

4 March, 2020

Dear Ms Dorries

As Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health you will no doubt be concerned by the overwhelming evidence from the latest hearings at the Infected Blood Inquiry that victims and their families are not receiving the psychological support they need.

Last week, a succession of high calibre experts outlined to the inquiry the long term physical and psychological impact of infection through contaminated blood and blood products. They emphasised that those affected were just as much in need of mental health support as those infected.

All last week's powerful evidence can be found online via The Infected Blood Inquiry.

In his concluding comments, inquiry chair Sir Brian Langstaff could not have been clearer in his "expectation" that "proper support and follow-up" will be in place by the time he makes his final report.

The Haemophilia Society believes the provision of long-term specialist psychological support for the victims of the contaminated blood scandal and their families cannot wait.

Those infected and affected have lacked adequate mental health support for decades. Now, through the Infected Blood Inquiry, many are being re-traumatised by memories of grief and loss. Some still carry the added burden of secrecy which makes it difficult to talk to others about what they are going through.

As the inquiry now approaches its investigative stage, with key clinicians and politicians expected to give evidence, The Society is very concerned that the mental health impact of reliving this deeply traumatic episode could tip over into self-harm or, in a worst-case scenario, suicide, if support is not provided quickly.

When I, along with other campaigners, met you and your ministerial colleague Oliver Dowden in January, many of us highlighted the urgent issue of psychological support and you listened to our concerns.

For everyone affected by a genetic bleeding disorder

President: Baroness Meacher Registered charity no. 288260. Charity Registered in Scotland No SC039732.

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I now urge you to trigger action. Specialist, easily accessible long-term psychological help needs to be put in place across the UK using experienced professionals with the skills to deal with this level of deep-rooted trauma.

There is a desperate need for mental health support, and funds must be found to address this life-threatening situation as soon as possible.

Please don't be the minister who ignores this community's needs yet again.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely

C. Smith

Clive Smith
Chair of the Board of Trustees
The Haemophilia Society

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