Witness Name: Anne Riley
Statement No: WITN0202001
Exhibits: Nil
Dated: 31 May 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANNE RILEY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 21 May 2019.

I, Anne Riley, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Anne Riley. My date of birth is GRO-C 1952 and I live in GRO-C West Sussex. My full address is known to the Inquiry. I am a retired accounts clerk & auxiliary district nurse and have two daughters and a son, Sadie, Daniel and Angelina born in 1970, 1976 and 1977. My husband Trevor sadly passed away in 1978, and I live on my own. I currently suffer with fibromyalgia, tinnitus and severe digestive problems.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which I contracted as a result of being given blood transfusions on three separate occasions after operations.

3. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the impact it had on my life.

4. I confirm that I have spoken to a solicitor from Watkins and Gunn who I met at the hearings. I have not officially instructed them and at the moment I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

5. As a young woman I was very healthy and athletic. I swam for the county and was even asked to play football for Watford Ladies. I was very confidant and busy as a mother of three. I would often take the children out to play, and as a family we were very active.

6. In 1977 I woke up with excruciating pain in my stomach. I recall it was 6am as my husband woke up early to go to the Harrods sale. Even though I was in pain, I insisted that he still went. As the morning progressed the pain intensified and I was in agony. I also developed a throbbing pain in my shoulders. A neighbour phoned for the doctor, who prescribed codeine. The pain continued and one of my husband's friends arrived to our house in the afternoon. He took one look at me and phoned for an ambulance. I was 'blue lighted' to Watford General Hospital, as we lived in GRO-C at the time. Several doctors carried out examinations and I remember being so tense and in so much pain that my hands went into a claw and a fist. I recall one of the doctors asking why I was worrying, to which I replied 'because of the pain in my stomach'. They would not let me be on all fours, which was the only way to stop the throbbing. Medical professionals treated women as neurotic back then, and I feel that is how I was perceived. At this time my son Daniel was only 5 months old.

7. The following day I was sent for an x-ray, on the way down I noticed that there was blood returning back up the IV line. It was discovered that an ovarian cyst had exploded and I had been bleeding internally for 36 hours, and I was sent for emergency surgery. I was haemorrhaging badly and required a blood transfusion, which was duly given during surgery. The

operation was carried out on the 8 January 1977. I do not know how many units of blood I received.

8. Following the operation, my GP apologised for not discovering the cyst at an earlier appointment, and went on to explain that I was only 5 minutes away from dying prior to the surgery.

9. I gave birth to our youngest daughter on GRO-C 1977 (GRO-C GRO-C), and continued to have health issues after the birth. I was initially put on Benamol as my body ached, but that caused bruising. I kept bloating up and then it would go away.

10. In 1978 another ovarian cyst burst and I had been bleeding internally for 24 hours prior to surgery. A total hysterectomy was carried out at Watford General Hospital, as it was obviously thought that this was going to be an on-going problem. I was only 25 at the time, but I did not mind as I already had three children. A further blood transfusion was given. They kept me in hospital for a total of 10 days, and the recovery was tough. Again I do not know how many units of blood I received.

11. After the hysterectomy I was always in pain, and would crawl into a hot bath to feel better.

12. I had a further operation to remove my gall bladder, a cholecystectomy, again at Watford General Hospital. Prior to the operation I had horrendous stomach problems and issues with bile, so it was necessary to remove the gall bladder.

13. It was in the Christmas of 1982, 83 or 84, I cannot be sure, I remember being so much pain with my stomach that the doctor came out to administer morphine. He returned on Boxing Day to check how I was. In March I was rushed into hospital again with severe stomach pain caused by an infection in the gall bladder, it was removed shortly after.

14. Over the years I experienced endless health problems, having regular bouts of bloating and fluid retention, fatigue, unexplainable pain and so called 'women's problems'. All were common symptoms of a HCV infection, so I do not understand why they did not test for the virus then. I underwent many tests and examinations, some very personal and unpleasant. During my 30s I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and tinnitus. I attended the pain clinic at GRO-C, where they prescribed a therapeutic dose of Amitriptyline so that I could sleep at night.

15. By 2011 and at the age of 59 I was so bloated I looked 9 months pregnant. A blood test taken by the GP had detected possible ovarian cancer, which was very frightening, but to my mind impossible as my ovaries had been removed in 1978. I was referred to the gynaecology ward at the Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital in Grimsby to have some fluid drained off the stomach on 19 December. I left hospital the following day.

16. My son had planned to spend Christmas with me that year, but I phoned him on 23 December as I had difficulty breathing. I also phoned an ambulance and was admitted back into the Diana, Princess of Wales Hospital. I was given drips, oxygen and kept in over the Christmas period. I kept moving between the respiratory and gastroenterology wards. In the respiratory unit I was fitted with a bag and a back drain was carried out behind my right lung. This is a very painful procedure but necessary, because the fluid build up was compressing the lung and I could not breathe. I remained in hospital and was transferred to the gastric ward with suspected liver failure. Daily blood tests, scans, x rays and examinations became the norm. My three children took turns to travel to my Lincolnshire home to care for the pets. It was a huge drain on the finances and the work commitments of them all.

17. Finally after a few weeks in hospital an astute doctor who had trained at Kings College Hospital took further tests. During his investigation, I tested

positive for HCV and was diagnosed early 2012. I was immediately put into isolation and barrier nursing implemented.

18. The following day about 5 doctors came into my room and they were completely gowned up. I do not recall what they mentioned about HCV, but they said something along the lines of 'I am sorry to tell you, but you require a liver transplant'. Nothing can prepare you for being told that without a liver transplant, you will die through no fault of your own. I am a very spiritual person, so asked to be on my own after I heard the news.

19. Shortly after another lady came in to ask whether it was due to a religious belief that I needed to think about the transplant, but I explained it was because I was spiritual. I had to get my head around the seriousness of my condition, and the fact that someone had to die for me to live – I would have a foreign organ in my body. I just needed some time to think about it all, and I kept thinking about my children and if I had infected them. I stayed in hospital for a total of 10 weeks and was given potassium regularly. When I went into hospital I weighed just under 14 stone, and by the time I was discharged I weighed just under 8.

20. I had no idea of what Hepatitis C was. I do recall the hospital providing an information booklet on the virus to read. I do not recall what information was provided in regard to sexual relations, but I have not had a relationship since. I feel like a leper.

21. It is never been identified which of the blood transfusions was contaminated with HCV.

22. In a letter dated 1 February 2013 from the North Lincolnshire and Goole Hospital, Dr Moss states that I have HCV RNA positive Genotype 2, and that cirrhosis has been identified in the liver. He further adds that no blood transfusions have been received, so the infection must be from her husband. He asserts that my husband was a drug user and this was very ill informed of him. He fails to recognise the blood transfusions given to

me during the operations. I never picked up on this error previously as I was obviously to ill at the time to recognise. I am extremely angry that the cause of infection written in the letter was incorrect.

23. I have never had any tattoos or taken drugs.

Section 3. Other Infections

24. I have not received any infection other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

25. A letter dated 1 February 2013 confirms that I tested negative for HIV and HBV.

Section 4. Consent

26. I do not remember being told that the consultant was testing for HCV specifically, but I consented to the endless tests as they were trying to find out what was wrong with me.

Section 5. Impact

27. The impact of the HCV infection from the contaminated blood transfusions on my health has been horrendous. Prior to the liver transplant I had severe cirrhosis of the liver, and severe respiratory failure meant that I required on going back drains until November 2014. My kidneys have been damaged by the HCV, and I am in constant pain with the fibromyalgia. I have suffered with jaundice, skin thinning that causes endless bruising and cuts from the slightest knock, IBS and bowel problems, extreme fatigue, loss of teeth and gums and severe weight loss. I now have little resistance to infection, which explains how I caught Clostridium difficile. This has caused permanent damage to my bowels.

28. As a result of the HCV infection, I suffered with hepatic encephalopathy; confusion caused by damage to the liver from cirrhosis, and fluid on the brain. I would have times when I did not know what I was saying; something the children used to refer to as 'liver brain'. There are also chunks of my past that I do not remember, and memories that I lost because of the affect on my brain. My children have often reminded me of events in the past.

29. There are times when I have been down and depressed. I have the support of my children, but it is hard for them to console me when they have gone through everything as well. There are times when my eldest daughter will ask if I have upset her because I can be so withdrawn.

30. I have no body confidence at all, and this is another reason why I have not looked for another partner. My stomach is scarred all over, and I suffered with teeth and hair loss whilst on the treatment to clear the HCV infection. For a woman it is devastating to lose your teeth and hair. I now wear glasses full time because my vision has deteriorated.

31. Once the HCV was discovered in 2012, I was in and out of GRO-C Hospital every couple of weeks to have back drains. The liver was so diseased that it was not working properly and there was a build up of fluid behind the lungs. I would find myself being unable to breath because of the pressure. I cannot explain how excruciating the back drains are, but you will do anything when you have difficulty breathing. I was so scared that I was going to die and if I walked down into the village I would have to stop on the way to catch my breath. It is particularly painful when the lung opens back up after the pressure is relieved. During one of the drains, I remember a doctor pricked himself. I felt awful in case he had caught the infection. My lower right lung is permanently damaged and I am susceptible to infection.

32. On one occasion when I was in hospital, I contracted Clostridium difficile – the worst type of bacteria to infect the stomach. Again I was placed into

isolation and received barrier nursing. I recall stepping out of bed one day and I messed myself, I was absolutely mortified. I was kept in for 4 weeks and had to wear nappies. I found the bacterial infection humiliating, and there was one incident where my daughter had to clean up after me. I still have to take spare clothes with me whenever I go out now, and this has knocked my social confidence completely. If I am going out I also have to know where all of the public toilets are.

33. Whilst under the care of Dr Kosh Agarwal at Kings College Hospital, I was put onto the liver transplant list in July 2013. In August 2013 I went up to London to stay with my daughters. I had bruising all over my leg and I was struggling to breathe, as usual. I was admitted to hospital, and they moved me from the secondary transplant list onto the emergency list.

34. I was later placed onto a 12-week treatment trial consisting of ribavirin and sofosbuvir. I believe only 5 patients were put onto the trial, and I was fortunate to be one of them. Before the treatment commenced the viral count was 14.7 million, yet within a couple of weeks it had gone completely. Due to the extent of the side affects, I was let off taking the ribavirin in the final two weeks.

35. The course of treatment was horrendous. I experienced dental problems, my hair fell out and I had no energy. I had cold showers in the middle of the night because my skin felt as though it was on fire. I could barely eat because the medicine affected my taste buds. I suffered with fatigue, fainting and was forever falling over. I also had symptoms of fibromyalgia and tinnitus to deal with at the same time.

36. I cleared the virus in November 2014, and I cannot put into words how happy I was to have cleared the infection. This put an end to all of the painful back drains, which was a huge bonus for me. I also had the knowledge that my new liver would not get infected.

37. Life on the transplant list was a whole new ball game. Life comes to a standstill and you are unable to make plans to do anything. Permanently waiting, hoping and not knowing if the day will come, whether you will live or die before a donor can be found. It messes with your mind and emotions, along with the hopes of your family too. I waited ages for a liver transplant and on three occasions I was 'blue lighted' to Kings College Hospital, only to find out that the liver was not suitable. The feeling of devastation was unbearable.

38. The fourth call came on the 30 September 2015 and after a day of uncertainty the transplant was given the go ahead. Sadie met me at the hospital. All three of my children and my mother were overjoyed that the transplant was going ahead, but were anxious about the procedure. I walked down to theatre late in the evening and remember the operating table being nice and warm. The transplant was carried out in the early hours on the 1 October 2015. Thanks to the amazing surgeons at Kings, I was given a new liver free of HCV. I would have not lived much longer without a donor liver. I am so grateful to my donor, the doctors at Kings and my own family for all the love and support I received at this time. For me the outcome has been unbelievable.

39. After the surgery one of the consultants came to visit me and explained that due to decades of HCV contamination, my liver was completely grey, slimy and totally destroyed. We had initially asked to see it, but it was that disgusting even the consultant was repulsed by it. Whilst recovering in hospital I had drips and tubes coming out of my neck. Morphine was administered via a drip, but after a few days I instructed the nurses to take it out as I'd had enough of the hallucinations.

40. Clostridium difficile struck again during the hospitalisation, and once again I was put into isolation. The doctors advised that a colonoscopy would be taken, and I was shut in a small room shortly after the transplant. Unbeknown to me the procedure had been pushed back until the end of the day, because of the risk of infection. The hospital staff never

explained how long I would be waiting, and kept assuring me that I would be seen soon. I was only in a hospital gown and extremely cold. Sadie was sitting in my isolation ward for hours and there was a lack of communication. I was in the room for over three hours on my on, and I felt very lonely. It was probably one of my worst days in hospital.

41. I lived on a diet of bananas and custard in hospital, as I had no appetite and that was all my stomach could cope with. I remember the children used to also bring in ice-lollies.

42. Since the liver transplant I have not been hospitalised, visiting only for check up appointments. I am still under the care of Kings College Hospital, and my blood is tested on each visit. To this day they struggle to find a vein, and I do not like needles. The appointments were initially scheduled weekly but have slowly decreased to every 6 months. I now drive myself up to the hospital.

43. The recovery from the liver transplant has not been easy and it has taken until now for me to finally see real progress and feel strong enough to get on with life.

44. My daily routine revolves around medication. When I wake up I have to take anti rejection tablets along with Levothyroxine sodium. An hour later I have another 7 tablets and 5 supplements because my eating habits are not consistent. Then around 10pm I have to take all of the night medication. I am now on 9 separate medications along with my inhaler, detailed below.

45. Amitriptyline 25mg tablets – two at night. Levothyroxine sodium 50 microgram tablets – one to be taken each morning before breakfast. Quinine sulfate 300mg tablets – one to be taken at night. Loperamide 2mg capsules – 1-2 to prevent diarrhoea if going out. Tramadol 50 mg capsules – one to be taken two to four times a day for pain flare up. Amlodipine 5mg tablets – one to be taken each day. Colesevelam 625mg

tablets – four to be taken each day with food. Tiotropium bromide 18 microgram inhalation power capsules with device – inhale the contents of one capsule once daily, at the same time of day. Salbutamol 100 micrograms/dose inhaler CFC free – one or two puffs to be inhaled four times a day when required.

46. Dr Sam Thomson arranged a nuclear x ray at Chichester Hospital, as I was still having faecal accidents. It transpired that my bile salts were not being absorbed due to the damage from the all my surgeries and the Clostridium difficile. My whole digestive system has been wrecked due to the surgeries. I have now been given a treatment, and I only have accidents when I forget to take the medication. The tablet has to be taken 4 hours before or after any other mediation, so if I do not take it within a certain timeframe, I cannot take it at all. I continue to go camping and attend festivals with all of my children, but have a toilet in the tent.

47. I have recently had a small cancer removed from my lip because of the anti-rejection medication. I have also had a cancer removed from my back. If further cancerous cells are found, the hospital will change the medication prescribed.

48. The minute I open my eyes in the morning I feel intense pain, and cannot move because of the fibromyalgia. It is a direct consequence of the HCV. Only once I have taken tramadol, does the pain ease enough to enable me to function. Although I am in constant pain, I do not complain because it has been the norm for me since my 20s.

49. I also have terrible hearing and constant tinnitus. I have the radio on to distract from the noise, and I find myself left out of conversations in crowded places because I cannot hear what is being said. I struggle with telephone conversations, and when people have accents I find it hard to understand what they are saying.

50. I am fully aware that my liver will not last indefinitely, and I know that my kidneys and lungs have been affected as well, my kidneys smaller than they should be.

51. After the diagnosis of Hepatitis C, I was so scared that I had passed on the infection to my own children or previous sexual partners. I had also been nursing and fostering without knowing I was infected. Fortunately my children and grandchildren have all tested negative for the virus, and due to the hysterectomy I never had any menstrual bleeding. I have lost contact with foster children and ex partners so my fears continue. I will never have peace of mind again. I am a nurturing, caring person so I have found the thought of passing on the infection extremely difficult. It is an overwhelming feeling of guilt.

52. I informed my NHS dentist that I was HCV positive, and from then on he would gown up from head to toe and wear rubber gloves. I felt like a leper. I went to a private dentist in Lincolnshire in the end, and had over £10,000 worth of treatment carried out. As my illness progressed, my bridge and crowns fell out because my gums had shrunk, and I could not eat. A plate was made but it did not fit properly, I consequently went to a different dentist and had another plate made. I know have a gap in my bottom teeth and my current dentist is in no hurry to fix it.

53. I received a letter from GRO-C Hospital dated 11 December 2013 stating that cirrhosis of the liver was caused by excessive alcohol intake. There is an assumption that because you had a liver transplant, you are a heavy drinker. I only ever drink on occasions. Unlike drinking, HCV is like woodworm – it attacks the whole liver at once. I wrote back in response and received a letter of apology dated 21 January 2014. It affirms that my liver cirrhosis was secondary to the HCV infection and has nothing to do with excessive alcohol intake.

54. Since I moved to GRO-C, I have felt very isolated. I do not know anyone here and I left my social life in Lincolnshire. Whilst this area is nice, I have

found the residents very clicky. I find being away from everyone particularly hard, as I had to say goodbye to my church, and friends from social clubs including clay pigeon shooting. Although the extended family lives in GRO-C, it is still 45 minutes away.

55. I now volunteer at the local charity shop for 2 afternoons a week, but I am very tired once I finish.

56. 1978 was a terrible year for the family, I lost my mother-in-law in June on the night of my hysterectomy, and I later lost my husband. Our eldest daughter Sadie was staying with her Nana the night she died.

57. After my husband passed away, I raised our three children singlehandedly. I had to carry on living a normal life and be strong for them. Trevor died in his sleep at the age of 33 because of respiratory failure. It was at the time we were moving to Lincolnshire, and he went up on his own initially to move some of our furniture. Whilst he was away he phoned every night, and on the Wednesday he explained how he went to see the GP about a trapped nerve in his neck.

58. I did not hear from him on the Thursday, but presumed he was out with friends. On Friday morning his sister came round and said that he'd gone to be with their mother, I didn't know what she meant, she didn't say he was dead. It didn't click that he was actually dead straight away.

59. We both travelled up immediately, but arrived too late to see the body. It took 7 weeks before the body was released, and I never had a chance to see him. The day of the funeral was also chaotic; one of Trevor's friends came to pick me up, but the car broke down on the way and we were late getting there.

60. With three children to raise I worked as hard as I could and at one point I held down 4 jobs to keep a roof over the children's head. From 9am- 4pm I worked in an accounts department. I also baked cakes for the local

dance school and did their accounts, so that Daniel and Angelina could attend lessons for free. During the night I worked as an auxiliary nurse, and did bank nursing at the weekends. I often did not know what day of the week it was, and would fall asleep in a chair with a coffee, but I had a mortgage to pay and children to support.

61. My GP decided to medically retire me in 1991 because I was so ill. I found myself indoors twiddling my thumbs and I did not know how to pay the mortgage. Unable to work full time anymore, I made ends meet by fostering teenage girls. This was not easy and came with a lot of issues, but it was a very rewarding experience. I also accommodated French students over short periods, prior to fostering. By 2004 my health had further deteriorated and I had to stop fostering completely in April 2005. I sold our 4-bedroom home and moved to Lincolnshire to become a live in carer. By this time, the property had a secondary charge against it and I could not afford to buy again. The patient was a very difficult man, and it was affecting my mental health. I approached the local council who eventually found me a private rented home in GRO-C.

62. As a result of the infection I will never know financial security again – renting privately offers no guarantees. Councils have told me that it is highly unlikely I will be offered social housing because I am a single tenant.

63. At my age I should be economically independent and mortgage free. I have experienced a real financial struggle, and lost my home. I did not qualify for any housing benefit because I honestly declared a shift, which took me one hour over the threshold for support.

64. Following the diagnosis of HCV, I had to relocate from Lincolnshire to West Sussex to be near my children and family, as I required full care. I therefore came under the care of Kings College Hospital, with local care provided by GRO-C Hospital. My youngest daughter tried to find accommodation, but with two dogs, a cat and relying on DSS payments,

only one landlord (who happened to be a vet) would accept me. I had to donate a lot of my belongings to charity shops, as the house in GRO-C was much smaller. A hobby of mine is sewing, and I had no space to bring all of my materials. The children helped me with packing and the move.

65. Everything in my house is second-hand, and whilst my children were growing up I would have to buy their clothes as cheaply as possible. As a family we would all go and score at the clay pigeon shoots, so that the children could have some pocket money and I could earn an extra £25 to support the household.

66. I feel extremely cheated and I have had all aspects of my life highlight compromised by the affects of my HCV infection. Nothing can compensate for all my years of ill health, the loss of my career and home; it has caused so many issues and upsets in my life. Up until I received compensation from the Skipton Fund, I was unable to assist my children financially in the way that I wanted due to the HCV infection and my inability to work full time. The money received from Skipton Fund does not compensate for the loss of earnings over 34 years. The money from the sale of our home did not last very long, and as an in house carer I was only remunerated with food and accommodation.

67. I do not like to look back because I cannot handle the pain from the past. I know I am a victim but I have always just got on with life, and don't dwell on anything. I continue to take one day at a time. I had a ticking time bomb inside me for over 30 years, and during the initial tests and examinations I was treated as a neurotic – that I was exaggerating about 'women's problems'.

68. My children, wider family and friends have had a tough time seeing me look so ill. Many of my friends have broken down over what I have had to go through. GRO-C already on the organ donor register.

69. I absolutely hate the fact that my children have been through so much and all the guilt I feel is for them. I have tried to protect them from everything, but they have witnessed how ill I have been, and I know that it still affects them, as I am their only parent. Even to this day, they do shifts of looking after me. My infection with HCV has had a profound affect on my son, and I understand that he still feels raw in regard to what has happened. My daughters are more resilient, but they are still deeply affected.

70. A year after my transplant, my daughter gave birth to a little boy and I was present when he was born. Without clearing the virus and receiving an organ donation I would have not been there. My son later had a little girl, and I have been able to see my grandchildren grow up.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

71. I have been offered counselling but this is in London and not really suitable.

72. I have not joined any support groups. When I attended the public hearings in London I found out about support that has never been offered to me. It was only by attending the hearings that I realised that there is more help out there.

73. Back when I had the operations, there was a lack of understanding on behalf of the doctors. However this does not negate from the fact that they saved my life twice and then provided me with a liver transplant. I cannot fault the treatment I have received from the NHS over the years, and I am in no doubt that these operations saved my life – for that I am extremely grateful. However it was much later to be discovered that I had been infected with Hepatitis C, as a direct result of the blood transfusions I had been given.

74. Dr Sam Thomson, the consultant at GRO-C Hospital and his team have always been lovely. The follow up team at Kings College Hospital are also very supportive, although the physio sessions post operation were useless. I was never made aware that it would take between 18 months and 2 years to recover from the liver transplant, until I said 'I cannot understand why I am not getting better'.

75. Every 4-6 weeks I see an osteopath for pain.

76. I did not have a specific hepatitis nurse, but I was fortunate and extremely lucky to be under the care of Dr Kosh Agarwal at Kings College Hospital. He has an outstanding team.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

77. It was by chance that my daughter-in-law found out about Skipton Fund, and I applied for financial compensation. During the application process, I was asked to submit medical evidence of receiving a blood transfusion. I approached Watford General Hospital for records, but they could not find anything. My daughter-in-law suggested contacting my local GP, Dr Farrer, and she was able to provide three pages of my notes in regard to the treatment I received at Watford General.

78. The notes state that on 8 January 1977 there was a haemorrhage on the left ovary and an ovarian bleed. There is another mention of a haemorrhage on 1 June 1978 and a total hysterectomy on 2 June 1978. I remember thinking halleluiah at the time, but I now question where everything else has gone. I wonder why only those three pages of my notes were kept; surely they must have known something?

79. The application was accepted, and I received an initial payment of £20,000, followed by an additional £50,000 as I developed cirrhosis of the liver.

80. I now receive a monthly payment from the EIBSS. It started off at £1230 in 2014, but this increased to £1536 as I am on a low income. From April 2019 I received a letter from the EIBSS stating that the Stage 2 yearly payment will increase to £18,431 per annum, inclusive of the Winter Fuel Allowance.

81. I find it extremely unfair that I have been continuously ill for over 30 years and medically retired since 1991, yet you can only receive financial assistance from the date you apply. There are no backdated payments.

Section 8. Other Issues

82. I would like the Inquiry to achieve justice and proper compensation for those infected and affected by contaminated blood.

83. In the early days the haemophiliacs infected were treated appallingly as the NHS tried to sweep the disaster under the proverbial carpet. It took over 30 years for my infection to be diagnosed. Many have died along the way as a direct result of contamination and have suffered severely. There may be many more yet to be diagnosed.

84. It is hard to place the blame entirely with the medical professionals, as the doctors were only using the blood supplies that they had, which was necessary to save lives – mine included. When demand for blood supplies was high and British stocks low, they had no choice but to look further afield for supplies – a catch 22 situation. Elstree Blood Products supplied Watford General Hospital, and they were importing the blood in.

85. I would like to know, having kept three pages of my medical notes directly relating to my surgeries, why I was not called in for my blood to be tested for HCV as soon as they became aware the blood was contaminated.

86. I was horrified to discover the imported blood was taken from American prisoners and Russian corpses. Who on earth thought it was a good idea

to take blood from such sources. The devastation it has caused to haemophiliacs and people like myself, along with their families is beyond comprehension, relentless and unforgivable.

87. Answers need to be provided for why they imported the blood in the first place, and secondly why it was not screened. More in-depth enquires should have taken place prior to importing blood. In America many people sell their blood to finance a drug dependency. Hepatitis C, HIV and AIDS are by products of such drug dependency, along with other life choices which cause the spread of these viruses. The testing of individual blood donations should have been much more stringent and compulsory. I do not know who can truly be held accountable for this, but the innocent victims need answers, strong support and adequate compensation.

88. Thousands of us are victims, our lives decimated through no fault of our own. As I have addressed previously, HCV has caused so many problems in my life – my health, my home, my security and peace of mind have all been taken away. As a mother you do your upmost to protect your children, but mine had to witness my health being destroyed and my body ravaged by Hepatitis C. Someone must be held to account for all that we have suffered.

89. My life has been both saved and destroyed by the NHS, but the fact remains that the decision to import blood without stringent checks in place was catastrophic for so many of us. I hope with all my heart that lessons have been learnt and nobody else ever suffers again, as I and my fellow victims have.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 31st May 2019.