

Wednesday, 26 July 2023

(2.00 pm)

Live Stenographic Transcript

SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF: I want to say a couple of things before I start. The first is to all of you sitting here. Can I thank you for your patience in queuing to get in today. You will understand, I know, why: for the particular security arrangements that we have to have in place for the Prime Minister. For the same reason, when we finish, at any break, would you please remain, all of you, in your seats so that the Prime Minister can leave first. That, again, is for security reasons, and I know none of you would want to prejudice that in any way.

Secondly, it is for you, Prime Minister, can I just express the gratitude of the Inquiry for someone who is probably one of the busiest -- if not the busiest -- people in the country, with a packed diary, making space at our request to come to this Inquiry to give evidence. Much appreciated.

I should add, in respect of all the ministers and the Leader of the House who we are hearing from this week, that all of them have come freely at the request of the Inquiry in order to facilitate this particular and useful week.

Prime Minister, let me explain to you the

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asked your officials to brief you on a number of points and you have some notes with you as an aide-memoire, is that right?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. Now, I don't think you need an introduction. You are Prime Minister and you have been in that post since 25 October 2022.

Prior to that, is this correct, you were Chief Secretary to the Treasury between 24 July 2019 and 13 February 2020?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. And you were Chancellor of the Exchequer from 13 February 2020 until 5 July 2022?

A. Yes, that is correct.

Q. And you were first elected to Parliament in May 2015?

A. Yes.

Q. You have made a statement to the Inquiry. We don't need it on screen at the moment. The reference, for lawyers, is WITN7712001, and it is available to all who would like to see it on the Inquiry website.

Prime Minister, I'm going to start by looking at two documents, two letters that were sent by the then Paymaster General, addressed to you although you may not actually have seen them, in 2020.

Can we have, Lawrence, on screen EIBS0000706.

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arrangements. You are talking obviously to a packed hall, but probably the number of people who are listening will be in four figures, both here, below in an overflow room, and more particularly online.

To your left you have lawyers. Those in front of you are participants in the Inquiry, who have a particular interest in what you will have to say. Apart from those at the back who have a rather different interest, they are from the press.

So that's your audience. In a moment or two Ms Richards will ask you the questions but first I will invite Mary to ask you to take the oath.

MR RISHI SUNAK (sworn)

Questions from MS RICHARDS

MS RICHARDS: Prime Minister, you say in your witness statement that:

"As is the usual process for managing policy decisions, this work is being led by other Ministers and I will be sighted in relation to the scope of the scheme and intended response at the appropriate stage when they have a set of formal recommendations to make ..."

My understanding is, at the time you made your witness statement, your knowledge of the issues was therefore limited, for the reasons you've described, but that since being asked to give oral evidence you have

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We can see the date of the letter is 13 July 2020, it is from the Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP, who was then Paymaster General, addressed to you, "Dear Rishi", and she explains the capacity in which she is writing:

"... sponsoring Minister of the ... Inquiry, to update on progress and commitments that the Government has made."

Then if we look under the heading "Funding the Inquiry", you will see from the letter she is raising three matters: "Funding the Inquiry", Financial support", and then when we go over the page in due course, "Compensation".

I just want to flag up if I may, and ask you about, what's said under the heading "Funding the Inquiry". There is reference to public commitment to support the completion of the Inquiry's work, and then Ms Mordaunt said this:

"This work remains urgent for many victims -- justice delayed is justice denied as the fallout from this tragedy continues to claim lives."

Just pausing there, Ms Mordaunt has told us, as the letter indicates, that she was aware that people were continuing to die, and it is obviously the case that it follows from this letter that your officials would also have been so aware. Do you know whether that's

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1 something you were aware of at the time, that this
2 wasn't just a matter of a historical injustice but that
3 people were continuing to die and to suffer as indeed
4 they do to the current day?

5 **A.** Well, just before I address that specifically, if
6 I might start by saying that I believe what has happened
7 has been an appalling scandal. I think thousands of
8 people, obviously many in the room today, and others
9 that the Chair referred to who are watching, have
10 suffered for decades, and they have suffered a layer of
11 injustices at that.

12 It hasn't just affected those people who have been
13 directly impacted and affected, it has affected their
14 families, friends and carers as well, so it goes far
15 beyond those who are directly impacted and, as you just
16 said, this is not just about historic wrongs, people are
17 suffering and being impacted today. I believe every
18 four days someone tragically loses their life as
19 a result of what has happened in the past.

20 As I have been reading the testimonies of those
21 involved, infected and affected, it has been a very
22 moving experience for me and I commend everyone who has
23 shared their testimonies for their bravery. It can't
24 have been an easy thing to do but it has enabled this
25 important work to take place, and indeed I'm pleased to

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1 topics raised in that letter and -- which over the
2 course of the following months were all dealt with
3 substantively.

4 **Q.** We will pick up on what happens over the course of the
5 following months. Just looking then still at the
6 highlighted passage on the screen, "justice delayed is
7 justice denied". More broadly, do you understand and
8 accept the point that Ms Mordaunt was making there,
9 justice delayed being justice denied, and how delay
10 itself can compound injustice, in this context, the
11 infected blood context?

12 **A.** As I mentioned at the beginning, this appalling scandal
13 has gone on for decades, people have been let down for
14 decades by successive Governments, people raised
15 concerns, they were batted away and told nothing was
16 wrong, nothing to see here. That wasn't right. People
17 thought that they were being helped when in fact, as it
18 turned out, they were being harmed. People asked for
19 an inquiry. That was rejected before it was finally
20 accepted.

21 So I think over a succession of not just years but
22 decades, justice has been denied to people, they haven't
23 received the recognition that they need and deserve, and
24 that's why I'm so pleased that the Inquiry was
25 established and that it is continuing its important work

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1 be able to be here to contribute to that important work.

2 With regard to the letter, as is entirely normal, it
3 would have been dealt with and was dealt with by
4 officials. It is not a letter that I saw personally at
5 the time, but again that is not unusual given the volume
6 of correspondence that ministers, particularly senior
7 ministers like the Chancellor, receive. It would be
8 entirely normal that those letters would be in the first
9 instance dealt with and triaged by officials.

10 In this particular instance, my understanding is
11 that there was communication between the officials at
12 the Treasury and indeed officials at the Cabinet Office
13 who worked for Penny Mordaunt at the time.

14 **Q.** Although the letter didn't come to your attention for
15 the reasons that you have explained, and which echo what
16 we have heard from other ministers in terms of the
17 filter process in relation to correspondence, do you
18 know whether you had any awareness or whether there was
19 any broader awareness within the Treasury or within
20 Government at the time about the point that Ms Mordaunt
21 was making here, that people were continuing to die? Is
22 that something you can recall being aware of at that
23 time?

24 **A.** Not something that was brought specifically to my
25 attention or that I was involved of. There were three

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1 and hopefully will conclude soon, and the Government is
2 committed and I'm committed to acting as swiftly as
3 possible.

4 **Q.** We will come back to the question of Government action.
5 If we just go over the page to what Ms Mordaunt said
6 about compensation. So you will see the heading
7 "Compensation for victims". She says in the second
8 paragraph, second line:

9 "... I believe it to be inevitable that the
10 Government will need to provide substantial
11 compensation. The costs are likely to be high ..."

12 Then there is reference to the Irish model:

13 "I believe we should begin preparing for this now,
14 before the Inquiry reports ... my officials are working
15 with DHSC colleagues to consider approaches to
16 compensation. Any decision on compensation will require
17 careful consideration."

18 Then she says:

19 "Experience of other Inquiries suggest that early
20 action could save the Government significant legal costs
21 as well as provide victims with compensation as soon as
22 possible."

23 Now, in relation to that sentence I have just read,
24 you will see Ms Mordaunt there identifying two benefits
25 to early action. The first a potential financial

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benefit to the Government, and then the second a provision of compensation to victims as soon as possible.

I will come back later to this phrase "as soon as possible", but what Ms Mordaunt explained and accepted in her evidence was there she was looking at the question of what was the morally right and just thing to do. Would you accept that?

A. Well, obviously, Penny could best answer questions about what she was trying to get across in the letter. As far as I can see, reading it now, there were three topics that she raised of substance.

The first was continued funding for the Inquiry, which has been delivered on with over £125 million to date being spent on the Inquiry, to make sure it could do this important work.

The second was resolving an issue about parity of treatment between those impacted, living in different parts of the United Kingdom, and again that was resolved in spring of 2021, whilst I was Chancellor, with a provision of an extra £175 million of funding to do so.

And the third topic was around compensation, where, since that letter was written, interim compensation payments have been made to around four and a half

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compensation?

A. Yes. What I would say is, obviously in my role it was not something that I was directly involved in because these costs were not -- or those forecasts had not been crystallised at that point. The Inquiry had been established, it was doing its work, there had been no interim reports from the Inquiry, and it wasn't my direct departmental responsibility in the way that it was Penny's, as she would be the responsible minister for it. It wasn't something that, as I said, I was directly involved in at the time, and I think probably because the work was still ongoing and it hadn't reached a point where those decisions on compensation had yet to be made, or any advice or recommendations from the Inquiry or otherwise at that point had not been made either.

Q. Let's look at Ms Mordaunt's follow-up letter, which is EIBS0000705.

So this is 21 September 2020, so a couple of months later. If we just go to the bottom of the page in relation to "Compensation for victims".

You will see Ms Mordaunt repeating what she had said about the inevitability of the Government needing to provide substantial compensation. Then she says, and we have got the adverb "firmly" added now:

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thousand people and, as people are familiar, £100,000 each. There is a figure mentioned in here, obviously today over half a billion pounds of those payments have been made. And as the letter itself says, any decision on compensation will require careful consideration and there is further detail about how Penny envisaged that might happen.

Obviously, lots of things have evolved since that letter, not least we have had the Chair's Interim Report but also Robert Francis' report, which have a variety of suggestions which are slightly different to those mentioned in this letter, but again they have been delivered on.

And I think Penny Mordaunt herself said, the three topics that she raised, all of which she was able to progress.

Q. Yes. Obviously my questions are going to focus on the issue of progress in relation to compensation. Would you accept, and this is a question really about the position of the Government as opposed to your own, because you didn't see the letter at the time as you've explained, but would you agree that this letter indicates that the Government was on notice back in 2020 of the likelihood -- Ms Mordaunt uses a stronger word, inevitability -- of the Government needing to pay

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"... I firmly believe that we should begin preparing for this now -- before the Inquiry reports."

Then, if we go over the page, she suggests she would like to meet with you or the Chief Secretary. Then says:

"I cannot stress enough the urgency of taking long overdue action on financial support and compensation."

Then there is a handwritten addition from her suggesting there's ideas about a solution and she had been trying for some time to secure a meeting with you.

This letter was not, I think, regarded in the same way as the previous letter. The first letter, your statement tells us, was regarded as being "for information". This letter, your statement suggests, received a holding response, is that right?

A. Yes, so to the best of my knowledge this letter was dealt with by officials, it wasn't brought to my attention, and there was communication between, again, Cabinet Office officials and Treasury officials on the substance of it.

Again, I am not directly aware of exactly what happened. My understanding is there was not a meeting that took place but officials were in touch and I'm not sure the reasons why that didn't happen. But from what I can tell and what records show is work was going on

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1 between the two different departments on resolving the
2 issue raised in that letter above on the first page
3 about the parity of treatment, which was a substantive
4 and immediate issue at that moment. Again, that was
5 resolved some months later, I think Penny's letter
6 refers to a Spending Review. It was resolved reasonably
7 soon thereafter, as I've said, with a provision of about
8 £175 million to resolve those disparities that had
9 existed between people in different parts of the United
10 Kingdom.

11 **Q.** Would you accept --

12 **A.** And quickly, again, I would just say it would be normal
13 for matters of public spending to be dealt with by the
14 Chief Secretary of the Treasury. That is entirely
15 normal. So the Chancellor has a broad remit. Chief
16 Secretary to the Treasury's primary responsibility is
17 public spending. I used to -- as you indicated in your
18 opening I had that job myself, and it would be entirely
19 normal for matters strictly related to public spending,
20 where other departmental ministers were making inquiries
21 or requests of the Treasury, that it would be the Chief
22 Secretary who would deal with those. So that is
23 entirely as one might expect.

24 **Q.** Would you agree that this letter indicates that
25 certainly as at the autumn of 2020 the Government's on

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1 as I understand it, that were used to deliver the
2 compensation payments of £100,000.
3 **Q.** So officials, on any view, within the Treasury would
4 have been aware that the question of compensation was
5 regarded by the minister most closely involved as long
6 overdue and urgent in terms of being addressed.

7 There's no suggestion here in Ms Mordaunt's letter
8 that the question of compensation didn't need to be
9 looked at, for example, until the Inquiry reported. It
10 is action now that she is talking about?

11 **A.** Well, that's what she said. I think that it's --
12 slightly differently, I believe that in Parliament later
13 on she did make a statement whilst in that role saying
14 that the issue of compensation would be determined after
15 the Inquiry made its final recommendations. That's what
16 she said in Parliament, my understanding is, in
17 a statement later. So I think the second part of what
18 you said is slightly different to what she then later
19 said in Parliament.

20 **Q.** Let's just look at some of the key dates then.

21 We have these, correspondence, in July and
22 September 2020, and although I'm picking matters up
23 in 2020, Prime Minister, the question of compensation
24 had been -- there had been calls for compensation for
25 decades, as reflected I think in some of your opening

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1 notice that the question of compensation is something
2 that's both urgent and long overdue?

3 **A.** Well, clearly that is the Paymaster General's view at
4 that time. Again, she was the minister responsible for
5 this particular subject. I wasn't in charge of the
6 overall Government at that point so it is hard for me to
7 speak to what the overall Government's view was at that
8 particular moment because I was not responsible for it.
9 She was the responsible minister, was closer to what was
10 happening, and clearly that was her view at the time.

11 Again, that was in advance of the Inquiry having
12 made any Interim Reports, before the Paymaster General
13 appointing Sir Robert to do his study, so none of that
14 had happened at that point. But clearly, for someone
15 who was involved in it, saw that that was the direction
16 of travel. And indeed was not wrong, in the sense that,
17 since then, around half a billion pounds of compensation
18 payments have been paid through the financial support
19 schemes.

20 **Q.** Yes. I should just say, the financial support schemes
21 have never been characterised as compensation, just in
22 terms of --

23 **A.** Yes, but they were the mechanism for delivering --

24 **Q.** In terms of the interim payments --

25 **A.** -- the interim payments. So those were the mechanism,

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1 observations, and there had been calls by
2 Parliamentarians in particular between 2017 and 2019 for
3 compensation.

4 But in terms of the Government, 2020 we have
5 Ms Mordaunt's letters, and then in March 2021 -- and it
6 may be this is what you are referring to,
7 Prime Minister -- the Paymaster General announced in
8 Parliament that an independent reviewer would be asked
9 to carry out a study looking at options for a framework
10 on compensation, ready to implement upon the conclusion
11 of the Inquiry. Was that what you had in mind when you
12 referred to Ms Mordaunt's subsequent statements?

13 **A.** Yes, I believe it was at that time.

14 **Q.** So March 2021 she commissions that.

15 In May 2021, a couple of months later, the Secretary
16 of State for Health -- the then Secretary of State for
17 Health, I should say -- Mr Hancock gave evidence to this
18 Inquiry saying that if the Inquiry recommended
19 compensation, the Government will pay it.

20 Again, I'm just trying to get the main dates before
21 I come and ask you a couple of questions.

22 March 2022, then, was the delivery by
23 Sir Robert Francis of the Compensation Framework Study
24 to the Cabinet Office.

25 Then if we just pick matters up at the end of

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1 March 2022 for the purposes, then, of the questions
 2 I want to ask you.
 3 Lawrence, can we have on screen, please,
 4 RLIT0002052.
 5 So we have the date there, 31 March 2022.
 6 If we zoom in on the first answer from the Minister
 7 for the Cabinet Office, please, Lawrence. So Mr Ellis,
 8 who was by this time in post, says:
 9 "Sir Robert delivered his report to me on 14 March,
 10 and I will carefully consider his findings and
 11 recommendations. It is my intention to publish the
 12 compensation framework study alongside the Government's
 13 response as soon as possible, and in sufficient time for
 14 the infected blood inquiry and its core participants to
 15 consider them before Sir Robert gives evidence to the
 16 Inquiry."
 17 Which was due to be and in fact was July 2022.
 18 Now, you will know, Prime Minister, and I'm not
 19 going to ask you about the detail of this, we have
 20 explored it with other witnesses, but you will know that
 21 the Government did not publish its response to the
 22 Francis study either at that time or at any point
 23 subsequently. So that's the chronology. March 2022.
 24 There is then this Inquiry's First Interim Report
 25 and a prompt decision made by Government to accept the

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1 wrongs still have no idea of the shape, the form, the
 2 scope of any compensation scheme or of timescale.
 3 Now, against that background, that overarching
 4 chronology, I'm going to invite, if you're able to,
 5 a yes or no answer to this question: is that good enough
 6 in terms of the Government's response?
 7 A. Well, the first thing I would say is of course people
 8 have been waiting far too long to get the recognition
 9 that they deserve for what's happened and the redress
 10 for what's happened. I was very clear about that from
 11 the outset of my remarks.
 12 Now, I can only speak to the Government that I'm
 13 responsible for, which, as you highlighted at the
 14 beginning, has only been for the last eight months or
 15 so, so many of the things earlier in that chronology the
 16 Government might have done but I -- I am sure you will
 17 take evidence from other people -- ultimately that was
 18 not my responsibility at the time, so it was not
 19 something I was directly involved in or can answer to.
 20 What I can tell you is what's happened under my
 21 Government whilst I have been Prime Minister, and since
 22 that's happened, days afterwards interim payments were
 23 made to around four and a half thousand people, £100,000
 24 each. In December, as you mentioned -- that was
 25 a couple of months after I was Prime Minister -- for the

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1 recommendation within three weeks of the interim
 2 payments.
 3 We then move to December 2022, when Mr Quin,
 4 the minister who was by that time responsible, accepted
 5 the moral case for compensation in Parliament. We can
 6 look at it if need be but I'm sure you are familiar with
 7 that from the reading that you have done for the
 8 purposes of your evidence.
 9 So he accepted the moral case but couldn't commit to
 10 a timetable.
 11 Then we have the Second Interim Report of this
 12 Inquiry in April.
 13 Then, subsequent parliamentary statements have been
 14 to the effect that the Government has still not made
 15 a decision on the question of compensation.
 16 Now that's the core chronology then: raised in the
 17 terms we have seen it by Ms Mordaunt in 2020, so over
 18 three years ago the matter was identified by Ms Mordaunt
 19 as both urgent and long overdue; over 16 months since
 20 Sir Robert Francis' Compensation Framework Study was
 21 delivered to the Government; and now over three and
 22 a half months since the Government's Second Interim
 23 Report recommending compensation on the basis of wrongs
 24 done at individual, collective and systematic levels.

25 And the people whose lives were torn apart by those

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1 first time ever in decades, first time any Government
 2 accepted the moral case for compensation.
 3 That was an important recommendation. I believe it
 4 was the first recommendation put in Robert Francis'
 5 study, and the Minister for the Cabinet Office accepted
 6 that on the floor of the House of Commons for the first
 7 time ever. And that happened whilst I was
 8 Prime Minister.
 9 Then subsequently to that and in parallel there has
 10 been an enormous amount of work that is happening across
 11 Government -- which as the minister responsible, the
 12 Minister for the Cabinet Office, I'm sure explained when
 13 he was giving evidence earlier this week -- to ensure
 14 that when the Government receives the final report, as
 15 has been its position consistently, it will aim to act
 16 as quickly as possible to make decisions and provide
 17 people with the recognition of the justice that they
 18 deserve.
 19 But, as I say, the chronology stretches back long
 20 before I was Prime Minister and that's -- as I said,
 21 since I have been Prime Minister these are the very
 22 specific steps that have been taken which I think are
 23 meaningful, but I acknowledge of course there's more to
 24 do and I'm determined to move as quickly as practically
 25 possible after the Government receives the final report,

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1 but in parallel an enormous amount of work is going on,
 2 on all the questions around compensation.
 3 **Q.** I'm going to press you for an answer to the question,
 4 Prime Minister.
 5 You may not have been -- you were not of course the
 6 Prime Minister from 2020, and I'm not suggesting that if
 7 there was fault on the part of Government it is fault
 8 for which you have a personal responsibility, but you
 9 were one of the most senior members of the Government,
 10 and you now lead the Government, and I'm inviting your
 11 perspective, given what you now know -- you may well not
 12 have known it at the time, but given what you now know,
 13 over three years and still no concrete compensation
 14 framework in sight and no information about what it
 15 might look like. Is that good enough?
 16 **A.** I think what I would say is of course people want to
 17 see --
 18 **(Pause)**
 19 All I would say is, in order for the Government to
 20 make decisions on compensation, it is -- rightly has
 21 asked an independent inquiry to conclude its work, to
 22 provide the advice to Government recommendations about
 23 what to do.
 24 Now, having not been at the time responsible for
 25 initiating this Inquiry in 2018, 2017 when it was

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1 receiving that advice.
 2 So, in one sense, if the Inquiry has taken this
 3 amount of time to provide that evidence, then saying to
 4 Government, "You should have acted before receiving the
 5 evidence", I think, well, this is tricky, because
 6 ultimately people would then say, if they didn't like
 7 what the Government had done, "Well, why haven't you
 8 waited for the result of your independent Inquiry to
 9 come back and tell you its views on compensation?"
 10 So if the Government had just pre-emptively acted
 11 before the conclusion of this Inquiry and reached
 12 a conclusion that people were unhappy with, I think most
 13 people will have said, "Well, you set up an independent
 14 inquiry, it is right that you should let that Inquiry
 15 make recommendations to you before deciding what to do."
 16 So I think that is an entirely -- that process
 17 I don't seem to think is unreasonable one.
 18 Now, would it be preferable for that process all to
 19 be able to happen faster than it has done? Of course it
 20 would be, because this has been going on far too long.
 21 I acknowledged that at the beginning. This has been
 22 going on for decades -- people have been waiting. But
 23 in terms of a process that I did not put in train, that
 24 is in train and I think is reasonable, I think that is
 25 right that the Inquiry finishes its work, provides those

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1 announced, and determining its terms of reference, it is
 2 hard for me to second guess the process that was
 3 envisaged at the time or what I would have done
 4 differently. But the Government at the time having
 5 decided to establish an independent inquiry to make
 6 recommendations on compensation, fully funding it,
 7 recognising that this was a complex and sensitive issue
 8 that required independent and thorough investigation, as
 9 is happening, it is reasonable to allow that inquiry to
 10 conclude its work.
 11 Now, at the time 2020, 2019, the Inquiry had not
 12 concluded its work. Estimates had not been provided,
 13 questions around scope, eligibility, how best to do it,
 14 delivery mechanisms, none of those questions had been
 15 answered. Now of course I appreciate that people want
 16 to see action as soon as humanly possible. I can
 17 entirely sympathise with that. Right? So sooner the
 18 better for sure. All right? And of course people
 19 would -- this has been going on for decades, of course
 20 that's not good enough, but it is very hard for me to
 21 second guess the decisions that were made by people in
 22 good faith to establish an independent, thorough
 23 investigation of all these issues, provide advice to
 24 Government on how best to deal with compensation and
 25 implement it, and then for Government to act after

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1 independent recommendations, which it has done and is
 2 doing, and then the Government acts as quickly as
 3 possible to make decisions and bring the appropriate
 4 recognition and redress to people.
 5 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** May I just ask, is your answer then to
 6 counsel's question that you would have wished it had
 7 been quicker?
 8 **A.** Well, for all -- I think no -- of course I wish it would
 9 have been quicker. I mean, I think that seems
 10 self-evident. This has been going on for decades.
 11 I don't think anyone would sit here and say that they
 12 wish that this process could not be concluded quickly,
 13 given what's happened over the successive decades.
 14 Everyone wants to see as swift resolution to this
 15 tragedy as possible, this appalling scandal be righted
 16 as quickly as possible.
 17 But also, as your work has uncovered over the past
 18 five, six years, however long you have been
 19 investigating this, there are a range of complicated
 20 things to work through, a range of sensitivities. It is
 21 important that work is done thoroughly so that there is
 22 a full and proper understanding of the issues at stake
 23 and the appropriate way to provide that recognition and
 24 redress.
 25 If it was a simple matter then presumably no one

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would have thought an inquiry was the right thing to do, but people called for an inquiry. They called for an inquiry because they thought it was right that someone independently looked at all these issues and they supported the work of the Inquiry, and that work is happening.

But as a general principle, would I prefer this all to be dealt with as quickly as possible? Of course, because this is an appalling scandal that has gone on for decades.

MS RICHARDS: Ms Mordaunt, as her contemporaneous statements made clear, as well as her evidence to this Inquiry, commissioned the compensation framework study precisely so that the Government could have independent advice without waiting for the recommendations of the Inquiry, albeit that the structure would then only be set up and the payments made once the Inquiry had made its recommendations.

But the whole point of Ms Mordaunt's actions in commissioning Sir Robert Francis' study was that everything could be done to ensure that on the conclusion of the Inquiry -- not weeks or months after, on the conclusion of the Inquiry -- compensation could be payable if that was what the Inquiry recommended.

Now, over 16 months since Sir Robert reported to the

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then shortly after I became Prime Minister those payments were made, to four and a half thousand people.

Q. What Ms Mordaunt said in Parliament was she was commissioning this work to look at options for a framework "ready to implement", so implement, "upon the conclusion of the Inquiry".

Now, leave aside what she meant by "the conclusion of the Inquiry", because she didn't probably envisage that the Inquiry would make its recommendations on compensation before its final report.

Does the Government have options that are ready to implement upon the conclusion of the Inquiry?

A. The Government, as you will have heard from the Minister for the Cabinet Office this week, is conducting an extensive amount of cross-Government work to analyse all the various questions and recommendations posed in the Interim Reports so that Government is in a position to act as quickly as possible after receiving the final report, and that work continues at pace.

Again, the minister responsible is the Minister for the Cabinet Office and he will have explained in detail exactly what is happening over the past several months that he has had that job, but there is extensive work that happening, there is a determination to move as quickly as possible, as I said, and at the appropriate

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Cabinet Office, those most affected by this still have no idea of the Government's response. Is that good enough?

A. So what Penny Mordaunt said, I believe, at the time of the statement, was that Government would wait to receive the Inquiry's final recommendations before making decisions on compensation. I believe that's what she said at the time that she announced the Robert Francis study. I believe she said that in the House of Commons from the dispatch box. I believe that was her stated position.

Again, because I was not responsible for this policy, nor for the Government and nor the Penny Mordaunt report to me, obviously I'm not privy to whatever decisions were made at that time as to what people's thinking in Government was about this particular area. But I think she was clear that her expectation was Robert Francis' work would inform the work of the Inquiry but ultimately Government would respond when the Inquiry had concluded. I think that's what she said pretty clearly at the time.

But it is worth saying that Government has acted since then in providing interim compensation payments, which was the recommendation of the Interim Report. It was acted on swiftly, in a matter of weeks, and as --

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time that advice would be surfaced to me.

Q. I will come back to the phrases "as soon as possible" or "as quickly as possible" and "at pace" because they are phrases that the Inquiry has heard a lot without having a clear idea of what's meant by that.

But can I just repeat the question. Does the Government have options that are ready -- and I'm not asking you for detail of what they are because of parameters of Government decision-making and so on -- does it have options ready to implement upon the conclusion of the Inquiry?

A. As you acknowledged earlier, advice would not be brought to my attention until it was ready, because that work is ongoing. And the policy work is complex, all the issues involved, that have been highlighted in previous evidence, require quite a lot of thought and consideration about how best to do them. Those decisions have not been made. But that policy work is ongoing so that the Government is in a position to move quickly. But that work is clearly not concluded and no decisions have been made and I'm not intimately involved or familiar with it, as would be normal because that would be surfaced to me at the appropriate time.

Q. So is the answer to my question "no" or is the answer to my question "I don't know"?

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1 **A.** The answer to your question is I would not be in
2 a position to go over the policy detail at this stage
3 because it would not have been -- it's not -- as it is
4 entirely normal, has not been surfaced with me, because
5 the policy development is ongoing.

6 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Just if I may, Ms Richards, I heard
7 the answer not so much as "no", but "not yet". There
8 may not be much of a difference.

9 Can I just remind everyone, I know the evidence is
10 emotive to many of you but we do have a tradition of
11 respecting the witness, to make it easier for them to
12 say what they want to say.

13 Please.

14 **MS RICHARDS:** Could we look at something you say in your
15 witness statement, Prime Minister.

16 WITN7712001, paragraph 5, please, Lawrence.

17 If we go to the next page. You say this at the
18 conclusion of your statement. You set out that the
19 "government is taking every step to prepare to respond
20 appropriately to the inquiry's final report".

21 Can I ask what the basis is for your statement to
22 that effect? Is that an assurance you have been given
23 or is that your own assessment of the position?

24 **A.** Both I would say. There is an extensive amount of work
25 ongoing in Government on this issue, which the Minister

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1 October, so again I can talk to you in detail about the
2 Government that I'm responsible for and, as you say,
3 I became Prime Minister on 25 October. That first set
4 of meetings that you described happened in November and
5 there have been, I believe, half a dozen meetings since
6 then at a ministerial level, which is almost one
7 a month, which is a significant amount of activity
8 across ministerial work, I would say in my experience,
9 as well as further meetings with the APPG chairs and
10 those affected as well.

11 So, taken together, I think that is a significant
12 body of work since I became Prime Minister and that is
13 what I can best speak to and am responsible for.

14 Obviously I'm not responsible for the preceding two
15 to three years of how Government organised its time, but
16 I am sure you all have and will take evidence from those
17 who were at the time and they can probably answer better
18 to that than I can.

19 **Q.** The Government's position of waiting until it receives
20 the final report is the next matter I wanted to ask you
21 about, Prime Minister.

22 So Mr Quin told us in terms that is the Government's
23 position: to wait for this Inquiry's final report before
24 it responds to the question of compensation.

25 Does the Government acknowledge and accept that this

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1 for the Cabinet Office, as I've said, would have
2 outlined for everybody here, and has done previously,
3 but he has had, I think, half a dozen different meetings
4 with all of those involved across Government, having met
5 campaign groups as well, the APPG, having met those
6 directly infected and affected, having engaged with
7 ministers from the devolved administrations. So all of
8 that work is ongoing and there is a determination to
9 move thoroughly through all the issues that need working
10 through.

11 **Q.** What we learnt from Mr Quin's evidence is that meetings
12 at permanent secretary level commenced on 30 November
13 last year, that the small ministerial group that he
14 asked to establish and was permitted to establish began
15 its meetings in February of this year. That the
16 meetings with devolved administrations took place in
17 June, possibly also July, of this year.

18 Now, that suggests that there has been work
19 undertaken over the last few months but doesn't really
20 explain the position over the proceeding two and a half
21 years. Are you able to cast any further light on why we
22 really seem to only see activity over the last few
23 months?

24 **A.** I think you said you started seeing activity in
25 November, and I became Prime Minister at the end of

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1 Inquiry's Second Interim Report, so the report published
2 on 5 April of this year, constitutes the Chair's
3 complete recommendation on compensation? That is his
4 final report on the question of what compensation should
5 be payable and to whom. Does the Government understand
6 that?

7 **A.** The Government does understand that. But as is entirely
8 normal and precedent, the Government would wait for
9 the conclusion of Inquiry's findings so it has the full
10 context and understanding of everything that is relevant
11 to the situation before making final decisions. That's
12 the long-standing convention and precedent and advice we
13 recommend following and that is the process being
14 undertaken here.

15 Having said that, that doesn't mean that work
16 doesn't begin beforehand and, as we have just been
17 talking about, work has been ongoing for all the months
18 that I have been Prime Minister at a more intensive pace
19 than I think has happened at any point previous to that.
20 So people should be reassured that just because the
21 final report hasn't come does not mean that all the
22 questions that have been raised in the Interim Report
23 are not being looked at, being examined, being analysed
24 and being worked through, because there is
25 the determination to try and move as quickly as

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1 practically possible, but it is entirely normal that
 2 Government would wait for the full context of
 3 an Inquiry's findings to be concluded.
 4 **Q.** That may be a perfectly ordinary process in many cases.
 5 But here Government has accepted already the moral case
 6 for compensation. It has accepted already that the
 7 making of some interim payments, described by the then
 8 Prime Minister as, I think, the beginning, not the end.
 9 It has said in terms through its then Secretary of State
 10 for Health, Mr Hancock, if the Inquiry recommends
 11 compensation the Government will pay it. Why, in those
 12 circumstances, and given everything you've recognised
 13 about the decades of suffering and the decades of being
 14 rebuffed, why wait further? What is it you think you
 15 will learn -- and when I say "you", I mean the
 16 Government will learn -- from the final report relevant
 17 to the question of compensation that you do not already
 18 know?
 19 **A.** Because before making final decisions there's the
 20 context in which those decisions need to be made. So
 21 understanding the full context of the Inquiry's findings
 22 about what has happened over the preceding decades is
 23 important for a variety of policy reasons, as
 24 I understand it, that will have a bearing on various
 25 things, and that's why the Government would ordinarily

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1 case for compensation.
 2 Now, of course, that is only a step towards
 3 providing the recognition and redress that everyone here
 4 and everyone watching deserves, but it should give
 5 people some comfort about mine and the Government's
 6 determination to sort this out and address it, given we
 7 are taking steps that no other Government has taken.
 8 **Q.** What are the sound policy reasons you referred to in
 9 your answer a few minutes ago for waiting for the final
 10 report, in this context?
 11 **A.** As I think the Inquiry acknowledged in its note of the
 12 21st, whilst ongoing policymaking is happening it is
 13 difficult for me to comment in detail on those things,
 14 and indeed that was something that the Inquiry
 15 acknowledged in its note on 21 July and indeed something
 16 the Minister for the Cabinet Office would have spoken to
 17 as well.
 18 As I said, in general terms I can talk about it,
 19 which is that it is important, for rational
 20 decision-making purposes, legally if nothing else, to
 21 have the full findings of an Inquiry before making
 22 decisions -- that is absolutely precedented and normal
 23 advice -- and understanding the full context of all the
 24 Inquiry's findings before making final decisions on
 25 something as complex and sensitive as this.

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1 wait to have the final report, so it has a full set of
 2 findings to make decisions on. There is good legal
 3 precedent and reasons for that, and rational
 4 decision-making would suggest that is the right thing to
 5 do.

6 But I would go back to saying that that doesn't stop
 7 the Government from acting, and it has acted. The
 8 payment -- I think as you acknowledged -- of interim
 9 compensation payments to four and a half thousand people
 10 is a significant step. It was described as such by
 11 Robert Francis, and I think he described those sums in
 12 his words as significant amounts, because he recognised
 13 at the time that it was likely that ultimate
 14 compensation would take time.

15 I believe the First Interim Report from this Inquiry
 16 also acknowledged very clearly that it was likely that
 17 final -- the Government would normally wait until
 18 final -- receiving the final report before making
 19 decisions and acknowledged that itself. So that was, as
 20 I said, a recommendation in the interim -- this Inquiry
 21 recognised that that is what the likely scenario would
 22 be. So I don't think that is untoward.

23 But the Government is acting, acting with interim
 24 compensation payments and acting, as you said, to be the
 25 first Government ever in decades to accept the moral

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1 **Q.** I may be repeating a question but what is it that the
 2 Government thinks it will know, relevant to
 3 compensation, that it doesn't already know?
 4 **A.** Again, I know this will sound frustrating but because
 5 there are active policies under consideration and legal
 6 considerations, which ordinarily the Government would
 7 not comment on, whilst those decisions are yet to be
 8 made I can't go into those things in detail. But it is
 9 entirely normal and would be normally legally advised to
 10 the Government not to make final decisions until
 11 an Inquiry has finished. And there are a variety of
 12 things that the Inquiry may or may not say in its final
 13 report that will impact the overall way that this
 14 appalling scandal is treated and dealt with, and it will
 15 put the previous findings in a broader context that is
 16 helpful for the Government when it makes those final
 17 decisions.
 18 **Q.** One of the recommendations in the Second Interim Report
 19 of the Inquiry, expressed as you know to be the final
 20 word on compensation, is that the compensation scheme
 21 should be set up now and should begin its work before
 22 the end of the year. I think that is recommendation 18,
 23 from memory.

24 Does your evidence mean that the Government has
 25 rejected recommendation 18?

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1 **A.** The Government is doing its work. What I don't want to
2 do is add to what I believe to be a litany of broken
3 promises and dashed expectations of everyone in this
4 room and everyone watching has had to endure for years
5 if not decades. The last thing I want to do is sit here
6 and promise something else and give people false hope
7 and I want to be completely straight. I want to see
8 resolution as quickly as practically possible. I have
9 made that crystal clear.

10 The actions of my Government to date should give
11 people some confidence and assurance that that is what
12 we are working towards, but these are sensitive,
13 complicated matters on a significant scale that require
14 work to work through them properly.

15 That work is happening, so it is hard for me to give
16 a precise time frame on exactly when and how these
17 things will be resolved, but an important step on that
18 is receiving the final report obviously.

19 **Q.** Some fear that the reason or a reason why the
20 Government's position -- and I don't think this is
21 active ongoing policymaking, it has been the
22 Government's position, as I understand it, for some
23 time, unmovable -- of waiting for the final report
24 before it makes any decisions on compensation is either
25 an excuse for delay because the Government only started

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1 Government would respond appropriately to them. That's
2 what happens in every other case. That is exactly
3 normal. And then it is a question of, well, how is
4 Government held to account? I think we are very lucky
5 to live in a country where there is very strong
6 parliamentary scrutiny. We have a very vibrant media,
7 as the Chair alluded to at the beginning. So there is
8 lots of different ways that Government is held to
9 account, both in Parliament and in public opinion, for
10 how it behaves and is very transparent about all of
11 those things.

12 But I think it is entirely normal that Inquiries
13 finish their work, make recommendations, Government will
14 respond, and the combination of public opinion and
15 Parliament rightly holds Government to account and we
16 have very strong scrutiny of accountability mechanisms
17 to do that.

18 **Q.** Do you accept that waiting for the final report
19 inevitably means further delay and, depending on how
20 long the Government then takes to consider the report,
21 may then lead into a period of a general election, of
22 election purdah, with all the policymaking constraints
23 that imposes, and so this could simply prolong the
24 question of compensation for a very substantial period
25 of time indeed, which was certainly not what Ms Mordaunt

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1 the real work too late or it is because at that point,
2 the point of delivery of the final report, the Inquiry
3 will no longer have powers and the Government will be
4 free to ignore the recommendations of the Inquiry with
5 impunity. That's the fear, Mr Sunak. I'm not putting
6 that to you as a statement of fact but that is people's
7 concern.

8 The absence of a clear explanation as to why
9 Government is waiting for the final report when that
10 wasn't what the Second Interim Report anticipated is
11 fueling that fear.

12 Are there any observations you can make in relation
13 to those matters?

14 **A.** Well, the reassurance I try and give people is to say
15 look how we have acted: to be the first Government that
16 accepted the moral case for compensation, to have made
17 the interim compensation payments. Now that the MCO has
18 given evidence, people can see a sense of the breadth
19 and intensity of the work that is happening in
20 Government, that as far as I can tell was not there in
21 the past. So I think that should give people some
22 reassurance that there is a desire to see this through.

23 And in terms of things like this happening, I think
24 it is entirely normal that Inquiries would finish their
25 work, make recommendations to the Government and then

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1 anticipated?

2 **A.** I think as the Chair set out at some point when he was
3 describing this Inquiry's work, and I think the Chair
4 said wanted to proceed as quickly as thoroughness
5 allows. I think that is a good guide to how Government
6 should behave as well, and that's certainly my
7 intention: is to proceed as quickly as thoroughness
8 allows, as this Inquiry's work is also doing. And
9 that's the commitment that I would give people. As
10 I said, the track record since I have been
11 Prime Minister has showed, I think, considerable forward
12 progress, accepting that there is still lots to do.

13 **Q.** Will you, Prime Minister -- and can I stress in asking
14 this question I'm not asking you to perform a volte-face
15 on the Government's position in the witness box, that
16 would not be a correct question to put to you -- but
17 will you, Prime Minister, agree to the Government
18 looking again -- to you and your colleagues looking
19 again at the question of whether it really should wait
20 until the final report, rather than take decisions and
21 announce decisions now?

22 Given everything you have referred to about people's
23 suffering, about the period of time, about people dying
24 whilst they are waiting, would you agree to go and look
25 at that again? I'm not asking you to commit to any

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1 outcome, because that would have to be a matter then for
2 collective decision-making within Government, but is
3 that something you can take back, not least because if
4 the principal reason for waiting for the final report is
5 that that's what normally happens, that may not be
6 a good enough reason?

7 **A.** I think it is right that Government goes through this
8 properly, given the complexity and scale of the scandal
9 that has befallen us over many decades, and this
10 Inquiry's work has taken several years, rightly and
11 necessarily. So I think that gives everyone a sense of
12 the complexity and scale of what we are dealing with,
13 that this Inquiry's work has taken this long, and it is
14 right that it takes that long because there is a lot to
15 go through and these are important issues that require
16 thorough examination, and I think it is equally right
17 that Government is thorough in how it then responds.

18 Now, I don't want, as I said before, to add to the
19 history of false promises, dashed hopes and
20 expectations. The actions of the Government to date
21 speak to my desire to move this forward and that remains
22 my commitment and the actions demonstrate that and the
23 work is ongoing to enable us to do that and it will
24 continue to do so. Everyone in Government from me down
25 understands the urgency and importance of this issue and

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1 there any willingness on the part of the Government you
2 lead to look again at the question of waiting for the
3 final report?

4 **A.** Again, Ms Richards, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to
5 speculate on changing the Government's position in
6 public. That wouldn't ordinarily happen, as I think you
7 acknowledged to me in your note on 21 July.

8 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** May I just ask a question, and
9 I wonder if you can give this your personal
10 consideration, not here but in due course.

11 It may be thought that waiting for an event, in this
12 case the publication of the final report, is a question
13 of timing. That is, if it is going to happen then, we
14 can wait until then, and that's when we will take
15 action.

16 It may be a question of principle, which is your
17 normally done, that there is a principle of some sort
18 which means that you need to look at a final report
19 before you answer.

20 But can I ask you just to consider this: I don't
21 want to tempt providence but suppose something happened
22 which meant that the Inquiry report was inevitably
23 delayed. Suppose -- as I say, I don't want to tempt
24 providence -- but suppose some accident happened to me
25 or some illness which meant I couldn't complete it for

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1 I am sure these hearings and your work have only
2 reminded everybody of the importance and urgency of it,
3 and I know that will be an important feature of the work
4 going forward too.

5 **Q.** Is the answer to my question that you are not able to
6 give one or that you declining to --

7 **A.** As you -- no, I think, Ms Richards, as you said, it
8 wouldn't be appropriate for me to change Government
9 policy here at the dispatch box --

10 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** You are talking over each other.

11 Could you let the Prime Minister finish his answer
12 and then ask a question.

13 **MS RICHARDS:** Of course, sir.

14 **A.** No, as I say, it wouldn't be appropriate for me to
15 speculate on changing Government policy here, as you
16 acknowledge. As I said, I have given you an answer
17 fulsome in my desire to see urgency around this issue,
18 and I think these hearings have served to remind
19 everybody working on this issue in Government how
20 important it is that we move with urgency because of
21 the -- you know, the appalling scandal that this was and
22 the decades of injustice that have brought us to this
23 point.

24 **Q.** My question, Prime Minister, was not would you change
25 the Government's position in the witness box, but is

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1 a further three months. Are people going to be expected
2 to wait for that further three months before having
3 a response from the Government, given that they will
4 have had all that time, until the autumn of this year
5 already past, in order to get ready to respond?

6 **A.** I would say, Chair, not wanting to speculate on your
7 future health --

8 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** It is for you to take back and think
9 about.

10 **A.** No, again, I'd just go back to what I said previously,
11 ultimately it is in the Inquiry's control when it
12 concludes its Inquiry and presents those final findings
13 to Government, and I think there is a determination
14 amongst everyone's part to see that happen as quickly as
15 possible, and I am sure the Inquiry will reflect on that
16 as well.

17 That's -- that's not what I'm in control of. But
18 what I can control is the work that is ongoing now to
19 make sure that all the things that need to be considered
20 when it comes to compensation which have been raised in
21 the Interim Reports are being looked at and examined and
22 that policy work is happening. But what I don't want to
23 do, as I said, is put an artificial timeline on
24 something that can't be met. And as I said previously,
25 because I'm not intimately involved in the policy

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1 detail, as is entirely normal, as that is surfaced to me
2 then it would be a different story, but that work is
3 ongoing.

4 **MS RICHARDS:** In what was the most recent debate in the
5 House on this issue, which was 22 June 2023,
6 Dame Diana Johnson at the conclusion of the debate said
7 this:

8 "It seems to me that real political leadership to
9 get this done is lacking ... It is not good enough;
10 action is needed now."

11 And we have seen -- and I do not think it is
12 necessary to put it on screen -- we have seen, for
13 example, from the statement of Kit Malthouse, who was
14 then Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, talking about
15 needing to have senior ministerial assistance to push
16 matters through. We have heard from Mr Hunt, now
17 Chancellor of the Exchequer, but when he gave evidence
18 to this Inquiry last year, about the importance of
19 having the Prime Minister's direct involvement in
20 something and how once the Prime Minister says something
21 can be done, it can be done. He was talking there in
22 the context of the establishment of this Inquiry.

23 Ms Mordaunt said towards the conclusion of her
24 evidence on Monday that she believed this matter to be
25 a priority for the Prime Minister, for you. We know

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1 Well, we will take a short break. Shall we say --
2 because everyone has to -- let's take a quarter of
3 an hour now, shall we? That gives us time to get
4 everything sorted and have the Prime Minister back.

5 Prime Minister, it may be this is your time to
6 leave -- as you heard me say at the beginning, everyone
7 will remain in their seats while you exit this
8 chamber -- and we will see you back, please, at 3.20 pm.

9 **MS RICHARDS:** And the usual warnings, sir.

10 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Yes.

11 You are giving evidence. You may not discuss the
12 evidence you have given or anything which you think you
13 may yet be asked in evidence with anyone, whoever that
14 anyone is.

15 See you back at 3.20 pm.

16 (3.05 pm)

(A short break)

18 (3.20 pm)

19 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Can I just mention that it has been
20 mentioned to me during the break that I should remind
21 anyone who wants to use their services that the
22 Red Cross are here and available should anyone need
23 their help.

24 **MS RICHARDS:** Sir, I understand the technical problems have
25 been resolved but before I ask you to look at

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1 from your statement and understand that it is not
2 hitherto been something in which you had direct
3 involvement. Is it right to understand that this is now
4 something that you regard as a priority?

5 **A.** Yes, of course. And that's why -- as I said, that's why
6 I'm here and that's why, since the Government that
7 I lead was formed, you've seen, I would believe, you
8 know, tangible concrete progress and action on this very
9 important issue, more so than we'd seen in the past, and
10 that's what you will see going forward.

11 **MS RICHARDS:** Sir, I understand there are some technical
12 problems with the document display and I do need to, for
13 the purpose of my next questions, show the
14 Prime Minister some documents -- documents he has
15 already seen but I do need to bring them up on screen.
16 I don't know how long ... I'm told five minutes or
17 so.

18 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Shall we have an afternoon break at
19 this stage or is that too early?

20 **MS RICHARDS:** It is a matter for you, sir.

21 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** I am conscious that we don't want to
22 detain the Prime Minister any longer than necessary.

23 **MS RICHARDS:** No, but I would say I have not less than
24 20 minutes, probably half an hour.

25 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Very well.

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1 a document, Prime Minister, I just want to go back to
2 what I was asking you just before the break, about the
3 question of priorities.

4 Ms Mordaunt, in her capacity as Leader of the House,
5 when she gave evidence to the Inquiry on Monday, said
6 this:

7 "We are about to go into the fourth and final
8 session of legislation. I know that's going to be
9 a short session and there are carry over bills. Whilst
10 there are policy areas still to be resolved and not
11 questions that I can answer on that, but what I can tell
12 you is that in terms of this Government and its
13 Prime Minister's priorities going into that fourth
14 session, this is one of his priorities."

15 Now, the Leader of the House has responsibility, as
16 we understand it, for planning and supervising the
17 Government's legislative programme amongst other things?

18 **A.** Yes, that is one of their priorities and
19 responsibilities, yes.

20 **Q.** From your knowledge of the Government's legislative
21 programme and plans, was Ms Mordaunt right to say that
22 this is one of your priorities?

23 **A.** Yes, as I said before, I think -- I hope people can take
24 away from the actions of the Government since I have
25 been Prime Minister that we are making progress in

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1 resolving the years of injustice on this issue and
 2 bringing people the redress and recognition that they
 3 rightly deserve, and it will continue to be a priority
 4 and that will continue to be a focus for me and the
 5 Government.
 6 **Q.** I want to turn to the specific question of interim
 7 payments.
 8 Can I ask you to look at JEVA0000258.
 9 So this is a Sunday Times article from 31 July 2022.
 10 So I think at the time of the Conservative Party
 11 leadership contest, and it refers to the then Tory
 12 leadership hopefuls, Ms Truss and yourself, and says you
 13 had both called for interim payments to be made to the
 14 victims of one of the worst disasters in NHS history.
 15 I won't read what Ms Truss said but then what you are
 16 recorded as saying is this:
 17 "The contaminated blood scandal is a tragic
 18 injustice and we must now match words with action just
 19 as we did with those affected by the Thalidomide
 20 scandal. Survivors and their families need to have
 21 certainty now, so I'd ensure the interim compensation
 22 payments recommended by Sir Brian Langstaff are paid
 23 without delay."
 24 Now, just so that we understand the reference to the
 25 thalidomide scandal, am I right in understanding that to
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1 were in relation to survivors, those who were infected
 2 who still live, and to bereaved partners and widows.
 3 Those whose children died, those whose parents died,
 4 have never benefited from the financial support schemes
 5 and never received any compensation, and they are the
 6 focus of one of the Chair's recommendations and
 7 a recommendation for interim payments now.
 8 If we look at JEVA0000276, please, just to provide
 9 further context to this issue.
 10 This is a letter sent by, I think, some campaigners
 11 to you at the beginning of this week. I don't know
 12 whether it reached you through your ordinary offices but
 13 I know the Inquiry has forwarded it on to you.
 14 If we could just go further down the page, please,
 15 Lawrence.
 16 So, I just want to pick it up with the paragraph
 17 beginning "Our journey":
 18 "Our journey has been marked by immeasurable pain
 19 and loss. Sir Brian Langstaff has done commendable work
 20 in putting forth recommendations that offer a fair
 21 resolution. However, these recommendations still need
 22 to be fulfilled, our pleas echoing in what seems to be
 23 an empty hall.
 24 "The appointment of the ALB's chair remains to be
 25 made. This delay denies victims and their families any
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1 be a reference to an announcement you made in March 2021
 2 when, as Chancellor, you pledged lifetime funding, that
 3 had otherwise been due to run out this year, saying that
 4 the thalidomide victims deserved better than to have
 5 constant uncertainty. Is that what that refers to?
 6 **A.** I believe so.
 7 **Q.** Then the reference to matching words with action and the
 8 need for survivors and their families to have certainty
 9 now, would you stand by those words today?
 10 **A.** Yes -- well, they referred very specifically, so it is
 11 important not to take them out of context, they referred
 12 very specifically to the recommendations that were made
 13 in an Interim Report about interim compensation payments
 14 of £100,000 paid to those who were already part of the
 15 support schemes, and indeed that was delivered in full,
 16 as I said, days after I became Prime Minister.
 17 **Q.** Yes. It was announced I think by the then
 18 Prime Minister on 17 August. So within three weeks of
 19 the First Interim Report recommendation on interim
 20 payments the Government took a decision and acted.
 21 Now you will know, I am sure, that amongst the other
 22 recommendations in the Inquiry's Second Interim Report
 23 is a recommendation for interim payments to be made to
 24 a cohort of individuals who did not receive the interim
 25 payments made last year. So the interim made last year
 50

1 tangible sense of progress. Many continue to die
 2 without seeing full redress; this cannot be right."
 3 Then it is the next issue that I want to explore
 4 with you, Prime Minister:
 5 "The interim payment for deaths not yet recognised
 6 is critical. These payments are not just about
 7 compensation; they symbolise acknowledgement, and they
 8 represent initial recognition of each life lost. We
 9 know, for example, that many of the 380 children
 10 infected with HIV died in childhood, and their deaths
 11 remain unrecognised."
 12 Now, before I ask you -- and, I'm sorry, this is
 13 a long introduction to a question, but before I ask you
 14 the question I'm going to ask you to look at something
 15 in the Chair's Second Interim Report about the position
 16 of children whose parents died and parents whose
 17 children died.
 18 If we could have, please, Lawrence, INQY0000453 and
 19 if we could go, please, to page 7, I think.
 20 I'm going to pick it up at the bottom of the page.
 21 The last paragraph. Then over to the next page:
 22 "Colin was around a year old when he was given
 23 factor concentrate. At about two and a half he was
 24 diagnosed with HIV. His parents, Colin and Janet Smith,
 25 gave evidence to the Inquiry. His mother said '... he
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1 loved school but he became too ill to go really.
 2 I mean, sometimes he would just say, "I think I want to
 3 go school today", and we'd would put him in
 4 a wheelchair, wrap him up and we'd get him literally to
 5 the door and then he'd say, "I want to go home now."
 6 His father recalled: 'I lost my job because the boss was
 7 scared of people finding out and losing customers. So
 8 within a week I got another job. I thought I'd take
 9 a night shift job. Nobody around, nobody would know me,
 10 but the day I was going to start he called me into the
 11 office and said he couldn't start me, so from that point
 12 on I was basically unemployable. I went to the Job
 13 Centre. They wouldn't let me sign on.' Colin died
 14 aged 7. His father said: 'There's no way a child should
 15 have to die the way he did. It wasn't pleasant. It
 16 still affects us now. And it's not just our son,
 17 there's lots of children have had to go through that ...
 18 I could cope with death but not with the death of my
 19 son. I still have trouble today: the fact that he's in
 20 a grave on his own, and the guilt will never go away.'"
 21 One further passage, if I may, Prime Minister. It
 22 is the next one:
 23 "Susan ..."
 24 Susan's two sons, I should say, were infected with
 25 HIV and died in childhood of AIDS.

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1 whose deaths have -- and whose continuing suffering have
 2 never been measured or recognised through financial
 3 support or compensation. And they are some of those
 4 whose suffering would be recognised if interim payments
 5 were made.

6 As you told us, it took only a short period of time
 7 for the first lot of interim payments to be made. But
 8 nearly four months down the line from the recommendation
 9 in relation to interim payments to people who have never
 10 received anything, there is still no action on the part
 11 of the Government.

12 Is there any good reason -- having regard to what
 13 you said last summer in relation to the first lot of
 14 interim payments, is there any good reason for the
 15 Government delaying in taking a decision on the question
 16 of interim payments for these people?

17 **A.** I think first thing I would say is I have two young
 18 children and I can't imagine the loss that Brian and
 19 Stephen's mother felt and Colin's parents felt, and, as
 20 you said, there are hundreds more like that, but from
 21 everything we know, each one a tragedy. For every one
 22 of those a family's, and it is heartbreaking to read it
 23 again and listen to it again, as I have done previously,
 24 and they are absolutely uppermost in mine and everyone
 25 else's thoughts.

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1 "Susan, mother of Brian and Stephen, gave evidence
 2 to the Inquiry: 'You think what might have been. I can
 3 only still see them as 9 and 16 but its Christmas --
 4 a couple of weeks ago it was Brian's birthday, but
 5 Christmas, we put flowers on. And right after Christmas
 6 it's Stephen's birthday, in the February, so more
 7 flowers. Then in May it is Brian's anniversary. Then
 8 in September it is Brian's birthday. And then October
 9 it's Stephen's anniversary.'"

10 Pausing there, the anniversary she refers to is the
 11 anniversary of their deaths:

12 "And then we are back to Christmas again. And it
 13 doesn't matter how many years go by, you're still
 14 asking: Why? Why? Why? And I keep going to the grave
 15 and I keep saying -- sometimes I think they are not
 16 there, they are going to walk in. I just think, no, no,
 17 it can't be ... Why? I just want someone to tell me
 18 why. It won't bring them back. I just want them back
 19 so much. I just ache for them to come back. You can't
 20 get on with your life ... I just ache. I think it is
 21 like a heartache, your heart is aching so much, your
 22 whole body aches. I'm just mentally and physically
 23 tired, I think. I just want them back and I can't."

24 Now those are just two examples, Prime Minister, as
 25 I am sure you understand, of the groups of individuals

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1 With regard to what might happen in terms of future
 2 compensation, obviously that is one of the many
 3 recommendations in the report and that is subject to
 4 ongoing Government decision-making and policymaking,
 5 which is why it is difficult for me to speculate further
 6 or go into more detail about what may or may not happen
 7 in that regard, but of course that work is ongoing, and
 8 questions of scope are important. There are significant
 9 questions that need to be answered as part of resolving
 10 this overall scandal and how best to do it, because it
 11 relates to decisions that haven't yet been made.
 12 Obviously there's not much more I can add to that.

13 **Q.** Would you agree that the longer it is going to take for
 14 the Government to reach conclusions about a compensation
 15 scheme overall, whether that is waiting for the final
 16 report, putting through primary legislation, appointing
 17 people, whatever it might be, the longer it is going to
 18 take, the greater importance there may be to the
 19 Government considering further -- interim payments for
 20 those who have never received them or, indeed, further
 21 interim payments for those who have? Is that something
 22 the Government understands, that there is a relationship
 23 between how long you are going to take to set everything
 24 up, and perhaps taking some interim measures now?

25 **A.** Again, Ms Richards, for all the reasons that I have

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1 outlined, because these -- all these matters are subject
 2 to ongoing Government policymaking and deliberation,
 3 where final decisions haven't been made, I can't and it
 4 wouldn't be appropriate to comment or speculate on what
 5 may or may not happen in the active considerations of
 6 Government. But, as I said, many people have been
 7 affected by this scandal over many decades and
 8 an important part of resolving the scandal that is
 9 contaminated blood will be working through those issues
 10 of scope and eligibility. But, as we have seen from the
 11 different reports that have been done, indeed there are
 12 some points of divergence on that particular question
 13 between people who have looked at this, the Inquiry's
 14 First Interim Report and Sir Robert's report, it is
 15 important that those things are worked through because
 16 they obviously are particularly important.

17 **Q.** I won't press you further on this question on interim
 18 payments for now but would just leave with a similar
 19 invitation to the invitation I made in relation to the
 20 position of waiting for a final report, an invitation,
 21 which I leave without asking you to commit to it, for
 22 the Government to think hard about the position of
 23 interim payments, particularly if, through its own work
 24 that it can't tell us about, any final compensation
 25 scheme is still some way off in the future.

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1 **A.** As I have said right at the outset, people have been
 2 waiting for answers not just for months, not just for
 3 years, but for decades. And I talked about the layers
 4 of injustice, because there really have been layers of
 5 it, not just the fact that this happened to someone, but
 6 the fact that it impacted their family, the fact they
 7 were lied to for so many years about what had happened,
 8 told everything was fine, "Nothing to see here" when
 9 that clearly wasn't the case, and then when they sought
 10 answers and an inquiry they were rebuffed for many years
 11 until the Inquiry was established, and as I acknowledged
 12 the hurt and the suffering isn't just historic, it is
 13 continuing today. I acknowledge and understand all of
 14 that, and sympathise with it.

15 **Q.** Mr Quin told the house in December 2022, and I think
 16 again this year, that he hoped to ensure that those
 17 infected and affected were kept fully apprised of the
 18 progress that was being made. Now that hasn't happened.
 19 If it had, it may be this hearing wouldn't have been
 20 necessary.

21 So those infected and affected have not been given
 22 anything other than the information we have about
 23 progress being made, working at pace, hoping to achieve
 24 things as quickly as possible.

25 I'm not again asking for details of Government

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1 I'm going to turn next as a topic to the question of
 2 transparency and openness. Now, you referred,
 3 Prime Minister, in some of your early remarks to a part
 4 of the background events in question. So you will know
 5 that those who were infected were, for the most part,
 6 not told of the risks of their treatment. You will know
 7 that many were not told that they had been infected.
 8 You will know that when they turned to the Government
 9 and elsewhere for answers, they were told for years they
 10 had the best available treatment, they were rebuffed.
 11 Phrases such as "bad luck" had been used. They feel as
 12 though they have been kept in the dark for years about
 13 what happened.

14 And as a result, as I am sure you will appreciate,
 15 trust in Government is fragile on the part of those
 16 infected and affected, and they feel they are still
 17 being kept in the dark because of not knowing what's
 18 going to happen in relation to compensation, and that in
 19 itself is a further source of distress and anger and
 20 trauma.

21 Is that something that the Government understands
 22 and has at the forefront of its collective mind when
 23 taking its decisions, that the fact that people still
 24 have no idea about what's going to happen in itself is
 25 capable of causing further harm?

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1 policy here, Mr Sunak, but has the Government
 2 considered, to your knowledge, whether, even if it can't
 3 give full details of what it is thinking about at this
 4 stage, whether there are any commitments in principle,
 5 for example, it could give, so that if there are things
 6 still to be worked out it can give some reassurances
 7 publicly to those infected and affected, rather than
 8 saving it all up for one announcement at the end?

9 **A.** I think I point you back to what I said to you earlier,
 10 about the right and proper way to deal with this is to
 11 work through the issues thoroughly, which is happening
 12 already in Government, as the MCO has explained in
 13 detail when he was here, in his evidence, and the track
 14 record of the Government under my leadership to make
 15 significant progress on these issues, both with the
 16 interim payments and the acceptance of the moral case
 17 for compensation and the work that has been done. And
 18 again, as soon as Government receives a final report,
 19 that will help move the process forward even further.

20 **Q.** Would you agree that it wouldn't be acceptable for those
 21 infected and affected to find out any information about
 22 the Government's decision-making from the media rather
 23 than directly from the Government?

24 **A.** I mean, I think in general the Minister for the Cabinet
 25 Office has been in Parliament, which would be ordinarily

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1 the right place to do this, and for the Government to be
 2 held accountable, where I think he has made at least two
 3 different statements and participated in at least one
 4 debate as the various -- on top of the various meetings
 5 he has had, including one at least, I believe, with
 6 various people involved in the APPG on this particular
 7 issue, as well as having met with those chairs.
 8 So those are all the various channels of normal
 9 parliamentary scrutiny of the Government which I think
 10 are functioning and working well, and there's many
 11 different ways for people to hold their Members of
 12 Parliament to account, and indeed the Government, in all
 13 the appropriate ways that we have in this country.
 14 **Q.** Yes, Prime Minister, my question was not suggesting that
 15 there was any impropriety in announcements being made in
 16 Parliament at all. My question was about the media.
 17 Can we look at RLIT0002137, please.
 18 So this is an article in the Financial Times. Can
 19 we zoom in -- thank you, Lawrence.
 20 You will see there is reference in the first
 21 paragraph -- I'm looking at the left-hand column -- to
 22 a suggestion that a compensation bill could reach
 23 10 billion "according to officials, in a further blow to
 24 the UK's stretched public finances".
 25 Then there is reference to the acceptance of the

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1 "with the compensation at present 'completely unfunded',
 2 The Telegraph has been told".
 3 Now, those articles contain information that hadn't
 4 been shared with Parliament, hadn't, most importantly
 5 for these purposes, been shared with those infected and
 6 affected.
 7 There may be three possibilities that occurred to me
 8 in relation to how these articles came to contain this
 9 information: leaks from civil servants, without
 10 ministerial knowledge, approval or encouragement, within
 11 one or more Government department; leaks with
 12 ministerial knowledge, Government or encouragement
 13 within one or more Government departments; or the
 14 journalists simply making it up.
 15 Do you know if there has been any investigation
 16 within Government to establish which of those three it
 17 is or whether there is any other explanation?
 18 **A.** I don't -- to my knowledge, I'm not sure of any
 19 particular investigation that has happened on that
 20 particular issue, but, as I think everyone would
 21 probably understand, much as I would love to be able to
 22 control whether -- anyone leaking information from
 23 Government, that is not something that I can do. We do
 24 on occasion initiate leak investigations but it is very
 25 hard, as people know, to ultimately track down sources

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1 moral case.
 2 Then, fourth paragraph:
 3 "Government officials have told the Financial Times
 4 that the compensation scheme might cost £5bn-£10bn."
 5 There is then reference to the "tight nature of ...
 6 public finances", to discussions between Treasury
 7 officials and Department of Health officials:
 8 "'We are working through the options,' said one
 9 government insider.
 10 "Another official added: 'People are very worried
 11 about the cost.'"
 12 So that is one article, and then there is a second
 13 article, if we can just look at it, RLIT0002136.
 14 It is to similar effect, except now the figure
 15 that's given is quadrupled or doubled, depending on
 16 which end of the scale you take, to the previous
 17 article.
 18 There is reference to -- this is the second
 19 paragraph in the left-hand column:
 20 "Ministers [examining] financial modelling which
 21 place the upper forecast for total compensation to those
 22 infected with HIV and hepatitis C and their loved ones
 23 at the mid £20 billions."
 24 There is reference to concern in Whitehall, to
 25 ministers not knowing where the money is coming from,

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1 of leaks from Government.
 2 But my general view is of course people shouldn't
 3 leak from Government. I would certainly not authorise
 4 any of that. Didn't authorise any of that. And as
 5 I said, if it was possible to know who would do it, then
 6 of course I would take action.
 7 **Q.** My question to you, next question, is: should there be
 8 an investigation? Can I explain why I put that question
 9 to you, Prime Minister, because it might be said that if
 10 this was consciously being leaked by Government, whether
 11 it is civil servants or ministers or both, it might
 12 suggest a strategy on the part of Government to try to
 13 get the public and media on its side or on the side of
 14 Government inaction or rejection of some of the
 15 recommendations. And that would be wholly wrong, I am
 16 sure you would agree, if that were the position. I'm
 17 not suggesting to you it is. We just don't know.
 18 Do you now think, looking at that, that there should
 19 be an investigation?
 20 **A.** Again, it is not something I would speculate or comment
 21 on how the Government conducts leak inquiries, because
 22 they are necessarily sensitive and the last thing you
 23 would do is tell people you were about to do so, but, as
 24 I said, there is an established set of procedures in
 25 place that we have.

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1 **Q.** I am going to end with a few more general questions,
 2 Prime Minister, and I want to take you, first of all, to
 3 a passage which I think I asked Ms Mordaunt about as
 4 well.
 5 It is RLIT0002074.
 6 This is Parliament, 25 April 2017, and it's
 7 Andy Burnham giving I think his last speech in
 8 Parliament and choosing to do it on the subject of
 9 infected blood.
 10 If we could go a little further down the page,
 11 please, Lawrence, and find the right passage. Yes. The
 12 second paragraph, it is the end of that, where
 13 Mr Burnham talks about there having been:
 14 "... goodwill on both sides of the House ... a sense
 15 of people wanted to do something to help. That
 16 continued in the early part of this Parliament, with
 17 a sense building that something was going to be done.
 18 However, following those expectations, victims now feel
 19 that they have been led up to the top of the hill only
 20 to be let down once again."
 21 Then if we go to the very bottom of the page,
 22 please, Lawrence -- no, I can't find the reference I had
 23 in mind. It is a reference, in any event, to
 24 Government's failure to back what had been Mr Cameron's
 25 apology with substantial action, having left people

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1 confidence in particularly the Department of Health to
 2 do it, and they had been rebuffed for years if not
 3 decades. Many people in this room, I'm sure, were part
 4 of those calling for an inquiry. That inquiry was
 5 established. It was announced, I think, the same year
 6 as that debate, probably relatively shortly thereafter,
 7 started its work months after that, and obviously that
 8 Inquiry's work is still ongoing. And during that period
 9 interim payments have most recently been made and the
 10 moral case for compensation has been accepted.
 11 So, compared to when those statements were made --
 12 well, clearly there has been progress. Is there more to
 13 do? Absolutely. I recognise that. But given, as far
 14 as I understand it at the time, one of the very
 15 significant demands of people, rightly, were for there
 16 to be independent inquiry established to examine this
 17 issue of compensation and everything else, that has been
 18 done.
 19 Now, the Inquiry's work has perhaps taken longer
 20 than people anticipated or expected, but it is right
 21 that that work is done thoroughly, and that is ongoing
 22 and, as I said, the interim report that recommended
 23 interim compensation payments has been acted on swiftly
 24 since then and the moral case for compensation has been
 25 accepted.

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1 feeling in the wilderness again.
 2 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** It's the paragraph -- that's it.
 3 **MS RICHARDS:** I'm grateful both to you, sir, and to Lawrence
 4 for finding that.
 5 So Mr Burnham went on to call for the payment of
 6 compensation now later on in the debate, as I am sure
 7 you know. That's over six years ago.
 8 Do you understand, Prime Minister, does the
 9 Government understand, that with all these years having
 10 gone by and 16 months having elapsed since Sir Robert
 11 delivered his study to the Government, that many victims
 12 of the infected blood disaster feel, as Mr Burnham
 13 described them there, that they had been led up to the
 14 top of the hill only to be let down again. That they
 15 feel in the wilderness all over again because of the
 16 lack of any announcement or action on the issue of
 17 compensation.
 18 **A.** Well, I think subsequent to that the former
 19 Prime Minister did do something that people had been
 20 calling for, for many, many, years if not for decades,
 21 which was a public inquiry, and that was established
 22 I believe after that debate happened. Something that
 23 was a huge source of -- rightly, a source of grievance
 24 for people, because they wanted answers, they wanted
 25 them thoroughly investigated, they didn't have

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1 Again, I'm not well placed to say because at that
 2 period in time this is not something I would have
 3 intimate knowledge of, but those are significant
 4 developments since that debate happened.
 5 **Q.** Obviously things have been done. You recognise that
 6 that doesn't mean that there aren't still very important
 7 things that have been currently left unaddressed. Are
 8 you able to give any reassurance about timescales
 9 because we have had reference since certainly March 2022
 10 or thereabouts to working "at pace". But that doesn't
 11 tell us what the pace is. We have had the phrase
 12 "as soon as possible" referred to with Mr Ellis, the
 13 then Paymaster General, telling Parliament in mid-2020
 14 that the Government's response would be published as
 15 soon as possible.
 16 Those are words, mantras potentially, that don't
 17 necessarily have much content unless you can be more
 18 specific. So is there any reassurance you can give to
 19 those listening about timescales?
 20 **A.** I think what guides me is as -- we had this conversation
 21 earlier, I think the Chair's description of when he was
 22 describing the work of this Inquiry was to move as
 23 quickly as thoroughness allowed. I think that is
 24 a descriptor for how this Inquiry has done its work and
 25 I actually think that is the right phrase.

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1 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** I think it was "reasonable
2 thoroughness", because you can be too thorough.
3 **A.** I think the point is well made and similar, but I think
4 that is a good guide not just for this Inquiry's work
5 but for how Government should behave, given the scale
6 and complexity and significance of this issue. And as
7 I said, the Inquiry -- the fact that this issue is one
8 that is of such a magnitude and complexity and impact
9 for so many people it has taken this Inquiry this number
10 of years to get to this point, I think demonstrates all
11 the things that I just said. And my commitment is that
12 the Government will act in the same way, to act as
13 quickly as thoroughness allows. And what I don't want
14 to do is, as I said, add to the years or decades of
15 false hopes and expectations by putting an arbitrary
16 timescale on something. But I would rather be honest
17 with people that what is guiding me is the same
18 principle that guides the Chair and his work for this
19 Inquiry.

20 **Q.** To clarify, I'm certainly not asking for an arbitrary
21 timetable. Mr Quin told us that there had been
22 an internal deadline, and we have seen it from
23 documents, which was May of this year, for the work to
24 be completed on compensation framework.

25 That obviously was not met. Are there internal

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1 work has been done and that's why the Government under
2 my leadership accepted the moral case for compensation
3 and started intensive work to make sure it was in
4 a position to act on those words.

5 **Q.** Are you able to tell us unequivocally that this
6 Government, your Government, is committed to the payment
7 of compensation to those infected and affected, even if
8 you cannot yet tell us the form and scope of the scheme?

9 **A.** Again, of course that's the case, demonstrated by the
10 fact that the Government, under my leadership, honoured
11 the interim compensation payments that had been agreed
12 previously and made sure they were paid in a matter of
13 days and has continued to do extensive works as the
14 Minister for the Cabinet Office evidence will have
15 demonstrated to people. That's not the work of
16 a Government that isn't committed to acting on this
17 issue.

18 **Q.** Mr Hancock, having told the Inquiry, in his capacity as
19 the Government minister, that if the Inquiry recommended
20 compensation the Government would pay compensation, can
21 those listening take it that this Government is not
22 intending to renege on that commitment?

23 **A.** Again, because no final decisions have been made,
24 factually that remains the case, as a -- just a matter
25 of constitutional principle, this -- no final decisions

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1 deadlines? I'm not asking what they are for current
2 purposes, but are there, as a matter of fact, internal
3 deadlines to which the Government is working?

4 **A.** I don't -- I don't believe that there is a specific
5 month/date deadline, because people are working, as
6 I said, as quickly as possible through all the various
7 issues to find resolution on them in preparation for the
8 Inquiry's final report to be made.

9 **Q.** Ms Mordaunt told the House earlier this year, not long
10 ago I think, this. She said:

11 "It may fall to us in this place, on our shift, to
12 put that right, but we must put it right. There is not
13 just the original injustice that was done to those
14 people, many of whom were children at the time, but the
15 further layers of injustice that have happened with
16 regard to their financial resilience, as many of them
17 lost their homes and were not able to work, facing the
18 appalling stigma and hardship that came with that. We
19 have to put that right."

20 Would you accept as Prime Minister, as leader of the
21 current Government, that if the acknowledgement of
22 a moral case for compensation is not followed by action
23 in providing compensation, then you are not putting it
24 right?

25 **A.** Of course action will be taken. That's why considerable

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1 have been made on compensation. So that's a statement
2 of fact. Is my view that compensation is likely to be
3 paid? Of course that's my view. And that's why we
4 accepted the moral case for compensation and that's why
5 the work is ongoing in Government to think through all
6 the questions about how and who and when and all those
7 things that were raised in the interim report.

8 But as a matter of fact obviously that final
9 decision has not been made.

10 **Q.** A number of those infected and affected fear that
11 through the length of time it has taken so far, the
12 absence of any information about what the Government
13 might be planning, the decision to await the final
14 report, the inability to give a timescale, they fear
15 that this is something which is going to be kicked off
16 into the long grass and potentially then lost in the
17 complexities of a general election. I'm just going to,
18 if I may, Prime Minister, just read a couple of
19 statements, observations made by Core Participants in
20 advance of this hearing.

21 One Core Participant said this:

22 "What's the use? I could be dead soon and never see
23 my compensation. They are just hanging it out for us
24 all to die and they won't have to pay. Sorry, it's how
25 I feel at the moment."

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1 Then another:
 2 "All I would say, as we all know, we've waited long
 3 enough for this to be settled. Surely even the
 4 Government must agree that over 40 years is more than
 5 enough in anyone's mind. The longer the Government drag
 6 this on, the more individuals are dying and suffering,
 7 and we have suffered more than enough."
 8 Now, I just give those as examples to show the
 9 strength of fear and concern about this getting kicked
 10 off into the long grass, with people continuing to die
 11 and people continuing to struggle financially and
 12 emotionally.
 13 Is there anything else that you feel able to say,
 14 Prime Minister, that would provide any form of
 15 reassurance to enable those listening to regain
 16 confidence that justice will be done without undue
 17 delay?
 18 **A.** Yes, the reassurance I hope people would take is that --
 19 is -- as the comments you mentioned talked about,
 20 decades of waiting, decades and decades of waiting for
 21 action, for recognition, and since I have been
 22 Prime Minister, which is just eight and a bit months, we
 23 have seen interim compensation payments made, four and
 24 a half thousand people, a significant sum of £100,000.
 25 We have seen the moral case for compensation accepted

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1 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Now, how long a break do you think we
 2 might need?
 3 **MS RICHARDS:** 20 minutes minimum. 20 minutes to 30 minutes.
 4 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** Shall we say half an hour?
 5 I hope that's not inconveniencing you too much,
 6 Prime Minister, but we will come back, shall we,
 7 at 4.35.
 8 If there is any further delay on that, it will be
 9 for good reason and you will be told, and I can't
 10 promise you how long you will be detained once we come
 11 back, it all depends on the questions that are asked and
 12 the answers and so on, but for the moment, if everyone
 13 just remains in their seat, you can leave us and come
 14 back at 4.35 pm.
 15 Thank you.

16 (4.05 pm)

17 (A short break)

18 (4.35 pm)

19 Questions from CORE PARTICIPANTS

20 **MS RICHARDS:** Prime Minister, just a handful of further
 21 questions and, as you will appreciate from our
 22 processes, these are questions I have specifically been
 23 asked on behalf of Core Participants to ask you.
 24 The first is a matter of detail. When the
 25 compensation study from Sir Robert Francis was provided

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1 for the first time in those 30 or 40 years. And we have
 2 seen I think a level of intensity of work on all the
 3 questions surrounding compensation that has not happened
 4 before, as far as I'm aware, in Government, although no
 5 doubt your other evidence will demonstrate that.
 6 So that is the reassurance that I hope people will
 7 take away.
 8 Yes, I completely understand people have been
 9 waiting for a long time, people are waiting for redress,
 10 waiting for recognition. That's entirely right and
 11 reasonable that they are and they want it to happen as
 12 soon as possible. I share those sympathies, I also want
 13 to see that, and I'm determined to work as quickly as
 14 thoroughness allows to find resolution on all these
 15 issues, and the actions of my Government over the last
 16 eight months, in the context of those 40 years, should
 17 show people that we are making progress towards that
 18 goal.
 19 **MS RICHARDS:** Sir, those are the questions I'm proposing to
 20 ask the Prime Minister. But obviously we will need to
 21 take a break -- I'm sorry, it's taken rather longer,
 22 particularly with a technical break -- to allow Core
 23 Participants to suggest any further questions arising
 24 out of the oral evidence that they would wish me to
 25 consider.

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1 to Government, which was in March 2022, you were still
 2 Chancellor at that stage. Do you know whether as
 3 a matter of fact your department did any work to cost
 4 it?
 5 **A.** I'm not aware, to the best of my recollection.
 6 **Q.** But that's an issue which presumably somebody within
 7 your department would be able to assist us with
 8 answering -- sorry, somebody within the Treasury, no
 9 longer your department.
 10 **A.** I would imagine that -- as I said, it was not something
 11 that I was directly even aware of.
 12 **Q.** The second question is this, you said in the course of
 13 your evidence these words, "Ultimately, it's in the
 14 Inquiry's control when it reports" and then you referred
 15 to the Government proposing to respond to the Inquiry's
 16 final report for the purposes of compensation.
 17 These are the questions I'm asked to ask you in
 18 relation to that. First -- I'm going to say both of
 19 them because you may want to answer them together.
 20 First, is the Government using the Inquiry's
 21 timeline for reporting as an excuse not to provide
 22 compensation for victims?
 23 And, relatedly, does the Government not wish to
 24 compensate victims based on the evidence it must already
 25 be aware of, which has been publicly given to this

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1 Inquiry, and which you have admitted was an appalling
2 scandal?
3 **A.** I'm happy to (inaudible) provide reassurance. Of course
4 it is not an excuse and obviously we had an extensive
5 dialogue about how the Government typically would wait
6 for an Inquiry to conclude all their findings, present
7 all those to Government, so that it has all the
8 information it needs to make final decisions, and, as we
9 have discussed, that work is ongoing in advance of the
10 final report coming. So it is in no way an excuse, but
11 it is a step that is required.

12 And the second question is again I think related.
13 There is no desire not to do this and take this forward.
14 Obviously, a final decision on compensation has not been
15 made, as I articulated earlier, but the moral case for
16 compensation has been accepted, interim payments have
17 been made and work is ongoing across Government on the
18 basis of the interim report about how any future such
19 compensation might be delivered.

20 **Q.** The next questions pick up on that issue of waiting for
21 the final report. You indicated that the Government
22 would always await the final report of an Inquiry before
23 acting. As I am sure you will appreciate, the Inquiries
24 Act expressly empowers an Inquiry to report on
25 an interim basis, otherwise this and many other

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1 I was not a part of, so I wasn't part of that Government
2 decision-making process, I had left Government by that
3 point. I think the Government believed at that point
4 that, given those recommendations were specific and
5 tightly defined, that it would be possible to do that
6 and that it was the right thing to do. Something that
7 I agreed with at the time but I wasn't in Government, so
8 I wasn't privy to the decision-making around that
9 decision.

10 **Q.** In relation to the recommendation that in the second
11 interim report, the most recent, the recommendation of
12 interim payments to parents and children -- and leaving
13 aside the other recommendations, which may be more
14 complex in terms of the infrastructure of a compensation
15 scheme -- why does the Government need to see the
16 Inquiry's findings in context and work through the
17 findings thoroughly in terms of considering the further
18 recommendation for interim payments, when the Government
19 was able to swiftly implement the first recommendation
20 without working through the remainder of the Inquiry's
21 findings?

22 **A.** Again, I wasn't in Government when that original
23 decision was made, so I'm not able to speak to what
24 happened. I wasn't a member of Government. I didn't
25 have access to those papers. I was a back bench MP at

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1 Inquiries wouldn't have had the power so to do.

2 What is the purpose of an interim report if the
3 Government will not act upon its content until a final
4 report is delivered?

5 **A.** I can't remember the exact language used, but I think at
6 the time it was acknowledged that it was an unusual
7 step, the interim report's recommendations. I believe
8 that was the word that was used or a word similar to
9 that. So I think the report itself acknowledged that,
10 the fact it was an interim report making recommendations
11 was unusual, and those interim recommendations were
12 acted on within weeks.

13 As a matter of general principle, and historical
14 precedent, good policy making and legal advice would
15 suggest that it is important for Government to have the
16 full findings of an independent Inquiry before making
17 final decisions.

18 **Q.** If it is Government practice and precedence, for the
19 reasons you have referred to, to await the final report
20 of an Inquiry, so that its recommendations can be
21 considered in context, why did the Government, as you
22 repeatedly referred to, choose to make substantial
23 interim payments last summer without awaiting the final
24 report and surely the same considerations apply?

25 **A.** No, because I think the Government at the time -- which

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1 that time. And with regard to the Second Interim
2 Report, again as the conversation we have had, matters
3 of eligibility, scope, are all things that are under
4 active consideration by Government and part of the
5 policy making process that is underway, and the MCO
6 spoke to in detail.

7 **Q.** The final area for questions is I just want to go back
8 to Ms Mordaunt's evidence and the question of
9 legislation. Again I'm just going to read what
10 Ms Mordaunt told us:

11 "We are about to go into the fourth and final
12 session of legislation. I know that's going to be
13 a short session. There are carry over bills. Whilst
14 there are policy areas still to be resolved and not
15 questions that I can answer on that, what I can tell you
16 is that, in terms of this Government and this
17 Prime Minister's priorities going into that fourth
18 session, this is one of his priorities."

19 I think you indicated that Ms Mordaunt was right to
20 refer to the compensation payments as one of your
21 priorities going into the fourth session.

22 To clarify -- and this is the question I'm asked to
23 ask you -- is it one of your priorities to introduce
24 legislation on the compensation scheme in the fourth
25 legislative session of this year?

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1 **A.** I can't speak to the composition of the King's speech on
 2 the fourth session of the legislation for obvious
 3 reasons. That is still something Government has to take
 4 a view on. I was talking more generally about this
 5 being a priority of mine. For all the reasons that
 6 I outlined previously in the session and the actions
 7 that the Government has taken since I have become
 8 Prime Minister, I hope would demonstrate that it is
 9 something that I take seriously, that we have
 10 prioritised and the seniority of the Cabinet level
 11 attention that it has had, from the MCO, and indeed my
 12 presence here today, and the work that has happened in
 13 Government and the acceptance of the moral case, are all
 14 demonstrations that this is a priority for me.

15 **Q.** There may be a disconnect then between what you are
 16 saying to us and what Ms Mordaunt has said to us.
 17 Ms Mordaunt obviously in her position as Leader of the
 18 House may be in a position to deal with matters of
 19 proposed legislative sessions that you are not. It is
 20 important that people are not left confused about what
 21 the position is.

22 I'm not asking you, if you don't know the answer, to
 23 give us an answer today. Is this a matter that you
 24 can -- that further inquiries can be made just to
 25 confirm what the position is in that regard?

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1 acknowledge that this is and has been an appalling
 2 scandal. Many of you in this room, many watching, many
 3 others affected over a period of decades, not months or
 4 years, and those affected, as I said, is a broad group,
 5 not just those who were directly impacted, but their
 6 families, friends, carers as well and I recognise that
 7 those layers of injustice have continued.

8 It is not something that's only happened in the
 9 past, it is something that is still affecting families
 10 today and when you read some of the testimonials that
 11 I referred to earlier as well, it is hard not to be
 12 enormously moved by them, as I am. And for the people
 13 who have come forward to talk about their experiences
 14 deserve our praise and our gratitude for doing so. It
 15 is not easy to talk about, for example, the social
 16 stigma that was attached to all of these things in years
 17 gone by. I can't imagine what that was like to live
 18 with. I think one of your testimonies talked about
 19 somebody losing their jobs as a result. Thankfully, I
 20 hope, we have moved on from that but that would have
 21 been appalling, as well as a tragic loss of life. I am
 22 pleased to be able to be here today to participate in
 23 this Inquiry's important work, which I fully support,
 24 which is why the Government has fully supported the
 25 Inquiry, and my determination is to deliver the

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1 **A.** I can give you the position clearly now. Decisions on
 2 fourth session legislation have not been made. They are
 3 a matter, as per usual Government decision making
 4 through collective responsibility.

5 **Q.** So are you saying to us that Ms Mordaunt was wrong in
 6 what she said?

7 **A.** No -- again I can't speak for her but as you read her
 8 evidence to me, she said that this was a priority for
 9 me. Yes, it is a priority for me. That is completely
 10 consistent with me also saying that decisions on the
 11 fourth session legislation have not been made. I think
 12 those two things are entirely consistent.

13 **Q.** I'm not going to pursue that further now, but it may be
 14 a matter that the Inquiry might want to consider whether
 15 for its own purposes it needs further clarity in
 16 relation to that. But I do not think I can take that
 17 matter further with the Prime Minister given his
 18 answers.

19 There are no further matters that I'm asked to
 20 raise. Do you have any questions?

21 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** I have no questions beyond those that
 22 I have already asked.

23 **MS RICHARDS:** Mr Sunak, is there anything that you wish to
 24 add?

25 **A.** I will just conclude where I started really, which is to

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1 appropriate redress and recognition that people need and
 2 deserve as quickly as thoroughness allows.

3 And hopefully, whilst the wait has been long, people
 4 can see that there has been forward movement since the
 5 time I was Prime Minister and that should give them some
 6 encouragement and hope that we will get this done.

7 **MS RICHARDS:** Thank you Prime Minister. Sir Brian.

8 **SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF:** I thanked you at the beginning for
 9 making space in your calendar to come here today. You
 10 will realise I think now how important that is. It is
 11 important in particular because when I wrote my Second
 12 Interim Report, which I recognise was an unusual step,
 13 given that there was no further evidence we had thought
 14 to be heard before the final report was drafted, because
 15 as I said in conscience I could not countenance there
 16 being any further delay on my part before the
 17 recommendations which I was making would be put into
 18 effect.

19 I said that I thought there was no reason, given
 20 political will, why they could not be put into effect
 21 this year. You will realise that to every one here
 22 I think you -- it is one of the unfortunate aspects of
 23 being Prime Minister -- you embody political will. And
 24 they will take away I think from the evidence you have
 25 given the reassurances that you have said in terms: of

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course we will put it right; of course it is the case we are committed to compensation to those infected and affected. You have agreed that it is one of your priorities. It is a priority -- and that word is a word of considerable importance, not everything can be a priority. And you have endorsed Penny Mordaunt's wish to have it sorted "on our shift", your Government's shift.

You will take away, I hope, the need for many to see tangible reassurance of that. You have pointed out that you have been one of the Prime Ministers who has actually matched rhetoric with some action. On your shift, so far, we have had interim payments, albeit agreed before you came in, but you had committed yourself anyway in the course of the election campaign for that. You have pointed to the fact that you have been in charge of the Government when it recognised the moral case for compensation, as no previous Government had done. And you have made it clear in what you have said today, right from the start, that you recognise wrongs were done and the way in which over so many years people's desires have been brushed aside by Government, and that you said was wrong, and you are speaking of previous Governments of all descriptions.

They will be looking, I suspect, for yet further

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Thank you very much.

(4.55 pm)

(The Inquiry adjourned until 2.00 pm on Friday,
28 July 2023)

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tangible recognition. They recognise the evidence they have heard this week of work being done. But there aren't any details. There is no timeline. There is no structure yet in place. If there is anything that you can in the interim do to reassure them, preferably by actions rather than by words, but either will do -- actions preferably -- that there will be the compensation which is just and fair and it will be delivered as soon as possible. Because if it troubles my conscience I would think it would trouble the conscience of a caring Government and you have said that's what you would wish to be.

So thank you for your evidence. You will see -- you just had it demonstrated -- the importance of what that means to people and for the time that you have spent, as you have said, at short notice, it needs to be recognised, that is some indication, some action that you have taken to honour those words. Thank you.

MS RICHARDS: Sir, just before we rise, we are not sitting tomorrow. We are next sitting on Thursday afternoon to hear the evidence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer -- I'm sorry, Friday afternoon.

SIR BRIAN LANGSTAFF: We will, however, consider sitting where we are just for a little while longer to let the Prime Minister retire.

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