

**Fortnightly Report. 16 August 2006**

\*Items to note. \*\*Slippage

**1. Document Inventory.**

The document inventory has been completed. Inventories now exist for related documents at:

- Wellington House.
- References to the Self-Sufficiency report.
- Files recalled from Nelson.
- Documents returned to DH by external solicitors.
- Documents released by the Scottish Executive.

A review of files at Nelson has been carried out and no files, other than those already recalled were located.

**2. FOI Requests.**

Self-Sufficiency References.

Preparation of the unpublished references of the Self-Sufficiency report is almost complete. DCA, FOI Unit have been involved and the Media Centre advised. Agreement to release documents relating to a previous administration has been obtained from the Permanent Secretary. The process has taken significantly longer and been more time consuming than originally anticipated. It is anticipated that the deadline of the 23 August will be achieved. The Media Centre has advised that they need to alert the Prime Minister's press office of this release and are progressing this.

\*An outstanding action is to develop public interest arguments for the redaction of two documents. One relates to the redaction of a company's name considered commercially sensitive (S43 of the Act). The second relates to reference to a devolved administration that could damage relationships (S28 of the Act). Difficulty is being experienced in developing an argument that meets the requirements of FOI and DCA.

\*One of the DH documents being released; from Diana Walford dated September 1980 states that 'This form of hepatitis (NANB) can be rapidly fatal...'

Documents returned by external solicitors.

The documents have been redacted but in the light of experience of FOI in relation to the Self-Sufficiency, references will be reviewed to release as many documents as possible without redaction.

\*\*With the experience of the process for FOIA gained with the Self-Sufficiency references the timescale for release has been moved from late August to mid September.

Although the Department is not obliged to comply with these FOI requests by virtue of section 12 of the Act, we have determined that these requests should be processed in line with the provisions of the Act. As there are a significant number of documents returned by the external solicitors (estimated at 600), we are exploring the potential to place them in the national archives or release onto the web site. This would negate the need to provide copies.

## **Review of Documentation Related to the Safety of Blood Products: 1970 - 1985**

### **3. Review of Documents.**

A review of documents is complete for:

- References to the Self-Sufficiency report.
- Documents returned to DH by external solicitors.
- Documents released by the Scottish Executive.

The review of the documents held at Wellington House has started but is one week behind schedule\*\*. Resources have concentrated on the release of the Self-Sufficiency references under FOIA (see below). \*\*Similarly the start date for the review of files recalled from Nelson has moved to the right.

### **4. Scottish Documents**

The documents released by Scotland have been reviewed and no duplicates with those held by DH have been found. There are references on two occasions to notes of the Advisory Committee on the Virological Safety of Blood (April and November 1990). A visit to the Scottish Executive is being arranged, their experience following the release of documents and location of any DH documents is on the agenda.

### **5. Support**

Gerry Robb and Andrew Whitcombe have been briefed on the support needed. It has been agreed that Andrew will help with the review of files at Wellington. Experience to date is that the turn round is slower than originally anticipated due to pressure of other work. The contract for the temporary member of staff has been extended to the end of August.

### **6. Quality Assurance**

Hugh Nicholas has been briefed on the QA role. It should be noted that Hugh could not provide the 'historic memory' nor specialised knowledge of blood.

### **7. Communications**

The Scottish Executive, National Assembly for Wales and the Northern Ireland office has been advised of the work being undertaken. DCA, FOI, Customer Services and Media Centre are aware of the proposed release of documentation.

### **8. Impact on Timeline**

\*\* The end date for the project has moved from mid October to early November to take account of the slippage reported above. The release of the documents returned to the DH has moved from 25 August to mid September.

### **9. Next meeting.**

The next meeting will be arranged for early September. Hugh's email regarding period of interest, 1970 – 1985, will be on the agenda.