

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1384001

Exhibits: 0

Dated 28 March 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

GRO-B will say as follows:-

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B  
GRO-B  
GRO-B
2. I was infected with HIV through my ex-partner, GRO-B: P who contracted the virus as a result of being treated with contaminated blood products.
3. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

### Section 2. How Affected

4. I was infected with HIV as a result of my relationship with my ex-partner, P who was a Haemophiliac and who never told me that he was HIV positive. I found out about this when I was diagnosed with the virus

## ANONYMOUS

in 2002. Everything at that time led back to the relationship with a Haemophiliac who had unfortunately already been infected.

5. We were together between 1985 and 1986. I met **P** at work as he used to work for the same operating department at the **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B** Our relationship lasted approximately 3 months and he was my first sexual partner.
6. I went on with my life quite happily, I met my current husband and we moved to Dorset in 1992.
7. I became unwell in about 1999, which was a significant year to me as my brother passed away due to testicular cancer. I recall that I blamed my symptoms of tiredness, depression and fatigue on my long working hours.
8. I visited the GP and explained my symptoms which they were unable explain. I also suffered with headaches and the GP sent me to acupuncture sessions as there was nothing specific he could put his finger on.
9. Shortly after, my visit to my GP my health suffered a severe downturn. I suffered abdominal pains, weight loss and diarrhoea which prompted me to go to my GP once again. I was unhappy with my deteriorating health and I knew that something was wrong with me. So I requested a referral to a gynaecologist who in turn referred me for a laparoscopy. I was diagnosed with mild endometriosis and I had to attend an upper gastrointestinal specialist to conduct an Endoscopy and Colonoscopy. After the examinations the doctor concluded that I had Crohn's Disease. I became feeling increasingly worse which resulted in me being prescribed steroids and immunosuppressant's, which given I was HIV positive with an already compromised immune system could have killed me.
10. I was under the care of **GRO-B** where I was admitted in March 2002 for two weeks due to a viral infection caused by cytomegalovirus (CMV). I underwent tests which showed that the powerful

## ANONYMOUS

medication was working, meaning that I could be discharged with oral medication. After a few weeks of finishing my treatment, I was readmitted to hospital with viral pneumonia.

11. In May 2002, I was severely underweight and struggled to breathe without an oxygen mask which resulted in my readmission to hospital where the doctors discovered that my CMV was rife and had not completely gone away. The doctors were scratching their heads and made a decision to send me for a HIV test. It was common knowledge that CMV was prevalent with people who were HIV positive. At that moment in time, I had no idea that I may be positive so I agreed to the test to rule it out.

12. The test result for HIV came back positive. At this point, the penny dropped when a Health Care advisor spoke to me and I mentioned that I had had a sexual relationship with a Haemophiliac. This diagnosis changed my entire life.

13. I am currently under the care of GRO-B at GRO-B

### **Section 3. Other Infections.**

14. I do not believe that I was exposed to a risk of any other infections apart from HIV and Hepatitis.

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

15. I do not believe that I have been treated or tested without my consent, or for the purposes of research.

### **Section 5. Impact**

16. The news devastated me. Both my husband and I felt shocked and upset. I married my husband in 1991, therefore by 2002; we had unprotected sex on



## ANONYMOUS

numerous occasions. I was anxious that I may have infected him. The next stressful hurdle was my husband undergoing a HIV test. We were both relieved to find out that he tested negative.

17. The infection, seriously affected my working life. I was a **GRO-B** **GRO-B** and my diagnosis meant that I could no longer continue working in this capacity. I was already off work due to my sickness and I recall I took a whole year out. My world fell apart within half an hour of receiving the devastating news.

18. Another sad and stressful time was when a story appeared in the local newspaper saying that a member of staff in **GRO-B** was infected with HIV. Although my name was not mentioned, there was a recall of all patients who had been operated on whilst I was in theatre, so they could be tested for HIV. **GRO-B** had to go through recalling patients and I felt very sorry for him having to identify which patients were under my care whilst I was a scrub nurse. We moved down from the midlands in 1992, which meant that there was 10 years worth of patients to be tested. I worked in general surgery which, amongst other responsibilities, involved assisting surgeons holding surgical equipment in open abdomens. I knew that if I had suffered with a needle stick injury, there was an element of risk to the patient. Consequently, this made me feel even worse. Thankfully, none of the patients came back positive which brought me an extreme amount of relief.

19. I decided to take retirement from my post in 2003. I qualified for early retirement on ill-health grounds. Even though Occupational health staff were aware about the reasons for my retirement; they had to have letters from my consultant.

20. I felt terrible and ashamed. I still feel ashamed to this day that this happened to me. I was a professional nurse and I could not believe that I let this happen to me. I had 3 partners in total during my life; therefore contracting HIV was so ill-fated. The most unfortunate thing was that I was 22 years old and my first sexual partner was **P**.

## ANONYMOUS

21. I feel ashamed, upset and devastated. I did not want to tell anybody aside from my husband. To this day, my family is not aware about the reality of my health and they believe that I am still being treated for Crohn's Disease.
22. I have not allowed myself from becoming depressed as I did not want to shrivel up into a corner crying. I am fortunate because I am still here, I am still alive.
23. My doctors wanted to start me on antiviral treatment which had a 50% chance of success. My viral load was through the roof and my CD4 count was only 40 which was a fatal combination. I do not think the doctors expected the treatments to work. Recently, I recall reading a letter involving correspondence between my doctors shortly after my diagnosis which stated that I only had 5 years left to live. I did not know about this at the time which I believe is for the best.
24. Since I was diagnosed with HIV I have been on a cocktail of medication including Nevaratine, 3TC, lamivudine and Truvada. I was never put on AZT which I feel lucky about because I was very aware of its bad side effects. I was on prophylactic antibiotics for a little while. Initially, I had to take three tablets of my medication twice a day as my CD4 counts were very low. In addition, I had to take two different types of antibiotics to prevent opportunist infections.
25. Presently, I take Nevaratine and I have also been taking Descovy for the past two years. I take two tablets once a day now.
26. As a result of these various medications, I suffer with high blood pressure. Additionally I suffer with osteoporosis which contributed to a broken ankle four years ago. I suffered with nausea and my kidneys stopped functioning to their full capacity which meant that I was under regular renal function monitoring. Also, my blood cholesterol level was also affected and I am aware that some

## ANONYMOUS

of the drugs prescribed affect my cardiovascular system. I underwent an ultrasound and submitted urine samples, from which the doctors concluded that Truvada caused many of my health-related issues. Since I stopped taking Truvada and started taking Descovy, I have felt reasonably fine.

27. At the time of my HIV diagnosis, I recall undergoing a barrel of tests; one of which was for Hepatitis C. Thankfully, I tested negative.

28. Since I changed my Treatment I have not had any problems with my liver and my health is stable at the moment as I am on HIV treatment which is working. My viral level is undetectable and I am keeping quite healthy.

29. When I could no longer continue working as an **GRO-B** I felt that my career had been snatched away from me. I was young at the time, only 39. I enjoyed my job, I coordinated various things and I lead a team of great people. I qualified in 1985 and the HIV diagnosis was the end of my career and vocation. As I took early retirement, I did not achieve the full potential of my pension which would have been a 2/3 of my final salary had I continued working. This has caused a huge financial impact on my life.

30. I have returned to work as a **GRO-B** on part-time basis. I work 16 hours per week. I do not feel that I could return to working full-time as it would be too much for me. Also, my hospital appointments would affect my ability to attend anyway. I received good advice from **GRO-B** staff who reassured me that I could go back and work as a nurse. I was quite nervous to go back in case somebody asked me to do something I would not be allowed to do. I am a **GRO-B** which means that I wake people up after the anaesthetic wears off. I can no longer be involved in exposure procedures.

31. In the 1990s, I was classified as a G Grade **GRO-B** which is equivalent to a Band 7 today. I could not continue working in my post from 2002, and started working part-time which means that I am now classified as Band 5. This loss has had a serious financial effect on my life. At the time, we

## ANONYMOUS

had our mortgage to pay and we were concerned at how we would manage financially.

32. My diagnosis came as a shock to myself and my husband. It caused all sorts of questions and friction. I gave him the opportunity to leave and I told him that I would understand. Fortunately He replied that I was still the person he married and that he did not want to leave me. He has been extremely supportive of me throughout it all. Although, at the time, we were both very upset.

33. My parents are still under the impression that I am being treated for Crohn's Disease. They are quite elderly and I do not think they would be able to address the fact that I am HIV positive. In 1999, my brother passed away due to testicular cancer which had a terribly negative impact on my parents' health. Therefore, I have not told them about my diagnosis as they may not be able to cope with another blow.

34. We have kept my infection a secret from our families. We decided it was unfair to tell one side of the family and not the other. I feel ashamed to this day that this has happened to me.

35. I worry that if I had to be admitted as a patient to a hospital where I work, I would have to be treated by my colleagues; ultimately meaning that they would have to find out about my diagnosis. I worry about this because there are still bad associations with the virus. Even now, people associate HIV with drug addictions because they are not aware of the plethora of ways it can be contracted.

36. When we look after patients who are HIV and Hepatitis positive, the first thing some of my colleagues say is that the patient is "*another drug addict*". I question this but such behaviour reinforces my view to keep my infection a secret. It is so hard to listen to people jump to the wrong conclusions.



37. At times, I still worry that I am putting my husband through this. We talk about it quite often and I confide in him but I still feel guilty.

38. In terms of travel insurance; one of my first applications after diagnosis was refused. In consequent years, the applications were accepted but at a substantially increased cost.

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

39. In terms of dental treatment, I had to re-register with a different dentist because I could only ever be seen as the last patient on the list. My appointments were regularly cancelled a week before with no reasons provided. In the end, I became very fed up and re-registered elsewhere where I have been fine. Nevertheless, I had to go through the process of disclosing my HIV status which was an unpleasant experience as people assume the worst.

40. In terms of my doctors and consultants, I feel that everybody has been very supportive of me. I have an excellent GP and all staff at GRO-B GRO-B are wonderful whenever I have any questions or queries.

41. I was offered counselling before undergoing testing for HIV. The counsellor explained what the test was for and what would happen if I was diagnosed as positive. There was also counselling offered post-test, but I have received limited psychological support otherwise.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

42. I did not know about the availability of financial assistance from The MacFarlane Trust until a health care advisor at GRO-B named Tricia Moat researched them for me.

43. In late 2003, after having to sign a waiver I received £23,500.00 which I put towards our mortgage.



44. I receive monthly payments of £1,500.00. But initially, the payment was significantly lower.

45. The application process was straightforward to begin with. I had to provide evidence of the information I provided, with letters from my consultant. I was informed that [P] was still alive but I have had no contact with him.

46. I do not believe I faced any obstacles in receiving financial assistance. Initially, I thought perhaps I would not be eligible.

47. I have applied for one grant to have a new boiler fitted which was granted. In order to receive the grant, I had to get three quotes for the boiler which was quite a difficult process.

48. I receive a winter fuel allowance. This was a bit ad-hoc and uncertain to begin with, but in the last few years, I have received regular payments.

49. I felt lucky to have received anything at all. However, now, looking into what is going on with the infected blood inquiry and finding out how it all came about, I believe that we should get at least double the financial assistance if not more. This is because the financial assistance is not nearly enough to compensate for all of the pain and suffering.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

50. The pain and suffering followed by investigations has been drawn out a long time and I believe it should be over and done with so that people can get on with their lives. I do not think the Government and NHS have dealt with it very well. For somebody who works for the NHS, it has been difficult for me to accept they might have been involved.

## ANONYMOUS

51. I think the best solution is to be open and honest. I would like to see who was responsible for what happened and I would like to see them to be held accountable.

### Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

52. I do wish to be anonymous and I am prepared to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-B

Dated.....

28/3/2019