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Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5603001

Exhibits: WITN5603002 - WITN5603006

Dated: 15/3/22

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 18 October 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1974. I reside at GRO-B GRO-B. I am divorced and have one daughter. I chose not to have any further children due to the risks associated with being a carrier of Christmas Disease. I have, however, fostered over one hundred children in the last twenty-one years. I am currently employed at GRO-B.
2. I intend to speak about my late father, GRO-B: F, infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") after having received Factor IX and Factor VIII treatment around 1980 or 1981 at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, as treatment for his Haemophilia B. In particular, I wish to discuss the nature of how I had learnt about my father's infection, how his illness had affected him and our family thereafter, and the process of applying for financial assistance. My father's date

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of birth is [GRO-B] 1936, and his date of death is [GRO-B] 1992. I produce a copy of his death certificate as **Exhibit WITN5603002**

3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I do not wish to be anonymous as I wish for my story to be known in full.
4. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.
5. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.
6. I have constructed this statement without access to my father's medical records.
7. My step-sister [GRO-B] [GRO-B] was present during the process of drafting my witness statement to the Infected Blood Inquiry ("IBI"). She has provided a separate witness statement to the IBI. [GRO-B] was the main carer for my father, so she is more knowledgeable of what happened with regards to my father's haemophilia diagnosis, the treatment he received, his HCV diagnosis, and the lead up to his death. She also outlines our family structure. Please refer to **Section 2** through to **Section 4** of her witness statement.
8. My step-sister [GRO-B] [GRO-B] has also provided a witness statement to the IBI.

Section 2. How Affected

9. As previously stated, my older step-sister [GRO-B] has provided a witness statement to the Infected Blood Inquiry. Please refer to **Section 2** of her witness statement, which discusses the following:

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- (a) Our father's haemophilia diagnosis;
- (b) The point at which it is believed that our father was provided with contaminated Factor IX and Factor VIII concentrate around 1980 or 1981, at the Royal Victoria Infirmary ("RVI"), Queen Victoria Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4LP, as treatment for a bleed following an operation to remove all of his teeth;
- (c) Our father's HCV diagnosis;
- (d) The lead up to our father's death; and
- (e) Our father's cause of death.

10. I do however wish to note; with reference to the point at which my father was diagnosed with HCV, and whether he was provided with adequate information to allow him to have understood and managed his infection. Conversely, whether he was given information surrounding the risks to others being infected with HCV.

11. I recall questioning whether I could catch AIDS from touching the toilet seat in our family home. It was a real fear of mine that this was possible, which I must have picked up from my mother. In addition, my father had a separate towel in the bathroom which we were not allowed to use. Therefore, I cannot state as fact whether my father was provided with adequate enough information to have allowed him to understand his infection. It is unclear whether the issue of having separate towels was a practice implemented following receipt of information from a medical professional, or, whether it was information my parents had found themselves. Our parents kept a lot from my siblings and I, so we do not know as fact, whether this would have been information they were provided with.

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12. I am not aware of whether I was tested as when I was a child in respect of HCV.
I am not aware as to whether my father was tested for HIV but I do know that he was not infected with this virus.

Section 3. Other Infections.

13. Please refer to **Section 3** of my step-sister [GRO-B] witness statement [GRO-B]).

Section 4. Consent

14. Please refer to **Section 4** of my step-sister [GRO-B] witness statement [GRO-B].

Section 5. Impact.

Mental/Physical Impact

15. Please refer to **Section 5** of my step-sister [GRO-B] witness statement [GRO-B].

Treatment

16. Please refer to **Section 5** of my step-sister [GRO-B] witness statement [GRO-B].

Impact

17. My father's HCV diagnosis had a wide-ranging effect on my father, my mother, my siblings and I.

18. Within a matter of months of my father's HCV diagnosis, which to the best of my recollection was sometime around 1984, but it could have been after that, [GRO-C] For the majority, this was

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attributable to her belief that my father had contracted AIDS, and that he had passed it on to her. She was terrified of that possibility.

19. On the first occasion, my mother gave me a letter which I was to give to my sister **GRO-B** who did not live in the family home at the time. I sort of knew what the letter entailed and what my mother had done which was that **GRO-C**

GRO-C

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GRO-C

23. Thereafter, within a matter of weeks, my mother attempted to leave my father on two separate occasions. My mother and I left the family home and moved into an emergency woman's sheltered accommodation in Newcastle town centre where we remained for a while. I had to move schools and I was not allowed to see my father. He had not done anything wrong that I could see so to be taken away from him was very difficult and upsetting for me.

24. Whilst my mother and I were living at the sheltered accommodation, a friend of my father came to visit my mother. He had told her that he was very concerned about the state of my father's health, so he arranged for my mother to meet him the next day at a local pub. My sister **GRO-B** and my mother went to meet my

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father whilst I was at school. **GRO-B** has told me that she was shocked by his appearance as it had looked like he had lost a lot of weight. It was most likely the stress of losing his wife and his daughters.

25. Thereafter, my parents agreed to get back together, on the condition that they **GRO-C** as my mother was terrified about the risk of AIDS. She believed that my father had AIDS, and whilst he had tested positive for the infection, it was dormant.

26. **GRO-D**
GRO-D He tried to live with it for his own sake, and ours. In the end, my father could not take it anymore so my parents split up for the second time. My mother and I moved into another women's sheltered accommodation.

27. My father's HCV diagnosis and my mother's paranoia surrounding the presence of AIDS – even though my father was never diagnosed with it, had completely changed her personality. She went from being a very strong and formidable force with a level-head, to someone who was very bitter and angry. **GRO-D**
GRO-D To see my mother change so drastically was hard to bear as it was so out of character. She was not in a good place and she was convinced that she had contracted AIDS.

28. It could be assumed that with my mother's **GRO-C**, her moving us to a woman's sheltered accommodation, and her **GRO-D** could be signs of how desperate she was to leave my father. Also, of how scared she was surrounding the risk of contracting a blood borne infection. Unfortunately, my mother never spoke about these things as I would have been considered too young to understand.

29. Following my father's death in 1992, it seemed as though my mother's personality completely changed again and she went back to being her former self. **GRO-D** and took up employment working with vulnerable adults all over the United Kingdom ("UK"). We did not discuss my

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father's death with my mother. It was not a topic that she would become involved with. She just would not entertain it.

30. Taking everything into account, following my father's HCV diagnosis, I had a very messed up life growing up. I spent a lot of time with people who were either arguing and fighting or on my own. There were times where my parents were incapable of looking after me, and where I wanted to be taken into care as what I was living with was awful. [GRO-D]
[GRO-D] I was lucky that my sister [GRO-B] lived so close by, as I spent a lot of time at her house. She took on a lot of the responsibility of looking after me. I am forever grateful.

31. My upbringing had an effect on my education. I had to change schools when my mother moved me from place to place. The upheaval was hard to adjust to at times. I could not concentrate at primary school as I would think about the arguments between my parent's that would take place when I returned home. This sticks in my mind even after all these years.

32. In the lasting future, it has made me stronger. I have taken on a lot of foster children as I did not want those children to be brought up in the way I was. I attribute what I have gone through in the past to my willingness to have helped others with their future.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

33. Please refer to **Section 6** of my step-sister [GRO-B] witness statement [GRO-B] which discusses whether my father experienced difficulties in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected with HCV. This section also refers to the lack of counselling and psychological support my father received following his HCV diagnosis, and the dental care he received.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. In 2013, following a conversation with [GRO-B] the sister of [GRO-B] I became suspicious about a pay-out she told [GRO-B] she received [GRO-C] [GRO-B] from the Skipton Fund. Thereafter, I went home and carried out some research surrounding the Skipton Fund, where I found out that I could make a claim on behalf of my late father's HCV infection.

35. Received by the Skipton Fund on 17 September 2013, I wrote a letter to the Skipton Fund (exhibited below, at **WITN5603003**), which states as follows:

"To whom it may concern,

I have recently heard about the Skipton Fund and am interested in knowing whether our family are entitled to any money, due to my father's operation.

Enclosed is his death certificate."

36. Within a letter, dated 17 September 2013, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to the Trustees of the late Mr. [F] c/o Mrs. [GRO-B] entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund application with respect to the late Mr. [F] ([F])' (exhibited below, at **WITN5603004**), I was told that an application for a stage one ex-gratia payment from the Skipton Fund equal to the sum of £20,000 in respect of my late father had already been approved and paid. The letter states as follows:

"Thank you for your letter regarding a Skipton Fund application with respect to your late father and for providing a copy of the death certificate which I am returning to you.

An application for the stage one ex gratia payment of £20,000 with respect to the late Mr [F] has already been received, approved and paid. Unfortunately, the Skipton Fund is only able to make one stage one payment which respect to each person who contracted hepatitis C through

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treatment with NHS blood or blood product (on the balance of probabilities) and there would therefore be no further payment payable on the estate in this instance.

When the application was processed we were notified by the application that there was no Will, no Grant of Probate and that there were no other eligible persons who would entitled to the payment.

For your information, in cases where the deceased person had no surviving spouse and had more than one child we would either split the payment equally between all surviving children or make the payment to one of them for onward disbursement provided we had written permission from the other children.”

37. In response to the aforementioned letter, I wrote a letter which was received by the Skipton Fund on 24 September 2013, to Nicholas Fish, Skipton Fund (exhibited at **WITN5603005**), requesting information on who claimed the stage one ex-gratia payment on behalf of my late father.

38. Within a letter, dated 25 September 2013, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to Mrs **GRO-B** entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund payment with respect to the late Mr **F**' (exhibited below, at **WITN5603006**), it states the following:

“Thank you for your recent letter and for providing your original birth certificate which I am returning to you with this letter.

*I can confirm that the payment with respect to the late Mr. **F** was claimed by Mrs **GRO-B** on the basis that she had confirmed on the registration form that there was nobody else who might be eligible for a payment with respect to the late Mr **F** and confirmed in a signed letter that he was a widower and “there are no other siblings eligible for the Skipton Fund.”*

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However, I have spoken to [GRO-B] today and she has clarified to me why she thought that she was the only eligible child of the late Mr [F]. When the alteration to the scheme was first announced in January 2011 it was up to claimants to come forward to make applications with respect to people who died prior to 29 August 2003 since the Skipton Fund would not know who these people might be; registrations were therefore frequently made off the back of people being contacted by haemophilia centres and/or hospitals.

In this case [GRO-B] tells me she was contacted out of the blue by the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI), which is what we would have expected to be the case. The Haemophilia Centre would have looked at the later Mr [F] file and seen that his estate would be eligible for a Skipton Fund payment because it was likely that he contracted hepatitis C through haemophilia treatment with NHS blood products. They more than likely only had contact details of [GRO-B] as the person eligible to make the claim. Because she was contacted by the haemophilia centre at the RVI it appears that [GRO-B] wrongly assumed that the payment was payable just to her in connection with her father's haemophilia, rather than his contracting hepatitis C (which in this case happened to be through haemophilia treatment, around half of Skipton Fund applications are non-haemophiliacs who received whole blood).

If you have any further queries please don't hesitate to contact me."

39. Thereafter, I contacted my step-sister [GRO-B] to determine why she had claimed the payment from the Skipton Fund, based on the premise that there are no other siblings eligible for the Skipton Fund. She stated that she believed that the money was for [GRO-B]. I asked why it was in dad's name then but she couldn't answer. Furthermore, I did not understand why [GRO-B] had wanted to know the location of where our mother died, and to have a copy of her death certificate, if the application was indeed for [GRO-B]. Something did not seem right. The result was a family

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discussion which was difficult in itself as myself and [GRO-B] do not really have much to do with [GRO-B] and her siblings.

40. This matter has subsequently been resolved within the family. It has been agreed that the money obtained from the Skipton Fund will be repaid in 'drips and drabs' to those who are owed. It was agreed there are six siblings who were eligible for a share of the stage one payment paid out by the Skipton Fund. [GRO-B] set up an account and I received £3,300 which she paid at £100 per month. My step sister [GRO-B] not get anything as she was not considered my father's blood. Ironic really as she was the one who was probably most impacted by his condition. I found it even more unjust as [GRO-D]

[GRO-D]

- 41 [GRO-D]

[GRO-D] and as mentioned [GRO-B] will repay the money. I did not fully understand the purpose of the payments, originally thinking that they were made due to dad's haemophilia. But now, I am aware that they were to acknowledge the pain and suffering of those who were infected with HCV and those family members who provided for them and were impacted by the day-to-day struggle to do so. Following that logic, it is my opinion that the rest of the family were undeserving of any share

Section 8. Other Issues

42. Following my father's haemophilia diagnosis, [GRO-C] had been tested for the presence of haemophilia. When the results of the test had returned, I was told that I was a carrier of Christmas Disease, and if I had a son, it would be a 50% chance that they would develop haemophilia. I experience joint stiffness and my markers are quite high, which is a side effect of carrying haemophilia.

43. My father's HCV diagnosis has made me ask a lot more questions of the medical profession when I attend to seek medical assistance. As I am aware

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that my father contracted a blood borne infection when he was provided with a blood transfusion at the RVI, I have asked whether it would be possible to donate my own blood, so that when it is needed, I could receive an autologous blood transfusion of my own blood. I believe that this carries a much lower risk. I was told that this procedure is not possible on the National Health Service ("NHS").

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 15/3/22

Table of Exhibits:

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number
13 September 2013	Death certificate for F	WITN5603002
17 September 2013	Letter from GRO-B to the Skipton Fund.	WITN5603003
17 September 2013	Letter, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to the Trustees of the late Mr F c/o Mrs. GRO-B entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund application with respect to the late Mr F F '	WITN5603004
24 September 2013	Letter, from GRO-B to Nicholas Fish, Skipton Fund.	WITN5603005

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24 September 2013	Letter, from [GRO-B] to Nicholas Fish, Skipton Fund.	WITN5603005
25 September 2013	Letter, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to Mrs [GRO-B] entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund payment with respect to the late Mr [F] [F] [F]	WITN5603006