



Ministry  
of Defence

**Ministry of Defence**

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Ref: FOI2021/06110

Email: [DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk](mailto:DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk)

2 July 2021

Thank you

for your email of 8 June 2021 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

*“1) During the beginning of the Covid pandemic who gave the authority to pause casework, how long was this paused for? What steps have been taken to resume casework as soon as possible? What are Veterans UK doing to relieve the backlog of these cases?*

*2) Do medical advisors contribute to the decision made on every case, if not what percentage do they not contribute to and why?*

*3) What percentage of mental health related cases meet the requirements for 50% GIP (level 8) or higher before reconsideration?*

*4) What percentage of mental health related cases have their awards increased to 50% GIP (level 8) or higher at reconsideration or tribunal?*

*5) What percentage of Veterans UK decision makers have served in HM armed forces?*

*6) What percentage of Veterans UK have served in HM armed forces?”*

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 Ministry of Defence and I can confirm that some of the information in scope of your request is held. However, I must advise you that we would not be able to answer your request without exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Section 12 of the FOIA makes provision for public authorities to refuse requests for information where the cost of dealing with them would exceed the appropriate cost limits, which for central government is set at £600. This represents the cost of one person spending 3.5 working days in determining whether the department holds the information,

locating, retrieving, and extracting the information.

To answer question two of your request would involve a manual search of every Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) file, and every War Pension Scheme (WPS) supplementary allowance in order to ascertain the percentage of cases which required advice from a Veterans UK Medical Adviser (MA). MAs contribute to the decision on all WPS claims (with the exception of supplementary allowance claims, where medical advice would be sought on an as and when required basis). AFCS is more complex, as medical advice is required for a certain category of claims e.g. mental health conditions and others, however other types of claims can be processed without MA advice, although MA advice would be sought on an as and when required basis. Decisions for AFCS and WPS appeals are made by the Pensions Appeal Tribunal, however, should the decision directions require medical advice, then this would be obtained by Veterans UK. To carry out such a task to answer this part of your request would involve a manual search of many thousands of cases, far exceeding the cost limit.

To answer questions three and four of your request would involve a manual search of every AFCS file in scope of your request in order to identify how many of the events leading to an increase in tariff were a reconsideration or tribunal. The estimated cost to manually review all AFCS claims that have a latest tariff of Level 8 or higher under the Mental Disorder tariff, following a change in tariff to determine the reason for the change, would take one person six working days. This is equal to approximately £1,110 worth of effort, exceeding the appropriate cost limit.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (Advice and Assistance) the department may be able to answer your request if you were to remove question two and either remove or refine questions three and four. For example, by asking for all increased mental health awards and not limiting the request to only those increased at reconsideration or tribunal.

You may find it useful to note that MOD holds the following electronic information:

- i. Percentage of initial claims for mental health that received a tariff of Level 8 or higher under the Mental Disorder tariff injury table of the AFCS as at 31 March 2021.
- ii. Percentage of AFCS claims awarded under the Mental Disorder tariff injury table that have a latest tariff of Level 8 or higher as at 31 March 2021 following a change in tariff.

You may also find it helpful to note that Defence Statistics Health publish statistics on claims and awards made under the AFCS. The latest publication presents statistics as at 31 March 2021 and can be found on the Gov.uk website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/armed-forces-compensation-scheme-statistics-index>

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](mailto: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)