

Speech

## **PM statement on the Infected Blood Inquiry: 20 May 2024**

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's statement to the House of Commons on the Infected Blood Inquiry.

---

From: Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street  
([/government/organisations/prime-ministers-office-10-downing-street](#)) and The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP ([/government/people/rishi-sunak](#))

Published 20 May 2024

**This was published under the 2022 to 2024 Sunak Conservative government**

Location: House of Commons

Delivered on: 20 May 2024 (Transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered)

---



## Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's statement on the Infected Blood Inquiry



Mr Speaker, Sir Brian Langstaff has today published the final report of the Infected Blood Inquiry.

This is a day of shame for the British state.

Today's report shows a decades-long moral failure at the heart of our national life.

From the National Health Service to the civil service, to ministers in successive governments...

...at every level, the people and institutions in which we place our trust...

...failed in the most harrowing and devastating way.

They failed the victims and their families – and they failed this country.

Sir Brian finds a “catalogue” of systemic, collective, and individual failures...

...each on its own serious...

...and taken together amounting to a “calamity”.

And the result of this inquiry should shake our nation to its core.

This should have been avoided.

It was known these treatments were contaminated.

Warnings were ignored. Repeatedly.

Time and again people in positions of power and trust had the chance to stop the transmission of those infections.

Time and again they failed to do so.

Sir Brian finds an “attitude of denial” towards the risks of treatment.

Worse, to our eternal shame, in a way that is hard to even comprehend...

...they allowed victims to become “objects for research”.

Many – including children at Lord Mayor Treloar College - were part of trials...

...conducted without their or their parents’ knowledge or consent.

Those with haemophilia or bleeding disorders were infected with HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B through NHS treatment...

...through blood clotting products, such as Factor 8...

...including those who had been misdiagnosed and did not even require treatment.

Many were infected through whole blood transfusions.

Others were infected through their partners and loved ones...

...often after diagnoses had been deliberately withheld for months or even years...

...meaning these infections should easily have been prevented.

I find it almost impossible to comprehend how it must have felt...

...to be told you had been infected - through no fault of your own - with HIV, or Hepatitis B, or Hepatitis C...

...or to face the grief of losing a child, or to be a young child and lose your Mum or Dad.

Many of those infected went on to develop horrific conditions including cirrhosis, liver cancer, pneumonia, TB, and AIDS...

...enduring debilitating treatments like interferon for these illnesses – illnesses the NHS had given them.

Many were treated disdainfully by healthcare professionals who made appalling assumptions about the origin of their infections.

Worse still, they were made to think they were imagining it...

...made to feel stupid.

They felt abandoned by the NHS that had infected them.

Those who acquired HIV endured social rejection, vilification, and abuse...

...at a time when society understood so little about the emerging epidemic of AIDs.

With illness came the indignity of financial hardship....

...including for carers and those widowed and other bereaved family members.

And throughout it all, victims and their loved ones have had to fight for justice...

...fight to be heard, fight to be believed, fight to uncover the full truth.

Some had their medical records withheld, or even destroyed.

And the inquiry finds that some Government papers were destroyed...

...in a "deliberate attempt to make the truth more difficult to reveal."

Sir Brian explicitly asks the question "was there a cover-up?"

Let me directly quote his answer for the House:

"There has been".

He continues: "Not in the sense of a handful of people plotting in an orchestrated conspiracy to mislead...

...but in a way that was more subtle, more pervasive and more chilling in its implications.

To save face and to save expense there has been a hiding of much of the truth."

Mr Speaker, more than 3,000 people died without that truth.

They died without an apology.

They died without knowing how and why this was allowed to happen...

...and they died without seeing anyone held to account.

Today, I want to speak directly to the victims and their families – some of whom are with us in the gallery.

I want to make a wholehearted and unequivocal apology for this terrible injustice.

First, to apologise for the failure in blood policy and blood products, and the devastating - and so often fatal – impact this had on so many lives...

...including the impact of treatments that were known or proved to be contaminated.

The failure to respond to the risk of imported concentrates.

The failure to prioritise self-sufficiency in blood.

The failure to introduce screening services sooner.

...and the mismanagement of the response to the emergence of AIDS and hepatitis viruses amongst infected blood victims.

Second, to apologise for the repeated failure of the State and our medical professionals to recognise the harm caused.

This includes the failure of previous payments schemes...

...the inadequate levels of funding made available...

...and the failure to recognise Hepatitis B victims.

And third, to apologise for the institutional refusal to face up to these failings – and worse, to deny and even attempt to cover them up.

The dismissing of reports and campaigners' detailed representations.

The loss and destruction of key documents including Ministerial advice and medical records.

And the appalling length of time it took to secure the public inquiry which has delivered the full truth today.

Mr Speaker, layer upon layer of hurt, endured across decades.

This is an apology from the State - to every... single... person... impacted by this scandal.

It did not have to be this way.

It should never have been this way.

And on behalf of this and every Government stretching back to the 1970s...

...I am truly sorry.

Mr Speaker, today is a day for the victims and their families...

...to hear the full truth acknowledged by all...

...and, in the full presence of that truth, to remember the many, many lost loved ones.

But justice also demands action and accountability.

So I make two solemn promises.

First, we will pay comprehensive compensation to those infected and those affected by this scandal...

...accepting the principles recommended by the inquiry which builds on the work of Sir Robert Francis.

Whatever it costs to deliver this scheme, we will pay it.

And my Rt Hon Friend the Minister for the Cabinet Office will set out the details tomorrow.

Second, it is not enough to say sorry, pay long overdue compensation and then attempt to move on.

There can be no moving on from a report that is so devastating in its criticisms.

Of course, in some areas medical practice has long since evolved.

And no-one is questioning that every day our NHS provides amazing and lifesaving care to the British people.

But Sir Brian and his team have made wide-ranging recommendations.

We will study them in detail before returning to this House with a full response.

And we must fundamentally rebalance the system...

...so we finally address this pattern, so familiar from other inquiries like Hillsborough...

...where innocent victims have to fight for decades just to be believed.

Mr Speaker, the whole House will join me in thanking Sir Brian and his team...

...especially for keeping the infected blood community at the heart of their work.

We would not be here today without those who tirelessly fought for justice for so many years.

I include journalists and Parliamentarians in both Houses...

... especially the Rt Hon Member for Kingston upon Hull North.

But most of all, the victims, and their families...

...many of whom have dedicated their lives, leading charities, and campaign groups...

...pouring their own money into decades of running helplines, archiving, researching, and pursuing legal cases....

...often in the face of appalling prejudice.

It is impossible to capture the full pain and injustice they have faced.

Their sorrow has been unimaginable.

They have watched loved ones die.

Cared for them as they suffered excruciating treatments or provided their palliative care.

Many families were broken up by the strain.

Hundreds of thousands of lives have been knocked off course; dreams and potential unfulfilled.

But today their voices have finally been heard.

The full truth stands for all to see.

And we will work together across government, our health services, and civil society...

...to ensure that nothing like this can ever happen in our country again.

And I commend this statement to the House.



All content is available under the [Open Government Licence v3.0](#), except where otherwise stated



[© Crown copyright](#)