



## Michelle O'Neill announces improved financial support for people affected by contaminated blood

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Topics: [Health policy \(/topics/health-policy/\)](/topics/health-policy/)

The Health Minister, Michelle O'Neill, has announced the reform of payment schemes established for patients infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C following treatment with NHS-supplied blood or blood products before September 1991.

This follows a public consultation led by the Department of Health in England earlier this year. All beneficiaries in the north of Ireland were invited to respond to this consultation.

The Minister said: "I am well aware that although no amount of money could ever make up for the life-changing and tragic impacts that these events have had on a number of people, those in the north of Ireland who have been adversely affected by NHS treatment with infected blood should be given the financial support that they need."



Health Minister Michelle O'Neill

The Minister announced the following key features of the reformed scheme.

- All infected individuals will now receive an annual payment. These annual payments will be linked to the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) and include the £500 winter fuel payment as a standard payment without the need to apply for it.
- Those infected with hepatitis C at stage 1 will receive a new flat rate annual payment of £3,500, rising to £4,500 from 2018/2019.

- For those with hepatitis C at stage 2 or those with HIV, annual payments will increase to £15,500, rising to £18,500 from 2018/2019.
- Those co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C at stage 1 will receive £18,500, rising to £22,500 from 2018/2019.
- Those co-infected with HIV and hepatitis C at stage 2 will receive £30,500, rising to £36,500 from 2018/2019.
- Discretionary support will continue and will be enhanced from 2018/2019.
- The £50,000 lump sum payment for those infected with hepatitis C stage 1 who progress to stage 2 will continue.
- Partners or spouses at the time of death of a primary beneficiary will be entitled to a £10,000 one-off lump sum where the HIV/hepatitis C infection contributed to the death of their partner or spouse. This will apply both to those who have already been bereaved and those who are newly bereaved.

The Minister continued: "My officials will continue to work with the Department of Health in England and with the existing financial scheme administrators to provide the additional financial support as soon as possible to beneficiaries in the north of Ireland.

"I will keep under consideration alternative proposals for improving the support provided to these beneficiaries in the future."

Increased annual payments and new annual payments will take effect this year and be backdated to April 2016. These payments will continue to be additional to any other income a person may receive, and are disregarded when calculating income tax and eligibility for other state benefits.

## Notes to editors:

1. There are five ex-gratia payment schemes in operation providing financial support across the UK for people who had been infected with HIV/Hepatitis C by NHS-supplied blood products, and their families. Three of these are HIV financial support schemes and two are hepatitis 2 financial support schemes. All five schemes operate from Alliance House in London.
2. On 13 July 2016, David Cameron announced his government's response to the Department of Health (England) consultation on proposals for reform of the current financial assistance schemes. Whilst the proposals in the consultation were for England only, all affected patients and other beneficiaries in England, Wales Scotland and north of Ireland were invited to respond.
3. In March 2016, Scotland announced a separate package of improved financial support arrangements for those affected by HIV and hepatitis C via infected NHS blood and blood products in Scotland.

4. The government in Wales has announced that, as an interim measure, payments for the whole of the 2016/17 financial year will be at the same levels as England. To inform future arrangements, the Welsh government has issued a survey to those affected inviting their views and will be engaging directly with stakeholders.
5. The changes planned for the north of Ireland replicate those announced by England in July 2016.
6. For media enquiries please contact the Department of Health Press Office on 028 9052 0575 or email: [pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk) (<mailto:pressoffice@health-ni.gov.uk>). For out of hours please contact to Duty Press Officer via pager number GRO-C and your call will be returned.
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