

PO 738127

Dear...

Thank you for your correspondence...

The Government is deeply sorry about the events that led to the infection of many haemophilia patients and others with HIV and hepatitis C, and has the utmost sympathy for all those affected. However, I should clarify that the financial support available is not compensation, given that liability has never been established or accepted.

I am sorry that Mr **GRO-A** is dissatisfied with the outcome of the review in the Autumn of 2010, and the enhanced support package announced by the then Secretary of State for Health, Andrew Lansley, in January 2011. However, our approach has been to target resources at those who are suffering most as a result of their infection, and I think that is entirely proper.

All of the decisions that were made regarding payments from the Skipton Fund to individuals infected with hepatitis C, were based on an expert scientific review of the evidence base on the spectrum and impact of disease associated with hepatitis C infection. The review report does acknowledge that there is a wide spectrum of illness associated with chronic hepatitis C infection, and that some people with chronic hepatitis C infection but who do not meet the eligibility criteria to receive annual payments from the Skipton Fund, could be experiencing financial hardship as a result of their infection. That is why we set up the Caxton Foundation, to make discretionary payments to those affected, based on need. I should clarify that the Caxton Foundation does not have a two stage system of support, but rather assesses all applications, from any recipient of a Skipton Fund payment, based on need.

In relation to Mr **GRO-A** concerns about gaining the necessary medical evidence to support a Skipton Fund application, the Department has always directed the Skipton Fund to use a balance of probabilities for claims where evidence is absent or incomplete .

It has been the view of successive governments that after all this time, there is no justification for a public inquiry into the matters relating to NHS supplied contaminated blood or blood products in England. The relevant facts are already in the public domain. All relevant documents held by the Department of Health on blood safety, covering the period 1970 - 1985 (when heat treatment of clotting factor products was introduced), have now been published in line with the Freedom of Information Act. If any further documents from that period come to light, the Department will also publish them in line with the Freedom of Information Act.

I hope you find this information helpful.