

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of Inquiry hearings from Belfast

Belfast was the location for the third week of the Infected Blood Inquiry personal testimonies.

At the beginning of the hearings, Inquiry chair, Sir Brian Langstaff said: "Why has the Inquiry come to Belfast? The answer is simple. It is a matter of principle. It is easier for them [the infected and affected] to come in person to an Inquiry in Northern Ireland than an Inquiry in London. So the Inquiry puts people first, UK wide, and comes."

This week, as with the previous two weeks in London, witnesses have spoken bravely, openly and honestly about their experience of the contaminated blood scandal.

Many witnesses drew attention to the large disparity in financial support between Northern Ireland and England—something The Haemophilia Society and other campaigners are lobbying the Government to urgently address.

The first witness in Belfast, Paul Kirkpatrick, said: "There is nothing more unfair than treating equal people unequally. We're being treated differently...I think that's not right."

He told the Inquiry that this was the first time he had told his story publicly, something a number of other witnesses also volunteered. One said that preparing to tell his story at the Inquiry had

been "liberating" and for the first time he had shared the fact he has haemophilia and contracted Hepatitis C as a result of contaminated blood products with a wider circle of colleagues and friends.

One witness, Brigid Campbell, described the "huge hole" left by the death of her father, Malachy, who died in 1990 after being infected with HIV in 1983 from contaminated blood products.

Many witnesses spoke of the debilitating chronic effects of Hepatitis C. Three siblings told of their brother, Seamus Conway, who died last year of liver cancer—the result of contracting Hepatitis C. He was aged just 45.

Quotes of the week

"If I lived in England, the recognition of my victimhood would be different. That is a sad reflection of any government which has now created a hierarchy of victims under the pretence of it being a devolved matter."

Nigel Hamilton, who has Hep C as a result of treatment for his haemophilia

"To everyone who is involved in this Inquiry—you are not alone, we are in this together and no matter what we will get the answers we deserve."

Danielle Mullan, whose mum Marie was infected with Hep C following a blood transfusion

"I was told 'don't worry about it, you have probably had it most of your life. It hasn't impacted on you and you will not impact anybody else.'"

Paul Kirkpatrick on his Hep C diagnosis in 1987 as a result of treatment for his haemophilia

"The Inquiry has made me bring forward things I had buried in my mind for quite a while. It's probably good that I am able to sit here and bring them out now."

Ms J, who contracted Hep C as a result of treatment for her haemophilia B

Inquiry news

The Inquiry now takes a week's break from witness hearings. It will resume at Fleetbank House in London from Tuesday June 4 until Friday June 7. The Inquiry then moves north for the start of two weeks of hearings at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Leeds from June 11-14 and June 18-21.

Following the Inquiry and listening to its witnesses has brought back very difficult and traumatic times for many people. If you need support or have questions about the Inquiry please contact Debra Morgan on publicinquiry@haemophilia.org.uk or call 0207 9390780.