



Defence Business Services

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Ref: FOI2022/05190

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[REDACTED]

16 May 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 25 April 2022 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

"I would like to make a FoI request regarding Veterans UK, can you confirm how long the telephone helpline for Veterans to enquire regarding claims etc has been reduced due to the Covid Pandemic and only dealt with Suicide, death and bank account queries and not the full contact centre enquiry menu?"

Also when is it due to resume full service i.e when will a veteran be able phone up and get the full menu options of being able to enquire about a claim without going to an email response?

Also can you let me know for April 2022 how many Veterans UK Office based staff are still working from home?"

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.

Due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Veterans UK Helpline was fully closed between 23 March 2020 until 2 June 2020. During this time email enquiries were offered and recorded advice regarding the help and support available, was provided via the Helpline number. Once lockdown started to ease the Helpline services were gradually resumed over a period of time. The table below indicates the timeline of events:

Date of Reopening of Service	Service Available
3 June 2020	Bereavement notifications, New Claims enquiries, Welfare Support.
1st August 2020	A new line for Mefloquine was introduced for those who feel they have been affected by taking mefloquine (medication used to prevent malaria) whilst serving.
28 August 2020	Change of Address and/or Bank Details.
7 February 2022	Enquiry updates on claims/appeals.

The full menu of options resumed on 7 February 2022. There are still two recorded messages on the line that do not filter to a Helpline agent. These are available when options regarding Armed Forces Pension Scheme and Ministry of Defence Medal Office enquiries are selected, these are not services provided by the Veterans UK Helpline and signposting is offered.

The number of Veterans UK Office based staff working from home is not held.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Guidance) you may wish to be aware that Veterans UK staff, administering the Compensation Schemes, are unable to carry out their role remotely due to the requirement to access hard copy files and therefore all Veterans UK staff, working on the administration of the Schemes, are currently in the office. Staff who work at the Ilford Park Polish Home are also working on site as their roles cannot be carried out remotely. Veterans UK staff in roles, which can be carried out remotely, are working at both the office and home, in accordance with MOD guidance on Smarter Working. This is a local arrangement between the Line Manager and employee, and it is not mandated that the information is recorded.

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



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