

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name

GRO-B

Statement No: WITN1214001

Exhibits:0

Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GRO-B

GRO-B

will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B, DOB GRO-B 1944 and I live at GRO-B
GRO-B West Sussex GRO-B
2. My sister, GRO-B: S (DOB GRO-B 1953), died on GRO-B 1993 after being infected with Hepatitis C and HIV from her husband, who had been treated with contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late sister'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

4. I do not have much information as to my brother-in-law's infections. I was aware of GRO-B: B's HIV infection as he was diagnosed in or around 1985 and B had discussed it with me. However, B was in complete denial and as far as he was concerned he didn't have HIV.

ANONYMOUS

5. When [B] was diagnosed, because they were married, my sister was tested regularly to ensure that she had not become positive too. After every test for seven years she would call me and tell me that she was fine.
6. I found out about [S] HIV infection through a phone call from her in 1992. It was a very short phone call; she told me that she had been infected and then slammed the phone down. I think it was all too much for her.
7. For several years prior to her telling me about her infection, [S] had suffered from a series of illnesses that could have been attributable to HIV. She had a continuous common cold for years and she was told that she had no cold antibodies, she had excessively heavy periods that can be a sign of HIV, and she just generally wasn't very well. I therefore have my suspicions that either she had the virus and hadn't been told, or that she knew she had the virus but hadn't told me.
8. I do not have any knowledge of [S]'s Hepatitis C infection. I do not recall hearing about it and when I spent her final 10 days by her side I only heard the nurses and [S]'s consultant talk about AIDS.

Section 3. Other Infections

9. I am not aware of what other infections [S] may have been exposed to.

Section 4. Consent.

10. [S] was tested regularly for HIV and I believe she must have consented to these tests.

Section 5. Impact

11. [S] did not cope well at all with [S]'s illness. She developed some severe mental issues and she started to drink heavily. I think at one point she was sectioned but she discharged herself. Her family was falling apart.
12. She turned against me because I couldn't get her out of the mess that she was in. At times she was awful to me, but I just kept doing the best I could. She used to send me awful

ANONYMOUS

letters wishing that I was dead. There were also times when she would call me throughout the night until my ex-husband got so mad that he disconnected the phone.

13. Throughout this [S] would ask me to come and help her, which was tough as I lived so far away. She would disappear for days and I would have to go up to [S] and go out looking for her; I would normally find her drunk somewhere. When I arrived she would beg me to get her out of the mess she was in. As I was her older sibling by ten years she wanted me to do something to save her.
14. I was in charge of making the arrangements for [S]'s funeral. My father helped me financially with it because I didn't have any money at the time. I do not recall encountering any problems with the funeral director, although I think they had to wear protective clothing. I told him that [S] died as a result of HIV. I was asked if they could use [S]'s brain for AIDS research but, to my shame, I refused.
15. After [S]'s death my Dad was in complete denial. He forbid me from ever saying the word AIDS and, as such, my relationship with him fell apart. In 1997 he phoned me and said he wanted to die. He said he was going stop taking his heart medication. When I asked if he would not want to stay alive for me, he said "no". He therefore stopped taking his medication and died shortly after. He just couldn't cope with losing [S].
16. A few days before [S] died, she asked me to look after [GRO-B] when she was gone. [GRO-B]'s half brothers went to live with their father and my husband and I were appointed [GRO-B]'s legal guardians.
17. [GRO-B] was understandably traumatised and it was difficult to blend her into the family. My husband was extremely worried about people finding out that [GRO-B] was orphaned due to AIDS because of the stigma. My husband eventually left in 1994 feeling unable to cope with the changes in our family and the possible AIDS discrimination.
18. I was left with two girls who each blamed one another for my husband leaving. My daughter blamed [GRO-B] and [GRO-B] understandably, blamed everyone else. They hardly spoke to one another for seven years and I was stuck in the middle. I did most of the communication between the two of them; I felt sorry for them both. This was all happening whilst I had my own grief to deal with as I had lost my sister and my husband.

ANONYMOUS

19. When my husband left he flatly refused to support any of us, including his own daughter. I therefore had to apply for income and child support, which caused a problem as GRO-B had not been adopted and I could therefore not claim benefits for her. I did eventually get the child support agency onto my husband but again I could only claim for my daughter. It was an extremely difficult time financially, which only caused more conflict between the girls.
20. When GRO-B came to live with us we were living in tiny rented accommodation, so the immediate problem was that we didn't have room for GRO-B. We were given social housing which I am still in (and still hate). Our circumstances were discussed in a council meeting and therefore leaked to the village. As such, when I went to register GRO-B into the local primary school the Headmaster refused to admit her as he said if she joined the school then other parents would remove their children. He did finally admit her and apologise to me about a year later and said that she was one of his brightest pupils.
21. I also discovered that there was a petition going round to remove us from the village, which I had to put an end to. Even to this day I feel like some people are a bit hostile towards me, but maybe that's just in my head.
22. GRO-B appeared to do fine at school which absolutely amazed me considering everything she went through. She is a very hard worker and a smart girl. It was not possible to talk to her though and she ultimately left home when she was 17.
23. I'm very proud of my daughter as she left university with a first and she is now a designer. She does however continue to suffer from severe anxiety and depression.
24. The effects and the repercussions on the family are still being felt to this day. We haven't communicated as a family. In hindsight we should have all sat down and talked about it all but it just never happened.
25. In the year 2000 I was diagnosed with cancer and had to have chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Both my daughter and GRO-B ran away because they were so scared having already experienced so much trauma.
26. In 2013 I fell down the stairs and had a brain bleed, and after that it was like taking the lid off Pandora's Box. Everything that I had bottled up was released and I just absolutely fell apart.

27. I am now 75 years old. Over the years I have had to be treated for depression and anxiety. A few years ago I was diagnosed with PTSD and general anxiety disorder. I had cognitive behaviour therapy and was told that my condition is now chronic because I have had the anxiety for so long. The mental issues are absolutely awful, but I turn down medication. I also suffer from high blood pressure, fibromyalgia and scoliosis.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

28. We were surrounded by social workers for a number of years who kept a close eye on things. We had family therapy but I don't think the girls were ever given one-on-one therapy. It did help to an extent and it was one of the social workers who spotted that I was disabled and helped me to claim DLA.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

29. When my sister died I had a letter of sympathy from the MacFarlane Trust and a cheque for £1000. Thereafter I received monthly payments from them. It wasn't an awful lot but I never felt like I could ask for more because they were a charity.

Section 8. Other Issues

30. The fact that the state did not support GRO-B is absolutely disgraceful. She was left an orphan and needed family to step in and help but we were not given the emotional or financial support that was really needed.

31. I have been through all of my anger and accepted what has happened, but it still needs to be sorted out. Whilst it is too late to help my life, I hope that those who need help will benefit from the Inquiry.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

32. I would like to apply for anonymity.

33. I don't think I would be able to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

ANONYMOUS

Statement of Truth

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

Signed. GRO-B

Dated. 25th March '19