

The Infected Blood Public Inquiry NEWSLETTER



THE
HAEMOPHILIA
SOCIETY

A summary of remote inquiry hearings

The trusts and schemes set up to support people infected with contaminated blood products came under scrutiny this week.

Peter Stevens, chair of the Macfarlane Trust (MFT) 2000-07, chair of Skipton Fund from 2003, chair of Eileen Trust 2000-18 and chair of Caxton Foundation 2011-13 gave evidence for two days. He was followed by Ann Hithersay, MFT chief executive 1997—2003 and Christo-

pher FitzGerald, MFT chair 2007-12.

Mr Stevens had two sons with haemophilia—one died in 1989 after being infected with HIV.

An original MFT trustee in 1988, Mr Stevens then returned as chair in 2000. He was critical of the government for not giving the MFT enough money to deliver the commitments of the Trust's Deeds, in particular towards the bereaved, but adopted a cautious, low key

approach when asking ministers for more money. He defended MFT's reserves of £4 million.

Mrs Hithersay said the MFT's culture was "not to be over-generous", with importance placed on "looking after and growing" the money it had. She felt the MFT behaved more like an administrative arm of government than an independent charity. Mr FitzGerald took steps to reduce the MFT's reserves.

Inquiry news focus: Peter Stevens' emails

In 2004 Peter Stevens was in regular email contact with Haydn Lewis, a recipient of the MFT, who has since died. After receiving an email from Mr Lewis, Mr Stevens forwarded it to a colleague with the comment: "It is irritating that someboyd (sic) so thick can come up with such meddlesome suggestions." A second email from Mr Stevens following an MFT partnership meeting, said: "What a monumental waste of time—not just this afternoon but all the hours spent nurturing that lot of moaners." Mr Stevens said his comment about Mr Lewis was "totally inappropriate" and he had apologised to him when the email came to light. The inquiry was also shown an email sent to Mr Stevens by a fellow trustee, Gordon Clarke, sympathising that he was getting criticism from "the great unwashed".

Quotes of the week

"What's with these people? ..it makes one wonder why infected intimates are treated exactly as registrants, since they do not have haemophilia to worry about. We might see if we can review that..(that would be a way of pissing off the Lewis contingent)."

Peter Stevens, MFT chair, 2004

"We were very careful not to appear too greedy. Now, perhaps in making that decision, we should have erred on the side of registrant need more strongly than possibly we did."

Ann Hithersay, chief executive MFT

"There were many people...from whom we never heard or we only heard when they said thank you. There are others who had very negative views, which they expressed very forcibly."

Mr Stevens on MFT registrants

"I believe that the whole issue of life insurance was not looked at by the trustees, by government ... and that the deficit in the lives of people was not recognised because it wasn't looked at. Some questions are too difficult to look at."

Mrs Hithersay