**War Widows Recognition Payment Q&A**

Q: Why is the amount £87,500?

A: There is nothing we can do to bring a loved one back, and no amount of money will ever change that. This payment is not intended to put a value on the widow’s loss. But this is a meaningful amount in recognition that remarriage or cohabiting with a new partner does not erase the bereavement.

Q: Is the payment subject to tax?

A: The Government has announced that these payments will be exempt from income tax and National Insurance contributions.

Q: When will they receive the money?

A: The scheme will start as soon as possible and, in any event, by the end of the year. The scheme will be open for two years to allow time for applications.

Q: How many people will this affect?

A: We estimate that around 380 people will be eligible for this payment.

Q: What about widows who have already died?

A: Sadly not all those who were affected in this cohort are still with us today. The payment will not be paid to descendants of war widows who have already died. If an eligible widow dies after applying, we will make a payment to their estate.

Q: What are the eligibility criteria?

A: Payments will be made to those who forfeited their entitlement to a pension for a service attributable death prior to 2015 and have not had this pension restored through divorce or subsequent bereavement. Service attributable deaths include any death that was linked to service including as a result of illness or injury, it is not limited to deaths on military operations or exercises.

Q: Are people who have had their pensions reinstated through divorce or further bereavement eligible for this payment?

A: This payment is a form of recognition for those who are not eligible for pension reinstatement under the scheme rules. Therefore, those who have already had pensions reinstated are not eligible.

Q: If a person subsequently has their pension reinstated due to divorce or further bereavement, will this payment be taken into account or be removed?

A: This payment is not a form of pension reinstatement and therefore would not be considered under any future reinstatement under the scheme rules.

Q: Why do people need to apply – don’t MOD know who they are?

A: In line with legislation, once an individual is no longer in receipt of payments from MOD, the MOD will not update its records on an ongoing basis, and therefore information including address, bank details and surname may not be current. The information requested on the application will enable the MOD to cross-check with the records it holds to verify an applicant’s eligibility.

Q: How will people apply for the payment?

A: The scheme will be administered by a dedicated team in Veterans UK and application support will be available through the Veterans Welfare Service. An application form with guidance is being prepared and will be made available on launch later this year.

Q: Will I have to complete a 14-page application form for this payment?

A: The application form is being designed to make the process as straightforward as possible and will require sufficient information from the applicant to make an assessment on their entitlement. Once the form has been created it will be published on gov.uk and be available by request to Veterans UK. Support to complete the form will be available from the Veterans Welfare Service.

Q: What impact will this have on other Government support (e.g. benefits)?

A: This payment will not be exempt from benefits means testing. At the point of scheme launch details will be available on how this payment will affect entitlement to Government support.

Q: Has the Government considered the Armed Forces Covenant?

A: Yes. The Armed Forces Covenant calls for special consideration for the bereaved. It is precisely on this basis that the Government has considered this matter in detail, to honour the sacrifice they and their loved ones have made.

Q: Why can’t you just reinstate the pensions for those who missed out when the rules were changed in 2015?

A: Successive Governments have had a policy against retrospective changes to schemes. The rules were not unique to War Widows and the wider public sector implications had to be a valid consideration for Government. That said, the payment addresses the inequitable situation for this cohort who, as the Armed Forces Covenant provides, should receive special consideration.

Q: What do you mean by retrospective?

A: Retrospective can mean one of two things:

(a) A policy change to a public service pension scheme could be described as “retrospective” if the change improves the position for those already exercising their rights under a scheme, even when that change is from a future date. This means that reinstating War Widows’ pensions could be regarded as a retrospective change, even though it only confers entitlement to reinstatement from a future date.

(b) Retrospection is also used in a narrower, legal sense to mean a provision which takes effect from before it comes into force (or which prospectively alters previous expectations in a way which could not be reasonably expected).

Q: If you can’t make retrospective changes, how were retrospective changes were made in Devolved Administrations for the Fire and Police Services?

A: As well as being a devolved matter, these pensions schemes are contributory, unlike Armed Forces Pensions, and so the cost of these changes fell to current scheme members as well as taxpayers.