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Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
The Cabinet Office
70 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2AS

26th January 2019

Re: Infected Blood Inquiry

Dear Mr Lidington,

I write to you with a heavy heart in my position as Chair of Trustees for The Haemophilia Society.

As you will be aware, the opening of the Infected Blood Inquiry last year represented the culmination of more than 30 years of campaigning from The Haemophilia Society and many from our affected and infected community. We believe this Inquiry can and must deliver the closure and justice that has eluded the victims of the contaminated blood scandal for so long.

However, four months after the opening hearings, shortcomings have emerged which we fear run the risk of compromising the Inquiry's effectiveness and have hindered our charity's ability to fully participate. We have begun to lose faith in the process as the issues we have raised have continued to be ignored.

Our principal concern is a severe lack of financial resources which is in danger of failing the very people this inquiry was set up to champion.

The emotional support offered to people affected by the Inquiry is proving wholly inadequate. At present the Inquiry is offering just six hours a week of psychological support via a Red Cross-operated telephone line. That's six hours to be shared between everyone affected by the inquiry. As Inquiry chairman Sir Brian Langstaff said in his opening remarks in September 2018, more than 24,000 people may have been affected by this scandal. People whose lives have been torn apart by this scandal are being asked to re-live feelings of grief and hurt by the Inquiry, but are being left to deal with the resulting cascade of emotions by themselves. By comparison, the psychological support offered to the Grenfell Inquiry amounts to £50 million, which we fully support, but ask that you address this disparity in funding. We know

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personally from our members that they are not getting the support they need. We would urge upon you swift action to address this significant unmet need.

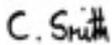
Secondly, we are concerned at the apparent lack of resources for the Inquiry's legal team, which currently only has one QC. This compares very unfavourably with the Grenfell Inquiry which has, rightly, seven QCs. The Infected Blood Inquiry is multi-jurisdictional and multi-locational event and as such is incredibly demanding of both the Inquiry's QC and the Chairman. We feel there is a significant likelihood that the Inquiry could be subject to delays, should members of the Inquiry team fall ill or unforeseen events should force them to step away from the Inquiry. We have also seen questions we have raised go unanswered which has hindered our work and updates we should be providing to our members. We ask that this be reviewed as soon as possible to ensure the legal team has sufficient support to be able to deliver this most complex and keenly-awaited public inquiry.

The Haemophilia Society has always made clear that it wants to participate fully in the Inquiry and understands the scrutiny that it is under. We want our organisation to be able to fully represent our members and to answer all questions put to us as truth and justice is sought by all involved. However, we are concerned that we will not have the ability to participate on an equal footing to others involved in the investigatory stage of the Inquiry.

We respectfully ask you to meet with us to discuss our concerns and to help us find a way through this impasse, which is hindering our work with the Inquiry. There is so much progress being made and hard work being done by so many in the infected blood community; we must ensure this once in a lifetime opportunity to address the issues of the contaminated blood scandal is not wasted.

We appreciate the hard work that has taken place in the Cabinet Office to get the Infected Blood Inquiry up and running. We hope by tackling the points raised we can ensure that it achieves the very demanding but long-overdue goal of giving the victims of the contaminated blood scandal the truth and justice that they deserve.

Yours sincerely,



Clive Smith
Chair of the Board of Trustees

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