

Witness Name: Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt

Statement No.: WITN3499034

Exhibits: WITN3499035 –

WITN3499036

Dated: 05.07.23

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP**

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I, Jeremy Richard Streynsham Hunt, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

1. I am currently the Chancellor of the Exchequer and have been since 14 October 2022. I make this statement pursuant to a 'Rule 9' request from the Inquiry dated 5 June 2023, which asked me questions regarding my involvement in the matters under investigation in my capacity as Chancellor to date.
2. I have previously made a written statement dated 28 June 2022 and given oral evidence to the Inquiry on 27 July 2022, where I answered questions regarding my period in office at the Department of Health and Department of Health and Social Care as it became.
3. I have not set out my career and government roles in this statement, which were outlined in my previous statement.
4. As I said in my previous statement in June 2022, this Inquiry is about an historic injustice, and I have been acutely conscious of giving timely recognition to its victims.
5. The government has accepted the moral case for compensation. I have received updates and advice from my officials in my capacity as Chancellor. These concern live, ongoing policy issues, upon which ministers have not yet come to a decision. It would not be appropriate to share these documents with the Inquiry at this stage in line with the longstanding constitutional convention preserving the protected space required to permit full and frank discussion of policy in the course of formulation. The information contained is subject to change and further discussion and will be reviewed upon consideration of the recommendations of the Inquiry.

6. The government will confirm its response to the recommendations of the Inquiry after a final report is published in the autumn, as has previously been set out by the Minister for the Cabinet Office in his statement to the House of Commons on 19 April 2023, and subsequent statement on Thursday 22 June 2023. The relevant decision, and reasons for it, will then, of course, be provided to the Inquiry and published.

## **Section 2**

7. **I have been asked when I first gave consideration as Chancellor of the Exchequer to the question of compensation for people infected and affected by the use of infected blood and blood products.**
8. As Chancellor, I have continued to stay well informed on the progress being made on the decisions around a compensation scheme, particularly following the publication of the Second Interim Report by Sir Brian Langstaff.
9. Ministerial responsibility for these issues primarily lies with the Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Rt Hon John Glen MP. This reflects the usual Treasury ministerial structures, where the Chief Secretary takes day-to-day responsibilities for spending issues such as these. The specific role of the Chief Secretary in this matter has included undertaking meetings with other government ministers and Treasury policy officials to make progress on decision-making for a compensation scheme (this most recently included a Small Ministerial Group meeting chaired by the Minister for the Cabinet Office on 14th June) and replying to relevant correspondence and Parliamentary questions.
10. I have received regular advice from my officials updating me on the progress DHSC and Cabinet Office are making on considering the policy options for a compensation scheme.
11. On 22 February this year I received advice on the fiscal implications of the policy options being considered. I noted my officials' updates and in particular their emphasis on the imperative to act quickly for the benefit of the infected and affected and to respond meaningfully to the public inquiry, whilst recognising the wider economic and fiscal context.
12. Since then, I received advice on 18 May this year, updating me on the latest of policy options being considered for a compensation scheme. I also received a note on 21 June, which my officials prepared for No.10, outlining some of the more technical, fiscal considerations.
13. As I set out above, given these are live policy issues and the details within the advice are not yet confirmed, I have not provided these submissions as exhibits.
14. In addition to the advice of my officials, I review an updated Treasury scorecard – which sets out an estimated impact of potential measures on public finances across the forecast period – most weeks, and particularly frequently during processes for fiscal events, most recently for the Autumn Statement 2022 and Spring Budget 2023. I know, from the aforementioned advice from officials and the preparations that are made for the Small Ministerial Groups attended by the Chief Secretary, that DHSC is progressing analysis quickly to refine these estimates.

15. The government is considering the recommendations of the Compensation Framework by Sir Robert Francis and the Second Interim Report of Sir Brian Langstaff within the UK's wider macroeconomic context, and the government's enduring commitment to the sustainability of public finances. Treasury officials are working closely with DHSC and Cabinet Office to ensure that any fiscal or economic implications of a compensation scheme are duly considered as one of many factors informing a final decision.
16. **I have been asked to describe the steps I have taken to understand the current impact of waiting for recognition of individual losses on people infected and affected by the use of infected blood and blood products.**
17. As I emphasised in my statement last year, I have been acutely conscious of the impact on those infected and affected and the need to recognise injustice done to victims, since first contact with my sadly late constituent Mike Dorricott in 2007. I deeply regret that Mike was unable to obtain justice whilst alive.
18. In terms of the current impact of waiting for recognition, I understand particularly from having met other constituents, GRO-A and GRO-A that it is imperative that the government acts quickly to give the infected and affected the certainty they need over this issue, and I am confident that the government is doing so.
19. **I have been asked to describe the steps I have taken to satisfy myself with the response of the Government to the Compensation Framework Study by Sir Robert Francis and the Inquiry's recommendations about compensation particularly in the Second Interim Report of Sir Brian Langstaff.**
20. The Compensation Framework Study by Sir Robert Francis was published during my time as a backbencher. Shortly after, on 3 August 2022, I wrote to the Prime Minister Boris Johnson along with former Health Secretaries Matt Hancock MP and the Rt Hon Andy Burnham, urging immediate action on interim payments to victims and bereaved partners [WITN3499035]. Interim payments to infected people and bereaved partners then began to be paid in October 2022 – shortly before I became Chancellor.
21. On 15 December 2022, in my capacity as chair of the Cabinet Committee on Home Affairs, I wrote to the Minister for the Cabinet Office to confirm the Committee's clearance to announce the Government's acceptance of the 1st and 19th recommendations of Sir Robert Francis KC's compensation study – including acceptance of the moral case for compensation. This letter can be found at WITN3499036.
22. I welcome the publication of the Second Interim Report of Sir Brian Langstaff earlier this year. As I have outlined above, I have been kept up to date by my officials through regular updates on how the government is carefully considering the recommendations of both reports.
23. **I have been asked to confirm when the Government intends to provide a substantive response to the Second Interim Report.**
24. The Government is considering the recommendations of the Second Interim Report carefully. HM Treasury officials are working closely with colleagues in the Cabinet Office and Department of Health and Social Care, who are leading on the analysis of the recommendations. Ministers currently meet regularly to discuss this issue through

Small Ministerial Groups as referenced, as mentioned most recently on 14 June. The Chief Secretary and my officials will continue to be closely involved in this process.

25. As stated previously, the Government will respond to the recommendations of the inquiry following the publication of its' final report in the autumn. I will continue to take a close interest in the final outcome of the report.

### **Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

**GRO-C**

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Dated \_\_\_\_\_ 05/07/2023 \_\_\_\_\_

### **Table of exhibits:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes/ Description</b>	<b>Exhibit number</b>
03.08.22	Letter to the Prime Minister signed by Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt, Rt Hon Andy Burnham and Matt Hancock MP urging immediate action on interim payments	WITN3499035
15.12.22	Letter from the Chancellor to the Minister for the Cabinet Office confirming clearance to announce the Government's acceptance of two of Sir Robert Francis's recommendations	WITN3499036