

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

The Infected Blood Inquiry moves to investigation stage

The next hearings of the Infected Blood Inquiry will turn to haemophilia centres and the clinicians that worked there during the contaminated blood scandal. The inquiry will be delving into what was known about the levels of risk associated with treatment at the time.

The hearings had been due to start in June, but have been postponed until mid-September at the earliest, as a result of the coronavirus outbreak.

In February, the inquiry heard five days of expert evidence from the fields of psychology, HIV, hepatitis and bleeding disorders.

The panels of experts discussed current and past treatments and outlined their thoughts on “best practice” in their field. They were not asked to comment on the rights and wrongs of treatment during the contaminated blood scandal.

So, what happens next? Here’s what we know:

- The final report is likely to be published in summer 2022
- There will be about another 40 weeks of public hearings, sitting for three days a week
- Hearings will finish at the end of 2021
- A team of 200 inquiry investigators are working on millions of pages of documents
- Sir Brian has personally read more than 1,000 witness statements
- It is not too late to submit a witness statement

We will post details of the next hearings on the public inquiry section of our website at haemophilia.org.uk as well as on social media.

You can request to join our dedicated Facebook page or follow us on Twitter @HaemoSocUK_PI.

For help or more information contact our public inquiry team using the details below.

Our campaign for long-term, specialist mental health support

The Haemophilia Society is calling on the Government to fund long-term, easily accessible specialist psychological support for victims of the contaminated blood scandal and their families.

We know that the Infected Blood Inquiry has meant re-living painful memories and feelings of loss and grief. Some carry the extra burden of secrecy which makes dealing with these feelings even more difficult.

As the inquiry gears up for more high-profile witnesses such as politicians and key clinicians, those following the inquiry face a traumatic period. The Society is concerned that without specialist

support, there is a risk that those who are struggling with mental health issues could tip into self-harm or, in a worst-case scenario, suicide.

Our concern was echoed by all the expert witnesses at the February hearings who highlighted the major long-term psychological impact of infections as a result of contaminated blood products on individuals and their families. In his concluding remarks, chair Sir Brian Langstaff said he “expected” full support to be in place by the time he writes his report.

Earlier this month, The Society wrote to Nadine Dorries, Minister for Patient Safety, Suicide Prevention and Mental Health to ask her to get funding for more psychological support across the UK.

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

NEWS IN BRIEF

Submitting witness statements through Eversheds Sutherland

Some members who are represented by Eversheds Sutherland may be experiencing delays in having witness statements taken or submitted to the inquiry.

We wanted to reassure you that the Eversheds Sutherland public inquiry team is continuing its work with The Haemophilia Society and those members who have chosen the firm to represent them.

The Eversheds Sutherland team is currently in discussions with the Infected Blood Inquiry in an attempt to find a way of carrying out their work in a more timely manner.

They had hoped that they would be able to conduct these discussions with limited impact on you, its clients, but unfortunately certain matters are taking longer to resolve than both they and we would like.

We have every confidence that a way forward will be found, and we will update members as appropriate as soon as we are able to. We

understand that this delay is frustrating for those involved.

If you have any specific questions about the progress of your statement please contact our public inquiry lead, Debra Morgan on publicinquiry@haemophilia.org.uk or call her on 020 7939 0780.

Coronavirus delay does not mean inquiry stops

Sir Brian Langstaff, chair of the Infected Blood Inquiry, has insisted that the coronavirus will not stop his team pressing on “full tilt” with their investigations and preparations for future hearings.

Although public hearings have been delayed until the autumn, Sir Brian said he remains “determined to proceed to a conclusion as quickly as possible”.

But Sir Brian said the priority had to be the safety of all those involved in the inquiry. He added: “The wellbeing of participants in the inquiry is my predominant concern.”

No dates will be set for public hearings until the course of the virus is clearer.

English Infected Blood Support Scheme meeting update

The Society’s public inquiry lead, Debra Morgan, took part in a meeting between officials from the English Infected Blood Scheme and other affected groups last month to discuss how the scheme can be improved.

Points raised included:

- Making access to psychological support grants easier by cutting back on admin and removing need for a GP referral
- Creating new, simpler forms to make it easier to apply for funds
- Drop in support payments for co-infected recipients compared to previous schemes should be addressed

- Need for steam lining childcare paperwork to avoid filling in the same forms every year
- Need for a review of payments to ensure all groups are supported fairly in comparison with others

The EIBSS team said many people did not know that they will fill in forms on behalf of applicants. You can email and they will fix a time to call back to get the information they need. They are also considering producing a newsletter to keep people informed of latest developments and highlight what people can apply for.

All comments will now be taken forward by the officials to their next quarterly meeting with their counterparts at the Department for Health and Social Care. We will update you on what happens.