

Witness Name: Jason Jonathan Evans

Statement No: WITN1210008

Exhibits: WITN1210009-036

Dated: February 2020

**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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**EXHIBIT WITN1210033**

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## Infected Blood Inquiry

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29 March 2018  
Volume 638

 10.43 am

### Diana Johnson (Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)

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*(Urgent Question):* To ask the Minister for the Cabinet Office to reconsider the decision to deny funding for legal assistance and advice to those affected by the contaminated blood scandal during the consultation on the terms of reference for the infected blood inquiry.

### The Parliamentary Secretary, Cabinet Office (Chloe Smith)

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The infected blood inquiry is a priority for this Government. The infected blood tragedy of the '70s and '80s should never have happened, and the victims, who have endured so much pain and hardship, deserve answers. The Government will ensure that the inquiry has the resources it needs to complete its work as quickly as a thorough examination of the facts allows. We are committed to making sure that all those who have suffered so terribly can have the answers they have spent decades waiting for and that lessons can be learned so that a tragedy of this scale can never happen again.

We want to make sure that all those who need to contribute to the inquiry can do so. The Inquiries Act 2005 allows for the chair to make awards for legal representation for the inquiry itself once it is formally established—in other words, after the terms of reference have been set. We know that the inquiry chair intends to make early provision for core participant designation and legal expenses awards after the inquiry is formally set up. So the Government are not denying funds for legal representation at the inquiry. These funds will be available as soon as possible after the inquiry is up and running.

In addition, I can confirm that Ministers have decided that reasonable expenses properly incurred in respect of legal representation for the purpose of responding to the consultation by the infected blood inquiry on the terms of reference prior to the setting-up date will be awarded. Any claims will be handled by the solicitor to the inquiry, and it will be for the solicitor to determine these expenses. I hope that that is good news to the House.

I know that the chair of the inquiry, Sir Brian Langstaff, is keen to ensure that all those affected by this tragedy have a chance to make their voices heard. I know that last night he held a meeting with interested groups and that he is continuing to engage with those who are affected and the bereaved families. Sir Brian wants to ensure that the consultation process is as user-friendly and inclusive as possible, and such that legal advice is not a necessity for being able to respond to the consultation on the terms of reference. He wants to ensure that everyone has the chance to share their views, which will inform the terms of reference.

We believe that this is an exceptional circumstance. Thousands of people have been fighting for years to get answers to why this terrible tragedy happened, and they want to be part of ensuring that such a tragedy can never happen again. I know that the whole House welcomes the fact that the Government have established this judge-led public inquiry to provide the answers that victims and families have had to wait for. I and others here today, I am sure, will continue to play our parts passionately for our constituents.

 Column 934

### Diana Johnson

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I thank the Minister for her response. I just wish that the decision had been made earlier. As she outlined, this is a group of people who have battled for many, many years for a public inquiry, and we now want to make sure that the terms of reference are so drafted as to incorporate all the concerns of those affected. As she will know, many of those implicated in the inquiry will have access now to legal advice and expertise in their submissions on what the terms of reference should be.