

Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) Newsletter

Issue 5 – September 2024

Welcome

Welcome to the fifth edition of the Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) newsletter. This edition provides an update on the support that is available to you, as well as the latest developments on the UK Government's (UKG) proposals for the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme.

Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

The Victims and Prisoners Act received Royal Assent in May 2024. The legislation established the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) which will administer a UK-wide Compensation Scheme. Sir Robert Francis KC was appointed as the Interim Chair of the IBCA. On 21st May, the previous UKG announced proposals for a UK-wide compensation scheme.

Sir Robert Francis Report

In June, in response to concerns raised about the former Government's proposed compensation scheme, Sir Robert Francis met with several prominent charities, organisations and support groups representing the infected blood community. In August, Sir Robert published a report based on the feedback he had heard, setting out his recommendations on how the proposed compensation scheme could be refined to address the concerns raised.

You can read the full report here: <https://shorturl.at/CbtA4>. Sir Robert's written statement provides a summary here: <https://shorturl.at/4fnaQ> or watch on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dVGAyyvWPk.

Support Payments for Life

The new UKG accepted Sir Robert's main recommendation that those already registered with one of the four UK devolved financial support scheme (both infected and bereaved partners / spouses) - and those who register between now and 31st March 2025 - will continue to receive the equivalent of the support scheme payments **for the rest of their life**, as part of their compensation package. You can read the UKG response to Sir Roberts recommendations here: <https://shorturl.at/qCaSr>

When will compensation be paid?

For those who were infected, IBCA aims to begin making the first payments by the end of 2024. More information is available on the IBCA website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infected-blood-compensation-scheme-summary-august-2024>

Infected Blood Expert Group Report

The design of the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme was informed by recommendations from an Expert Group. Chaired by Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery, the Group included legal and clinical experts, as well as care specialists. You can read the Expert Group's report here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/infected-blood-inquiry-response-expert-group-summary-report

Update from the NI Health Minister



In August, Health Minister Mike Nesbitt attended a meeting with the Minister for the Cabinet Office Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, to discuss infected blood compensation and the future of the devolved infected blood financial support schemes. Following the meeting he said: ***“I welcome the UKG decision to continue to make support payments for life to***

existing beneficiaries of the Infected Blood Payment Scheme NI. Beneficiaries will continue to receive their payments as normal until 31st March 2025.

“I have agreed in principle that the NI Scheme should close to new applications from 1st April 2025. My Department is working on a four nations basis to discuss and agree the transitional arrangements to facilitate further decision making on the future of the NI Scheme.”

Support scheme payments received up to 31st March 2025 will **not** be taken into account by IBCA when assessing compensation. We are working to agree transitional arrangements between the Infected Blood Payment Scheme NI and IBCA and will update you on progress as soon as possible.

Regulations

In August, regulations were made which provide the legal framework for IBCA to make compensation payments for ‘infected’ victims i.e. those living or deceased who were directly / indirectly infected with HIV, Hepatitis C and chronic Hepatitis B, through NHS-supplied blood, blood products or tissue. Further regulations will be needed to pay compensation to the ‘affected’ community. For a summary, visit the IBCA website: <https://shorturl.at/hBzrp>.

A message from Sir Robert Francis KC

Sir Robert Francis has published a message to the infected blood community in which he said: *“The UKG has now formalised the details on who is eligible for, and how we will calculate, compensation for those who suffered infections from blood or blood products...I am pleased that the Government accepted the vast majority of [my] recommendations. The scheme also now broadly follows the recommendations made by Sir Brian Langstaff and reflects advice from the Infected Blood Inquiry Response Expert Group. As our team works hard to set up the complex organisation required to deliver, I want to ensure we continue to listen to your views and take them into account. Over the coming weeks and months, I will be speaking with a range of groups representing this community alongside David Foley, IBCA’s Chief Executive.”*

(full statement is available on the IBCA newsletter)

For further information

If you have any questions about the Government’s plans, please contact IBCA. **Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.**

Alternatively, one of the following local groups would be happy to advise you:

Organisation	Contact	Email / telephone
Haemophilia Society	Conan McIlwrath	conan@haemophilia.org.uk 020 7939 0780
Haemophilia NI	Nigel Hamilton	NIhaemophilia@outlook.com 07824 777039
Families & Friends of Haemophilia NI	Paul Kirkpatrick	Familiesofhaemophiliani@gmail.com

Interim payments to estates: £100,000

The Victims and Prisoners Act places a statutory duty on the UK Government to pay £100,000 interim compensation payments to the estates of people who have passed away, where such payments have not already been made to a partner or spouse of the deceased person.

The application process is on course to open from October 2024 and the UKG will set out further details on the application process, including guidance on how personal representatives can make an estate claim, in the near future.

IBCA Mailing List

If you have been infected or affected by the infected blood scandal and would like to know more about the IBCA and the compensation scheme as it develops, then you can sign up to the IBCA mailing list: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Z55REY/>

A reminder on a few important things

Are you getting the support you are entitled to?

The Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) provides financial support to people who were infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C following treatment with NHS blood, tissue or blood products in Northern Ireland. Support is also available for bereaved spouses, civil partners and long-term partners. The NI Scheme offers various types of financial support, including:

Lump sum payments on registration

Annual winter fuel payment

Regular monthly or quarterly payments

Discretionary one-off grant payments

Please contact the Scheme Manager if you feel you should be getting more support from the Scheme or have any other questions.

Tax and benefits

When the four UK devolved financial support schemes were set up in 2017, legislation was passed to ensure that payments received from the Schemes were exempt from income tax. Therefore, if you live in the UK, income tax is **not** deducted from the payments you receive from the NI Scheme. This exemption only extends to the monthly / quarterly payments from the NI Scheme or interim compensation payments from the UKG.

Any return from investing those sums is not exempt from tax.

Once any money from the NI Scheme or interim compensation from UKG is invested, any interest received on that investment will be taxable in the normal way and should be declared in tax returns and self-assessments.

You should seek independent financial advice.

Payments from the NI Scheme are not taken into account when applying for any of the following means-tested benefits from the Department for Communities (DfC):

<i>Income Support</i>	<i>Housing Benefit</i>
<i>Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)</i>	<i>Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)</i>
<i>State Pension Credit</i>	<i>Universal Credit</i>

However, you must still declare to DfC any payments you receive from the NI Scheme or interim compensation from the UKG.

If you don't tell DfC about payments received, means-tested benefits may be affected. We can help by providing you with a letter to confirm payments you have received from us and inform the DfC to disregard our payments to you. If you have any problems, let us know.

Money advice

The NI Scheme does not provide financial advice, however the NI Direct Finance Support Service supports people who live in Northern Ireland and need short-term financial help.



For advice about how you can save money on your energy bills, insurance and other costs, please contact the NI Direct Finance Support Service.

Don't forget to keep your details up to date ...

Don't forget to let us know about any change of circumstances, for example if you move address or change your bank account.

The NI Scheme Manager would be happy to give advice and assistance over the phone.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Contacts



Infected Blood Payment Scheme	IBPS NI Business Services Organisation, Finance Directorate 2nd floor, 2 Franklin Street BELFAST BT2 8DQ	Phone: 028 9536 3817 Email: bsso.ibss@hscni.net
Infected Blood Compensation Authority	IBCA	Phone: 0141 726 2397 (9am - 5pm) Online: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/infected-blood-compensation-authority
Benefits	Department for Communities Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street BELFAST BT2 7EG	Phone: 028 9082 9000 Online: www.communities-ni.gov.uk You should contact the office that pays your benefit within DfC: Universal Credit: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/universal-credit-service-centre Pension Credit: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/northern-ireland-pension-centre Income Support: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/income-support If you receive only Housing Benefit : Phone NI Housing Executive: 0344 892 0902 (8.30am to 5.00pm)
Money Advice	NI Direct	Phone: 0800 587 2750 Online: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/finance-support
Psychological Support	Clinical Health Psychology Department Level 9A, Outpatients Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital BELFAST BT12 6BA	Phone: 028 9615 5867

NI Health Minister	DoH Private Office Room C5.10 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ	Phone: 028 9052 0643 Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk
DoH NI Permanent Secretary	Permanent Secretary C5.11 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ	Phone: 028 9052 0559 Email: permanent.secretary@health-ni.gov.uk
Stakeholder Group / general policy queries	Infected Blood Inquiry Team Department of Health NI C4.8 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate BELFAST BT4 3SQ	Phone: 028 9052 0764 Email: ibit@health-ni.gov.uk