

Witness Name: Christina Woodridge

Statement No: WITN1612001

Exhibits:0

Dated: March 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CHRISTINA WOODRIDGE

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I, Christina Woodridge, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Christina Woodridge, DOB [GRO-C] 1947 and I live at [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]
2. My son Martin John Wells, DOB [GRO-C] 1968, died on Saturday [GRO-C] 1993 at the age of 24 after being infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.
3. My daughter Stella has also provided a statement to the Inquiry, which can be found at WITN1599001.
4. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late son's 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. Martin was diagnosed with haemophilia at eight months old we did not know at the time I was pregnant that I was a carrier of haemophilia. [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] I was the only one to have given birth to a haemophiliac son.

6. I separated from my ex-husband and childrens father Leslie Wells in 1971 so I raised my children alone until I remarried ( GRO-C ) in 1980. Martin's father refused to accept there was anything wrong with Martin.
7. Martin was initially treated with Cryoprecipitate at the Oxford Haemophilia Centre and was first treated with Factor VIII concentrate in or around 1976. Shortly after, Martin became very jaundiced.
8. Martin got Hepatitis A in 1978 after he was given numerous doses of Factor VIII. He went to the Slade Hospital in Oxford where he was kept in isolation for three weeks. The conditions were absolutely terrible and we were not allowed to see him as he was strictly barrier nursed and he befriended a cockroach who lived in his room.
9. When he finally got out of the Slade, Martin was playing in the park near where we lived and was hit in the head by kids throwing stones and had to go to hospital for treatment where he was given more Factor VIII.
10. Martin was very isolated at mainstream school; he wasn't even allowed to join the chess club. I was informed about Treloars School through Martin's doctors and we felt that he might benefit from changing to a school who could better manage his condition. I loved him and just wanted him to go to a school where he would be cared for and happy. He didn't want to go originally but we all went to visit the school and Martin fell in love with it; probably because of the pool tables!
11. When Martin went to Treloars I demanded that they tell me when he was in the sick bay as I was aware from some of his friends their parents were not informed. I got a call in 1983 telling me that Martin was unwell so I immediately went to the school. When I arrived he looked terrible; he was grey, trembling and he was curled up into a ball.
12. I had seen a programme about AIDS in America and the link with haemophiliacs, so when I saw Martin in that condition I immediately knew what had happened to him. I went to the spiritualist church and prayed for his health.
13. The following day the school said he had turned a corner overnight and looked to be on the mend. I told the school that they mustn't lie to me and they promised they wouldn't.

14. In late November 1983 I received the worst phone call of my life. It was ????, the understudy of Dr Wassef, who told me that Martin had AIDS (although it wasn't yet called AIDS it was called HIV). I said I know; I knew about the virus and I knew it would attack his immune system. I was shaking after the phone call. I went to my husband and asked for a cigarette, even though I hadn't smoked for five years at the time.

15. Neither Martin nor the boys at Treloars were told about their infections. They were just told that they had suffered from glandular fever. Martin would regularly bring friends home, Jason, Andrew, Chippy all good friends

16. As Martin got older and started bringing girls home, I bought him condoms because I was aware of the risk and wanted him to be responsible. At this time I rang the haemophilia centre and told them that they had to tell Martin about his infection and talk to him about safe sex. Shortly after, they wrote to Martin and asked him to go to the hospital for 'tests'. When he was there, they told him about his infection and gave him some information about it.

17. Martin had his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party not long after being told and we had a lot of the boys from Treloars come round for a sleepover. Some of them were singing a song about HIV and I don't really think they understood what it all meant at that time.

18. There is a note in Martin's medical records that says he was the third person in the UK to be infected with HIV through contaminated blood products.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

19. I am not aware of any other infections that Martin may have been infected with.

### **Section 4. Consent.**

20. We were not made aware that they were testing Martin for HIV or Hepatitis C, and I never consented to any such testing.

### **Section 5. Impact**

21. The school got Martin on a Youth Training Scheme with the electricity board, where he was doing really well and they really appreciated him. However, when they were told that Martin had HIV he was immediately sacked, despite being one of the best workers. This really upset Martin and it was very difficult to take.
22. He then got a job with Walls Ice Cream where he worked in IT; however he had to give this up around in or around 1990 as his health deteriorated.
23. Martin was seeing a woman called Justine, and they had a son together. Jake was born on [GRO-C] 1989. He was born healthy but got a respiratory disease when he was 4 months old the complications of which left him with cerebral palsy. I believe that he got the infection because his immune system was so weak as Martin had full blown AIDS when he was conceived.
24. Martin's married Justine and they had a son Jacob
25. I gave up work and cared for Martin and Jacob, Martin would stay with me and Jacob would stay with myself and respite carers, Martin went back to live with Justine not long prior to his death. The relationship between myself and Justine broke down.
26. When Martin was very ill, he asked if I would be able to look after Jake when he passed but I said that I simply wouldn't be able to.
27. Martin died on [GRO-C] 1993 and I had a breakdown after his death. Due to the conflict with Justine, we were unable to attend Martin's funeral and instead held a memorial service for him, to which we invited his surviving friends from Treloars.
28. Stella was able to adopt Jake and she cared for him until his death on [GRO-C] 1999. I broke down after Jake's death and I tried to commit suicide in 2003. I am now on mental health medication and I will be for the rest of my life.
29. My husband and step-son also had to go through all of this and it was a very difficult time for them also. [GRO-C] and I divorced in 2000. After I found out about Martin's infection I was not intimate as I was so frightened of STDs.

30. What happened also impacted on GRO-C. She said she would not have a haemophiliac child because of everything that was going on with Martin. She said that if she found out she was a haemophilia carrier she would abort her baby.

31. I have shed so many tears over the years that I have no more left to cry; I am incapable of feeling anymore.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

32. I received some counselling after my suicide attempt but I nor my family were not offered any support before this.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

33. Martin was part of the group who brought the 1991 litigation. I believe He signed the waiver for HIV but didn't know anything about his Hepatitis C infection at this time.

34. We have not had any involvement with the Skipton Fund.

#### **Section 8. Other Issues**

35. I want to know why they kept on using products which they knew were dangerous.

#### **Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

36. I do not want to be anonymous.

37. I do not want to give oral evidence.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed.....C Woodridge.....

GRO-C

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Dated.....24/4/2019.....