

# PRESS RELEASE

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## GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES HELP FOR HIV INFECTED BLOOD TRANSFUSION RECIPIENTS

The Government is to extend the special help for HIV infected haemophiliacs to people who have been infected with HIV as a result of NHS blood transfusions or tissue transfers received within the UK, William Waldegrave, Secretary of State for Health, announced today.

In a Written Reply to a Parliamentary Question from Sir Michael McNair-Wilson, MP for Newbury, Mr Waldegrave said:

"I have decided that the special provision already made for those with haemophilia and HIV is to be extended to those who have been infected with HIV as a result of blood transfusion or tissue transfer in the United Kingdom. The payments will also apply to any of their spouses, partners and children to whom their infection may have been passed on. The rates of payment are shown in the table. (Similar help will be available throughout the UK.)

"The Government have never accepted the argument for a general scheme of no fault compensation for medical accidents, as such a scheme would be unworkable and unfair. That remains our position.

"We made special provision for those with haemophilia and HIV because of their very special circumstances. It has been argued that this special provision should be extended to include those who have become infected with HIV through blood or tissue transfer within the United Kingdom. I have considered very carefully all the circumstances and the arguments which have been put to us. I have concluded that it would be right to recognise that this group, which shares the tragedy of those with haemophilia in becoming infected with HIV through medical treatment within the UK, is also a very special case.

"The circumstances of each infected transfusion or tissue recipient will need to be considered individually to establish that their treatment in the UK was the source of their infection.

"A small expert panel is being set up to consider cases where necessary. I am pleased that Mr Benet Hytner QC has agreed to chair this panel and I shall shortly appoint two medical assessors to assist in this work. Further detailed work needs to be done on the machinery for handling individual claims for these payments; but payments will be made as soon as possible.

[MORE]

Parliamentary authority for making these payments will be sought through Supply Estimates and the Confirming Appropriation Act. On the basis of the reported cases the estimated cost could be £12 million. However, I cannot be certain about the cost, as numbers of valid claims are not known.

"I share the great sympathy which is universally felt for the blood and tissue recipients who have tragically become infected through their treatment. Money cannot compensate for this but I hope that the provision we are making will provide some measure of financial security for those affected and their families."

#### Notes For Editors

At the end of December 1991, there were 74 reports in the UK of HIV infection in people who received blood transfusions or tissue transfers in the UK. There are also 17 reports where the place of transfusion is unknown at present. There may be some other cases which are not yet reported. There have been no reports of infection resulting from NHS blood or tissue transfer in recent years. Claims will need to be validated.

We cannot be certain about the cost, as numbers with valid claims are not known. On the basis of the reported cases we estimate the cost could be £12 million.

The amounts of payments to be made to the HIV infected NHS blood and tissue transfer recipients are:

	£
- Infant	41,500 each
- Single Adult	43,500 each
- Married Adult without dependent children	52,000 each
- Infected person with dependent children	80,500 each

and to the infected spouses and/or children of the above:

- Adult infected spouse or partner of the blood or tissue recipient	23,500 each
- Infected child who is married	23,500 each
- Unmarried infected child	21,500 each

These sums comprise the variable amounts paid to HIV infected haemophiliacs following the settlement of the litigation, and the payments of £20,000 to each HIV infected haemophiliac which were announced on 23 November 1989.

[ENDS]