

Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme

Payments for Widows, Widowers and Civil Partners of Beneficiaries who have died

Introduction

The Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme (SIBSS) will be managed by NHS National Services Scotland. It replaces the previous support provided by UK-wide schemes (such as the Caxton Foundation, the Macfarlane Trust and the Eileen Trust) for those who are Scottish beneficiaries. This document sets out details of the policy on payments for widows, widowers or civil partners of an infected person who has died and who is eligible for payments after the infected person's death. This document provides guidance on the policy set out in the SIBSS Scheme Document, which is available on the [Scottish Government website](#). The Scottish Government has agreed that eligible widows, widowers and civil partners should receive a regular annual payment, which is 75% of the amount their spouse or civil partner would have been eligible for if they were still alive.

This is currently:

- £20,250 per year if your spouse or civil partner was infected with advanced Hepatitis C (sometimes referred to as 'Stage 2') or HIV
- £27,750 per year if your spouse or civil partner was coinfecting with both Hepatitis C and HIV
- In some cases, you may be eligible for £20,250 per year if your spouse or civil partner was infected with chronic Hepatitis C (sometimes referred to as 'Stage 1') if Hepatitis C directly contributed to their death – see below for more details on this.

What happens if your spouse or civil partner dies after April 2017?

If your spouse or civil partner was already receiving a regular payment from SIBSS due to their advanced Hepatitis C and/or HIV and they die on or after 1 April 2017, then you should let the scheme know as soon as possible. They will ask you for details to confirm your identity and that you were the beneficiary's spouse or civil partner and were living with them at the time of their death. Once this is confirmed, you will be eligible to receive payments at the same level as your spouse or civil partner for twelve months from the date of their death.

After the first twelve months, you will automatically start to receive payments at 75% of the rate your spouse or civil partner would have been entitled to if they were still alive, although you must notify the scheme if you marry someone else or enter into a new civil partnership. These payments will be paid monthly.

What happens if your spouse or civil partner died before April 2017?

If your husband, wife or civil partner is already dead or if they were already deceased before they are registered with the Scottish Infected Blood Support Scheme, then you can apply to receive an annual payment of 75% of what your spouse or civil partner would have been entitled to if they were alive. If your spouse or civil partner was not registered with SIBSS or any of the UK schemes then you (or whoever is responsible for managing their estate) will need first to apply to register them with the scheme – you should contact SIBSS to get the relevant application form for this.

If your husband, wife or civil partner was receiving regular monthly or quarterly payments before they died and was allocated as a 'Scottish' beneficiary by the Skipton Fund or MFET, then you will automatically qualify for this payment if you meet the criteria below:

1. you were still married to or in a civil partnership with your spouse or civil partner when they died and you were living together at that time (if you were divorced, your civil partnership had been dissolved or you were separated then you will not be eligible);
2. you have not since remarried or entered into a new civil partnership with someone else;
3. if you are also infected with advanced Hepatitis C or HIV yourself, you will not be eligible for a widows annual payment if you are receiving regular annual payments in your own right. However, you can receive the widows annual payment if you have chronic Hepatitis C (sometimes known as Stage 1).

If you have already been receiving support from one of the following UK schemes (the Caxton Foundation, the Macfarlane Trust or the Eileen Trust) then your details should be passed on to SIBSS and they will contact you if you are likely to be eligible and send you an application form. If you submit your application form by **30 April 2017**, and your application is accepted, then your payments will be backdated to 1 April 2017. If you are not contacted by SIBSS, you will be able to find an application form on their website or call or email them and they will send you a form to complete.

If your husband, wife or civil partner was already receiving an annual payment, then you will need to complete a short application and provide a copy of your marriage or civil partnership certificate, along with a copy of your photo ID (such as a driving licence, passport or bus pass) and proof of your address (such as a bank statement). You will also be asked to confirm the date of your spouse or civil partner's death, that you were living with them when they died and that you have not since remarried.

How to apply if your spouse or civil partner had chronic Hepatitis C (Stage 1)

If your husband, wife or civil partner had chronic Hepatitis C (so was not entitled to annual payments at the time of their death) and was a Scottish beneficiary (either registered with SIBSS or previously registered with the Skipton Fund as a 'Scottish' beneficiary) then you can still apply for an annual payment if you meet the three criteria above. However, there will also need to be sufficient evidence that, on the balance of probabilities, Hepatitis C directly contributed to your spouse or civil partner's death.

This means you will need to complete the same form as the one for widows, widowers or civil partners of beneficiaries with advanced Hepatitis C or HIV, but you will also need to provide:

- a copy of your spouse or civil partner's certificate of registration of death (death certificate)¹;
- contact details for an appropriate doctor who can provide relevant evidence about the cause(s) of your spouse or civil partner's death. Ideally this should be completed by a Hepatitis C clinical specialist who was involved in treating your spouse or civil partner for Hepatitis C, but clearly this may not be possible if they died some time ago. In such cases, another hepatologist/infectious diseases consultant can be nominated if they have access to your spouse or civil partner's records or alternatively your spouse or civil partner's GP may be nominated.

SIBSS will then contact the nominated doctor and ask them to explain briefly why they believe that, on the balance of probabilities, Hepatitis C or treatment for Hepatitis C directly contributed to the spouse or civil partner's death.

In some cases, SIBSS may consult another Hepatitis C clinical specialist and clinical records to help verify whether, on the balance of probabilities, Hepatitis C infection directly contributed to your spouse or civil partner's death. Where needed, if your spouse or civil partner was living in either another country of the United Kingdom or outside the UK when they died, then SIBSS may contact relevant clinicians in the health service of that country for further information on the cause of death.

Please note there is a review getting underway which will consider evidence regarding cases where Hepatitis C caused the death of patients; this might in future lead to some changes in cases where spouses of beneficiaries who had chronic Hepatitis C are able to receive regular payments. However, you can still apply for this support in the meantime as each case will be considered based on the individual circumstances.

¹ we are aware that Hepatitis C may not have been mentioned on the death certificate even where it did contribute to their death so just because it is not mentioned does not mean your application will necessarily be refused

What other support is available for widows, widowers and civil partners?

If you do not qualify for an annual payment based on the criteria set out above, you may still be eligible for support from the Support and Assistance Grants part of SIBSS if:

- you were the wife, husband, civil partner or long-term partner of someone who was infected with Hepatitis C or HIV and was registered with SIBSS or was previously registered with one of the UK schemes as a Scottish beneficiary.
- if you were not married or in a civil partnership, you will still qualify as long as you can show that you were living with the beneficiary in a relationship similar to a marriage and were not married to or in a civil partnership with anyone else at the time (if you have previously received support from an existing UK scheme as a partner, you may not need to provide evidence of this);
- you were still living with them when they died and had not either divorced or had your civil partnership dissolved.

Any such widow, widower, partner or civil partner of a deceased beneficiary will be able to apply for an increased living costs supplement of £1,000 per year to help fund the increased longer term costs associated with their spouse or civil partner's death or illness if they do not qualify for a regular annual payment. This payment is not means tested so anyone can apply, although you are encouraged only to apply if you feel you need extra financial support.

Alternatively, you can apply for income top-up support if you are on a low income. If your household income, including any benefits you receive, is below a certain threshold level, you will be able to receive payments to top-up your income to that threshold level. The threshold level varies depending on the size of your household – it is higher if you have children under 21 years old living with you. Contact SIBSS or look at the guidance on Support and Assistance grants for more details of the threshold level which applies to you and to get an application form. They can also help with advice on filling in your form.

Finally, if you have been receiving regular financial support from either the Caxton Foundation, the Macfarlane Trust or the Eileen Trust, but you think you don't qualify for an annual payment and will get less support from the Support and Assistance grants scheme than you did previously, please email or telephone SIBSS staff and they will be happy to look into this for you.

Contact details

If you have any queries about this or would like to be sent an application form, you can call SIBSS on 0131 275 6754 or email NSS.SIBSS@nhs.net. There is also further information about the scheme on the website at <https://nhsnss.org/SIBSS>.