

*Confidential**Circulation: Trustees only***The Macfarlane Trust**

**Report to:** Board of Trustees

**Date of meeting:** 26 January 2015

**Report from:** Chief Executive

**Subject:** Political developments

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**APPG Inquiry Report**

The report of the APPG Inquiry was launched on 14 January 2015. I was able to obtain an embargoed advance copy. Jason McCartney, Co-Chair of the APPG, met with myself, the Chair of the Skipton Fund and Eileen Trust, the Vice-Chair of the Caxton Foundation, and Alasdair Murray, who attended in Roger Evans' place, on 13 January 2015 to discuss the report in advance of publication. The meeting was constructive, and Jason McCartney recognised that there is a definite split within the beneficiary community overall between those who would like the Alliance House entities closed down, and those who have a positive view of the organisations and the support we all provide.

In the end, the report was released late on 13 January 2015 via the Haemophilia Society website. We do not know whether this was intentional or not. As I said in my briefing email to all board members on 14 January, the report is nowhere near as bad as it could have been. Whilst it does criticise the Alliance House organisation, overall it is quite balanced, the recommendations are non-sensational, and there is no recommendation that the Alliance House entities should be abolished.

Whilst we have not been officially asked to comment on the report, we are intending to submit a response on behalf of all 5 Alliance House entities. This will be discussed in detail under Part B of the board agenda.

**Penrose**

It was announced on 15 January 2015 that the Penrose Inquiry will report on Wednesday 25 March 2015. This is just 5 days, and 3 working days, before Parliament is dissolved on 30 March in advance of the General Election. In the backbench debate on 15 January, the Minister undertook to issue an interim response to the Inquiry report before the dissolution of Parliament.

**Backbench debate, 15 January 2015**

Alistair Burt and the APPG were successful in securing a backbench debate in the House of Commons on 15 January 2015. 35 MPs attended, including the Minister; 9 of the 35 had also been at the Westminster Hall debate in October 2013. Unlike the Westminster Hall debate, this debate focussed far more on the "bigger picture", and MPs' contributions centred around individual beneficiaries' experiences of having been infected, the impact it has had on their lives, and a call to provide some form of final settlement. There were far fewer individual criticisms of the Alliance House organisations. However, on two occasions during the debate, Alistair Burt referred to MFT specifically as not being "salvageable", "saveable", or "capable of reform", although he did then go on to say "it may be that the trust has an impossible role". It is extremely regrettable that both in the APPG Inquiry report, and in the debate itself, reference was made to 2/some MFT trustees/former trustees having spoken "in confidence" to the APPG/written to the Secretary of State (the detail on all 3 points was inconsistent), concerned about the way MFT is run. It is equally regrettable

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that Alistair Burt has never sought to discuss these alleged concerns with us directly, but has used them to criticise us publicly; also that those trustees never raised the issue with the MFT board as a whole.

Jane Ellison MP, Under-Secretary of State for Public Health, spoke for approximately 15 minutes at the end of the debate. She said that the Government could make no comment about the future of support to those infected in advance of the publication of the Penrose report on 25 March, but undertook to give an interim response to Penrose before Parliament was dissolved. It seemed clear from her statement that no action is going to be taken as a result of any of the Inquiries or the backbench debate during this current Government's term of office.

#### **HCV Litigation**

It was announced in the press on 15 January 2015 that 3 men infected with Hepatitis C are launching a legal case against the Secretary of State to challenge the system of support for those infected with Hepatitis C as a result of contaminated blood. The case is based on the claim that they are being discriminated against because they are paid less than those who were infected with HIV, ie the 3 men behind the case have only received the Skipton Stage 1 lump sum of £20,000, and have not progressed to Stage 2, when they would receive a further £50,000 lump sum and a regular payment of £14,574. Those infected with HIV have received a similar lump sum and currently receive £14,574 per annum as a regular payment through MFET. The men are hoping that the Secretary of State will take action to correct the anomalies as they see them without recourse to legal proceedings in the High Court through judicial review.

The case has implications for the support provided by the Skipton Fund and the Caxton Foundation.