



Ministry of Defence

Defence Business Services

Secretariat
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Ref: FOI2024/05615

DBSRES-Secretariat@mod.gov.uk

8 May 2024

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 5 April 2024 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD), requesting the following information:

"... I wonder if you could clarify the roles of the medical advisors (MA) working for the Veterans Agency because I am still not entirely clear about this. ... indicated that some MAs work exclusively for the Veterans Agency and others, presumably working part time for the Agency, are working GPs. Could you please clarify if the former actually see patients clinically at any time and/or applicants for War Pensions/Compensation and if not, are their decisions based on correspondence alone? I understand that the Agency employs around 21 MA posts. Can you please advise me how many of these MAs work exclusively for the Agency?"

And your further correspondence on 25 April asking:

"Could you please also include how many FTE medical advisor posts there are in the VA and how many of the MAs are employed part time?"

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 of the information in scope of your request is held.

Defence Business Services (DBS) currently has 27 Medical Adviser's (MAs). Some of these are part time with DBS and some full time. Some of the MAs still practice clinically and see patients in their respective medical fields, however, some work solely for DBS. In respect of the MAs who work solely for DBS, although they do not see patients clinically, they must continue to hold a full, unrestricted licence to practice with the General Medical Council (GMC) and continue to undertake annual appraisals to maintain their revalidation certificates.

Under Section 16 (Advice and Assistance) you may wish to note that DBS MAs are not involved in the clinical diagnosis, care or treatment of War Pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) claimants. A MA's role is limited to providing advice and guidance based upon pre-existing medical evidence which is used to determine the level of disablement in accordance with the relevant scheme rules.

MOD MAs are a group of doctors who sit under the operations umbrella of DBS. Some are trained in the Service Pensions Order (SPO), some in the AFCS and several are dual trained for cases which span both schemes.

As a requirement for the post of DBS Medical Adviser, all employed must hold a full, unrestricted licence to practice with the GMC and continue to undertake annual appraisals to maintain their revalidation certificates. GMC revalidation assures patients and the public that doctors remain up to date and fit to practice. Revalidation supports doctors to develop their practice, drives improvements in clinical governance and gives patients confidence that doctors are up to date. It is founded on the principle that the doctor has met the professional expectations as a doctor practising in the UK.

Individual staff members hold various specialist qualifications, but the key factor in their recruitment is their experience and breadth of knowledge within the field of patient care and medicine. MAs are fully trained in all aspects of medicine and disability assessment.

MAs usually join the department following a successful career in some branch of clinical medicine relevant to the Armed Forces. This includes, but is not limited to, General Practice, Orthopaedics, Occupational Health, Mental Health, and Public Health. On joining they are trained in medico-legal determinations and evidence-based medicine, as they relate to the legislation covering the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme and War Pension Scheme administered by DBS. In post, they undertake regular continuing professional development which may be general or informed by particular case types or issues raised, both medical and legal. The compensation schemes are no-fault and, for both schemes, MAs give case-specific, evidence-based advice and certificates on causation and assessment and provide reasons for decisions.

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