

## AA in GB: NATIONAL SUB-COMMITTEE FOR ARMED SERVICES

### Newsletter—July 2018

#### *Mid Surrey Intergroup*

I am the ASLO for Mid Surrey. Following a conversation with one of the London ASLOs, I was given the opportunity to help out at Northwood Headquarters.

Refocussing back on my own patch, I have recently attended a Unit Health Fair at Deepcut.

I have also attended a brigade health committee meeting at the headquarters of the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Aldershot. My point of contact was the brigade SO2 (staff officer level 2) for health, a major-rank appointment currently held by a civil servant in Aldershot. The officer is based in my Intergroup, but with an area of responsibility covering most of the south east (although not London). As well as regular and reservist units, the role has a certain amount of responsibility for veterans' issues.

It was a useful group of commanders to sow the AA seed with; the brigadier general commanding the HQ was present, along with his deputy and the officer responsible for health and wellbeing. Also, there were commanders of units in the 11<sup>th</sup> Brigade area. A military regional clinical director was also present.

I was scheduled for a 10-minute pitch, which turned into an active discussion for 20 minutes. Generally, the mood was receptive and positive. The attendees know alcohol is a problem in the armed forces, and whilst the Army's current policy is for soldiers to be encouraged to moderate their drinking (units will soon be required by the chain of command to have a unit alcohol advisor), there was tacit acknowledgement that this would not work for some. Units were encouraged to consider inviting AA to their unit health fairs and to consider signposting individuals to AA. In short, this was, I think, a useful presentation to an influential group.

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#### *Somerset Intergroup*

I attended the ASLO seminar in York on 17 February 2018. I found it very educational and informative; during the day I made various contacts with other ASLOs, who I found to be extremely helpful in providing me with ideas on how to approach various military establishments and charities.

On Monday and Tuesday, following the seminar, I made calls to the contacts I met and provided them with my own contact details. I was also in contact throughout the weekend and the following week with our treasurer, who helped me immensely with regards to obtaining literature and advice on how to claim my expenses.

I made phone calls to the Royal British Legion (RBL) in Weston-super-Mare and secured a meeting with them for Thursday, 1 March. After my visit, Samantha Jones, the case officer for Somerset, also invited me to attend another meeting around June/July for all of her front-line volunteers and asked me to give a brief explanation to them on how we work, as she thinks it would be extremely useful to them.

I also made calls to SSAFA and Help for Heroes; having had little response to either of these calls, I decided to send follow up emails. I ultimately arranged a meeting with John Forrest, branch secretary for SSAFA, Somerset region, who is based in Street. We met on 13 March; I provided him with various posters, leaflets, and flyers, and he in turn explained the SSAFA structure to me and has distributed my details to all of his front-line volunteers throughout Somerset.

On Thursday, 28 February I received an email from a psychological wellbeing manager for Help for Heroes, who is based in Plymouth, but who has agreed to meet me in Taunton, which is half-way, and I provided her with some AA literature and discussed AA in general with her.

My intention at this early stage of my appointment as ASLO is first to approach the military charities and then move on to the active military establishments. Through my contacts so far, I have found that there are numerous military charities within our Intergroup that I had no knowledge of, so at present I am doing some research into who they are and if AA can be of any help to them.

I have also found that active military establishments are more difficult to secure appointments with as they tend to keep their problems inhouse, although they are not impenetrable, so patience and perseverance seem to be the key here. I am currently composing a template letter to send to unit family officers, chaplains, and company commanders and I am at present compiling a list of all the forces bases within our Intergroup, including the territorials.

There are numerous armed forces charities throughout Somerset which I was not originally aware of, including Combat Stress, the Big White Wall, the SPVA (Service Personnel and Veterans Agency), and the SSAFA Forcesline, to name but a few. I am very happy with the progress I have made up till now, but obviously there is still extensive work to be done. To be continued!

On 21 March, I received a call from Rachel Inman, who is an outreach worker from the Connect Centre in Wells; she was concerned about an ex-soldier who had been accessing the service and asked me to provide her with information, literature, and posters, which I did when I met her on 27 March.

I was at social event in central London on 20 March, where by chance I met a lad who apparently is the youngest serving major in the British army. I told him about AA and also how difficult it was for me to gain access to active military establishments. He provided me with his contact details and has offered me assistance should I need it. I have not had any response from the active establishments I have written to yet, and I am focused on the charitable organisations at the moment, but I may take up his offer of assistance in the near future.

I have been in regular contact with our South West Region ASLO, who has been of tremendous help to me in providing advice and assistance; more recently I have had a conversation with our South East Regional ASLO, who has also provided me with valuable assistance, suggestions, and help.

I am finding this ASLO position very demanding and time-consuming, so the 'easy does it' approach must be the way forward. However, I am also finding it extremely rewarding, and I am finding the principle of 'giving your recovery away in order to keep it yourself' very satisfying.

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## *Armed Forces Day, Lanarkshire*



I contacted Lanarkshire Council in January of this year and asked if AA could put up a PI Stand for their Armed Forces Day, which was being held at the Hamilton Council Buildings on 23 June. I also highlighted our website address on the email, explaining it had much more information that may be helpful. Lanarkshire Council replied stating that they would be pleased for us to attend. On the day, our PI Stand was next to the British Legion and the Veterans Association, so we did some networking. It was a well-organised day; they had a service and a march-past, with the town's mayor taking the salute. Members of the public came to speak to us, and we gave them AA literature to take away. Members of the Scottish Parliament also came to speak to us and were very impressed with the work that we do. The day went well, and we have been invited back again next year. There will be Armed Forces Days events the following weekend, in West Lothian, Stirling, and Edinburgh. The picture below shows a member of the Scottish Parliament, Linda Fabiani, who also supports AA public information activities in the Scottish Parliament, where AA conducts presentations.

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