

2/7

Charles Lister

29/01/2003 17:21

*Ms Christmas**To see and file.*

GRO-C

30/1/03

Rob

To: PSPHTemp/PR-OFF/DOH/GB@GRO-C
 cc: Vicki King/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C Jill Taylor/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C
 Zubeda Seedat/PH1/DOH/GB@GRO-C Eleanor
 Treharne-Jones/COMMS/DOH/GB@GRO-C David
 Daley/COMMS/DOH/GB@GRO-C Sammy
 Sinclair/PR-OFF/DOH/GB@GRO-C Gerry
 Robb/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C Hugh Nicholas/PH6/DOH/GB@GRO-C
 Peter.Thompson@GRO-C
 PSLRois/PR-OFF/DOH/GB@GRO-C
 Robert.Holmes@GRO-C
 Subject: HEPATITIS C COMPENSATION: STATEMENT BY MALCOLM CHISHOLM

PS(PH) should be aware that Malcolm Chisholm made a statement today to the Scottish Parliament Health Committee. He was talking about the sort of financial assistance scheme he would like to introduce for people infected with hepatitis C through blood and blood products if the devolution and social security disregard issues are resolved. He said that he would propose paying lump sums of £20K to all people living who still have the virus and a further £25K to those who have developed cirrhosis. This suggests that there would be no payment for people who have had the virus and then cleared it - whether spontaneously or after treatment - and nothing for the relatives of people who have died as a result of hepatitis C infection.

This is the first time that Scottish Ministers have been explicit about the package on offer so Malcolm Chisholm's remarks will be picked up the media, particularly in Scotland. Campaigners response will, I suspect be mixed given that the money is not as much as many people have hoped for and the package makes no provision for widows or dependents of those who have died.

If we were to adopt the same policy in England, the cost would be considerable. There are around 3,500 people that we know have the virus from contaminated blood although some of them may have cleared it. The initial £20K payment would therefore cost £70m. On top of this, there are an estimated 5,000 people who may have been infected who we have not identified. If only half of these claimed, the cost would rise to £120m for a total of 6,000 people.

It's hard to know how many of these 6,000 would qualify for the second payment of £25K either immediately or in subsequent years. The Scots are assuming 20%. Using the same assumption, the cost would rise by a further £30m (£25K x 1,200) taking the total estimated cost in England to £150m. At a crude guess, probably around £90m of this would fall in year one with the rest spread over a number of years.

If we are asked by the media for a line, our current position is:

"The report published on 6 November 2002 by the Scottish Expert Group on Financial and other Support was commissioned by the Scottish Executive. Its recommendations, and the subsequent statements made by Scottish Executive Ministers, relate only to people who

contracted hepatitis C from blood or blood products provided by NHS Scotland. Although we have enormous sympathy with people who were infected with hepatitis C through blood, the Government's position remains that a special financial assistance package for this group is not justified."

As a supplementary, we could add:

"A strategy to achieve effective prevention, testing and treatment services for all hepatitis C sufferers has been published for consultation. An action plan to implement this strategy will be produced in the next few months."