



Ministry  
of Defence

**Defence Business Services**  
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Ref: FOI2024/09872

4 July 2024

Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 12 January 2024 to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) requesting the following information:

*“How many Royal Air Force, Royal Navy or Army Air Corps helicopter aircrew members (either still serving or ex-aircrew) since 2007 have successfully received compensation from the Ministry of Defence in relation to respiratory-related illnesses (and medical consequences therefrom) attributable to service, and how many have applied for compensation with a decision pending?”*

*This request covers claims made under both the War Pension Scheme (WPS) and the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), and the information I am seeking relates to when awards were given.*

*For AFCS claims, the relevant tariff descriptor (from The Armed Forces and Reserve Forces (Compensation Scheme) Order 2011) is as follows:*

**Table 2 - Injury, Wounds and Scarring(\*)**

*Item 50, Level 13*

*Descriptor: Lung damage due to toxic fumes, smoke inhalation or blast, where symptoms have continued, or are expected to continue beyond 6 weeks and where the claimant has made or is expected to make a substantial recovery within 26 weeks.*

*For WPS claims, the list of specific illnesses of interest is as follows:*

**Acute Respiratory Diseases**

*Adenoviruses*

*Influenza A and B viruses*

*Streptococcus pneumoniae*

*Streptococcus pyogenes*

*Coronaviruses*

*Rhinoviruses*

**Other Chronic Illnesses**

*Asthma*

*Cancers — any types and named, if possible*

*Chronic bronchitis*

*Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease*

*Constrictive bronchiolitis  
Emphysema  
Granulomatous disease  
Tuberculosis  
Interstitial lung disease  
Lymphoma  
Pleuritis  
Pulmonary fibrosis  
Sarcoidosis  
Airway hyperactivity  
GORD / gastro oesophageal reflux"*

On 5 June 2024 you provided the following refinement to your request:

*"Could I please make a modified data request as per your suggestion (i) and (ii):*

- i. For Royal Navy and RAF helicopter aircrew who were awarded for the conditions listed under WPS or AFCS between 1 January 2008 and 31 March 2023 and had served any time between the same time-period.*
- ii. For Army helicopter aircrew who were awarded for the conditions listed under WPS or AFCS between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2023 and had served any time between the same time-period."*

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 all the information in scope of your request is held. However, in order to protect personal information governed by Data Protection Legislation, Section 40(2) of the FOIA has been applied to some of the information by not giving exact numbers equal to or lower than five. Section 40 is an absolute exemption and there is therefore no requirement to consider the public interest in making a decision to withhold the information.

I can confirm that in answer to Q1, between January 2008 and 31 March 2023, there were five or fewer cleared claims under the War Pension Scheme (WPS), where a Royal Navy or Royal Air Force (RAF) helicopter aircrew member was awarded compensation for the specified conditions.

Between 1 January 2008 and 31 March 2023, there were no cleared claims under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS), where a Royal Navy or RAF helicopter aircrew member was awarded compensation under the specified tariff descriptor.

In answer to Q2, between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2023, there were no cleared claims under either the WPS or AFCS where an Army helicopter aircrew member was awarded compensation for a condition on the provided list.

As at 31 March 2023, there were no pending claims by Royal Navy, Army or RAF helicopter aircrew member for the specified conditions.

Under Section 16 of the FOIA (Information and Assistance), you may wish to note that service information has been gathered from the Joint Personnel Administration (JPA), which is the most accurate source for demographic information for UK Armed Forces personnel.

For the Royal Navy, only helicopter pilots and observers have been included, those with a generic job role of aircrew, aircrewman or naval airman have been excluded. For the Army, only helicopter pilots with the Pilot Helicopter Trade Competency from 2016 and beyond have been included. For the RAF, helicopter aircrew members include pilots, weapon system officers or weapon systems operators have been included.

It may also help to explain that the MOD administers two schemes for those injured, suffered ill health or bereaved as a result of Service. The most recent scheme is the AFCS which was introduced for personnel whose injury, ill health or death was caused by Service on or after on 6 April 2005 and allows claims to be considered from personnel who are still serving. The older WPS available to ex- Service personnel whose disablement arose as a result of Service before 6 April 2005.

Claims under the WPS for Acute Respiratory Diseases and Other Chronic illnesses are recorded on the War Pensions Computer System (WPCS), which is administered and managed by Defence Business Services (DBS), as a free-text medical diagnosis description. This information is based on the medical evidence and diagnosis obtained from medical records once a claim has been registered.

The figures for 'acute respiratory diseases' provided in this response were based on a free-text text search on the following terms, as advised by a Medical Adviser: 'adenovirus', 'influenza a', 'influenza b', 'Streptococcus pneumoniae', 'Streptococcus pyogenes', 'coronavirus', 'rhinovirus'.

The figures for 'other chronic illnesses' provided in this response were based on a free-text text search on the following terms: 'asthma', 'bronchial cancer', 'lung cancer', 'larynx cancer', 'chronic bronchitis', 'emphysema', 'chronic obstructive pulmonary disease', 'constrictive bronchiolitis', 'granulomatous disease', 'tuberculosis', 'interstitial lung disease', 'lymphoma', 'pleuritis', 'pleurisy', 'pulmonary fibrosis', 'sarcoidosis'.

Please note, Influenza A & B, Streptococcus pneumoniae, Streptococcus pyogenes, airway hyperactivity and GORD/gastro oesophageal reflux are either causes or symptoms of conditions and therefore would not be recorded within the WPCS free-text medical diagnosis description.

These figures should be treated as a minimum. Where service number is not recorded on the War Pension claim record, it is not possible to identify if the claim is from an individual who was employed within a helicopter aircrew.

Defence Statistics Health publish statistics on claims and awards made under the WPS. The latest publication presents statistics as at 31 March 2023 and can be found on the GOV.UK website at the following link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/war-pension-recipients-index>.

AFCS data is sourced from the Compensation and Pension System (CAPS) which is also administrated and managed by Defence Business Services.

The data was extracted from the CAPS as at 31 March 2023 to inform the latest published Accredited Official Statistics, as published on the Gov.uk website on 6 July 2023:

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

Finally, you may wish to note that tariff descriptors are identified using a free text search due to potential spelling errors made upon entry into CAPS; for this response, the search term "lung" was used to identify awards made under the specified tariff descriptor.

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

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Defence Business Services Secretariat