

Compensation push

# Cross-party plea made for infected blood victims to get Budget payout

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Nearly 120 MPs from all the major political parties have written to chancellor Jeremy Hunt urging him to allocate funding to compensate victims of the infected blood scandal in his Spring Budget.

In a letter sent yesterday, the MPs called on Hunt to “provide reassurance” that his statement on March 6 “will explicitly address the contaminated blood scandal and enable the urgent delivery of compensation”.

The move comes after politicians and campaigners this week accused government officials of “dragging their feet” over delivery of payments to the thousands of bereaved family members who have not yet received redress.

Contaminated blood left tens of thousands of people, many suffering from the rare condition of haemophilia, infected with HIV and hepatitis C in the 1970s and 1980s.

About 1,250 people are thought to have contracted HIV, of whom three-quarters had died by 2020, according to an official inquiry into the episode.

The letter was signed by 117 MPs from “The infected blood scandal [was] the biggest treatment disaster in the history of the NHS”

the Tory, Labour and Liberal Democrats, including prominent Conservatives Robin Walker, MP for Worcester, and Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham.

The MPs said they “look forward” to Hunt “announcing on 6 March the allocation of funds to fully compensate victims of the infected blood scandal — the biggest treatment disaster in the history of the NHS”.

The letter was co-authored by Diana Johnson, Labour MP for Kingston upon Hull North, and Sir Peter Bottomley, Conservative MP for Worth West.

The FT revealed in December that ministers had timed some £10bn to £20bn in payouts to the victims to avoid jeopardising pre-election tax cuts this year.

Privately, ministers noted that it was convenient for the government that the compensation bill would not be finalised until after the Budget, meaning the Office for Budget Responsibility cannot score the compensation payments in its economic forecasts.

Sir Brian Langstaff, chair of the public inquiry into the scandal, urged the government last April to establish an arm’s-length body to pay handle payouts.

This recommended that the government swiftly offer £100,000 to each of the bereaved family members of victims who had not yet received any payment.

The government, which has accepted the “moral case” for compensation, has said it will make a statement on the inquiry’s findings within 25 sitting days of the final report being published.

The report is expected in late May.