

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: Matthew [GRO-B]

Statement No: WITN1775001

Exhibits:0

Dated: February 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MATTHEW [GRO-B]

I, Matthew [GRO-B] will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Matthew [GRO-B] DOB [GRO-B] I live at [GRO-B]  
[GRO-B]
2. My father [GRO-B: F] DOB [GRO-B] died on [GRO-B] at the age of 50 after being infected with HIV as a result of treatment with contaminated blood products.
3. Other members of my immediate family, including my mother, will also be providing statements to the Inquiry. I am one of five siblings.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

5. My father suffered from Haemophilia A and was treated with Factor VIII.
6. I was only a child when my father was infected so I do not have much information about this time. This will be covered in detail in my mother's statement.

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## Section 3. Other Infections

7. Given what I have learnt about the Contaminated Blood Scandal over the years I believe that my father was also exposed to Hepatitis C along with all the other haemophiliacs who received contaminated factor concentrate.

## Section 4. Consent.

8. This is not something that I am able to comment on. My mother's statement will address this issue.

## Section 5. Impact

9. I was first made aware of my father's illness during the summer holidays when I was a child.
10. We tried to keep a normal life for as long as we could but when the symptoms started to show our world just shut down. We couldn't have friends round anymore and our world seemed to shrink overnight.
11. My parents had tried to shield my brother and I from it for as long as possible.
12. I had seen the adverts on television and the news coverage. I knew that Dad having HIV/AIDS meant he was dying.
13. All of the jokes at school were about AIDS at the time, which was difficult to deal with even though the other children didn't know about my Dad. I couldn't speak up and try to put an end to the jokes or they would have known something was up. It was like someone having leprosy. There is nothing today that compares in terms of stigma.
14. School were very good and tried to make sure that I was ok but even that brought its own problems. I was regularly called into the teacher's room so they could check how things were at home; when I came out my friends wanted to know why I'd been summonsed and of course I couldn't tell them the real reason for it.

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15. Even today it isn't something I feel I can talk openly about. I have told some of my friends and people are generally more understanding these days but I still mainly keep quiet about my Dad's illness. The stigma didn't die when Dad died; it has only really improved in the last 10 years as people have become more informed.
16. I remember that as Dad got more ill there was a smell in the house; it was a smell you associate with death and it got to the point where I just didn't want to go home. Mum had a hospital bed brought in towards the end and cared for him at home. Tom and I helped her as we were to only two at home full time. I remember having to do things like help Dad to the toilet. It was soul destroying to watch him struggle.
17. A District Nurse used to come in and help. She was the mother of a boy in my year at school who I didn't get on with. I was terrified that he would find out about Dad's HIV status and tell other people at school.
18. Dad died at home in GRO-B 1993. I remember clearly that it was a Monday night and I was watching the Krypton Factor on TV when Mum came down to tell us that Dad had passed away. It was so hard having to deal with his death and the stigma attached.
19. I was just 16 years old and about to sit my GCSE mock exams. I went on to do A levels but really, after his death, I went off the rails. Within 2 months I was experimenting with drink and drugs; something I had not done before.
20. Mum had to return to full time work and sell the house because she couldn't afford it on her own.
21. I suffered from depression and it was only when I got into my early 30s that I was really able to settle down into a job. Before that I would do a job for 3 or 4 months and just move on. There was no permanency or stability.
22. I am now a builder. This is the last job that I (or anyone who knows me) expected me to do. I fell into it after I rented a friend's flat and got friendly with the builder who was carrying out works on it. If Dad hadn't been infected with HIV and died when he did I believe I would have done better in my A levels and gone on to university like my older siblings.

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23. I have struggled to form any meaningful relationships. I have only had two relationships since the age of 18. After Dad died I became very introverted. As a family it seemed to make us draw in on ourselves rather than pull together.

24. I haven't really had a conversation about any of this with anyone in my family other than my Mum. We talk about Dad but we just don't talk about what happened. The memories are just too painful. Giving this statement has brought back a lot of difficult memories.

25. I don't think that any of my family can say that we are truly happy people. There is a cloud that is hanging over us and certainly for me I think it will stay there for the rest of my life.

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

26. I am not aware of any counselling being offered to us at any stage. When Dad died we were just abandoned; there was no support.

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

27. I haven't had any dealings with the various trusts and funds.

28. I think that my Mum needed more support both at the time of Dad's illness and when he died. She was abandoned by everyone.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

29. My Dad had a loving wife, five children and a good job and it was all taken away from him because he was pumped full of drugs that killed him.

### **Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

30. I would like my surname redacted from my statement but other than that I do not require anonymity.

31. If the Inquiry wanted to hear from me then I would be prepared to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-B

Dated.....

26/02/19