

5 February 2020

Dear Mr Swann

I write seeking urgent clarification on the issue of backdated payments for recipients of the Infected Blood Support Scheme for Northern Ireland.

On 27 January 2020 Finance Minister Conor Murphy announced that £1m would be made available with immediate effect to address the disparity in support payments between Northern Ireland and other parts of the UK. It was understood that payments would be backdated to April 2019 and calculated using the English support payment model.

However, comments made by Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health, at the health committee on 30 January revealed that only £600,000 has been allocated in the form of interim payments, with £400,000 held back to better understand the “specific problems and challenges” of those infected by contaminated blood.

Withholding such a substantial amount of money only days after it was promised is a shocking development which further insults our community, many of whom struggle to maintain a basic standard of living.

I cannot see any justification for the delay in allocating all the money ringfenced by Mr Murphy. Over the last three decades those infected by contaminated blood products and their families have spent considerable time and effort telling politicians and civil servants in Northern Ireland about their “problems and challenges”. To hold back money now using a lack of understanding about our community as an excuse is nothing short of outrageous.

Going forward, I agree that there are other, more complex issues to address – such as a fairer system for bereaved partners and the fact that bereaved parents and children have never received any financial support.

For now, the priority must be to immediately distribute all the money that has been allocated to the victims of contaminated blood.

For everyone affected by a genetic bleeding disorder

President: Baroness Meacher Registered charity no. 288260. Charity Registered in Scotland No SC039732.

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SOCIETY

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I ask you to meet with a representative from The Haemophilia Society, along with our colleagues at Haemophilia NI and Families and Friends of Haemophilia NI as a matter of urgency to clear up this matter which has caused great distress and anger to our community.

Yours sincerely

Liz Carroll
CEO The Haemophilia Society

Cc:

Sue Gray, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Finance
Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health
Conor Murphy, Finance Minister
Oliver Dowden, Minister for the Cabinet Office

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