

From the Rt Hon Dawn Primarolo MP
Minister of State

Your Ref: 2007/hc/173/ws

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Thank you for your letter of 30 July to Alan Johnson enclosing correspondence from Ms GRO-A about patients infected with contaminated blood products following NHS treatment.

The Government takes the issue of people who have been affected by contaminated blood products very seriously, and has great sympathy for anyone who has suffered harm as a result of NHS treatment.

Officials from the Department met with members of Lord Archer's inquiry team on 25 April to discuss how the Department may assist. Departmental officials have provided the inquiry with a very significant number documents relating to this issue and officials continue to offer the inquiry team any help they possibly can.

In 2006, the Department commissioned a review of documents held between 1970-1985 relating to blood safety. A copy of the *Review Documentation Relating to the Safety of Blood Products 1970-1985 (Non A Non B Hepatitis)* was issued on 22 May, together with all the references. The Review has been sent to a number of people, including Lord Archer. In addition, Lord Archer has been advised that the Department will release as many papers as possible identified in the Review, in line with the Freedom of Information Act.

Turning to your comments about the Republic of Ireland, it has never been established that any wrongful practices were employed in the UK, which is why successive Governments have concluded that a public inquiry is not justified. Donor screening for hepatitis C was introduced in the UK in 1991 and the development of this test marked a major advance in microbiological technology, which could not have been implemented before this time.

You also asked about compensation for those affected. There is no legal liability to provide compensation for people with haemophilia and hepatitis C. However, in 2004, the Government established the Skipton Fund to provide payments to individuals infected with hepatitis C as a result of receiving NHS blood or blood products before September 1991.

I hope this reply is helpful.

DAWN PRIMAROLO