

Witness Name: Deborah Woods  
Statement No: WITN3642001  
Exhibits: 0  
Dated: September 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBORAH WOODS

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I, Deborah Woods will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Deborah Woods of [GRO-C] [GRO-C] My date of birth is the [GRO-C] 1956.
2. I retired as a head teacher of a special needs school in January 2012. I live in the northwest with my partner whom I have lived with for fifteen years.
3. I make this statement on behalf of my late father, Anthony 'Tony' Carver. He was born on the [GRO-C] [GRO-C] 1929 and died on the 5 May 1994 from pneumonia as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
4. My mother, Joan Carver, has also produced a witness statement to the Inquiry, '**WITN1141001**'. Before my mother provided her statement, as a family, we collectively gathered to recall dates and details for the statement. For that reason, I agree with most of the information contained within her statement and I will reiterate this in each section.
5. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical

records. My mother had been told that these are no longer available as my father passed away in 1994 and the records were destroyed 10 years after his death.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

6. I would like to rely on my mother's witness statement in relation to this section.

## **Section 3. Other Infections**

7. I do not know if my father had any other infections other than HIV. As a result of HIV, my father fell foul of every infection that was going around. He got pneumonia four times as a result. This was noted in his death certificate as cause of death.

8. I do not know if my father contracted Hepatitis C (Hep C) as a result of infected blood products. GRO-C

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9. Nothing was mentioned about Hep C after my father's death. In fact, every medical professional who had been responsible for my father's care was silent on any other potential causes of death. After his death, there was silence from everybody involved. I feel that everything was shoved under the carpet.

## **Section 4. Consent**

10. I would like to rely on my mother's statement in relation to this section.

## **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

11. I recall seeing that my father was wasting away. He became much thinner and was extremely susceptible to all sorts of infections. If there was anything going around, my father would catch it. For that reason, my father would stay indoors or at most he would go into the garden.

12. It became increasingly difficult for my father to walk. He couldn't get into the bath without assistance. We lacked the facilities and resources at home to help with his mobility issues. I got into

several heated arguments with the hospital over this. Whenever he was in hospital they always wanted to discharge him as soon as possible as they were short on space. I kept arguing with the doctors that my father was not ready to come back home and that we lacked the resources to cope. I explained that it was difficult for my mother as she was in her sixties. On one occasion I refused to leave the hospital until we received some support.

13. In my father's final year, I went to my mother's house on most weekends to support her. My father spent a lot of time in hospital in his final year and when he wasn't there, he was at home, and not very mobile. We could not leave my father at home for longer than an hour. In that year, my father had pneumonia twice and we called an ambulance.

Each time he went to the hospital it would be for a minimum of 3 weeks. On 3 occasions we were told to prepare ourselves for the worst. When the end came it was very out of the blue as until then my father had overcome all of his health issues. He was in hospital for ten days in a room by himself, which was better than being in a general ward.

14. I recall his death vividly. My family and I were devastated. I looked to my mother who was extremely bitter about the situation and said to her that she could either let this eat her up, (which my father would not have wanted), or we could all move on and celebrate what we had. We choose the latter; however, with the introduction of the Public Inquiry and the making of this witness statement, I find that the bitterness had exploded.

15. If my father hadn't been infected I have no doubt that he would have lived a long and happy life. He was an active, healthy man. It made his final 10 years even sadder knowing what could have been.

16. I believe my father was given AZT to treat the infection. He knew that it was a new drug on the market and thought of it as a wonder drug that would prolong his life. My father was very enthusiastic about AZT. Unfortunately it had dire side-effects.

17. I do not know if there were any other treatments

which ought to have been made available to my father. My father had a lot of faith with the doctors and nurses and went along with whatever they recommended. I do not believe he ever challenged any treatment or medication that he received.

18. As time passed, my father became far less communicative and felt the emotional toll of his infection. I believe that the AZT had a lot to do with this. At times I felt that he was so lost in a daze. He would sometimes spend ages sitting in his chair without saying a word to anyone.
19. My father started to suffer from blackouts. This meant that somebody needed to be with him 24 hours a day 7 days a week. Before he took AZT, he was poorly but never had blackouts. To give an example, my father joined a support group that held sessions on reflexology. He found it calming and useful and decided that he would go alone as it was nearby. He blacked out on the way and was brought back home by a kind stranger.
20. I believe that my father's infection hindered the family and his social life drastically. From 1989 until 1993, I was working in Hong Kong and during that time my father really wanted to visit me, but it was difficult for him to travel. He did manage one trip in 1990 but was too poorly to come a second time. In the end, I returned to the UK in 1993 as I could not stay so far away from him knowing how ill he was.
21. My father's infection had a tremendous impact on the whole family. It was not long after my father was diagnosed that he rang me to tell me of the infection. It was incredibly difficult to hear. Unfortunately, I was living in the North and my father was in the South, miles apart. It was a bit of a bombshell for me and I was speechless. I didn't really know what to say to him. No one really knew what was going to happen. At the time I was working with special needs children who suffered from various life threatening conditions and all sorts of thoughts went through my head. Before that I hadn't even considered that father might be that ill. My sisters were told at around the same time of my father's infection and fortunately they lived much closer to him.

22. Everyone rallied together to ensure, as far as possible, that my father lived a good and comfortable life. If I had an inkling of becoming poorly, I had to stay away from him. It changed our way of living.
23. As for the stigma of living with HIV my father did not want his infection to become wider knowledge. He had seen people being judgmental on TV and he did not want to put us through that.
24. We never told many people about my father's infection when he was alive. Following his death we didn't care about hiding the truth. We became far more open and everyone who knew the family knew about the circumstances surrounding my father's death. Luckily everyone accepted it for what it was.
25. After my father's death, we had some issues with his funeral. As I recall, the undertaker was called by the hospital to discuss the circumstances of his death. He was instructed not to embalm him and my father was to put placed in a special coffin.
26. My youngest sister was about to have a child in the last year of my father's life. It gave her a lot of enjoyment but at the same time she was wrapped with guilt about whether the child was going to be okay. It was difficult for the family and we still think about it now.
27. I think my father's death has affected us all in different ways and when we remember him, it can get very emotional. For instance, my sister's daughter was about to get married. My mother was present at the wedding dress shop. When it came to paying, my mother said she would buy the dress and that it was a present from her grandad. This triggered a lot of emotions and everyone started crying.
28. When my father was alive, he had a good job as an area manager for coffee houses. It required him to do a lot of travelling which became too onerous. He could no longer cope and therefore had to retire early. He was picking up infections and wanted to blank them out. He just wanted to live a normal life.

At that time, he told me and my sister that he didn't know how long he had. I believe that he would have worked up until his retirement age had he been able to.

29. Financially, I know that he was always worried about whether he had enough in the pension pot to keep him going. His decision to retire was influenced by his infections and by the one off payment that he received from the Macfarlane Trust. I believe this was when he accepted that his health was not going to improve.
30. Whilst working at the school, one of our pupils was given infected blood products and we were informed that she was HIV positive. The school struggled to come to a decision on how to handle the situation. At that time, no one at work knew about my father. I came clean and gave my take on the situation voicing that it was nothing to worry about. Nevertheless there were some members of staff who we knew we couldn't tell as they would refuse to teach her.

### **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

31. I was not offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of what happened to my father. I do not believe that my parents were offered any either. If my father needed help, or if we wanted emotional support, we relied on one another. I believe that counselling would have helped had it been offered.
32. The only exception to the above was a support worker named Tudor Williams who dropped by my parent's house to provide emotional support to my mother. She had his phone number and could contact him if needed.

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

33. I would like to rely on my mother's witness statement in relation to this section.

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

34. I have no other issues I would like to raise.

**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

35. I do not wish to remain anonymous and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

36. I do not want to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C .....

Dated 7/10/2019.