

*This is going to
Lord Warner
overnight.*

Lord Warner

From: William Connon

Date: 9 October 2006

Copy: see list

Lord Jenkin's query regarding papers on blood policy

Issue

I attach a draft reply for you to send to Lord Jenkin, as requested. ~~at Annex A~~

Background

Work is well advanced on the examination and analysis of Departmental files and papers on the policy of self-sufficiency in blood products between 1970 and 1985. An outline of the project and progress to date is given below.

Project Brief

The brief is to review all the documents held by the Department in order to assess the approach to issues in relation to the self-sufficiency of blood, specifically the inactivation of blood products, by those involved during the period 1970 – 1985.

There are three sets of documents held by the Department

1. Wellington House files, these have always been in the possession of DH and held at Wellington House, including the unpublished references to the report 'Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products A Chronology from 1973 – 1991' This includes the 47 lever arch files which Lord Jenkin refers to, which were not properly filed on registered departmental files..
2. Documents that have been returned to DH by a firm of solicitors in the North East following press articles on lost documents.
3. Files recalled from Departmental Record Office (DRO) Nelson, these files were recalled as part of the 'look back' exercise and a subsequent search for relevant files.

Project Deliverables

- An inventory of all documents related to the subject held by DH. There are about 7,000 – 8,000 documents. The majority of these documents relate to 1970 – 1985.
- A review of all documents inventoried to assess the approach taken between 1970 and 1985 to the inactivation of blood products; Non-A Non-B Hepatitis (Hepatitis C).
- Prepare and process for release, in line with, but not under FOI, two sets of documents; those relating to the unpublished documents referred to in the published report 'Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and Wales' and those documents returned to DH by a firm of solicitors.

- In as far as, it is possible to do so, establish which papers and/or files have actually been destroyed, when this happened and what they were likely to contain.
- Report on the documenting the outcome of the project.

Progress to Date

An inventory has been completed for all the documents held at Wellington House on registered files, those returned by a firm of solicitors, the documents recalled from DRO and the 47 lever arch files.

Unpublished references to the report 'Self-Sufficiency in Blood Products in England and Wales A Chronology from 1973 to 1991' were released in line with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) on the 24 August 2006.

The documents returned by the firm of solicitors have been reviewed and are now being prepared and processed for release in line with, but not under, FOIA. It is anticipated that this work will be complete in October 2006.

Documents held at Wellington House (including the 47 lever arch files) and those recalled from DRO Nelson are being reviewed. It is anticipated that this review will complete in November.

A final report on the project is planned for December.

Note

An article in the Scottish Sunday Herald refers to 45 boxes of documents found by officials. We assume this refers to 47 lever arch files that have always been held at Wellington House, item 1 above. These files are now being reviewed as part of the project.

Conclusion

The 47 files have only recently been examined as part of this review when it became clear that they contain relevant documents. We are confident that they were included in the analysis for the self-sufficiency report, as colleagues who were present at that time recall seeing the consultants working on documents from the cupboard where the files were held. But we cannot be certain and I have therefore not included this in the reply to Lord Jenkin.

However, they were not made available to Lord Jenkin when he came to examine the registered files. This was simply because as they are not registered files we were not aware that they contained relevant information. You may now wish to invite Lord Jenkin to come into the department and examine any papers contained in these files, which are relevant to his period in office.

William G Connon
Blood Policy

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