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Diana Johnson MP
House of Commons
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25 July 2017

Thank you for sending me a copy of your letter of 14 July to the Prime Minister regarding the UK Contaminated Blood and Blood Products Inquiry.

I, and Haemophilia Scotland, are grateful for your commitment to this issue and the tenacity of your campaigning. As you may know, Haemophilia Scotland was a core participant in the Penrose Inquiry into the disaster and we hope that we can share that experience to the benefit of everyone wanting a productive and effective UK Inquiry.

Firstly, we are in strong agreement with your call for the consultation and establishment of the Inquiry to be led by the Department of Justice or the Cabinet Office. We agree with you that this would strengthen the impartiality of the process and the confidence of those affected.

Similarly, we support your call for a clear timetable to be announced as soon as possible. The issues raised by this disaster are extremely distressing to those involved. Prolonged periods of uncertainty and speculation add to the damage already inflicted on the community. However, there must be sufficient time for everyone affected to engage with the outstanding questions around the terms of reference and powers of the Inquiry.

Finally, on the issue of security of documents, we agree that some steps are required to ensure the Inquiry has as much relevant evidence to consider as possible. Our experience during the Penrose Inquiry is particularly apposite here.

On day one (8 Mar 2011) of the Penrose Inquiry oral hearings the Tamburrini evidence started. Medical records were destroyed between the announcement of the Inquiry and it beginning. The relevant passage of the transcript runs from line 20 on p83 to line 12 on page 86.
<http://www.penroseinquiry.org.uk/downloads/transcripts/080311.PDF>

Ms Dunlop, the Inquiry QC on the day, summarised the issues saying “the Crown Office didn't tell practitioner services not to destroy the records and the Scottish Government Health Directorate didn't tell anyone not to destroy the records.”

There is clearly a valuable lesson to be learnt from the Scottish experience. It would be best practice now for steps to be taken to prevent the destruction of medical records or relevant documents. These may be held,

- In general practice or haemophilia centres
- by blood transfusion services,
- by any of the Departments of Health for England, Scotland, Wales, or Northern Ireland,
- or in the Home Office (specifically in relation to the collection of blood from incarcerated populations).

We are looking forward to working more closely with you as the process of defining the scope and powers of the Inquiry continue.

Yours sincerely,

Dan Farthing-Sykes
CEO, Haemophilia Scotland

CC
The RT Hon Theresa May MP, Prime Minister