

6 September 2021

[REDACTED] 2021 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

"I am interested in collection some data regarding your agency and would appreciate any assistance available in answering the following queries?"

If I need to submit a formal FoI Request please inform me of the relevant details etc?

I am interested in the following if available:

- 1. How many staff are currently employed by Veterans UK to deal with claims for the War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme?*
- 2. Has there been any change in numbers of the above during the Covid 19 pandemic?*
- 3. How many Medical Advisors, qualified Doctors etc are available to assist with medical claim revues etc?*
- 4. How many staff are currently working remotely from home etc and how many are unable to do so due to limitations of internal systems etc?*
- 5. What is the average wait time for a new claim submission through to completion by the internal Medical Advisor's?"*

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 some information in scope of your request is held. Please find the answers below which have been listed in the order you presented the questions.

1. There are 223 members of staff employed by Veterans UK to deal with claims for the War Pension Scheme (WPS) and Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS).
2. There has been no change in staffing levels and the above figure during the pandemic.

3. There are 24 qualified Medical Advisors (MAs) employed by Veterans UK.
4. There are 11 Managers and 24 MA's who are able to work remotely. However, it may be helpful if I explain that Veterans UK adopt a blended working approach depending on the needs of business. As such, a specific figure of those primarily working remotely is not possible. All remaining staff are unable to work remotely and attend the office full time.
5. The time taken for a new claim submission through to completion by the internal MA is not held. This is because it is not recorded as it is not the end point of the claim. The time counted and recorded in the clearance time data also includes the time it takes for the payments team to implement the decision and send out the notification of the decision to the customer following a decision by an MA.

Under Section 16 Advice and Guidance you might be interested to know that during the Covid-19 pandemic although the number of staff employed did not reduce, the number of staff that attended the office was drastically reduced to 3-5 staff per day to carry out essential work. In line with trade union agreement and central government advice the numbers have gradually increased over time and all restrictions have now been removed.

Additionally, the average clearance time for AFCS claims as at 31 August 2021 was 109.80 working days and for WPS claims it was 176.96 working days.

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