

Honorary Welfare Officer Conference
Staverton Park Daventry
12 - 13 October 2007
Conference Report

Friday 12 October

1. Registration and Exhibition

Delegates were able to gather information from the exhibitors which included. The RAFBF, Veterans Agency, Bond Pearce, The RAF Community Support Team, The Royal British Legion and of course The RAF Association. This took place whilst they both registered for the event and chose their preferred seminars.

There were 140 delegates and 30 exhibitors, guests, staff and speakers. Some delegates brought their partners along so all in all there were 210 who attended the Presidents dinner.

2. President's Dinner

The Association's National President Air Marshal Philip Sturley gave an after- dinner address and spoke candidly about the positive state of the Associations current financial growth, the present efforts to increase membership, the need to get closer to the Serving Royal Air Force and the importance of recent new initiatives like Contact Houses and Internet Cafes.

He also stated there is a need to engage more with the Air Training Corps and the importance of getting more young people on board.

The President went on to say how pleased he was to see so many welfare officers at this the first ever National Welfare Officer Conference, and how valuable the Association's welfare volunteers are. He asked all to ensure they had their say during the seminars, the topics of which had been chosen by the delegates. He finished by saying the feed-back from the conference will be collated and put into a report. The report will go out via areas and also a summary will be published in the next edition of Air Mail.

3. Saturday 13 October

After an excellent evening on the Friday delegates were ready on Saturday for a full programme of Presentations and Seminars.

The Conference was chaired by Tricia Freer Welfare Director

4. Secretary General

Edward Jarron, Secretary General in his opening address said the key message he wanted to get across was about improving communications - he urged all present to have their say and air their views and ideas, this was what the day was all about.

5. Director Welfare RAFBF

Mike Barter Director Welfare RAFBF reinforced the message that the two Charities were working far more closely together. Regular conversations and meetings were taking place between RAFA & RAFBF addressing operational issues, through the Joint Welfare Advisory Board from the joint ventures between the two organisations like the respite homes that provide a valued welfare break service, to more strategic issues discussed with the Controller and Secretary General in a Joint Working Group

There is no more talk about a merger the two Charities had different roles and objectives which complimented and supported each other. The RAFBF considers it provides Benevolence for the RAF Family and looks to the RAFA as a membership organisation to act as the eyes and ears on the ground and keeping The RAFBF informed of whom and where help for the RAF family is needed.

The RAFBF has recently changed its charitable objectives as the needs of the RAF Family have changed over the last few decades. More assistance will be invested within the Serving Air Force and a new strategy setting out the plans for the future will be shared with RAFA in the near future.

Mike Barter went on to give a general view of the welfare it currently provides from housing support to wheelchairs and home adaptation grants.

6. Richard Radcliffe Smee and Ford

Richard Radcliffe the Chairman of Smee and Ford, an organisation that studies legacies gave a highly entertaining, and informative presentation on the importance of legacies being left to Charities like the Association. His message had a serious undertone but he gave a sensitive subject an amusing angle that it would be difficult to put in writing. That said, the feedback received from delegates indicated that his was the most popular presentation of the weekend.

7. Morning Seminars.

The following Seminars took place for the remainder of the morning

- a) RAFA Caseworker
Tricia Freer and Chris Fear
- b) Changing needs of Clients
Alan Robson, Michael Grell and Mike McCourt
- c) Developing Welfare Support with the Royal Air Force
Lianne Wainwright, Chris Francis and members of the
RAF Community Support Team
- d) Veterans Affairs David Wright and John Davies

Afternoon

8. Chairman Families Federation

Dawn Mc Cafferty the Chairman of the new RAF Families Federation gave delegates the background and overview of this new service to the RAF which is being parented by the Association. This an exciting new venture for the Association which will bring it closer to the RAF.

The seminars were repeated during the afternoon and the President Philip Sturley gave a final message to the delegates before the Conference closed. He said that there is still work to be done in the area of communication across the Association. Information and knowledge about what was going on was still patchy. He thanked all for taking the time and effort to make the day such a success and for the honesty and good ideas that had been shared which would now be taken back and made into a report.

9. Conclusion

This event was the first dedicated National Welfare Officer Conference and proved to be very successful. There was general agreement that to put on a similar event every two to three years would be beneficial in the future.

Some of the comments and ideas received from the Seminars will be used to further develop welfare support and some will be used in future planning. To have the levels of experience and knowledge at one event was invaluable.

From the point of view of the delegates, we, as conference organisers felt they also valued sharing ideas with each other, this was as useful to individuals as it was to the Associations welfare generally.

Finally all of the attendees appeared to have a great time and really enjoyed a truly welfare focused event. It was a worthwhile exercise and certainly demonstrated the strength and dedication of the welfare officer network.

Attachments

Feedback analysis
Seminar reports

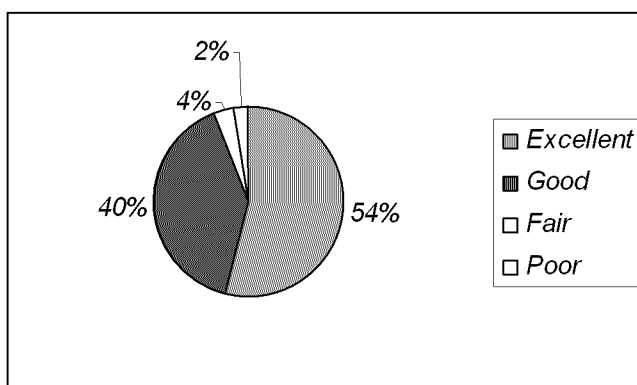
Tricia Freer
Welfare Director

HWO Conference Feedback Statistics

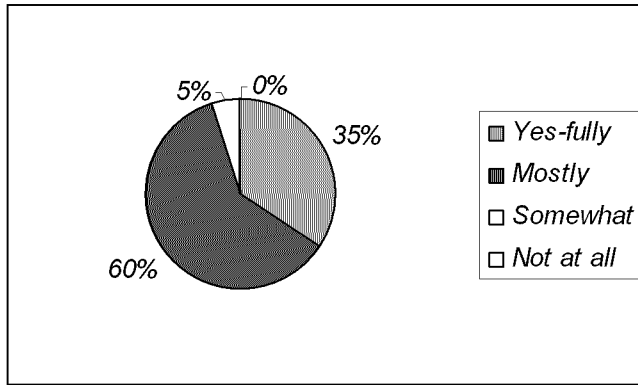
In total 138 Delegates attended the Conference and of those 84 delegates returned a Conference Feedback Form.

The following figures show a percentage of the 84 feedback forms received.

1. We asked you what you thought of the chosen venue for the conference:

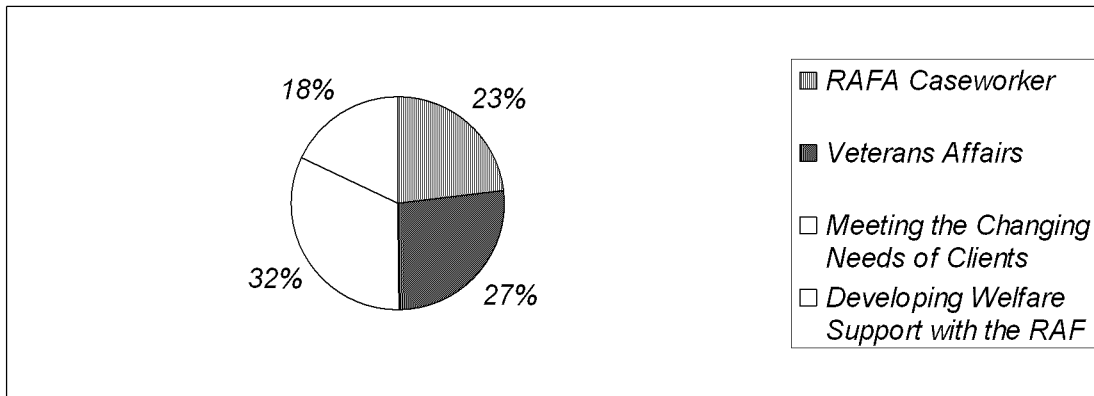


2. We asked you whether the Conference met your expectations:



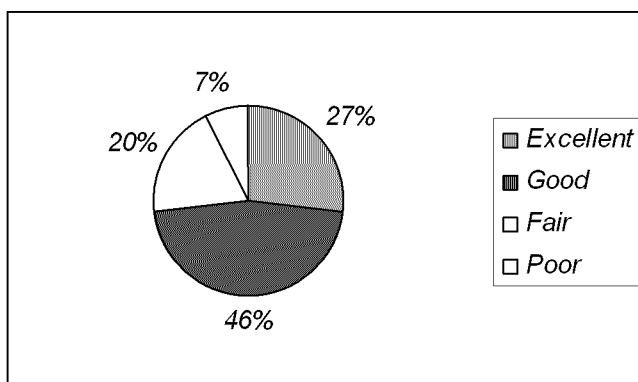
The Seminars

3. The following chart indicates the seminars attended by delegates:

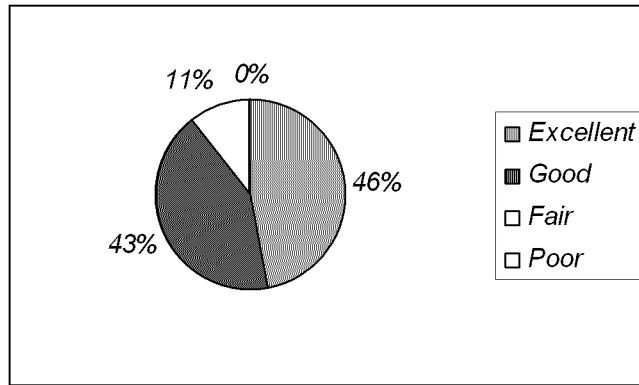


4. The following charts identify delegate feedback for each seminar:

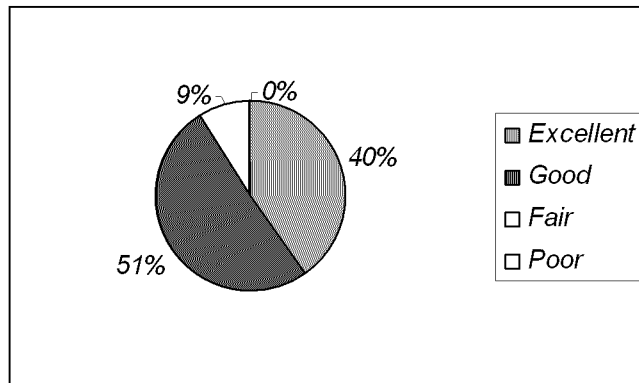
RAFA Caseworker



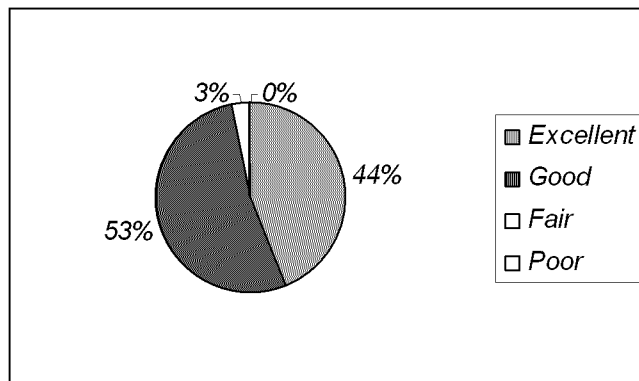
Veterans Affairs



The Challenge of Meeting the Changing Needs of our Clients



Developing Welfare Support with the Royal Air Force



5. We asked delegates to tell us what the best part of the conference was; some of the comments are as follows:

'All parts were good'
'The platform presentations'
'Talk on legacies'
'The RAF FF presentations'
'The whole conference'
'The seminars'
'Richard Radcliffe'
'Information from the Director Welfare, RAFBF'
'The opportunity to share views'
'All of it!'
'Dinner'
'President's dinner & networking'
'Interaction between other HWO's'

Many comments praised the Guest Speakers, particularly Richard Radcliffe, most comments indicated the opportunity to speak and share ideas with other HWO's had been the best part of the conference.

6. We asked the delegates to tell us what they thought could have been done better; some of the comments were as followed:

'I don't think it is possible'
'The seminars could have been more informative'
'The caseworker group needed to be smaller'
'Needed more time for the seminars'
'Could only go to two seminars'
'The seminars seemed a bit rushed at times'
'A more central location'
'Audio facilities in Seminar rooms'
'More control of group discussions'
'Some tended to dominate group discussions'
'Longer Seminars'
'Name tags should have had Area / Branch on them'
'Transport from railway station took 45 minutes'
'The wait for transport at the station was too long'
'More media required'
'Two days is needed'

The main issues were that the conference seemed a little rushed and should be held over two days and the distance from the train station was too far, some delegates had to wait a long time for the bus to arrive. There were occasional errors with accommodation that were out of the RAFA control. Some further problems identified have been charges for extra nights and this is being dealt with by the hotel. Also early arrival meant that delegates had to wait for rooms to become available.

7. We asked delegates what they enjoyed the most; here are some of the comments:

'The platform presentations'
'The President's Speech'
'The guest speakers'
'The seminars'
'Richard Radcliffe'
'The President's Dinner'
'Networking'
'Meeting other HWO's'
'The venue'
'All of it'

Most comments again praised Richard Radcliffe and his legacy presentation; the delegates mainly described the experience of networking and meeting other HWO's as being the most enjoyable part of the conference.

Seminar Reports

Developing Welfare Support with the Serving Royal Air Force Seminar Feedback

The following comments and suggestions were made during and after the Developing Welfare Support with the Serving RAF seminars:

- Could Branches offer more support to serving personnel during the resettlement process?
- If a Branch is in a position to offer help particularly on a larger scale, could they go straight to RAF Stations and ask them 'how can we help your station?'
- Can the RAFA publicise RAFA Welfare more on RAF Stations?
- 'I have been an HWO for years and I had no idea that the RAFA even supported serving personnel, I thought it was an ex-service charity'
- Can the RAF FF signpost RAFA with any issues arising from Serving Personnel?
- 'By helping families, we are helping serving personnel'
- 'Support offered to the serving RAF must reflect the changes in the RAF environment that are rapid and continuous'
- 'There should be more contact between RAFA and local amenities and doctors, dentists etc.'

- If RAFA wants to support the whole RAF Family and is working on new initiatives it must have the resources both at area and centrally to cope with the influx of cases and workload as it is no use offering all these services and then letting people down with lack of resources.
- Serving personnel need more assistance in the interim period of leaving RAF Stations to date of discharge, this is particularly important with medical discharges.
- Can HWO's form a relationship with the Welfare Team on RAF Stations?
- The welfare responsibilities of the RAF and RAFA need to be clarified to avoid conflict and confusion
- All welfare and support that RAFA offer the serving RAF needs to be better publicised and targeted to the RAF
- Can RAFA seek sponsorship to support the RAF Contact Houses?

Recommendations

1. The services and support offered needs to be backed up by a fully resourced welfare team.
2. The services offered to the serving RAF needs to be better publicised and targeted to the RAF audience.
3. The HWO needs to be educated on the whole range of services offered to the RAF Family as many did not know RAFA assisted with the serving community.
4. There are some serving HWO's, perhaps this can be expanded.
5. One of the main areas felt to require better support and welfare was at the time an individual is leaving the service, the details of this should be explored to see if RAFA can help – can RAFA be advised about individuals at time of abnormal discharge?.
6. The RAF Community Support team could be asked to involve RAFA as well as the SPVA to work in harmony to extend welfare services and support to abnormal discharges to ensure seamless transition. The SPVA Vulnerable Service Leaver Policy needs to involve RAFA

Actions

1. To publicise RAFA Welfare Services to the Serving Community
2. To identify need of serving personnel at time of discharge/terminal leave and particularly medical/abnormal discharge
3. To continue with the current initiatives

Chris Francis

Caseworker Seminar Report National Welfare Officer Conference

1. Introduction

The morning and afternoon Caseworker Seminars were both quite different. The subject matter was possibly the most contentious of all of the seminars. The morning session appeared more focused on moving forward and generally the attendees had an awareness of the development of the Caseworker project so far. It was also aided by the fact that two HWO's who are members of the Caseworker working group were present.

During the afternoon session some attendees did not appear to be as up to speed on the Caseworker process so far. The power-point presentation which in the morning only lasted ten minutes, took up the majority of the session due to the presenters being asked questions. This had the inevitable outcome of very little time left for the attendees to discuss the papers they were given, leaving some feeling a bit rushed and frustrated by the end of the session.

However, the above evidences the fact that no matter how much information we send out to keep welfare officers informed of what is going on, we cannot guarantee we have been always been successful. This can be frustrating for all concerned.

2. Seminar content

All attendees were given an overview of what a Caseworker is and why the Association is going down this route, a chart of the new caseworker structure was presented and key statements about Caseworking were given. Finally it was put to attendees how can the Association ensure its success. A recent SWOT analysis from the first Caseworker induction course was given to all attendees along with the following questions each Seminar then split into two groups to discuss.

- a. *How do we minimise the confusion between HWOs and Caseworkers?*
- b. *How do we keep the Branches on Board and encourage them to keep financially supporting the Caseworkers in their Branch Area?*
- c. *Have we missed anything?*

3. Group Work

The flipchart feed back results from the two groups are as follows in no particular order

1. More information as to what a Caseworker will do and what the responsibilities of Caseworkers will be
2. Branch would only accept responsibility for financing expenses of the Caseworker within their area only
3. More information, more liaison between HWO's and Caseworkers and Area
4. How do we differentiate between an HWO / Caseworker better qualification and training
5. Wording needs clarification and Branches should financially support Caseworkers, keep Branches on board communicate through Air Mail
6. Communication
7. When does an HWO handover to a Caseworker
8. Frustration over cancellation of training
9. Is an HWO a Caseworker play on words
10. Caseworker supports role of Area Welfare Officer and HWO
11. Terminology and Communication
12. Clarification of funding
13. Up to date HWO Caseworker training
14. Is RAFA in a position to run the HWO courses
15. Review of Caseworker Structure Management chains
16. Accountability
17. Co-operation of Branch HWO willing to travel Branch said no
18. Eastern Region for example expect a minimum of 9 Caseworkers
19. Caseworkers expect to travel more, cover up to 8/9 Branches and
Co-ordinate with the RBL & SSAFA
20. Serious lack of communication HWO's don't know what the Job description is, no details, so we don't know whether we can or wish to do the job
21. Line of delegation from Welfare Director looks rather indistinct dotted lines for HWO's
22. Present situation- Caseworkers are called upon to do work where there is no HWO
23. Same as a stand alone Welfare Officer and regional Welfare Officer
24. Intention is to fill the gaps where there is no one covering an area
25. Caseworkers will go on 5 modules 1 day each and be accredited
26. Long standing situation of increased legalisation, debt problems etc, more complex cases, one requires better training and qualification

4. Action Plan to take immediate effect

Issue	Action	By Whom	By when
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Improve Communication	More articles in Airmail, copy minutes of Caseworker working group in welfare bulletin	Welfare Director Caseworker working group Area Welfare Staff	Commence October 2007 ongoing
Agreement of Casework	Continue to progress the Caseworker project Gain Open College Network Training Accreditation	Welfare Director Welfare Team Caseworking working group Area Welfare Staff	Caseworking group ongoing gain accreditation by early 2008
Confusion of Caseworker role	Put on Caseworkers Seminars in Areas	Welfare Team	Soon as possible depending on Area

5. Key Messages Arising From Attendees

- Need for improved communication
- General agreement of need for Caseworker
- Some confusion still regarding clarification of role of Caseworker

We would like to thank all those who took part in the lively Caseworkers Seminars

Tricia Freer Welfare Director
Chris Fear Area Welfare Officer

HWO Conference Seminar Report – Veterans Affairs

1. Seminar Tutors: David Wright (WP&WD), John Davies (AM&AWO NI)
2. Both sessions were fully attended (35+). The President attended the morning session and the Secretary General attended the Afternoon session.
3. The seminar began with a short presentation and a briefing on announcements of changes to AFCS awards and review of WP Scheme.
4. Items discussed were:
 - a) Mergers of in-Service and ex-Service Agencies into Service Personnel & Veterans Agency (SPVA).

b) War Pension (WP) and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).

c) Priority Treatment within the NHS.

d) Veterans Day.

The discussions were lively and succeeded in dispelling some misinformation surrounding Veterans Affairs. The conclusions of both the Seminars were very similar.

5. Merger into SPVA

a) The merger should improve personnel, medical and compensation services from the recruit stage - to discharge – to support to veterans.

b) There may be a danger of dilution of quality of single Service support from tri-Service Agencies.

c) It is too early yet to judge any improvements as merger only took place in April of this year. RAFA should keep a watching brief and HWOs undertook to report any specific cases of failings or success to David Wright.

d) SPVA publications, for example “Veterans World” should have a wider distribution to all HWOs. AWOs to obtain copies direct from SPVA and forward with Welfare Bulletins.

6. War Pensions & Armed Forces Compensation Scheme

a) The change in awards in AFCS announced by the Minister, Derek Twigg, this week was welcomed and, although ceiling of £280K was seen by some as miserly, explanation of Guaranteed Income Payment for severely injured was accepted as fairer than civilian schemes (this payment was not general knowledge).

b) Both seminars agreed that a review of the WP scheme was due to correct anomalies between the two schemes, for example, Widows awards for life.

c) It was generally agreed that Benefits and Supplementary Allowances should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and not administered by SPVA. However, there should be no reduction in the number of allowances or amounts awarded.

7. Priority Treatment

a) There was general acknowledgement and agreement that Service Hospitals are a thing of the past and that use of centres of excellence within the NHS and private sector was the way forward. However, concern was voiced by some that this had taken away a service to veterans as they no longer were able to be treated in Service Hospitals and had to rely on the Priority Treatment scheme in the NHS. This only applies to War Pensioners though.

b) Despite concerns voiced in paragraph 7.(a), it was agreed that the Priority Treatment Scheme (HSG(97)31 dated 18 June 1997) should not be widened to encompass all veterans.

8. **Veterans Day**

a) The seminars discussed whether there was a need for another event in addition to the National Remembrance in November. It was agreed that Veterans Day should not be a remembrance event, but a celebration of what the veterans of the Armed Forces had done for their country and their achievements.

b) It should be used as an opportunity to involve children, schools and youth groups. However this could only be achieved by organising events pertaining to youth (the recent rock gig at the Royal Hospital Chelsea and veterans visiting schools was quoted).

c) A national event (not necessarily in London) should be organised by COBSEO and funded by MoD. Regional events should be co-ordinated by SPVA and funding provided.

d) MoD should do more in obtaining corporate support (as in the USA) with free entry to facilities and events.

e) MoD (SPVA) should give more support to organisers when dealing with local authorities.

9. In general, the seminars were a great success and the discussions open and frank.

David Wright

John Davies

HWO Conference Seminar Report

The Changing Needs of Clients

The following notes are a summary of comments received from the two seminars held on the above topic at the Conference. In general delegates were quite enthused at the opportunity of contributing to what will become a very important part of welfare development within the Association. Some points were repeated. These repetitions have been removed.

RESPITE CARE/RESPITE CARE HOMES:

- 1 Reconfigure some or all of the Respite Homes to be able to cope with families in the future.
- 2 If consideration is given to changing their role in the future to meet the needs of a younger client base, elements such as entertainment and other facilities will need to be considered.
- 3 Keep respite homes as they are. Investigate accessibility for local respite for all client age groups.
- 4 Consider ideas such as Time Share agreements with organisations such as Butlins/Warner Holidays. Consider specialist hotels for holidays etc. *(Note: RAF & Dependants Disabled Holiday Trust already do this).*
- 5 Give clients money for respite/holidays.
- 6 Holiday chalets: consider expanding or updating.
- 7 Use of local homes/holiday facilities – eg better use of Swiss Holiday UK Scheme.
- 8 Mix of respite etc for different age groups: eg some weeks during year set aside for younger groups.

TRAINING

- 1 Social Service Training/Refresher Training for HWOs.
- 2 HWO course to be brought up to speed as needs change
- 3 Requirement for core information on Local Authority responsibilities.
- 4 Welfare Handbook: update to include different organisations that can support our changing client base
- 5 More information about agencies/charities that might help these clients.
- 6 Basic information on entitlements to Benefits, then who to send them to for expert support.
- 7 Pensions & Benefits – Basic training & knowledge. Also other Agencies ie from Help the Aged.
- 8 Child care: - costs & legislation. *(Note: already provided on Bases through RAF).*
- 9 Touchbase (newsletter from DWP). : suggest all AWOs/HWOs/Asst HWOs consider obtaining a copy.
- 10 Knowledge of local charities – will often give money to help

SERVING PERSONNEL

- 1 Extra facilities such as Occupational Therapists (OT), rehabilitation (such as RAF Headley Court) to cope with an ever increasing need.
- 2 Liaison/notification to AWO/HWO when an individual who has been seriously injured in Service moves into an Area. Or give the individual AWO/HWO contact details.

- 3 Welfare arrangements/needs for the young wounded – investigate and be more aware of.
- 4 Better insight into serving personnel & their problems – eg. Debt, Divorce, Remoteness.

GENERAL POINTS

- 1 Marketing: Make greater use of as many tools as possible, such as Internet to publicise our facilities & activities.
- 2 Debt - signposting for clients, ie CAB or other organisations.
- 3 Consider good/better relations with Social Workers & other providers, eg CAB, etc.
- 4 Helpline: Consider provision of Helpline to signpost potential clients in right direction.
- 5 Need younger RAFA members with new ideas
- 6 Facing civilian redundancy – how to cope, who to turn to?
- 7 Late onset problems, eg, stress, PTSD, etc.
- 8 Widows/widowers – their needs.
- 9 Advocacy techniques.

SUMMARY

Delegates grasped with much enthusiasm the fact that the Association is clearly looking ahead to the fact that:

- a. As well as our traditional caseload of older members we are also, slowly but surely seeing a much younger age group approaching RAFA for help.
- b. We may well need to examine the function/role of our 3 respite care homes, possibly considering catering for the younger client base and possibly dedicate one of the homes to accommodate families either permanently or at set times throughout the year.
- c. Consider the provision of additional holiday/respite facilities for the “new generation” of welfare cases (younger ones). This could include better use of the Swiss Branch UK Holiday Scheme. Consider local respite facilities for all age groups.
- d. Gain a better understanding of the needs of the younger client base, their injuries, family problems etc. This will obviously introduce a new range of state benefits the younger client may be entitled to and to date we have not had much involvement with, and this will impact on the benefits lecture on the HWO Course.

- e Many delegates recognised the clear and obvious need for the HWO course to be frequently reviewed as the needs of our clients develop.

We had two very successful seminars which produced a great deal of discussion. This topic could and should be included in future welfare seminars run by Area Welfare Officers where there will be more time to discuss and enhance on specific issues.

Alan Robson

Michael Grell

Mike McCourt