

Infected Blood

Lloyd Russell-Moyle >

(Brighton, Kemptown) (Lab/Co-op)

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1. What progress he has made on considering the recommendations of the second interim report of the **infected blood** inquiry.
(Unique identification number 901710 (Unique identification number))

Alex Davies-Jones >

(Pontypridd) (Lab)

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2. What progress he has made on considering the recommendations of the second interim report of the **infected blood** inquiry.
(Unique identification number 901711 (Unique identification number))

Kerry McCarthy >

(Bristol East) (Lab)

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3. What progress he has made on considering the recommendations of the second interim report of the **infected blood** inquiry.
(Unique identification number 901712 (Unique identification number))

Dame Diana Johnson >

(Kingston upon Hull North) (Lab)

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4. What progress he has made on responding to the final recommendations on compensation by the **infected blood** inquiry. (Unique identification number 901714 (Unique identification number))

Grahame Morris >

(Easington) (Lab)

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6. What progress he has made on considering the recommendations of the second interim report of the **infected blood** inquiry.
(Unique identification number 901716 (Unique identification number))

The Minister for the Cabinet Office and Paymaster General >

(John Glen)

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The Government recognise the urgency of the issue and are committed to progressing the work as quickly as we can. For that reason, we have appointed an expert group to advise the Cabinet Office on detailed technical considerations. On Monday in the other place, the Government committed to bring forward an amendment to the Victims and Prisoners Bill on Report, with the intention of speeding up the implementation of the Government's response to the **infected blood** inquiry.

Lloyd Russell-Moyle >

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My constituent **GRO-A** a haemophiliac, contracted HIV after being given contaminated **blood** at the Royal Free Hospital. He was 14. He is now 54, and it is four and a half years since he gave evidence at the inquiry and a year since the initial recommendations came out. It is a scandal, is it not, that the Government were forced to give in by a defeat in the other place? Frankly, the Government have been complicit in people's lives continuing to be lost. How long before compensation will be paid? What date should I give Mr **GRO-A**? How many people's lives will be lost while we wait for the Government to get into action?

John Glen >

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There are 54 working days before the report is published on Monday 20 May. The Government have committed to respond to it within 25 sitting days, but I will do everything I can to bring forward as substantive a response as possible as soon as possible after that date.

Alex Davies-Jones >

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My constituent **GRO-A**, a victim of the contaminated **blood** scandal, is 80 years old. He is in and out of hospital and is having to take morphine for the insurmountable pain he suffers. After bravely giving evidence to the public inquiry and the public seeing that story, his lifelong neighbours began to question whether it was safe to live on the same street as him and even went to the police. Victims such as **GRO-A** deal with the physical and mental consequences every day, but one query he has for the Minister is the figure of 30,000 potential claimants, which has been disputed regularly and is one reason for the hold-up in providing justice. Will the Minister provide clarity on that figure?

John Glen >

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I am trying to ensure a comprehensive response as soon as possible. That is why we have appointed Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery to head up a team to advise on how to implement the recommendations of the report. I am doing that as quickly as I can. There are issues around eligibility, the severity of disease and its progression, and so on, which I need to be sure on so that I can address the challenges that exist. With respect to the 30,000 figure, I cannot give a number from the Dispatch Box, but I will ensure that the Government response, when it comes, will be as comprehensive as possible, to give some assurance to the hon. Lady's constituent.

Kerry McCarthy >

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ITV is now set to produce a drama about the contaminated **blood** scandal, following the success of "Mr Bates vs The Post Office". As we know, thousands of people have been affected by the scandal, including my constituents, **GRO-A** who lost her husband in 2005, and **GRO-A** who lost her husband **GRO-A** in 2021 **GRO-A** was a local councillor. I knew him very well. He was an absolutely lovely man. He was also a trustee of the Haemophilia Society. Some people, including **GRO-A** have been fighting this battle for 40 years. Why has it taken us this long to get to this point? Will it really take a TV drama to make the Government finally act?

John Glen >

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I am aware of the comments about a TV drama, but I am concerned to ensure that we build on the decision of this place on 4 December with respect to the Victims and Prisoners Bill. That Bill is working its way through the other place. Committee will finish on 12 March, so Report stage cannot happen before 15 April. Listening to the testimony of the hon. Lady and of those in the other place, whose nephews and husbands died as a result of contaminated blood, has made me more determined to ensure that the Government's response is as comprehensive as possible and that it meets the expectations of everyone in this place and of the country at large.

Dame Diana Johnson >

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I think the Minister is a good man and is trying to do his best, but this is the biggest treatment scandal in the history of the NHS. We have had six years of a public inquiry. The Government have now had the recommendations on compensation for 12 months. I understand that the Minister has not yet met anyone infected or affected, or taken any soundings from any of the campaign groups. Now, we hear in a written question this week that his expert group were not allowed to know the names of those people or to have the minutes of those meetings or of any of the workings that are taking place. Does he understand that, after decades of cover-up and criminal activity, the lack of transparency with which the infected and affected are being treated is totally unacceptable?

John Glen >

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I explained to the right hon. Lady when I met her on 6 February, and again when I spoke to her on 8 February, the context of Professor Sir Jonathan Montgomery's appointment. As she knows, Sir Brian recommends that eligibility for compensation includes those with hepatitis C, HIV and all chronic cases of hepatitis B.

On the right hon. Lady's question about engagement with the groups, I am very keen to engage when the Report stage happens in the middle of April. I will then work on plans to engage with as many groups as possible across the United Kingdom, building on my conversations with representatives of the devolved Administrations on 6 February.

Grahame Morris >

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Since the recommendations of the infected blood inquiry were announced, another 82 victims of the scandal have sadly died. I note what the Minister said about the appointment of Sir Jonathan Montgomery as chair of the experts offering technical advice on the compensation talks, but may I express the anger of one of my constituents, who is a victim of the scandal, about that appointment? He has asked me to ask: what confidence can victims have in the compensation process when an individual who is linked to pharmaceutical firm Bayer—a company that supplied infected blood—and chairs the Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, which was at the epicentre of the scandal, is advising the Cabinet Office?

John Glen >

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I thank the hon. Gentleman for his question. The appointment of Sir Jonathan Montgomery was compliant with all the processes, similar to those used for the appointment of Sir Robert Francis and others. I recognise the concern expressed around Jonathan's involvement with Bayer. That ceased at the end of October last year. He was part of an independent advisory group—not making executive decisions—for the pharmaceutical company. In the other place, the noble Baroness Brinton described Sir Jonathan as a “well-respected ethicist”. He has been asked not for further recommendations, but to advise the Government on the implementation of the recommendations made in the report. I hope that is helpful.

Mr Robin Walker >

(Worcester) (Con)

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Like other Members, I have constituents and friends who have been profoundly affected by the scandal, through both hepatitis and HIV. I recognise that my right hon. Friend is working extremely hard to come up with a solution to move the conversation forward, but can he update the House on any conversations he has had with the Treasury on delivering compensation as swiftly as possible once it is available?

John Glen >

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Conversation about this is taking place all the time across Whitehall. That will continue at pace as we move towards the 20 May publication. My determination is to bring forward as substantive a response as possible on the compensation issue as soon as possible after that. Obviously, those conversations happen over time, but I undertake to update the House at the next opportunity when there is something substantive to say.

Mr Speaker >

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I call the shadow Minister.

Nick Thomas-Symonds >

(Torfaen) (Lab)

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In his second interim report, of 5 April 2023, Sir Brian Langstaff set out:

“I recommend that a compensation scheme should be set up now and it should begin work this year.”

Now we are into the next year, 2024, and the scheme has not been set up. We have no timetable from the Government on when work will begin. The Minister does not need to wait until 20 May for the final report. Can the Minister tell the victims’ groups, who have waited for so long, whether he has persuaded the Chancellor to include the funding for the scheme in next week’s Budget, and when will the first substantive payments be made?

John Glen >

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I think the right hon. Gentleman will understand that I cannot pre-announce aspects of the Budget, but his general point about urgency is one that I hear, as I said to him when I met him before the February recess. As I also explained, Report stage in this place on 4 December left us with legislation that was not fit for purpose, which is why further changes need to be made. Those changes are being made as urgently as possible.

On Monday of this week, the Government committed that on Report in the other place, we will bring forward the appropriate amendment to enable that arm’s length body to be created with the legal functions and UK-wide remit that is necessary. I have been working closely with Earl Howe, meeting with him as the Bill has gone through the other place. However, I cannot announce aspects of the Budget in any form—I hope the right hon. Gentleman will forgive me.

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