



THE SCOTTISH OFFICE

From the Minister for Health and the Arts
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Thank you for your letter of 4 March enclosing one from your constituent Mr GRO - A, Glasgow in which he seeks your support for financial assistance to be given to haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C through NHS treatment.

The Government has great sympathy with patients who have become infected with Hepatitis C through blood transfusions and blood products.

You may be aware that following a request from the Haemophilia Society the Secretary of State for Health agreed to review the Government's position on the question of compensation for haemophiliacs and others who have contracted Hepatitis C through blood transfusions or blood products.

After lengthy and very careful consideration which was given to all aspects of this tragic and complex issue, the Government announced in July 1998 that it would proceed on the well established basis that compensation or other financial help to particular patients or groups of patients should only be paid out where the NHS or individuals working in it have been at fault. This was not the case for those who contracted Hepatitis C, where infection had not occurred as a result of negligence on the part of the NHS. It was therefore decided that the needs of those sufferers, whose conditions have resulted from inadvertent harm, should be met from benefits available to the population in general.

I know this decision is a disappointment to those affected. It was a very difficult decision to take in light of the tragic nature of this issue. However in the circumstances the Government has concluded that it is the only feasible alternative to adopt.

GRO - C

SAM GALBRAITH