

1. Mr Pudlo CA OPU2
2. Mr Hillecoat DS/SoS

From : Ann Towner CA OPU2
Date : 12 December 1995
Copy : Mr Guinness CA OPU2
Dr Rejman CA OPU2

MEETING WITH ROY HATTERSLEY AND THE MANOR HOUSE GROUP 19/12/95

1. As requested in your minute of 22 November I enclose briefing for this meeting, which is at 9.30am. The briefing consists of :

- (a) note on the Manor House Group
(I understand that Mr Hattersley will supply you direct with details of the representatives attending the meeting)
- (b) the wording of our reply to POH (1)4057/19 : line to take and background
- (c) compensation for haemophiliacs who have contracted Hepatitis C, and related questions :
 - lines to take
 - background
 - key facts
 - briefing for the Prime Minister
- [(d) enquiry about financial help for the Manor House Group : line to take and background.

2. The Manor House Group appears to be a fairly small new group. SoS may think it appropriate to discourage them and the MP from expecting to continue to have Ministers ear, or to deal with the Department, separately from larger organisations to which it seems they could usefully be linked, eg the Haemophilia Society, with which the Department has regular dealings.

3. Mr Pudlo and Dr Rejman, both of CA OPU2, will be the officials attending the meeting.

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(a) THE MANOR HOUSE GROUP : Background

1. Although the group have not supplied any written information about themselves, we understand from the Haemophilia Society that the Manor House Group is a group of haemophiliacs who have contracted Hepatitis C. Individual members of the group are members of the Haemophilia Society. The group itself is not at present affiliated to the Haemophilia Society. However we have been told that the Haemophilia Society will be considering whether they should change their constitution so that the Manor House Group, and another group of Haemophilia Society members with HIV, can become affiliated to it.

2. The Manor House group is based predominantly in the Birmingham and Manchester area, but members can come from all parts of the country. They meet or telephone by way of providing support to others in similar situations to themselves, but are also understood - like the Haemophilia Society - to have an interest in lobbying for financial help for those infected with Hepatitis C. It may well be that this is what they really want to discuss at the meeting, rather than the wording of DH replies to correspondence. Both issues are therefore covered by the attached briefing, as well as the recent request received via members of the Manor House Group based at Manchester for grant funding for the organisation.

(b) REPLY SENT TO LETTER FROM MR. **GRO-A** (POH (1)4057/19)

Line to take

I regret that
1. We are sorry if any of what was said in the reply to Mr **GRO-A**'s letter was felt to be unhelpful. ~~It is our~~ ^{understanding that} as a general rule it is more ^{natural} helpful for Ministers to acknowledge what correspondents may be suffering as a result of their condition than ^{before} ~~simply to address~~ ⁱⁿ the issues raised ~~as if they were purely a matter of business.~~
[But we will reconsider whether the comment at the end of the letter about the Government doing all it can to help those affected would be best removed.]

2. We have had no other complaints about this wording. But if the Group have ^{specific concerns} ~~alternatives to suggest~~ we would be happy to ~~consider~~ ^{listen to} them.

3. It must be born in mind that replies need to meet both the needs of the constituent and those of the MP who will generally send on the reply.

Background

1. Mr **GRO-A**'s letter of 24 July, forwarded to DH by Roy Hattersley MP (copies attached), said that he is a haemophiliac with liver disease. He touched briefly on the effect this had on his family life, and on the Manor House Group's (of which he is Chairman) desire for financial help from the Government. He mentioned his uncertainty about his medical prognosis, and that, as the drug interferon has apparently not helped in his case, there is not much more that can be done for him. He ended by reiterating the Haemophilia

Society's call for financial help for haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C.

2. The reply sent (copy attached) used standard wording which has been agreed with Ministers for use in cases of this sort. ~~It was cleared at Grade 7 level, as required in SoS cases.~~ ✓

3. The Department receives quite a large amount of correspondence on this issue (about 300 letters to date this year). The standard reply is designed to explain the main relevant aspects of the Departments policy, and to add a more personal touch where appropriate, eg by expressing sympathy with the sufferers condition. We have no reason to think that the material is inappropriate and have had no other complaints about it (aside from one from another member of the Manor House group). ~~But we will reconsider whether the comment at the end of the letter about the Government doing all it can to help those affected would be best removed, as perhaps appearing provocative. Ministers may wish to officials to consider a revision of the current wording in the light of this meeting.~~ ✓

4. Mr **GRO-A**'s letter did not raise any further specific points which the reply could sensibly have addressed additionally in the reply. We have additional material we can use explaining why the Government does not propose to make special payments to those with Hepatitis C when it did to those with HIV. However, this is generally reserved for cases where the correspondence majors on this, or for follow up letters where that is the key point. In this case, this was only one of a number of points given a brief mention in Mr **GRO-A**'s letter. It would not be practicable to consider trying to get involved in other matters specific to individual cases, ~~eg whether any treatment would help them.~~

4. The main purpose of the meeting is likely to be to press Ministers on the issue of compensation for haemophiliacs infected with Hepatitis C through blood products

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