

The Infected Blood Inquiry weekly summary

The
Haemophilia
Society

A summary of inquiry hearings week of 16 January 2023

This week marked the start of the final phase of the inquiry. Core participants now have the chance to outline, usually through their lawyers, what recommendations and findings of fact should be made in the inquiry's final report.

The first presentation was on behalf of Collins Law. Steven Snowden KC set out six questions for the Department of Health asking for

specific details on what it believed had gone wrong. He also called for further interim recommendations on compensation to be made to force the government into action. The presentation finished with a moving video featuring Lee Turton, who died of HIV aged 10. Eleanor Grey KC, representing the Department of Health (DH) could have had up to

four hours to put the government's position, but instead spoke for 30 minutes. She said DH had 'no case' to offer, partly to avoid accusations that it was 'putting its own view' rather than listening. Sir Brian Langstaff probed this position, which appeared to have gone backwards since opening statements in 2018 when DH admitted 'wrong' had been done.

Quotes of the week

'When the inquiry opened, you did on behalf of the department [of health] appear...to take a position and that was that wrong had been done. It would help me...to understand what wrong the department had in mind when you said that.'

Sir Brian Langstaff to Eleanor Grey KC, counsel for DH

'We don't have a position to offer you on what that might be'.

Eleanor Grey KC's response

'They are left with a strong sense of being exploited by the clinicians who couldn't wait to utilise what they deemed to be a unique environment.'

Brian Cummins, on behalf of boys who attended Treloar's College in Hampshire in the 1980s

'We accept that our actions and statements at the time, while well intentioned and based on expert advice, have subsequently been shown to be damaging to the community and false. For this we unreservedly apologise.'

Apology from the Haemophilia Society, first made in 2017

'People talk too loosely about closure...there can be no closure to love, nor should there be for someone you have loved and lost. Grief is a journey without destination.'

Bishop Jones' Hillsborough report

Inquiry focus: The Haemophilia Society's presentation

The Haemophilia Society (THS) used its three-hour presentation to look back as well as putting forward recommendations for improved treatment, care and accountability in the future. Katie Gollop KC, on behalf of THS, said the inability of DH to articulate what 'should not have happened' in relation to the contaminated blood scandal undermined all trust in its ability to deliver compensation. She called for a further interim recommendation on compensation for bereaved parents, children and grandchildren. She said THS was 'painfully aware' of criticism of its role and reassured those watching that this has been listened to and understood. Splits resulting from people feeling let down by THS continued to cause hurt. Ms Gollop said these splits were partly the result of 'government forcing physically injured and psychologically damaged and bereaved people to fight for justice and compensation'. She called for guaranteed access to recombinant treatment as well as to new therapies, including gene therapy, for people with bleeding disorders.