

Department for Work
and Pensions consultation

Frequency of Diffuse Mesothelioma
Payment Scheme statistics

Response by
Thompsons Solicitors

August 2017

About us

1. Thompsons is a UK-wide law firm with a network of offices across the UK, including the separate legal jurisdictions of Scotland and Northern Ireland. As the largest trade union and personal injury law firm in the UK, we specialise in personal injury and employment law for trade union members, their families and private clients. At any one time we will, as a firm, be handling over 50,000 cases.
2. In the field of personal injury, Thompsons is a leading specialist in handling claims arising from industrial disease, serious traumatic injuries, fatal accidents, spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries, amputation claims and serious medical injury.
3. The firm participates regularly in government consultations on a wide range of issues relevant to our trade union and other clients.

Introduction

4. Thompsons Solicitors brought about the first ever successful case for asbestos-related disease compensation in the UK in the House of Lords in 1972 and is established as the leading firm of asbestos litigation solicitors.
5. At any given time our teams of specialist solicitors act for hundreds of clients affected by asbestos related illnesses. It is our view that we are best able to do this with the most up to date information, and certainly no less than currently provided.

Q1. How often do you use or refer to the Statistics?

6. We act for people diagnosed with mesothelioma every day. When advising clients about compensation remedies it is necessary to consider the option of the Diffuse Mesothelioma Payment Scheme (DMPS). The updated DMPS statistics are necessary to fully inform potential applicants about the scheme and current payment levels. It is essential that the provision of statistics is maintained on a not less than a biannual basis.
7. The Management Information DMPS statistics, currently provided each month to members of the DMPS Oversight Committee should be made publically available on a monthly basis to support the objective of interested parties monitoring trends and current payments.

Q2. For what purpose is the information used (please provide detail to help with our evaluation)?

8. To monitor developments in DMPS.
9. We worked with the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum (the 'Forum'); we participated in discussions at Ministerial level and assisted by informing the Parliamentary debates on the Mesothelioma Bill, which led to the establishment of the DMPS. We support the Forum's interest in monitoring and influencing development of the DMPS and the EL insurance tracing scheme.
10. Reducing the frequency of provision of statistics will be prejudicial to the quality of information available for us to be able to advise our clients and it will restrict the legitimate independent scrutiny of statistics by the Forum and other interested parties.

Q3. What would be the impact(s) for you and your organisation of changing the frequency of the publication from biannual to annual?

11. It would limit our ability to provide timely, and relevant information about the DMPS to mesothelioma sufferers, and limit the Forum's research into all aspects of untraced insurance which affects asbestos victims.

Q4. If the 5th July 2017 statistics were the final biannual edition what impact would it have on your area/work?

12. High impact.
13. A transition to annual statistics would have a detrimental effect on the quality of information available to advise mesothelioma sufferers.

Q5. If the 5th July 2017 statistics were the final biannual publication what could help you manage any impact/risk?

14. Reducing the frequency of publication would have a retrograde impact on our clients and those who seek to help and represent those suffering from asbestos related disease. The information should continue to be published on a biannual basis.

Q6. Any other comments or issues that you would like us to consider

15. Management Information statistics, provided to the DMPS Oversight Committee, should be made publically available in line with government's commitment to transparency.