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File. (Paul Pudlo confirmed he would be handling the follow up) Mr P Z Pudlo

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Subject: MANOR HOUSE GROUP - MEETING WITH SOFS

This is a short report of the meeting with SofS today - no doubt private office will provide a full note in due course.

The group comprised 6 members including GRO-A with Roy Hattersley and Graham Ross GRO-D Solicitor who was involved in the HIV litigation and now represents GRO-A and other haemophiliacs).

Much of the hour long meeting was taken up with a series of emotive accounts of individual plight to which SofS listened patiently. It was clear from the outset that it was about money rather than the language of PO replies. The usual issues of access to alpha interferon and recombinant factor VIII were raised to which SofS played the standard line. However he was surprised at allegations that some patients (including GRO-A) had been kept in the dark about Hep C infection for some time after it had been diagnosed. We explained that what a patient is told is a matter for local judgement and that there may be reasons for not informing immediately - eg no treatment available - unreliable tests. SofS asked for GRO-A's case to be investigated.

Mr Ross offered SofS a deal that he would call off legal action if SofS shared among the group the money it would save from not having to defend a legal action.

Roy Hatterlsey summed up by making three or four points :-

(i) Patients have a right to know that they have been diagnosed as Hep C positive so that they can modify behaviour to avoid transmission and seek suitable treatment as early as possible.

(ii) Nine out of ten ordinary people informed of the issue would conclude that those infected were entitled to compensation - ie public opinion supports payment.

(iii) Those haemophiliacs infected suffered double jeopardy (ie HCV on top of haemophilia - this allies them with the HIV cases and distinguishes them from the transfusion cases.

iv) HIV has attracted disproportionate resources because of its status

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as a "glamorous" condition. Presumably this was designed to undermine the Government's case that HIV was more deserving of compensation.

SofS said that he would respond in writing to Roy Hatterlsey - after Xmas.

Looking forward :-

(i) Mr Ross will undoubtedly interpret the meeting as giving him a special locus as defender of the abused - we can expect press reports along the lines that the Government is weakening. I understand that "You and Yours" (BBC radio 4) is already interested. I have agreed with press office that they hold the line that "the Government's position has not changed and" (if asked) "the meeting was a private one arranged at the request of Roy Hattersley - it is normal practice for Ministers to accede to such requests from senior MPs. SofS listened to Mr Hattersley and will be writing to him in due course."

(ii) Feedback from Graham Barker of the Haemophilia Society is that the group were pleased to get an hour, felt they had been listened to and were encouraged. The latter causes me to think that the press campaign may be stepped up. Graham was anxious that the Department do not see the Manor Group as a new point of contact on these issues - I reassured him that the Society would remain our natural point of contact. He was clearly worried about a split in the Society and he has a problem of balancing interests. He will be approaching us with a response to the adjournment debate which he reasonably understood to invite the submission of worked proposals for a compensation scheme.

iii) We will be preparing a letter for SofS when we have heard from A-IU on the disclosure issue.