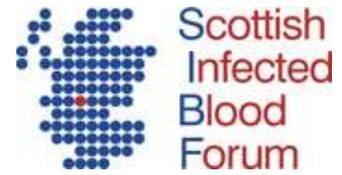




www.haemophilia.scot

Charity SC044298



www.sibf.org.uk

Charity SC043464

Rt. Hon John Swinney MSP
First Minister of Scotland
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

By email: firstminister@gov.scot

27 May 2024

Dear First Minister,

Response to UK Infected Blood Inquiry and Future Compensation Arrangements

We write to thank you for the fulsome apology you gave on 21 May in the Scottish Parliament to all those in Scotland who have been so badly harmed and blighted by the infected blood scandal. Your apology was earnest, genuine and meaningful and represents a new chapter of this story in Scotland.

We are also grateful for the kind words you expressed about the members of the Scottish Infected Blood Forum, Haemophilia Scotland and others who have pressed for justice over the decades. Sadly, far too many Scottish campaigners have not lived to see this day.

We welcome the commitment to ensuring that the Inquiry recommendations are followed in Scotland. In that respect we welcome the establishment of the Infected Blood Oversight and Assurance Group, and we look forward to contributing positively via our representatives to its work. We further welcome the willingness you set out to work with the UK Government to deliver those recommendations.

There is one matter however where we urge that no concession is made which could result in those infected in Scotland and their widows/partners becoming worse off.

From the statements made by the UK Government in relation to compensation we fear a very clear threat to the future of the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme and the monthly payments it makes to those infected and their widows/partners. The UK Government has indicated that after 01 April 2025 support payments will be counted towards a beneficiary's final compensation award. We fear this may be the end of the support schemes.



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Thank you for your help.



Many of the infected community see this as simply re-purposing the support payments and calling them compensation. We do not see this as the intent of either Sir Robert Francis or Sir Brian Langstaff in their respective reports.

For many of its members, SIBSS monthly payments are their only source of income and its establishment in Scotland has resulted in much better financial stability and general wellbeing than the UK run schemes that preceded it. Not only do we see a need for the monthly payments to continue but it is vital that they continue to be administered, funded, accessible, and directly accountable in Scotland.

We worked closely and thoughtfully with Scottish Government to create SIBSS and it has overall worked very well now for six years.

We have real reason to be alarmed if the support schemes cease to operate. In Scotland they are lifeline for many who do not have other regular income and has also provided much needed psychological support. If individuals are provided with a single payment the payment itself may cause distress in knowing how to manage such sum. Without the support scheme those infected and affected could be ruinously abandoned by the State after being ignored for many years. We do not believe this is something that the Scottish Government would want to happen. Some form of on-going support is very much needed.

For most in Scotland, we must retain both the monthly payments and their trusted administration by SIBSS with its 97% member satisfaction rate.

We acknowledge the repeated undertakings from Scottish Government that SIBSS payments will be for life and draw attention to Recommendation 13 b) of the Inquiry's Second Interim Report from April 2023 which states that annual support scheme payments should be 'guaranteed for life, by legislation or secure government undertaking'.

So, we ask you to not only reiterate in the Scottish Parliament past undertakings to maintain those payments but also bring forward legislation in Scotland to reassure Scottish infected and their widows/partners of that continued commitment.

To offer the necessary confidence to SIBSS members that monthly payments will continue for life, support from not only Scottish Government is needed, but legislation supported by all sides of the Scottish Parliament that SIBSS will be retained, and payments secured under law. We need to get the legal will of Parliament to give that confidence.



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We are due to meet soon with Minister for Public Health Jenni Minto to discuss the follow up to the IBI Report. We trust the Scottish Government as a whole feels able to, in particular, take steps to ensure that SIBSS monthly payments continue and that the need for these features in on-going discussions with the UK Government.

Should you wish further elaboration on why this matters so much to us we are happy to provide it.

With warm wishes.
Yours sincerely,



Bill Wright
Co-chair, Haemophilia Scotland



Joyce Donnelly
Convenor, Scottish Infected Blood Forum

CC.

Shona Robison MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government
Jenni Minto MSP, Minister for Public Health and Women's Health