

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1543001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: July 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GRO-B

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B of GRO-B
GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B I have two children, aged
GRO-B and GRO-B and I work full time as a GRO-B

2. This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

3. I was infected with HIV by my ex-Haemophiliac partner, who had been infected with both Hepatitis C and HIV via his use of contaminated Factor VIII concentrates.

4. On GRO-B and entirely unconnected with this matter, I attended a walk in GP and sexual health clinic in GRO-B and requested a sexual health check. The tests were duly carried out and I was told that I would be contacted with the results. I therefore left the clinic and almost dismissed the matter from my mind.

ANONYMOUS

5. About a week or so later, I received a telephone call from a specialist nurse at the clinic whilst I was at work. She told me that I needed to attend the GRO-B Hospital as soon as possible. I remember questioning her on the telephone and asking her to tell me what the problem was because I was getting really scared and at first she refused and said I must attend the hospital. I told her that I was GRO-B and that it would be difficult to just up sticks and rush to the hospital. She therefore broke the news to me on the telephone; she told me that I was HIV positive.
6. I was in complete shock and I think I managed to somehow arrange cover for my job and I then headed straight to the hospital.
7. On arrival at the hospital I met the same specialist nurse who I had spoken to on the telephone. I remember her giving me a finger prick test to double check the previous results and this confirmed the terrible news that I was infected with HIV.
8. I can't really remember much more about this meeting as I was in a complete mess and not in the right frame of mind to take anything on board. I had attended the hospital alone and I just wanted to go home to my mum.
9. After the meeting, I remember getting into my car which was parked in the hospital car park and just sitting there for about 1 ½ hours. I was in complete shock and spent most of the time crying or staring into space. I was unable to function and my mum and sister had to come to the car park to rescue me.
10. I do not know exactly when I became infected with HIV. I am no longer with my ex- partner but I did tell him about my infection which upset him. He now has a new partner and we are no longer in contact.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I was also put at risk of being infected with Hepatitis C as a result of my relationship with my ex-partner.

Section 4. Consent

12. I don't believe that I was tested or treated without my knowledge or consent.

Section 5. Impact

13. I was absolutely petrified when I found out I had HIV. I was thrown into a real life nightmare and my life, as I knew it, abruptly ended. I had to get my children tested and they were only aged and at the time. They were scared of the needles and it was heart breaking not being able to tell them why I was subjecting them to blood tests. Thankfully their tests came back negative.

14. However, my outlook on life completely changed. I cry every day and although people say that HIV is not a life sentence; I completely disagree.

15. I am sad and fearful every day of my life. I worry what I will say to my children when they are older if they find my medication and start asking questions. I worry that the baby sitter might discover my medication and I panic that I have not hidden it well enough; sometimes to such an extent that I rush home to check.

16. When I received the phone call which changed my life in I was a in a However, my told a number of other people and word spread around my work that I was HIV positive. It was so upsetting and it got to the stage where I was treated like a leper; people wouldn't drink out of the same cup as me and I was ostracised. I managed to stick it out for a couple of months but in the end the stigma I was subjected to was too much to bear so I left.

17. I therefore had to apply for another job and

18. I was determined to continue working full time to support my children and shortly after leaving my previous job I applied for a at a different I was successful at the interview and However, my health took a downturn as a result of the HIV and I had to take some sick leave. I therefore had to attend a meeting with my manager regarding my absence and I broke down in this meeting and disclosed my HIV status to him.

ANONYMOUS

19. I was subsequently signed off sick for a period of six months and placed on anti-depressants. Upon my return to work, my manager made my working life almost unbearable. His attitude completely changed towards me after he found out about my HIV status. **GRO-B** and I had to leave this role.
20. Both my mental and physical health was rapidly declining but I was not going to give up. After a short time, I don't know how I managed it but somehow I plucked up sufficient courage to apply for a **GRO-B** in a **GRO-B** towards the latter part of 2018.
21. The interview procedure was really tough **GRO-B**
GRO-B
22. I must have performed well because I was appointed as a **GRO-B** in December 2018. The only people in the workplace who know about my HIV status are my manager and **GRO-B** and it has not been disclosed to any other member of staff so I have not suffered any stigma or discriminatory treatment.
23. **GRO-B**
24. When I first found out about my HIV status I was really shocked that the medical professionals were not going to start me on any treatment straight away. They were going to monitor my CD4 count and my health and only place me on medication if they thought I really needed it. I was really unhappy about this because I thought it was odd that they would wait until I was really ill before trying to make me better.
25. Therefore, with the help of my mum, I challenged this decision and ultimately was successful and managed to get the medical professionals to agree to start me on medication immediately.

ANONYMOUS

26. I was initially placed on three medications and the side effects were horrific. I became very depressed and suicidal. I remember researching the medications and being horrified that the very thing that was trying to keep my HIV at bay was doing untold and irreversible damage to my other organs, such as the liver and the kidneys.
27. I have to attend the hospital for regular check ups but I tend to do this in my flexi-time from work so that it does not impact upon my attendance at work.
28. What was also very upsetting was that the hospital sent letters about my HIV status addressed to me but with my neighbour's address on the letter. This was deeply upsetting and totally unacceptable.
29. I met my new partner about a year after my diagnosis. I was honest with him about my infection and he seemed to accept it. However, whenever we have an argument he calls me an "AIDS victim". His son comes to see me every GRO-B night and every other weekend and my partner therefore makes me change all of the bedding throughout the house and ensure that everything is thoroughly cleaned. My partner insists that I wash my hands frequently and he stands over me to ensure that I am washing my hands properly. My partner also makes a real point of ensuring that I am fully aware that he won't put his son's toothbrush in the same cup as my toothbrush. He frequently tells me no one else will want me and I am scared to be on my own. My mum tells me to get rid of him.
30. The only people I confided in about my HIV were my mum, sister, partner, one close friend (who is no longer a close friend), my managers and GRO-B. However, other people have found out about my HIV status because it got round the GRO-B because one of my old managers told people when he was not supposed to. I remember one girl who I used to work with sent me a message asking me whether it was true that I had AIDS.
31. I did confide in one close friend who I had known for years because our daughters went to nursery, infant and primary school together. However, following my disclosure she now longer lets her daughter play with my daughter and has nothing to do with me anymore.
32. My mum and my sister have been amazing but I am scared to tell anyone else due to the reactions I have received following disclosure of my status. It is fair to say that my mum and my sister are totally heart broken for me and distraught at how my life has ended up.
33. I have always been a grafter and have managed to work full time despite what I am dealing with. I do worry about becoming poorly due to my HIV and having to take another period of

ANONYMOUS

sick leave because it will have a financial knock on effect. I work hard to keep a roof over mine and my children's heads and am proud of this fact.

34. HIV has changed me; I am much more scatty and just not the same person really. I am frequently scared and worry about the fact that I am now prone to infections and cancer. One of the cancers that I am prone to is ovarian cancer and I therefore chose to have my ovaries and cervix removed in order to lessen my risk of contracting this type of cancer.
35. I also had to have a full hysterectomy and in the weeks leading up to this, I was bleeding a great deal. The sight of my own blood scared me because I was petrified that it could touch someone and infect them.
36. I get scared and worry that I will forget to take my medication or I think that I could run out of medication if I am on holiday and this sends me into a complete panic. I just cannot live like I used to.
37. I struggle to talk about what has happened and preparing this statement has been one of the first times that I have actually spoken about my story.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

38. Recently I again attended the walk in centre in **GRO-B** to have my coil changed. I had my daughter with me in the waiting room and ordinarily this would be a short and straightforward procedure.
39. I was called into the consulting room and told to sit on the bed whilst the nurse went through a number of standard questions with me. She was about to start the procedure. I then said *"I do need to tell you that I am HIV positive"* and she said *"Oh right, jump off that bed and sit on the chair for a moment"*. She then said *"I am not happy to remove this coil so I suggest you leave it in for a few more weeks and see how you get on"*.
40. I started to cry and kept asking her why she was not prepared to remove my coil. She then telephoned someone who, I believe, was more senior and I heard her sarcastically say *"This one is sat here crying because I won't change her coil"*. I am not sure what the more senior person told her but in the end she agreed to change my coil. She carried out the procedure with lightning speed and left an instrument inside me. She then sent me on my

ANONYMOUS

way. This should have been a straightforward 15 minute appointment but it ended up taking about 1 ½ hours.

41. Not long ago I decided to have a tattoo done and unfortunately it became infected. I therefore again attended the walk in clinic. The doctor who examined me confirmed that it was infected. He asked me if I had any health issues and I told him that I was HIV positive. He literally jumped up out of his chair, walked to a cupboard and grabbed a packet of antibiotics and almost threw them at me. I went to shake his hand and he completely avoided this contact and got me out of the room as quickly as possible.
42. When I left the walk in centre I immediately telephoned 101 and I explained what had happened and listed the medication I was on for my HIV and the name of the antibiotics which had been "thrown" at me.
43. They told me that under no circumstances must these medications be prescribed together and that I must not take the antibiotics as doing so could have serious repercussions upon my health.
44. I attended the Spire Hospital in GRO-B a couple of weeks ago for a colonoscopy. I sat with one of the nurses who was carrying out my pre-op and following my HIV disclosure to her, she said "Don't worry we will just have to double up on gloves". I asked her why and she said "So that your bodily fluids don't touch any of the staff". I never returned after this despite the fact that I am still bleeding.
45. I have not disclosed my HIV status to my dentist for fear that he will refuse to treat me.
46. I have been offered counselling but I have been too afraid to take this up. I try to block out what happened to me and keep certain doors shut.
47. I am precluded from obtaining life insurance.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

48. I think I found out about the Macfarlane Trust (MFT) via the hospital in or around 2015/2016. I received monthly payments from them together with the annual winter fuel payment. I found the MFT very helpful and easy to deal with.

49. I now receive financial support from FIBSS, in the form of monthly payments

Section 8: Other issues

50. I would like the Inquiry to establish the truth about the contaminated blood scandal.

51. I would also like to be compensated for what happened so that if anything happened to me there would be sufficient funds to ensure that my children are provided for.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

52. I would like to apply for anonymity and I do not wish 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... 27.8.19