

Witness Name: Charis Blomfield

Statement No: WITN2882001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHARIS BLOMFIELD

I, Charis Blomfield, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Charis Blomfield. I was born on [GRO-C] 1955 and I live at [GRO-C] [GRO-C] Dorset, [GRO-C].
2. I am divorced with 2 children. I am retired.
3. I make this witness statement on behalf of my late brother, Duncan Leigh Benfield. He was born on [GRO-C] 1967 and died on [GRO-C] 2002 at the age of 35 as a result of Hepatitis C (Hep C) and AIDS.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late brother's full 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 Affected

5. My brother came to live with us at the age of 7. He was adopted by his previous parents and was sexually abused until 7 years old. This stopped when he was taken to hospital for dentist assessments, at the age of 7 and at

that point he was taken into social care. They asked my parents to foster him which they did. He came to live with us and we raised him from then on.

6. Duncan had severe Haemophilia A and I believe he was diagnosed before 6 months old. From the time that my parents fostered Duncan until the age of 13, Duncan had a lot of blood transfusions and Factor VIII (FVIII) treatment and attended the hospital quite regularly. It was from the age of 17 that hospital visits started to settle down.
7. After fostering Duncan, my mother became a chair of the Dorset Haemophilia Society.
8. Duncan's haemophilia was so severe that he required the treatment on a regular basis. Both my parents were taught how to administer FVIII and from the age of 13 I believe Duncan started to self-administer FVIII.
9. Duncan attended Boscombe Hospital until the 1980s when it closed down. I believe he was under the care of Dr David Stern. He then attended Bournemouth and Poole Hospital (BPH) and was under the care of Dr Alison Worsley.
10. I do not believe that my parents or Duncan was provided with any information or advice beforehand about the risk of being exposed to the infections.
11. I believe in the mid 1970s/late 1970s, Duncan was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C (Hep C). However, it is possible that he could have been infected at any point when he was having FVIII.
12. I believe Duncan tested positive for HIV in the mid 1980s. The infection later developed into AIDS. After he was diagnosed with HIV he went to live in Hong Kong for about 5 years and came back to the UK in the early 1990s. I have explained in detail below, in section 5 why Duncan went to Hong Kong.
13. I believe Duncan told me whilst he was in Hong Kong that he also had Hep C. I believe they told him after he received the settlement from the Macfarlane Trust and he signed the waiver not to pursue a future claim.

14. I do not know how Duncan was told that he tested positive for HIV and Hep C as I was at university at the time.

15. I do not know what information was provided when he was told that he had HIV and Hep C. At the time there were adverts of icebergs falling and people thought it was a death sentence. I therefore believe that adequate information was not provided to Duncan to help him understand and manage the infections.

16. I do consider that information about the infections should have been provided earlier. It felt like the roof had collapsed on Duncan again. He was first neglected and abused and then he was infected with HIV and Hep C. I feel that he was not helped by anyone in the medical establishment and left to deal with it himself.

17. I cannot comment on how the results of tests or information about the infections were communicated to Duncan. I am aware that he did not get any booklets, pamphlets or even guidance when he was told.

18. I do not believe that Duncan was given information about the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection. It was my mother who told my brother to be careful with his girlfriend and was told not to have unprotected sex. I recall his girlfriend's parents were very angry as a result. From the time he believed he was infected, he had two relationships and both were tested and both tested negative.

Section 3. Other Infections

19. I am not aware that Duncan received any other infections other than HIV and Hep C.

Section 4. Consent

20. I believe Duncan was treated and tested without our knowledge. I believe there was a possibility he could have been infected when he had the dental appointment in the hospital at the age of 7.

21. I do not know if he was treated or tested without his consent as he was not under our care but under the care of the social services.

22. I do not believe that adequate or full information was provided to my parents or Duncan. My mother was working for the Haemophilia Society and she was never told anything.

23. I believe that Duncan was tested and treated for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

24. As a haemophiliac, Duncan was limited in what he could and could not do. I believe that he was affected mentally more than physically. When he found out about the HIV, he just wanted to die. As previously stated, I was at university. However, I came home to speak to Duncan as he was having suicidal thoughts. He did not trust anyone in the world apart from me and our parents. He hated the world for what it did to him. He did not trust social workers, doctors, or the hospital. The word damage is not enough to describe it. Just as he started to trust people, this scandal destroyed him. He suffered from depression as a result and I believe he was given medication for it.

25. He went to college to do photography, and suddenly nothing mattered to him, he just wanted to die. I spoke to him for 2 days; I told him that if he committed suicide, we would miss him. He could not believe this happened to him. He was confused. He was frightened of people and he did not want anyone to know he had HIV. He told me that he felt dirty having the infection. He was frightened about touching people. It stopped him living a normal life. We had to work hard to fight for him. I suggested to him to go to Hong Kong. My friend gave him a room to live in and my old employers gave him a job. In Hong Kong no one would know him and he was able to live a comfortable life without any having to deal with the stigma. He was treated in a haemophilia centre in Hong Kong.

26. When he found out that he had Hep C, he told me he had a lot of joint pains. He became vegetarian and he had to eat carefully. He could no longer work

after he was diagnosed with Hep C. He was very lethargic. When he returned to the UK in the early 1990s he started to sleep a lot and wake up very late in the day, eat breakfast and would be tired again. He worried about putting too much on us as I had children too. He would always come across as being okay and just say he was fine but really he was not. He tried to pull his weight even though he was so ill. He tried to live a normal life as much as possible. He was very angry with the whole situation but he did not want it to have an impact on us and he tried to protect us too.

27. In or about 2002 he was in a relationship with his partner and they wanted to start a family. He was talking about sperm washing and he was happy and found equilibrium in life.

28. In the early 2002, Duncan was tired after going on a long trip with his girlfriend. He accidentally drove round a sharp curve and drove off a cliff. His girlfriend had slight injuries and had whiplash. Duncan had a brain trauma. He was taken to Southampton Hospital, and his brain was operated on and it was successful. He was then taken to Poole Hospital and put in High Dependency Unit as he had HIV. At this time, the HIV turned into AIDS. In June 2002, Duncan had a seizure and from then onwards he did not recognise us. He was cared for until November 2002 when he died.

29. I am not sure what treatment he had in relation to his infections, as he was living on his own.

30. I do not know if he faced any difficulties or obstacles in accessing any treatment. I do not know if there were any treatments which I consider ought to have been made available to him at the time.

31. In relation to the mental and physical effects of the treatment, it is difficult to differentiate between the effects of the infections, his Haemophilia and from any treatment that he may have had.

32. The stigma that was associated with HIV was horrible. It had a major effect on me at work. We all kept the infections very private as we know what

people were like at the time. I believe two people at work found out and then it became common knowledge.

33. The infections had a massive impact on my family at the time. My parents were devastated when they found out that Duncan was infected with HIV and Hep C. We were all very badly affected. At the time my mother was suffering from Parkinson's disease and my father died 2 months after Duncan died, so it was extremely difficult for her. She was deeply affected by everything that had happened.

34. My son was at school at the time of his uncle's death. He was so distressed

GRO-C

35. My daughter was so affected after Duncan died

GRO-C

She is now living abroad with her boyfriend as she was unable to cope in the UK.

36. I worked in a news room for BBC Monitoring and I was bullied by an unsympathetic and harsh employer who said I had 'too many sick relatives.' I took a case against my boss and won, even though it took a year. The stress as to what was going on at home took its toll on me. My boss had refused me compassionate leave. It was a very difficult time for me and my employer failed to assist me. It had a massive financial effect on me, as this job was the only source of income and I wanted to continue my career in it.

37. As previously stated, my mother spent a lot of time with the Haemophilia Society, raising money and all that time the doctors knew what they were doing and they failed to tell anyone. This really affected her and she was so angry and felt let down.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

38. I do not know if Duncan faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care and support in consequence of being infected.

39. I do not believe counselling or psychological support was ever made available to Duncan. I was not offered any psychological support. If it had been offered to me, I would have definitely accepted it as I believe it would have helped.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. I believe Duncan was involved in the 1991 litigation and I believe he received about £19,000 from the Macfarlane Trust.

41. I do not believe he received anything else. I did not receive any financial assistance.

42. I know he had a mobility car and a blue badge.

43. I believe that the amount of financial assistance that Duncan received was not enough. I am aware of people who were in a similar situation and they received far more financial assistance than Duncan. I therefore do not understand why Duncan only received £19,000. I do not think Duncan was treated fairly.

Section 8. Other Issues

44. I know my brother's death was and is injustice. I would like justice now to be achieved for all those who were given contaminated FVIII products and were infected.

45. The biggest thing I can do for my family is say how much my parents did for my little brother. My mother went to more funerals than she could ever believe she had to. If there is any justice in the world, this should be the point at which it is made.

46. How is it that we have had to wait so many years for justice for brothers, sisters, parents and children who have died as a result of this scandal?

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

47. I confirm that I do not wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

48. I 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

Dated

7.4.19.