



Special Category Mechanism

This information sheet is about the Special Category Mechanism (SCM) which is an aspect of the contaminated blood support scheme in England (EIBSS). It is a process by which people who were infected with Hep C due to contaminated blood and blood products can apply for higher annual payments.

The information is aimed at staff in haemophilia centres who have been asked to contribute to or sign an application by someone with a bleeding disorder.

Much of this information will, however, apply similarly to people without a bleeding disorder who were infected by blood transfusions or blood products as well as people secondarily infected via a family member or partner.

What is the Special Category Mechanism?

People who were infected with Hep C as a result of contaminated blood and blood products are entitled to support payments paid monthly or quarterly.

Most people will be classed as Stage 1 which means they reached the chronic stage of Hep C infection but have not progressed to Stage 2. Stage 2 payments are made to people who developed advanced cirrhosis, liver cancer or other life-limiting liver conditions due to their infection.

There is a wide range of ill-health among people at Stage 1 and the purpose of the SCM is to identify people whose Hep C infection or its treatment has had a long-term negative impact on their day-to-day life, worsened their health beyond what was expected in people classed as Stage 1 and led to medical complications or extra treatment.

If successful under the SCM the ongoing payments an individual is entitled to will rise to the same level as people classed as Stage 2.

Currently beneficiaries at Stage 1 are entitled to £3,050 a year and those at Stage 2 or who qualify under the SCM £15,150. These payments are independent of and in addition to other discretionary payments, the winter fuel payment of £505 or payments due to their HIV infection paid by the BSA. They also don't affect the patients access to benefits.

Who is eligible to apply?

The Special Category Mechanism is open to anyone infected in England or registered under the English scheme who has successfully applied for the Stage 1 payments but has not progressed to Stage 2. They should be in receipt of the monthly or quarterly payments totalling £3,050 a year and will have

received the one-off £20,000 lump sum from the Skipton Fund in the past.

People do not need to still be infected with Hep C to apply.

If they are not registered with the English scheme but should be they must apply on the EIBSS website initially for Stage 1 status before they can apply under the SCM.

If they have advanced cirrhosis, primary liver cancer, have received or are on the waiting list for a liver transplant, have B-cell non-Hodgkin's lymphoma or have type 2 or 3 cryoglobulinaemia accompanied by membranoproliferative glomerulonephritis then they should instead apply for Stage 2 payments using the application form available on the EIBSS website.

Patients infected or registered in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland should instead contact the schemes in those countries for further support.

How do you apply?

The application form for the Special Category Mechanism is available on the EIBSS website here: (<https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2017-10/EIBSS%20-%20Special%20Category%20Mechanism%20Form%20%28V1%29%2010.2017.pdf>)

The form is filled in by the applicant and their clinicians. The form advises that the patient should contact the hospital service treating their hepatitis, or failing this their GP. We however, believe that for most people with a bleeding disorder their haemophilia centre will be best placed to assist in compiling the required information and completing the form.

The applicant completes Sections 1-3 which cover their personal and contact details, contact preferences and data protection.

Then the applicant completes section 5A which will be best done in consultation with their clinicians. This section contains a list of specified complications of Hep C or its treatment which the DH consider to be substantial and long-term.

The applicant also completes section 6A questions Q1 and Q2. These sections ask the applicant if they believe their Hep C or its treatment has led to ongoing mental health problems or fatigue. They can also add additional information to describe the extent of the impact and how long they have been experiencing it.



What information do clinicians need to provide?

When you are approached by your patient they may already have completed the sections listed above although you will want to discuss the information provided in sections 5 and 6.

The form states that the clinician sections must be completed by a hospital doctor or viral hepatitis nurse unless permission has been sought from the BSA. We understand that BSA are happy for Haemophilia doctors and nurses to complete sections 4B, 5B, 6B and 7 if they have knowledge of a patient's hep C. We recommend centres work with colleagues in Hepatology to compile the required information.

In section 5B the clinician should provide confirmation that the diagnoses and dates in section 5A are correct and if possible provide evidence from the patients medical records. It may be necessary to request blood tests to confirm diagnoses.

If there is clear evidence for any of the conditions in section 5 then section 6 can be disregarded and you can move on to section 7.

In section 6B, if the patient has stated that they have mental health problems or fatigue, the doctor or nurse is asked for their opinion on how likely the problems are attributed to hep c infection or its treatment.

You are also asked to confirm their symptoms and their impact, describe the start dates and expected duration of the conditions and describe any treatment they are receiving. Please include evidence from medical records if available.

In section 7, clinicians are asked for their overall clinical opinion that the patient's Hep C or its treatment are having a substantial and long-term impact on their ability to carry out daily activities. Some centres have found it useful to have patients complete quality of life surveys.

Finally, the medical practitioner that completed the form needs to complete the declaration in section 4B. The form is then returned to the applicant to send to the BSA along with any further evidence to FREEPOST BSA.

What happens next?

There is no deadline for applications, however, all applications received prior to the 12th January 2018 which are ultimately successful will have the increased payments back-dated to October 2017. We are seeking to have the 12th January date pushed forward to give individuals and their centres more time to gather the required evidence and submit the application.

Applications where the evidence provided by the medical practitioner clearly supports the answers

provided by the applicant will be approved.

Applications where the medical practitioner endorses the answers based on professional judgement or balance of probability will be referred to a clinical assessor for review.

If an application is rejected it will be returned with an explanation of the decision, BSA may seek further evidence but also there is an appeal process that will be outlined in the rejection letter.

If people are still rejected following appeal they may reapply after 6 months or if they can provide evidence that their condition(s) have worsened.

The annual payment amounts for people at Stage 1 will rise to £4,000 and for Stage 2 or SCM to £18,000 from April 2018.

Who can I contact for further information?

The contaminated blood support scheme for people infected in England (EIBSS) is run by the NHS BSA who can be contacted on nhsbsa.eibss@nhs.net or 0300 330 1294.

They have produced their own guidance here: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2017-11/guidance-for-special-category-mechanism.pdf>.

More detail on the support scheme is available here: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/england-infected-blood-support-scheme>.

If you have further questions about this guidance you can contact The Haemophilia Society on the details below.

About The Haemophilia Society

We are the only UK wide charity for everyone affected by a bleeding disorder; a community of individuals and families, healthcare professionals and supporters.

More than 25,000 men, women and children in the UK have a diagnosed bleeding disorder, and the number rises every year. Membership of The Haemophilia Society is free and open to all.

To find out more, or to become a member for free, visit our website at www.haemophilia.org.uk/join or call us on 020 7939 0780.

Telephone: 020 7939 0780
Email: info@haemophilia.org.uk
Website: www.haemophilia.org.uk

© The Haemophilia Society November 2017 Review date November 2019 Registered charity no. 288260 (Scotland SC039732) Company limited by guarantee reg no. 1763614.