

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



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A summary of inquiry hearings

The UK's current infected blood support schemes were investigated, with evidence from health ministers from the four nations and civil servants.

There are 3,960 people registered with the UK's support schemes. England has 3,100 beneficiaries, Scotland 546, NI 101 and Wales 213.

Scotland led the way in reforming its scheme, which was followed in 2017 by England, NI and Wales. Scotland

adopted a 'self-certification' system and gave applicants the 'benefit of the doubt'. NI's scheme was pegged to England but when the NI Executive collapsed in 2017, civil servants didn't have the authority to match changes in England and the scheme was 'frozen' at its original levels until a health minister was appointed in 2020. In Wales, after consultation it was decided the scheme needed to offer 'more than

money' and wider support such as welfare advice and a psychological support service were introduced. But payments fell significantly behind after England unilaterally increased its payments in April 2019.

Recent uplifts to payments could start to be paid in June, with letters confirming the finances due to be sent to the devolved governments by the UK government next week, the inquiry heard.

Inquiry news in focus: compensation

Compensation has been a key word this week—both inside and outside the inquiry. The inquiry shared a letter from Penny Mordaunt to the Chancellor in which she said "substantial" compensation payments were "inevitable". All three ministers from NI, Scotland and Wales agreed with her when they gave evidence. Then, on Thursday, the government announced that Sir Robert Francis QC would lead the independent review of a compensation framework. Health Secretary Matt Hancock told the inquiry that he believed the government had a "moral responsibility" to address the impact of what happened to those infected and affected. On compensation, he was direct, saying: "If the inquiry's recommendations point to compensation, then of course we will pay compensation."

Quotes of the week

"I expect Sir Brian to make recommendations about levels of financial support and it is inevitable that the Government will need to provide substantial compensation. The costs are likely to be high, and I firmly believe that we should begin preparing for this now -- before the inquiry reports." Letter from Penny Mordaunt MP to Chancellor Rishi Sunak, September 2020

"The inequality provokes reactivation and reliving of past traumatic experiences and can be perceived as confirmation that fairness is not required due to the 'second class citizen' status."

WIBSS clinical psychologist Caroline Coffey on the impact of lack of parity

"I think it's undeniable that people have good reason to be angry and upset about what had happened and the fact that they're still having to argue and fight their case."

Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health in Wales 2016-2021

"Some of the things that I heard coming from those who had been infected and affected was challenging to hear. It's not something that I expected, as Minister of Health, to have had occurred to people of Northern Ireland as part of a service that should have been delivered safely by the Health Service here." Robin Swann

"I would absolutely give a commitment to anybody receiving a payment, any of the beneficiaries infected or affected, that I would expect that to continue for their lifetime." Matt Hancock