



Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Paymaster General
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Our reference: MCO/00505

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4 May 2020

Dear Mr Stein & Mr Harrison,

Thank you for your letter of 26 July addressed to the Prime Minister on behalf of your clients, regarding the Infected Blood Inquiry. I am responding as the sponsoring Minister of the Inquiry. I apologise for the long delay in replying.

First of all, I wish to reassure you and your clients that the Inquiry is a priority for the Government. In January, the previous sponsoring Minister, Rt Hon Oliver Dowden MP, and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health, Nadine Dorries MP, met with a number of people representing those infected and affected, to hear their views and listen to their concerns. Following the meeting, Mr Dowden wrote to the Prime Minister updating him on the Inquiry's progress, and the actions that he and Ms Dorries had agreed to address some of the most pressing issues of support for people infected and affected.

It is extremely important that all those who have suffered so terribly can get the answers they have spent decades waiting for, and lessons can be learnt so that a tragedy of this scale never happens again.

The Inquiry is making good progress and has been hearing oral evidence since 30 April 2019, with nearly four thousand others providing written statements. As you will know, at its most recent hearings in February, the Inquiry heard from a series of expert panels that include psychological, hepatitis, HIV, blood and bleeding disorders, statistics and medical ethics groups. Unfortunately, because of the Covid-19 outbreak, the Inquiry has had to postpone its next hearings scheduled for June and July until after the summer. However, the Inquiry's investigative work, its examination of the evidence and its preparations for forthcoming hearings, continues at pace. I am committed to providing the Inquiry with all the support it needs to complete its work as quickly as a thorough examination of the facts allows.

On the matter of financial support, I welcome the announcement in January by the Northern Ireland Assembly of £1m in funding to uplift payments to beneficiaries. However, I am aware there remain significant disparities in financial and non-financial support for those infected and affected across the UK. This is why, as the sponsoring Minister of the Inquiry, I want to assure you that I am committed to taking forward the actions agreed at the meeting in January to address these disparities.

You also referred to the ongoing call for compensation, which I recognise is different from financial support. At the meeting in January, Ministers also agreed to consider a request to look at a framework for compensation before the Inquiry reports, and this is something I will be discussing with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health.

Please be reassured that as soon as I receive the Inquiry's recommendations, I will review them with the utmost urgency.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Mordaunt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt MP
Paymaster General