



Mesothelioma UK's Armed Forces project

In 2012, the Government announced that the fines levied against banks for manipulating the LIBOR (London Inter-Bank Offered Rate) rates would be used to support armed forces and emergency service charities, amounting to £102 million over the next four years.

In 2016, Mesothelioma UK applied for funding through a grant by the chancellor using LIBOR funds to support

a specialist service for armed forces personnel and veterans who have been affected by mesothelioma, the asbestos-related cancer.

The funding is supporting a three-year project, aimed at raising awareness of the disease and establishing a shared approach to providing information and support for Armed Forces personnel and veterans.

The project:

- Provides a specialist mesothelioma nurse, based in Southampton. This nurse will work closely with the charity's existing Professional Nurse Forum to ensure that all nurses are fully aware of the issues and services relating to the Armed Forces.
- Provides a finance and benefits advisor who can deal specifically with Armed Forces personnel and veterans. The advisor will ensure that the Professional Nurse Forum is aware of the range of benefits, pensions and compensation options available to Armed Forces personnel. The advisor will work closely with the Veterans UK agency and asbestos support groups throughout the UK.
- Will work with multiple organisations and healthcare professionals, responsible for meeting the healthcare needs of Armed Forces personnel and veterans, to raise awareness about mesothelioma and available support.
- Will develop and deliver a range of written and online information resources to raise awareness of the disease within the Armed Forces and military personnel community.
- Includes the launch of a Facebook group specifically for the Armed Forces at www.facebook.com/groups/mesoUKarmedforces. The group provides the latest news and updates on mesothelioma for the Armed Forces. The page enables people to ask questions and contact others with similar experiences.
- Has a comprehensive research programme that will collate all available data to quantify and describe the mesothelioma burden amongst the Armed Forces and also explore the experience of armed forces personnel in relation to mesothelioma.

Contact

If you're a serving member of the Armed Forces, a veteran, mesothelioma patient, family member or carer, a member of an Armed Forces partner organisation or other party interested about finding out more about how Mesothelioma UK is supporting our Armed Forces, the treatments and care available, or for advice on benefits/compensation claims, please contact Mesothelioma UK at:

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 @MesoUK
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Asbestos and mesothelioma

– facts for the Armed Forces

Asbestos and the Armed Forces

In the last century, asbestos was widely used throughout the UK including within areas of the Defence Estate and Crown Estate. Many UK citizens, including members of the Armed Forces, have come into direct contact with asbestos, either through handling products with

which they were working or in the buildings/other assets in which they were working or living including ships, tanks and aircraft.

This also applies to defence contractors and civilians working under contract for the MOD and/or Crown Estate.

As with many other public service buildings, many of the buildings on and around Armed Forces bases contained asbestos and although there is a drive to improve the fabric of buildings to prevent further exposure to asbestos, exposure throughout the UK is well documented.

It is difficult to be specific about asbestos exposure that has occurred within the Armed Forces or the incidence of mesothelioma. However given the nature of the work and the environments in which service men and women were working, and based on the incidence being seen, there is no question that, as with the rest of the UK, Armed Forces personnel have been exposed to asbestos.

Key facts and figures

- The UK has the highest incidence of mesothelioma in the world with around 2,700 cases per year
- 84% of those diagnosed are male
- The average age for someone diagnosed with pleural mesothelioma is 75 years
- Currently eight veterans per month are claiming war pension due to a diagnosis of mesothelioma

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MESOTHELIOMA UK

Supporting People With This Asbestos Cancer





Being diagnosed with mesothelioma

– facts for the Armed Forces

What is mesothelioma?

Mesothelioma is a cancer caused by exposure to asbestos. It starts in mesothelial cells that are found in the lining of the chest and abdominal cavities. The UK has the highest incidence of the disease in the world with over 2,700 people diagnosed each year. Nine out of ten cases are found in the lining of the chest cavity – this is called pleural mesothelioma. Mesothelioma found in the abdomen is called peritoneal mesothelioma.

How does asbestos damage health?

Asbestos fibres are breathed (inhaled) into the lungs. The fibres are so fine

they can penetrate deep into the smallest airways and air sacs of the lungs and cannot be breathed or coughed out. Because the fibres are long it is difficult for the body's defence mechanism to clear them. These processes lead to the development of asbestos-related diseases.

The earliest signs of the disease can be quite vague. The most common symptoms are breathlessness, chest pain, fatigue and weight loss. Sometimes it can take a number of investigations and hospital visits to diagnose the disease.

Are you concerned about asbestos exposure?

If you have been exposed to asbestos at any time during your Armed Forces service, you are potentially at risk. However, the majority of people who have been exposed to asbestos dust do not suffer ill health as a result.

The period of time between exposure and the development of an asbestos-related disease can be between 10 and 50 (or more) years. There is no way of identifying who will go on to suffer health problems and who will remain unaffected.

What should you do if you are worried about a previous exposure?

- Remember - the majority of people exposed to asbestos do not suffer health problems as a result
- Be aware of your own well-being and changes in your health
- Contact your Senior Medical Officer (SMO), Principal Medical Officer (PMO), GP or Mesothelioma UK for advice if you are concerned

Treatment for mesothelioma

The treatment of mesothelioma depends on a number of things including the type of mesothelioma, how advanced the disease is, the general health and fitness of the patient and their personal preferences.

There are various treatments for patients with mesothelioma. These include measures to control symptoms in combination with radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery.

Not all patients are suitable for every treatment. None of the treatments available offer a cure but they aim to minimise symptoms, maximise quality of life and for some, lengthen life.

Some treatments are available through clinical trials.

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Benefits and compensation

– options for Armed Forces patients

Mesothelioma is considered an industrial disease resulting in potential benefit and compensation entitlements not relevant in other cancers.

You should not be put off if you have not claimed benefits before. You have a legal entitlement to some of these benefits, although potential payouts may differ based on where and when asbestos exposure occurred and your length of service.

For everyone affected by mesothelioma, the benefit and compensation claims process can feel overwhelming and challenging.

For Armed Forces personnel and veterans, there is an added layer of options to consider and explore.

Until December 2015, serving and former Armed Forces personnel who had been exposed to asbestos prior to 1987 were not entitled to seek redress from the MOD under the Crown Immunity indemnity.

This policy highlighted the inequities between Armed Forces personnel and their civilian counterparts.



Following an active lobbying campaign by a partnership of organisations including the Asbestos Victims Support Group Forum and the Royal British Legion, and supported by Mesothelioma UK, the law was changed to grant Armed Forces personnel the ability to access either a tax-free lump sum or a traditional weekly War Pension. Attendance Allowances and Blue Badges can also be applied for.

Dual exposure

For those exposed to asbestos outside of any Armed Force service there are a number of civilian benefits, state and civil compensation options to consider.

It is not unusual for an individual to have been exposed during their Armed Forces service and also outside of that whilst working in a civilian job. This is termed 'dual exposure'.

Dual exposure means the individual may be entitled to benefit and compensation options through both the Armed Forces (Veterans UK) and civilian routes.

Mesothelioma UK works very closely with Veterans UK. Veterans UK is the part of the Ministry of Defence responsible for providing assistance on many issues including benefits, housing and welfare.

Veterans UK and Mesothelioma UK ensure that those individuals living with mesothelioma, who are seeking benefit and compensation advice, receive personalised information focused on securing the most appropriate conclusion for their circumstances.

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