Witness Name: Karen Macnally
Statement No.: WITN4992001
Exhibits: **WITN4992002 - 005**
Dated: x 12.02.2022.

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KAREN MACNALLY

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 8 February 2021.

I, Karen Macnally, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Karen Macnally. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960, and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am semi-retired with a pension from the NHS. I retired in 2017 but have since gone back to working 21 hours a week in a less stressful role.

2. I intend to speak of my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received, and its impact on me and my family's lives together.

3. I can confirm that I am not legally represented and that the provisions for anonymity have been explained to me and I am happy for my story to be

in the public domain. I am also aware that any criticism that I make may be subject to a right of reply.

Section 2. How Infected

4. When I was 15, I found out that I was pregnant. I was young and naive, so I did not realise until I was 5 months along. We lived in GRO-C at the time in a close-knit community and because my father did not want anyone to find out including family, he paid for us to go to a private facility in Birmingham so I could have a termination.

5. We drove to Birmingham in a car. I could not see any details on our drive to the facility as I had to stay out of sight. It was all very hush hush. My father had even borrowed the money to pay for us to stay there after the termination, which lasted only two or three days. We arrived at the facility in the morning, and I think I had the procedure on the same day.

6. I was very young, and I did not really know or understand what was going on at the time, and I couldn't ask questions. I know the operation did not go smoothly. I remember being taken into the operating theatre and something hot being inserted inside me. I don't know if it was to kill what was there or to induce me. I was later taken back to the operation theatre, and I think this was for a D&C.

7. I must have gone into labour because I recall lifting my head and seeing the baby, but they pushed me back down. I remember feeling hot and saying; 'can you open the window?' Then I suddenly felt cold, and I said 'I'm freezing' and immediately after, all the nurses started rushing around me. There seemed to be a sense of urgency. They put me on drips, and I believe this is when I had a blood transfusion. One of the bags seemed to have had red blood in it while the other had clear liquid, I don't know whether it was feeding me, but I remember feeling great afterwards. It made me feel 'alive' you could say.

8. I will never forget the attitude of the nurse from the facility. I don't know her name, but she had no sympathy or compassion at all. On several occasions, when I was in pain or upset, she told me to shut up and get on with it. She said words to the effect of; I had to learn my lesson. I do understand that this was the mindset of many at the time but to a young girl in a situation like I was her behaviour was callous. I think you'd need great deal more empathy to do that job today.

9. It was after the birth that I was taken back to theatre and underwent a dilation and curettage (D&C) procedure.

10. When I woke up back in my room after this second operation, I imagined that there were bars on the window and that my dad had brought me to this facility to be locked up. It certainly felt like I was being punished.

11. When we got back home to GRO-C, I was not allowed to talk about it. My dad ruled back then and what he said went and to this day, my mum prefers not to speak to me about it. I was confined in my bedroom for about a week after, and no one in the family spoke about it. It was considered shameful, something to be swept under the carpet, not to be discussed.

12. I was very traumatised by the whole ordeal and have suffered from depression ever since. I exhibit a page from my GP records that confirm that I had a termination procedure in November 1975, and was treated for depression from as early as 1978 which I will discussed at a later point. (See **WITN4992002**, Note from Dr PA Jackson & Dr J C Jackson at Townside Primary Care Centre.)

13. Afterwards, my dad was very strict with me. He did not let me go out with boys or to clubs, and it was only when I turned 17 that I was allowed to live some sort of social life again and go out with friends and mix with

others. I met my husband to be not too long after this but my dad still kept a close eye on me. He would not allow us to go away together unless we were engaged. I don't think my dad could cope with having daughters.

14. After I got married, I can remember my dad also asked me weird questions about having a grandchild and when I asked him why, he said he just wanted to make sure I could have one. I got the sense then that he did not think I could have a baby.

15. I had my first son in 1981 and my second child in 1982. I had to be induced for the first one, but the second was born very quickly. During the first delivery, I saw a lot of blood, and I immediately flashed back to the termination procedure, and it was quite traumatic for me, so much so I had to be given oxygen. As far as I am aware, I did not receive a blood transfusion during either of these deliveries.

16. I first began to experience symptoms in the summer of 1976, less than a year after the termination procedure. In June, I had just finished school and got my first job, in a customer service role. I remember feeling achy and fatigued, although I wouldn't have used those words back then. I used to go to the nurse's room a couple of times a month and complain about feeling tired. She would give me paracetamol and put it down to my 'time of the month'. I was quite a shy teenager, so I tried not to make too much of a fuss.

17. I was always tired and nauseous, my joints were achy, and occasionally I would suffer from night sweats. My sister and I were raised to work hard and carry on regardless. On one occasion, when I felt really ill, I called her and told her how I felt. She came around and said, "God, you look awful", so we called the doctor even though I didn't want to bother them or waste their time. I told the doctor that I felt low and I was achy all over, and it felt like it was in my organs as well. He said it was clinical depression.

18. One morning in 1988, I collapsed on the street on my way home from dropping my sons at school. A couple of neighbours saw me and one of them took me to my mum's house. I had to sit down while my mum rang the doctor. I was shaking and my skin was yellowish, and when the doctor arrived - Dr Siegler from the local practice, she knew instantly what the problem was.

19. I was taken to the Isolation Unit at Monsall Hospital. The room I was in had a bed and a sink in the corner, that was it. I can remember that students were coming around to observe and they were checking my body all over, for what I didn't know at the time, but later realised were needle marks, which of course I didn't have. I felt like a monkey. They were looking in between my toes, my legs etc. It was humiliating – and frightening as no one explained what was going on.

20. I was there for about 10 days. They kept coming in with masks and gloves and kept washing their hands. They disinfected my floor every day, and if they touched me would wash their hands. No one ever really said what was wrong with me or told me why I was being kept there until near the end of my stay. I remember at one stage the man in the room next to me died and I was really scared that I was going to die as well. I think initially I wanted to stay there as I knew I would struggle to cope with the kids if I went home but I started to miss them and was allowed to telephone my mum and I was able to speak to them on the phone but they were not allowed to visit. I can remember my mum and dad coming to visit and only being able to see me through the window. They couldn't come in to the room at first but were able to do so later.

21. I think it was just before I was released from Monsall I found out I had been diagnosed as having non-A, non-B hepatitis. I don't remember all the details but I do recall a young doctor coming into my room and sitting by me and explaining the diagnosis. To be honest I didn't really understand what he said – it meant little to me. I did not know what Non-

A Non-B was. I knew I needed rest and was told to convalesce for the next three months. There was no follow up appointment or any mention of treatment or medication. Much of the rest of that period is very 'foggy'. It is a time of my life that I have difficulty in piecing together.

22. Around 2002 I discovered I was HCV positive and will describe the circumstances later in the statement.

23. I have never been an intravenous drug user nor been sexually promiscuous and I only got my first tattoo at age 50. As I said I have only had the one blood transfusion that I am aware of and I have never been medically treated overseas.

24. I had a miscarriage in either 1992 or 1993, and I lost a lot of blood at the time. They offered me a blood transfusion then to help my recovery, but I refused because I was worried I would have flashbacks to the termination and the emotions that would revive for me.

Section 3. Other Infections

25. I don't know if I was tested back then for HIV, but I don't think I have it. I don't believe I have received any infection other than HCV due to being given infected blood. However, I do attribute a number of medical conditions that I have suffered from over the intervening years to my infection with the virus, the fact it was undetected for so long and its impact on my immune system and body in general.

Section 4. Consent

26. I don't believe in the main I have ever been treated or tested without my knowledge or consent. I have always consented to testing. That said, when I was diagnosed with Non-A, Non-B hepatitis, I was not aware that it was being tested for then.

Section 5. Impact

27. I was only 16 when I believe that I first started to experience HCV symptoms, so I did not understand what was really going on at the time. Even then, I had started to feel 'foggy' and would space out regularly. My concentration level was poor and I put it down to being a dreamer, but I remember I used to get told off by my mum and other people. Someone would be speaking to me, but I'd be off in the clouds. They used to say I was 'off with the fairies'.

28. In hindsight, there were other symptoms too. I could not be a normal teenager and go out drinking with the girls. Whenever I would go out, I would have two glasses of wine and start throwing up. I couldn't hold down an alcoholic drink, so I stopped trying to.

29. For a few days before the day I collapsed on the street in 1988, a couple of customers at the shop where I worked at the time, and my colleagues and my boss had all commented that I had a bit of a yellow tinge. I remember going to the bathroom regularly to check the colour of my eyes. The night before the street incident, I had slumped on the shop floor during my shift, and I could not get up, I was just so weak. Someone had to help me up in the end.

30. After I collapsed and was taken to the isolation unit at Monsall Hospital, I was really anxious because nobody told me what was wrong. I was mainly worried about my kids because I was going through a divorce and was struggling with being a single mother. My dad was not happy with me that I had chosen to be a single mother, as it was my decision to split up with my then-husband, so I didn't have that parental support. I had been working hard to feed my kids, and I was also getting benefits that did not amount to much, so that sometimes I wasn't eating myself. Therefore, throughout my stay in the ward, I kept asking about my kids. I was worried that I was dying and what would happen to them. My mum managed to reassure me that I was going to be okay and I felt a little

better but I was too frightened to ask the doctors for any more information. I found the whole experience intimidating – there just never seemed to be the chance to get someone to sit down and tell me what was wrong in layman's terms.

31. I think they did tell me I had to have a certain type of diet, but I was throwing up a lot at night, like clockwork around the same time, so I did not pay much attention to that.

32. When I was finally discharged from the hospital, they told me to take it easy. They said that I would feel exhausted, but I had to try to go on staged walks to get my strength up. I started off just walking to the garden gate and back and upped the distance from that. It took weeks before I could go on a proper walk. Even small tasks like washing up left me having to lie down to recuperate afterward. I stayed at my parents' house for a fortnight. My kids had been living with them while I was in the hospital, but I think we sent them off to my sister's while I recuperated.

33. The doctor at the hospital had told me that it would take me about three months to get my strength back, when he informed me that I had non-A or non-B hepatitis. It sticks in my mind that I was told unless you are into bondage or whipping it would be difficult to pass it on sexually!

34. In the meantime, I could not work, so I lost my job. I had tried to keep my job, but my boss – who was aware of my diagnosis, kept giving me late shifts and hours, such as weekends that he knew I couldn't do due to childcare requirements. In the end I had to leave. I think that this was due to the stigma of having non-A, non-B hepatitis or maybe just the word hepatitis. They may not have known exactly what it was, but it was still hepatitis. I cannot remember who, but I think someone told me that was the reason they wanted me gone.

35. I carried on feeling extremely tired, and I was not able to sustain a normal working life. It seemed like every two years or so, I would have to take extended sick leave because I simply could not carry on. I used to be off sick from work regularly. I tried to get a job with a company car to help with getting about but it was fruitless but I did not want to be on benefits. There were some mornings where I felt like I could not get out of bed to take my sons to school, and neighbours would help out by watching them on their way to school. I was often out of it for long periods at its worst.

36. In 2002, I read an article in the newspaper. It was about Pamela Anderson, the actress, revealing that she had been diagnosed with HCV and describing her symptoms. This was the first time I heard of HCV, and all of the symptoms she described resonated with me.

37. By this time, I worked in mental health at Fairfield Hospital, having started around 1996 so I went to my manager and told her that I was struggling and I needed support. I described how emotional and tired I was feeling. How my bones ached, and I felt constantly nauseous. I asked my manager to refer me to occupational health at work. The occupational health professional was known as an excellent doctor, and I had intended to try and speak to her all along because I thought she might be able to empathise as a woman. She understood straight away and immediately informed me that the right person to see would be Dr Uriel and at Fairfield Hospital.

38. Dr Uriel turned out to be a young doctor with a mop of red hair as I recall and as soon as he saw me told me that he believed I had HCV. He explained that he would need to confirm this with a blood test, but he seemed to be excited about it, but not disrespectfully. I don't think they had many cases of HCV in GRO-C at the time. I think there were only two confirmed cases, including me.

39. I cannot remember if they gave me any information on dealing with my diagnosis going forward, but I know that I was feeling mixed emotions. I was angry that nobody had picked it up over the years yet relieved that I finally knew what was wrong.

40. I had given birth to my third son in 1994 and had also had a sterilisation procedure in 1996, both times at Fairfield Hospital, yet nobody had picked up on my diagnosis. They must've known as surely a blood test would have flagged it up. It also made a few things click into place because I remember that when I had my sterilisation, several doctors at Fairfield Hospital kept popping in to see me. In particular, I remember the Consultant telling me that I would be the last person to be taken down; 'because of my blood'. Did he know at the time? If so why wasn't I told? I may have also been in denial and could have been burying my head in the sand, afraid of knowing more or asking further questions.

41. I was also angry that my GP had not picked it up. I thought that he must have known at least. He was a good GP and had been good to me other than this.

42. **GRO-C**

43. I was then referred to a specialist, Dr Wilkins, who was conducting HCV research at North Manchester Hospital, and I thought he was wonderful. It was great finally having somebody who understood my illness and what I was going through, who was empathetic and could explain what lay ahead.

44. I had to go to the hospital a lot during this period. I was having liver scans and tests, but that was fine with me because I finally knew what was wrong with me. I had a liver biopsy, but that was fine. The biopsy itself did not cause me any problems but I've heard they can be invasive.

I do remember that my readings were very high, in fact amongst the highest, which causes scarring to your liver.

45. I was offered my first round of combined Interferon and Ribavirin treatment in 2007 for 48 weeks. I had the injection in my stomach once a week on Fridays and 2/3 tablets, 3 times a day.

46. I experienced a lot of side effects, from flu-like symptoms, nausea, to shivering and feeling hot and cold, usually around two or three hours after taking the medication, so I would go to bed before they kicked in fully. I lost so much hair that I went to a wig shop and bought a wig, but I ended up wearing hats because the wigs were making me sweat, and I was already sweating a lot – another side effect. On one occasion, one of my sons said I had a bald patch at the back of my head. My hair has never gone back to its former thickness. My bones also continued to ache but worse than normal, and I suffered with brittle bones and nails. Many of the side effects were not new to me, simply a more severe version of what I had previously experienced over the years.

47. My depression also worsened throughout the course of the treatment. I had been battling depression since the termination and was prescribed Venlafaxine during the 1990s when I struggled to cope. I had used the drug on and off to combat it. I think my doctor even increased the dosage to 150mgs during the course of the treatment. Everything was heightened for me whilst taking the medication.

48. I continued to work during the first three months of the treatment, but I was feeling so ill, I could not continue. My boss understood that I was on this treatment and was suffering from various side effects, so we discussed it and agreed to cut down on my hours, but I still could not manage and eventually stopped working. I hated it because I felt like I had acquired a reputation for being sick.

49. I went through the full course of treatment and was monitored on a regular basis and it looked like the HCV was gone at first, but as soon as the treatment stopped, it came back. I was devasted, a whole year of pain and I still had the disease. Dr Wilkins at North Manchester hospital told me not to despair. He said that they were conducting a lot of research, and there would be a chance to try another treatment or a different kind of pen (for the Interferon).

50. Not too long after this, I was offered a second round of treatment, again Interferon, a different type with Ribavirin. This was a horrible experience for me. I could not tolerate this, and it felt like my body was shutting down. I was constantly crying, very emotional. I rang my sister and told her that I felt like I needed to go to the hospital. We went to Manchester General Hospital, and I was admitted onto the infectious diseases ward, where I was isolated and alone. Dr Wilkins came down to see me, and I told him that I just wanted to be looked after, rest and escape. I stayed at the hospital for a while, and my elder son, who was in the army at this time, was called down to come and see me. Following consultation, it was decided to stop the treatment because it was not doing me any good. The doctors agreed that my body could not take this treatment so soon after the last one. I immediately started to feel better as soon as the treatment was discontinued, and I was discharged.

51. I was then sent for further liver scans and told as my readings were still very high that I was near the top of the list for various medical trials. I had also heard the story of a woman who died after 30 years of living with HCV, and what stuck in my head was that I only had 30 years to live and some of it has passed. I kept thinking that time is rolling on and I was getting desperate.

52. In 2011, I was invited to be part of a new trial. Dr Wilkins told me about two different treatments, one from America and another from Geneva. I ended up being on the one from Geneva, and I think it was called B11. It was tablets and injections. One of them was a white tablet to take every

day, and this was for about 6 months. (See exhibit **WITN4992003**, a letter from the Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust to my GP, informing them that I was part of this research study.)

53. I experienced as many side effects while I was on this treatment as I had on the first one. I was left feeling very fatigued and low. It did have a knock-on effect on my depression which was magnified by events. During my depression years my GP tried me on several anti-depressants. I remember using Citalopram, Fluroxene and Sertraline to control it at different times. The last one drove me to the edge. At one point in my life when using it, I was so down, I felt suicidal and I rang my GP and told them that I felt like I was on a cliff's edge. The GP prescribed me Venlafaxine, a different antidepressant from the ones I was on previously and this seemed to calm me down.

54. I was relieved when they told me that it worked, and I was finally cured. I thought I would cry, but I was more in a state of a shock. It had been part of my life for so long. Dr Wilkins said that it would probably take time to sink in. I had later tests to confirm the disease was gone but I have not had a liver scan since the time I was told I was clear of the virus. I was told that the liver regenerates.

55. I was thrilled when I realised the HCV was gone. I imagined what it would mean to have more energy to do stuff finally. I even thought it would cure my depression, and it did for a while. My depression didn't really surface again for at about 8 years even though I was aware it was always there in the background. My depression has only started to come back to the fore in the past 4 months due to life changes and work.

56. Although the HCV was cured, it has had a massive impact on my life and my family. I am burdened by a sense of guilt about their childhoods even though I did the best I could. I feel that I may have caused them psychological problems and that they were made to grow up quicker than they should have. My eldest shouldered some of the responsibilities

during my illness by looking after his younger brother and taking him to school.

57. It destroyed me to have to see the effects that my illness had on them. I have to accept that this is how it has affected them, even though I am broken about it. It is horrible that an illness can have so much knock-on effect on your family's life. I have also been left homeless twice as a result of being infected with HCV.

58. Before I retired in 2017, I had been working for the NHS since 1996. I believe I could have progressed further in the NHS if it hadn't been for my illness. I could have gone for higher band jobs, but my sick record stopped me. I knew myself that it would not be long before I would again start to feel fatigued and I knew that my record would be examined when I was considered for another role.

59. It had a financial knock-on effect, but even if I had gone for the jobs and been successful, I knew that the stress of working the higher band job would have kicked off my depression and fatigue. I thought I'd rather be safe within a lesser job than have a breakdown because of a new role and the stresses it may bring.

60. It has also had an impact on my social life because I could not drink. I could not socialise with colleagues and friends after work because they would all be drinking, and I could not drink. I used to tell them I don't drink because it makes me ill, but it always felt like I was making excuses and sometimes I would succumb and have an alcoholic drink, but it would make me feel so poorly and before long, I stopped going out altogether.

61. It also impacted my second marriage because he wanted to go out all the time and socialise. He would say come out to the pub, people won't notice that you are not drinking. They would be going on pub crawls, and I could not keep up with that type of lifestyle. He started going out on his

own GRO-D I didn't want to have to tell people that the reason I could not drink was because of my HCV. I felt there was a stigma attached to the infection; people did not really understand it and there was an ignorance about it. In the end, it was like we were living two separate lives. When I finally told my second husband later down the line after we had split that I had HCV, he said that everything made sense now.

62. It feels like I have slept my life away. From the time I was 15 until now that I am cured, I have slept so much. When I had depression and was taking my son to school, I felt invisible if I wore a hat to drop them off. I thought that people could read me otherwise. I would get home after dropping them off and set the alarm to go pick them up and then fall back asleep.

63. I was tired all the time, not just tired, worn-out tired so I did not have the energy to take them out to different places. I couldn't keep a job down and consequently did not have the funds either to take them out or treat them. There were times where I even paid for a childminder to look after them when I was in work, so that I could work to cover our basic financial needs.

64. My sons are wonderful. Anytime that they see that I am beating myself up because I didn't do x y z with them, they tell me everything is fine. They are kind-hearted lads, and do not judge me. My third son, whom I had with my second husband, did not feel too much of the impact because his dad was around to cover the financial aspects, and he was too young when I was really ill, so it did not have much of an effect on him.

65. I have lost a lot of friends because I could not socialise with them. I would tell them I was tired, and they would not believe me. I acquired a reputation for moaning. This was even before I realised I had HCV, so there was no understanding of what I was going through later. I don't

blame anyone for that. I myself could not understand what was happening to me, let alone someone else, until I met Dr Wilkins.

66. My sister and mum never really grasped why I always felt so tired. When they actually found out about my diagnosis they were devastated. I would go home and cry because no one could understand me. I tried everything I could to help myself and get some energy. I even tried Paganism – a themed alternate approach - with some friends, hoping to derive some benefit from a different kind of approach. However, I didn't have the energy to keep up with what it entailed and I slowly drifted away.

67. Growing up the way I did means that I have now been conditioned to not talk about my HCV infection, especially because it also comes attached to the termination procedure I had when I was 15. That was such a traumatic experience for me. I have only just told my current husband about it in the last week, and to date, I still cannot say the word abortion.

68. My dad, on his deathbed apologised to me for being so hard on me when I was younger, but too much of the damage had already been done.

69. It has affected my digestive system. When I had HCV, I had IBS-like symptoms that would not go away, like stomach ache, bloating and could not hold down food, and it's worse when I am lying down. That persists to date.

70. I think my kidneys have also been affected because of my liver issues, although medically, I have not been informed that there are any problems. I have had a test about my bladder because my bladder is weak, and I attribute it to having HCV. I also feel an ache in my lower back, and I have wondered if that is where my kidneys are located? I attribute a lot of my medical issues to having HCV. I feel like it was attacking my body from inside and all of my other organs have had to

work harder to cope. After all it does affect your immune system and the bodies ability to fight off other ailments. I feel that I am always going to be more vulnerable than the average person to any bug that is going around.

71. My teeth were yellow and loose for a long while and then started to loosen more and fall out, so I had them all taken out in India 7 years ago by a professional service. This is the only time I have ever had a medical procedure overseas. I think the damage to my teeth was another effect of the HCV. When I was on the treatment, my gums bled a lot. I thought it was because I was a smoker or that I was getting old before my time but now I'm not so sure.

72. One time, I was driving in the morning. Suddenly, I felt like I did not want to be alive anymore. I had just dropped off my sons at their dad's and I was looking for my sister's house. I was in a daze. Time seemed to pass by quickly. I looked up and realised that I did not know where I was. This has happened only a couple of times, not regularly. It was during the worst of my depression. I didn't want to kill myself, but I just didn't want to exist.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

73. I think I was given the treatment as early as possible after my diagnosis in 2002. I was offered my first course of treatment in 2007, and I don't think there were any obstacles to getting the treatment.

74. When I was on the Interferon/Ribavirin, and I was being treated by Dr Wilkins, it felt a bit like I was a guinea pig, and they were experimenting on me because, realistically, we did not know if it was going to work. However, at the end of the day, Dr Wilkins gave me the most information and always understood what I was going through, so I didn't mind being treated or being experimented on in that way - if that was the case.

75. Around 2009, I noticed a few moles, three on the right side of my face and on my neck, and it was more cosmetic rather than anything serious, so my GP referred me to Radcliffe Primary Care Centre. The doctor - I can't recall her name - asked if I had HCV, and I said yes and that I take every precaution necessary. The doctor told me that she was unsure whether she wanted to operate on me due to my HCV. I told her that I was offended and that her implication made me feel dirty, so she said she would remove two of them and left one. I think she did not do all three because she was determined that I wouldn't get my way because I had stood up to her. It felt spiteful, and when I got back into my car to go home, I wanted to cry.

76. On another occasion, I think this was in 2000 or 2001, I went for a gynaecological procedure in which they would use a laser internally. The consultant at Fairfield Hospital who I think was the same doctor who did my sterilisation in 1996, made a comment in front of me about not wanting to touch my blood.

77. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support either at the point of diagnosis or during any of the treatments I have undergone. I was told about a support group in Manchester, which had people with HCV similar to me, but this was located in a rough part of Manchester, and I was a bit frightened to go there even though it would have been good to talk to other people going through it at the time.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

78. I think Dr Wilkins told me about the Skipton Fund. I probably had difficulty filling out the form, but I don't remember clearly now. I know I applied in August 2012 and that my application was turned down in December 2012.

79. They rejected my application because they said there was no proof that I had ever received a blood transfusion. I appealed against their decision and my mum wrote a note supporting my application, and so did Dr Uriel. (See exhibits **WITN4992004** and **WITN4992005**.)

80. Part of the reason for the Skipton Fund's refusal of my application and my later appeal in February 2013 was based on the information they read in the letter exhibited as **WITN4992003.** In my interview with Dr Baxter about the treatment trial in 2011, I mentioned that I had never had a blood transfusion. This was because the termination was quite a traumatic incident for me, and I have grown up conditioned not to talk about it. It is not something I would naturally disclose. My mum also used to accompany me to several appointments, and I suspect that she accompanied me to that interview with Dr Baxter, so I definitely would not have disclosed it then because it is something we did not and, still do not talk about.

81. The Appeal rejection letter also says they believe that I caught the infection at the time of my diagnosis with Non-A Non-B in 1988. But what about my symptoms before that? How and from what or who did I catch it then? Nothing was identified to indicate that was the time I caught the virus.

82. I was disappointed that my appeal was rejected. It was quite down-heartening and rekindled the feeling that no one believed what you had to say. I feel like people who have contracted HCV because of a blood transfusion deserve an acknowledgement of what they have gone through. It would have been nice to have some money. It could have changed a lot for me. I would have liked to take care of my boys a little, as a way to make it up to the family, maybe take them on holiday for all the years they suffered through me being ill.

83. The Skipton Fund appeals panel just felt to me like a distant group of people who had no understanding about HCV or how to deal with victims.

84. I have tried to get my medical records from Fairfield Hospital, but I have been told that they did not retain records from that time. I know that the doctors at Fairfield Hospital came across my termination records because during the delivery of my first and second sons in 1981 and 1982, they had brought it up.

85. Recently, I sent a letter to my GP because I want them to confirm that my records show that I had a blood transfusion in 1975. I think my GP Surgery will charge £50 for access to the records, but I am still waiting for the answer to my letter.

86. My motive is not really about trying to claim compensation because no amount of money can compete with the feeling I felt when I was told that I have finally been cured after having HCV for so long.

Section 8. Other Issues

87. I am disappointed that I cannot give blood now because I have had HCV. It has affected my faith in the NHS a little because I feel like I can't always take them at face value. It makes you feel like they might have missed something, and you have to stamp your feet to get anything done.

88. I have been angry in the past that I was not diagnosed sooner or that nobody recognised what I had. It would have answered many questions for myself and my family, my children, ex-husband, sister, and friends. I had to read Pamela Anderson's story before I could find out.

89. I did not think about legal actions because I could not afford litigation, and I also worked for the NHS for a long time, and I don't think I would

have been forgiven for bringing an action. My chances of winning also seemed very slim because back then, you had to pay court fees.

90. I do not know the name of the hospital where I had the termination in Birmingham. My dad has since passed, and he never told me the name. I don't think he would have told my mother, and in any case, I wouldn't ask her because, as I've been at pains to point out, we just don't talk about that. My mother would not want to discuss it and I don't want to upset her.

91. I still feel like there is a stigma against HCV and as said earlier that there is still a lot of ignorance around hepatitis. I feel like my life would have turned out a lot differently if I had been able to disclose openly what I was going through without the stigma attached.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed x GRO-C

Dated x 12.02.2022.