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Our reference: MC2020/09413

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GRO-C

13 July 2020

Dear Rishi,

I am writing as the sponsoring Minister of the Infected Blood Inquiry, to update on progress and commitments that the Government has made.

This is by far the largest UK public inquiry in terms of numbers of core participants, and is one of the biggest treatment disasters in NHS history. Progress is being made though planned hearings have been postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Core participants are currently engaged in discussions with the Inquiry secretariat over resuming hearings with restricted attendance in the autumn.

### **Funding the Inquiry**

Successive sponsoring Ministers have committed publicly to supporting the completion of the Inquiry's work as quickly as thoroughness allows. This work remains urgent for many victims - justice delayed is justice denied as the fallout from this tragedy continues to claim lives.

It is therefore essential that we maintain our commitment to full funding for the duration of the Inquiry. I am grateful for the Chief Secretary's recent approval of the contract for its information management system, and look forward to continued support from the Treasury.

### **Financial support**

People affected by this tragedy receive ex-gratia financial and non-financial support through the Infected Blood Support Schemes of the four UK nations. Ministers and the previous Prime Minister have committed to address disparities across the UK in the levels of financial support provided by the four devolved schemes.

In January, the previous sponsoring Minister, Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Nadine Dorries MP, met with campaigners and committed to a number of actions. This included resolving remaining disparities in financial support in

Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland, and addressing as far as possible broader issues of disparity, including support for bereaved partners (beneficiaries in England, Wales and Northern Ireland are severely disadvantaged compared to beneficiaries in Scotland).

The Departments of Health across the four UK nations are costing the amounts needed to achieve parity for beneficiaries, and we expect this work to be completed shortly. The resolution of these disparities is one of the main requests of the victims and their families, and my strong belief is that it would be the right thing to do.

### **Compensation for victims**

Following the stakeholder meeting in January, Minister Dowden wrote to the Prime Minister setting out agreed actions to address the most pressing issues of support, including consideration of a framework for compensation.

I fully expect the Inquiry Chair, Sir Brian Langstaff, to make recommendations about levels of financial support, and I believe it to be inevitable that the Government will need to provide substantial compensation. The costs are likely to be high; for example, the compensation tribunal established in the Republic of Ireland paid out €743m between 1996 and 2018.

I believe we should begin preparing for this now, before the Inquiry reports, and my officials are working with DHSC colleagues to consider approaches to compensation. Any decision on compensation will require careful consideration.

Experience of other Inquiries suggests that early action could save the Government significant legal costs as well as provide victims with compensation as soon as possible. The Inquiry cannot make determinations on liability, but its recommendations and findings could be a springboard for civil or criminal cases which could determine liability.

I believe the best arrangement would be to view this scheme as part of the NHS's existing compensation schemes. This gives us the potential to avoid one-off costs or funding to deliver a scheme. I would like to discuss the merits of doing this work with your officials as soon as possible.

I will keep you and other interested Ministers updated on progress. I have copied this letter to the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, and the Health Ministers of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

GRO-C

**Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP**  
**PAYMASTER GENERAL**