Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No; W7205001
Exhibit No; **WITN7205002**
Dated; 3rd December 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 1 September 2022.

GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B My date of birth is GRO-B 1965 and my address is known to the Inquiry.

2. I intend to speak about my mum GRO-B: M and her infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of her illness, how it affected her, and its impact on her and our family's lives together.

3. My father GRO-B has provided a statement to the Inquiry as **WITN7212001**. I intend to provide an account of how my mother's infection with HCV and death has impacted my siblings and me. My sister is GRO-B and my brother is GRO-B

Please see my father's witness statement for details on how my mother contracted HCV.

4. I confirm that I am not currently legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry Team to assist with my statement. I do not wish to provide my account anonymously.

5. The Inquiry Investigator has also explained the Inquiry's statement of approach and 'Right to Reply' procedure. I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.

Section 2. How Affected

6. My mother was initially diagnosed with leukaemia in November 1986. I was still living at home at the time, and it was devastating news. She had always been fit as a fiddle, and I only recall her being ill when I was about eight or nine years old after she had a hysterectomy. Just before her diagnosis she had been suffering from pains in her chest and had been bedridden for a week or so, then she was taken into hospital for tests which finally led to the diagnosis.

7. We were so pleased and proud of her when she was cured of leukaemia years later. She had endured so much chemotherapy and invasive treatments which were all very hard. She was incredibly well liked in the village and had a great many friends and they all knew of her illness. It was well known that my mum had gone through one of the pioneering leukaemia treatments of the time, an autologous stem cell transplant (Addenbrooke's doctors called it the "auto graft"). Several patients received the same treatment at a similar time to her, on the same ward, and had not had the success she had (not gone into remission) and subsequently died. I believe my mum was a fighter and was determined to live for her family. She was a strong and stoic kind of woman. Her family meant absolutely everything to her.

8. The news of my mum's HCV diagnosis came as a shock to my siblings and me. I feel we were left in the dark about the effect this virus could have on our lives. We were not advised to get ourselves tested for the virus, we did not know anything at all about the handling of it, the prognosis of it or what the future could hold. I believe my Dad was told that we should all "not share towels" and we should "be a bit more careful if mum cut herself". This was the extent of my knowledge about HCV and my brother and sister's too. I certainly did not think it was life threatening as we had never been told that. In retrospect it feels as if it was downplayed somewhat or hushed up.

9. Our parents seemed to receive the news calmly because they trusted the doctors. My dad informed me that my mum had contracted HCV due to being given infected blood, and that the consultant, Graham Alexander, had told them that. Dad said that Graham Alexander told him he should "make a claim against the blood bank". My parents were reluctant to do this because they had a gratitude to Addenbrookes for curing my mum of her leukaemia. They perceived it would somehow cost Addenbrookes money directly, and they had a loyalty of sorts to that hospital, and thought it was kind of ungrateful. Anyway they were just not those kind of people.

Section 3. Other Infections

10. I do not believe my mum received any infection other than HCV due to being given infected blood.

Section 4. Consent

11. I do not know if my mum was ever tested or treated without her or my dad's consent.

Section 5. Impact

12. When my mother began feeling ill again in around 1994/95 it had a terrible effect on everyone as our biggest fear was that the leukaemia was back. I used to have dreams and nightmares constantly that this was the case. She seemed to be always unwell with one thing or another from about 1993/1994 although in retrospect she never seemed free of problems. The GP would generally tell her that her symptoms stemmed from her various treatments (chemo etc) and were side effects.

13. I moved out of my parent's house in 1987. I occasionally accompanied my mum to doctor's and hospital appointments, but it was mainly my dad, and occasionally my sister, who lived closer to our parents' house. It was hard to see my mum constantly suffering from illness especially when the leukaemia was confirmed to have not returned. I do not understand why she was not investigated for liver problems at this time. As far as I know she was not. She had many tests and treatments but was also having (what we now know as liver related symptoms) things like yellow coloured faeces, bloating, itchy skin, nausea, pain etc.

14. The information regarding the circumstances surrounding my mum's health issues have only become clearer to me in the last five years. My dad is very pragmatic, so he did not believe that searching for answers or explanations would bring my mum back. However, my siblings and I need closure.

15. It has been traumatic for me to have to piece together the medical records, family diaries, memories of family and friends for the statement. It was hard to get the medical records from Addenbrookes hospital. I had to make many phone calls and deal with many dead ends including unreturned phone calls and emails, automated recordings that lead nowhere etc until finally the medical records department said they had "about 12 to15 pages of blood test results". I had to chase these very hard and was emailed by the Access to Health Records team saying they could not supply them due to staff shortages and they would be delayed

a further 30 days or more. I explained it was outside of the Data Protection Act to not supply them within the allocated time frame, and that it would fall well outside of that if they were to delay the records any further. They subsequently sent me over 200 pages of scan results and blood test results, which was way more than I was told they were holding.

16. It was a devastating time and hard to reconcile that no one addressed her many symptoms as a red flag for liver damage, when Addenbrooke's and the consultants knew she had received a notably high amount of blood and blood products during the period where it was subsequently known that the blood had been contaminated. Why did nobody think to investigate liver issues earlier than 1995 considering her many symptoms and illnesses subsequently. The hospital also made mistakes. When my mum complained of some swelling she was experiencing, the doctors suspected ascites but dismissed it. Later, a doctor who reviewed my mum's files for the Leeds Day action, Dr Nick Sheron, confirmed that the doctor had been wrong in stating that my mum did not have ascites when she clearly had.

17. Mum also was found to have an overload of iron in her blood in 1995. She was given venesections to bring the iron levels down and these carried on for about two years. It is my belief the HCV caused this.

18. I am a lot angrier about things now it than I have ever been. I didn't know the facts all those years ago when my mum was alive and I feel she would still be alive today if her liver deterioration had been identified earlier and she could've been treated or received a liver transplant. My daughter has no memory of her grandmother, my brother and sister's children only faint memories, if any. My daughter has no other grand parents on her father's side, only my father as her one grand parent. My mum was a lady who loved children and lived her life solely for her family. She would have had the most fabulous years with her 7 grandchildren as she had so much to give.

19. Before my mum passed away, there was another diagnosis of Hodgkin's Lymphoma. This did not feel right because the doctors seemed to be treating her in a hurried manner and there were records with pencil notes which felt unprofessional. She agreed to another round of chemotherapy treatment for the Hodgkins lymphoma and I feel me and my siblings put some pressure on her to have it when she didn't have the strength or desire to go through more chemo. Obviously we did not want our mum to die. This was a truly awful situation to be in. But it seems the chemo she was given for the Hodgkins hastened the deterioration of her damaged liver and she was unable to tolerate it, and subsequently died.

20. This seemed brutally unfair. All of the strength she had to endure chemo, auto graft treatment, operations, lumbar punctures, scans, biopsies, antibiotics, were ultimately for nothing. She fought for her own life and was given a death sentence in return, this is my belief. I do not understand why she was only given a liver biopsy in 1995 when doctors knew she would have been an obvious candidate for liver problems following so many transfusions. It is my understanding that the hospital knew from around 1991 that they had been using contaminated blood products yet they carried out lots of other tests and ignored the liver side of things.

21. When it became obvious that my mum would not be getting better and was going to be discharged to die at home, my dad asked the registrar at the hospital how he thought long my mum had left. Dad said, "are we talking six months or six weeks?" The register responded maybe six weeks. My mum did not even make it six days after discharge.

22. As part of the evidence given to the Penrose Inquiry, I have seen a comment from Dr Graham Alexander stating, "We didn't know what to tell people. We had nothing to offer them, as they might not have gone on to develop liver problems." It also says that he was clear in that "from 1985 patients should have been made aware they had a disease, and that as many as a fifth of recipients of contaminated blood would go on to develop serious liver disease". My mum constantly presented with

issues such as nausea, bloating, back pain, yellow mucus from her nose, yellow stools, and yellow nodules on her feet, iron overload in the blood and she always had itchy skin. All of these point to [possible] liver damage, so why was she never identified as at risk.

23. No one ever provided us with information about managing the risk of infection to us after mum died, I became concerned and decided to get tested for HCV. My sister and I took care of our mum at her home in her final days, especially with washing, personal hygiene, including cleaning inside her mouth etc. The results came back negative for both of us. My brother was tested some time after and was also negative.

24. Generally speaking, Addenbrookes Hospital has been accused of lying and destroying records. It makes me wonder what other things they changed internally or chose to ignore back then. It has given me huge problems with health anxiety now, for myself and my family, as my level of trust for health professionals is almost non-existent.

25. My mum passed away far too young, at 55 years old. She had so much left to live for and so much to give to her children and grandchildren. My dad is not the same man now as he once was, they were soul mates and had been married almost 35 years. The stress of my mum's passing in the way she did has changed him and also myself and my siblings.

26. My brother has produced a letter outlining his thoughts which I exhibit as **WITN7205002**. I am reluctant to speak on either his behalf or that of my sister because they have been impacted in their own ways.

27. I am close to my dad, and I know he suffered from extreme periods of depression after my mum died. He was drinking heavily and had been prescribed Diazepam and anti-depressants which he took for a short while. Our relationship suffered while my dad was grieving. He called

me late one evening and said he was in the car with a bottle of whisky and some of the Diazepam pills and he intended to take his own life as there was nothing left for him to live for.

28. My daughter was only two years old at this time, and I was a single parent with a struggling business. I had no money and was also dealing with harassment from my daughter's father, from whom I had recently separated. The additional stress from my dad was a lot to bear, and I was worried about him for a long time.

29. It definitely had a knock-on impact on my business. I had to I had to take time out of the factory to go to the hospital. When my mum died, I struggled to be there, and I was not there as much as I would have liked as my business was struggling. My mind was not on work, which undoubtedly made life and business more difficult. The stress of losing my mum and coping with my dad contributed to the breakdown of my marriage in October 1999.

30. About two days before my mum died, she asked my dad to take her down to the Fen in the car, which was a remote area at the edge of the village and a local beauty spot that meant a lot to both of them. My mum told my dad to bring the gun with them that day. My dad had a shotgun from when he used to go game shooting. It was our perception that my mum wanted the both of them to die together. They had apparently talked about neither one being able to live without the other, and that is what they would do if one of them was going to die before the other. I can't imagine the pain and anguish they must have endured to even contemplate such a thought. It was a horrendous time to wait for them while they were out of the house. I am not sure my sister and brother knew what was happening at the time.

31. When both of them returned alive, we were relieved that my dad had not gone through with their plan. We could not imagine being left with no parents. I was also proud of my dad for not going through with it because

it must have taken a lot of strength. I am sure he did not want to leave his children with no mother and no father. It was extremely traumatic for me and something that will never leave my mind.

32. My grandmother, my dad's mum who has since passed away, used to live near my parents and was also close to my mum. She was also really affected by mum's passing. While alive, she supported my parents and was good with practical matters, which was a big help, especially for my dad after my mum died.

33. I had no knowledge of any of the financial support schemes, and we did not have any avenues to turn to. No one gave us any information about where we could get help, financial or otherwise. I recognised when my dad needed some financial support, and even though I was struggling, I was in a position to assist my dad financially, and I did so for about five years. I gave him initially about £100, later £150 a month, because my he was worrying about money and not working much. I did not want him to be stressed or suffer financially. He had enough on his mind, and I tried to help by relieving some of the financial burdens.

34. When it became apparent that there would be an Inquiry about the contaminated blood scandal, we did not think it would affect us because we had sought legal action and had got nowhere with it.

35. We will do what we have always done, which is to support each other. I miss my mother every day. I do not feel I have grieved for her as I should because of the resentment and anger I carry about the HCV. She had so much to give and contribute to all our lives, and I have lost my support system and my confidante.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

36. No one informed us of the availability of counselling or psychological support at any stage that I aware of.

37. At the time, we lived in a small village, and everyone, including our local practice, knew about my mum's health issues. I assumed that the doctors or occupational health therapists would reach out to support us, but that did not happen. She did not receive any treatment that I know of for her HCV, she was offered Interferon but didn't want to suffer the well known horrible side effects.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

38. As mentioned above, no one informed us about the availability of any of the financial support schemes. If they had, we would have made an application, especially as it would have been really helpful for my family when we went through periods of severe financial struggles.

Section 8. Other Issues

39. Our experience and finding out about other people's experiences with infected blood have affected my faith in the National Health Service. I will ask a lot more questions now and won't be fobbed off. It has given me bad health anxiety due to total lack of trust in doctors.

40. So many people deserve an explanation and more than have got up til now. I believe the decision to continue to give known damaging blood products intravenously was initially about saving costs, which is why blood was procured from sources known to be unsafe. It is a shame that the UK did not become self-sufficient when we had the chance. It is my opinion that things like records were destroyed in an attempt to cover up this failure to look after people. I also believe more people (politicians, doctors, professors, health care professionals, GPs) were all in some way guilty of not speaking out about it, or at worst guilty of lying and covering up to save reputations and jobs. I think so many lives could have been saved if they faced the truth and dealt with it honestly and openly.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 3/12/22