

The Infected Blood Inquiry weekly summary

The
Haemophilia
Society

A summary of inquiry hearings: week of 23 January 2023

This week Sir Brian Langstaff, Chair of the inquiry, listened to closing statements on behalf of core participants. Nicola Leahey, who was infected with hepatitis C through a blood transfusion, said her treatment had left her feeling 'physically and mentally abused, stripped of my dignity, my self esteem diminished'. She asked Sir Brian if those infected and affected could see his final report

before the media and public. Speaking for the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Philip Aldworth KC said it accepted 'that things went wrong and things should and could have been done differently'. He said despite guidance on the use of NHS factor in June 1983, 'significant amounts' of commercial products continued to be

used in Northern Ireland. David Johnston KC, for the Scottish government, committed to better palliative care, to on-going specialist psychological support and to a physiotherapy service for people with bleeding disorders. He argued that previous pay-outs, not support payments, might need to be considered in the compensation process.

Inquiry focus: NHS Blood and Transplant's statement

Speaking on behalf of NHS Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), Charlie Cory-Wright began by apologising for the failure of the service to provide a safe and reliable blood supply using voluntary donors. He also specifically apologised for the use of blood donations from prisons and said sorry to Dr Huw Lloyd, former director of Newcastle Regional Blood Transfusion Service, who was castigated by colleagues for 'breaking ranks' in rolling out hepatitis C screening in April 1991, ahead of the national September deadline. He said the effectiveness of the blood transfusion service had been hampered by lack of authority over clinical practice and an absence of central funding. Mr Cory-Wright said NHSBT wanted to introduce 'vein-to-vein' electronic tracking software but was currently facing funding problems in getting this progressed. NHSBT agreed that more focus needed to be placed on the recipients of blood donations, which he said had been incorporated into guidance since 2015.

Quotes of the week

'It was so wonderful to meet others in the same situation. Sad, but wonderful, who understand the worry and uncertainty, the fear of the unknown, the stigma, the guilt of surviving when others lose the battle. We are united. Thrown together through no fault of our own by one common theme: contaminated blood.'
Nicola Leahey

'The Scottish government is acutely aware of the suffering of those who were infected with HIV or with hepatitis as a result of NHS treatment with blood or blood products. It profoundly regrets that anybody should have suffered in that way.'
David Johnston KC

'Once it was recognised that the blood of those donors [from prisons] was at highest risk than those of the general population, those donations should have ended. In not ending those donations, people will have been infected by blood that we took. We sincerely apologise for that.'
Charlie Cory-Wright KC

'Belfast's historic reliance on commercial concentrates up to 1983 may well have shaped or influenced product selection to a significant degree.'
Philip Aldworth KC