

DRAFT LETTER

Mr Robert Key MP

In looking again at my reply to your supplementary question in the House on 16 April (Hansard, col 121) regarding the introduction of an AIDS screening test for blood donations, I realise that I may have left you with a mistaken impression.

flag (B).

The position, explained in earlier statements such as Lord Glenarthur's of 18 March 1985 (House of Lords Hansard, cols 384-385), is that we are co-ordinating the evaluation of HTLV III antibody screening tests, as they become available, to assess which will be the most suitable for the National Health Service. This work will start within the next three weeks.

It is very difficult however to give a timetable for completing this work. We believe it is most important to ensure that the tests provide reliable results before introducing them for routine use. Realistically this work is likely to take several months, but we would aim for its routine introduction into the National Blood Transfusion Service as soon as possible.

JOHN PATTEN