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Dear 

Thank you for your email of 04 December 2020 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

"I would like a copy of your guidance document on how to investigate complaints against Veterans U.K. under the freedom of information act.

To be clear, I'm not looking for a vague outline of what the complaints process is, I'm looking for the document that instructs staff on how to investigate complaints."

I am treating your correspondence as a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

A search for the information has now been completed within the MOD and I can confirm that all information within the scope of your request is held. Please find attached at Annex A, a copy of the Veterans UK, Customer Resolution Team's complaint procedure guide.

If you have any queries regarding the content of this letter, please contact this office in the first instance.

If you wish to complain about the handling of your request, or the content of this response, you can request an independent internal review by contacting the Information Rights Compliance team, Ground Floor, MOD Main Building, Whitehall, SW1A 2HB (e-mail CIO-FOI-IR@mod.gov.uk). Please note that any request for an internal review should be made within 40 working days of the date of this response.

If you remain dissatisfied following an internal review, you may raise your complaint directly to the Information Commissioner under the provisions of Section 50 of the Freedom of Information Act. Please note that the Information Commissioner will not normally investigate your case until the MOD internal review process has been completed. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF. Further details of the role and powers of the Information Commissioner can be found on the Commissioner's website at <https://ico.org.uk/>.

Yours sincerely

Defence Business Services Secretariat

**Customer Service
Team**

**Complaints
Procedures
Guide**

Veterans UK

11 October 2019

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this guide is to inform all staff dealing with complaints of the correct procedure to follow to ensure all complaints are recorded and dealt with effectively.

1.2 Applicability

All staff within Veterans UK dealing with complaints.

1.3 Terminology

Throughout this guide, the word 'customer' is used to refer to a person who contacts Veterans UK.

1.4 Abbreviations

A list of abbreviations used throughout this guide is at *Appendix 1*.

2 OVERVIEW

2.1 Aims and objectives of complaints procedure

Veterans UK will treat all customers fairly and equally and provide a complaint response giving:

- A factual account of the evidence
- A balanced assessment of evidence obtained
- Information relevant to the outcome of the complaint

If the investigation finds that all or part of the complaint is merited, the response will include some, or all, of the following:

- Acceptance of responsibility
- An apology for poor service
- Information about corrective action to be taken within Veterans UK
- Information passed to an operational area

2.2 Veterans UK Complaints Procedure

Veterans UK has a 3 stage internal formal complaints procedure.

Where the operational caseworker cannot resolve a complaint, they escalate to their Manager. The Manager will contact the customer to further attempt to clear the complaint at this stage. Where this is not possible, the Manager passes the complaint to CST to begin the formal complaint process.

The 3 formal internal stages of complaint are:

- 1. Manager, Veterans UK Customer Service Team (CST)**
- 2. Head of the Customer Service Team**
- 3. Head of Veterans UK (HVS)**

A complaint can only be escalated to the next formal stage where it is about the same subject. A further complaint received from the same customer about a different topic starts again at the beginning of the process.

2.3 Independent Complaints Panel (ICP)

If a WP or AFCS customer has followed all 3 internal stages of complaints procedure and still feels the complaint has not been properly or fully addressed, they can ask the ICP to look at their case. The ICP can only look at whether a complaint has been thoroughly and properly investigated, that a fair investigation took place and that full and accurate replies were provided.

Customers wishing to ask the ICP to review their complaint should be directed to write to:

The Secretary
Independent Complaints Panel
Norcross
Blackpool
Lancs
FY5 3WP

Any member of the Armed Forces Pension Schemes has a right to raise or further a complaint via the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) if they disagree with a decision or an action taken by the scheme administrator. They should be directed to write to:

Armed Forces Pension Schemes
Manager
Veterans UK
Mail Point 610
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow
G2 8EX

2.4 The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman / Pensions Ombudsman

If a WPS / AFCS customer is not satisfied with the ICP response, or an AFPS member has already completed the IDRP, they can ask the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (WPS/AFCS), or the Pensions Ombudsman (AFPS) to complete an independent, external review. To do this, they need to approach their Member of Parliament who can refer the complaint to the relevant Ombudsman on their behalf. *(See Appendix 3 for addresses).*

2.5 GOV.UK website

The Government Website www.gov.uk provides customers with an overview of the Veterans UK complaints procedures. It explains how to submit a complaint, the levels of escalation and the target response time of twenty working days.

2.6 Definition – what is a complaint?

Whilst it is impossible to provide a definition that covers all circumstances, a complaint can be defined as:

‘A clear expression of customer dissatisfaction about services provided’

2.7 Format and source of complaint

Complaints can be made:

- Verbally
- In writing by letter or email
- By the customer
- By the customer's representative (whereby the signed authority of the customer must be provided), including, but not limited to family, carer, solicitor or welfare group

2.8 Why are complaints important?

Complaints are important because they provide information Veterans UK can use to reduce customer dissatisfaction and improve service delivery. They provide an opportunity to regain the goodwill of a dissatisfied customer.

2.9 The way complaints are dealt with

The processes for dealing with formal complaints are explained in **Section 6** of this guide.

2.10 Grade responsibility

This guide is designed to explain the process of handling a customer complaint from receipt to response. It does not differentiate between, or allocate tasks to any specific grade within the Customer Service Team.

3. TARGETS

3.1 CST internal targets

Veterans UK's complaint response time targets are set by the Government, in line with other Government Departments and the Ministry of Defence. They are:

- All complaints received are acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt
- All complaints are answered within 20 working days of receipt (*also see Section 9 – Interim updates*)
- CST clear 95% of complaints received within 20 working days

3.2 The date a complaint is classified as being received on CST

Complaints often go to other business areas before being passed to CST. The above targets are calculated from the date the complaint arrives on CST, not within Veterans UK.

Care should be taken to check the date the complaint was received by Veterans UK, as if it has been held by another area, consideration should be given to apologising for the delay in the CST acknowledgement letter. This ensures that the customer is made aware that the complaint investigation has been delayed at the outset. Consideration should also be given to prioritising the complaint investigation under such circumstances.

4 THE CUSTOMER SERVICE TEAM (CST)

4.1 The role of CST

CST provides a service for customers who are dissatisfied with the treatment they have received from Veterans UK. CST investigate and respond where Veterans UK Helpline, the operational caseworker and the Manager of the relevant business area have been unable to resolve a complaint and the complaint has become a formal process.

4.2 The role of the Veterans Welfare Service (VWS)

VWS offer free and confidential advice to customers. This includes the War Pension Scheme (WPS), the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), the Armed Forces Pension Scheme (AFPS) and all related matters. They can also advise on other areas outside the remit of Veterans UK, including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). CST work closely in conjunction with VWS, as many customers who are unhappy with Veterans UK service delivery can benefit from VWS advice and assistance. VWS involvement must be checked and considered in all cases.

4.3 Areas of complaint investigated

CST investigate and respond to complaint about the service provided by Veterans UK. This includes, but is not limited to, all issues relating to the administration of:

- The War Pension Scheme
- The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme
- The Armed Forces Pension Scheme

4.4 Complaints for other areas

CST do not investigate and respond to complaints about:

- Any aspect of service provision by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
- The National Health Service (NHS)
- The services provided by the Army Medals Office
- Service Provision by any other Government Department
- In-service treatment
- Medical discharge from the Armed Forces and Principal Invaliding Conditions (PIC)
- Correspondence addressed to Members of Parliament (MPs)

- Correspondence requesting information under the Freedom of Information Act
- Any aspect of the service provided by The Centre for Health and Disability Assessment (CHDA)

Refer to Sections 7 & 8 for details of the processes to be followed.

4.5 Queries which are not complaints

CST receive queries which are not specifically complaints, but rather requests for claim updates, general information or advice. All referrals or correspondence received on CST should be carefully checked to ensure it is a complaint about Veterans UK service provision before any action is taken.

4.6 Recording of telephone complaints

Customers who wish to continue with a complaint after speaking to the Helpline and the Operational Area Manager are transferred to CST by telephone. Calls are not recorded and it is important that an accurate record is kept of all conversations held. All details must be noted and transferred to a typed record as soon as possible after a call is terminated.

Frustrated customers can be abusive. Remain calm and polite but firmly advise that if the abuse continues you will terminate the call. Do not terminate a call without advising the customer that is your intention. Note your telephone record accordingly. Where abuse is threatening, consider referral to Operational Policy and Planning Team (OPPT) for allocation of Potentially Violent (PVP) status.

4.7 Urgent and priority complaints

CST have no set priority or urgent case listing. However, all complaints received are assessed upon receipt, and where it is clear that priority or urgent status is merited, this must be considered and given. Examples are:

- Where a customer is experiencing substantial financial hardship as a result of suspected error
- Severe mental health illness cases
- Cases where there is a serious allegation of misconduct
- Where a complaint has been held by another business area before being passed to CST resulting in a delay in response

4.8 The CST file

CST have a complaint file which is held on the CST team whilst the complaint is under investigation. It is not linked to the WP or AFCS file until the complaint procedure has been completed. (*See Section 11 – File Retention Policy*).

The CST file has a front sheet used to record all action taken during a complaint investigation. This is also used as a 'BF Sheet' to facilitate chasing up requests for information required to answer a complaint and ensure target response times are met.

5. SHAREPOINT

5.1 What is Sharepoint?

Sharepoint is a Microsoft Office 365 application, used to record and share files across Defence Business Services (DBS). All actions taken by CST are recorded on Sharepoint. CST Sharepoint is headed 'Complaints', and contains the following sections:

- Home
- Forms and Templates - all CST internal and external letter heads and forms
- Guidance - any information provided to assist with drafting a complaint response including current lines to take
- On Hand - list of all complaints currently under investigation awaiting response
- Statistics - the CST database of current and cleared cases, monthly / annual statistics and live list of work on hand
- Recent – documents recently viewed, amended or created
- Recycle Bin – where CST complaints cleared within the past 3 months are stored

5.2 What information is stored / recorded?

All information relevant to a complaint is recorded on Sharepoint. Complaint details are entered when received on CST, and a CST reference number is allocated. The details are updated throughout the course of a complaint investigation and archived when complete. Archived information can be accessed where required. The information stored on Sharepoint mirrors that held on the CST file. Details recorded on Sharepoint include:

- The complaint letter, record of telephone call or email
- CST reference number
- Complaint level of response
- Category of complaint
- Area of complaint
- A summary of the complaint
- Received date
- Target completion date

- Actual clearance date
- Copies of all requests for information sent
- All information provided by business areas to answer complaint
- All letters sent to the customer during complaint investigation
- Copy referral emails or letters to other business areas
- Any other correspondence received relevant to the complaint under investigation
- The final complaint response

5.3 How to access Sharepoint

Sharepoint is accessed via Google Chrome and the website www.office.com using your DII password, MOD Email address and PUID.

6 COMPLAINT TO BE INVESTIGATED BY VETERANS UK - PROCESSES

Initial CST action / scrutiny

6.1 Complaint STAGE 1 – Initial CST action / scrutiny

When a complaint is received on CST:

1. Check to see if the caseworker and Operational Area Manager have attempted to resolve the complaint
2. If not, contact the Manager of the Operational Area by email to ask them to contact the customer
3. Read the complaint carefully to see which area the complaint relates to – complaints can cover one or more area and topics
4. Check the complaint is relevant to Veterans UK
5. Once satisfied the complaint is for CST to address, continue to register the case.

Registering the complaint

6.2 Registering the complaint

To register a complaint and allocate a unique CST reference number:

1. Take and complete a blank CST front sheet. Blank sheets are help in Sharepoint – Forms and Templates
2. Enter the NINO, AFCS or service number, Surname and forename(s)
3. Allocate a category and an area to the complaint (*See Appendix 2*) Where the complaint covers several categories and business areas, select one for each, with the first being the most relevant to the main issue of content (up to 3 categories and areas can be allocated for each complaint)
4. Attach the front sheet to a plain buff A4 folder

5. Access the CST Database on Sharepoint. Select the next available CST reference number for the month the complaint was received on CST and enter the details. Enter a brief description of the complaint. The database calculates a 20 working day target.
6. Enter the 20 working day target on the CST front sheet
7. Access the CST On Hand in the 'Statistics' section on Sharepoint
8. Enter the details from the CST front sheet
9. Access the main 'On hand' section on Sharepoint (not the one in the Statistics section)
10. Select 'New'
11. Enter the CST code you have allocated and the name of the customer – this creates a live working record for the case
12. Save the complaint letter, record of telephone call or email to the case. If you do not have an electronic version, scan to save. Scan and save any attachments sent by the customer.

Acknowledging the complaint

6.3 Acknowledge the complaint:

All complaints should be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days of receipt on CST. To acknowledge a complaint:

1. Access the main 'On Hand' section in Sharepoint
2. Click on the name of the complaint you have entered
3. Once in the records for that customer, Select 'New'. This displays a list of forms.
4. Select and complete the CST acknowledgment
5. Click on Save – Rename. Rename the acknowledgment with the date prepared, in reverse format eg: a complaint received on 12 March 2018 would be 20180312. Followed by the surname and the suffix 'ACK'
Eg: 20180312-SURNAME-ACK
6. Print 2 copies, 1 for the customer and 1 for the CST file. Post 2nd class.

Investigating the complaint

6.4 The complaint investigation

Once registered, contact the business area the complaint refers to for background information and advice to answer the complaint. You may have to contact more than one area.

If the complaint relates to WPS or AFCS, complete a CST Proforma to request advice :

1. Access the main 'On Hand' section of Sharepoint. Select the record for the customer
2. Click 'New' . Select 'CST Proforma'
3. Complete personal details
4. Enter complaint details. Enter specific questions to answer complaint. Ask for any copy documents required from a file, for example, Medical Advisor (MA) Reasons for Decision or copy notifications
5. Click Save – Rename Rename the proforma:
(for WPS) SURNAME-WPS-REQ-ADV
(for AFCS) SURNAME-AFCS-REQ-ADV
6. Click Save – Download
7. Access CST Multiuser Email. Email the Manager of the relevant area. Click Attach – Downloads. Attach completed CST proforma
8. Request a full response within 5 working days
9. Print a copy of the sent email for the CST file and save to the customer record in Sharepoint
10. Update the case on the On Hand list in the 'Statistics' section of Sharepoint to show advice requested and the 5 working day BF date
11. Annotate CST front file cover to show the area contacted for advice and enter the 5 working day BF date.
12. Place file in BF cabinet under the date the advice is due

If the complaint does not relate to WPS or AFCS, for example, VWS or AFPS:

1. Email the Manager of the area required to answer the complaint. Detail the complaint, clearly stating what questions require answering. If a full history of all action taken on the case is required, request this. Attach a copy of the complaint.
2. Request a full response within 5 working days
3. Send and print a copy of the sent email for the CST file.

4. Save the sent email to Sharepoint.
5. Update the case on the On Hand list in the 'Statistics' section of Sharepoint to show advice requested and the 5 working day BF date
6. Annotate the CST front file cover to show the area(s) you have contacted. Enter the 5 working day BF date.
7. Place file in BF cabinet under the date the reply is due

Chasing up requests for advice

6.5 Chasing requests for advice

Check the BF cabinet daily to see if the advice required to answer the complaint from the operational area has been returned within the 5 working day BF.

If it has not:

1. Forward the previous email requesting advice to the relevant Manager asking for a response within 2 working days.
2. Update the main 'On Hand' list in Sharepoint for the case
3. Note the CST file cover with a further 2 days BF
4. Place in the BF cupboard under the new due date

If the advice has still not been returned after chase up action has been taken, refer to the CST Manager for escalation.

Advice returned

6.6 Request for advice returned

When the advice requested is returned:

1. Note the main 'On Hand' list in Sharepoint to show the advice has been received
2. Save the advice in Sharepoint under the relevant complaint.
3. Scan and save any supporting documents sent where you do not have an electronic version
4. Read the advice carefully to see if it fully answers the complaint.

5. If it does, note the CST file cover that the case is ready for drafting and place in the drafting rack in due date order. Note the main 'On Hand' to record that the case is ready for drafting. If the case is for AH or HVS response, place in drafting BF order 3 days before it is due to allow extra time for checking and signing off.
6. If it does not, email the advice provider to request further information. Set a further 2 day BF and note on the main 'On Hand' in Sharepoint. Note the new BF and place file back in BF cabinet under the new BF date.

Drafting the response

6.7 Drafting the complaint response

For CST level responses, a case / complaint background is not required before drafting. To draft the response to the complaint:

1. Read the complaint again.
2. Check the advice received obtained answers all points.
3. Check you have the present position of any ongoing case action. Check WPCS or CAPS and telephone the caseworker if required.
4. Access the case in the main 'On Hand' in Sharepoint . Click 'New' and select the letter head appropriate to the level of response (ie: CST, AH or HVS)
5. Click on Save As – Rename. Name your letter in reverse date format followed by surname and response level Eg: 20180312-SURNAME-CST RESPONSE, 20180312-SURNAME-AH_RESPONSE
6. Draft the response. Explain what you have investigated, and the outcome. Explain any case specific points. Apologise if there have been errors and state what action will be taken to prevent the error occurring again.
7. Consider use of any agreed 'lines to take'. These are held in Sharepoint – Guidance
8. Answer each point separately in the order raised for clarity and ease of reference for the customer
9. Keep use of abbreviations to a minimum and explain at 1st use what any abbreviations mean
10. Always consider VWS – if they are already familiar with the customer, include a reminder that VWS can be contacted at any time. If VWS have had no previous involvement, include details of the relevant contact telephone number and email address

11. If some areas of the complaint do not relate to Veterans UK, explain this to the customer and include details of the appropriate area to contact (*See Appendix 3*)
12. Include complaint escalation details in case the customer is dissatisfied with the CST response
13. Print letter and attach to CST file.
14. Pass to another drafter for peer checking. Note CST file cover that check has been done.

Escalated complaints - Head of CST & HVS level

6.8 Complaints escalated to Stage 2 (Head of Customer Service Team) and Stage 3 (HVS)

The action taken to investigate these complaints is the same as Stage 1 CST level. Always check to see that the subject of complaint is the same before escalating. Complaints from the same customer relating to a different topic must begin the Complaint Stage process again.

Where the complaint is about the same subject, check to see what advice has been provided previously. Only request any additional information required eg: details of any actions taken since the last complaint response was drafted.

For Head of CST and HVS level responses, a case and complaint background is required to accompany your draft. This should include:

1. A brief case summary eg: name, service, rank on discharge.
2. Details of any already accepted conditions and the percentage assessment / AFCS tariff / AFPS award
3. A history of any previous complaints relevant to the current complaint – attach a copy of previous CST / Head of CST level responses to the background
4. A list of current complaint points to be addressed
7. Any additional information relevant to the case

Include a paragraph to advise on complaint escalation if unhappy with the HVS response. Escalation routes are as follows:

WPS / AFCS complaints – Independent Complaints Panel (ICP) (*See para 2.3*)

AFPS complaints – Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure (IDRP) unless the customer has already completed Stages 1 & 2 of IDRP, in which case direct to the Pensions Ombudsman for an external, independent review (*see Appendix 3*).

Head of CST/ HVS level response are checked by the CST Manager before being passed to the Head of CST or HVS for approval and signature.

The CST Manager, Head of CST or HVS may make amendments. If so, access Sharepoint – Complaints – On hand and amend the letter as required. Print and attach to CST file, leaving the original version on file. Return for further checking / sign off.

When a Head of CST or HVS response has been signed, keep a signed copy on the CST file. If the response is to be sent by email, send a scanned signed copy to the customer and note the CST file that this has been done.

Clearing the complaint

6.9 Clearing the complaint

Once the draft has been completed, checked and signed:

1. Post the original copy to the customer by 2nd class post. If you are attaching copy personal documents, send by recorded delivery. HVS responses are posted in a cream envelope, all other responses are sent using a standard brown envelope. Ensure a copy of the signed letter is on the CST file.
2. Check to see if VWS or any other operational area have requested a copy of the response or would benefit from receiving a copy. For example, if a claim is in progress, the content of the response may affect the claim or assist the caseworker in deciding if any further action is required.
3. Note the CST file front cover to record all action taken / copes sent.
4. Note the CST file cover 'Cleared' and the date.
5. Access Sharepoint – Complaints – Statistics – On hand. Delete the record for the case
6. Access Sharepoint – Complaints – Statistics – CST Database. Enter the cleared date and move the case to the 'Archived' 2nd page
7. Access Sharepoint – Complaints – On hand. Select the case to be cleared and click on 'Remove'.
8. Place the CST file in the cleared rack where it is held for 3 months pending customer comeback.

7 COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR HEALTH AND DISABILITY ASSESSMENT (CHDA)

7.1 The Centre for Health and Disability Assessment (CHDA)

CHDA are a private company. DWP hold a contract with CHDA to arrange disability assessment medical examinations, which includes arranging medical examinations on behalf of Veterans UK. Prior to CHDA, the contract was held by ATOS. A customer who is unhappy with a medical examination can contact CHDA directly or write to or telephone Veterans UK. All complaints received by Veterans UK about CHDA are passed directly to CST. The operational caseworker or Manager does not attempt to resolve the complaint.

Initial CST action / scrutiny

7.2 When a complaint about CHDA is received on CST:

1. Check to see if the complaint relates to the medical examination only.
2. If any part of the case does not, and is for Veterans UK to address, follow the Complaint Stage 1 process detailed at Part 6 of this guide in conjunction with the following. Amend the acknowledgement sent to ensure the customer is aware the complaint will be considered and answered by 2 separate areas, Veterans UK and CHDA.
3. Check WPCS to see if the completed medical examination report form has been received back by Veterans UK.

Registering the complaint

7.3 Register the complaint in the same way as detailed in Complaint Stage 1 processes (**See part 6 of this guide**). Use the codes relevant to CHDA and consider further complaint categories and areas if the complaint also relates to Veterans UK (**See Appendix 2**).

Acknowledging the complaint

7.4 All complaints about CHDA must be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt on CST.

There is a standard CHDA acknowledgment letter in the 'Forms and Templates' section of Sharepoint. This should be amended depending upon the nature of the complaint and the individual circumstances of the case.

7.5 Complaint about medical examination only – report returned to Veterans UK

1. Access the main 'On Hand' section in Sharepoint
2. Click on the name of the complaint you have entered
3. Once in the record for that customer, select 'New'. This displays a list of forms
3. Select 'CHDA acknowledgment'
5. Click on Save – Rename. Rename the acknowledgment with the date prepared, in reverse format eg: a complaint received on 12 March 2018 would be 20180312. Followed by the surname and the suffix 'CHDA_ACK' Eg: 20180312-SURNAME-CHDA_ACK
6. Print 2 copies, 1 for the customer and 1 for the CST file. Post 2nd class.

7.6 Complaint about medical examination only – report not yet returned to Veterans UK

1. Complete Steps 1 – 5 as above.
2. Amend the text of the acknowledgment to include a paragraph along the lines of:

'As soon as we receive your completed medical examination report from CHDA we will refer your complaint to them for investigation. They will respond directly to you once their investigations are complete.'
3. Print 2 copies, 1 for the customer and 1 for the CST file. Post 2nd class.

7.7 Complaint about medical examination plus other issues relevant to Veterans UK

1. Complete CHDA acknowledgment as above, adding one of the following, depending upon the circumstances of the case and complaint:

'We have referred the part of your complaint relating to your medical examination to CHDA. They will investigate and respond to you directly once their investigations are complete. Veterans UK will investigate the part of your complaint relating to (insert brief details of complaint relevant to Veterans UK) and respond separately, in writing, within 20 working days.'

'As soon as we receive your completed medical examination report from CHDA we will refer this part of your complaint to them for investigation. Once received, they will investigate and respond directly to you. Veterans UK will investigate the part of your

complaint relating to (insert brief details of complaint relevant to Veterans UK) and respond separately, in writing, within 20 working days.'

Investigating the complaint

- 7.8 Where the complaint is about the medical examination only, refer to CHDA to investigation:**
- 1. If the medical examination report has been received back by Veterans UK, obtain 2 copies with 2 copies of our initial referral form.**
 - 2. If not, BF the case on CST and check every 3 working days to await return and obtain copies.**
 - 3. Once you have the copy examination report and referral form, retain one copy on the CST file.**
 - 4. Access the main 'On Hand' section in Sharepoint**
 - 5. Click on the name of the complaint you have entered**
 - 6. Once in the record for that customer, select 'New'. This displays a list of forms**
 - 7. Select the Referral to CHDA letter**
 - 8. Click on Save – Rename. Rename the referral letter with the date prepared, in reverse format eg: a complaint referred on 12 March 2018 would be 20180312. Followed by the surname and the suffix 'CHDA_REFERRAL' Eg: 20180312-SURNAME-CHDA_REFERRAL**
 - 9. Print 2 copies, 1 for CHDA and 1 for the CST file. Attach the letter for CHDA to the medical examination report and referral form and post recorded delivery.**

Where part of the complaint is for Veterans UK to answer, refer the CHDA complaint as above and continue with Stage 1 complaint investigation. (See part 6 of this guide).

Clearing the complaint

- 7.9 If the complaint refers to the medical examination only, the CST case can be cleared once referred to CHDA. Clear as detailed in Part 6 of this guide.**

If there are issues to be investigated by Veterans UK, continue with the Stage 1 complaints process (**See Part 6 of this guide**), clearing once this has been completed and a final response sent.

Copy of CHDA response

7.10 The referral letter to CHDA asks them to provide Veterans UK with a copy of their complaint response. Once the complaint has been referred to CHDA, the CST case is cleared. Set a BF for 4 weeks to await the copy complaint response from CHDA. Place CST file in CHDA BF drawer in BF cabinet.

CHDA response returned.

When the copy CHDA response is received, check to see if the content affects any ongoing Veterans UK action.

1. If the examination report was found to be incorrect or inadequate, refer to the operational area Manager as a further examination may be required, and the Medical Advisor will need to be made aware. Note the CST file accordingly. Make the CST Manager aware for escalation purposes.
2. If the complaint was not upheld, and the content of the response does not affect any ongoing Veterans UK action, no further action is required. File the response on the cleared CST file and move from the CHDA BF drawer to the cleared rack.

CHDA response not received

If CHDA do not send a copy of their response within the 4 week BF period, telephone CHDA Customer Relations to enquire if their investigation is complete and request a copy response. BF accordingly.

Customer unhappy with CHDA response

7.11 If a customer unhappy with a complaint response from CHDA contacts Veterans UK, they should be advised to ask CHDA to look at their case again. CHDA have a 2 stage complaints process, but the customer has to contact them directly to request escalation. Veterans UK cannot re-refer a complaint at this stage.

7.12 The Independent Case Examiner (ICE)

ICE is CHDA's equivalent of Veterans UK's Independent Complaints Panel (ICP). However, as part of the contract DWP hold with CHDA, Veterans UK are excluded from this process and Veterans UK customers do not have the option of escalating a CHDA complaint to ICE.

Veterans UK ICP will not look into complaints about CHDA irrespective of the nature of the complaint.

If a Veterans UK customer has exhausted the 2 stage CHDA complaints process and remains unhappy, the only escalation route is to ask the Parliamentary Ombudsman to investigate the matter. To do this, the customer must contact their MP directly requesting assistance, which is a process they have to instigate themselves. Veterans UK plays no part in any such referral and should not provide any related advice, as it is at the discretion of the MP whether or not they will advise escalation and offer assistance.

8 COMPLAINTS NOT TO BE INVESTIGATED BY VETERANS UK

8.1 Veterans UK receives complaints about many matters which are unrelated to business and should be handled by either other areas of the MOD, other Government departments or private sector organisations. Some examples are complaints about:

- The Department for Work and Pensions
- The Army Medals Office
- In-service treatment
- Medical discharge and Principal Invaliding Conditions
- NHS hospitals

This list is not exhaustive, and discretion should be used in each case to advise the customer where to direct the complaint.

8.2 When a letter is received on CST that is not for Veterans UK to address, write to or telephone the customer advising them who they should contact, providing contact details if possible.

8.3 A list of useful addresses is at ***Appendix 3*** of this guide.

9 INTERIM UPDATES

9.1 When is an interim response sent?

CST have a target complaint response time of 20 working days. Where this cannot be met, an interim response is sent to the customer. Interim responses should only be sent where advice requested to answer a complaint has not been received. The interim letter should apologise for the delay and explain clearly why a full response cannot be sent within 20 working days. It should also provide any information which could prove helpful to the customer whilst a full response is being prepared. Offering general VWS assistance should also be considered at this stage.

9.2 New target date

When an interim response has been sent, a further 20 working day response target is added to the complaint. However, this is a guide only, and once an interim response has been sent, every effort should be made to obtain the required advice and the full response drafted and issued as soon as possible. Outstanding requests for advice should be chased by telephone not email, and the urgency of response stressed to the Manager of the relevant operational area.

Issuing an interim response - Process

9.3 To issue an interim response:

- 1. Access the main 'On Hand' section in Sharepoint**
- 2. Click on the name of the relevant complaint**
- 3. Once in the records for that customer, Select 'New'. This displays a list of forms.**
- 4. Select and complete the CST Interim Letter**
- 5. Click on Save – Rename. Rename the letter with the date prepared, in reverse format eg: an interim sent on 12 March 2018 would be 20180312. Followed by the surname and the suffix 'INTERIM' Eg: 20180312-SURNAME-INTERIM**
- 6. Type a brief letter to apologise for the delay, explain why a full response cannot be sent and include any other information which could be useful at this stage. Offer VWS assistance if appropriate.**
- 7. Print 2 copies, 1 for the customer and 1 for the CST file. Post 2nd class.**
- 8. Access the CST On Hand and Database on Sharepoint and enter a new 20 working day response target date.**
- 9. Note the CST file cover with the new target date**

10. Continue to chase any outstanding action required to answer the complaint urgently by telephone or by face to face discussion where possible.

10 MP HOTLINE

- 10.1 CST does not answer written correspondence received from MPs. However, CST is responsible for answering calls from MP offices. There is a dedicated number and handset for this purpose and calls received must be answered within 5 rings.**
- 10.2 Only general advice can be provided by telephone. Case specific queries including claims cannot be discussed.**
- 10.3 If case specific details are requested, the caller must be advised to put the request in writing, where it will be answered by the Veterans UK Secretariat Team.**
- 10.4 All calls received are recorded on a MP Hotline Record of Telephone Call sheet. These sheets are contained within a dedicated box file held in the CST library and as much detail as possible should be recorded.**

11 FILE RETENTION POLICY

11.1 CST files are retained on the CST team for 3 months following clearance. They should be weeded when the complaint response is sent. Retaining files for 3 months allows quick access to previous correspondence if a customer writes back in or telephones requesting clarification or further action such as complaint escalation.

If 3 months elapse with no further contact from the customer, check RS Web to see where the file is. If the file is at TNT, send the CST file as a put-with. If the file is at Norcross, walk the CST file to the Manager of the relevant operational area and request that it is linked to the case file. The CST file is then held on the case file in accordance with operational team file retention policy.

Note the CST Database to show where the CST file has been sent.

AFPS complaints – AFPS should be sent a copy of the complaint response in all cases. There is no case file so retain them on CST for 12 months. If no further contact from the customer within the 12 month period, the file can be placed in confidential waste.

11.2 Sharepoint records for a complaint are live whilst the complaint is under investigation. Once the complaint is cleared, the records for the case are deleted and held in the recycle bin for 6 months. Once 6 months have elapsed, they are deleted permanently.

12 STATISTICS

CST produce monthly statistics for the Management Board to show the number of complaints received with details of the nature of the complaint and the relevant business area(s). These provide an insight into how many customers are unhappy with the service provided by Veterans UK and allow any trends to be identified for corrective action to be considered.

The details entered onto the CST database when a complaint is received and cleared are used to formulate the month end statistics. These are transferred to a CST Achievement Excel spreadsheet for distribution to Senior Managers. The achievement spreadsheet runs from April to March and is updated before distribution each month end to provide year to date figures.

Producing monthly statistics - Process

The CST Achievement spreadsheet is located within Sharepoint – Stats. To enter the month end figures:

- 1 Open the achievement spreadsheet
- 2 Open the CST Database
- 3 Complete the front page of the achievement spreadsheet from the details held in both the open case and archived sections of the database. This is a summary of the month and includes:
 - the number of complaints received
 - the total number cleared
 - the number of cases cleared within the 20 working day target date
 - the number of cases which were not cleared within the 20 working day target
 - the number of cases on hand at the end of the month
 - the percentage achievement for the month ie: what percentage of cases were cleared within target
- 4 Complete pages 2 and 3 of the spreadsheet from the details held on the database. This provides more insight into the type of complaints received and the areas they relate to. Remember that some complaints cover more than one area and components, so the figures entered on pages 2 and 3 will not always match the overall summary on Page 1.

5 Enter details of how many telephone calls were received on the MP Hotline that month

Once all details have been entered, email the spreadsheet to the CST Manager who will forward to all interested parties.

13 KEEPING OTHER AREAS INFORMED

It is important to keep other areas of Veterans UK informed about current complaints as it can impact on their work and they may have additional information that will assist in the complaint investigation and response.

13.1 CST On-hand list

Every Monday morning, the On-hand list must be checked to ensure that it is up to date, and any outstanding requests for advice are noted.

It should then be emailed to the following areas for information:

- CST Managers
- Operational Managers
- Secretariat Team
- Veterans Welfare Service
- HVS Office
- OPPT

14 LIST OF APPENDICES

- 1 List of abbreviations**
- 2 List of CST Complaint Codes**
- 3 Useful contact addresses**

ABBREVIATIONS

AFCS	Armed Forces Compensation Scheme
AFPS	Armed Forces Pension Scheme
AH	Assistant Head
CHDA	Centre for Health and Disability Assessment
CST	Customer Service Team
DBS	Defence Business Services
DPA	Data Protection Act
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
HVS	Head of Veterans Services
ICE	Independent Case Examiner
ICP	Independent Complaints Panel
MA	Medical Advisor
MP	Member of Parliament
NHS	National Health Service
PIC	Principal Invaliding Condition
PVP	Potentially Violent Person
OPPT	Operational Policy and Planning Team
VWS	Veterans Welfare Service
WPCS	War Pensions Computer System
WPS	War Pension Scheme

CST COMPLAINT CODES

Process Administration

- 1.0 Delay in claim consideration
- 1.1 Payments incorrect
- 1.2 Payments delayed
- 1.3 Level of assessment / tariff incorrect
- 1.4 Overpayment calculation / recovery
- 1.5 Reasons for decision
- 1.6 Miscellaneous
- 1.7 Treatment allowance
- 1.8 Query regarding scheme WPS / AFCS
- 1.9 Interim reviews

Customer Service

- 2.0 No reply or ack to correspondence
- 2.1 Incomplete reply to correspondence
- 2.2 Rude during telephone call
- 2.3 Tone of letter or email
- 2.4 Incorrect advice given
- 2.5 Difficulty getting through by telephone
- 2.6 Didn't answer all questions
- 2.7 Promised to provide something not delivered
- 2.8 Miscellaneous
- 2.9 Complaint about member of staff

Appeals / Recons

- 3.0 Delay in appeal / recon process
- 3.1 Reasons why appeal / recon not allowed
- 3.2 Complaint about RBL
- 3.3 Complaint about Dept Rep
- 3.4 Leave to appeal disallowed
- 3.5 Leave to appeal to UTT disallowed
- 3.6 Complaint about Tribunal hearing / members
- 3.7 Complaint about SOC
- 3.8 Miscellaneous

CHDA

- 4.0 Complaint about content of medical report
- 4.1 Complaint about CHDA appt arrangement
- 4.2 Complaint about CHDA Doctor

- 4.3 Complaint about CHDA audit
- 4.4 Complaint about CHDA delay
- 4.5 Miscellaneous

Medical Evidence Gathering

- 5.0 Delay in obtaining medical evidence
- 5.1 Explanation of why further evidence has been requested to decide claim
- 5.2 Complaint about the medical evidence used
- 5.3 Complaint about overseas medical
- 5.4 Miscellaneous

Legislation / Policy

- 6.0 Query about legislation relating to schemes we administer
- 6.1 Interpretation of policy query
- 6.2 Policy advice given is inaccurate
- 6.3 Policy advice given is too brief
- 6.4 Request for Policy to review case
- 6.5 Enquiry re case law

DPA / FOI

- 7.0 Interpretation of DPA
- 7.1 Interpretation of FOI facts
- 7.2 Miscellaneous

Security

- 8.0 Security breaches
- 8.1 Miscellaneous

Pension Sharing on Divorce

- 9.0 Delay in processing
- 9.1 Incorrect calculation
- 9.2 Incorrect advice given
- 9.3 Payments incorrect
- 9.4 Reasons for adjustment / recovery
- 9.5 Miscellaneous

Forecasts

- 10.0 Requests for forecasts
- 10.1 Miscellaneous

III Health Benefits

- 11.0 Complaint regarding SIP
- 11.1 Complaint regarding SAP
- 11.2 Complaint regarding medical discharge
- 11.3 Complaint regarding PIC
- 11.4 Miscellaneous

Redundancy

- 12.0 Complaint regarding resettlement grants
- 12.1 Miscellaneous

Mesothelioma 13.0

Miscellaneous 14.0

LIST OF USEFUL ADDRESSES

Request for service records (Army)

Army Personnel Centre (Service Records)
Disclosure 2
Mailpoint 515
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow
G2 8EX

Request for service records (RAF)

RAF Disclosure Team
Room 14
Trenchard Hall
RAF Cranwell
Sleaford
Lincs
MG34 8HB

Request for service records (Navy)

RN Disclosure Cell
Room 48
West Bettery
Whale Island
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO2 8DX

Centre for Health and Disability Assessment (CHDA)

The Customer Relations Manager
CHDA
4th Floor South East
Quarry House
Leeds
LS2 7UA

Complaints against MOD in service treatment

MOD Service Complaints Wing

Ps2 (A)

DPS (A)

IDL 428

Army HQ

Ramilies Building

Marlborough Lines

Andover

Hants

SP11 8HJ

Internal Dispute Resolution Procedures

Armed Forces Pension Schemes

Manager

Veterans UK

Mail Point 610

Kentigern House

65 Brown Street

Glasgow

G2 8EX

Ministry of Justice Complaints

Ministerial Correspondence Unit

Ministry of Justice

102 Petty France

London

SW1H 9AJ

Medals Office Appeals and Complaints

DF Sec

6th Floor Zone C

MOD Main Building

Whitehall

London

SW1A 5HB

NHS Complaints

NHS England

PO Box 16738

Redditch

B97 9PT

Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

**Millbank Tower
Millbank
London
SW1P 4QP**

Pensions Ombudsman

South Colonnade
Canary Wharf
E14 4PU

Service Document / Medical Discharge Queries

JPAC Enquiry Centre
Mailpoint 480
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow
G2 8EX

Service Complaints Commissioner

Dr S Atkins
PO Box 61755
Lindon
SW1A 2WA

