

Infected blood victims urge govt to drop defence

More than 500 people taking the government to court over the contaminated blood scandal are urging it to concede the case in light of evidence heard by a public inquiry and an interim report produced by its chair.

The claim, which began in 2017 but was stayed pending the inquiry into what has been described as the biggest treatment disaster in the history of the NHS, alleges the Department of Health – now the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) – breached a duty to take reasonable care to prevent personal injury or loss, amounting to misfeasance in public office.

Lawyers for the claimants, some of whom are haemophiliacs infected with hepatitis C through treatment with factor VIII blood products, and relatives, have written to the health and social care secretary, Steve Barclay, saying their clients want proceedings to resume and

the government to accept summary (expedited) judgment against it given what the inquiry has uncovered.

In his second interim report, published last month, the inquiry chair, Sir Brian Langstaff, said “wrongs were done at individual, collective and systemic levels”. Among the testimony he highlighted was that by the Chancellor and former Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, who said the disaster was “a failure of the British state”.

Jason Evans, the lead claimant in the case, whose father died after receiving contaminated blood and who founded the Factor 8 campaign, said: “The latest interim report from the infected blood inquiry has made it even more evident that the government has no real prospect of defending this scandal any longer.

The claimants are seeking compensation consistent with the recommendations made by Sir Robert Francis KC and Langstaff. They are unhappy that despite

Francis having reported in June last year, and Langstaff’s call for urgency, no compensation framework is imminent.

