Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No WITN2208001
Exhibits: **None**
Dated: 07/11/2018

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 8 November 2018.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-C 1951. My address is known to the enquiry stop I am currently retired but I do help with my husband with a delivery job that he has GRO-B. I intend to speak about my husband's infection of hepatitis C, which contracted through a blood transfusion or blood products during treatment following an accident at work in around 1974. In particular the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and impact it had on him and our lives together.

Section 2. How Affected

2. My husband and I have been married for 47 years.

3. At the time my husband was working in the mines. He suffered a serious accident at work in the 1970s. There was someone who was burning a container top open it and it exploded due to there being an explosive material in the container.. My husband was badly burnt. Due to being badly burned my husband was centre to Bangor Hospital. While at Bangor Hospital he received a blood transfusion as well as plasma to deal with his injuries.

4. My husband was only made aware of his hepatitis C diagnosis in 1994 or 1995. I recall this date because of her one of our granddaughters was born around that time. He had went to donate blood as he had done many times before. I believe it was only in the 1990s that they started to screen the blood. He is no longer able to donate. We went together to donate blood regularly over the years. I myself was forced to stop donating blood due to my relationship with my husband.

5. My husband received plasma as well as a transfusion. I believe he received quite a lot of blood. He was in a very bad way. He was in hospital for around six weeks before he got home.

6. I also believe he had to go back in to get his pinkies amputated. They were basically useless to him after his injuries so he got them done. My husband also had to receive physiotherapy treatment. I believe he had this for 18 months to 2 years while he was off of work.

7. All the treatment that my husband received was at Bangor hospital. I do not think it's there now. There would have been the Bangor burns unit that he was treated at.

8. At the time of my husband's accident and subsequent treatment we had two children. One was two years old and the other was only two months old.

9. My husband was tested after having a note from the blood donation service in around 1994. I was worried because I had a son after his accident. GRO-C After my youngest child I got sterilised. I have three children with my husband. There is GRO-B It would have been GRO-B who was born after my husband have been infected. GRO-C GRO-C I believe that at the time of my husband's diagnosis he was in the forces.

10. There was no indication of risk at any time in relation to his treatment. When things like this happen you just trust the NHS and the doctors who are saying that this treatment is necessary.

11. I have had to be tested due to my relationship with my husband. I'm disappointed that I have not been able to give blood anymore. I am also worried about the fact I was able to donate blood for such a long time given the risks. I am pleased to say that I have tested negative for hepatitis C. It does concern me that my husband was still able to donate blood while he would have been positive for hepatitis C prior to his diagnosis.

12. As I have stated, my husband was informed about his infection through a letter from the blood donation service in around 1994 or 1995. No treatment advice was given, and I believe that we still have a copy of that letter informing him of his hepatitis C.

13. I do not recall if much information was given as to how to deal with GRO-B's infection, and I do not recall any advice that was given with regards to the transfer of this infection.

14. When my husband was diagnosed they just tried to put him on treatment for hepatitis C. I felt that they tried to pass blame onto him. The almost tried to infer that he had been inscrupulous and tried to blame it on infidelity, which as far as I am aware never happened. It seemed very odd to me that a doctor would suggest this.

15. This should never have happened in the first place, but advice should have been given upon diagnosis.

16. It was a shock to be given the information about my husband's diagnosis through the blood transfusion service, as before we were not aware of any risks with the treatment given to my husband and the fact that this could have been transmitted through infected blood products used by NHS doctors and hospitals.

17. I do not recall being told of the risks of me being infected, but I do recall knowing that I had to be tested.

Section 3. Other Infections

18. I am not aware of my husband having been infected with any other blood-borne disease. I am only aware of him now having issues with his liver as a result of his hepatitis C.

Section 4. Consent

19. I am unaware of if my husband was ever tested for any blood-borne diseases prior to his letter from the blood donation service. I am not aware of him having been tested without his consent.

Section 5. Impact

20. In terms of family life it was devastating for both of us. When the kids were little he still had ambition. I believe the family life is where my husband's diagnosis has had its biggest impact.

21. In 1989 we bought the house that were living in. We got a mortgage and when we found out in 1994 we had to notify the mortgage company and insurance of my husband's diagnosis. We were accused of hiding his diagnosis from them. This insurance company was Legal and General.

22. We sent them a copy of the letter that he had received from the donation service as this was the first time that we had been made aware of my husband blood being contaminated. They said they could not cover the endowment. Due to this we had to sell our house to pay off the mortgage. We were knocked back by the Council for a house. We now have to pay £600 a month in rent. With housing tax this amounts to about £800 per month. Without my husband's diagnosis the mortgage would have been paid off. This was going to be security for us and for our children.

23. We used to go holidaying abroad but it is now too expensive to go with health insurance due to my husband's condition. We have not been able to go on holiday for five years.

24. We have four grandchildren. They are 23, 19 five and two. The eldest grandchild is Stephanie and we would have found out just before she was born about my husband's diagnosis.

25. I do not recall that year but when the pits for the mines shut my husband then found a new job as a traffic warden. Due to this being a public facing job he did have to let his employer know about his diagnosis. I believe this was quite embarrassing for him. His employer

was quite good for with him following his diagnosis. He did require time off to have treatment and they were good about allowing him this. The supervisor was very good with him. I do not recall the name of his supervisor.

26. With the grandchildren I would say that my husband is unable to really attend to them as he might have if he was not diagnosed with hepatitis C. He has to be hyperaware of any cuts or the like. It's a horrible situation to be in.

27. My husband still suffers some flulike symptoms and often gets colds. It's totally miserable for him and he has no enjoyment in life.

28. I believe that the symptoms were what caused my husband go part-time in his job as a traffic warden.

29. Before being infected my husband was very active. He went from being totally easy-going before the accident to being intolerant and crabit. I believe that the flulike symptoms started sometime after his accident. It's one of those things he has a mentality of just getting on with it. Every day is different he can either be alright or totally out of hand with his flulike symptoms. Often his appetite is down to nothing. There is no point going to the doctor with his symptoms as there is nothing they would be able to do for him.

30. One issue we have had is that when his life assurance came to an end they would not allow him to renew. I don't know if it is directly because of this but his liver is currently active with hepatitis C. They did a biopsy and this confirmed this.

31. One thing we have done because of my husband's diagnosis is we have prepaid for a funeral plans. This was a bid dent into our savings we may not have really had to consider at this point yet were not for my husband's diagnosis and financial situation that this put us in.

32. When my husband retired from the police he took a part time job in the evenings which involved picking up mail from businesses. I am unsure of the year of this.

33. With his current job with GRO-B he can get confused quite easily and also struggles to concentrate when driving at night. We get a set amount of parcels per day. This job is in my husband's name but I do often help and then keep him company while he does this in case he gets confused. I can also drive if need be. His concentration is affected but I will take over when he needs me to. We do try and get done before it gets dark.

34. We have not been on holiday for five years as I said. Sometimes in the past we might have thought about driving down to England but we are unable to with my husband's concentration issues.

35. We were very social together before my husband got ill. We would go up to the social club. This all stopped especially when he was diagnosed with hepatitis C. He did not want to go anywhere. This is true of the time following my husband's accident but it all got 10 times worse when he found out about the hepatitis C.

36. I believe my husband is very worried about the stigma of having hepatitis C. He lived life as he should and I think he is ashamed by this stigma of hepatitis C. I would say that we did not even know it existed prior to his diagnosis. It was not until the transfusion service told us about this that we really became aware of hepatitis C.

37. I feel that it has impacted on our life together. I feel it has impacted us in a big way. I expected us to do things together as we grew old together. I always have to keep an eye on him and I feel as if I am nagging him. It's the things you take for granted that we now cannot do together. I feel almost like a nursemaid to him.

38. I do not believe he would go out very much if it was not for me forcing him and our dog needing to be walked. He only goes for short walks with the dog. He would never be out without the dog.

39. Even in terms of decorating and things around the house that's something that all fell to me. Any DIY or any decorating.

40. My husband used to be a bowler. That's something he hasn't done since his diagnosis. It really has affected our social life.

41. I believe that my husband does have some difficulty talking about his condition. I believe this really started once he found out about the hepatitis C. He was not wanting to socialise with people. I believe he was nervous about people finding out. He stopped going out at night. I believe that there was some fear that any conversation could lead back to his diagnosis. I think he was worried in case someone had a bad reaction to finding out about his hepatitis C.

42. In terms of my husband's general health have noticed he can go days without eating. His weight is down even now. I believe he has a BMI of 17 right now. The doctor never really said anything about him on any diet to put on weight.

43. My husband also takes ear infections regularly.. He is quite hesitant to go to the doctors. My husband does have hearing aids because of his hearing issues as well as his ear infections. I believe that his doctor would only give him paracetamol because of his liver and his intolerance to stronger medication.

44. We both totally trusted doctors and medical professionals prior to my husband's diagnosis and now this puts it at the back of your mind that maybe you cannot trust these people.

45. In terms of my husband coping with this emotionally he does get upset. It is a bit of a taboo subject and he doesn't talk about it. We have to do things like keep plasters on hand in case my husband has a cut.

46. It was very difficult to tell our own kids. They sort of looked and backed off initially. We have to be very careful if anything happens in terms of cuts or anything like that. Only our two eldest grandchildren really understand. It can be something as simple as taking a bite on. I have seen times aware. Eating an apple and then one of our younger grandchildren will ask for a bit. You cannot risk sharing any food with our grandchildren. I believe my husband is quite on the ball with this and I would even go as far as to say that he is hyperaware with a lot of things.

47. I am not aware of further medical complications arising from my husband's infection.

48. My husband did not have any symptoms until he was treated for hepatitis C, following the letter I have mentioned from the blood transfusion service and his subsequent diagnosis.

49. My husband was treated with interferon and thereafter was treated with ribavirin.

50. My husband did not face any difficulties accessing treatment as far as I am aware.

51. I do not believe that there were any treatments that should have been offered to my husband, but weren't.

52. My husband started experiencing flu-like symptoms during the time he received treatment and early on into his initial treatment he had to go off of work and was off work for a period of about 18 months due to the

symptoms he experienced. He was flat out during this time, and was tired, lethargic and generally not very well at all.

53. I believe the only impact on other treatment was the attitude of a GP at our surgery called Dr GRO-B, who was very rude and accusatory with my husband. My husband's dental treatment has not been impacted by his diagnosis, although he did make sure that his dentist was aware.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

54. I believe the only support that my husband has had has been from the infected blood forum organised by Haemophilia Scotland. In my opinion there has been no support from the NHS in terms of any counselling or other support. Doctors have not been supportive. There is a Doctor GRO-B at my husband's GP surgery who has been nothing short of obstructive and rude. He was dismissive of my husband. This doctor refused to give my husband a medical when we were buying a house, to insure him. He said the insurance company were only trying to get money out of us as our family could bury him when the time came, which is why we bought pre-paid funeral plans.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

55. In terms of any funding applications, I believe that my husband filled out any of these by himself. These may have been sent to him or may have been through the infected blood forum events he attends. We have received two payments from the Skipton Fund over the years. I think we received a payment of £20,000 and £30,000 at different times. I do not remember when we received these.

56. We have received a one off payment from the Caxton fund of £200 initially in relation to our heating bill, due to my husband feeling cold often and needing the heating to be up higher than a normally healthy

person. This was the only amount we received from the Caxton Fund. I believe that there was at some point a suggestion of applying for a grant through the Caxton fund, but I am unsure if this was for something specific. My husband and I were of the opinion that there are others out there who may need this money more than us, and for that reason we did not seek any grant. I do not believe that my husband faced any difficulties in applying for any of these funds. These funds have been specifically directed to my husband and nothing has been made specifically available for me as an affected person.

Section 8. Other Issues

57. My husband and I both feel that the previous Penrose Inquiry was a shambles. We were sent a massive document with the findings of this inquiry, which in the greater scheme of things meant nothing. There was no acknowledgement of blame and no findings to really benefit those who had been infected. The document that came from the Penrose Inquiry was full of fancy words that are meaningless to ordinary people, and in the end it did nothing to help affected or infected people. It was a total whitewash.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **GRO-C**

Dated 15th February 2019