

Witness Name: Robin Swann

Statement No.: WITN5570027

Dated: 19 August 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FOURTH WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ROBIN SWANN MLA

I, Robin Swann, in response to the Rule 9 request from Jillian Roe, Infected Blood Inquiry, dated 1 June 2021, will say as follows:

1. With respect to the announcement that payments for non-infected bereaved spouses or partners will increase from 75% of the deceased beneficiary's annual payment to an automatic 100% of the deceased beneficiary's payment in the first year, with 75% payable in subsequent years, which was said to be in line with the policy in Scotland and will be backdated to 1 April 2019:

a. Why is this payment only being backdated to April 2019, in particular in light of the fact that the payments have been made in Scotland since 2017?

1.1 The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) (England) agreed to fund payments for non-infected bereaved spouses or partners in the United Kingdom backdated to 1 April 2019. I agreed to these terms and whilst the date of 1 April 2019 was proposed by DHSC, I understand that date was identified as the effective date for the agreed changes to all annual payments as that was the date when DHSC introduced the increase in annual payments which led to the divergence in financial support available across the UK. As part of the 25 March 2021 UK parity agreement, I agreed to 1 April 2019 as the effective date for the

annual bereaved payments along with the other devolved administrations to help ensure that all four UK schemes achieved the best parity of financial support possible within the available funding and to adhere to the agreed principle that no beneficiary in any UK scheme should be left disadvantaged as a result of a change in another scheme. Further questions on why this date was chosen and whether increased payments could be made to the bereaved partners of beneficiaries who died before 1 April 2019 would need to be directed to DHSC.

b. Will the backdated increase be available to the spouse or a partner or the estate of a beneficiary who was alive on 1 April 2019 and receiving the payments at the lower rate, but has subsequently died?

- 1.2 Yes, however the backdating will be dependent on when the bereaved partner or spouse registered with the NI Scheme. These payments will be uplifted with arrears paid effective from 1 April 2019 to all bereaved beneficiaries (spouses or long-term partners) who register with the Scheme on or before the 31 March 2022 and if the death occurred on or at any point before 1 April 2019. For those bereaved beneficiaries who register with the Scheme but where the death occurred after 1 April 2019 or for those who register with the Scheme after 1 April 2022, the payment will be backdated to the beginning of the financial year in which the application was made or the date of bereavement, whichever is later will apply. In the case of an infected beneficiary who passed away on or after 1 April 2019 and where there was no qualifying spouse or partner, arrears would have been payable to their estate up until the date of death; however, there are no deceased beneficiaries on the NI Scheme to which these circumstances apply. Ongoing annual payments will not be available to the estates of deceased beneficiaries. This is because these ex gratia payments are intended to provide ongoing financial support and certainty to those who are living with infection as a result of NHS supplied contaminated blood or those who have lost their spouse or partner as a result of infection and are left with a loss of income as a direct result of this.

- c. **Will these payments be available to the bereaved partners of those beneficiaries who were alive during the life of IBPSNI but died prior to April 2019? If not, why not?**

1.3 Yes, subject to the backdating criteria set out at paragraph 1.2.

- d. **Will these payments be available to the bereaved partners of those beneficiaries who died before 1 April 2017? If not, why not?**

1.4 Yes, subject to the backdating criteria set out at paragraph 1.2

Other information

2.1 I would like to take this opportunity to correct an inaccurate statement I made during my evidence to the Inquiry on 19 May 2021. I incorrectly referred to a four nations' meeting held on 11 March 2021 chaired by the Paymaster General in which all four UK Health Ministers agreed in principle to take steps to bring the UK Infected Blood Support Schemes into broader parity. This meeting was in fact one of the four nations' weekly ministerial meetings and was chaired by the then Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed

GRO-C

Dated 19/08/21

