

18 June 2004

Ms Karin Pappenheim  
The Haemophilia Society  
385 Euston Road  
London  
NW1 3AU



*Skipton House  
80 London Road  
LONDON  
SE1 6LH*

*Tel: 020 7972 2000  
Direct Line: 020 7972*

Dear Ms Karin Pappenheim,

**Launch date of hepatitis C ex gratia payment scheme announced**

Further to my letter dated 26 January 2004, I am writing to inform you of the latest developments regarding the Department of Health's ex gratia payment scheme for those inadvertently infected with hepatitis C following NHS treatment with blood or blood products - the Skipton Fund.

On 3 June 2004 Ministers from the four UK health departments, who have joint responsibility for the scheme, announced that the Skipton Fund would become operational and start to process applications on 5 July 2004. I have enclosed a copy of the Department's press statement for your information.

Careful consideration of the press statement (especially the 'Notes to editor' section) will enable you to decide whether you wish to take forward an application, or encourage or help someone else to do so. Please note that subsequent to the publication of the details of the scheme in January, the condition whereby Skipton Fund payments would be offset by compensation awards made elsewhere has been revised (paragraph 13 of the 'Notes to editor' section). In addition, the position regarding payments to those who have spontaneously cleared the virus has been clarified (paragraphs 9 and 11 of the 'Notes to editor' section).

You will note from the press statement that Registration Forms for the Skipton Fund are now available. On behalf of the Fund, I have enclosed a copy of this form. If you wish to make an application, you should now complete and return this, or pass it on to someone who you are assisting to make a claim. Completion and return of this form will enable the Skipton Fund to efficiently distribute formal application packs, including comprehensive guidance, when they are available on or before 5 July. If you have already submitted an online Registration Form you do not need to complete the enclosed form.

The four UK health departments have established the Skipton Fund to act as an independent agent. This means that the Fund alone will deal with applications for payment and, when necessary, appeals and medical referrals. The Fund will interpret applications against the eligibility criteria laid down by the health departments (and reproduced in the enclosed press statement), but the departments will not be involved in the running of the payment scheme. They will however retain responsibility for policy issues, such as review of the eligibility criteria or payment amounts.

If you have any queries regarding an application, please do not contact the Department of Health. Queries should be directed to the Skipton Fund, whose details are listed on the Registration Form, on their website ([www.skiptonfund.org](http://www.skiptonfund.org)) and on the enclosed press statement. The website also includes an online version of the Registration Form, which can be completed instead of the paper version. The Fund would appreciate restraint if you wish to contact them by telephone – the current number is temporary until the introduction of a full helpline, the number of which will be detailed in application packs.

I would like to join Melanie Johnson, the Minister for Public Health, in encouraging everyone who is eligible, to apply to the Skipton Fund. Completion of the Registration Form is the first step towards receiving payment, and I hope that you will find the rest of the application process user-friendly and efficient. I have outlined below the format that the process will take.

***How do I make an application? The five step application process -***

1. Make sure that you complete a Registration Form and return it to the Skipton Fund, either using the paper copy enclosed with this letter or the online version available at [www.skiptonfund.org](http://www.skiptonfund.org)
2. Wait for an application pack – this will be sent to you on or before 5 July
3. Complete the application form and return it to the Skipton Fund
4. Once the application has been considered, the Skipton Fund will inform you of the decision regarding your eligibility and either authorise payment or detail why you did not qualify
5. The amount of time it will take to receive payment will depend on your individual circumstances, but the Fund expects to make payments to most successful claimants within a few weeks. If you do not qualify for payment, details of the appeals process will be sent to you.

(Please note that the process is designed to enable all claimants to make applications by themselves and that the services of a third party, for example a solicitor, do not need to be retained. However, claimants are free to pursue assistance if they wish).

Thank you for your interest in the Skipton Fund, and if you decide to take forward an application, I wish you well with your claim.

Yours sincerely

**GRO-C**

R.M. Gutowski  
Head of Blood Policy

# Hepatitis C ex-gratia payment scheme to launch

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The Skipton Fund, the body set up to administer the UK-wide ex gratia payment scheme for people infected with Hepatitis C from NHS blood or blood products, will launch and begin processing applications on July 5 2004.

From today, people can register their details with the Skipton Fund to ensure that they are sent application forms and guidance on how the scheme will work.

Public Health Minister Melanie Johnson said:

"I'm pleased to announce that the Skipton Fund will soon be able to start processing claims. This is good news for claimants and I am keen to encourage everyone who is entitled to apply to come forward."

"Further to our consultation with patient groups and experts in this area, I am now confident that the application process will be efficient and user-friendly. In addition, claimants can be sure that their applications will be dealt with fairly."

"This is an important initiative which will go some way towards improving the lives of those inadvertently infected with hepatitis C."

People wishing to take forward an application and who are not already registered on the Department of Health's confidential mailing list, can contact the Skipton Fund for a copy of the Registration Form. Those registered on the mailing list will be sent a Registration Form shortly, and need do nothing in the meantime.

## Contact details

**Post** Skipton Fund  
PO Box 50107  
London  
SW1H 0YF

**Phone** Registration Helpline 020 7233 0057

**Website** [www.skiptonfund.org](http://www.skiptonfund.org)

**E mail** [apply@skiptonfund.org](mailto:apply@skiptonfund.org)

## Notes to editor

1. People who wish to make a claim can register their details with the Skipton Fund by sending in a Registration Form. This can be obtained from the Skipton Fund or submitted via the Fund's website. All people who have registered with the Skipton Fund will be sent an application form together with comprehensive guidance on how the scheme works and how to use the form.
2. People who have registered an interest in the scheme through the Department of Health's confidential mailing list will be sent details of the Skipton Fund and a Registration Form shortly.
3. Applications will be processed from Monday 5 July.
4. Health Secretary John Reid, and his counterparts in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland announced the details of the hepatitis C ex gratia payment scheme on 23 January 2004. The scheme will provide payments to those inadvertently infected with hepatitis C as a result of NHS treatment with blood or blood products.
5. Agreement between the Health Ministers of the four UK government administrations led to the establishment of the Skipton Fund to administer a common UK-wide scheme.
6. The scheme will make lump sum payments of £20,000 to all those who now have Hepatitis C from blood, with a further £25,000 when people reach a more advanced stage of illness.
7. The 'advanced stage' of illness that triggers eligibility for the £25,000 is defined as when a patient develops cirrhosis, liver cancer or if they have received a liver transplant.
8. Legislation affecting social security benefits and residential care charging has been amended to ensure that people receiving payments from the scheme are not penalised as a result.
9. General eligibility 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 or to people who have cleared the virus spontaneously in the acute phase of the disease. In the case of eligible people who die between 29 August 2003 and 5 July 2004, the payments will be made to their estate. Where eligible persons die after 5 July 2004, payments will only be made to their estate if the eligible person had applied to the Skipton Fund whilst they were still alive.
10. People who have been infected with HIV through blood, blood products or tissue 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.
11. People who have cleared the virus as a result of treatment or who have cleared it spontaneously after a period of chronic infection will be eligible for payments from the scheme.
12. 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.
13. If people have received compensation from other sources in connection with their infection, Skipton Fund will not make any deduction from any award to take account of this. *[Please note that this position has been revised since the publication of the original details of the scheme on 23 January 2004]*
14. Applicants will only need to provide basic personal details to the Skipton Fund but will need to ask their doctor to complete the main section of the application form which details information to support their eligibility.
15. If the Skipton Fund decides that an applicant is not eligible for payment they will write explaining the reason for this decision. The applicant can then apply to an independent appeals panel, which may be chaired by a QC.
16. Applicants will not need legal advice when completing the application form and they will not be asked to sign any waiver. The scheme will not reimburse legal costs incurred in making a claim or in appealing against a decision by the Skipton Fund.

**END**

# Registration Form

www.skiptonfund.org e-mail: apply@skiptonfund.org Tel: 020 7233 0057

If you think you qualify for an ex gratia payment because you were infected with Hepatitis C as a result of National Health Service treatment with blood or blood products, please complete and return this form. A formal application form will then be sent to you as soon as possible. You may wish to call the Skipton Fund or refer to the guidance on the website (www.skiptonfund.org) if you are not sure about your eligibility for the scheme.

**ANYBODY REGISTERED WITH THE MACFARLANE TRUST NEED NOT COMPLETE THIS FORM.**

Please complete ALL sections of the form and send or e-mail it to:

The Administrator,  
The Skipton Fund,  
PO Box 50107,  
London SW1H 0YF

Account Number:

For Office Use only

Title Mr/Ms/Miss/Mrs\* *Delete where appropriate*

Name

Address

Post Code

Daytime telephone number:

Is it acceptable for the Skipton Fund to call this number and leave a message? YES NO

E-mail:

National Insurance Number

Date of birth:

**If you are registered with a Haemophilia Centre, please complete as follows:**

Name of Centre

**If you qualify, payment will be made direct to your Bank or Building Society account. If, for whatever reason, you do not qualify then these details will be disposed of.**

Name of Bank/Building Society:

Account Name:

Sort Code:

Account Number:

or

Building Society Roll No: