

Witness Name: Eluned Morgan

Statement No.: WITN5763001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: 20/07/2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ELUNED MORGAN MS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 2 June 2021.

I, Eluned Morgan MS, will say as follows:

Introduction:

1. My name is Eluned Morgan, MS, Minister for Health and Social Services for Wales. My work address is Senedd Cymru, Ty Hywel, Cardiff Bay, Cardiff, C99 1NA.
2. I was appointed as Minister for Health and Social Services in May 2021.
3. Catherine Cody, Senior Policy Official within the Welsh Government's Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) has been involved in providing advice and information to me in respect of the issues set out below.

Evidence:

With respect to the announcement that the regular annual ex-gratia payments will be increased to the rates currently paid in England/Scotland and 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?

4. The decision to backdate payments to April 2019 was made by the UK Government so they will be able to confirm the reason for this.

b. Will the 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?

5. Yes, the higher rate of payment will be available.

With respect to the announcement that payments for bereaved partners will be increased to 100% of the beneficiaries payment in year 1, and 75% in year 2 and subsequent years in line with the position in Scotland and back dated to 1 April 2019:

a. Why is this payment only being backdated to April 2019?

6. The decision to backdate payments to April 2019 was made by the UK Government so they will be able to confirm the reason for this.

b. Will the 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?

7. Yes, the higher payment rate will be available.

c. Will these payments be available to the bereaved partners of those beneficiaries who were alive during the life of WIBSS but died prior to 1 April 2019? If not, why not?

8. Yes, the higher payment rate will be available.

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

9. Yes, the higher payment rate will be available.

With respect to the announcement that the lump sum payment to a Hepatitis C Stage 1 beneficiary will increase from £20,000 to £50,000, with the additional £20,000 payable if a stage 1 beneficiary moves to stage 2, bringing the payment in line with Scotland 'This will be backdated to 1 April 2017, meaning all eligible beneficiaries currently registered on the Scheme will receive the appropriate payment in arrears';

a. Please set out who will receive this payment. In particular:

i. Is this increase in the lump sum payment available to the bereaved partners or estates of those beneficiaries who died before 1 April 2017? If not, why not?

10. No, the decision to not include this group was made by the UK Government so they will be able to confirm the reason for this.

ii. Is this increase in the lump sum payment available to the bereaved partners or estates of those beneficiaries who were members of the scheme at 1 April 2017 but have since died?

11. It is available to bereaved partners/estates of those who have died since 1 April 2019.

iii. If not why not, given that Scotland has been making this payment at this level since the inception of SIBSS?

12. N/A

b. Does the phrase 'all eligible beneficiaries currently registered with the Scheme' include:

i. Any beneficiary, including bereaved widows or partners or estates who have registered with the scheme at any time to receive any payment or grant? If not, why not?

13. An eligible beneficiary is an individual who was registered with WIBSS, and/or as a bereaved partner on 25 March 2021; or applied to WIBSS, on or before 25 March 2021 as a bereaved partner, or whose partner was a registered beneficiary with WIBSS.

ii. A beneficiary who was registered with an Alliance House Organisation but is not registered with the current scheme? If not, why not?

14. All beneficiaries that transferred from AHO to WIBSS since 2017 would be current scheme members. WIBSS along with the other schemes, would need access to the AHO files to make further investigations for those who did/have not transferred.

With respect to the announcement that lump sum payments for HIV (£80.5K), will change in line with England and be backdated to April 2017 ‘meaning all eligible beneficiaries currently registered with the Scheme will receive any appropriate additional payment in arrears subject to the lump sum amount previously received’:

a. Please set out who will receive this payment. In particular:

i. Is this increase in the lump sum payment available to the bereaved partners or estates of those beneficiaries who died before 1 April 2017, where they have received less than £80.5K?

15. No this payment will not be made to the bereaved partners or estates of beneficiaries who died before 25 March 2021. WIBSS are not aware of any beneficiary who transferred over from AHO in 2017 that was not paid the £80.5k.

ii. Is this increase in the lump sum payment available to the bereaved partners or estates of those beneficiaries who were members of the scheme at 1 April 2017 but died before 31 March 2021, where they received less than £80.5K?

16. No payment will be made for those who died between 1 April 2017 and 25 March 2021, in this category.

iii. If not why not, given that Scotland has been making this payment at this level since 1 April 2017?

17. The decision to not include this group was made by the UK Government so they will be able to confirm the reason for this.

b. Does the phrase ‘all eligible beneficiaries currently registered with the Scheme’ include:

i. Any beneficiary, including bereaved widows or partners or estates who have registered with the scheme at any time to receive any payment or grant? If not, why not?

18. An eligible beneficiary is an individual who was registered with WIBSS, and/or as a bereaved partner on 25 March 2021; or applied to WIBSS, on or before 25 March 2021 as a bereaved partner, or whose partner was a registered beneficiary with WIBSS.

ii. A beneficiary who was registered with an Alliance House Organisation but is not registered with the current scheme? If not, why not?

19. All beneficiaries that transferred from AHO to WIBSS since 2017 would be current scheme members. WIBSS along with the other schemes, would need access to the AHO files to make further investigations for those who did/have not transferred.

In order to receive the £10,000 bereavement payment, will a link have to be proved between the beneficiary's death and his/her infection with either HIV or HCV? If so, what is the reason for this policy and what will the criteria be?

20. We introduced the £10k bereavement payment at the start of our scheme in April 2017. To be eligible for the payment WIBSS only requires proof of death (death certificate) this does not need to be linked to HIV and/or Hep C. Being a member of the scheme at the time of death is the only requirement.

Please set out your understanding of the remaining differences between the four schemes once the changes announced on 25 March 2021 have been implemented. How will the remaining differences between the four schemes be dealt with?

21. Due to devolution there will inevitably be differences in the schemes which are based on beneficiaries' needs/requirements. The aim of the announcement on 25 March was to gain greater financial parity for the main ex-gratia annual payments. The 4 nations will continue to work together to gain greater parity in the other areas of the schemes such as:

- NI is working towards a SCM which we have implemented as Hep C Stage 1+, Scotland and England have similar schemes and are refining these to be more aligned.
- Means testing – England have this as a criteria, we do not.
- Discretionary funding – all 4 nations are to work together to look at the criteria of the grants, what beneficiaries are able to claim for, as under each scheme this has been different eg, we allow for a range of white goods while others don't. EIBSS means test, we do not.
- Now that each beneficiary will receive a £10k bereavement payment – set up to pay for funeral costs, it is no longer appropriate for EIBSS to allow for pre-paid funeral plans under the discretionary payment.

To what extent will the infected and affected communities (including the wider bereaved community such as parents, adult children and carers of those

infected) be involved in the future discussions about parity between the four schemes?

22. Any discussions regarding future changes to the schemes across the UK will involve the beneficiaries and their families when it is appropriate to do so.

Will beneficiaries be able to make applications for discretionary one off grants? If so, what will the criteria be?

23. Beneficiaries have been able to make applications for discretionary funding from WIBSS since 2017. The current criteria is attached at [WIBS0000063].

Will beneficiaries be able to make applications for child care payments? If so, what will the criteria be, and at what levels will the grants be paid?

24. We do not currently have child payments and this is matter for further parity discussions.

To what extent, if at all, will there be means testing in relation to any element of the scheme?

25. We do not means test any of our ex-gratia or discretionary payments.

What steps will the Welsh Government take (themselves or by instructing WIBSS), to ensure those who are not currently registered, but eligible for these payments are aware of them?

26. We will ask WIBSS to work with GP practices and the relevant NHS clinics to raise awareness of the scheme. WIBSS website also provides information in relation to the wider aspects of the scheme.

27. We will continue to work with our colleagues in the other Health Departments to access documentation from the AHO – this is subject to data protection issues.

When will the schemes be able to update beneficiaries on what their payments will be and when they will be made?

28. Following receipt of the funding letter from the UK Government which details the timing and mechanisms for the budgetary funding, officials will be in a position to write to our beneficiaries to provide information on payment levels and the timetable for making these. It is anticipated that payments will be made at the same time across the UK.

GRO-C

Signed

Dated 20/07/2021

Table of exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
20210603	WIBSS small grants criteria	WIBS0000063