

# Hepatitis C ex-gratia payment scheme to launch

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The Skipton Fund, the body set up to administer the UK-wide ex gratia payment scheme for people infected with Hepatitis C from NHS blood or blood products, will launch and begin processing applications on July 5 2004.

From today, people can register their details with the Skipton Fund to ensure that they are sent application forms and guidance on how the scheme will work.

Public Health Minister Melanie Johnson said:

"I'm pleased to announce that the Skipton Fund will soon be able to start processing claims. This is good news for claimants and I am keen to encourage everyone who is entitled to apply to come forward."

"Further to our consultation with patient groups and experts in this area, I am now confident that the application process will be efficient and user-friendly. In addition, claimants can be sure that their applications will be dealt with fairly."

"This is an important initiative which will go some way towards improving the lives of those inadvertently infected with hepatitis C."

People wishing to take forward an application and who are not already registered on the Department of Health's confidential mailing list, can contact the Skipton Fund for a copy of the Registration Form. Those registered on the mailing list will be sent a Registration Form shortly, and need do nothing in the meantime.

## Related links

[Skipton Fund \(external link\)](#)

## Notes to editor

1. People who wish to make a claim can register their details with the Skipton Fund by sending in a Registration Form. This can be obtained from the Skipton Fund or downloaded from the Fund's website. All people who have registered with the Skipton Fund will be sent an

application form together with comprehensive guidance on how the scheme works and how to use the form.

2. People who have registered an interest in the scheme through the Department of Health's confidential mailing list will be sent details of the Skipton Fund and a Registration Form shortly.

3. Applications will be processed from Monday 5 July.

4. Health Secretary John Reid, and his counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland announced the details of the hepatitis C ex gratia payment scheme on 23 January 2004. The scheme will provide payments to those inadvertently infected with hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment with blood or blood products.

5. Agreement between the Health Ministers of the four UK government administrations led to the establishment of the Skipton Fund to administer a common UK-wide scheme.

6. The scheme will make lump sum payments of £20,000 to all those who now have Hepatitis C from blood, with a further £25,000 when people reach a more advanced stage of illness.

7. The 'advanced stage' of illness that triggers eligibility for the £25,000 is defined as when a patient develops cirrhosis, liver cancer or if they have received a liver transplant.

8. Legislation affecting social security benefits and residential care charging has been amended to ensure that people receiving payments from the scheme are not penalised as a result.

9. General eligibility is defined in terms of having received blood, blood products or tissue from the NHS before September 1991. No payments will be made in respect of those who have died before 29 August 2003 or to people who have cleared the virus spontaneously in the acute phase of the disease. In the case of eligible people who die between 29 August 2003 and 5 July 2004, the payments will be made to their estate. Where eligible persons who die after 5 July 2004, payments will only be made to their estate if the eligible person had applied to the Skipton Fund whilst they were still alive.

10. People who have been infected with HIV through blood, blood products or tissue on in the past, and have in addition contracted Hepatitis C in the same way, will be eligible for payments from the scheme in the same way as those who have only been infected with Hepatitis C.

11. People who have cleared the virus as a result of treatment or who have cleared it spontaneously after a period of chronic infection will be eligible for payments from the scheme.

12. It will be assumed that people who have developed Hepatitis C after being treated with Factor VIII or Factor IX blood clotting factor concentrates were infected as a result of that treatment. Virtually all haemophiliacs will fall into this category.

13. If people have received compensation from other sources in connection with their infection, Skipton Fund will not make any deduction from any award to take account of this. [Please note that this position has been revised since the publication of the original details of the scheme on 23 January 2004]

14. Applicants will only need to provide basic personal details to the Skipton Fund but will need to ask their doctor to complete the main section of the application form which details information to support their eligibility.

15. If the Skipton Fund decides that an applicant is not eligible for payment they will write explaining the reason for this decision. The applicant can then apply to an independent appeals panel, which will most likely be chaired by a QC.

16. Applicants will not need legal advice when completing the application form and they will not be asked to sign any waiver. The scheme will not reimburse legal costs incurred in making a claim or in appealing against a decision by the Skipton Fund.

**Contact**

Skipton Fund

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