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INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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Infected Blood Compensation Scheme appoints PR agency to 'combat negative press'

The Infected Blood Compensation Authority, which is set to provide financial compensation to those in the UK impacted by the infected blood scandal, has awarded a £250k brief to a comms agency.

by Evie Barrett | 27 January 2025



Findings of the six-year inquiry on were published in May 2024 (Credit: Leon Neal/Getty Images)

Four Agency Worldwide has been appointed by the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA) to help develop the communications strategy for the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme, it has emerged.

The scheme launches following a public inquiry, in which the government and NHS were accused of failing patients after more than 30,000 people in the UK were

infected with HIV and hepatitis C through contaminated blood products they were given in the 1970s and 80s.

During last year's Autumn Budget, Chancellor Rachel Reeves announced that £11.8bn had been set aside to compensate victims of the scandal.

According to a document available via the Gov.uk Contracts Finder site, Four's brief from the IBCA covers raising awareness among affected communities, as well as ensuring media coverage is "well balanced".

The document states: "We would also expect you to lead on combatting negative press and media, developing defensive lines and changing the narrative to support the good and positive work we have been established to do."

Regarding media engagement, Four has been appointed to "proactively sell-in", "encourage positive reporting", and "lead on lines to take", working closely with the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme's in-house press office.

The brief also covers crisis comms, advocate and stakeholder engagement, and case study curation.

"Your approach will need to evidence candour, warmth and understanding, so that key target groups need to know we are here to help," states the IBCA in the briefing document. "We want them to feel safe and that justice will be served expediently for the hardships they have endured over the years."





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"Importantly, our approach and messaging needs to be straightforward, uncomplicated and honest."

Its focus will span beyond national media to local and community-based titles, in order to target "hard-to-reach audiences".

The document explains: "The decades of mistrust and deliberate misinformation by the UK government has created an engaged but mistrusting audience that actively, and legitimately, is sceptical of the intentions of the UK government, and by association IBCA, to do the right thing and right the wrongs of the infected blood scandal.

"Overall, our primary target audiences are concerned and mistrustful."

The IBCA said in its tender document that it intended to appoint a PR agency for a minimum of two years, with the option to extend by a further 12 months. The total PR budget over the three-year period is £250,000.

Four's contract began in December, according to the Contracts Finder site.

PRWeek UK has contacted the agency for comment but had not received a response at the time of publication.

