

Lord Archer
House of Lords
London
SW1A 0PW

07 APR 2009

Dear Lord Archer,

As you are aware, in 2007 the Department released around 4,500 documents on the safety of blood and blood products up to 1985, and supplied copies to your Inquiry/Lord Archer's Inquiry team. Officials had reviewed the papers in line with FOI, and a small number were withheld either in whole or part under an exemption in the FOI Act, after seeking advice from the Department's solicitors.

I have been concerned that recent discussion of your report has often focused on this small number of documents, compared with the weight of documentation now released. In view of the high level of interest, I asked officials to review the decisions taken in 2007, and consult lawyers again, with the aim of releasing as many as possible. That review has taken place, and I am writing to let you know that the Department will shortly be releasing most of these documents on the DH website. The Department will only withhold eight documents – five of these contain personal information, and three are legal documents. Nothing in these eight documents adds anything to our knowledge or understanding of the contamination of blood and blood products in those years.

The documents will be accessible from Monday 20 April at

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/FreedomOfInformation/Freedomofinformationpublicationschemefeedback/FOIreleases/DH_076693

I hope this further release of papers will help to show that the Department is committed to identifying and releasing as much as possible of the documentation it holds on the background to the tragic events that are set out in your/Lord Archer's report.

Yours ever,

GRO-C

DAWN PRIMAROLO