



THE  
HAEMOPHILIA  
SOCIETY

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26 November 2019

Dear Mr Sterling, Mr Pengelly and Ms Gray

I write to you on the urgent issue of the Infected Blood Payment Scheme for Northern Ireland.

You will be aware that in Northern Ireland there is a gross disparity in some categories of support payments for victims of the contaminated blood scandal compared with England and Scotland. In practical terms this means victims in Northern Ireland with stage 1 hepatitis C are sometimes losing out by up to £23,500 a year compared to people infected in England.

Earlier this month, the chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry, Sir Brian Langstaff, referred to the “grinding poverty” in which many victims of the contaminated blood scandal are forced to live and urged political leaders to address the inequalities of support payments across the UK.

People whose lives have been devastated by infections caused by treatment with contaminated blood products are being severely penalised financially because they were infected in Northern Ireland. This is unacceptable and cannot be allowed to continue.

According to latest figures, less than 100 people receive money from the Infected Blood Support Scheme in Northern Ireland. Of those, 59 have stage 1 hepatitis C. It would require an annual payment of less than £1.4m to lift all stage 1 recipients from the insulting £4,500 a year they currently receive to the £28,000 special category mechanism they would theoretically be entitled to if they lived in England. Surely this is not too much to ask after the physical and mental torment they have endured for so many years.

In April 2019 the UK Government made funds available for an uplift in payments for England that were not extended to Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland, which is something The Haemophilia Society, along with other campaigners, has been working to rectify.

On 4 September 2019 Chancellor Sajid Javid made an announcement in the Government’s spending review that an extra £400m was to go to Northern Ireland. In it, he specifically referred to “those who have been tragically wronged in the contaminated blood scandal”. Although this is a devolved matter, Mr Javid concluded: “I sincerely hope that the Northern

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Ireland administration will use some of the new funding that we're providing today to address those issues."

We, along with our members in Northern Ireland, were hopeful that the Chancellor's announcement meant that the disparities in support payments would finally be addressed. However, almost three months on, we cannot see any evidence that increased payments are on the way.

As a UK-wide charity, our members in Northern Ireland rightly expect us to investigate why money which was apparently earmarked by the UK Government for victims of contaminated blood in Northern Ireland does not yet appear to have been allocated to this cause.

I would be grateful if you could clarify whether any money has been ring-fenced to increase payments made through the Infected Blood Payment Scheme for Northern Ireland and, if so, when these uplifts will be received.

While we appreciate there are many pressures on the health budget in Northern Ireland and that this is a devolved matter, we are concerned that the needs of victims of the contaminated blood scandal are being ignored once again.

Time is not on our side, those infected as a result of contaminated blood in the UK are dying at a rate of one person every four days. Please reassure those infected in Northern Ireland that you will not keep them waiting any longer for the support they deserve.

Yours sincerely



Liz Carroll  
CEO The Haemophilia Society

Cc:  
Sinn Fein, The Democratic Unionist Party, The Ulster Unionist Party, The Alliance, The SDLP

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