

The Infected Blood Inquiry weekly summary

The
Haemophilia
Society

A summary of inquiry hearings week of 3 October 2022

Brave mothers gave evidence about their sons who were treated at Birmingham Children's Hospital under consultant Dr Frank Hill in the 1980s.

Elisabeth Buggins discovered two of her three sons, Richard and Jonathan, were infected with HIV when she saw a list of names on the hospital's fridge. Dr Hill had encouraged parents not to find out their children's HIV status for fear

they might 'treat their boys differently'. Richard died in 1986, which was made even worse by the coroner's decision to release to the press that an eight year old with haemophilia had died of AIDS, sparking a media frenzy.

Brenda Haddock's son Andrew was told he had HIV aged 12 by Dr Hill without her knowledge. He went from being a bright boy to losing

interest in school, becoming aggressive and depressed. He died aged 24.

Brenda said of Andrew's loss: 'It does ruin your life. You never, ever get over it.' Linda Woolliscroft described the 'black cloud' that hung over her life, caused by the death of her only son Michael. He'd been diagnosed with HIV aged 15 but only told two years later.

Inquiry focus: Public Health and Administration Group

Six experts with backgrounds in the civil service, the law, academia, psychology, patient safety and clinical practice came together to discuss how public health is organised and implemented. Academic and clinician, Professor Allyson Pollock believed that the clock needed to be turned back and local health systems restored for better accountability and understanding of emerging health problems. Former civil servant, Lord Michael Bichard thought creating a 'learning culture' in organisations when things went wrong would be far more productive than the current tendency to look for blame. He said in government, this had to be led by the Prime Minister.

Civil servant Clare Salters highlighted the 'real problem' that a policy position in England often became the 'default' view in the UK. She said separate systems were important. The panel also looked at how long-term planning could be made more effective and how to tackle the 'danger' of groupthink within the civil service.

Quotes of the week

'You try to carry on. I've just got on with things because I was always frightened that if I thought about it too much, the floodgates would open and I'd never shut them.'

Brenda Haddock on the death of her son Andrew

'I felt my world was crumbling. All I wanted to know was when I was going to die. It definitely had a big psychological impact on me as I didn't see the point in doing anything and I constantly questioned everything. I hated the thoughts that used to go through my head.'

Anonymous witness on his HIV diagnosis as a child

'Absolute trust was given with the most precious things we had in the world'.

Elisabeth Buggins

'Each of you have helped to place another piece in the jigsaw puzzle about what happened and why.'

Sir Brian Langstaff pays tribute to all witnesses to the inquiry

'If more attention had been paid to the need for good surveillance and building up the epidemiology at every level, much of this inquiry may never have been necessary.'

Professor Allyson Pollock