

**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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**FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SAUNDERS**

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I, Michael Saunders, will say as follows:-

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Michael Saunders. I was born on [GRO-C] 1939 and I live at [GRO-C] [GRO-C] Birmingham [GRO-C] with my wife. We are both retired.
2. I am the father of Andrew Saunders who was born on [GRO-C] 1972 and died on 26 September 1994 at the age of 22 after contracting HIV and Hepatitis C from contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Andrew's full medical records which I believe have been destroyed because of the period of time since his death.
4. Where dates are referred to in this statement and I have not had access to medical records those dates are recorded to the best of my knowledge given the passage of time.

## **Section 2. How infected**

5. Andrew suffered from severe Haemophilia A.
6. He was treated Birmingham Children's Hospital under the care of Dr Frank Hill.
7. I believe that Andrew was infected in 1983 after the hospital continued to treat his haemophilia with infected Factor VIII even though they knew it was contaminated. I believe they did this because they did not have enough NHS Factor VIII to treat their patients. I believe Andrew was treated with non heat treated Armour Factor VIII.
8. We were not given any information about the potential risks associated with Factor VIII.
9. We became aware that something was wrong when the Mail on Sunday newspaper printed an article about contaminated Factor VIII being used in hospitals. The Haemophilia Society denied that the report was true.
10. Some months later we were informed by the hospital that Andrew was infected with AIDS. He was only 11 years old at the time so, as his parents, we decided to keep his diagnosis from him.
11. When Andrew was 15 years old the hospital wanted him to be aware of the route of transmission of the virus by sexual intercourse so Dr Hill told him that he was infected with AIDS.
12. Andrew was told not to have any sexual relations with girls.

## **Section 3. Other infections**

13. Although we have no proof we do believe that Andrew was exposed to vCJD as the symptoms he suffered in later life were the same as people who had that disease.

14. I also believe he was exposed to Hepatitis B.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

15. Andrew was tested without our consent. We did not know he was being tested for HIV.

16. I believe he was not given sufficient information about his infection. I also believe he was tested for the purposes of research although I have no proof.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

17. Andrew completely changed after he was informed of his diagnosis. He was only 15 and went from being a loving, happy son who always came home on time to being disruptive and argumentative.

18. He had a good relationship with his sisters before his diagnosis. This deteriorated after his diagnosis because of the change in his behaviour.

19. He started staying out late and getting into trouble with the police. He just seemed to give up on life.

20. It took us a long time to get Andrew accepted into a normal school when he was a child because of his haemophilia. His HIV diagnosis did not really affect his education because he was not told about it until he was 15.

21. When Andrew went for job interviews he never got the job if he told them about his AIDS/HIV status.

22. When Andrew left home it devastated our family. His mother was always looking for him and asking his friends how he was. This meant that we neglected our daughters a bit. Our youngest daughter felt it the most.

23. All our family was aware that Andrew was infected with AIDS. They were very supportive. However, neighbours and acquaintances kept away from us

because, at that time, everyone thought you could catch the disease by just being in the same room. It was very hard.

### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

24. Andrew did receive treatment for his HIV. I remember that he took a lot of tablets but I cannot recall their names due to the passage of time.
25. Andrew's care was transferred to the adult Haemophilia Centre at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham when he was 16 years old. He was then under the care of Dr Wilde who Andrew liked. However, I can recall a number of occasions when he was receiving treatment for a bleed, or an illness related to HIV, where he did not cooperate with staff and was then discharged even though he still needed treatment.
26. The hospital made it clear that if he did not cooperate with staff they would not treat him and Andrew just didn't seem to care.
27. I spoke to Dr Wilde on one occasion and asked if he would speak to Andrew because I was worried that Andrew was not coping mentally. He did speak to Andrew and Andrew told him how he was feeling. Dr Wilde just told him that there was nothing he could do for him and that Andrew should go out and make the most of the time he had left.
28. This had a huge impact on me as, until I heard this, I had been hoping for a cure. I spoke to Andrew after we left the appointment and tried to reassure him that a cure would be found and he would be ok. He was very down and resigned to his fate. He was 18 years old at the time.
29. Andrew was never offered any counselling which is shocking given he was only a child when he was diagnosed. I believe his mental health would have benefited from counselling.

30. I have never been offered counselling. My wife was offered it on one occasion [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

31. When Andrew was 15 years old he received a payment from the Government of about £20,000. I cannot recall the details of how this came about. It may have been as a result of the American HIV litigation.
32. When Andrew was about 18 I believe he received another payment but I do not know how much this was for as he was living away from home by then.
33. My wife's sister informed us that she had been told people who had been infected with Hepatitis C could now make a claim. I contacted the Haemophilia Society and spoke to someone called Chris who informed me that this was correct and that I could claim from the Skipton Fund as Andrew's next of kin. I was told to send Andrew's medical records from the Birmingham Children's Hospital as evidence that he had been infected. I contacted the hospital and was told that no records existed from the time that Andrew was treated.
34. Chris then informed me that our application to the Fund had been rejected because of lack of evidence but that if I could get a doctor to support our claim that Andrew had been infected with Hepatitis C we could appeal against the decision. I asked how we were going to prove our case if the hospital had not kept records and that, in the circumstances, surely the onus was on the Fund to prove Andrew was not infected rather than the other way around. Chris agreed and said she would speak to the Appeal Chairperson at the Skipton Fund.
35. I went to the QE Hospital to see Mr Wilde. I saw his secretary who said that he was not in the hospital that day but that she would get him to try to help us if he could. Mr Wilde then sent a letter to the Society saying that, in his opinion, Andrew had been infected with Hepatitis C.

36. Our application was eventually granted and in or about June 2011 we received a payment of £20,000.

**Anonymity**

37. I do not want to be anonymous.

38. I do not want to give oral evidence at the Inquiry but I would be prepared to do so if the Inquiry feels it would be helpful. ✓

**Statement of Truth**

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

Sign: GRO-C

Dated 02/01/2019