

Infected Blood: Parity of Support across-UK

Context and background to meeting

1. A letter sent by the chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry (IBI) on 15 October 2017 to David Lidington, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, requested that the Department look again at the levels of support being provided to those who have been affected by infected blood. As you know, subsequent to this, PS(MHISP) and David Lidington (CDL) had a meeting (21 January) with the IBI secretariat and beneficiary advocacy groups and a number of issues were raised, mainly relating to the inequality of support between:

- the four UK nations;
- the infected and the bereaved; and
- different bereaved groups i.e. children and parents versus spouses and partners.

2. An “interim payment scheme” was presented at the meeting (see **Annex A**) by the campaign group “Tainted Blood” which suggested significant increases in the level of support given to beneficiaries and although we do not know which groups have actually endorsed this proposal, Cabinet Office was keen for the Department to consider making changes in line with this proposal.

3. At a meeting between PS(MHISP) and officials on 7 February, it was suggested that we should look at what changes to the current scheme in England would be necessary to address the inequalities highlighted at the meeting. In doing so we needed to ensure no-one would receive less than they do currently. Cabinet Office was keen for any announcements be made prior to the Infected Blood Inquiry resuming their gathering of evidence from 30 April 2019.

4. A submission was sent up setting out the changes that would be needed to the scheme in England to try and meet the proposals set out in the “interim payment scheme” for England.

5. This resulted in the announcement made on Tuesday 30 April 2019, whereby the Government announced that additional funding will be made available to support those infected and affected by the infected blood tragedy in England.

6. Further to this announcement all beneficiaries of the scheme in England were written to on Friday 3 May 2019 setting out the new payments as set out in **Annex B**.

7. The main changes in England will be:

- Increased and consolidated payments for all infected beneficiaries.
- A larger number of bereaved beneficiaries will be eligible for income top-up payments.

8. We were advised that to mitigate the risk of legal challenge to the changes, we should work within the structure of the existing infected blood support scheme for England. And to make an announcement by 30 April, it was considered that we would not be able to address the cross-UK parity question within the time allowed.

Objectives of meeting

9. We are holding this meeting to discuss how we might take the next stage of this process forward and look at ways of managing the ongoing pressure to provide parity of support across the UK.

10. As all will know, health is a devolved matter any agreement between the DAs to provide a consistent level of support is not enforceable. And as officials are aware, since the individual schemes were set up in 2017 they have become very different in their structure which will make the delivery of this ask particularly challenging.

11. We are seeking in principle agreement to provide greater parity, if not identical schemes, across the UK and to that end it would be useful to establish what parts of the different schemes are common to all and then try to tease out where they differ. Ministers will want this for their forthcoming meeting.

Discussion questions

How best to present the similarities and differences between the schemes in a meaningful way?

- **Similarities?**
- **Differences?**
- **Drawing up areas of compromise or identifying areas in each scheme where this is not possible – eg single administrator – economies of scale?**
- **How do we maintain flexibility in a cross-UK scheme that will allow for changes to be made in the light of Inquiry recommendations?**

Consultation: are we all agreed that a cross-UK consultation exercise will be needed to be considered / recommended to Ministers? How might this be run?

Timing: Do we need another officials' meeting or can we continue by correspondence? When do we think we will be in a position to recommend the Ministerial meeting takes place?

Next steps

- **Read out from this meeting – to be agreed by all attendees**
- **Another meeting? TBC**
- **Timing of submissions to each Minister in preparation for their meeting?**

Annex A

Interim scheme proposed by Tainted Blood at 21 January Meeting

| Beneficiary | Infected | Bereaved (100% of infected payments for 12 months, then 75% (shown)) |
|--------------------------------------|----------|--|
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 | 28,000 | 21,000 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 + SCM | 33,000 | 24,750 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 2 | 33,000 | 24,750 |
| HIV | 33,000 | 24,750 |
| Co-infected Stage 1 | 43,000 | 27,750 |
| Co-infected Stage 1 + SCM or Stage 2 | 43,000 | 27,750 |

Annex B

New payments in England announced 30 April 2019

The new payments will be paid in on beneficiaries' usual July payment date and will be backdated to 1 April 2019.

The main changes are:

- Increased and consolidated payments for all infected beneficiaries.
- A larger number of bereaved beneficiaries will be eligible for income top-up payments.

The structure of the scheme will stay the same, with all beneficiaries receiving winter fuel payments and continuing to have access to one-off discretionary support payments.

Infected beneficiaries

Beneficiaries who were infected with HIV and/ or hepatitis C, and are registered with EIBSS already, do not need to do anything. Uplifts are being made to annual payments. In addition, we have removed the need for you to apply separately for income top-ups and your new annual payments will reflect this. A letter setting out your new consolidated payment amounts (including the backdate to 1 April) and the dates you can expect these to be paid to you in July will be sent to you shortly.

Bereaved beneficiaries

Bereaved beneficiaries who already receive means-tested top-up payments will have their payments automatically recalculated under the new arrangements, using the information they have already submitted to us. A letter setting out your new consolidated payment amounts (including the backdate to 1 April) and the dates you can expect these to be paid to you in July will be sent to you shortly.

Any bereaved beneficiary who now considers they are eligible for additional support, should contact us to find out how they can apply for this. Once an application has been received it will be processed and, if successful, a letter setting out the details of the new support payments will be issued.

Dependent children

In addition, any infected beneficiary with an income below £37,900 who has dependent children in the household may also be eligible for additional support for those children. This support is also available to bereaved beneficiaries with dependent children who receive income top-ups. Please contact us for further details or look at the guidance on our website.

Payments for existing and new beneficiaries in England - will all be backdated to 1 April 2019.

Infected beneficiaries

| Beneficiary | Annual non-discretionary payment (£) |
|---------------------------|---|
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 | 18,458 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 + SCM | 28,000 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 2 | 28,000 |
| HIV | 28,000 |
| Co-infected Stage 1 | 38,000 |
| Co-infected SCM | 44,000 |
| Co-infected Stage 2 | 44,000 |

Bereaved beneficiaries income top-up

| Household income (£) | Annual income top-up (£) |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 0 - 10,000 | 18,000 |
| 10,001 - 15,000 | 10,421 |
| 15,001 - 20,000 | 5412 |
| 20,001 - 28,400 | 1412 |
| 28,401+ | 0 |

All infected and bereaved beneficiaries will also receive a winter fuel payment of £531 (increased in line with the Consumer Price Index) paid on 1 December 2019 and continue to be eligible for one-off discretionary payments.