

The Rt Hon, David Cameron MP  
House of Commons  
London, SW1A 0AA

Thank you for your letter of 22 December 2010, enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mr [GRO-A], about the Department of Health's review of the support available to individuals infected with Hepatitis C and/or HIV by NHS supplied blood transfusions or blood products, and their dependants .

Although I was particularly keen to publish the Review Report before the end of the year, regrettably the parliamentary time did not allow us to do that before the end of 2010. I therefore wanted to ensure that it was made available at the first possible opportunity".

However, since Mr [GRO-A] wrote his letter, the Secretary of State for Health announced the outcome of the review on 10 January 2011. A copy of the review report can be found on the Department of Health's website at: [http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH\\_123363](http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_123363), and copies have also been placed in the library.

The new measures that will be introduced are:

- Changes to the payment scheme for hepatitis C patients:
  - all those in receipt of Stage 2 payments from the current Skipton Fund *ex-gratia* scheme (the criteria for which will now include those with B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma) will receive:
    - an increase in the Stage 2 lump sum payments from £25,000 to £50,000; and
    - a new annual recurrent payment of £12,800;
  - an new fund will be established as soon as practicably possible to provide discretionary *ex-gratia* payments for those affected by hepatitis C infection who are in greatest need;
- Those infected with both HIV and hepatitis C will receive two flat-rate annual payments of £12,800, one in respect of each infection, along with any respective lump sums.

- Before the end of March 2011, dependents of patients infected with hepatitis C who died before the Skipton Fund was established on 29 August 2003 will be able to register a claim for:
  - £20,000 if the infected individual had reached the Stage 1 threshold of chronic infection at the time of death; and
  - an additional £50,000 if the infected individual had progressed with serious liver disease to Stage 2.
- All recurrent annual payments - for both hepatitis and HIV infection - will be annually uprated in line with the Consumer Prices Index.
- All *ex-gratia* scheme payments will be disregarded for the purposes of calculating income tax and eligibility for calculating other state benefits, and be disregarded for the purposes of means-tested residential social care support.
- Anyone infected with hepatitis C or HIV from NHS blood or blood products currently paying for prescriptions will be able to apply for a payment to cover the cost of an annual prescription pre-payment certificate.
- Over the next three years £100,000 a year will be provided to selected national charities to provide counselling to those affected.

This package of measures addresses the major anomalies in the previous system of financial assistance that was available to this patient group, and establishes a much more coherent, comprehensive and generous package of support than what was in place previously. If Mr GRO-A is eligible for any of the new payments for hepatitis C patients he should contact the Skipton Fund at:

The Skipton Fund  
PO Box 50107  
London SW1H 0YF  
<http://www.skiptonfund.org/>

I recognise that money can never fully make up for what Mr GRO-A has experienced, but I nevertheless hope that the package of measures that we have now announced will help to make his life easier.

## ANNE MILTON