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The Rt. Hon. The Lord Owen CH

Thank you for your letter of 7 October to John Reid about the hepatitis C payment scheme and the review of internal papers between 1973 and 1985. I am sorry for the delay in replying.

I was pleased to see your comments on the financial assistance scheme for people infected with hepatitis C as a result of being given blood products by the NHS. The decision to make ex-gratia payments was taken by the Secretary of State for Health on compassionate grounds. At this time the details of the scheme including the eligibility criteria and the size of awards, are still being discussed. We are making every effort to progress this scheme as swiftly as possible, and we expect to make a further announcement about the scheme shortly.

I am aware that an informal review was commissioned by Yvette Cooper last year. I have been advised that the review is being undertaken by the Department of Health to clarify the facts surrounding the drive for UK self sufficiency in blood products in the 1970s and 1980s. The review is based on papers available from the time. The review does not address why papers from your Private Office at the time were destroyed. We are aware that it has been some time since the review was first commissioned, and officials have been asked to conclude the review as soon as practicable.

JOHN HUTTON