

**Witness Name:** Shirley Smith

**Statement No:** WITN6875001

**Exhibits:** Nil

**Dated:** 31.3.22 .

**INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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**WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SHIRLEY SMITH**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 25 August 2021.

I, Shirley Smith, will say as follows: -

**Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is Shirley Smith ("Dewdney"). My date of birth is GRO-C 1963. I reside at GRO-C. I married my husband in 1990 and we have five children and four grandchildren together. I am currently employed at a major supermarket chain, and I am on secondment to the Trade Union.
2. I intend to speak about my late step-father William Wiper's ("Billy") infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV") after having received Factor IX and Factor VIII concentrates at the Royal Victoria Infirmary, Newcastle, around 1980 or 1981, as treatment for his Haemophilia B. In particular, I wish to discuss the nature of how I had learnt about his infection, how his illness had affected him and our family thereafter, and the financial assistance that has been received. His date of birth is GRO-C 1936, and his date of death is GRO-C 1992.

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 step-father's medical records.
7. My step-sister Debbie Tait was present in the room during the process of drafting my witness statement. Both GRO-B (GRO-B) and Tracey Vasey (**WITN5327001**) have provided witness statements to the Infected Blood Inquiry ("IBI"), outlining the impact my step-father's HCV infection had on their lives.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

8. Before I was born, my father had married his first wife and they had four children together. Their names are Matty Wiper, Sharon Wiper, Tracy Wiper, and Steven Wiper. My mother also had two children before she married my step-father. Their names are Haslam ("Hazy") Khalik and Madjide Khalik.
9. From the age of around six months old, I had lived with my mother Betty Wiper and my step-father Billy. Whilst he is not my biological father, I have always called him dad. I shall refer to him as my father from this point on within my witness statement.

10. For the first ten years of my life, it was just my mum, my dad and I, and I had a happy upbringing. My step-brothers and sisters did not visit the family home very often. However, when they did visit, they would visit for the day but they would never stay overnight.
11. In 1973, my step-brothers Hazy and Madjide came to live with us in the family home. In 1974, my step-sister GRO-B was born. From around 1975 to 1976, my brother Matty came to live with us for a short while, after suffering serious abuse at the hands of his step-father. My step-sister Tracey also came to live with us for a few months.
12. In 1976 we moved address. From 1976 to 1981, I lived here with my mum, dad, Madjide and GRO-B Sharon came to live with us for a few months but left to live closer to her partner. Matty lived with us for a while, but left to move in with Sharon. Tracey lived with us for a very short time.
13. Around 1983, when I was aged twenty-years old, my mother, my father and GRO-B moved address. I moved into my own flat. Then, in 1986, I moved next door to the family home, where I raised my son. The relationship with my siblings, other than GRO-B has deteriorated over the years, and our contact is now very limited.
14. My father had moderate Haemophilia B (more commonly referred to as "Christmas Disease"). He was diagnosed with haemophilia as a result of an incident with his twin brother, who died at school at a young age when he was hit with a pea shooter.
15. Growing up, I was always aware my father had haemophilia as we had to be careful around him. He wore special boots as his ankles were always swollen. Despite his haemophilia, on a day to day basis, I cannot say that he did anything different to anyone else.
16. I recall my father visiting the Royal Victoria Infirmary ("RVI"), Queen Victoria Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4LP, and his General Practitioner ("GP") on a regular basis throughout my childhood. I do not know for what reason he

sought medical assistance, but I remember sitting in the waiting room in the GP for long periods at a time. I can only assume that this was attributable to his haemophilia and its consequences.

17. As far as I am aware, my father did not have many large bleeds throughout my childhood which would have required treatment at the RVI. Albeit, there were a number of incidents where he experienced small bleeds which he treated at home without the assistance of blood treatment.
18. Sometimes, my father would cut himself shaving, which required him to recover at home for two days or so. He is the only haemophiliac I know that despite the risk of suffering an associated bleed, would shave his face every day. Another time, I saw him nick the end of his finger on a corned beef tin in the kitchen, it bled profusely and he stood in the garden with his hand in the air to stop the bleeding.
19. Around 1980 or 1981, when I was aged approximately eighteen years old, I attended the Haemophilia Ward at the RVI with my father so that he could undergo his pre-operation assessment with Professor Jones. He was due to have an operation to remove all of his teeth, as he had been experiencing issues with his teeth for a number of years prior.
20. During the pre-operation face to face assessment, he was asked by Professor Jones whether he had recently suffered from any bleeds or swelling. In response, he had stated that he had recently been bleeding from his back passage. There were concerns and questions surrounding my dad's health, as to whether the operation would go ahead as planned.
21. The dangers of experiencing a severe bleed as a result of the operation were explained to my father by Professor Jones, and my father felt a lot more positive about it when it was explained that they would use Factor IX concentrate as treatment.
22. My father was not provided with any information surrounding the risk of being exposed to blood borne infection associated with the use of Factor treatment. I

was present in the room during the pre-operation assessment, and this information was not discussed.

23. During the pre-op before my father was due to undergo surgery, it was implied that he might not make it out of the operation, and that he could die. He was a high risk I assume because of his haemophilia. He was very nervous and scared by the prospect of the surgery.

24. Despite the concerns surrounding my father's health, the surgical procedure went ahead as planned. However, it did not go well as his gums burst causing a serious bleed.

25. My father was given eight pints of Factor IX concentrate in an attempt to stem the bleeding. This was unsuccessful as his body rejected the treatment, so he was then given Factor VIII concentrate. This was successful at stopping his bleeding.

26. Following my father's surgery, he remained at the RVI for a few days before he was discharged home to recover.

27. In the early to mid 1980s, my father received a letter at home from the RVI. I recall hearing my mother and father arguing, so I went downstairs to find out what was going on. [GRO-D] She was shouting; [GRO-D] and he was saying; [GRO-D] [GRO-D] My dad was very upset but my mum was hysterical. She then sat on the floor and was screaming at him something along the lines of "you have given me AIDS."

28. I have never seen the aforementioned letter as my parents kept it away from [GRO-B] and I, but we later found out that [GRO-C] had both been asked to attend to the RVI to undergo blood testing for the purposes of identifying whether my dad had previously received contaminated blood.

29. More or less straight away following receipt of the letter, [GRO-C] attended the RVI to undergo this blood test. When the results of the blood test had returned, my father was diagnosed as positive for an infection which I now know

to be HCV. However, again as mentioned nothing was said to my sister or I at the time. We were unaware of what infection he had. I do know that after the diagnosis my father and, I think also my mother continued to visit the hospital on a regular basis, possibly as much as every month or so initially before it settled down to every 6 months.

GRO-C

GRO-C

30. I am unaware of whether my father was provided with adequate information surrounding HCV, which would have allowed him to effectively manage and understand his infection. If my father was provided with this information, my siblings and I were not told. I do not recall seeing any leaflets or posters around the house on HCV.
31. I am also not aware of whether my father was given any information surrounding the risk to others becoming infected as a result of his infection.
32. Thereafter, my mother was very concerned that my father had given her AIDS. I believe that this worry may be attributable to the adverts which were being played on the television at the time surrounding the presence of AIDS and the 'gay plague.' She must have taken this information onboard. There was a lot of public ignorance on AIDS at the time as there was a lack of information on the blood borne infections in general.
33. My parents had later found out that another man with whom my father was in the same ward at the RVI around 1980 to 1981 had developed AIDS. He had an operation before my father which required treatment with blood. My parents had become very friendly with this man and his wife, and were very concerned when they were told this information. I think this was partly what caused my mother to feel the way she did.
34. I believe there to be only one attributable cause of my father's HCV infection. This being the Factor IX and Factor VIII concentrates he had received as treatment for a bleed resulting from an operation at the RVI to extract all of his teeth around 1980 to 1981. As far as I am aware, my father did not receive any

blood product as treatment for his haemophilia either prior to this occasion, or thereafter. If he had, then I was not made aware of this fact.

35. There are no other possible causes of his HCV infection. He did not have any tattoos or piercings, he never received medical treatment outside of the United Kingdom ("UK"), he was not an intravenous drug user, and he was happily married until the point of his HCV diagnosis.

36. In the lead up to my father's death on [GRO-C] 1992, I recall him feeling a little unwell but nothing too serious. He was previously a heavy drinker and would frequent the local pub on a regular basis. However, after his HCV diagnosis, he rarely left the family home.

37. On Thursday [GRO-C] 1992, my father collapsed in the bathroom at home. An ambulance was called, and he was taken to the RVI to receive medical assistance. Upon arrival at the RVI, my family and I were taken into a separate room in the hospital. We immediately knew that there was something seriously wrong with regards to our father's health.

38. After a short period of time, a doctor came into the room to tell us that our father had suffered a heart attack and that they were unable to resuscitate him. My father died on [GRO-C] 1992.

39. Within the death certificate, that I understand my sister has provided a certified copy of, it states; William Wiper;

*"Cause of Death:*

*1 Coronary Atheroma."*

40. When [GRO-B] and I gained access to a copy of our father's death certificate, we were shocked to see coronary heart disease as the cause of death. This medical issue was very much out of the blue as it had not been mentioned previously, albeit, our parents kept a lot of information from us. I am certainly not aware of dad spending time in hospital or having any tests in relation to his

heart. I am sure that if he had experienced problems with his heart in his later years he would have confided in [GRO-B] or I.

41. Neither [GRO-B] or I experienced any issue or difficulty in seeing our father's body after he passed or at his funeral. We were told that our father was bleeding from somewhere on his body – it was as vague as that, so it was suggested that we did not view his body. I agreed as I did not want to see him in this state.

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

42. Other than HCV, I do not believe that my father contracted any other infections as a result of receiving contaminated Factor IX and VIII around 1980 or 1981 at the RVI.

43. In addition to HCV, [GRO-C] my father were at some stage tested for the presence of HIV. When the results had returned [GRO-C] were told that [GRO-C] had tested negative for the presence of this.

### **Section 4. Consent**

44. I do not believe that my father had been tested or treated without prior consent having been obtained, without his knowledge or for the purposes of research.
45. When my father was tested for the presence of blood borne infection at the RVI, I believe that he would have consented to this being undertaken. However, whether he would have been aware that they were specifically checking for HCV is another matter. My father attended the RVI to undergo testing two or three times a year after his HCV diagnosis.
46. I have never been tested for HCV myself and it has never been recommended to me that I get a test by any medical professional. I am not sure about [GRO-B] as she was living in the family home at the time whereas I had moved away.

## Section 5. Impact.

### Mental/Physical Impact

47. Our father was one of the funniest men you'd ever meet. He was so caring, loving, and he was very sharp. Everyone loved him. However, retrospectively, we had noticed that there was a decline in the state of our father's physical health from the point of his HCV diagnosis. It therefore could be suggested that the attributable cause of his physical decline was his HCV.
48. From the point at which it is believed that my father had contracted HCV, he had been suffering with problems sleeping. He sought medical assistance from his GP on numerous occasions as it was having an effect on his everyday life. As far as I recall, the only medication he received was sleeping pills. He also experienced fatigue and was often lethargic. He would have to sleep in the afternoon on most days
49. Particularly within a month of his death, my father had lost a lot of weight. He went from a well-built, tall, and stocky man of 15/16 stone to resembling a skeleton. It was pitiful to witness this decline. GRO-B and I used to say that he had old bones before his age.
50. My father had also developed a taste aversion to amongst other things, alcohol. This was very out of the ordinary as he had previously been a heavy drinker and he would frequent the local pub on a daily basis.
51. Due to my father's haemophilia, he had experienced issues with his joints such as his elbows and knees, and was a little hunchbacked. The swelling in the joints caused him the most discomfort and pain. In particular, he had problems with his arms which meant that he could not straighten them without being in excruciating pain. In hindsight his joint problems seemed to worsen considerably in his later years which would be in keeping with the impact of the HCV on his system.

52. As far as I am aware, my father's HCV infection did not have an effect on his mental state of health. I cannot say that he was diagnosed with depression or ever complained of such.

Treatment

53. As far as I am aware, my father was not ever offered treatment for his HCV infection. If he had, then I was not made aware of this fact. I am unaware if he ever had a biopsy or in fact what the condition of his liver was.

Impact

54. Outside the effects of my father's HCV on his physical health, his diagnosis had such a devastating and wide-ranging effect on my mother, my parent's marriage, and the family unit. It turned our whole lives upside down.

55. Within a matter of days of my father's HCV diagnosis, GRO-C  
GRO-C  
GRO-C As I've said already, she was convinced that my father had given her AIDS and that she was subsequently dying from the infection.

56. GRO-C

57. GRO-C

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GRO-C

59

GRO-C

60. Thereafter, my mother attempted to leave my father on two separate occasions. I can't be sure on dates but I believe it would have been in the mid 1980s. My mother and [GRO-B] moved from the family home to an emergency woman's sheltered accommodation in Newcastle town centre, where they stayed for a while [GRO-B] had to move school and was not allowed to see our father. My father had not done anything wrong. To be taken away from your father is the worst thing and it was a very difficult period not only for her but for us all.
61. When [GRO-B] and my mother were still at the sheltered accommodation, a friend of my father visited my mother. He was very concerned about my father and his state of health, so he arranged for my mother to meet him the next day. I went with my mother when [GRO-B] was at school. We met at a local pub for lunch. I was so shocked when I saw my father, as in the space of around two weeks, he looked as though he had lost a lot of weight. His appeared gaunt and had a look of sadness about him. I remember telling him that I was not leaving him until he had eaten all of his lunch. It was most likely the stress of losing his wife and his daughters.
62. Thereafter, my mother and father got back together. However, this time, there was a condition attached to this arrangement. This being, that my mother and father [GRO-C] as she was still terrified that he had AIDS. Whilst he had not tested positive for HIV, she believed for some reason that the virus was dormant in him and that it would resurface, putting her at risk.

63. My mother's paranoia surrounding the AIDS infection was so intense, that my parents had to move house as she thought that the whole house was contaminated. She wanted to have a new start and be out of the situation, so she moved house at the earliest opportunity and took the first house she was offered by the local authority. The family home went from a large house with a garden in a lovely area to a small maisonette in a busy street opposite a pub.

64. GRO-D

65. I lived next door to the family home so that I could look after Debbie. I took on the relationship of bringing her up GRO-D

GRO-D

GRO-D However, the situation took its toll on my dad and soon could he not take it anymore so our parents separated for the second time. GRO-B and mother moved to another women's sheltered accommodation property.

66. Before my father's HCV diagnosis, my mother was a very strong character and a formidable force. My father could not work, so she took on a lot of responsibility as she was the breadwinner for the family. To see my mother in this way was heart-wrenching; it was so out of character. It felt as though she had completely switched identities. GRO-C

GRO-C

67. My father's HCV diagnosis and her groundless belief that he also had AIDS and she may contract it had completely changed her personality. We noticed a change almost overnight. GRO-D

GRO-D

68. After my father's death, it was almost as if she had flipped a coin and changed her life around. She GRO-D and went back to working hard. She worked all over the country with vulnerable adults. I did not discuss my

father's death with my mother. I don't know whether his passing **GRO-D** **GRO-D** or she just gained a better understanding of what was wrong with him – **GRO-D**

69. I believe that my father's HCV diagnosis ruined his life. It definitely changed him physically and not for the better. Materially, it was much worse; He lost his wife **GRO-D** he lost his children, and his family unit. Before his diagnosis, they were a normal and very loving couple who got along. Afterwards, they always argued.

70. My father's HCV infection also had a huge impact on my sister **GRO-B**. She was the youngest of our siblings so she was vulnerable. She was taken out of the family home, moved to the other side of town into temporary sheltered accommodation, away from our dad and she had to move school. At a very young age she found her mother **GRO-C** and she has had to deal with that for the foreseeable. She had seen the hurt on my father's face every time my mother was **GRO-D**. She watched him wither away. **GRO-B** was our father's favourite child as she was the youngest but being so she witnessed it all.

71. Now that I am aware what HCV is as an infection, it has almost shattered our family. Until I was aged ten years old, I lived with my mother and father. I was the only child and we had a happy upbringing. However, as soon as my father was diagnosed with HCV, it changed the family dynamics and family life disintegrated.

72. Whilst I still spoke to my mother after her **GRO-C** and **GRO-D** it had affected the relationship my sister and I had with our mother. We could see what she was doing and how it was clearly affecting my father. It was difficult to witness. We did not understand the agreement our parents had made with regards to their matrimonial relationship. He loved her, and the agreement was the only way he could keep her. Our view on our mother changed, and we no longer **GRO-D**. We still spoke till the day she died, but I did not **GRO-D**

73. If my parents remained the couple they were when I was a child, I believe myself, [GRO-B], and my children would have benefitted from this. We would have had a better upbringing and my children would have had a relationship with their grandparents when they were still alive. Before my father's HCV diagnosis, [GRO-B] and I were both brought up by a strong mother, and we learnt to just get on with it.
74. I believe that my father had experienced the stigma attached to having received contaminated blood. His brother did not speak to him after the point at which he received blood product around 1980 or 1981 or soon after this. I can only assume that this was as he believed he may have contracted AIDS as a result. They previously had a good relationship. We did not talk about my father's infection at all, it was not readily known outside the immediate family.
75. My father's haemophilia had quite a financial and work-related effect on the family unit. He was unable to work due to the associated risks of experiencing bleeding, and his joints did not allow for it. He would try to help my uncle with his business as a driver's mate, but he did not have a full-time steady job. My mother took on the role of breadwinner to provide for the family. Whilst she did have a job as a cleaner, she did not always work, so money was very tight growing up.
76. My father applied for the Disability Living Allowance ("DLA") as there was a decline in his health and his joints were painful. He must have been registered as disabled at one point as he was in receipt of regular payments of the DLA.
77. My father was unable to obtain life insurance due to his haemophilia.
78. It is my belief that due to my upbringing and what I had gone through, I now have a job where I look after people so that I can have a positive effect on other individual's futures.

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

79. I do not believe that my father faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment - albeit I don't think there was any - care and support in consequence of being infected with HCV. If he had, then I was not made aware of this fact. As mentioned, I don't believe that he actually received any treatment for the infection.

80. I do not believe that my father's infected status impacted on the dental care he had received. He did not attend the dentist for a very long period of time, and when he sought assistance, all of his teeth were removed. He had to attend the dentist at the RVI due to his haemophilia.

81. I am not aware of whether my father was ever offered counselling or psychological support as a consequence of being infected with HCV. If he had, then I was not made aware of this fact. I know that no other member of the family was offered such counselling at any stage.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

82. In 2013, my sister [GRO-B] had been told about the Skipton Fund, who were providing financial assistance for persons infected or affected with HCV as a result of receiving contaminated blood or blood product. She did some research surrounding the Skipton Fund, and filled out an application form respectively.

83. I am now aware of the following facts; On 17 September 2013, [GRO-B] wrote a letter to the Skipton Fund on behalf of our siblings, whereby she enquired whether we were entitled to any financial assistance with respect to our late father.

84. However, within a letter, dated 17 September 2013, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to the Trustees of the late Mr William Wiper, c/o Mrs [GRO-B] entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund application with respect to the late Mr William Wiper, [GRO-B] 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.

85. Retrospectively, we had found out that our step-sister Tracey Vasey (WITN5327001) had applied to, and obtained the stage one ex-gratia payment from the Skipton Fund. This is confirmed within a letter, dated 25 September 2013, from Nicholas Fish, Scheme Administrator, Skipton Fund, to Mrs [GRO-B] [GRO-B] entitled 'Re: Skipton Fund payment with respect to the late Mr William Wiper. The letter states as follows:

*"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 Wiper was claimed by Mrs Tracey Vasey 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 Wiper and confirmed in a signed letter that he was a widower and "there are no other siblings eligible for the Skipton Fund."*

*However, I have spoken to Tracey today and she has clarified to me why she thought that she was the only eligible child of the late Mr Wiper. 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 Tracey 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 Wiper's 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 Tracey as the person eligible to make the claim. Because she was contacted by the haemophilia centre at the RVI it appears that Tracey 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."*

86. [GRO-B] had found out that a payment was obtained from the Skipton Fund on the premise that there were no other siblings entitled to make a claim. [GRO-B] told me that around 2011, Tracey wanted a copy of our mother and father's death certificate, and the location of where our mother had died, so that she could make an application for money [GRO-C]. However, after this revelation, she realised that she had actually made an application in respect of our father. Tracey stated no one else held an entitlement to the payment and partly proved this by providing our mother and fathers death certificates.

87. This revelation led to a family conference where it has been agreed that the money received by Tracey from the Skipton Fund on behalf of our father, would be repaid by her as and when to those who would have benefitted. I know that [GRO-B] has received her share from Tracey. I myself was told, that as I was not my fathers' direct descendant then I was not entitled to any share. For me, this is not about a financial motive. It is to tell the story about how this infection, HCV, impacted our family. It destroyed what was a loving relationship and caused resultant hardship and emotional difficulties for all those for involved and I believe the affects hastened my fathers' death. Was the stress of this what caused his heart problem? We will never know.

88. The process of financial assistance obtained on behalf of my late father is discussed further within **Section 7** of my step-sister [GRO-B]'s witness statement ([GRO-B]).

**Section 8. Other Issues**

89. The Contaminated Blood Scandal has not dented my faith in the National Health Service ("NHS"). I recall watching a documentary which discussed the sourcing of blood collections from American prisoners. It is unfortunate that the blood was not screened before it was used on patients in the NHS.

90. I would like someone to be accountable for what has happened, and for someone to say "we are sorry." I know one person cannot take on that responsibility, but it would be nice for some recognition. I do not want anything similar to the Contaminated Blood Scandal to happen again in the future.

91. [GRO-B] and I have spent most of our adult life trying to avoid the topic of our father's death. That is just how it was with our family. However, the weeks leading up to the drafting of our witness statements have brought it all back to the surface. For us it was never about the money but an acknowledgement that a mistake out-with our control caused the break-up of our family.

92. I have provided a witness statement to the IBI to allow my father's story to be made public. I hope our contribution will help enable the mistakes of the past not to be repeated.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed [GRO-C]

Dated 31.3.22.