

Written Ministerial Statement

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Department of Health

STATEMENT FOLLOWING PUBLICATION OF THE INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY REPORT

Published on Monday 20 May 2024

Mr Swann (The Minister of Health): First and most importantly, I want to acknowledge all the individuals and families impacted by this tragedy. The anguish and trauma they have endured over many decades is inconceivable.

The health service's use of contaminated blood in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in untold suffering and loss. I believe it is right that today, I publicly reiterate my Department's apology to all those in the infected and/or affected community in Northern Ireland. They were failed by the system that should have been there to help them and for that I am deeply sorry.

While I welcome the publication of the final report from the Infected Blood Inquiry, I also recognise that this is a poignant day for so many. This has been a long and arduous journey for them, and I know that there will have been many times over the years when they thought this day would never come.

It is with deep regret that we cannot undo the actions of the past, however it is incumbent on us in government and across the health service to ensure that this never happens again.

While I am not in a position to respond in detail to the report today, I have no doubt that the work of the Inquiry and its recommendations will help to inform and shape the delivery of healthcare in Northern Ireland in the future.

My Department will ensure the report is given the careful consideration it deserves and will be engaging with counterparts on a four nations basis, as well as across NI Executive departments. A full response to the Inquiry's recommendations will be provided as soon as is practicable.

Members can also be assured that my Department will continue to provide updates on this important piece of work.

Throughout my time in this office, I have met with those impacted many times and have heard directly from them about the devastating effect the use of contaminated blood has had on their lives. I therefore want to make clear today that we will continue to seek their input as we move through the next stage of this process.

Finally, I want to pay tribute to the infected and/or affected community for the bravery, determination, and dignity they have shown over the years. This was especially evident over the course of the Inquiry, and I remain grateful to those who contributed. Recalling their experiences will have understandably been very traumatic.

I am also grateful to Sir Brian Langstaff KC and his team for their thorough work in producing this comprehensive report.