

Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) Newsletter

Issue 6 – March 2025

Welcome

Welcome to the sixth edition of the Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) newsletter. This edition provides an update on the latest developments on the establishment of the new UK-wide Infected Blood Compensation Scheme and how it affects the NI Scheme.

Update from Health Minister Mike Nesbitt



In October, Health Minister Mike Nesbitt, alongside the Scottish and Welsh Ministers, attended a meeting with the Minister for the Cabinet Office Nick Thomas-Symonds MP, to discuss and agree how the Infected Blood Support Schemes (IBSS) will operate during the **transition period**, from 1st April 2025 (after the Schemes have closed to new applications) until all beneficiaries transfer to IBCA.

Minister Nesbitt said: ***“I have agreed that the Infected Blood Payment Scheme NI will close to new applications from 1st April 2025.*”**

***“All those who are registered on the NI Scheme, will continue to receive regular payments, including the winter fuel allowance.*”**

“I have also agreed with the Cabinet Office Minister that the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) will take over legal responsibility for infected blood support payments to NI Scheme beneficiaries from 1st February 2026.”

Discretionary grants will continue to be available after 1st April 2025, however any grants paid will be taken into account by IBCA when calculating compensation.

You may have the opportunity to transfer from the NI Scheme before the 1st February 2026. The NI Scheme will continue to administer your regular support scheme payments, until you are invited by IBCA to start your compensation claim. Your choices are outlined below.

Infected Blood Compensation Scheme

The second set of regulations, to fully establish the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) compensation Scheme, were laid in Parliament on 12th February 2025. These regulations ‘*restate and replace*’ the August 2024 regulations and extend the UK wide compensation scheme to cover all victims, including ‘*affected persons*’ of contaminated blood.

The regulations also create an infected and affected supplementary route and allow responsibility for making regular financial support payments to be transferred from the four devolved Infected Blood Support Schemes (IBSSs) to the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA). For more information, please view the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme Summary at:

<https://shorturl.at/uRyYx>

Your Choice

The UKG has decided that all those who are registered with a IBSS (both infected and bereaved partners/ spouses) before 1st April 2025, will continue to receive regular support payments for life, as part of their compensation package **if they choose to do so.**

Once an IBCA offer has been received, an individual can choose to either:

- i. continue to receive the regular support payments that are provided by the IBSS currently for life, in addition to IBCA compensation award as part of the overall package, or;
- ii. accept the full IBCA compensation offer as a one-off lump sum or periodic payment over 5, 10 or 25 years.

If you choose to continue to receive IBSS payments for life, any support payments paid from 1st April 2025 will be taken into account when IBCA calculates the amount of compensation that you are entitled to for future financial loss and care costs.

The best option for you will depend on your personal situation. Your IBCA claim manager will be able to provide more details on these options when you apply for compensation.

Only payments received from the IBSS after 31st March 2025 will be taken into consideration when IBCA calculates an individual's final compensation package.

Infected Blood Support Scheme Payments

From 1st February 2026, IBCA will have responsibility for paying your regular support payments which are currently paid by the Infected Blood Payment Scheme (NI) **if you have chosen this option**. The payments will continue to increase annually in line with inflation, in the same way they currently do. Payment rates for 2025-26 are outlined below.

The NI Scheme will process all final monthly / quarterly payments (covering to end of March 2026) in January 2026 and IBCA will assume responsibility for both the February and March 2026 monthly payments.

The Managers of all four UK Infected Blood Support Schemes are working closely with IBCA and the UK Government to ensure that regular support payments continue as normal without interruption as they transfer to IBCA.

Deadline for new applications to NI Scheme

The four UK-wide Infected Blood Support Schemes will close to new applications on 31st March 2025, as part of transitional arrangements with IBCA. **This applies to new applications only**. If you know someone who may have received infected blood, please make them aware of the deadline to apply to the NI Scheme.

This is with the exception of recently bereaved spouses or partners of existing infected scheme members who pass away before the 31st March 2025. In this instance, the bereaved spouse or partner will have three months from the date of death to apply to an IBSS.

Increase to NI Scheme payments for 2025-26

The payment rates on the four UK devolved IBSS increase each year in line with inflation. The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rate in September is applied and the UK Government has confirmed that payment rates will increase by 1.7% for 2025-26. From 1st April 2025, the rates will be as follows:

Payment Description	2025/26 NI annual rate (100%)	2025/26 NI annual rate (75%*)
Hepatitis C stage 1	£23,294	£17,471
Hepatitis C stage 1 (enhanced)	£35,327	£26,495
Hepatitis C stage 2	£35,327	£26,495
Mono HIV	£35,327	£26,495
Co-Infected (HIV and HCV stage 1)	£47,952	£35,964
Co-Infected (HIV and HCV stage 2)	£55,518	£41,639
Co-Infected enhanced (HIV and HCV stage 1 enhanced)	£55,518	£41,639
Winter fuel	£670	N/A

* 75% rate applies to bereaved beneficiaries from year 2 onwards.

Payment dates

Your payment dates for 2025/26 are as follows:

Friday 11 th April	Friday 15 th August	Friday 12 th December
Friday 9 th May	Friday 12 th September	Friday 9 th January*
Friday 13 th June	Friday 10 th October	
Friday 11 th July	Friday 14 th November	

* Friday 9th January 2026 will be the final date for monthly/ quarterly payments from the NI Scheme.

Infected Blood Compensation Update

The Northern Ireland Government is not responsible for paying compensation. This is being led by a new arms length body, the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA). IBCA has published a Framework Document which outlines how the Cabinet Office and IBCA will work together to deliver the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme, which will provide financial compensation to victims of infected blood on a UK-wide basis.

IBCA will operate independently when calculating and delivering your calculation claim. The Cabinet Office, as the sponsor department for IBCA, will help ensure that IBCA continues to operate effectively and efficiently, but is **not involved in compensation claims**. For more information please visit: www.ibca.org.uk/about-ibca/framework.

By mid-February 2025, IBCA had sent invites to 204 beneficiaries to begin their compensation claims, with a further 46 planned by the end of March 2025, as part of it's ongoing '*test and learn*' process to keep improving the compensation service as it is developed and scaled up. For more information please visit IBCA's Community Update of 5th March 2025 at <https://shorturl.at/wqju9>.

From April 2025, IBCA intends to accelerate the number of claims it is processing for people those who were infected with Hepatitis C and/ or HIV and are already registered with a UK financial support scheme. The service will be built to take claims from groups in the following order (not all claims in each group need to be completed before another group begins):

- living infected people registered with a IBSS

- supplementary claims
- people claiming on behalf of registered estates
- affected people linked to a registered infected person or registered estate
- people infected but not registered with a IBSS
- people applying on behalf of an estate not registered with a IBSS
- people who are affected and not linked to a registered claim

IBCA has advised that some people from all the above groups may be invited to make their compensation claim in 2025, although not all claims from all groups will be completed during 2025. For more information please visit the IBCA website at: www.ibca.org.uk/news/payments-to-be-scaled-up-in-2025.

How the claims process works

IBCA is working to make the claims process as easy as possible. When you make your claim, you will be assigned a 'claim manager', who will support you throughout the process. This will include help with finding information that may be needed to support the claim, as well as advice on how the compensation offer has been calculated.

Applicants will **have up to three months** to decide whether to accept their offer of compensation. Applicants will be able to speak to a **financial adviser** who will help them to decide the correct type of payment to suit their circumstances, as well as advice on how to protect against fraud and ways to manage their compensation money safely. Free **legal support** is also available through IBCA, to help with certain parts of the claim.

Compensation: questions and answers

The following are some of the most common questions that have been asked by the Infected Blood community and answers provided by IBCA.

Q: Will my support payments go down or stop when I claim compensation?

A: Your support payments will continue, unless you choose for them to stop. If you are registered with an IBSS, you can choose to continue to receive your current support payments for life as part of your compensation package, with the rest of your compensation payable as either a lump sum, or payments over 5, 10 or 25 years.

Alternatively, you can choose to end your support payments and receive all of your compensation as either a lump sum, or as payments over 5, 10 or 25 years. If you choose to continue support payments for life, these will be paid at the same level as the Scheme category you are in as of 31st March 2025. The payments they will not go down and will also increase annually in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

If your calculated future financial loss and future care awards (part of your compensation amount when you receive compensation on the core route) are higher than your expected support scheme payments, you will receive a 'support scheme top up award' which will be added to your compensation. This top up does not result in a deduction from the compensation award. It may result in an increase.

Q: I receive IBSS payments so I won't be automatically offered compensation through the Core Route.

A: Everyone eligible for compensation, including those who receive regular support payments from an existing Infected Blood Support Scheme (IBSS), will be offered compensation through the core route. This is where compensation is calculated using tariffs alone. Those registered with an IBSS also have the choice of receiving their future financial loss and future care awards as part of the core route - or to take the support payments for life as part of their compensation package. Your claim manager will explain the options available to help you to make the best decision.

Q: What is the IBSS deadline for registration?

A: From 31st March 2025, the infected blood support schemes (IBSS) will close **to new applications**, as part of transitional arrangements with IBCA. This is with the exception of recently bereaved partners of existing infected scheme members who die before the 31st March 2025. In this instance, bereaved spouse or partners will have three months from the date of death to apply to an IBSS.

Q: Will I need to apply for interim compensation of £100,000 on behalf of an estate before 31st March 2025?

A: No, you will still be able to apply to the relevant scheme for interim compensation payments on behalf of estates after 31st March 2025. The IBSS are not closing on this date and will continue to process applications for interim estates payments on behalf of the UK Government.

Q: What is IBCA doing for those who have been told they are approaching the end of their lives?

A: For all groups, IBCA is exploring as a priority how they could look at the claims of those who are nearing the end of their life due to illness and will provide an update as soon as possible on this matter.

Keep up to date with IBCA via social media

The IBCA has launched its own website and social media channels to provide the latest news and updates on the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme:

Website:	YouTube:	X:
www.ibca.org.uk	www.youtube.com/@IBCA_UK	https://x.com/IBCA_UK

You can also hear from Chief Executive of IBCA [David Foley](#) on X who will be updating the Infected Blood community on a regular basis.

IBCA Mailing List

If you wish to learn more about IBCA and the compensation scheme as it develops, you can sign up to the IBCA mailing list: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/Z55REY/>

For further information

If you have any questions about the Government's plans, please contact IBCA. **Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.**

If you require a hard copy or any further information referred to in the weblinks in this newsletter, please contact the NI Scheme Manager. **Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.**

Alternatively, one of the following local groups would be happy to advise you:

Organisation	Contact	Email / telephone
Haemophilia Society	Conan McIlwrath	conan@haemophilia.org.uk 020 7939 0780
Haemophilia NI	Nigel Hamilton	NIhaemophilia@outlook.com 07824 777039
Families & Friends of Haemophilia NI	Paul Kirkpatrick	Familiesofhaemophiliani@gmail.com

Interim payments to estates: £100,000

In our last newsletter (Issue 5, September 2024), we told you that the Victims and Prisoners Act places a statutory duty on the UK Government to pay £100,000 interim compensation payments to the estates of people who have passed away, where such payments have not already been made to a partner or spouse of the deceased person.

Since October 2024, the Business Services Organisation (BSO) has been processing these applications in line with the agreed policy on behalf of the UK Government.

To apply for Interim payments to estates, an individual **must have probate.**

Probate is the legal process of dealing with a deceased person's estate, which includes their money, property and possessions. To apply for probate, in almost all cases, you should be able to complete the process yourself by visiting NI Direct www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/apply-probate.

If your interim application is successful, you may claim back:

- i. the exact costs for applying for probate, and;
- ii. legal support of up to £1,500 for the probate process.

For more information on eligibility and how to apply for an interim estates payment, please visit the overview page at: www.gov.uk/infected-blood-compensation-estates. Please contact the Scheme Manager if you have any questions about the application process.

A reminder on a few important things

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:

<i>Lump sum payments on registration</i>	<i>Annual winter fuel payment</i>
<i>Regular monthly or quarterly payments</i>	<i>Discretionary one-off grant payments</i>

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

Tax and benefits

When the four UK devolved financial support schemes were set up in 2017, legislation was passed to ensure that payments received from the Schemes were exempt from income tax. Therefore, if you live in the UK, income tax is **not** deducted from the payments you receive from the NI Scheme. This exemption only extends to the monthly / quarterly payments from the NI Scheme or interim compensation payments from the UKG.

Any return from investing those sums is not exempt from tax.

Once any money from the NI Scheme or interim compensation from UKG is invested, any interest received on that investment will be taxable in the normal way and should be declared in tax returns and self-assessments.

You should seek independent financial advice.

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 (DfC):

<i>Income Support</i>	<i>Housing Benefit</i>
<i>Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)</i>	<i>Employment & Support Allowance (ESA)</i>
<i>State Pension Credit</i>	<i>Universal Credit</i>

However, you must still declare to DfC any payments you receive from the NI Scheme or interim compensation from the UKG.

If you don't tell DfC about payments received, 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.

Money advice

The NI Scheme does not provide financial advice, however the NI Direct Finance Support Service supports people who live in Northern Ireland and 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.

Don't forget to keep your details up to date ...

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.

Contact details are at the end of this newsletter.

Contacts



Infected Blood Payment Scheme	IBPS NI Business Services Organisation, Finance Directorate 2nd floor, 2 Franklin Street BELFAST BT2 8DQ	Phone: 028 9536 3817 Email: bssoibss@hscni.net
Infected Blood Compensation Authority	IBCA	Phone: 0141 726 2397 (9am - 5pm) Online: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/infected-blood-compensation-authority
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 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 0764 Email: ibit@health-ni.gov.uk
Psychological Support	Clinical Health Psychology Department Level 9A, Outpatients Centre, Royal Victoria Hospital BELFAST BT12 6BA	Phone: 028 9615 5867
Money Advice	NI Direct	Phone: 0800 587 2750 Online: www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/finance-support
Benefits	Department for Communities Causeway Exchange 1-7 Bedford Street BELFAST BT2 7EG	Phone: 028 9082 9000 Online: www.communities-ni.gov.uk You should contact the office that pays your benefit within DfC: Universal Credit:

	<p>www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/universal-credit-service-centre</p> <p>Pension Credit: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/northern-ireland-pension-centre</p> <p>Income Support: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/income-support</p> <p>If you receive only Housing Benefit: Phone NI Housing Executive: 0344 892 0902 (8.30am to 5.00pm)</p>
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