



News Release

29 August 2003

HEPATITIS C PAYMENTS TAKE A STEP FORWARD

A payment scheme for people in Scotland infected with Hepatitis C from NHS blood products took a major step forward, Health Minister Malcolm Chisholm announced today.

In a letter to the Health and Community Care Committee the Minister revealed that the UK Government has agreed that the Scottish Executive does have the necessary powers under the Scotland Act to establish the proposed scheme.

And in a parallel announcement the Department of Health has decided to provide financial assistance to people in England.

Mr Chisholm said:

"I am very pleased that the devolved issue has been clarified and we can now get on with the detailed business of establishing the scheme.

"I am now hopeful that the benefits issue with the Department of Work and Pensions will be resolved to a satisfactory conclusion and the people affected will be able to receive the financial assistance we have proposed in the near future."



NOTE TO EDITORS

The Health Minister informed the Health and Community Care Committee on 29 January 2003 that he was prepared to establish an ex gratia payment scheme. The scheme would award lump sum payments of £20,000 to all those who now have HCV (as a result of receiving blood, blood products or tissue from the NHS in Scotland) with a further £25,000 when people reach a more advance stage of illness.

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News Release: «NewsReleaseNo»

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