

The Infected Blood Inquiry weekly summary

The
Haemophilia
Society

A summary of inquiry hearings: week of 30 January 2023

This was the last week of hearings, but the inquiry team was keen to emphasise that this is by no means the end of its work. All attention now focuses on its final report.

We heard from lawyers on behalf of clients represented by Leigh Day, Watkins and Gunn, Thompsons and Milners. Simon Bowie KC, representing the Scottish Blood Transfusion

Service (SNBTS) and its 14 regional health boards, accepted surrogate testing for non-A non-B hepatitis should have been introduced in 1987 and that using prisoners as blood donors should have stopped in 1975, instead of 1984. There was an 'unacceptable delay' in giving people their HIV results, he said. Christian Howells, on behalf of Watkins & Gunn clients, said Prof

Arthur Bloom, a leading haemophilia clinician, gave 'materially misleading' advice about AIDS to the Welsh Office in May 1983. A poignant video was played at the end of Jamie Dawson KC's presentation on behalf of Thompsons clients, featuring images, words and videos about those infected and affected in Scotland.

Inquiry focus: Sir Brian Langstaff's closing comments

When Sir Brian Langstaff, Chair of the inquiry, walked into the hearing room at Aldwych House for the last time, the audience got to their feet in an impromptu gesture of respect. Sir Brian said his final report, which 'would not be short', wouldn't be published before autumn 2023, but that he would be as quick as 'reasonable thoroughness' permits. He said: 'Time is not a luxury I can squander.' Sir Brian announced that he would be producing an interim report about the framework for compensation which would be published before Easter. Concluding, he said: 'I would like to thank you for the spirit in which you have followed the inquiry proceedings, in whatever way you have, here in person, online, through the inquiry emails and wider media. I thank you with sincere appreciation for making this a collective endeavour, for the warmth with which you support one another, and for your kind words about the inquiry team and its process. Thank you all, individually and collectively. Thank you and goodbye, for now.'

Quotes of the week

'It seems that clinicians were so eager to use the more convenient wonder drug that they made decisions about patient safety for them.'

Emma Jones on behalf of Leigh Day clients

'There's a general view amongst the victims that for over 40 years people in the know have kept their mouths shut, their files closed and their shredders busy.'

Lloyd Williams KC

'The idea that the tragedy was unavoidable is simply untrue. This is the lie around which the state circled.'

Jamie Dawson KC

'They have fought and fought and fought for justice and truth. If ignored they knocked on another door. Like fighters, if ever knocked down they got straight back up. They never stopped.'

Sam Stein KC on his campaigning clients

'You have laid bare the most personal and distressing parts of your lives in pursuit of truth and justice and in the hope that lessons can be learned for the future for the benefit of others and so, with the greatest of admiration and respect to you all, I say thank you.'

Jenni Richards KC