

Sir Brian Langstaff
Infected Blood Inquiry
Aldwych House
71-91 Aldwych London WC2B 4HN

Colette Wintle

GRO-C

10th December 2024

Dear Sir Brian

I am writing to you as many others have done in the past few days to raise what are clearly concerning and deeply troubling issues, which are impacting the victims of the Infected Blood Scandal. I had hoped that after thirty years of campaigning for justice and truth, that following the delivery of your interim and final report, those of us harmed by the state would finally be delivered our long-awaited compensation, which the government committed to in May this year. I am sure you too would have expected them to follow through on your recommendations given the gravity of the impact of the infected blood scandal and the subsequent need for all the apologies that were verbalised in parliament by parties of all colours earlier this year. It is therefore disappointing and distressing for all the victims to have to return to "battle stations" to demand the government act far more quickly, than the glacial pace we are currently experiencing. Indeed , what we expected was full engagement with the infected and affected community in a fully transparent and honest manner, but that is not what we are being afforded. You quite rightly criticised the 'lack of openness, transparency, and candour' in state institutions and I have to say that after years of dealing with numerous governments, I don't believe lessons are being learnt at all. The secrecy with which the cabinet office for example appointed an "advisory expert panel" headed up by Sir Jonathan Montgomery was an indication of how they intended to deal with setting up the compensation scheme under the new organisation IBCA. Carol Grayson and I asked to meet with Sir Jonathan Montgomery because we suspected this unnamed group of experts would not engage with campaign groups. Clearly, we were right, and this unfortunately has resulted in a growing mistrust in everything that has been done since in the setting up of the compensation scheme. There is huge anger regarding the decisions being taken without ongoing consultation with the infected and affected community.

I am specifically concerned as to why our legal representatives are being prevented from having a greater role in representing their clients. It has taken seven years for us to build trust with them, and I consider that their knowledge of our claims is far greater than any case manager with a few weeks training will have. There is also the issue of confidentiality which I am sure is worrying many people, and the burden of having to go back over past NHS treatment traumas. In addition, the costs incurred in employing these case managers would surely be better spent just paying our legal representatives and enabling the speeding up of delivering compensation! I would greatly appreciate your thoughts on this as I am sure you didn't intend that we would be faced with another layer of government bureaucrats. I am sure you will be aware that this is causing further distress to all of us who are struggling with severe health problems, emotional and psychological impacts. There is a growing sense of being let down again and again despite being promised the government are listening and learning. That is not reflected in their actions thus far.

There has been no clear explanation of how IBCA is selecting people to submit claims for compensation. With due respect I would have thought those who have waited the longest and are at the end stages of their illness would be prioritised, but this does not seem to be the case.

The Paymaster general is meeting with five sets of campaign groups this week however these brief engagements are too few and far between. I don't think the cabinet office and its officials comprehend how disrespectful this appears to the community given we are supposed to be at the heart of all decisions taken which will affect what is left of our lives. I am one of the few long-standing campaigners left and having already suffered hepatic cancer , am fearful of how much time I have left and if I will ever see the compensation I have waited so long for.

I know you are watching, listening and maintain your interest in what government are doing so I thank you for that and any further interventions you can make on our behalf are as always greatly appreciated.

Warmest regards

Colette Wintle
Independent Campaigner for The Haemophilia
Community