

Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) Newsletter

March 2023

Welcome

A number of changes have taken place over the last few years. We thought it would be helpful to provide this short newsletter to let you know what support is available to you and to update you on other developments.

Are you getting the support you are entitled to?

The Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) provides financial support to people who were infected with HIV and/or hepatitis C following treatment with NHS blood, tissue or blood products in Northern Ireland.

Support is also available for bereaved spouses, civil partners and long-term partners.

The NI Scheme offers various types of financial support, including:

Lump sum payments on registration

Annual winter fuel payments

Regular monthly or quarterly payments

Discretionary one-off grant payments

Please contact the Scheme Manager if you feel you should be getting more support from the Scheme or have any questions.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Tax and benefits

If you live in the UK, income tax will not be deducted from the payments you receive from the NI Infected Blood Payment Scheme. Also, payments from the NI Scheme are not taken into account when applying for any of the following means-tested benefits from the Department for Communities:

Income Support

Housing Benefit

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)

State Pension Credit

Universal Credit

You must still declare to the Department for Communities (DfC) any payments that you receive from the NI Infected Blood Payment Scheme.

If you don't tell DfC about payments received from the Scheme, means-tested benefits may be affected. We can help by providing you with a letter to confirm payments you have received from us and inform the DfC to disregard our payments to you. If you have any problems, let us know.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Bereaved spouses and partners

Annual financial support for bereaved spouses and partners is available on the NI Scheme. Bereaved partners receive 100% of their spouse/partner's payment rate in the first year after they pass away, followed by 75% of that rate annually.

HCV (Hepatitis C) Stage 1 Enhanced Support

Following a consultation process, a model for HCV stage 1 enhanced support was agreed with a working group representing those infected and/or affected in March 2022. The additional support has been available since June 2022 to provide help with living costs to improve quality of life for those beneficiaries who experience ongoing physical or mental health symptoms arising from a history of HCV infection or its treatment.

Please contact the Scheme for more details if you think you may be eligible.

HCV (Hepatitis C) Stage 2 Support

NI Scheme beneficiaries may be eligible to receive the HCV stage 2 payment if due to the impact of HCV and / or its treatment they have:

- A. *liver cirrhosis*
- B. *primary liver cancer*
- C. *cell non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma*
- D. *had a liver transplant (or are on the waiting list to receive a liver transplant)*
- E. *renal disease due to Membranoproliferative Glomerulonephritis (MPGN)*

Please contact the Scheme for more details if you think you may be eligible.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Money advice



The NI Scheme does not provide financial advice.

The NI Direct Finance Support Service supports people who live in Northern Ireland and who need short-term financial help.

For advice about how you can save money on your energy bills, insurance and other costs, please contact the NI Direct Finance Support Service.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Psychological support



The Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCCT) offers a dedicated regional psychological support service for individuals (18 years and above) who have been infected and / or affected as a result of receiving contaminated blood. The service is also available for family members.

The service is run by Clinical Psychologists who are specifically trained and professionally qualified to help people with a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties connected to their life circumstances.

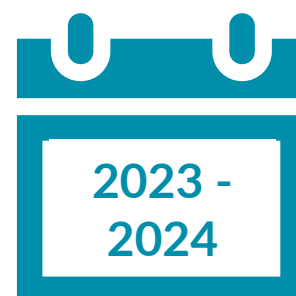
Where a negative impact on an individual's emotional well-being has been identified, therapy and support can be provided. This may be in the form of a brief meeting or longer, repeated contact. The following leaflet, produced by the Clinical Psychology Service, has more information:

<https://bit.ly/3IL7meN>.

Annual Payments for 2023-24

Your annual payments will increase by 10.1% for 2023-24. This increase will be applied in ALL the infected blood support schemes across the UK.

The new payment rates are as follows:



Support Payment Rates for infected beneficiaries

| Payment Category | 2023/2024 |
|--|-----------|
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 | £21,467 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 Enhanced | £32,555 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 2 | £32,555 |
| Mono HIV | £32,555 |
| Co-Infected HIV & Hepatitis C Stage 1 | £44,189 |
| Co-Infected HIV & Hepatitis C Stage 1 Enhanced | £51,162 |
| Co-Infected HIV & Hepatitis C Stage 2 | £51,162 |
| Winter Fuel | £618 |

Support Payment Rates for bereaved spouse/partners

| Payment Category | 2023/2024 |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|
| Hepatitis C Stage 1 | £16,100 |
| Hepatitis C Stage 2 | £24,417 |
| Mono HIV | £24,417 |
| Co-Infected HIV & Hepatitis C Stage 1 | £33,141 |
| Co-Infected HIV & Hepatitis C Stage 2 | £38,372 |
| Winter Fuel Payment | £618 |

** Bereaved beneficiaries will receive 100% of their late spouse/partner's rate in the first year and then 75% of that rate from the second year onwards.*

Interim Compensation

Following a report from Chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry Sir Brian Langstaff KC in July 2022, interim payments of £100,000 were made to all beneficiaries and bereaved partners registered on the NI Scheme.



Sir Brian has announced that he will publish another report before Easter 2023. Further Government decisions may be taken after that report is published.

Are you interested in joining a new Stakeholder Group?

We would like to set up a Stakeholder Group to support cooperation and engagement between Government and beneficiaries or others affected by contaminated blood.



If you are a NI Scheme beneficiary or are affected in another way, or if you represent a relevant organisation or charity, you could play an important role in discussions on how we can improve the NI Scheme.

You should be prepared to give your time to meet twice a year and abide by Terms of Reference which will be developed and agreed by the Group. Members will be selected in such a way as to ensure representation of all organisations, groups or charities and categories of beneficiary.

The Stakeholder Group will not be a decision-making body but will provide a voice for Scheme beneficiaries and others affected by contaminated blood to help us in the delivery of the NI Scheme.

If you are interested, please send a short letter or email DoH NI at ibit@health-ni.gov.uk setting out your personal experience and understanding of the issue and why you think you could play a role in the Group. Alternatively, you could ask someone to do this on your behalf.

We need your feedback!

In Autumn 2020, we conducted a survey to get your feedback on the support provided through the NI Infected Blood Payment Scheme. The responses helped us to make improvements to the Scheme, including introducing annual payments for the bereaved.

We plan to do another survey in the near future, so when you receive the questionnaire in the post or by email, please take the time to complete it. The survey will be completely anonymous and your views will help us to continue to improve the scheme to make sure it best meets your needs.

Finally ...

Don't forget to let us know about any change of circumstances, for example if you move address or change your bank account.

The NI Scheme Manager would be happy to give advice and assistance over the phone.

Contacts



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| Infected Blood Payment Scheme | IBPS NI Business Services Organisation, Finance Directorate 2nd floor, 2 Franklin Street BELFAST BT2 8DQ | Phone: 028 9536 3817 Email: bsso.ibss@hscni.net |
| Benefits | Department for Communities Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street BELFAST BT2 7EG | <u>MAKE THE CALL HELPLINE</u> Phone: 0800 232 1271 Email: makethecall@dfcni.gov.uk If you receive only Housing Benefit : Phone NI Housing Executive: 0344 892 0902 (8.30am to 5.00pm) |
| Money Advice | NI Direct | Phone: 0800 587 2750 Online: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/finance-support |
| Psychological Support | Clinical Health Psychology Department Level 9A, Outpatients Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital BELFAST BT12 6BA | Phone: 028 9615 5867 |
| NI Health Minister | DoH Private Office Room C5.10 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ | Phone: 028 9052 0643 Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk |
| DoH NI Permanent Secretary | Permanent Secretary Room C5.11 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ | Phone: 028 9052 0559 Email: permanent.secretary@health-ni.gov.uk |
| Stakeholder Group / general policy queries | Infected Blood Inquiry Team Department of Health NI C4.8 Castle Buildings Stormont Estate BELFAST BT4 3SQ | Phone: 028 9052 0728 Email: ibit@health-ni.gov.uk |