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Rt Hon David Lidington MP
Minister for the Cabinet Office
The Cabinet Office

By Email.

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I am writing regarding the UK Inquiry into the tragic events which led to many people becoming infected with hepatitis C and/or HIV as a result of receiving either blood products or a blood transfusion. I have previously had a number of useful discussions with Jackie Doyle-Price MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Health, when she was lead Minister for this inquiry. Now that responsibility for this has transferred to the Cabinet Office, I thought it would be useful to raise some key points in relation to the inquiry with you.

Firstly, we support the view from most stakeholders that the Inquiry should be led by a panel, rather than a single chair. As well as hopefully allowing the Inquiry to conduct its work more quickly, a panel would also help ensure resilience in the event of illness or any other unforeseen circumstances meaning one of the panel members requires a period of absence.

I understand that you hope to be in a position to announce a chair shortly. Could you confirm when you will be able to let me and Scottish Government officials know who the chair will be? I would be grateful if you could give us prior notice in confidence of your proposed chair sufficiently ahead of any announcement so that we can reflect back to you any views of concerns that may be raised by Scottish stakeholders.

Secondly, as I have already raised with the Secretary of State for Health and the Prime Minister, particularly to help meet most Scottish stakeholders' objectives of avoiding the inquiry becoming too lengthy, the Scottish Government believes the UK Inquiry should not duplicate the work of the Penrose Inquiry in relation to what happened in Scotland. As well as considerably increasing the likely timescales for the inquiry, considering points which the Penrose Inquiry has already considered in depth would be likely to raise very difficult constitutional questions in the event that the UK Inquiry reached any different conclusions from those of Lord Penrose. The Scottish Government would be happy to work with the National Records of Scotland (NRS) to help supply any records NRS holds from the Penrose Inquiry which the UK Inquiry panel wishes to consider. There is a very detailed set of records, which will cover the key decisions made, including many that were taken on a UK-wide basis.



I would be grateful if we could keep in close touch as the inquiry is set up so that the Scottish Government is kept up to date and that we can feed in our views in relation to the terms of reference.

Best wishes,
Shona

SHONA ROBISON