

Witness Name: Boris Johnson

Statement No. WITN7702001

Exhibits: WITN7702002

Dated: 10 July 2023

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BORIS JOHNSON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5 June 2023.

I, BORIS JOHNSON, will say as follows: -

1. I was Prime Minister between 24 July 2019 and 06 September 2022. I have been asked when I first gave consideration to the question of compensation for people infected and affected by the use of infected blood and blood products. When preparing this statement Cabinet Office colleagues have conducted document searches in order to assist me in fully responding. Those searches have not revealed any documents to suggest that I considered compensation before the first interim report of this inquiry which was published on 29 July 2022. Even if I had not actively thought about compensation beforehand, I certainly gave careful consideration to it at that point.
2. Prior to the interim report being published, I cannot recall any particular consideration of compensation in respect of infected blood. I was of course aware that the inquiry was ongoing and that compensation would be considered once the inquiry had concluded and reported.

3. Whilst not specifically about compensation, I wrote a public letter to campaigner groups on 21 October 2019 in which I indicated that the Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP (in his role as Minister for the Cabinet Office ("MCO")) would keep me updated on the inquiry's progress and the issue of the disparity between the support available in the devolved administrations. I have been asked whether I received updates from Mr Dowden. Document searches conducted on my behalf within the limited time available have not identified updates. However, it must be noted that on 06 November 2019 the pre-election period commenced with a general election scheduled for 12 December 2019. During the pre-election period Members of Parliament ("MPs") must exercise caution in making announcements or decisions that might have the effect of being new or long-term in nature. The absence of updates to me during that time could have been related to the pre-election period we were in.
4. Following the general election and Mr Dowden's continued appointment at MCO I understand that Mr Dowden met with campaigners on 28 January 2020 and that on 12 February 2020 [WITN7702002] he wrote to me setting out the issues discussed at that meeting. I note that the following day there was a cabinet reshuffle, and the Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP became the Paymaster General and MCO, meaning that she assumed the role of sponsor Minister for the Inquiry.
5. I have been asked whether I received the letter from Mr Dowden and what consideration I gave to it. I cannot recall seeing the letter.
6. I note that Oliver Dowden's letter mentioned compensation and one campaigner mentioned a framework. I am aware that during Penny Mordaunt's posting as MCO she commissioned an independent framework compensation study.
7. Shortly after receipt of the inquiry's interim report, on 03 August 2022 I received a letter from 3 former health secretaries, the Right Honourable MPs Jeremy Hunt, Matt Hancock and Andy Burnham, urging me to authorise the interim compensation payments recommended by the Chair.

8. I am aware that the then Minister for the Cabinet Office (“MCO”) and Paymaster General, the Right Honourable Michael Ellis QC MP wrote to the Chair on 16 August 2022 to confirm that the government accepted the Chair’s recommendation in the interim report regarding interim payments.
9. On 17 August 2022 I announced that the government accepted the recommendation to pay £100,000 to each of the victims and to those who tragically lost their partners. The announcement was made via various government communication channels, including my official Twitter feed as the Prime Minister. I also have a personal Twitter account and my team re-posted the official ‘tweet’ and commented “*It is utterly appalling that the families affected by the infected blood scandal have had to fight for so long to be heard. Today, we are finally beginning to right that wrong.*” I have been asked whether my comments indicated my expectation that further compensation would follow. It is right that I believed that the interim payments were just that, interim, provisional. In the video message making the announcement I also mentioned that people could register with the blood schemes “*between now and the inception of any future scheme*”, which is another indication that I felt the interim payments were the beginning, not the end.
10. I am pleased that I was in government when the first steps towards righting the wrong were taken. I have every sympathy for the infected and affected.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated _10th July 2023 _____

Table of exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
12.02.2020	Letter from Rt Hon Oliver Dowden CBE MP to Prime Minister	WITN7702002