



Sent via email

Johnny Mercer MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Defence, People and Veterans

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader of Plymouth City Council
Labour Councillor for Ham Ward

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Dear Minister

Commonwealth Veterans Support

I write concerning the above following a Motion at the City Council's recent meeting, which received unanimous support.

As a proud military city, Plymouth recognises that Commonwealth veterans have a long and proud history of service in the British Armed Forces. From conflicts during the Second World War to recent campaigns in Kuwait, Iraq and Afghanistan, Commonwealth veterans have served with distinction alongside their UK-born compatriots, yet when their service is complete many face uncertainty and significant charges to remain in the UK.

Commonwealth veterans are eligible to receive Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) in the UK, yet many veterans report that the service authorities failed to inform them that they needed to make an application to the Home Office after their service was complete. Many believed incorrectly that the process was automatic.

Since 2015 the cost for an individual application for ILR has increased by around 127% from £1051 to £2381 with a family of four having to pay close to £10,000 to remain in the UK. Some Commonwealth veterans who have struggled to make retrospective visa applications have also had to pay legal costs which has led to significant debt. While their applications are ongoing these veterans are unable to seek employment or claim benefits and are liable for the cost of NHS treatment. The uncertainty of their immigration status and the real threat of deportation on top of financial worries for these veterans and their families is unacceptable.

In consideration of the above, on behalf of Plymouth City Council and our proud Armed Forces Community I write to you to ask that Government remove visa charges for Commonwealth UK Armed Forces personnel and their immediate families when applying for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR). Further, that you support all Commonwealth veterans who have served a minimum of 4 years

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to be granted automatic Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK free of charge, and for any veteran who completes 12 years of service to be automatically offered UK Citizenship.

I hope that you will liaise with Kevin Foster MP to jointly address this vital issue, and very much look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tudor Evans', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Tudor Evans OBE
Leader, Plymouth City Council

cc.

Kevin Foster MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Borders and Immigration