the wider Armed Forces Community.

Llais as a whole has made new connections with organisations that support both Veterans and the wider Armed Forces Community and we look forward to developing these key relationships.

TESTIMONIALS

Alyson Thomas, Llais Chief Executive Officer:

"It was a privilege to attend the North Wales Veterans Event and see so many organisations coming together with a shared commitment to supporting veterans and their families. What stood out most was the strong sense of partnership, the willingness to learn from one another, and the determination to make a real difference for those who have served and their families. I am particularly proud of the leadership shown by our North Wales team in Llais, whose work reflects our commitment to the Armed Forces Covenant and our ambition to make sure the voices and experiences of veterans continue to shape both our own actions and those of the wider health and social care system".

Debbie Eiyato Executive Director of Workforce and Organisational Development

“It was an honour and a privilege to work in partnership with Llais to honour our veterans and showcase the services and support available to them. On behalf of the Health Board, our thanks go out to all Stakeholders supporting the Veteran community here in North Wales.”

Geoff Ryall-Harvey, Regional Director, Llais North Wales

“This event has highlighted the potential of the armed forces community to bring their experience, knowledge and talent to build resilient communities that work for everyone and bring about change for everyone.”

Zoe Roberts - Armed Forces Covenant & Veteran Healthcare Collaborative Lead

"It was a real privilege to work in partnership with Llais North Wales, to bring together such a diverse range of stakeholders from across the Veteran and Armed Forces community at the North Wales Veterans Health & Wellbeing Event. The event provided a fantastic opportunity to showcase the breadth of support available to Veterans across North Wales, with inspiring presentations from key guest speakers highlighting a variety of healthcare pathways, specialist services and wellbeing support.

The engagement, collaboration and shared commitment from our NHS, charity, Armed Forces and Veteran organisations, demonstrated the strength of the network supporting our Veteran community across North Wales.

Most importantly, the event helped to raise awareness of the services available and how Veterans and their families can access the right support when they need it.

It is such a privilege to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant and Veteran Healthcare Lead role within Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board and to play a part in supporting the Armed Forces community here in North Wales.

I am incredibly proud of the partnerships we have developed and the collective commitment to ensuring that those who have served, and their families, receive the recognition, support and care they deserve."

Kevin Hackett, Veterans Low Intervention Peer Mentor, Adferiad / Change Step and Veterans NHS Wales:

"I was delighted to attend on behalf of Adferiad / Change Step and the therapists of Veterans NHS Wales in BCUHB and take part in the Llais / BCU veterans event at Optic, St Asaph on the 26th of June 2026.Events such as these are very important to the veterans community, highlighting the work of different disciplines within the NHS and third sector charitable organisations.

The event was extremely well organised, accommodating those who wished to engage through the medium of Welsh and allowing sufficient time for each organisation to highlight the work they do within the veterans community. Covering topics such as sight loss, hearing loss, living with the loss of a limb, orthopaedics, mental health, practical or financial and peer support.

Alongside the presentations, there was also an opportunity for an exchange of ideas, networking and to catch up with colleagues from other organisations.

I hope the event becomes an annual addition to the calendar, especially in the week we celebrate the armed forces community."

Dan Price, Regional Director Llais Cwm Taf Morgannwg

"I found attending the Armed Forces event to be a very worthwhile and informative experience. It was encouraging to see so many organisations brought together in one place, all with a shared commitment to supporting members of the Armed Forces community across Wales. The event also gave me the opportunity to identify ways in which we could enhance our own work with veterans in my region, and to take away learning and ideas that could be adapted and implemented locally.

Overall, listening to the range of services and support available gave me a much better understanding of the help that can be accessed by serving personnel, veterans and their families. It was particularly pleasing to see colleagues from all across Wales, both internal to Llais, the Health Board and third sector come together to support the event, creating a real sense of collaboration and shared purpose. The event left me feeling positive about the commitment across Wales to working together and ensuring the Armed Forces community is aware of, and able to access, the support available to them. I also really valued the opportunity to attend an event in another region and see first-hand the excellent work being led by my colleagues there!"

Claire Starmore, Regional Operations Manager, Llais Gwent

“Thank you for the opportunity to attend the Veterans Health and Wellbeing event - it was really appreciated. Thank you also for making us feel so welcome.

It was great to see the work being carried out in North Wales to support veterans, I found it really valuable. It was also helpful to learn more about the range of support services available for veterans, which will be useful for us when signposting within the Gwent region. It really reinforced how important it is to ensure veterans are given a voice and are able to access the support they need. I look forward to playing a part in progressing this work across regions.”



Appendix 1
Event Feedback

The event received a score of 10 out of 10 for overall satisfaction
Key reasons for satisfaction:

- ‘Interagency co-operation’
- ‘Ted Shirley’s presentation was so inspirational; I would have to liked to have heard the full version of his presentation.’
- ‘All of the presentations were helpful and informative, as well being relevant.’
- ‘There was lots of helpful information that I was unaware of prior to this event despite being a veteran and BCUHB employee myself.’
- ‘I enjoyed the really life story about how Ted overcame PTSD.’
- ‘It was great to learn about other services that I didn’t know existed like Blesma UK.’
- ‘Learning more about audiology services and how they can and do support veterans.’
- ‘It all stood out.’

In response to the question, ‘Do you feel that attending the event supported your health and well-being in any way?’: 90.9% of the respondents said yes; 9.1% said no.

Of the no comments, the following were suggested

- ‘Could have done with some more time for networking and discussion’.
- ‘Maybe a bit too much content for the day’

We’ll use these comments when planning other such events.

Positive feedback included:

- ‘Well organised.’’
- ‘It was really good, each section was well planned.’
- ‘Lunch was great! Plenty of time to network at the start and during lunch to network.’
- ‘Well presented talks.’
- ‘Good projection of people’s presentations; also the variety of what was presented was really good.’
- ‘It was a very positive event.’

100% of respondents felt listened to and found the event easy to take part in.
100% of respondents said that they would take part in a similar event in the future.

When asked the question: ‘Do you plan to follow up with any of the services or contacts made today 100% of the respondents said yes, with specific references to the follow up contacts/service connections:

- Plas Menai
- RBL
- BLESMA
- Woody’s Lodge
- Audiology.

Appendix 2
List of Stakeholders and Contact Details

- Armed Forces Liaison Officer – North Wales www.wrexham.gov.uk
- BCUHB https://bcuhb.nhs.wales/
- BLESMA https://blesma.org/
- Blind Veterans UK https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/
- Help4Heros https://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/
- Hugh James Solicitors https://www.hughjames.com/
- Llais https://www.llaiswales.org/
- NHS Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance https://veteranaware.nhs.uk/
- Plas Menai National Outdoor Centre https://plasmenai.wales/
- Poppy Factory https://www.poppyfactory.org/
- RBL https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/
- RBL Recovery Services https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-support/how-we-help/recovery-services
- RNIB https://www.rnib.org.uk/
- SSAFA https://www.ssafa.org.uk/wales
- Ted Shirley https://tedshirley.co.uk/
- Veterans Low Intervention Peer Mentor, Adferiad / Change Step and Veterans NHS Wales
- https://www.adferiad.org/
- Woody’s Lodge https://www.woodyslodge.org

FEEDBACK

We'd love to hear what you think about this publication, and any suggestions about how we could have improved it, so we can use this to make our future work better.

LLAIS NORTH WALES CONTACT DETAILS

UNIT 11 CHESTNUT COURT
FFORDD Y PARC
PARC MENAI
BANGOR, LL57 4FH

TELEPHONE: 01248 679284

UNIT 1B A 1D WILKINSON BUSINESS PARK
SOUTH CLYWEDOG ROAD
WREXHAM INDUSTRIAL ESTATE
WREXHAM, LL13 9AE

TELEPHONE: 01978 356178

EMAIL: NORTHWALESREGION@LLAISCYMRU.ORG