[INSERT MP NAME]
House of Commons
London
SW1A0AA

Dear [INSERT MP NAME]

I write today having read in the media that veterans with Mesothelioma are unfairly compensated for their pain and suffering.

Mesothelioma is a particularly aggressive form of terminal cancer that is caused by exposure to asbestos. Its symptoms often don’t materialise until decades after exposure, but once diagnosed, life expectancy is usually just one to two years. The disease afflicts a large number of veterans, particularly ex-naval personnel who worked in the boiler rooms of ships. I was saddened to learn that as many as 2500 British naval veterans are likely to die from Mesothelioma before 2047.

In 2014, the Government set up the Diffuse Mesothelioma Scheme to award lump sum compensation payments to civilians who contract Mesothelioma and are unable to trace their employer or insurer. A significant amount of veterans, including unmarried and widowed veterans, stand to receive substantially less compensation than their civilian counterparts because veterans are unable to sue the Crown for injuries and illnesses sustained before 1987. As a result, the only compensation open to veterans with Mesothelioma is the War Pension Scheme, which awards regular payments for life. Unfortunately, this MOD scheme cannot award large lump sum payments, meaning that veterans with short life expectancies and no living spouse or partner to pass their award onto receive very limited compensation.

To illustrate this point, whilst a 63 year old civilian claimant would be awarded around £180,000 in compensation under the Government’s Diffuse Mesothelioma Scheme, a veteran of the same age who lived for one year would receive just £32,000 under the War Pension Scheme. This is in clear breach of the Armed Forces Covenant, which states that members of our Armed Forces should face no disadvantage due to their Service.

It is completely unacceptable that a veteran’s pain and suffering should be worth £150,000 less than that of a civilian diagnosed with the same disease. As such, I wholeheartedly support The Royal British Legion’s call for veterans with Mesothelioma to be given the choice between receiving a traditional War Pension or a lump sum payment that is comparable to the awards given to civilians under the Government’s Diffuse Mesothelioma Scheme.

I urge you to write to the Veterans Minister, Mark Lancaster MP, to ask that this unfairness is addressed at the earliest opportunity so that veterans with Mesothelioma receive the compensation that they deserve. I also note that an Early Day Motion on this issue - EDM 680 – has been tabled with cross party support; please do show your support by signing it if you are able to.

Yours Sincerely,