

Witness Name: Lord Frank Field

Statement No.: WITN3557001

Exhibits: WITN3557002

Dated: 4.7.22

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LORD FRANK FIELD

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 21 June 2022.

I, Lord Field, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

Please set out your name, address, date of birth and professional qualifications.

1. Frank Field,
 1942, Graduate and Member of Parliament for Birkenhead, 1979-2019.

Section 2: HIV/Haemophilia Litigation

In the late 1980s, a number of haemophilia patients infected with HIV through blood products brought legal proceedings against the Government, health authorities and other defendants. Please describe how and when this came to your attention and what if any actions you took in relation to those proceedings.

2. Once I knew the horror faced by some of my haemophiliac constituents infected by HIV from contaminated Factor VIII products I believe I helped establish a cross-party group campaigning for adequate compensation.
3. I was tremendously privileged to be able to work with the lawyer, Nicholas Warren, during my first ten years or so as MP. Nick ran the Birkenhead Resource Unit which was a legal service for Birkenhead constituents. Access to Nick was gained through the MP or local councillors. My friendship with Nick continued and he would help me informally with difficult constituency cases. It was Nick who alerted me to this scandal.
4. I worked with David Watters in the campaign to get adequate compensation for infected haemophiliacs so that they didn't have to initiate individual court action. I did not believe that the £20,000 cash payment was anything but an opening offer and that it was important to go back to the government to demand a much more adequate payment. At the bottoms of ^{HSOC000497} page 5 of the APPG minutes you sent me there is a hint at the tension between some MPs and backbench Tory MPs acting on behalf of the government. One Tory MP for example vehemently lobbied me stating that the offer would be taken off the table that day if the Haemophilia Society didn't recommend it immediately to its members. I was knocked over by the violence of the language used. The idea that people who were prematurely dying because of a government blunder should somehow find the energy to sue separately was to me an added outrageous and unnecessary injustice.
5. I cannot recall providing evidence to or being involved in any other inquiries, investigations, criminal or civil litigation resulting from Infected Factor VIII.
6. I believe I was an active member of the APPG until the last of those constituents I knew had died from contaminated Factor VIII.
7. In 1989 I lobbied The Sunday Times to take up this scandal and campaign as it did for Thalidomide victims. I would have tabled questions and been active in any relevant parliamentary activities.

An All-Party Meeting on the Subject of Haemophilia and HIV, which you attended, was held on 30 November 1989 to brief Members of Parliament (MPs) on the reaction of the Haemophilia Society and the Macfarlane Trust to the Government announcement of making £20,000 payments to each haemophilia patient infected with HIV through blood products [see enclosed minutes HSOC0000497]. Please answer the following questions to the extent that you are able to:

- a. What were your views at the time about the Government's position, its offer and the reaction of the Haemophilia Society and the Macfarlane Trust to the announcement? Have your views changed over time?
8. My views have not changed except for a sense of shame that I didn't continue campaigning for this Inquiry. With hindsight I should have been far less polite at the APPG meeting, but I was trying to keep together my parliamentary colleagues to lobby that this could only be a first payment.
- b. In that meeting, you made " the observation that the Government has begun politically, if not morally or socially, to accept accountability ", and expressed the feeling " that the £20,000 payments were a useful step but not enough ". On what basis did you make these observations, and what did you mean by them?
9. I was angry with what I believed to be the Governments opening offer would be the final payment to individuals dying through the use of infected Factor VIII. I did not know how to value the loss of life by the use of infected Factor VIII but I did know that destroying a life had to cost more than £20,000.

WITN3557002
In your letter to Sir Brian Langstaff dated 31 May 2022, you state that you took up the issue of infected blood products by writing an article on it for the Sunday Times. A Sunday Times article is also mentioned in your letter to GRO-A Committee Member of the Haemophilia Society, dated 9 December 1999 [copy

enclosed, HSOC0026736]. The inquiry has in its possession two such articles: one titled 'Aids and a question of responsibility' [article dated 10 September 1989, DHSC0046937_089, copy enclosed] and another titled 'Why Aids award is too little, too late' [article dated 10 December 1989, HSOC0007378, copy enclosed]. What was the aim of these articles, and to what extent, in your view, was that aim achieved?

10. The aim of my article (10/12/89) was to initiate the campaign to try and persuade The Sunday Times to start a campaign (for which I lobbied the editor). The second article was one of despair trying to ensure that the £20,000 settlement was not the end of the matter.

WITN3557002

In your same letter to Sir Brian Langstaff, you make references to pressures being applied by the Government in relation to settlement. Please provide further details of the pressures to which you refer. In particular, please set out the following if you are able to:

- a. When and how did you witness them?
- b. Who within the Government applied such pressure?
- c. What, if any, was your response?
- d. Did you have any reason to believe that the pressures which you witnessed were deliberately applied and went beyond the normal pressures of litigation? If, in your view, the pressures were deliberately applied by the Government, what did you take to be their reason for doing so?

11. I assumed the Government had called in pliable backbenchers to get them to close down the debate. I was one on the receiving end of some of this campaign. My response was to reject this pressure whilst still trying to remain on polite terms with colleagues. With hindsight that was a mistake. The Government was however successful in taking the steam out of our cross-party efforts. I totally misread how some MPs would disengage once this offer was made. The impetus behind the cross-party group collapsed and that may well have been in part my fault for not continuing to campaign as hard as I had.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

4.7.2022