

PO00000187582

Mr Philip Dolan  
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Thank you for your letter of 1 February about a public inquiry into contaminated blood products contaminated blood products.

First of all, I must stress that the Government has great sympathy for anyone who has suffered harm as a result of NHS treatment. Ministers do understand the hardship and great distress that people with haemophilia and their families have suffered, first from HIV and then from hepatitis C, and deeply regret that so many people were infected through blood products.

As you will be aware, there are a number of steps that this Government and the previous Government have taken to help alleviate the suffering of people infected with HIV and hepatitis C through contaminated blood products. In 1988, the Macfarlane Trust was set up to administer a special payments scheme for haemophiliacs infected with HIV through contaminated blood products. Each registrant continues to receive regular monthly payments (this varies in size, depending on whether partners are also infected and on the number of dependent children).

In 2004, we established the Skipton Fund to administer an ex-gratia payment scheme for people infected with hepatitis C through NHS blood or blood products. Under this scheme, £20,000 is payable to anyone infected with hepatitis C in this way before September 1991. An additional £25,000 is paid if the claimant has developed cirrhosis or liver cancer, or requires a liver transplant.

The Government does not accept that the infection of haemophiliacs with contaminated blood was as a result of any wrongful practices. The Government of the day acted in good faith, relying on the technology available at the time. In light of the substantial numbers of documents and reports available under the Freedom of Information Act, the current Government does not consider that a public inquiry is 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.

Ministers asked officials to investigate whether such infections could have been avoided had the UK achieved self-sufficiency in blood products. The results of this investigation are recorded in the report, *Self-sufficiency in blood products in England and Wales: A chronology from 1973 to 1991*. The report was published last year and is available on the Department of Health's website at: [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) (type 'self sufficiency in blood products' into the search bar and follow the links).

As you know, work is underway to identify any other existing Department of Health files and papers on blood policy. This work is currently ongoing. However, we will continue to keep the Haemophilia Society updated on this work.

I regret that this is not the reply for which you hope, but I hope it clarifies the Government's position on this matter.

**TONY BLAIR**

**RESTRICTED: ADVICE TO MINISTER**

**PO00000187582: BACKGROUND NOTE**

There have been various press and media reports of an announcement that an independent public inquiry is to be held into the supply of contaminated NHS blood in the 1970's and 80's.

The Government has not announced an independent public inquiry into the supply of contaminated NHS blood.

**Alex Demetris  
Customer Service Directorate  
Department of Health**