

EIBSS Monthly Accountability Meeting

19 March 2020 – 13:30-15:00

Attendees:

Thomas Reed (DHSC)
James Hardy (NHSBSA)
Linzi Fowler (NHSBSA)
Hollie Edminson (NHSBSA)
James Byers (NHSBSA)

Apologies:

Helen Causley (DHSC)
Dan Britton (NHSBSA)

Introduction

TR provided an introduction explaining the move to monthly EIBSS meetings, which is a shift from the quarterly meetings. Monthly accountability meetings will feature the DHSC Policy Team and NHSBSA EIBSS management only. A wider audience will still attend each quarter i.e. DHSC Sponsor and Finance representatives.

DHSC Update

TR provided the following update.

Following the Cabinet re-shuffle, Nadine Dorries remains Minister for this Policy area.

Cabinet Office Minister for the Infected Blood policy area is still to be appointed; this will have a knock-on effect to the parity discussion progress.

Covid-19 is impacting all policy areas, staff are being priority tasked to support the Government's response.

Devolved Administration Infected Blood Support Schemes are also support the Covid-19 response, so if EIBSS require any information from them during this time there may be a delay.

Devolved Administration Infected Blood Support Schemes are not making extra payments during the Covid-19 period, as there time is split between scheme support and Covid-19 response.

Government advice has been issued and all beneficiaries who have Hep C and/or HIV are 'high risk' so should be self-isolating.

ACTION- JB to contact Maxine on Monday 23rd March 2020 to see if DWP can assist with self-employed financial assistance during the covid-19 self-isolation period. UC application assessment can take up to 16 weeks, so may not be a viable option.

ACTION- DHSC to seek a policy steer on a Self-employed earnings top-up payment for those beneficiaries that have self-isolated due to Covid-19.

ACTION- NHSBSA to develop a Self-employed earnings top-up payment process. Potential to use ITU as the basis for this, as its already a known process.

Mental Health Support

Nadine Dorries has given the go ahead for EIBSS to stand up a 'Mental Health Support' service element within their current support model.

The initial thinking is that this new element to the scheme will be similar to the support provided by the Welsh Scheme.

ACTION- TR to share Minister submission wording with NHSBSA, to assist them with early process design ideas.

Cabinet Office have passed on a letter from the Inquiry asking for EIBSS to consider easing the existing Mental Health Support rules. This is due to beneficiaries' increased concern during the worrying Covid-19 period.

ACTION- NHSBSA to urgently look at easing existing Mental Health Support rules, to allow easier access to this support element of the scheme. Consider something like pre-approval for the support to be undertaken, as long as they're a registered mental health practitioner.

ACTION- DHSC to confirm they're happy for the easement on existing Mental Health Support Policy until the Covid-19 period is over.

ACTION- NHSBSA to inform DHSC of the revised process, so DHSC can update the Inquiry of the change.

ACTION- NHSBSA to consider how the change to existing Mental Health Support is communicated to beneficiaries.

Future scheme change considerations

- Parity point- application process for stage 1, Wales has a tick box process, could this be used for England.
- Stand up a new 'Mental Health Support' service. As mentioned above.
- Parity point- Bereaved payment amount, alignment to Scottish scheme

DHSC accepted that due to both the delay in appointing the Cabinet Office Minister and the effects of Covid-19, progress of these points will take some time.

NHSBSA Update

Newsletter- A draft version has been prepared, which has been based on the structure and theme of the Devolved Administration Newsletters (Parity point). The Newsletter will be sent out with the option to 'Opt-out' as it will contain important scheme changes to the payments.

Covid-19- JH updated on what EIBSS contingency arrangements were with regards to service continuity and agreed to provide a written update on this point to DHSC, once further defined.

ACTION- JH to provide a written Covid-19 contingency arrangements update to DHSC.

DHSC asked that NHSBSA to consider if any of the scheme changes discussed today could be designed in a different way, so they would be less impacted by Covid-19. NHSBSA agreed to consider this as part of their actions to create/revise the processes discussed today.

Dashboard

JH presented the dashboard on the service delivery for February 2020, all KPIs were achieved and no questions were asked regarding the data presented.

Risk Register

JH presented the Risks & Issues Log, the red risk for Medical Assessor staffing, is still red but JH updated that this would reduce significantly, once the three recently recruited Medical Assessors had completed their induction training and were actively assessing applications.

New risk added regarding the Covid-19 contingency arrangements for scheme service provision.

Finance

JH presented the monthly finance report for February 2020 and the March 2020 funding drawdown request. The March drawdown request shows that the 2019/20 end of year forecast is circa. £75,250,000, this is within the accepted tolerance of the allocated budget.

JH advised that the 2020/21 financial allocation for EIBSS would need to be agreed in the near future and advised that there are a number of items already known that will increase the costs compared to 2019/20. These known items are shown below.

- Child Payments- CPI increase
- ITU Increases
- Self-employed earnings top-up payment process
- Revision to existing Mental Health Support service element
- Recent JRG decisions
- New Mental Health Support service element

Action log

Action	Organisation	Owner
JB to contact Maxine on Monday 23rd March 2020 to see if DWP can assist with self-employed financial assistance during the covid-19 self-isolation period. UC application assessment can take up to 16 weeks, so may not be a viable option.	NHSBSA	JB
DHSC to seek a policy steer on a Self-employed earnings top-up payment for those beneficiaries that have self-isolated due to Covid-19.	DHSC	TR
NHSBSA to develop a Self-employed earnings top-up payment process. Potential to use ITU as the basis for this, as its already a known process.	NHSBSA	HE
TR to share Minster submission wording with NHSBSA, to assist them with early process design ideas.	DHSC	TR

NHSBSA to urgently look at easing existing Mental Health Support rules, to allow easier access to this support element of the scheme. Consider something like pre-approval for the support to be undertaken, as long as they're a registered mental health practitioner	NHSBSA	HE
DHSC to confirm they're happy for the easement on existing Mental Health Support Policy until the Covid-19 period is over.	DHSC	TR
NHSBSA to inform DHSC of the revised process, so DHSC can update the Inquiry of the change.	NHSBSA	HE
NHSBSA to consider how the change to existing Mental Health Support is communicated to beneficiaries.	NHSBSA	LF
JH to provide a written Covid-19 contingency arrangements update to DHSC.	NHSBSA	JH