



Cabinet Office

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Our Ref: CDL/2211

Diana Johnson MP  
Sir Peter Bottomley MP  
Co-Chairs  
All-Party Parliamentary Group  
on Haemophilia and Contaminated Blood  
House of Commons  
London SW1A 0AA

18 October 2018

Dear Diana and Peter,

In order to ensure preservation of historical records and information of relevance to the Infected Blood Inquiry, on 3 April this year Cabinet Office officials circulated an instruction to government departments to stop destruction of any information relevant to the Inquiry.

Unfortunately, the failure of the IT address used to send the instruction meant that it was not received by departments in April, and was not promulgated to departments until a further, more detailed message was circulated on 11 June.

We have gone back to every department to which the emails of 3 April and 11 June were addressed, and each such department has confirmed that no information of relevance to the Infected Blood Inquiry has been destroyed since 3 April. Because of their size and the complexity of some of the records they hold, HM Courts and Tribunals Service and the Legal Aid Agency are continuing to work to provide this assurance and have committed to doing so as urgently as possible.

I am very sorry about this mistake. It should not have happened; the Cabinet Office takes its responsibilities as sponsor of the Infected Blood Inquiry very seriously, and we understand the seriousness of such a mistake.

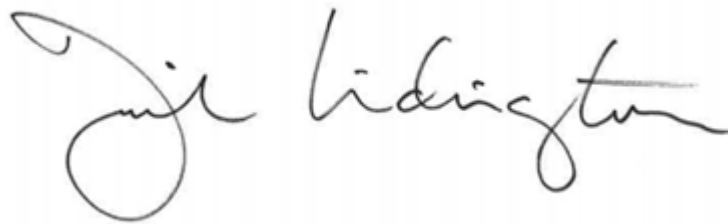
Cabinet Office officials have written to the Inquiry today with details of what happened and how it happened, the mitigating factors in place and to provide reassurance that all relevant information has been protected, and also to formally apologise to the Inquiry and most importantly to people infected and affected. In the interests of transparency, the Inquiry will publish the Cabinet Office letter as well as the original emailed instructions of 3 April and 11 June.

The Cabinet Office takes its sponsorship of the Infected Blood Inquiry very seriously. This was an administrative error that should not have happened, but fortunately no actual harm has occurred. I have discussed with senior officials exactly what went wrong, why, and the steps that are being taken to ensure no repetition. We will learn the lessons from this to avoid anything similar occurring in future.

Separately, Sir Brian Langstaff wrote to me this week following the preliminary hearings. When the Inquiry was launched in July this year, I deferred making a decision on whether to appoint a panel to sit with Sir Brian until he was able to take the view of core participants. At the preliminary hearings he was able to do so, and there was no demand for such a panel. Sir Brian is establishing expert groups to provide openness and transparency across a range of truly expert opinion, and he recommended that I do not appoint co-determining panel members. I am happy to accept his recommendation and have confirmed this to Parliament today in a Written Ministerial Statement.

In his letter Sir Brian also called for action in relation to financial and psychological support for the affected and infected. The Government will consider these comments and Sir Brian's recommendations carefully and will respond as soon as possible.

In the interest of completeness, I am depositing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Lidington". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

**Rt Hon David Lidington CBE MP**