



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

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Dear Jim,

Thank you for your supplementary question during DWP oral questions on Monday 7 February.

You asked me about Armed Forces Champions and security issues:

*"I thank the Minister for her response. In Northern Ireland, the role of the armed forces champions in jobcentres and in district councils presents difficulties with the security of some ex-soldiers. What discussions have taken place with the Minister or with jobcentres in Northern Ireland to ensure that veterans in Northern Ireland can access these services?"*

As you know social security is fully devolved to the Northern Ireland Executive, so any detailed questions about the way Armed Forces Champions operate in Jobs and Benefits Offices there would need to be specifically directed to the Department For Communities.

I would like to take the opportunity meanwhile to provide you with some more of the detail I think you were perhaps looking for, particularly around security issues as far as they pertain to veterans.

As you may be aware there has been considerable thought given to the way the Armed Forces Covenant operates in the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland. This includes specific security issues which is why, for example, the Universal Credit identifier which I referred to in my answer is now a voluntary question for veterans claiming Universal Credit in Great Britain, but does not operate in Northern Ireland at all so there is no risk of veterans being identified this way through that specific vehicle.

I understand though that there are important processes in place in Northern Ireland to support veterans. There are currently 11 Veterans Champions, one within each Council (Local Authority), rather than within specific Government

departments. They have the suitable local knowledge and connections to advise the citizens they represent on a range of issues and they receive regular training on specific initiatives, programmes and services delivered by the NI veteran support network (both statutory and voluntary). I am assured the Veterans Champions can refer veterans from their local area, directly to the NI Veterans Support Office for further advice and support, if required. Veterans are also directly referred for benefit checks and advice via the Department of Communities 'Make the Call' service that is open to all Northern Ireland citizens, and is alive to the sensitivities of the veteran context.

I hope this additional information is helpful. I will be placing a copy of this letter in the house library.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mims', written in a cursive style.

**Mims Davies MP**  
**Minister for Employment**