Witness Name: Geoffrey Cubitt
Statement No.: WITN5996001
Exhibits: none
Dated: 21/12/21

GRO-C

# INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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# WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEOFFREY IAN CUBITT

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 17 September 2021.

I, Geoffrey Ian Cubitt, will say as follows: -

## Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is name is Geoffrey Ian Cubitt. My date of birth is GRO-C 1963. I was born and raised in Loughborough. I have one brother and one sister. GRO-C. I live with my wife, Jay Cubitt. Together we have one daughter, who is aged thirty, two step daughters and one grandson, who is twenty-one months old. I have worked intermittently over the years in various roles. However, this has been disrupted due to poor health and I am currently unemployed due to the effects of hepatitis C.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C ("HCV") contracted from Factor VIII treatment received in around 1976 to treat a bleed. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness

affected me, the treatment received and the impact it's had on the lives of myself and my family.

3. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and I have not been involved in any previous litigation. The Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me and I am not seeking anonymity.

4. I can also confirm that the Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.

5. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have not taken up access to my medical records. Therefore, I have only been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates.

## Section 2. How Infected

6. In around 1967 or 1968, when I was four years old, I had a bad bike accident. I was chasing my brother down a hill, I crashed into a brick wall and I bit into my tongue. The next morning, I was unresponsive. I was taken to hospital and administered four pints of blood. For a four-year-old, this was a significant quantity. I was in the hospital for two weeks.

7. I was then referred to Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford for further investigations. It was here that GRO-C I were diagnosed with Haemophilia A. I had a level of twelve percent clotting factor - which is mild. There is no record of haemophilia in the family so we don't quite know where the disorder has come from. GRO-C

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8. Everyday life was not a problem whatsoever. In the early years, I only had treatments with cotton wool when I had teeth out. When it became available, I was also given DDAVP on particular occasions. I have been very fortunate that I don't really get bleeding in muscles or joints. Nevertheless, as an active young child, it was psychologically very difficult to be told that I could not participate in physical contact sports.

9. In 1975, my family and I moved to Australia. My father was an academic and he had a year's leave at an Australian University. I loved it out there, I felt so free and these are my best memories from childhood. I enjoyed the outdoor lifestyle and played many sports including cricket. Academically, I was also achieving well. We returned back to the U.K in January of 1976.

10. In around 1978, when I was twelve or thirteen, I had an accident at school, where a fellow pupil accidentally closed a door on me. The glass shattered and badly cut my hand. I was admitted to St Agnes' ward at the Leicester Royal Infirmary (LRI). I cannot remember the initial treatment, although I do not think it was very effective, as I was readmitted shortly after being discharged. Perhaps they just applied pressure to the wound initially.

11. On the second admission, I can recall doctors informing my parents that the normal supply of British blood products was running low and so, I was to be given three vials of an American blood product. I don't know why I can remember this conversation. I can remember someone informing us that each vial amounted to one thousand pints of blood. Presumably the risks were communicated to my parents, albeit they cannot remember. I was in Hospital intermittently for one week.

12. Since then, I had a couple of nose bleeds and bleeds in my thigh muscles and one operation needing a general anaesthetic. I have always been treated at the LRI's haemophilia centre under Nurse Carol and consultants, Dr Woods and Dr Mitchell. I had an operation when I was nineteen or twenty, but that was treated with DDAVP. I was always aware of the treatments that I received. As far as I was concerned, the LRI were sparing with treatments, providing DDAVP where possible, of which I was always responsive to.

13. As a haemophiliac in the late 1980s' as the AIDS epidemic came to the fore, I was tested for HIV, for which I was fortunately negative. I was a teenager at the time; going to parties and having girlfriends so it was important for me to know that I did not have HIV.

14. I married my wife in 1990. She gave birth to our daughter in GRO-C 1991.

15. Sometime in 1991, I found out that I was positive for hepatitis C. I can't remember if this was disclosed during a regular appointment or if I was called in especially. I don't think I was ever told that I was being tested for hepatitis C. The doctors told me that I had been unlucky and that I would have contracted the virus from my haemophilia treatment.

16. I can't remember too much about the appointment. I was told of the possibility of liver cancer and cirrhosis. I was also advised about what to do in the event of blood spillage and to use protection during sexual intercourse. I was not provided with any written information to take home.

17. I think this was inadequate given the gravity of the diagnosis. I was told that I had this life-altering illness and then simply left to walk away. From 1991, the LRI merely monitored me. I felt that I was left on my own and no counselling was offered, which I think would have been very beneficial.

## Section 3. Other Infections

18. As far as I am aware, I have not been infected with any viruses other than hepatitis C. I was tested for HIV for which I am negative.

19. One correspondence from my medical records mentions that I have hepatitis B antibodies. I am slightly confused as to what this means as I have never been informed that I have been infected with this virus.

## Section 4. Consent

20. As earlier iterated, I was not informed that I was being tested for hepatitis C. I think the clinical practice was such that unless I asked what I was being tested for, I wouldn't be told. I believe that was ordinary practice back then. They took four or five vials of blood to the laboratory and that was it.

## Section 5. Impact

21. Being infected with hepatitis C through contaminated blood has had far-reaching consequences on my life and the lives of my family. Nevertheless, I consider myself lucky that I am still alive considering the numbers that have died. The effects of this tragedy continue to shock me to this day.

22. For as long as I can remember, I have always considered myself as a complete failure. Although, I consider myself reasonably intelligent. However, since returning to the U.K from Australia as a child from that point I never achieved academically. I attained three GCSES in Maths, English and Physics. I could never apply myself and could not understand why. I have always called it 'the brain fog.' I would try to

concentrate but would often experience a kind of block which was very exasperating.

23. When I was diagnosed with hepatitis C, I finally was able to connect the dots and I realised that what I had been experiencing all these years was a common symptom of the virus, and therefore it was not me or my fault. This was very distressing for me as for so many decades, I have been perceived by my family as lazy, unable to apply myself or persevere with anything. To this day, my memory is not very good and I have trouble recalling many things.

24. Since I left school at age seventeen, I initially worked as a dry stone waller. I then worked for a year as a carer in a disabled centre. Between then and 2015, due to my HCV symptoms such as the brain fog and exhaustion, I have been unable to maintain consistent employment. I basically failed in most ventures that I have tried to pursue.

25. I was so ashamed that I was unable to hold down a job and support my family. As a result of this shame, I spent years where my wife thought that I was working but I would leave home and sit in my car all day. All this time, I was living off on my wife's savings, which only augmented my guilt. I wasted my life. I still feel so guilty, ashamed and upset about this period of my life.

26. That all came to a head in 2015, when my wife discovered the truth. We then separated for a period of time but are now back together.

27. I was depressed and suicidal for which I received cognitive behavioural therapy. I accessed this through my GP rather than through the circumstances surrounding my infection with hepatitis C. I never tried to harm myself but thoughts of this nature were pervasive.

28. My self-esteem was and continues to be very low. It is difficult to pinpoint the precise causes, but the brain fog and the years of feeling as if I wasted my life have definitely contributed to my depression. All I can say is that this is my story and it is not very nice. Reconciling with the effects of my infection is a daily struggle.

29. In 2016, I had a number of teeth out at Nottingham Hospital. The dentist did not treat me any differently. However, I have never been a regular at the dentist. I think this is owing to my poor self-esteem (due to the HCV effects). For many years, I didn't take care of myself. Up until four months ago, I was over eighteen stone and approaching diabetes. I recently started running and taking care of myself, and have lost three stone. This has improved my confidence but it is not easy as running leaves me exhausted for the rest of the day.

30. In 2015, I worked in a factory in Leicester for ten months. However, my fingers started to become stiff. I received injections to treat carpal tunnel but this prevented me from continuing with this employment.

31. Following this, I ventured into agency work. I worked one Christmas at parcel force. In 2017, I started working as a lorry delivery driver. I managed that for a year but the exhaustion brought this to a halt and I was forced to resign.

32. For the last couple of years, I have been working as a Barn Dance caller. I primarily work at festivals and weddings, and I am well considered in my field. However, this has slowed down since the onset of the pandemic. Financially, I rely on my wife and the money I receive from EIBSS.

33. My infection with hepatitis C has had a significant impact on the financial security of my family. Due to the HCV, I haven't worked for almost the entire duration of my marriage. I do not have a pension. Between the uncertainties of the pandemic and my continuing health

problems, maintaining consistent employment is a challenge. I would have carried on with parcel force as I was earning £30,000, which was absolutely out of this world to me after my employment experience, but I couldn't carry on.

34. My wife has been an absolute pillar. She has been brilliant. To have taken me back after what I did is admirable. We are friends but our marriage is still being rebuilt. I spoke to both my wife and my daughter before agreeing to speak to the Inquiry. I would not have done this statement without their agreement and permission.

35. The relationship between my daughter and I was destroyed by my deceit. Fortunately, we now have a really good relationship. I have a grandson, who is beautiful. She lives just outside of GRO-C and I see her regularly. She is a school teacher. My close family and my grandson keep me going. There is nothing that I wouldn't do for them.

36. I do not like myself. I have never liked myself. I was on antidepressants for about four months in 2015. However, they didn't seem to do anything for me so I stopped taking them. I want to draw a line in the sand and move on. It was a real shock receiving a phone call from the Inquiry asking if I wanted to provide evidence. I didn't realise that I had all these emotions stored up. Not being able to pin-point what is caused by hepatitis C and what is just self-pity is also distressing; I don't trust my own feelings.

37. It wasn't until 2001 that I was offered hepatitis C treatment at the Haemophilia Centre at the LRI. I self-administered injections of Interferon on a weekly basis, combined with tablets of Ribavirin on a daily basis. I endured treatment for a certain length of time. I was then checked to see whether my body was responding. As I was responsive, I completed the full year. However, around three or four months later, the virus returned. I was told that it can hide in the bone marrow.

38. During the treatment, I experienced flu-like symptoms which were very unpleasant. I lost weight and became very lethargic. Overtime, I became more tolerant of the side effects. I felt empty, anxious and depressed; symptoms which prevail to this day. I lost my hair and my eyesight deteriorated. I now have to wear glasses. I also experienced impotence which prevails to this day.

39. Subsequently, there were various discussions about a second course of treatment. However, after the trauma of the first round of treatment, I was intransigent. I knew I couldn't endure that again. My eyesight and hair have never returned to normal nor can I say that the impotency has improved. I continued to be monitored in the meantime. I also had a fibroscan in 2014 to measure the hardness of my liver.

40. In August 2016, the liver clinic offered me a second course of treatment. I think my case had been discussed by a clinical group and subsequently approved. I was initially very reluctant. The course, which was a combination of Viekirax, Dasabovir and Ribavirin, lasted twelve weeks. My hepatitis C was genotype 1 which affected my suitability for different treatments. I was told that this course was perfect for me and I did not experience any side effects at all.

41. Fortunately, the treatment was successful. When the nurse told me that I was all clear, I expected that I would feel happy and relieved. But to this day, a part of me still doesn't believe that I am free of the virus. The all clear was somewhat of an anti-climax, perhaps because of the lasting imprint the virus has had on my life. I have also noticed that whilst earlier correspondences indicated that I was all clear, subsequent letters describe me as being in remission. This causes me to worry that the virus might return.

42. I felt supported during the second course of treatment. I was under the liver clinic with whom I regularly consulted. The clinical nurse was

brilliant. I experienced no problems at all with them. I was regularly monitored. I have moderate liver disease but I do not have cirrhosis. I was discharged from the liver clinic. Since then, because of the pandemic, I haven't had a blood test in three years.

43. Although the treatment was successful, I don't feel any different, I still experience brain fog which has plagued me since receiving the contaminated blood all those decades ago. I still have the apprehension that the virus might return. In fact, I can't say I feel any different now to how I did before the treatment.

44. I have not been subject to stigma as a result of my infection with hepatitis C. I have been very open with people. At the time of the AIDS epidemic, I was having tests for HIV. There were frightening adverts on TV and haemophiliacs were widely known to be a risk group. I communicated with people that, as a haemophiliac, I at least knew my status, and so I could safely say that I was negative for the virus.

## Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

45. When I was diagnosed with hepatitis C, no counselling or psychological support was offered. I received life-changing news with no forewarning and little information moving forward. I believe that counselling should have been discussed with me as I was left in a very vulnerable predicament.

46. I don't hold any grudge against the LRI nor the haemophilia department. In hindsight, there are things that could have been done differently, but I don't have any misgivings. As mentioned earlier, as far as I am aware, they were sparing with treatments and sought to use safer products where possible.

## Section 7. Financial Assistance

47. In around 2016, the LRI applied to the Skipton Fund on my behalf and completed all the paperwork for me. They were brilliant. My application was successful and I received a stage 1 payment of £20,000. In November that year, I was informed that in addition to the stage 1 payment, I was to be paid new annual payments of £3,500 (inclusive of a £500 winter fuel payment), to be distributed as a lump sum.

48. In March 2018, Skipton contacted me to inform me that from April that year, the annual value of my regular hepatitis C stage 1 payments was to increase to £4,000 to be paid in quarterly payments of £1,000. This excluded a winter fuel allowance to be paid separately. Quarterly payments then increased to £4,615.50 in 2019.

49. On 29 January 2020, Skipton contacted me to inform me that from April that year, the annual value of my regular payments would increase to £18,772, to be distributed in quarterly payments of £4,693. In addition, I was informed that I would be entitled to a winter fuel allowance of £540. In 2021, a payment o £30,000 was made.

50. My experience of the Skipton Fund has been that they have assumed that if the applicant has received blood products, then they will have likely contracted any infection from those products. That is the way that I have understood it. I think it was set up correctly and has been a relatively easy process for people like myself. I also understand that the schemes now distribute equally across the U.K.

51. I appreciate the financial support that I have received, however, I do not know if it is ongoing. This causes me great worry, as I do not have a pension and so I am completely reliant on this support. Moreover, due to prevailing problems with my health, my future employment potential is uncertain.

52. I would like some assurance as to the longevity of financial assistance. I would also like to know if there is going to be compensation paid for my inability to work. I can't prove that I have been unable to work for all these years due to hepatitis C as I have never sought medical or other help, but it has undoubtedly had a significant impingement on my career.

## Section 8. Other Issues

53. Hepatitis C has significantly impacted my life in a number of ways. However, I am not angry or upset but fairly fatalistic. I believe that it is an unfortunate series of events that have led to this outcome. I knew there was an emphasis in Leicester in sourcing British products when it was possible. They were aware of infections at various times, and kept patients informed whilst trying to mitigate the risks. I can remember having conversations to this effect with my clinicians. I believe that I am lucky to have been there and not other parts of the U.K. I am also fortunate that I wasn't a severe haemophiliac.

54. I have never held anyone responsible for the circumstances surrounding my infection with hepatitis C. Nevertheless, from what I have seen, there have been cover-ups. Politicians and various senior members of the health services have been hiding behind time. It seems as if the government has waited for people to die before instigating an investigation. There were four thousand of us at one point, and now there are just a thousand of us left. If the government wanted to learn lessons, they should have done so earlier.

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 21/12/21