

England Infected Blood Support Scheme

Quarterly Meeting – Thursday 29th March 2018
Room 62, 39 Victoria Street

Attendees:

Ailsa Wight – Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
Nigel Zaman – DHSC (by phone)
Donna McInnes - DHSC
Ginny Belson - DHSC

Chris Calise – NHS Business Services Authority (NHS BSA)
Chris Tempest – NHS BSA

AW opened the meeting by saying that overall DHSC was very happy with the way NHS BSA had rolled out the new infected blood support scheme alongside the work they had carried out to support the implementation of two new policies (Special Category Mechanism (SCM) applications and payments and the review of the new discretionary payments scheme). NHS BSA also confirmed that they were happy with the working relationship they had with the IB policy team with excellent communication in both directions which supported good team work.

1. NHS BSA EIBSS Specification and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)

- DHSC getting final sign off on these documents next week and sending them back to NHS BSA.
- As it is a new scheme and some of the contents of the specification and MOU are already almost out of date it was recommended that both documents be revisited at the next quarterly meeting on 24th July 2018; this timing was agreed with NHS BSA.

ACTION: DHSC to send finalised signed off MOU and specification

2. Discussion of EIBSS quarterly report

- Regular monthly meetings had taken place since NHS BSA had started administering the new support scheme. There is also an annual accountability meeting that NHS BSA has with its sponsor branch each year that covers all the schemes NHS BSA runs.
- Most of the KPIs had been fully met as set out in the specification; some teething problems with the payments process meant that in January 2018 this KPI was below 100% for this period. This was when NHS BSA had moved to an automated payment process and this had thrown up some glitches. All the beneficiaries affected had been swiftly contacted and the missing payments had been made rapidly and NHS BSA had offered to pay any bank charges or costs incurred due to the delays in making the payments. DHSC was pleased with this proactive approach taken by NHS BSA.
- Applications had come in for new registrants to the scheme and these together with correspondence received had been managed in a timely way by NHS BSA.
- The contents of the quarterly report was agreed as helpful; DHSC agreed to send comments to NHS BSA on what else they would like to see in future quarterly reports.
- Both organisations agreed that they should continue to make more frequent informal contact if required.

- There had been a smooth integration of the staff that had transferred from the previous schemes to NHS BSA and these staff had been very helpful in the roll out of the new support scheme. There had also been integration of NHS BSA staff from Newcastle into the EIBSS team as well and these additional staff had been very helpful during the roll out of the new SCM as this had generated more enquiries than had been anticipated.
- The service would eventually relocate from London to Newcastle and it was acknowledged that new clinical expertise for the consideration of applications and appeals may need to be sought if advisors closer to Newcastle were required. The current professional networks could be used as well as links through DHSC to address this.

ACTION: DHSC to send comments on the content of future quarterly reports

3. Special Category Mechanism Roll Out

- NHS BSA was asked about their experience of rolling this payment scheme out and whether it had any concerns relating to this piece of work.
- NHS BSA reported that the major problem relating to the roll out of the SCM was the fact that the haemophilia centres and doctors had not been consulted with specifically when the new scheme was devised and had reported a large and unexpected increase in workload completing the forms on behalf of their patients.
- It was acknowledged that this had been an oversight by DHSC but the Haemophilia Society had been involved throughout.
- The most up to date figures provided were: 715 applications; 498 approved, 150 declined (8 had gone to appeal), 28 had been asked for further information and 39 were incomplete. The numbers applying had been significantly lower than had been anticipated.
- The money for the applications that had not been finalised “in year” would be accrued and these payments could be made up to the end of April 2018.
- An FOI request asking for this information had been submitted to NHS BSA with a deadline of 18 April 2018.
- It was agreed that all these facts and figures relating to the SCM needed to be sorted before the APPG meeting on 9th May 2018.

4. Review of the discretionary support mechanism

- Comments on the draft reports have been provided to NHS BSA by DHSC
- The review of the discretionary schemes operated by the former payment schemes had resulted in a number of options being proposed. The option to be recommended to the Minister would see no recipients worse off and a number would be substantially better off under the new scheme.
- Once a finalised version of the report is ready it will go to Ministers for a decision on which payment option to adopt and sign off. It was intended to send the submission up after recess and it was hoped a decision would be made by the end of April 2018.
- Beneficiaries had already been written to informing them that there would be no change to the current scheme and payments before end of July 2018. NHS BSA will be writing again to beneficiaries this week to let them know that the framework of the new scheme will not be published until after Easter.
- A further communication would be sent out by NHS BSA once the new discretionary scheme was finalised and they would also set out the new arrangements for the assessment of income in this letter.

5. Beneficiary engagement in the future

- NHS BSA agreed to provide plans for the setting up of its beneficiary focus groups and an understanding of how these groups will operate and how NHS BSA will engage with users in the future.
- Feedback from stakeholder groups has, on the whole, been very positive.
- EIBSS Patient Services – forms part of the NHS BSA Communication Plan – this would be shared at the July quarterly meeting
- NHS BSA was using a variety of communications – this was welcomed
- Focus groups – in the future these groups would be asked to look more generally at EIBSS operational issues – it was planned to have a further general session before the APPG on 9 May 2018
- NHS BSA had a contact centre providing a professional service to beneficiaries
- It was agreed that the outreach work started should continue
- NHS BSA was scheduled to meet with the Haemophilia Society before the next APPG meeting

6. Finance

- DHSC was unable to finalise the annual budget for next year but will be writing shortly to confirm this.
- The letter to NHS BSA would also set out the annual payments for all beneficiaries and the budget set for the discretionary scheme. It was noted that this expenditure on this scheme would need to be monitored carefully and this should be revisited in December.
- The surplus budget allocation associated with the year 2017/18 was unlikely to be seen again in future years as the budget set was slightly lower. It was agreed that it was useful to have a bit of surplus as the new scheme rolls out.
- Some concerns had been expressed by NHS BSA finance regarding the charging of administration costs in arrears for this year. It was noted that this was unusual and from FY 2019/20 these costs would be included in the allocated budget as usual.
- It was noted that some of the administration costs would change if the service was relocated to Newcastle. There might be some one-off costs such as redundancy payments but overall costs should reduce once the move had taken place.

7. Delayed payments to beneficiaries – mitigating actions

- DHSC had been made aware of three separate incidents that had resulted in payments to beneficiaries being slightly delayed.
- On all three occasions NHS BSA has made DHSC aware and took prompt action to ensure that beneficiaries were also made aware of the delay and the payments were put through as same day payments to ensure speedy resolution of the problem.
- NHS BSA has received positive feedback from those affected as to the handling processes employed.
- NHS BSA has advised that the following mitigating actions are being taken to try to ensure payment glitches do not arise in the future:
 - IT development is continuing to fix and identify any bugs that have caused issues within the system. All previous issues are now resolved
 - All payment runs in future will be manually checked and confirmed by the team rather than being pushed through an automated extract from the system to the finance team. This will identify any issues ahead of time with payments – this will continue until the team are confident in the automated systems

- A contingency option of faster payments for anyone who requires a same day payment would be kept in place, this has been used for any affected beneficiaries to resolve previous issues
- An EIBSS team member will be embedded with IT for future development and testing to try to ensure no future issues arise
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8. General Overview – what has gone well / what could have gone better

- NHS BSA confirmed that following a restructure the day to day contact will be Sheena Clarke and then Chris Tempest if Sheena is unavailable.

9. A.O.B.

- Date of next quarterly review meeting was confirmed for 24 July 2018 at 10am in Room 83 at 39 Victoria Street.