

Witness Name: John Aubrey
Statement No.: WITN0071002
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 26/08/2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN AUBREY

This statement is supplementary to my original witness statement to the inquiry dated 12 February 2019

I, John Aubrey, will say as follows: -

1. Since my statement was taken I have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD").
2. 2 to 3 days after the Inquiry interviewed me, by coincidence I received a letter from Welsh Infected Blood Support Scheme ("WIBSS"). WIBSS asked me if I would like to talk to somebody, whether face-to-face or group sessions or by telephone. I responded yes, face to face.
3. I realised after meeting the Inquiry team that talking things through helped me. All the emotions came out and I found it helpful to talk. However, it also brought things to a head, bringing up things that I had pushed into the background for a long time.
4. Two weeks after responding to WIBSS, Velindre Health Trust (a cancer hospital located in Cardiff) said they would get in touch with me. They sent me to see a woman called Julie Armitage who has been brilliant.

Julie is a wellbeing counsellor who has put my mental problems down to PTSD. This was diagnosed within 5 or 6 sessions.

5. PTSD was explained to me as being trauma as a result of being given HCV and the stigma associated with that. It was like a Pandora's box opening, when I spoke to the inquiry team.
6. For the first 6 months of sessions they were once a week, then becoming once a month (with each session lasting for 1 hour). I had a particularly bad Christmas in 2020 where I digressed significantly and went back to having depression and suicidal thoughts.
7. I believe this was triggered by the lockdowns in 2020 when I wasn't working. It gave me more time to think. I was furloughed throughout lockdown.
8. There was a downturn in finances but we didn't have financial hardship. It just gave me time to think and I found this difficult. The suicidal thoughts returned. I didn't act upon these thoughts.
9. I also hadn't seen Julie Armitage GRO-C
GRO-C I had an appointment just after the New Year in 2021. On reflection, because I didn't have this outlet over Christmas, I struggled even more. My partner was a great support to me.
10. My appointments with Julie are ongoing. She says I have made a lot of progress but there are times when I will take a step back though I am still taking two or three steps forward. The anxiety or panic attacks are ongoing but I am better able to cope with them. These feel like I am having a heart attack with the room closing in on me.
11. When the panic attacks arise, they take me by surprise. These happen on average once every few weeks. They hit me from nowhere. I am able to deal with it by leaving the situation and getting into the open air.

12. There have been occasions when I have frozen at work. However, they still don't know about my anxiety. Ever since I started seeing a counsellor, one of the female bosses at work told me to give myself a shake and get on with it.
13. I am not on medication but I have been offered it. I was asked whether I wanted to go on antidepressants over Christmas but I elected not to.
14. I will be seeing Julie for the foreseeable future. It is all paid for by Velindre Health Trust. I understand that my PTSD is chronic but I am learning to manage it. It should get easier to control.
15. I am a lot calmer than I was. I have flashbacks now and again but I am better able to understand and accept them. I used to feel guilty but I now realise that I am not to blame for what has happened to me.
16. I intend to retire soon.
17. I have received a levelling up payment from WIBSS and an increase in monthly payments. My original lump sum was £20,000 but this was increased by £30,000 to add up to the £50,000 that the Scottish claimants received as stage one payments from Skipton. This was just a few weeks ago. I also receive £29,000 per year from WIBSS in monthly payments.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed GRO-C _____

Dated 26.8.21