

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of this week's Inquiry hearings

The opening of the Infected Blood Inquiry on Tuesday marked a historic moment for our community. It was a day which many thought would never come. It was a moment to reflect, to remember those who did not live to see this Inquiry and to share experiences with others attending the hearings.

There was a huge media presence as people arrived for the first hearing and over the preceding days many TV, radio and print outlets had featured people affected by the contaminated blood scandal.

The first witness was Derek Martindale, who has severe haemophilia A and became infected

with HIV, along with his brother, Richard, as a result of contaminated blood products. Derek, supported by his family, spoke poignantly of his emotions when his brother died and how difficult life was for him as he dealt with his own diagnosis and later was also discovered to be infected with Hepatitis C. Many in the room were in tears, as Derek spoke of emotions and experiences which mirrored their own.

Over the course of this week the Inquiry has heard from 12 witnesses.

Each witness spoke bravely and powerfully about different aspects of the impact of the

contaminated blood scandal.

Although every story was different, common threads emerged. No one who gave evidence this week had been aware they were being tested for HIV or Hep C, no one had been offered counselling or support on diagnosis and no one was informed of the risks of their treatment using blood products.

All witnesses spoke of the stigma and secrecy they felt they had no choice but to endure.

The Inquiry also heard criticism of The Macfarlane Trust from witness Clair Walton who accused it of obtaining a stake in her home as her husband was dying of Aids.

Quotes of the week

"I want to thank the many who have volunteered statements... some are harrowing, some moving, some chillingly factual. All are valuable."

Sir Brian Langstaff, Inquiry chair

"That was when I realised the contempt they had had for me in those years when I was grieving, living with HIV, traumatised. I was shackled to this trust. I couldn't move. I couldn't live."

Clair Walton on the MFT

"I was told that I was HIV positive. I was told that I had about a year to live and I was told not to tell anyone, including my family and my parents."

Derek Martindale on being diagnosed with HIV aged 23

"If it happens ...we're going to rely on the person still alive to pursue it and find out what went wrong and I'm the only one left. I think about that every day... it's tough."

Stephen Nicholls on the pact he made with his school friends from Treloars.

"A bombshell is dropped on you and then you're left to go home with nothing, planning your funeral."

Jackie Britton on being diagnosed with Hep C

Inquiry news

The huge amount of documentation which the Inquiry is currently reviewing was revealed this week.

This includes a completed search of 2.5million documents from the Department of Health and the Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency as well as two million pages from NHS Blood and Transplant with 5.7 million more hardcopy pages still to be examined as well as electronic material.

A team of researchers will be based at the National Archives for the next six months to review relevant documentation.