

Witness Name: IRENE FITZPATRICK

Statement No: WITN3513001

Exhibits:

Dated: September 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF IRENE FITZPATRICK

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I, IRENE FITZPATRICK will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Irene Fitzpatrick. My date of birth is GRO-C 1944 and I live at GRO-C  
GRO-C Manchester, GRO-C
2. I make this statement in relation to my late son, Gary Norman Fitzpatrick, who was born on GRO-C 1969 and passed away on the GRO-C 1993, aged 22. Gary was infected with HIV as a result of being given contaminated blood products. He was also infected with Hepatitis but I am not sure which type.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late son's 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. Gary suffered from Haemophilia and was treated under the care of Dr Evans at the Royal Manchester Children's Hospital in Pendlebury, which has since been demolished and moved to Manchester.
5. We were not given any warnings about any risks associated with Factor VIII Concentrate. My brother had read about a link between Haemophiliac treatment coming from America and HIV. I asked the hospital about it and I was told, 'everything will be fine' and 'you know what the press are like'. That was about three to four years before Gary was diagnosed.
6. Gary was infected with HIV as a result of being given contaminated blood products. He was also infected with Hepatitis but I am not sure which type.
7. I was informed that Gary had been infected with HIV via a letter when he was approximately 15 or 16 years old. The letter arrived completely out of the blue and it stated that Gary had been tested for HIV and he was positive. The letter did not say what to do or how to deal with it. The hospital held a meeting and there were lots of other parents in attendance. There were mothers screaming and everyone was upset. We were given very little information at the meeting and I found it very difficult to hear what was said because people were crying and screaming.
8. I was told by the hospital staff that I should keep Gary's infected status quiet and not to tell the GP, the school or any relatives. Gary went to a school where all the other children had disabilities. I could not understand why we were told not to tell the school because I thought it was the school's legal right to know and also for the protection of other children.
9. Years later when I was at an appointment with the GP I was asked if Gary was HIV positive. The whole thing was a great big cover up and it never felt right to me. My feelings were conflicted, because one part of me did not want anyone to know about Gary's diagnosis due to the fear of what others would

think but the other part of me wanted the whole world to know because it was so incredibly wrong and unfair what happened to him.

10. We were not any given adequate information to help us understand and manage the infection.

11. I didn't tell Gary about his infected status when I first found out it and I made the conscious decision to keep it away from him. He had aspirations and he stayed on at school until he was 17 years old and I didn't want the diagnosis to ruin anything for him. I just couldn't bring myself to tell him because he was so looking forward to getting a job and working.

12. Gary's care for his Haemophilia moved to the Manchester Royal Infirmary when he was 18 years old. Someone at the hospital told Gary that he had been infected with HIV. He didn't tell me straight away and it was only when he broke down a few days later that he told me. He said he did not understand and that he felt none of it was right. He was told about the HIV when he was alone and he was not given the opportunity for anyone to be there with him. I felt that it was tragic he was not offered a chaperone with him to help him digest the diagnosis.

13. I can't say when Gary contracted HIV and it was clearly some time before the letter was sent.

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

14. I do not know if Gary received any other infections.

### **Section 4. Consent**

15. Gary was tested without his knowledge and without adequate information.

16. I believe Gary was tested for the purposes of research. They told me some of the boys who underwent treatment would be on AZT and some were on a different drug. I did not know which medication Gary was taking.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

17. Gary's mental health suffered just as much as his physical health and he suffered with depression. When Gary found out he was HIV positive he started smoking cannabis and got in with the wrong crowd. He also started to get a lot of new 'friends' when he received the compensation money. However those people were not his real friends.

18. Gary started doing really strange things for example he would leave the house and have picnics in the middle of the night in the forest. He also stopped going to the hospital for his treatment I telephoned the hospital but, given his age, I was told there was nothing they could do. He was on a path of absolute self destruction. He would go from angry, to volatile, to being completely withdrawn. On one occasion Gary could not remember if he had overdosed on his medication. Essentially his mental health completely broke down.

19. Gary missed out on playing when he was a child and when he got his first car he thought he could go anywhere. It was like he finally had his freedom that he had never had before. Gary loved to drive and it was one of the things in life that filled him with such pleasure. However it wasn't long when it came to the point where he wasn't psychically fit or able to drive. Despite the fact that he could not walk he would crawl on his hands and knees to the car. In the end my daughter had to take his car keys away from him because he was putting himself and others in danger. It was heart breaking to see him lose his independence.

20. It wasn't very long after Gary was told about his HIV status that his health started to change. He had 3 skin conditions simultaneously and he developed shingles. That was the first sign when I look back that it was the HIV but I didn't link it to the HIV at the time.

21. Gary developed chest problems and suffered with pneumonia. He had to have a nebuliser and dramatically lost weight. At 16 or 17 years old he was a chubby teenager but that all changed. It made me so sad because towards the end of his life he would say to me that, 'I wish I was chubby again'. He also lost his eyesight.
22. As time went on Gary was not able to inject himself or find a vein to have his haemophilia treatment. He was too weak and I would have to take him to Manchester Hospital to have it done and it was awful. There was no help available.
23. On one occasion an ambulance took Gary to the hospital for his treatment. The ambulance was late picking him up and when we got to the hospital we were turned away because we were late. We waited at the hospital for another ambulance to take us home and we were still there at 7pm. The waiting room was empty so Gary laid himself down across the chairs but a security guard told him to get up and said he should not still be there. I explained he was very poorly and we were waiting for an ambulance. Gary was treated so very badly and that really was not acceptable behaviour.
24. Gary had to have tar treatment for his skin conditions and he may have also received AZT.
25. I wouldn't know what treatment options there were for Gary because we were not given any proper information. There may have been other treatment options for Gary but they were never discussed with us.
26. On one occasion Gary needed to go to the hospital because he had a bubble on his foot which erupted. Allison, the nurse, came and she phoned an ambulance but they refused to take him with the open wounds. I went to the shops on the advice of Allison and bought plastic bags to cover them and after that the ambulance agreed to take him to hospital. The next day men in white suits turned up and took the bed away. I can only assume that that they were concerned about the risk of infection.

27. I looked after Gary on my own for the last 8 months of his life and all I was given to help me were plastic rubber gloves and an apron. Gary was bedridden during that time and completely immobile. During the last week of his life he did not eat and he had no pain relief. I would try and wet his lips to keep him comfortable.
28. On **GRO-C** 1993 a nurse came to give Gary a wash and she told me that Gary needed to have catheter because his body was slowing down. I knew something was going to happen and I got in touch with my daughters and asked if they could come over straight from work. I will never forget that I was in the kitchen making sandwiches when my daughter said, "Gary has breathed in but he has not breathed out again."
29. We never spoke to Gary about death because we just thought he would get better. I know that he did speak to a nurse and asked her what would happen to him and he also asked about what would happen to me.
30. On Gary's death certificate it states that he died of HIV. I demanded that it showed the real reason for his death and I had to fight for that. Dr **GRO-D** at Manchester Hospital took us into a room when he knew the time was getting close for Gary and he asked me what I wanted put on the death certificate. I said I wanted the truth put on it and he said I could get reporters at my door if it said Gary had died from HIV. I knew he was just trying to scare me and there was no way I was going to have that. I was lucky Gary died at home because the GP came around and he agreed that HIV should be stated on the death certificate as the cause of his death.
31. Gary was worried about people finding out that he had HIV. He thought that it was better not to tell anyone because we might get our windows smashed.
32. When Gary first died I wanted to commit suicide, but I had to be strong for my daughters. I was very angry and hurt. I had struggled to bring Gary up and he had a hard childhood. I am divorced and Gary's father was **GRO-D** I

didn't tell him about Gary's diagnosis in the beginning because

GRO-D

GRO-D

33. I suffered with depression for a long time and I couldn't get over the fact that Gary never got to live his life. Gary comes into my mind often but I have to take a deep breath and I fear that one day I will scream and I won't be able to stop.

34. Gary's infected status had an impact on his personal relationships. Gary had lived with his girlfriend, GRO-A, for about 7 months but he moved back home when he was poorly. They met at school and were sweethearts. GRO-A had a physical disability and was in a wheel chair. Gary was her carer and he would physically lift her. When he became poorly he was not able to look after her anymore. GRO-A went back to live her mum and Gary came home. They carried on seeing each other but it was not the same.

35. Gary really wanted to work and he got a job at a firm doing electronics. He had been there for 3 weeks when he had a bleed in his elbow. He decided he would carry on working and go over to the hospital in his dinner hour. He was back at work 10 minutes late and when he explained why they said 'this job is not for you' and he was dismissed. He then did odd jobs until he became too ill.

## **Section 6. Treatment/care/support**

36. Gary did not have any counselling.

37. Mavis, one of the nurses, came to visit to see what equipment I needed and we were meant to have a stair lift fitted but it never happened. When Mavis came back to see Gary just before he died she couldn't understand why the house amendments she had suggested had not happened. I cannot recall the details of the specific fund but I knew it as the Haemophiliac fund.

38. When I was taking care of Gary I met Allison and she said she was dealing with the Haemophiliacs that had been infected with HIV. She visited me on two occasions at my house.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

39. Gary received £25,000 from the Macfarlane Trust and he may have received another payment a few years later. I believe he had to sign something to receive that money.

40. When Gary moved back in with me he was penniless. He had spent the money he received on the flat. He referred to the money as 'blood money that was not really his'. He felt embarrassed about it because he did not earn it and he never enjoyed it.

41. The MacFarlane Trust paid for Gary's funeral and for a new bed when the old one was taken away.

42. In December 1992 I received £750 from the Macfarlane Trust which I used to have the room downstairs redecorated because Gary spent everyday, all day in there.

43. Dr Bolton asked if I aware of a payment you could receive when you care for a terminally ill person. I applied and the day after Gary died I received a letter from the DLA which confirmed that my application had been approved, but because he died I was not entitled to receive anything.

### **Section 8. Other Issues**

44. I get angry because Gary had visions for his future and it was all taken away from him. I would like to know why and who decided to purchase the Factor VIII when it became known that it was contaminated with HIV. I want the truth for Gary. When Gary came off the cryoprecipitate it was meant to give him a new lease of life. It was sold as a wonder drug but it did not end up like that.



**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

45. I am not seeking anonymity and I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry. I do not want 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: Irene Fitzpatrick

Dated.....

18-9-2019