

Message from Catherine Nalty, Deputy Secretary to the Inquiry

In June and July we held just over twenty meetings with groups of Inquiry participants based in different parts of the UK. The discussions focused on the impact of coronavirus on the next set of hearings. It was extremely helpful for the Inquiry team to hear the views of almost 200 participants. This was a learning experience for our team and, thankfully, in almost every meeting the technology worked well. We were especially pleased that people who had not previously attended any Inquiry events in person, were now able to do that, so I expect we will hold meetings in this way again.



Update on Psychological Support

At the end of February the Inquiry heard evidence from our psychosocial experts who all emphasised the importance of tailored psychological support for people infected and affected, including when they've lived with what happened for many years. In his letter to Penny Mordaunt MP, the sponsor minister for the Inquiry, Sir Brian called for more action to provide dedicated psychological support, describing this as "long overdue". In the meantime, and as we approach hearings which will be particularly important for all participants, we thought it important to ensure Inquiry participants are aware of the specific support currently offered, as we understand it.

The Infected Blood Support Schemes across the UK:

- England: grants for counselling support are now available for family members as well as beneficiaries, and this extends to family members of deceased beneficiaries
- Northern Ireland: a clinical psychologist and dedicated social worker are available for individuals infected as a result of receiving contaminated blood, and for affected family members.
- Wales: beneficiaries, their family members and bereaved family members can access psychological support from the specialist team at WIBSS
- Scotland: psychological support service available for people with haemophilia or other bleeding disorders and their families, and grants for counselling available from SIBSS for all beneficiaries and family members.

In addition,

- The Terrence Higgins Trust is offering a free talking therapy service for former Macfarlane Trust beneficiaries, living with or affected by HIV as a result of contaminated blood.
- The Hepatitis C Trust runs a confidential helpline on 020 7089 6221 which is staffed by people with personal experience of hepatitis C.

Finally, the support provided by the Inquiry's dedicated team from the British Red Cross will continue throughout the coming hearings, in person and on the phone.

Returning to document review at Fleetbank House

When the lockdown began the whole Inquiry team started working from home, and, as Sir Brian has commented, good progress is being made on the Inquiry's investigative work. This was possible because many thousands of documents had already been obtained and placed on the Inquiry's software system. We had to pause on one area of work - reviewing boxes of documents - but that has now restarted. You will see from the two photos (one from last summer) that their working space now looks very different. Paralegals are spaced 2 metres apart, gloves etc are available and the paralegals work through one box each to avoid touching the same surfaces. We are also now contacting other archives to resume searches around the UK.



Paralegal at work in Fleetbank House
June 2019



A social distanced paralegal at work in
Fleetbank House - July 2020

Infected Blood Inquiry contact details

Tel: 0808 169 1377

Email: contact@infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk

Address:

Fleetbank House, 1st Floor, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8AE

Twitter: @bloodinquiry

Website: www.infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk

British Red Cross Confidential Support line

Tel: 0800 458 9473 or 0203 417 0280 at these times:

Monday between 11am - 1pm;
Wednesday between 7pm - 9pm; and
Friday between 2pm - 4pm.

Or leave a message any time and you will receive a call back as soon as possible