

---

Press release: reference 2004/0025

---

[Last 7 days](#) | [Archive](#) | [Search](#) | [News Desk](#) | [Help](#)**Friday 23rd January 2004****DETAILS OF HEPATITIS C EX-GRATIA PAYMENT SCHEME ANNOUNCED**

---

Health Secretary John Reid today announced a scheme by which, people infected with Hepatitis C from NHS blood or blood products will be eligible to receive ex-gratia payments from the Department of Health.

Every person in the UK who was alive on the 29 August 2003 and whose Hepatitis C infection is found to be attributable to NHS treatment with blood or blood products before September 1991 will be eligible for the payments.

The ex-gratia payment scheme means that:

- people infected with Hepatitis C will receive initial lump sum payments of £20,000.
- those developing more advanced stages of the illness- such as cirrhosis or liver cancer - will get a further £25,000; and
- people who contracted Hepatitis C through someone infected with the disease will also qualify for payment

Mr Reid said:

"I'm pleased to be able to announce the details of this scheme today.

"I felt it was important that English Hepatitis C patients should receive these payments on compassionate grounds. It's clear that providing assistance is the right thing to do.

"I believe that these are fair and reasonable payments and I hope that they will help alleviate some of the problems people who have been affected in this way are experiencing. I'm also glad that people who receive awards from the scheme won't have the worry of losing their social security benefits as a result."

In addition to people currently infected with Hepatitis C the scheme will also include people who have cleared the virus as a result of treatment. Those infected as a result of the virus being transmitted from someone who was infected from blood or blood products will also

be eligible to receive payment as will people who were infected with HIV as well as Hepatitis C.

The Department is currently setting up the independent body that will administer the scheme and arranging for the necessary benefit legislation to be amended. It is hoped that the scheme will start operating in April this year. Payments to eligible claimants will follow soon after that.

The Health Secretary said:

"We have ensured throughout our negotiations that the scheme would be easily accessible for eligible patients. It's important that people making a claim are not going to be bogged down with bureaucracy

"We are pressing forward with the essential work that remains to be done in finalising the scheme, including how the application process will work for awards. We will be working with organisations such as the Haemophilia Society and Hepatitis C Trust on this to help ensure the procedures are as user friendly as possible."

A publicity campaign is being planned with the relevant organisations to ensure that eligible claimants know how to make an application to the scheme.

### **Notes for editors**

1. As announced the ex-gratia scheme would make lump sum payments of £20,000 to all of those who now have Hepatitis C from blood, with a further £25,000 when people reach a more advanced stage of illness.
2. On 29 August 2003 John Reid, Secretary of State for Health announced that, on compassionate grounds, he had decided to establish a financial assistance scheme in England.
3. Since then discussions have been taking place between officials of the four UK administrations to explore the benefits and feasibility of administering the proposed national schemes through a single UK scheme and to make the necessary arrangements to resolve the benefit issue. Today's announcement confirms the satisfactory outcome of those discussions.
4. The scheme will be administered on a UK wide basis by a new



independent operation which will be called the Skipton Fund. The scheme will be uniform across the UK. The management of the Fund will be associated with that of the Macfarlane and Eileen trusts.

5. The 'advanced stage' of illness that triggers eligibility for the £25,000 has now been defined as when a patient develops cirrhosis, liver cancer or if they have received a liver transplant. A team of medical experts is currently developing a protocol that will enable the existence of cirrhosis to be assessed using only existing biopsy data or the results of non-invasive tests.

6. Legislation affecting social security benefits will be amended at the first opportunity to ensure that people receiving payments from the scheme are not penalised as a result.

7. General eligibility for payments 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 when the original announcement was made or to people who have cleared the virus spontaneously. In the case of eligible people who die between 29 August 2003 and the time when the scheme is in a position to make payments, then the payments will be made to their dependants.

8. 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.

9. 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.

10. Where people have received compensation from other sources in connection with their infection, this will be deducted from any award they are entitled to under the scheme. The scheme will not reimburse legal costs incurred in obtaining that compensation, in unsuccessfully attempting to obtain compensation or in preparing a claim for payment from the scheme itself.

11. A further announcement will be made once the position is reached where claims can be processed through the scheme. This will make clear exactly what claimants need to do in order to make an

application. People in England and Northern Ireland who have not already registered an interest with the Department of Health and who would like to have information on making a claim when this becomes available should not contact the Macfarlane Trust but should leave their contact details with the Department by calling 020 7210 4850 or by emailing [dhmail@doh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dhmail@doh.gsi.gov.uk).

12. For media enquiries only, please contact the Department of Health Media Centre on 020 7210 4860/5287