

Witness Name: C J Walker
Statement No: WITN1787001
Exhibits: 0
Dated: April 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER JEFFREY WALKER

I, Christopher Jeffrey Walker, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Christopher Jeffrey Walker and I was born on **GRO-C** 1982. I live at **GRO-C**, Derbyshire, **GRO-C**. I am married with two children and I am employed as a Logistics Manager.
2. I make this statement as an affected brother of Steven David Walker, who was born on **GRO-C** 1980 and passed away, aged only 37, on **GRO-C** 2017.
3. Steven was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C via contaminated Factor VIII concentrates.
4. My mother, Gwynneth Elaine Walker, and my brother, Michael Leslie Walker, have both provided witness statements to the Inquiry under witness numbers **WITN1788001** and **WITN1790001** respectively. I defer to my mother's statement in relation to factual information pertaining to Steven.

5. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Steven's full medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

6. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

7. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 4. Consent

8. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 5. Impact

9. My early memories of Steven are that he did not attend school regularly throughout his childhood and instead spent a lot of time at home. I remember that when he did attend school there was a noticeable difference in terms of health issues between him and the other children. He was, understandably, much more frail than his classmates and unable to take part in physical activities.
10. We grew up in Norfolk and I have fond memories of our childhood. Despite the fact that I was younger than Steven, I have always acted like his big brother. In terms of our physical development, I was always ahead of him. By the time he was aged 10 and I was aged 8, we had similar physiques.
11. Norfolk afforded Steven a very sheltered upbringing and he was not in any way "*street smart*". He was extremely naïve, easily led and very trusting. His talents lay in academia, through which he tried to better himself. Growing up, I was fiercely protective of Steven and we had a very strong bond and connection; I would describe ours as "*a lovely relationship*". If I was doing

something "naughty" or something that I clearly should not be doing, Steven would just turn a blind eye. He never judged you. If I had asked to borrow £1,000 from him he would not have judged me, or thought any less of me, if it had been for something unsavoury rather than for something sensible and worthwhile. He was extremely easy going in this respect. It just seemed so unfair to me that Steven had been burdened with so many viruses which had both life changing and life threatening consequences. I defer to my mother's witness statement in relation to the full effect of these viruses upon Steven.

12. In 1991 we moved from quaint, middle class Norfolk to the industrial working class town of **GRO-C**, due to my father's work, which was understandably a massive culture change for our family. There was the immediate worry that Steven would become involved in physical interactions and encounters which he would be unable to handle. I found things in **GRO-C** quite shocking and it was certainly "*quite an eye opener*" for me despite the fact that I would describe myself as a bit of "*rough and tumble*". I was absolutely nothing in "*street terms*" when compared to the kids in **GRO-C**; they knew it all and I felt intimidated. The decision was therefore taken to send Steven to a private school where he was afforded a more protected and sheltered environment. He was therefore able to focus more on his lessons as opposed to the "*coming of age male bullshit*".

13. Our parents split up when Steven and I were both young but my mother then made the decision to get back together with my father so as to ensure that Steven would have the very best life that could possibly be afforded to him. I have so much admiration for my mother and for the choices she made in life. She was very open and transparent with me in relation to why she made the decisions she did. Steven needed his family around him and I never felt that anything was a hardship as we were all doing things to help Steven. My mother also equipped me with the skills I needed in order to make good life decisions.

14. In the summer of 1995 our family relocated again, this time to **GRO-C** due to my father's work. Sadly our family experienced a lot of "*anti English vibes*" whilst living in **GRO-C** and this was ultimately the main factor in why we

eventually moved back to England. However, whilst we were in GRO-C Steven was home schooled and I believe that this was the beginning of where he developed and fostered his "*hermit type lifestyle*", which was something that never left him. In my view, it was this lifestyle which both accentuated and firmly embedded his mental health difficulties. It was in GRO-C that the pattern for the rest of Steven's life evolved.

15. It is difficult to verbalise the effect that Steven's infections had on me. I remember having contact via social services in the form of a "*Big Brother Programme*". This was a scheme which was put into place to ensure that siblings of those who were infected, who may have missed out on nice things in life, were given the chance to experience the same. I remember being taken bowling and to the cinema by a kind trainee priest. Two things arose as a result of receiving this "*help*". Firstly, it embedded in me the belief that I wasn't normal and secondly that the firm belief that I was somehow missing out in something in life. Clearly, neither of the above was true. My parents had always worked and I never wanted for anything. I wasn't spoilt but I had a good upbringing in terms of love, time and adequate possessions.

16. Looking back I think the "*Big Brother Programme*" actually allowed me to slightly "*take the piss*". Our family seemed to be constantly moving and I think I took advantage of this situation sometimes and played up. I knew I could get away with things. A dynamic was created whereby I would leverage what I could to ensure that I got my own way. However, in my defence, it was really hard to grow up and form long lasting meaningful relationships when you were always on the move. I felt that I had to constantly impress and integrate myself into yet another new group of kids. I was therefore never really able to just be myself. I think my rebellion came as a result of that; I was never really bad and I did not break the law. However, I did daft things which I would class as more of a "*cry for help*". I remember having to use Steven's tutor who he had in GRO-C because I only scored 13% in my preliminary mocks. I did, however, manage to "*pull it out of the bag*" to score top grades in the final examinations.

17. However, I suffered a nervous breakdown in my mid 20s. I lost my job, split up with my girlfriend and therefore lost my home. This all happened practically "overnight". I ended up hitting rock bottom but I somehow managed to pull myself out of the dark hole and get on with my life. I am sure there will be experts out there who would say that what happened to me was, at least in part, a reaction to the fact that my sibling had been infected with multiple infections through no fault of his own. I have not thought too deeply about this and, in any event, I like to take responsibility for my own actions. However, there may be some truth in such hypotheses.

18. I was always both shocked and impressed in relation to Steven's dearth of knowledge in relation to medical issues. Due to the lengthy periods of time spent in hospital, Steven ended up giving the doctors and nurses advice and tips in relation to medical matters.

19. Steven was also extremely stubborn and I remember that when he moved into his own flat he was reluctant to allow anyone in to clean or help him in any way. My mother used to go round to his flat and end up nagging him about taking his medications and was naturally very worried about Steven's deteriorating health. However, it got to the stage where he found her behaviour a little patronising. I think that was around about the time when I started going round to his flat. I did my best to clean up the flat and during this time Steven and I shared some good moments together.

20. I felt that I really needed to support Steven and I think ultimately both my mother and I felt guilty about Steven's infections and the way his life had turned out. I think we both thought that we had taken our "eye off the ball" for a few years of Steven's life and then, almost in the blink of an eye, standing before us was a 30 year old bag of bones who was drinking heavily and smoking heroin and weed. Haemophilia took away Steven's ability to physically engage in life which in turn moulded his personality but ultimately it was his HIV that turned him into a hermit.

21. Understandably, Steven's HIV caused problems with forming meaningful relationships with girls. Steven would always get to know girls before

explaining the nature of his infections to them and becoming intimate with them I think there were only ever one or two girls who he became intimate with. One of these girls confided in me in relation to a personal encounter she had had with Steven. Due to Steven's worry of infecting this girl he had put two condoms on and due to the fact that he became paralysed with the fear of passing on the HIV, he was not able to have sex. I can imagine that this was a real blow for Steven. To my knowledge, this was the only time that Steven had ever tried to have sex. This also had a knock on effect of making Steven lonely as he was not able to build meaningful relationships with girls.

22. Steven was utterly made up when he became an uncle following the births of my sons in 2014 and 2015. When my wife and I conceived our first son, Steven was initially a little frosty with me. I think this was because my news acted as a cruel reminder of what he was not going to have in life. However, once Steven realised that he had a massive role to play as an uncle embraced it to the full. He was a fantastic uncle and I had not fully appreciated quite the extent he had gone to in his new role until after his death. It was only then that we discovered presents that he had purchased for his nephews in readiness for when they were a little older. One item was an expensive robot which connected to a laptop. Steven had invested so much thought and care into these gifts.
23. The innocence of his two little nephews invigorated Steven and gave him renewed faith in life. He came round for his dinner on the night he passed away, which was GRO-C 2017. My wife and I often cooked a roast dinner and invited Steven and our mother round. We never took the children to Steven's house because of the alcohol bottles and smell of smoke; it was not a safe environment for them. Steven ended up finishing his whole plate of dinner and we had a couple of drinks too. His nephews were sat on his lap and he was reading "*The Gruffalo*" to them. It was a lovely evening.
24. However, only a few hours after this, Steven took a turn for the worse so I drove him to the Northern General Hospital in Sheffield. I remember him being sat in the passenger seat saying "*I am in a bit of pain*". When we got

the hospital it transpired that he had had two heart attacks on the way to hospital. Steven was the strongest and bravest person I had ever met, and probably will ever meet; I hate to think how weak I would have been had I been "*dealt his cards*". He always managed to keep going and persevering, despite being on such a difficult path with an uncertain future. Despite his failing health, he still possessed a passion to continually better himself and continued to enrol upon and successfully complete online classes. I will admire Steven for the rest of my life; he was a fantastic brother and his passing has left a huge void in my family's life.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

25. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

26. I was offered counselling in consequence of Steven's infections when I was a lot younger. I also "*benefitted*" from the "*Big Brother Programme*" referred to earlier in my witness statement. I have never been offered any psychological support when I was an adult or following Steven's passing.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

27. I have never received any direct financial support from any of the Trusts. However, Steven did leave me some money upon his death, so I have therefore indirectly benefited from the Trusts.

Section 8. Other Issues

28. I want justice for Steven and I want financial security for my mother and also, to a slightly lesser extent, for my father. My mother has made choices and sacrifices throughout her entire life in order to ensure that Steven had the best possible quality of life. This has meant that she does not now own a property which she can call home and will probably have to postpone her retirement beyond the usual age. I would like my mother to be financially secure for the rest of her life.

Anonymity

29. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I would like 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.....

11/6/2020