

Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) Newsletter

Issue 4 – June 2024

Welcome

Welcome to the fourth edition of the Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) newsletter. This is a special edition to provide an update following the publication of the Infected Blood Inquiry's Final Report and the Government's subsequent announcement about compensation.

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Infected Blood Inquiry Final Report



The UK Infected Blood Inquiry's final report was published on 20th May 2024. The Report is over 2,500 pages and was published in seven separate volumes covering the Inquiry's wide-ranging Terms of Reference.

Chair Sir Brian Langstaff KC made 12 overarching recommendations, each with a number of sub-recommendations (58 in total) which cut across a range of different policy areas in the Department, including Quality, Safety and Improvement and Workforce, as well as the culture and working practices of the wider Executive, Civil Service and the Health and Social Care (HSC) system.

Addressing these will require a collective effort and co-ordination of actions and communications across the Department of Health NI and the HSC, as well as with other Government Departments, in collaboration with the infected and affected community. You can read the final report here:

www.infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk/reports/inquiry-report.

Prime Minister's Response



The PM made a statement to the House of Commons on Monday 20th May in which he made a “*wholehearted and unequivocal apology for this terrible injustice*”. He said the IBI final report finds a catalogue of systemic, collective, and individual failures, each on its own serious and taken together, amounting to a “*calamity*”.

He added *“This should have been avoided. It was known these treatments were contaminated.”* You can read the Prime Minister’s statement here:

<https://shorturl.at/74EAN> or watch on You Tube here:

<https://youtu.be/wPxuTPd67a0>

NI Health Minister’s Response



Former Health Minister Robin Swann attended the event in London to mark the publication of the Report. He said: ***“While I welcome the publication of the final report from the Infected Blood Inquiry, I also recognise that this is a poignant day for so many.***

“It is with deep regret that we cannot undo the actions of the past, however it is incumbent on us in government and across the health service to ensure that this never happens again.

“My Department will ensure the report is given the careful consideration it deserves and will be engaging with counterparts on a four nations basis, as well as across NI Executive departments. A full response to the Inquiry’s recommendations will be provided as soon as is practicable.”

You can read the former Minister’s full statement here: www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/final-report-infected-blood-inquiry

New Health Minister for Northern Ireland



Mike Nesbitt MLA replaced Robin Swann as NI Health Minister on Wednesday, 29 May 2024. Mr Nesbitt previously served as the Assembly Private Secretary to the Health Minister. The Minister's Private Office contact details are:

Tel: 028 9052 0643

E-mail: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

DoH Private Office
Room C5.10
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Belfast, BT4 3SQ

Victims and Prisoners Act

The Victims and Prisoners Act is the legislation which established the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) which will administer a UK-wide Compensation Scheme.

When the General Election was announced on Wednesday, 22nd May, the UK Government decided that this Bill was a priority and it passed through the remaining stages of the House of Lords in a fast-tracked process known as 'wash-up' so that it became law before Parliament was dissolved.

Northern Ireland is included in the legislation and victims here will be able to apply to the UK-wide compensation scheme when it is up and running.

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. A 'personal representative' would be required to distribute the monies in accordance with the terms of the deceased person's will or under the rules of intestacy (where there was no will). Those eligible for the payment will receive further information about this in the coming months.

Infected Blood Inquiry Second Interim Report



On Tuesday 21st May, Minister for the Cabinet Office (MCO) John Glen MP made a statement in the House of Commons in which he outlined the Government's response to the Inquiry's second interim report on compensation, which was published in April 2023.

You can read the MCO's statement here:

www.gov.uk/government/speeches/infected-blood-compensation-scheme

The interim Chair of the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) Sir Robert Francis will shortly be meeting with groups representing those within the infected blood community on the detail of how the new compensation scheme will operate.

Sir Robert will not be able to engage with everyone affected, so if you have any questions or concerns about the Government’s plans, please contact one of the following local groups who would be happy to advise or provide feedback on the meeting with Sir Robert:

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

Expert Group Summary Report

The IBI Response Expert Group was established by the UK Government to advise on the design of a compensation scheme for the victims of infected blood. The Expert Group, chaired by Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery, brought together legal and clinical experts who were assisted by care specialists.

The recommendations made by the Expert Group have informed the design of the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme. For further information please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/infected-blood-inquiry-response-expert-group-summary-report>

NI Infected Blood Support Scheme

In his statement on 21st May, John Glen MP said the UK Government recognises the importance of the infected blood financial support schemes and stated that there will be no immediate changes to the schemes and that payments will continue to be made at the same level until 31 March 2025.

However, he said that from the 1st April 2025, support scheme payments received will be counted towards a beneficiary's final compensation award. This is to ensure all Scheme beneficiaries are treated fairly, regardless of whether they were the first or the last to have their compensation assessed by the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA).

Meanwhile, you will continue to receive your payments as usual and we will keep you updated on any developments.

For a summary of the compensation scheme, including information on eligibility and categories of award, visit the IBCA website: <https://shorturl.at/NaEwJ>

Further interim compensation payments: £210,000

On Tuesday 21 May, MCO John Glen MP also announced that the Government will make further interim payments of **£210,000 to beneficiaries registered with the UK support schemes who became infected with HIV or hepatitis C following treatment with contaminated blood.**

If you are a **hepatitis C or HIV beneficiary** registered with the NI Scheme, you will receive a letter from the BSO with further information. For additional information please visit: www.gov.uk/government/publications/infected-blood-interim-compensation-payment-scheme-further-interim-payments-to-living-infected-beneficiaries-and-estates .

Final Compensation Scheme

In his statement on Tuesday 21st May, MCO John Glen MP said it is the UK Government's expectation that the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme would be operational and begin payments by the end of this calendar year.

If you have a family member or know someone who thinks they may be eligible for compensation, further information is available on the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) website at:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/infected-blood-compensation-authority

Or telephone helpline: 0141 726 2397

Psychological Support



We recognise that the publication of the Inquiry's final report may have caused distress for those who have been infected and/ or affected, so we wish to take this opportunity to remind you that a dedicated regional psychological support service is available for individuals who have been infected and /or affected as a result of receiving contaminated blood.

The service is also available for family members. The service is provided by the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCCT) and run by clinical psychologists who are specifically trained and professionally qualified to help people with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties connected to their life circumstances.

The following leaflet, produced by the Clinical Psychology Service, has more information: <https://bit.ly/3IL7meN>. For more information, or to request a copy of this leaflet, please contact the Clinical Health Psychology Department on 028 9615 5867.

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 payments*
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
Benefits	Department for Communities Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street BELFAST BT2 7EG	<u>MAKE THE CALL HELPLINE</u> Phone: 0800 232 1271 Email: makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk 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 (when in post)	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 Room 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