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Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN2668001

Exhibits: none

Dated: 6th March 2019

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 5th November 2018.

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

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is **GRO-B**. My date of birth is **GRO-B** 1972 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I intend to speak about my experience of becoming infected with HIV. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me and my family.

Section 2. How Infected

2. When I was 15 years old, I had a loss of blood from my bowels. I don't remember how that happened. At that point, I was taken to St Thomas' Hospital and received a blood transfusion. I remained in hospital for a

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couple of days. I remember feeling weak following the transfusion and then coming down with pneumonia.

3. When I came down with pneumonia, I was taken to Charing Cross Hospital, where they did several tests and detected that I had HIV. I asked whether that might have been due to the blood transfusion that I had received at St Thomas' hospital and the doctor said that was likely to be the case.
4. I remember that when I went back to St Thomas' hospital to try and recover records regarding the blood transfusion, all my records had been destroyed. This was six months after the transfusion.
5. At some point, I attended St Thomas' hospital again and they wanted to give me more blood due to my platelet count being low. However, my mother said I was not to receive another blood transfusion.
6. I remember staying at Charing Cross Hospital for about six months when I was 16 because of my HIV. When the medical staff from Charing Cross Hospital tried to trace my records, they could not find anything either.
7. I think I might have received my blood transfusion in April 1985. Later on, I would have found out that I was infected with HIV in August 1986.
8. I am aware that my medical records contained information regarding me being involved in prostitution in the early stages of my life. I want to make it clear that I have never been a prostitute in my life. I was 15 years old when I had the blood transfusion. Previously, when I was 12, I had been molested by someone where we used to live who was a member of the police force. It was more like inappropriate touching, no sex. This too was covered up. They can write whatever they like in my medical records, they lie and there is nothing to prevent them from doing so.
9. No information or advice was ever provided about the risk of being exposed infection as a result of the blood transfusion. I was even told that my platelet

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count was low and that I needed a second blood transfusion to bring my blood count back up.

10. When I was told that I was infected with HIV, a Dr **GRO-D** from Charing Cross Hospital spoke to my mother and then spoke to me. He explained a bit more about HIV and how I could have become infected. It would not have been possible for me to have become infected through sexual activity, as I did not have sex at the time due to being a young boy. Dr **GRO-D** did say that there was a chance that I could have been infected due to the blood transfusion as soon as I mentioned that I had received one. Dr **GRO-D** also provided leaflets about HIV and contacted St Thomas's Hospital, but they did not have any of my paperwork. It was all covered up. I cannot remember the names of any doctors from St Thomas's Hospital that might have been involved in the blood transfusion.
11. At the beginning, nothing was said in order to help me understand and manage the infection. I believe that the doctors themselves were scared and did not understand. They said that I was going to die and had about six months left to live. I did not completely understand the issue myself, as I was young. The doctor told me to let my family know. Eventually, I managed to get rid of my pneumonia. Dr **GRO-D** from the Charing Cross Hospital explained a little bit more about HIV to me when he found out what the infection was. However, I had to go to one of his clinics as they wouldn't speak to me at the hospital. The doctor was really upset because I was so young and because I had acquired this disease through the NHS. I was told to take my medication, to keep myself clean and if I ever cut myself, to wash and bandage the wound.
12. I do think that information should have been provided earlier. I was made to attend one of Dr **GRO-D**'s clinics for people with HIV and AIDS in order to get further information. Dr **GRO-D** said that he did not expect me to live past my next birthday. I think I was diagnosed a bit too late because I only found out that I had HIV when I caught pneumonia.

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13. I was shocked when I was told that I was infected with HIV. They should have told me sooner rather than later. I had to go through a lot to find out that I had it. However, the doctor, when we met face-to-face in the clinic, was good.

14. Initially, I was not told anything about the risks of others becoming infected as a result of my infection. I was told that I would get lesions on my skin and that if I had a cold I could die from it. Later on, I was told about not sharing razors, needles or having unprotected sex. However, I did not have sex at the time as I was too young and when I had a partner, I explained that I was infected with HIV and used condoms.

Section 3. Other Infections

15. I was only infected with HIV and subsequently I had many chest infections because of this. The possibility of being infected with CJD was never mentioned to me.

16. Currently, I also have the HPV virus, which was diagnosed two years ago and is linked to my HIV.

Section 4. Consent

17. I do not know whether I have ever been treated or tested without my knowledge, without my consent, or without being given adequate and full information.

18. I do not know whether I have ever been treated or tested for the purposes of research.

19. When I became infected, all I received was a leaflet about AIDS. That is all that they gave you back in the 80s, and that was very scary for someone my age. This was 32 years ago. When I went back to St Thomas' Hospital

to find out what had happened, I was made to feel like I had the plague as even medical staff wouldn't come near me.

Section 5. Impact

20. Following my infection with HIV, I was always physically weak and kept getting illness after the illness. My mental state was not good and I've tried to kill myself a few times. I was convinced that I was going to die and suffered from a lot of stress and many sleepless nights.

21. As a result of my infection, I developed osteoporosis. Both of my hips and knees were replaced twice each because the first time that a replacement procedure took place it was not done properly.

22. Following my blood transfusion, I suffered from pneumonia twice and was tested for AIDS after the second time. I was told that I was suffering from AIDS-related illnesses. I also had sores in my mouth and on my body, which led to deep scabs. The doctor said that I was developing AIDS-related illnesses and at some point my body was recovered in spots. At that point, they changed my medication.

23. I have received several courses of treatment over the course of my illness. At the beginning, I was on about 60 or 70 pills a day. They are too many to remember, as I was having 20 pills in the morning, 20 in the afternoon and 20 in the evening. These pills were all different. This treatment made me feel ill and so my treatment was changed. The second treatment that I was given also made me feel ill and it was changed again. I had previously been about twelve stone and my weight went down to six stone when I became so ill. I remember losing a lot of weight and being constantly in and out of hospital to have my bloods taken. When I was younger, I looked really ill and old; so much so that people would stare at me and this meant that I didn't feel comfortable going out anywhere. I had no life and stayed home all the time.

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24. I cannot remember the names of any treatments that I have had for my HIV. I have probably been on about four different courses of treatment over the course of my illness. I have been on my current treatment for the last 10 or 20 years.

25. My treatment was last changed two years ago, when I had to stay in hospital for a period of about three weeks over Christmas and New Year. I remember that I had an injection in my back and this caused me to become constipated as the doctors had given me steroids, which I shouldn't have had because I am allergic to them. My treatment had to be changed at that point and the doctors went back to increasing the number of pills that I was taking. The injection in my bag was required due to my osteoporosis. If I didn't have HIV, I would not require to be taking all these drugs constantly and I wouldn't have so many side-effects from the drugs. I was only 36 years old when I had my first hip replacement. However, the drugs caused my bones to become very brittle.

26. Initially, the pills that I was taking to treat my HIV caused me to lose weight and become depressed. I started self-harming and this has left scars. I was mentally angry and suicidal if early on, when I had my first course of treatment. I just want to know why all this happened to me. I was also vomiting all the time and had many sleepless nights, which I still do. I also have aches and pains.

27. I have never faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing any of my treatments. However, I would say that GRO-D did not know a lot about HIV and that none of the doctors did. I went to counselling about my infection. At first no one knew how my blood had become infected.

28. I do not think that there were any treatments which should have been made available to me that weren't. However, I do think that at first I was treated a bit like a guinea pig and the treatments that I was given were a case of trial and error.

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29. Being infected with HIV has affected my dental treatment. At first, my dentist refused to treat me and I had to pull out my own teeth. At the beginning, I experienced a lot of rejection as no one would touch you and if you had a cup of tea at someone else's house, they would put the cup in the being when you left. My dentist refused to treat me when he was told that I was infected with HIV as he did not understand the infection. It took me a long time to find a dentist, but I did eventually find one when I was about 21 years old. Even then, the dentist would put on two pairs of gloves and would be scared. I ended up changing dentists as I was not satisfied with the treatment received and again no one wanted to take me on because of my infection. It took me a long time to find my current dentist.
30. My family all knew that I was infected with HIV as soon as I was told. After that, when I was home, it was my mood swings that affected me and caused me to take my frustrations out on my family.
31. I took up drinking in order to try and forget about the whole matter. I would drink and take drugs in order to take my mind off my HIV. I couldn't have a partner in case they got the infection, and I didn't have much of a life at the beginning.
32. When I found a job and my company discovered that I was infected with HIV when I fell ill, I was dismissed. I got compensation from my work through Thompsons in England. I have been out of work for the last 10 years now.
33. I think that there is definitely a stigma around HIV and people still don't understand. It is very hard for me because my back, my hips and my knees have caused me to be off work due to the fact that the medication that I take for my HIV has caused problems and side-effects. Currently I also have the HPV virus, which was diagnosed two years ago. At that time, I had bumps on my back that were cancerous. They were removed, but they have now come back and I am currently waiting to see my doctor again. The HPV is linked to the HIV.

34. Becoming infected with HIV had a great impact on my education. When I was at school, it was okay at the beginning and then I became ill and I had to leave college after six months out of two years because I would be ill and couldn't come back. My lecturers did not understand why I required to be constantly in and out of hospital and this had a big impact on my being able to follow through with the course.

35. My infection also affected my work. I was dismissed once my employers found out that I was infected. However, I was able to claim compensation through Thompsons. I kept taking time off to attend hospital appointments and my employers wanted to know the reasons why. My union advised me to be honest and then I was dismissed on the grounds that I couldn't properly do my work due to my HIV. Thompsons dealt with this and the matter was taken to an employment tribunal where I got compensation. GRO-B
GRO-B they also let me go due to not being punctual as I had to attend many hospital appointments. My appointments affected my shifts and there were rumours that I had HIV or AIDS. I have been unemployed for the last 10 years and have had no other employers.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

36. Counselling was not offered to me after I became infected with HIV and I had to request counselling myself after I attempted suicide in order to get help.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

37. I have only ever received financial assistance from the government and not from any of the Trusts and Funds set up to distribute payments. What I mean is that I am currently own sickness benefits.

38. At some point, I received £500 from the Elton John Foundation years ago for a new fridge. However, this was not due to becoming infected.

Section 8. Other Issues

39. I am disappointed in the way that my medical records were handled and I am disappointed that my medical records which reflect my blood transfusion are now missing. I think that some of my records might have just been put in the bin and I am not satisfied with the way that I was treated back then.

40. I have never been involved in any litigation or campaigning as a result of being infected with HIV and have not been involved in the Penrose Inquiry either.

41. I do wish to remain anonymous for the purposes of this Inquiry as I would like the truth to come out.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

13th MARCH 2019