

News story: The Veterans Advisory & Pension Committee North East embark upon moves to counter identity theft

Concerns relating to information security in the official payment of pensions or benefits was examined and an ongoing project to improve the protection of the armed forces community was launched.

This important concern resulted in a veteran contacting the Board concerned that Veterans UK and The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) inappropriately share confidential information with the recipient's bank opening the possibility of identity theft.

The North East Board's Mr Peter Sinclair examined the problem and found that Veterans UK, and The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) provide banks with the veteran or benefit claimant's National Security Number, and specifics of the claimant's pension or benefit. This information being listed on every payment of the pension or benefit is open to a considerable number of people. This laxity opens the veterans or community member to the possibility of identity theft.

Upon speaking with senior bank officers, he discovered that such personal information is not needed by the bank and it appears to be a remnant of a procedure going back many decades and even then, was not information needed for financial institutions to process pensions or benefits.

The North East Board have raised concerns that providing such sensitive information is a breach of Data Protection Laws and is directly counter to the Government's advice on providing such sensitive information, which specifically states;

To prevent identity fraud, keep your National Insurance number safe. Don't share it with anyone who doesn't need it.

The NE Board have raised serious concerns that the provision of such personal information raises the danger of the armed forces community, especially the vulnerable ones, to having their identity stolen and that such service identifiers could constitute a security problem for the armed forces community.

The North East Board has made their concerns noted and are actively making moves to ensure that such potential problems are addressed and veterans and the whole armed forces community have the same protections as every other member of the community. They are actively seeking to ensure that the procedure effecting the armed forces community comply with the letter and spirit of the law regarding information sharing.

The North East Board is pursuing this matter with urgency.