

Midlothian MP starts veterans survey

Owen Thompson MP is working with a cross-party group of MPs to launch a survey about the experiences of veterans applying for support from the War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensation schemes.

As a long term campaigner for reforms of the processes at Veterans UK (an arm of the Ministry of Defence), Mr Thompson heard stories from veterans across the UK about their long and stressful struggles to get the support they are due for injuries and illnesses caused, or worsened, during their time in service.

Earlier in the year the Midlothian MP led a backbench business debate calling for an inquiry into Veterans UK which received broad support across the parliament, but so far the UK Government have not taken this forward.

Mr Thompson is now working as part of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Veterans to look into the issues further and press on a cross-party basis for the changes needed to make a fairer and clearer system of support for our ex-servicemen and women. The APPG will launch a survey in November to gather first-hand data from veterans about their experiences. The survey will be available at veteranssurvey.uk from 1 November until 1 February.

All UK veterans with experiences of applying for War Pensions

and Armed Forces Compensation Schemes administered by Veterans UK are invited to complete the short survey.

Mr Thompson said: "I started raising concerns about support for veterans when it became clear just how many ex servicemen and women feel let down by Veterans UK. Simply trying to get the support they are due can be a long, complex and stressful process, detrimental to their lives, their finances and their mental health. There are issues with the length of time they have to wait, the lack of clarity and transparency about the processes, the medical evidence used, poor communications and a complete lack of independent oversight of the system, to make sure it is working for veterans and not (as it feels to many) against them.

"Many veterans are struggling with worsening medical conditions and complex PTSD from their time in service; they should not face stressful battles with bureaucracy to get the support they need in order to get on with their lives. Many report their symptoms worsening as a result of their experiences with Veterans UK. This is an appalling way to treat our ex-servicemen and women.

"When so many veterans feel like the system is unfair, the government needs to listen. We need to shine a light on what's happening and bring about the systemic reforms that are needed, not tinker around the edges of a broken system. I'm sure no-one wants to see veterans let down, people to whom we all owe an enormous debt of gratitude. I am hoping that by working collectively, on a cross-party basis, we can turn the wealth of anecdotal evidence into hard data which convinces the government that there is a better way forward."



Owen Thompson MP