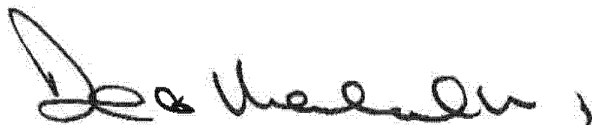


IMC: 28584(N)

Malcolm Chisholm MSP
Minister for Health and Community Care
St Andrew's Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

28 July 2003



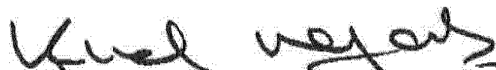
EX GRATIA PAYMENT SCHEME FOR HEPATITIS C FROM BLOOD PATIENTS

At our meeting on 10 July 2003, I said that I hoped to be able to write to you shortly to confirm my understanding of the legal position on your proposal to provide financial compensation for victims of Hepatitis C in Scotland.

I can now confirm that your proposed scheme is accepted as within devolved competence.

We agreed at our meeting that were it the case that this was a devolved issue, then we would try to develop a sensible approach that showed solidarity. We agreed that our officials would work together over the summer on the scope of the scheme, including how your proposal sits with any move to introduce a similar type of scheme elsewhere in the UK and how it sits within the benefits system, and put proposals to us both towards the end of August. We may then need to meet again to discuss with a view to making a joint announcement in the Autumn.

At this stage I would prefer us to restrict discussions between our two Departments and once we have a scheme worked out we can invite Wales and Northern Ireland to join in. I have asked my officials to liaise with yours to work out the detail.



GRO-C

JOHN REID