

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society – Combat Stress provides treatment and welfare support to ex-service personnel who may have suffered a psychological injury as a result of their military service.

As a welfare officer working for the Society in N Ireland veterans will often feel aggrieved that they are being discriminated against with regard to benefit entitlement. Many that have been injured, physically or psychologically, and are in receipt of a War Disablement Pension (WDP) or a Guaranteed Income Payment (GIP) as part of the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) are currently excluded from many benefits as their income places them above the thresholds. Presently only £10 or £20 is disregarded when calculating their entitlement. The only exception to this is Housing Benefit. In such instances WDP and GIPs are totally disregarded when calculating entitlement.

The Armed Forces Minister had been quoted in the national press as stating that from April 2013 changes would be made to welfare benefits regarding veterans. The changes would ensure that those veterans injured in the service of their country would not be disadvantaged when applying for benefits. WDP and GIP's would be totally disregarded when calculating entitlement.

I have read through the Bill and, as a lay person, can find no reference to such 'disregards' when calculating entitlement. I would therefore respectfully request confirmation that the new Welfare Reform Bill includes such provision.

Yours sincerely

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EX-SERVICES MENTAL WELFARE SOCIETY