

Witness Name: Paul Walker

Statement No: WITN6613001

Exhibit: N/A

Dated: 22 October 2021

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### WRITTEN STATEMENT OF PAUL WALKER

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I, Paul Walker of GRO-C will say the following:

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

1. I am the younger brother of Neil Anthony Walker who received contaminated Factor VIII concentrates that transmitted Hepatitis B and C and HIV infection.
2. When I was younger and hurt my knee, I recall that my mother rushed me to Sheffield Hospital where she was of the view that I was given Factor VIII but instead she was informed that I did not have haemophilia.

#### **Section 2: How Affected**

3. Neil was born on GRO-C 1971 and was then diagnosed with a Factor VIII level of less than 1%.
4. Neil was treated at Derby Royal Infirmary. He was prescribed both cryoprecipitate and Factor VIII concentrates. He was given cryoprecipitate and this stopped the bleeding.
5. One of my earliest memories was being woken up at night, to the sounds of my brother crying in pain. At times, my mother would have to lie down with him to calm him down. Other times, my mum would be hurrying us to

get dressed because an ambulance was on its way to take us to Sheffield hospital. We seemed to be spend our lives at the hospital, both day and night.

6. At times when Neil attended Sheffield Hospital, my mother was informed that as Derby Royal infirmary had not given Neil enough Factor VIII they would give him more.
7. There was only two years between Neil and I and so inevitably we were very close. We played together and went to the same school.
8. I always remember bath time. I would go first and Neil after me, mum would always bleach the bath after us and wash our clothes separately.

### **Section 3: Other Infections**

9. N/A

### **Section 4: Consent**

10. I believe that there was no time where my mother was ever informed of any risks associated with Factor VIII concentrate.

### **Section 5: Impact**

11. My parents got divorced when I was a young boy. He remarried and had another son and left us behind. I believe that if my father had been there for us and stood by us, we may have coped better but that is not the way it turned out. My mum and I carried the burden of everything, it was all left to us.
12. Neil and I went to the same school, Water Evans in Derby. I remember on one occasion while we were in class, I would fall asleep on my desk. The headmaster brought the two of us home and my mum was quizzed as to

what was going on at home. Mum told him that due to Neil's condition, we had to travel to Sheffield Hospital for treatment. We had no other family in Derby, mum's family were based in Stoke on Trent and my dad's family did not want to know so when we had to travel to Sheffield, we all went together. Surprisingly, the Headmaster advised my mum to keep me at home to get some rest.

13. As this was not a once off, my mum was very worried about my education and the effect of my home life was having on me. I lost count the amount of time we spent at the hospital.
14. Bullying became a lot worse when we started Ecclesbourne Secondary School. Our Headmaster Dr Dupey called a parent-teacher meeting and they had a vote. It transpired that the parents did not want Neil or I in the school. Dr Dupey assured the parents of the other children that he would arrange for a minder to take care of Neil and everything then on would be safer.
15. Neil had to have his appendix removed. No doctor wanted to perform the surgery and he was left overnight. It was at this point when my mum was informed over the phone that he had HIV. The next thing I know, there were was an article in the Telegraph about a young boy with HIV at Ecclesbourne School. We found out that the lady who lived down the end of the road worked at the hospital and spread it all over the village. We were told to keep a low profile following this otherwise we would have to move out of the village. People would stare and we were instructed to just ignore them.
16. Matters at school got worse once the kids found out about Neil's diagnosis. I could not stand school after that and it triggered a downward spiral. The abuse at school was awful and I became depressed.
17. I did my best to protect my brother, kids would shout at me and tell others to stay away from me as I had "AIDS" like my brother. I was involved in a lot of fights at school due to the abuse we received. I had no option but to

stand up for myself and Neil. I was compelled to tell my mum as it was not getting any better, so she suggested going to speak with the headmaster but Neil was very much against this as he feared it would make matters worse. Mum suggested taking us out and placing us in a new school but as soon as the news would get out, the cycle of bullying would begin again.

18. I hated when Monday came around as I knew the bullying would start again. I found it incredibly difficult as I had to travel on the school bus whereas Neil went by taxi.

19. Day to day activities were marred by the bullies. I was a very good swimmer and each time I was warned that if I got into the pool I was dead. So eventually it all got too much and I refused to go into school. They taunted us Neil and I were called the "AIDIES". I explained to my mum that I was too upset by it all and it was affecting me. No one should be treated this way.

20. One day Neil returned from school and went straight to his bedroom, he seemed very quiet. I asked him what was wrong and he told me that the teacher made him read to the class. Neil has a stammer and finds reading difficult. The teacher then told him to sit down until he could speak properly. It was obvious that some of the teachers did not want us there and instances like this proved it to us.

21. There were times that we felt worthless and dirty, I truly was worse than be a leper. We did not seem to fit in at all.

22. It is a time that I will never forget. My brother and I were very depressed. One day, Neil said he wished he had some friends at school, I told him he had me and we just laughed. I am thankful that we had each other.

23. One night we had a conversation which really upset me. Neil told me that he went to a funeral directors to arrange his own funeral. He told me that he would have to be buried in a lead-lined casket and concrete. I was shocked and frightened for him. He also said he would drive into the river

in his car. I was devastated by this and told my mum. She told me no one was going to die and to get those thoughts out of my head, that we will get through this together as a family.

24. I suffered waves of horrible thoughts. There were times that I wished the lord would end his suffering, then I would immediately regret it and feel nothing but guilt.

25. I wished that we had a normal life but we did not. We could never plan to go anywhere as Neil would always have a bleed and this would mean going to hospital again.

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

26. As a family we had no counselling or support, we were just left to go through it alone. It was a journey through hell which no family should have to endure.

### **Section 7: Financial Assistance**

27. Life was very difficult and money was very short as my mother was on her own and did her best to provide for us. I understand that she received a small amount of funding from the Haemophilia Society.

### **Section 8: Other Issues**

28. It has been very difficult to put this to paper. As a family we went through some very bad and cruel times. I feel like I am the lucky one as I made friends outside of Derby and they are still friends to this day.

29. I am 48 years old and have three wonderful daughters. I try to instil in them to be kind to people.

30. Things happened to me that I will never forget and will unfortunately be with me for the rest of my life. No one knows what my brother and I went through. I think about my sister Tracy who only lived for 2 weeks. There are times that I am glad that she escaped the abuse that Neil and I suffered.

31. My mother became increasingly active on behalf of the haemophilia community infected with HIV and wrote to the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher as part of that campaign in 1987 and 1989 demanding compensation for those infected.

32. She has continued to campaign since then and pressed hard for this Inquiry for decades. She was active with her local MP and councillors on the issue and continues to be so.

33. All we seek is for accountability and justice. No money will ever be enough. Looking back now, I know that my mother was our rock and tried to shield us from all of the hurt and abuse.

**Statement of Truth:**

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

Dated the 22 day of Oct 2021.

Signed: GRO-C

Paul Anthony Walker