Witness Name: Sam McMahon
Statement No: WITN1386001
Exhibits: WITN1386002
Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SAM MCMAHON

I, Sam McMahon will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Sam McMahon. I currently live at GRO-C Gloucestershire GRO-C I was born on GRO-C 1976.

2. I was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.

3. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my 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 infected

4. I have suffered from moderate Haemophilia A since birth. I refer to **Exhibit WITN1386002**, an extract from the National Haemophilia Database, which lists treatments which I received since 1977 including Cryoprecipitate and Factor VIII.

5. As a child I was under the care of The Children's Hospital Birmingham (CHB) and Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Birmingham (QEH). As an adult, I was primarily under the care of University Hospital, North Bristol (UHNB).

6. I was infected with HCV by infected blood products. I am not sure which batch of Factor VIII resulted in my infection, but I am sure that at least one batch did.

7. I was told as an adult by Dr Wilde at the QEH that I was likely infected with HCV as a child in the late 70s or early 80s. My mother, Judi Howells, will also be providing a statement and is best placed to give more information on what information was communicated to us, if any, in terms of risk factors (none I believe).

8. I was told by an unknown member of the Haemophilia Doctors at the UNHB that I had HCV on or around 1995. I was informed that HCV was a chronic form of hepatitis; that I may have liver damage; that it takes about 20 years on average for the virus to cause significant problems; that it could lead to cirrhosis or liver cancer and that there was no cure.

9. It is difficult to recall whether I was given adequate information at the time, but I feel that I was given adequate information in relation to managing my infection. I believe that the information should have been provided earlier. I believe that the risks to haemophiliacs were known much sooner to medical professionals compared to when I was told.

10. I was communicated the results in a very matter of fact way. I had no idea what kind of information I was going to be told that day and I felt that I was told as though I should have already known that I had been infected. The information was communicated very tactlessly.

11. I remember leaving the room after the information was communicated to me expecting to die in the near future. At the time, I was around 19 years of age

and I was told that the disease can cause liver failure after about 20 years. I have never been the same person since that day.

12. I was told that HCV can be transmitted through sexual intercourse. This led me to believe that I would never have an intimate relationship for however long I had left to live.

13. I was also told that the disease can be transmitted through exposure to infected blood.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I am unaware of any other infections that have been a result of receiving infected blood products.

Section 4. Consent

15. For a period in the 1980s, my mother informed me that I was suddenly and 'mysteriously' being tested every three months for "*jaundice*". This testing was performed without my knowledge and consent.

16. I was not given adequate or full information in relation to this testing. I am unaware as to whether this testing was being performed for any research purposes.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

17. The physical impact of HCV led me to take a year out of my life to undergo the Interferon and Ribavirin treatment. This treatment had a massive impact on my physical health due to the horrendous side effects.

18. The psychological impact was extremely difficult. I had to face the prospect of death at the age of 18 or 19 years old with no cure available. I was convinced that I would never be able to have a relationship or children. This was

extremely damaging to my self esteem. To this day it has been a factor in deciding not to have children. I do not want them to go through what I went through.

19. This infection had changed the course of my life. It impacted my education, career and earning potential. I found it extremely difficult to find a job after university as I had to take a year out for treatment.

20. I am unaware as to whether I was faced with difficulties in accessing such treatments. I am unaware of any other treatments which I consider I ought to have had.

21. I had a number of physical side effects of the treatment I received. Particularly in the beginning; I felt tired, drained and lethargic. Whilst I am very grateful for having the treatment, it also had an impact on my career and personal life. The treatment prevented me from getting a job after university.

22. The treatment also took a massive toll on my relationships. I frequently felt very down and depressed. I also had suicidal thoughts. As a result of my illness, I was unable to get life insurance. This has also led to my travel insurance being more costly.

23. In addition to the points stated above, my HCV infection took its toll on my family and friends. They were naturally very worried about my physical and mental wellbeing. My illness caused them a lot of stress anxiety, as it did with me.

24. It also made me very introverted and consistently worried. Having both Haemophilia and then HCV changes who you are as a person. Sometimes the impact is subtle. For example, not feeling as though you can ever have an alcoholic drink.

25. The impact can also be much more severe on some of the life choices you might want to take. For example the career choices, having children or wondering if you are ever going to have an intimate relationship again.

26. Fortunately, I rarely came across any stigma in relation to my infection. However, I do believe that it has impacted my career prospects.

27. With regards to the effect that my infection had on my education, I was very withdrawn whilst taking my A-levels, as that there was not much point in doing them if I was likely to be ill in the coming years.

28. I had to take a year out of university for the treatment for my illness. This undoubtedly set me back as I obviously was not able to earn money for that year. I also suspect that disclosing that I had HCV to employers was not a positive.

29. My mother, Judy Howells is also providing a statement. I believe that she will be best placed to evidence the impact that it had on her.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

30. Treatment was not available in the area where I lived. I therefore had to move in with my grandmother for over a year as the treatment was available in Birmingham where she lived. This made seeing friends and other family members much more difficult and expensive, especially as I was not earning at the time.

31. Neither counselling or psychological support has ever been offered to me as a consequence of me being infected.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

32. I received Stage One payment of £20,000.00 from The Skipton Fund in 2004. I also currently receive the NHS Business Authority (NHSBA) payment of £4,000 per annum. I believe this has been effective since 2016.

33. I found out about the above financial support through published articles in the Haemophilia Society newsletters.

34. The NHSBA wrote to me directly as I was previously a beneficiary of the Skipton Fund.

35. The NHSBA payment was fairly straightforward to apply for given that I had already received funds from the Skipton Fund. The Skipton Fund was a much more complex process. The documents were much more detailed and they all had to be verified by a Haemophilia Doctor.

36. In my eyes, the Skipton Fund payment had only compensated me for the loss of earnings for one year and one year only; namely the one year I had taken out of university for treatment. It in no way compensated me for being infected. Along with all the physical, psychological, social and financial ramifications of that.

37. The recent NHSBA payment is a step in the right direction, and I hope it will continue indefinitely. However, considering the fact that Haemophiliacs do have their lives cut unfairly short, I really do think that all of them deserve a bigger lump sum payment given the catastrophic impact of infection on every aspect of their lives.

Section 8. Other Issues

38. To my knowledge, there are no other issues to consider.

39. I have provided my medical records that have been made accessible to me for inspection and reference as the Inquiry sees fit.

Anonymity

40. NOT RELEVANT

41. I would prefer not 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 15/4/19