

March 4, 2011

Hep C support scheme extended

Health Secretary announces Scottish response to Contaminated Blood Review

More people who have been infected with hepatitis C through treatment with NHS blood or blood products will now be eligible for additional support.

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon today announced that she had accepted the recommendations of the Department of Health-led Contaminated Blood Review which will extend the scope of the existing support provisions to:

- Introduce of an annual payment of £12,800 for those living with hepatitis C who qualify for Stage 2 payments from the Skipton Fund
- Allow posthumous claims to be made on behalf of people who died before August 29 August, 2003
- Increase the one-off payment made to those who qualify for Stage 2 payments from £25,000 to £50,000 [whether the patient is alive or dead]
- Give access to discretionary fund for patients and/or their dependants suffering financial hardship
- Relevant patients who develop hepatitis C-related B cell lymphoma to be eligible to claim for Stage 2 payment
- Increase the annual payment for those with hepatitis C/HIV in line with the consumer price index

Ms Sturgeon said:

“I have every sympathy for those people and their families whose lives have been blighted by NHS treatment with infected blood. That is why this Government set up the Penrose Public Inquiry which is currently looking into these events.

“Clearly it’s right that those affected should be appropriately supported. That’s why the Skipton Fund and related trusts were established, to provide support to those affected by these events.

“The Contaminated Blood Review has made recommendations to provide additional support particularly to those who are suffering most or who are experiencing financial hardship as a result of their predicament.

“I have today accepted those relevant recommendations, which will be implemented in full. This will also allow for posthumous claims for support to be made on behalf of those who died prior to August 2003.

“No amount of support can restore these people’s health but I believe the measures announced today represent a considerable improvement for those who are most seriously ill or who are suffering financial hardship.”

Ms Sturgeon said a further review of Stage 1 payments from the Skipton Fund and the implementation of the new measures announced today will be reviewed when the final report (and any recommendations) of the Penrose Inquiry, are considered.

Background

Health Secretary Nicola Sturgeon established the independent public inquiry, to look into the circumstances in which patients treated by the NHS in Scotland became infected with hepatitis C or HIV or both, through the use of blood or blood products. Further information about the Penrose Inquiry is available here:

<http://www.penroseinquiry.org.uk/>

Three aspects of the plans for England will be handled differently for Scotland. These are:

Prescription ‘season tickets’

These are unnecessary as prescription charges are being abolished from April 2011.

Exemption of payments for social care provision

Plans in England will mean that all current and new support provisions of this type will be exempt for the purposes of means testing for social care provision. In Scotland, the guidance for residential care provision already disregards this type of support for the purpose of means testing income. For non-residential care, COSLA issues guidance but local authorities have discretion as to how to apply this locally. Officials will meet COSLA to try to establish parity across Scotland and England.

Counselling services by the third sector

In Scotland, relevant voluntary organisations will be able to apply to establish/offer suitable counselling services through the Section 16b grant scheme, our usual way of funding third sector health-related work.

Further information about making an application to the Skipton Fund is available at www.skiptonfund.org or by emailing apply@skiptonfund.org.

The Contaminated Blood Review report is available here:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Aboutus/Features/DH_123381

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