Witness Name: John Thorneycroft
Statement No.: WITN032901
Exhibits: **WITN0329002**
Dated: 4 January 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF JOHN THORNEYCROFT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 4 January 2019.

I, John Thorneycroft, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is John Thorneycroft. My date of birth is GRO-C 1970. My address is known to the Inquiry. I am a postman and have been for thirty-two years. I have two teenage children with my ex-partner.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"), which I contracted as a result of being given Factor VIII to treat my Haemophilia A. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me.

3. I can confirm that I am not being legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I have had severe Haemophilia A from birth and was treated with Factor VIII from the age of two, which was administered by injection in the arm. I was treated with Factor VIII up until I received a diagnosis of Hepatitis C at the age of fifteen. I am also aware that I was treated with Cryoprecipitate.

5. I received Factor VIII but I am unsure as to the exact details of the product or batch numbers. My mother administered the treatment when I was a child however when I reached teenage years, I administered the Factor VIII myself. I was only to use Factor VIII when I was injured, which were usually football related injuries.

6. If I had a serious injury my mother would take me to the Haematology department at Whitechapel Hospital. An example of an incident that occurred which required this level of care was when I suffered a football related injury, at the age of fifteen, to the tendons at the back of one of my ankles. I was admitted into Whitechapel hospital for two weeks. I received physiotherapy to my ankle and I was treated with Factor VIII two or three times a day.

7. I was under the care of and treated at Whitechapel Hospital by the Haematology Department by a Haematology specialist, Dr Colvin, whilst being given the Factor VIII treatment.

8. I started taking the Factor VIII treatment at the age of two when I was first diagnosed with Haemophilia A. Once I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C at the age of fifteen, I was no longer required to take it.

9. My mother and I were not provided with information or advice as to the risk of being exposed to infection from the blood products I received before or during the period of time I was administering Factor VIII.

10. The Haematology specialist, Dr Colvin, told me that I came to be infected by being given a bad batch of Factor VIII. I therefore, believe that I contracted Hepatitis C through one bad batch of the Factor VIII blood products. I am unsure as to the date that I was infected with Hepatitis C through the blood products I received.

11. I found out that I had been infected with Hepatitis C at the age of fifteen in an appointment with Dr Colvin that I attended with my mother in 1985. It was explained to my mother and I, that the blood products that I had been taking had not been heat-treated properly, which is how I became infected.

12. In the appointment, which lasted approximately thirty minutes, I was not provided with information about Hepatitis C to help me understand or manage the infection, or about what I could or couldn't do in terms of treatment. I was not told what Hepatitis C was or how it would affect me, only that that I could infect others. The doctor was very vague but I trusted my doctor.

13. I cannot be sure as to whether I was told about my diagnosis as soon as Dr GRO-D was made aware of it. I feel now as though the information was not passed to my mother or I straight away.

14. In my opinion the way in which the information about the infection was communicated to me could have been a lot better. The manner in which I was told about contracting the infection was somewhat abrupt. I had no idea at the time what Hepatitis was or how the infection would affect my life.

15. I explained to my ex-partner that I had Hepatitis C and it was she who decided that it would be a good idea to meet with a doctor at the hospital. The risk of infection to her and the potential risk of infection to children we may have in the future was explained to us. It was either

Dr Hart or Professor Passi in early 2002 at Whitechapel Hospital who explained this to us.

Section 3. Other Infections

16. I do not believe I have contracted any other infection apart from Hepatitis C as a result of being given blood products. My blood was tested for Hepatitis B ("HBV") and the human immunodeficiency disease ("HIV"). I was later tested for Creutzfeldt - Jakob disease ("CJD") when it was discovered that an individual had been infected with CJD.

Section 4. Consent

17. I do not believe I was treated or tested without my knowledge or consent.

18. My mother has informed me that I was subject to further tests, for research purposes, following my diagnosis of Hepatitis C. It appeared I was the only person who was given a specific batch of Factor VIII and had not contracted HIV alongside Hepatitis C. Those treating me were anxious to discover why this was.

19. I was tested for a variety of things but it would not always be the case that I was told what tests were actually being carried out and their purpose.

5. Impact

20. The main physical symptom of Hepatitis C that I faced was fatigue. I found this challenging due to the nature of my work as a postman. A large part of my work is physical but an essential requirements of the job is to be up early each morning. I woke up feeling lethargic and tired on a daily basis.

21. With regards to the mental effects of being infected, I believe I was conscious of passing on the Hepatitis C to female partners. I did not tell female partners about the fact that I had Hepatitis C until I met my ex-partner with whom I was with for sixteen years.

22. I did not tell my friends at school that I had Hepatitis C and only those friends that I have remained close with from school, now know of the fact that I had been infected. I did not tend to socialise as much as I would have liked to with friends due to feeling so tired all of the time.

23. It was six years after I was told of my diagnosis of Hepatitis C, at the age of twenty-one, that I was offered Interferon to cure the infection. Prior to this time I was not made aware that there was any available treatment for Hepatitis C. I was under the impression that Interferon became available to me once it had been tested, safe to use and available to patients. I believe my doctor wanted me to take it.

24. I first took Interferon at the age of twenty-one when it was offered to me. I was given sufficient information about the effects of Interferon, in that I was told that it would not be very pleasant. I was shown how to administer the Interferon injection myself. I would inject myself with Interferon every other day usually in either my stomach or my backside. I do not recall the period of time during which I treated myself with the Interferon.

25. The side effects of Interferon that I experienced were flu-like symptoms. I find it difficult to explain how it made me feel but in general I felt rough, further adding to the difficulties I faced in regards to my job. I dreaded taking the Interferon, as I knew I would feel so rough afterwards. I would not do much in the two or three hours after administering the drug.

26. After taking Interferon, I would stay in my room for several hours. I would feel extremely tired and therefore anti-social. I wouldn't go out with friends as much as I would have liked for this reason.

27. When I first started administering Interferon it did not work. I had been taking it for anywhere between three to six months when I was told that the treatment had failed. I think I may have requested a break, possibly a couple of months, before trying the Interferon for the second time. This was largely due to the unpleasant the side effects I had experienced. I was told that if the treatment did not work the second time then I would not be able to try it again. The reason why the Interferon had failed the first time was not explained to me.

28. Fortunately, the Interferon worked the second time and I am now cured of Hepatitis C. I have been told that whatever damage was done to my liver is irreversible. I have not been told how severe the damage to my liver is or the extent of the damage to my liver.

29. When I learnt of my Hepatitis diagnosis at fifteen, I kept it quiet from my friends. Some knew I had Haemophilia but I did not tell them about the Hepatitis. There was a stigma attached to Hepatitis at the time. I believe people related those infected with Hepatitis to sharing needles and drugs. I therefore held back from telling people, including women I had had relationships with, prior to meeting my ex-partner.

30. Looking back I believe that from a young age, my ambition may have been dampened from the side effects of taking Interferon. The side effects made it difficult to go out to bars with friends and be sociable.

31. I recall having time off of school occasionally, however this was for my Haemophilia. I do remember feeling tired as a teenager and this would have been a symptom of the Hepatitis.

32. Although I felt very rough whilst taking Interferon, I never took time off of work. At the Post Office, there were standards to be maintained and if more than two sick days were taken off in the space of a year, there were warnings and eventually this could lead to dismissal.

33. I did not tell my employer about my Hepatitis infection however I did explain to some managers during my career that I had Haemophilia. They were sympathetic and occasionally made provisions for me to do a job in the sorting office rather than go out for a delivery.

34. Financially, it was unfeasible for me to be able to obtain an endowment policy, due to it being a lot more expensive as a result of being infected with Hepatitis C. I would have been required to pay more than other people, which I found out through colleagues at work. Holiday insurance can be a financial burden which is due to having Haemophilia and also being infected with Hepatitis.

6. Treatment/Care/Support

35. I do feel as though the six-year gap between being diagnosed with Hepatitis C and being offered the Interferon treatment was a big concern. I believe I should have been given it earlier however as previously mentioned; I was under the impression that there wasn't any treatment on offer when I was first diagnosed.

36. I believe that the worst part of dealing with the Hepatitis diagnosis was the lack of explanation and the fact that I was not offered counselling or support at any stage.

7. Financial Assistance

37. It was the Skipton Trust Fund whom informed me that I was eligible for a payment of £20,000, twenty years ago. I had no problems in applying for or receiving the payment. I do not recall the exact date of which I applied for the payment, the date I received the payment or whether there were any pre-conditions attached.

38. I was contacted roughly three years ago by the Skipton Fund who informed me that I am eligible for regular payments of £252.00 per month which have since been raised to £333.00 per month. I also receive a one-off payment at Christmas for the heating bill, which most recently came to £515.00. I do feel that I should be getting more help financially from the fund.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 18/11/19