

Each such claimant will receive a solatium (base payment) of €25,400, as is the case at present. But, uniquely for litigation, each will also be able to claim for loss of earnings from the date of injury to death, post-traumatic stress disorder, damage to one's relationship with the deceased, and, most significantly, general damages for pain and suffering of the deceased.

The spouse and children of a deceased person will be entitled to claim, along with the parents of a deceased child.

Persons infected with HIV who are alive will be able to claim for damage to marital relationship, as well as claim under headings currently covered by the hepatitis C scheme.

Such persons can also demand an additional 20 per cent of an award for exemplary damages. Alternatively, they can seek exemplary damages in the courts if they feel they deserve a higher percentage.

The tribunal will decide on a case-by-case basis whether to deduct payments made by the State to haemophiliacs under the 1991 settlement, along with payments made by pharmaceutical companies in separate litigation.

Last summer, 59 HIV-infected haemophiliacs received around €6.7 million from five mainly US-based drugs companies.

Litigation against the companies has since been initiated on behalf of a further 20 such haemophiliacs.

A total of 105 haemophiliacs were infected with HIV in the State. Some 64 have since died.

Welcoming the settlement Fine Gael's health spokesman, Mr Jim Mitchell, said his party would facilitate the passage of the Bill through the Dáil next week.

"I don't know why it has waited until the last full day (of the Dáil). But better late than never," he said.

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