

Witness Name: D Willis
Statement No: WITN1608001
Exhibits: 0
Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DAVID WILLIS

I, David Willis, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is David Willis of [GRO-C] Staffordshire, [GRO-C] [GRO-C]. My date of birth is [GRO-C] 1974. I am a home owner with a long term partner and we have a son aged 19.
2. I prepare this statement as an affected son in relation to my late father Michael Willis (DOB: [GRO-C] 1950 and DOD: [GRO-C] 1991) who was infected with HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B through receiving contaminated blood products.
3. **This statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's medical records.**

Section 2. How Affected

4. My father was born with severe Haemophilia A and received numerous treatments with blood products throughout his life. He was also on home

treatment and when my sister and I were very young we remember that the fridge was stocked with my father's treatments.

5. My father was treated at the Royal Victoria Infirmary Hospital (RVI) in Newcastle-Upon-Tyne. I recall that one of his consultants was Dr Kate Talks.
6. My father contracted HIV, Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
7. I am not aware of exactly when or how my father found out about his HIV infection. However, my grandfather told me that my father had been told about his HIV by the RVI. When I was aged only 17 my grandfather sat me down and told me that my father was HIV positive. This bombshell news changed my entire life.
8. I do not know when or how my father found out about his Hepatitis C or Hepatitis B infections. The first time I found out that my father had been infected with Hepatitis C was in or around 2011 when we began the process of claiming financial assistance from the Skipton Fund.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. I do not know whether my father was exposed to the risk of vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

10. I am unsure as to whether my father was tested for various viruses without his knowledge and therefore without his consent. However, I strongly suspect that he was.
11. My whole memory of my father was that he was a severe haemophiliac who was always hooked up to some form of treatment at the RVI and therefore it is possible that he was used for the purposes of research without his knowledge or consent.

Section 5. Impact

12. My earliest memory of my father was him being in hospital and I believe this would have been in the ^{late} mid 1970s. My first memory of witnessing the toll which the infections had on my father was in or around 1989. I had not seen him for some time and he had lost an enormous amount of weight.
13. I recently looked through photographs of my father which were taken in 1981 and compared them to photographs taken in 1990; the change in my father was shocking. He was a shadow of his former self and it was so upsetting to see this.
14. I recall that both my father's hearing and sight deteriorated. He struggled with his mobility and he had to walk with the aid of crutches or a walking stick. At aged only 39 he was supposed to be in the prime of his life.
15. During the latter part of his life, he used to fall asleep whilst watching TV. It was as though someone had sucked the energy out of him.
16. By September 1991, he was a shadow of his former self. He declined in a very short time and he became both gaunt and thin. It felt like he was healthy one minute and had completely deteriorated the next minute.
17. I noticed my father's suffering; it was noticeable because my sister and I rarely saw him after my parent's got divorced. My parents split up before he became sick as they were not a compatible match. Shortly after they split, my mother moved us over 200 miles away from our father.
18. If you mentioned the word "AIDS" to anyone 30 years ago, you would get an awful reaction. It was highly associated with promiscuity and homophobia. When I was told about my father's diagnosis of AIDS aged 17, I could not confide in anyone including my friends and I suffered alone.
19. When I found out about my father's diagnosis it hit me hard. I feel really embarrassed to say this, but immediately after finding out this devastating

news, I had suicidal thoughts. Ultimately, I decided to pick myself up and carry on with my life. I talk about my father all the time and always in a positive light.

20. My father kept the news of his diagnosis secret and did not tell anyone apart from our closest family members.

21. My sister and I did not confide in any of our friends about our father's HIV.

The official line to our friends in Birmingham was that our father passed away due to cancer. Recently, discussions about HIV have become a lot more socially acceptable and I have started telling people the truth about my father's death. [GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

[GRO-C]

[GRO-C] I would say that my sister is a lot more open about HIV and my father's death than I am.

22. Before I was born my father had an accident which damaged his legs. He worked for Remploy, in Ashington, Northumberland. Remploy was a company which employed disabled people. My father worked at Remploy until he became too sick to continue which was in or around 1988. However, in the last few years of his life he was unable to work. He had always managed to support himself financially while he worked but once he gave up work I do not know how he managed financially. He did receive a Mobility Allowance.

23. I am not sure that my father understood how poorly he was because one of the last times he saw my sister and me he was discussing his caravan which was situated in a park close to the Scottish Borders. He said "*Once I am better, we will go there for holiday*" which showed that he was hopeful about the future. I do not know whether the doctors were truthful with him about his prognosis.

24. My father used some of his £60,000 settlement from the HIV litigation to fund a last holiday with his partner in Devon and Cornwall. Unfortunately, my father's partner left him before he died and I will never forgive her for this. My

father had to move in with his mother and father a couple of months before his death.

25. I remember the last time I said goodbye to my father in hospital: after he had passed away. As we lived so far away from him, by the time my sister and I reached the hospital, he had died. We stayed with him for a while and then they took him away in a sealed coffin and we were not allowed to see him again.

26. My mother has remarried and had her own family. It was like she expected us to forget about our father and my sister and I had to deal with our own issues alone and without support. I have not spoken to my sister very much about how I felt; I kept my feelings to myself for years. It is only within the last few years that I have opened up. I hit a low point in my life after he had died but I got myself out of it.

27. My father would not hurt a fly. He was a great guy. He did not deserve what happened to him. He loved my sister and me very much. He used to take us up to the Haggerston Castle which was a holiday park close to the Scottish borders and we were always out on trips to the beach. He loved his music and he was into the Beatles. He was just a lovely guy. He was very close to his Haemophilic brother who was two years older than him. They both got infected by contaminated blood and deteriorated together. My uncle went to his younger brother's funeral thinking that that was his fate. It must have been horrible to go through.

28. My sister is a Haemophilia carrier: GRO-C
GRO-C
GRO-C GRO-C
GRO-C
GRO-C

29. I was only aged 6 when my parents divorced so I feel that he missed when we were growing up. I would rebel against my mother when she did not let us see

him; however, they were not a compatible couple. However, I feel greatly impacted by the fact that I missed out on seeing my father. One minute we were a normal family yet in another minute my parents had split up.

30. My father was born in 1950; he would only be aged only 69 now. He has missed out on a huge proportion of his life, my life, my sister's life and his grandchildren's lives.

31. My partner knows everything and she is very supportive of me.

32. I recall that about 10 years ago I went to the ward where my father had been treated and it was comforting that the nurses remembered my father.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

33. I am unaware as to whether my father was offered any counselling or psychological support.

34. I have never been offered counselling; I dealt with everything myself.

35. My father received substandard dental care and had false teeth as a result.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. I clearly remember my father telling me that he received £60,000 following the 1991 HIV litigation. My father called it "*hush-money*" and he had to sign a waiver to receive this. He left me and my sister £15,000 each which we received on our 21st birthdays. My father also gave me and my sister £2,000 on another occasion.

37. I am unsure as to whether my father received any support from either the Macfarlane Trust or the Skipton Fund.

38. In 2011 my sister applied to the Skipton Fund and was successful in receiving the Stage One Payment which was received in 2012 and was for £20,000.

39. Following receipt of this payment, my sister and I investigated the matter further and attempted to gain access to my father's medical records. We then applied for the Stage Two Payment but this was refused.

Section 8. Other Issues

40. I actively look on the Tainted Blood Facebook page and they advised me to write to 10 Downing Street; which I did. I received a standard reply from them with a meaningless apology. David Cameron promised to sort out the blood scandal but then resigned.

41. I want people to be compensated for their loved ones.

42. I do not want any one to go to prison; but people have to be held to account. This cannot happen again and it is always swept under the carpet. People are still suffering and fighting for each moment of their lives. I want to help fight their corner and obtain justice for my father because what happened is plainly wrong.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

43. I do not wish to apply to retain my anonymity and if asked, I would be prepared to provide oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....

GRO-C

Dated.....

11/4/19