Thank you for your letter of 3 July 2017 seeking the Scottish Government’s views on the action called for in Petition PE1658 namely;

- whether the Scottish Government has been aware of, and looked at this issue
- whether the Scottish Government would consider voluntary ex gratia payments
- how any such payments would be calculated.

The Scottish Government is aware of this historical issue, which relates to the Urabe-containing MMR vaccine which the Scottish Home and Health Department (SHHD) promoted in its MMR vaccine campaign between October 1988 and September 1992. You will appreciate that these events pre-date devolution and relate to decisions made at the time by the UK Government.

Vaccination policy, at the time, was based on the expert advice of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI). I understand that in making its recommendations on MMR vaccine at the time, the JCVI did consider reported adverse reactions to the Urabe-containing vaccine. However there was insufficient evidence of a problem with the strain of mumps vaccine in the United Kingdom for a change in vaccine policy to be advised. Once data were available confirming the extent of the risk and that an alternative vaccine was available, the Urabe strain mump vaccines were replaced. It is of course regrettable that anyone was affected as a result of efforts to protect the population against disease, and I fully sympathise with those individuals and their families.

The safety of medicines, and policy on compensation for vaccines damages, are issues which are reserved to the UK Parliament. Disability or damage caused by a vaccination against mumps is covered by the Vaccine Damages Payments Scheme, which is administered by the Department for Work and Pensions. I am aware that there is a disability threshold for payments under the VDPS, and I know that the Committee has heard evidence that some of those who were affected by the Urabe-containing vaccine have not been judged to have met this threshold and consequently, they have not received any payment. The policy for payments under the scheme, including thresholds at which payments are made, is a matter for the Department of Work and Pensions, and it would be useful for the Committee to seek a view from the DWP on this issue.

Given that these are matters reserved to the UK Parliament, I can confirm that the Scottish Government has no plans to set up a scheme as suggested by the petition.

I hope that this response is helpful.