



Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme

Newsletter Issue 6

Welcome to issue 6 of the **Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBSS) Newsletter**

SIBSS Membership Survey

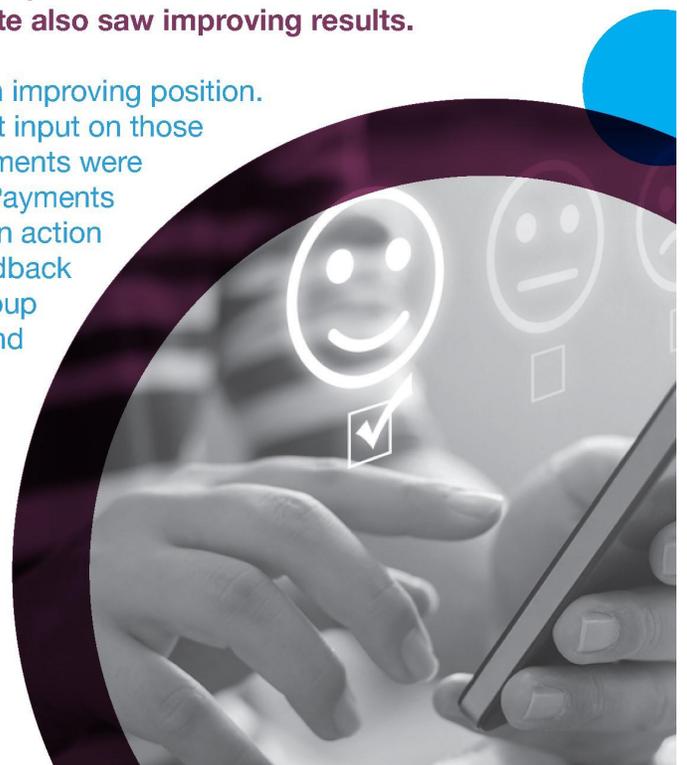
As SIBSS entered its 3rd year the Advisory Group, made up of representatives from the NHS, Hepatitis Scotland, Haemophilia Scotland, the Scottish Infected Blood Forum and the Scottish Government, agreed to a more detailed survey of the membership to assess the Scheme's performance and improvements to date. It was agreed that all members would be surveyed to gain as great a breadth of views as possible.

The Advisory Group met in August to discuss the results and agree an action plan to ensure continued improvement is maintained. The survey results have now been published. The highlights are that we had a **response rate of 73% - up from 47% in 2018's survey. Satisfaction with the Scheme and how it is run scored 91% - up from 84% in 2018. Dissatisfaction was 1% - down from 4% in 2018. Payment accuracy scored 96% - up from 2018's 95% and customer services saw a small improvement in score with dissatisfaction there below 1%. Both the Newsletter and Website also saw improving results.**

Overall, the results were positive and highlighted an improving position. The addition of free text feedback gave us excellent input on those areas where we can continue to improve. The comments were grouped into three key themes: Communications, Payments and Scheme Criteria. The Advisory Group agreed an action plan that will seek to address all aspects of the feedback and progress will be reported bi-annually to the Group as well as through the medium of this Newsletter and our website.

I would like to close by thanking everyone who participated in the survey. It is this feedback that gives us confidence in those areas that are working well and the focus to ensure improvements can be made on the priority themes you have highlighted. Thank you.

Martin Bell, Scheme Director.



There were a few concerns raised over the long-term continuation of SIBSS. The Scottish Government has confirmed it is committed to continuing to provide financial support long term. This provides assurance to members that there will be stability and consistency in their payments.

You Said – We Did

Through analysing the responses submitted as part of the bi-annual survey and 3 year review we were able to extract a number of requests from members which we then committed to acting upon to improve the service.

Obtaining Information:

You requested that it be easier to find specific information – We have added a separate section at the end of this newsletter with links to key information as well as initiating a review into the ease of accessing relevant information for someone with no prior knowledge. We are also in the process of creating an FAQ section on the website where the most common queries will be answered.

Increased Awareness of the Scheme:

You said that the scheme could do more to increase its profile – We are in the process of drafting a document to be sent round GP practices and Health Boards to increase the awareness of the scheme so that when patients present with HCV or HIV from infected blood they can be directed to our services.

Mental Health Support:

You requested additional information on Mental Health Support – The feedback from the SIBSS members' survey told us there is an unmet demand for mental health support among some of our beneficiaries. 63% of you said you do not receive mental health support, and, of those, around 40% either said they would like to access support, were unsure whether they would like to access support or did not provide an answer. To allow us to better understand how best to help our members, we would like to ask a further few questions of those of you who might be interested in receiving support. Your answers will remain anonymous and will only be used to consider expansion of the current mental health support provision. Please fill in the survey at the [link](#) or at the back of this newsletter – if you fill it in hard copy please return it in the envelope provided.



In addition, should you wish to find counselling independently, one-off grants are available. These are not means-tested and provide flexibility for members. The [grant section](#) on the SIBSS website provides all the information needed, alternatively you can contact the SIBSS team on 0131 275 6754 to discuss the options.

Benefits Advice:

In your survey answers, some of you also told us more assistance with benefit applications and appeals, in addition to services provided by Citizens Advice, would be helpful. We are pleased to advise that SIBSS beneficiaries can now access the services of an expert welfare rights advocate with specialist knowledge of the needs and healthcare implications for those infected and affected by infected blood. They have already given some important advice to us for our beneficiaries.

In addition, we've heard that some people may be stopping their Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) claims or letting them lapse because they don't want the inconvenience and stress of dealing with the DWP and having assessments; they feel that they can manage on their other income, including payments from SIBSS. However, if you do this it is important to bear in mind that people who receive ESA also receive a full National Insurance credit for each week they receive ESA. This counts in full towards their state Retirement Pension entitlement. This means that anyone who doesn't claim ESA when they could won't get a National Insurance Credit towards their state pension if they are not working. They can buy voluntary (Class 3") National Insurance Contributions, but these currently cost £15.30 per week.

Some people who don't qualify for ESA because, for example, they have too much capital or income, can also continue their ESA claim on a "credits only" basis and still revive their National Insurance Credit. If you are thinking of stopping your ESA claim or letting it lapse when you are next asked to undergo an assessment, you should bear this in mind. If you need advice or support in making benefits claims, please contact the SIBSS team. We can refer you on to someone who can advise you.

Did you know?

- If you do not have access to the internet, or prefer to talk directly, the SIBSS team are happy to give advice and assistance over the phone.
- If you receive a regular payment; you can request a monthly remittance advice to be sent to you.
- You need to inform us if you move address or your circumstances change.
- One off grants are available to help with living costs, income top up or other one off needs.

More information can be found by clicking on this [link](#).

Links

[SIBSS Website](#)
[Grant Information](#)
[Support Organisations](#)
[Scottish Government Website](#)
[Mental Health Survey](#)

Contact us

Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme
Practitioner Services
Gyle Square
1 South Gyle Crescent
Edinburgh, EH12 9EB
Phone: 0131 275 6754
Email: NSS.SIBSS@nhs.net