



# Ministry of Defence

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Ref: FOI2015/03330

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[REDACTED]

23 April 2015

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request dated 24 March 2015 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in which you asked the following:

*"Please confirm which recommendations, if any, made in the "Independent Medical Expert Group Report and recommendations on medical and scientific aspects of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme", dated 17 May 2013 have been implemented with respect to Topic 2 - Hearing Loss.."*

Your enquiry has been treated as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2000 and I can confirm that the MOD holds information within the scope of your enquiry.

The first recommendation of the Independent Medical Expert Group (IMEG) Report called for a "prospective study be undertaken of in-service cases with a hearing threshold of 35-50 dB averaged over 1 KHz, 2 KHz and 3KHz to report within 3 years of publication of the second IMEG report. The MOD can confirm that hearing loss research remains one of its most pressing research priorities. The Institute for Naval Medicine (INM) produced a report in June 2014 in response to IMEG's recommendation.

The Surgeon General Medical Director (SG Med Dir) is also developing a comprehensive portfolio of research. He has identified the scope of noise induced hearing loss research gaps, using an NHS England funded literature review. Further, on-going MOD sponsored research includes 3 x PhD studies at the Institute of Sound and Vibration (Southampton).

SG Med Dir is also engaging with UK academia (under the programme title "hearWELL") whose main effort is 'earlier and better detection' of noise induced hearing loss and its military operational relevant consequences. Funding for the hearWELL programme of research is being sought. Lastly, SG Med Dir has recently visited the US DOD Hearing Center of Excellence to identify opportunities for collaboration.

A further recommendation of the IMEG report was for 'routine use of objective testing e.g. Cortical Evoked Response Audiometry (CERA) and/or Otoacoustic Emissions (OAE) whenever downgrading to H3 or lower or medical discharge is being considered'. The MOD can confirm that since August 2013 the policy has been that whenever hearing has fallen to a grading of H3 or worse, the individual is to be referred to an approved audiology service (typically the Defence

Audiology Service or an MOD Hospital Unit host trust) for formal pure tone audiometry. If the hearing grade is confirmed, the individual will then be referred for opinions from both a consultant ENT surgeon and a consultant occupational physician. If either of them has any doubt about the reliability of the pure tone audiometry, objective tests of hearing which include CERA and OAE may be obtained from the Defence Audiology Service where the results may also be reviewed by a Service consultant ENT surgeon."

The third IMEG recommendation relates to the provision of digital hearing aids by the NHS. It is therefore recommended that you approach the Department of Health and the Devolved Administrations for an update on the progress they have made implementing this recommendation.

You may wish to be aware that in the Chancellor's autumn statement, he announced that the Government would provide funding of £10m from the LIBOR funds to the Royal British Legion (RBL) to use for veterans with Service-related hearing problems, to ensure that they can access hearing aids (including servicing and maintenance) not normally provided by the NHS. The RBL is working with the Department of Health, MOD, and NHS England to devise a fund to for veterans to apply to'.

If you are not satisfied with this response or you wish to complain about any aspect of the handling of your request, then you should contact the Headquarters of the Surgeon General in the first instance. If informal resolution is not possible and you are still dissatisfied then you may apply for an independent internal review by contacting the Deputy Chief Information Officer, 2nd Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail [CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk](mailto:CIO-FOI-IR@mod.uk)). Please note that any request for an internal review must be made within 40 working days of the date on which the attempt to reach informal resolution has come to an end.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may take your complaint to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the FOIA. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website, <http://www.ico.gov.uk>.

Yours sincerely,

Headquarters of the Surgeon General