

Witness Name: Farhat Khan

Statement No.: WITN0186-001

Dated:

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### WRITTEN STATEMENT OF FARHAT KHAN

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 9 February 2019.

I, Farhat Khan, will say as follows: -

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Farhat Khan. My date of birth is GRO-C 196<sup>61</sup> and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a homemaker and mother of two adult sons. I previously worked in a family owned fast food outlet until I became too ill to work. I immigrated from Pakistan and have since resided in GRO-C London with my family. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C following the birth of my first son. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my sons and our lives together.
2. I do not have legal representation.
3. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the option for anonymity and redactions. I have elected not to be anonymise, I wish for my story to be

known. The dates throughout my statement should be treated as approximate to the best of my knowledge and are often based on deductions from other life events.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

4. I was infected with Hepatitis C via a blood transfusion I received at St Georges Hospital on the 6 or 7 January 1991 following complications with the Caesarean section I had during the birth of my first son. I am not sure how many blood transfusions I had during this time as I was unconscious throughout but I know that I had at least one because the doctors told me.
5. Following the birth of my eldest son I remained in hospital, I was unwell. I do not have a very clear memory of it as I believe I was unconscious most of this time. I remember that I only got to see my baby six days after he was born. During this time, I received at least one blood transfusion. I am not sure how much but I would describe it as a lot. I believe I received infected blood from this transfusion.
6. I had a further blood transfusion in 1995 during an ovarian cyst operation. However, I know that it was the transfusion in 1991 which is when I received the infected blood because I remember that prior to the ovarian cyst operation in 1995 the doctor was worried about doing the operation as I had some liver damage. I had never used drugs and do not have tattoos.
7. For many years after the birth of my first son I was very tired all the time and feeling very unwell, so I went to see my General Practitioner ("GP"). The GP referred me to St George's Hospital for tests. I had very many tests in this time, liver biopsies, Computed Tomography ("CT") scans and endoscopy. The tests were to diagnose the Hepatitis C infection. I cried a lot after each of them because they caused me so much pain.

8. For three months the doctors repeated the same tests at Middlesex Hospital, St Georges Hospital and King's College Hospital. They were very painful and I was not enjoying my life. They had to do repeats to confirm my diagnosis.
9. I was told I was infected with the Hepatitis C virus in 2000. The doctors at St George's Hospital told me I had Hepatitis C and sent a letter to my GP. My GP then sent a letter to Middlesex Hospital following my diagnosis so that I received treatment there. All the time the GP helped me and told me what was happening. All the doctors that treated me were very good and helpful.
10. I do not remember if the doctors told me anything about managing bleeds or how to manage matters to ensure I did not infect other people.
11. All the doctors have been very good to me. The consultant at King's College Hospital was very friendly and all the staff were very good. I never faced any problem getting treatment or information.

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

12. I had lots of health problems after my first son was born in 1991, including Tuberculosis ("TB"). I don't know if that came from the blood as it may have just been that my immune system was very low at the time. I do think a lot of the ongoing issues I had were connected to the treatment for Hepatitis C and the damage to my liver.

### **Section 4. Consent**

13. I believe the doctors told me everything.
14. I believe I consented to treatment I received.

15. I asked the doctors about who was giving me the liver when I had my transplant so that I could pray for them but they said it was confidential and they couldn't tell me but that was the only time they didn't tell me something.

## **Section 5. Impact**

16. When I was infected with Hepatitis C I was very sick, I was tired all the time and vomiting. I was very weak. After my first son was born I was very sick all the time. I had TB in 1991 as well. I was so tired I would just lie in bed all the time.
17. Before I was diagnosed in 2000 I had my second son in 1994 and then had an operation to remove my womb and ovaries because I had ovarian cysts. I was very sick for nine years before I was diagnosed.
18. In 2000 I was offered treatment for my Hepatitis C, at The Middlesex Hospital. The doctors offered me a course of Interferon. The treatment plan was originally for six months. I had the injections for six months but they told me the infection was still there. The doctors decided I should have treatment for a further nine months. Then after nine months they told me I was still infected. The decision was made to continue with treatment. In total I was treated with Interferon for two years.
19. I remember the Interferon injections made me very sick. They gave me the injections in my stomach every Monday at the hospital. After the injections I couldn't do anything for the following three days because I had a very high temperature, vomiting, fatigue and felt very unwell. Then for two days I was feeling well but then the injections were happening again on the Monday and I was sick again. It was an ongoing cycle of injections, unwell for three days, feeling ok for two and then back for another injection.

20. Later on I was taught to do the injections myself. I would inject on the Monday, be sick for four days then have two good days. In my two good days I would need to try and get everything I needed to get done in the week, such as clean the house and other day to day activities. Those two days were the only time I felt well enough to do anything. I would have to rush around and get everything done because I knew that I would then have the injection again and be ill for four days.
21. The Interferon injections didn't work and I was still very sick. I often had water bloating my stomach and on my brain which caused a mini-coma. When this happened, I would be admitted to hospital to have the water drained. When I woke up I would be discharged, but after a few weeks I would have to return to the hospital for the water to be drained again. Sometimes I was large because of the water retention and other times very skinny because I couldn't eat. It was really tough both physically and emotionally.
22. For five years, between 2001 and 2006 I never ate, I just lay down all the time. Over the summer I often went and lay down in the sunshine outside because I was feeling cold all the time.
23. I had a lot of pain in my stomach one day and I was rushed into St Georges Hospital, it was a very bad time and I lost a lot of blood.
24. I would describe this period as being very hard I was in and out of the hospital for five years. My sons were young but had to cope with a mother who was not well. GRO-C I am fortunate that I had extended family who were able to look after them when needed. I worry about how my two boys felt having a sick mother. I worry about how it impacted them. I am lucky I had two sons who were good boys.
25. I think the infection impacted my cognitive function. I would describe it as at times my mind would just go. I remember one day I was driving the children to school and when I came back my mind was completely gone, I

didn't even know where the toilet was. I kept trying to use the remote control for the TV as a telephone, I tried to call my brother using it! I even found it difficult to open the front door when my brother arrived because I didn't know which door it was. I still have odd days when my mind isn't right.

26. It was after the bloating in December 2006 the doctors said I could have a liver transplant. I remember it was at Middlesex Hospital they told me that my liver was scarred, like a break in the liver. My liver was broken right down the middle so they decided to give me a whole new liver. Despite it being very damaged I never had liver cancer. When they took me in to do the transplant I wasn't scared because I didn't want my life as it was, it was no life, if they could give me a new life I was happy.
27. After the transplant on 27 December 2007 at King's College Hospital, I would describe my health is much improved, now my life isn't destroyed anymore.
28. The doctors gave me a card with all this medication on it, it was so much that they had to teach me how to take it all. I was in bed for two to three months after the transplant and my sister-in-law came in to help with the house and my medication.
29. After the liver transplant I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C again and this time I had it for six months. The transplanted liver they gave me was ok, it wasn't infected, but they diagnosed it again because the Interferon hadn't cleared it out of me the first time so the transplanted liver became infected.
30. In June 2018 I was treated with Direct Acting Antiviral medication. It took six months and when I had the medication I was still feeling sick and tired.
31. I believe my transplant has been successful. I am a lot better since my transplant. I do have to be careful with what I eat to keep the liver as healthy as possible and I have discovered I'm now allergic to some foods.

32. If I reflect back on how I felt emotionally prior to the transplant and Hepatitis C treatment, I was very depressed. Every day I was crying in the mornings. Sometimes my cousins would want to come into the house but I wouldn't let them because I felt like people wouldn't like seeing me so ill.
33. Prior to the transplant and treatment, I never really slept properly. Sometimes I couldn't sleep all night and I would go out for a walk at 5am then try to sleep when I got back.
34. I believe my youngest son suffered the most from my illness. He was only five when I became seriously ill, so my illness was his whole life. My eldest son told me that he didn't really understand it, he just knew I was very ill all the time and that he had to help me. It was tough on him.
35. In addition to my illness, my husband was GRO-C often not around for the children. When I was unwell and in hospital my brother and sister-in-law would look after the children. I relied heavily on my family and children to look after me while I was ill. I feel bad that my sons lives were framed by having an unwell mother. I remember them crying often. I am sorry they had such a tough life with me being in and out of hospital.
36. My eldest son has told me looking back on his childhood it was a really big struggle. When I spoke to him he recalled taking me to the hospital on the bus and finding his own way home when he was just fourteen. I remember waking up in the hospital after being admitted so they could drain the fluid and panicking about where he was. The nurses told me he had got the bus home alone.
37. Due to my illness my sons had to keep up with school work while also cooking and cleaning at home. I remember my eldest son taking me to the hospital while was doing his General Certificate of Secondary Education ("GCSE") exams. He put his degree on hold to look after me. He had to grow up too fast.

38. I thank god that my children are still good people even though I was never able to look after them properly. They have grown up to be very sensible because they didn't have me or my husband to care for them. I was very lucky that my brother was able to look after them when I was so sick.
39. Before my illness I was always very social within the family. This significantly reduced after I became ill.
40. I was impacted by stigma associated with Hepatitis, some relatives thought my sickness was dangerous and stayed away. On reflection this was because Hepatitis C was new, no one really knew about it so no one wanted to come to see me. Help and assistance was limited to some family members. I did tell people about my TB and the liver transplant but not the Hepatitis C. They just knew I was ill after I had my first son.
41. When I was unwell, daily life was a struggle. I struggled with keeping the house clean, looking after my husband, looking after my children and still going to the hospital. At that time, I thought if I don't get some financial help we might end up living in a shelter. I couldn't work because my health was so bad for so long. Our lives were very different when I couldn't work. My sons only remember living in council houses when they were children because we couldn't afford anywhere to live.
42. I couldn't go on holiday or travel at all before the transplant. My mum lives in Pakistan and I couldn't go to her. I didn't see her for 20 years. It wasn't until I had the transplant that I saw my mum again. She missed me very much. She cried a lot and gave thanks to god when she found out I was well again.
43. Now I have ongoing monitoring for my liver, it was once a month, then every three months and now it is every four months. I also have problems with my blood pressure and am now on more medication in order to control it.



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

44. I do not remember if they told me anything about managing bleeds when I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C. They called me into the hospital and taught me a lot about livers and hepatitis before I had the liver transplant. There was a support group at the hospital and they even gave me a study course at home.
45. The doctors have been very nice, the consultant I saw at King's College Hospital was very friendly and all the staff were very good. And now I go every month for check-ups and they still recognise me and say hello. After my liver transplant they didn't recognise me because when they discharged me they styled my hair and within three or four weeks I looked healthy and completely different because my body was starting to work again.
46. I did not face any difficulty in obtaining treatment, all the doctors did everything they could to help me. GRO-C
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47. I never received any psychological support. The doctor just advised me on all the practical things.
48. The dentists refused to treat me because they were worried they couldn't deal with my bleeding.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

49. I applied to the Skipton Fund in 2008 and received both the £20,000 and £50,000 lump sums. I was able to put this towards a house which means I no longer live in a Council house.
50. I get the heating allowance each December.

51. St George's Hospital told me about the Skipton Fund and the doctors there helped me to do the paperwork. It was very easy to apply with their assistance. I rely on the Skipton Funds money.

52. I have had difficulties and frustration with the Department for Work and Pensions. My benefits were stopped because they thought I was well so they said I had to go to work. I have mostly been reliant on social support since my illness started. The Council wanted evidence of my liver transplant and medical matters otherwise they wouldn't pay my benefits anymore.

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

53. I have no other issues that I wish to raise.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 7/8/2019