

THE LORD COAKER  
MINISTER FOR THE HOUSE OF LORDS

4.8.2.3.

12 May 2025

Dear Baroness Smith,

### **Armed Forces Commissioner Bill: Admissibility Decisions**

Thank you for your contributions and support for the Armed Forces Commissioner Bill. During Report Stage on 30 April, I promised to write to you to clarify the issue of duplicate Service Complaints in admissibility decisions.

In my speech I outlined the factors considered as part of an admissibility decision:

1. whether the complaint has been made within the prescribed time limits;
2. whether the complainant is currently serving (which includes both the regular or reserve personnel);
3. whether the complaint is a duplicate or repeat complaint; and
4. whether the subject matter of the complaint relates to a service matter or not.

At Report Stage you asked, *'If there were duplicate complaints—an equivalent complaint from two different people—would that not be admissible?'*

Regarding factor 3 above, this refers to complainants submitting an identical Service Complaint, which they have already submitted and received a decision on, for instance if they were unhappy with the decision. This is to avoid unnecessary duplication of workloads in the Service Complaints system. If a complainant is not happy with the outcome of their decision, there are further avenues to take such as contacting the Service Complaints Ombudsman for Armed Forces (SCOAF) (though of course the SCOAF will be replaced by the Armed Forces Commissioner). If there were two equivalent complaints from two different people, then this would not be a duplicate complaint and would be admissible so long as it met the other criteria.

I hope the above clarifies the matter, however, should you have any further queries then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Baroness Smith of Newnham  
House of Lords

I look forward to your continued support and helpful challenge of the Bill at Third Reading.

I am placing this letter in the Library of the House.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Vernon Coaker". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first name "Vernon" and the last name "Coaker" clearly distinguishable.

**THE LORD COAKER**