

Witness Name: Benjamin Richard Harrison

Statement No: WITN1277001

Exhibits: WITN1277002

Dated: May 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN RICHARD HARRISON

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I, Benjamin Richard Harrison, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Benjamin Richard Harrison of GRO-C  
GRO-C My date of birth is GRO-C 1975. I currently live with my partner of 15 years and we are going to get married this year. We have two children GRO-C aged 10 and GRO-C aged 3. I am currently unemployed.
2. I was infected with Hepatitis C following treatment with contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full 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 Infected**

4. I suffer from severe Haemophilia A with a clotting factor of 0.5%.
5. As a child I was treated at Lincoln County Hospital and Sheffield Children's Hospital.
6. I had to travel on a regular basis to Sheffield Children's Hospital because Lincoln County Hospital did not have a Haemophilia Centre until the mid 1980s. It is most likely that I became infected at Sheffield Children's Hospital. Unfortunately I am unable to recall any of the names of my treating consultants.
7. I received Factor VIII concentrate from the age of 2 ½ years and approximately 2 to 3 times a week. Prior to that I used to receive transfusions of plasma. Factor VIII became available as a home treatment in bottles when I was aged approximately 11 or 12. I currently self administer Factor VIII as and when required.
8. I was infected with Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
9. My mother told me that she was never told about the risks associated with these products. It was our understanding that I had no choice but to take these products. Furthermore, the doctors actually told my mother that Factor VIII was safe to use and therefore she didn't ask any questions. As far as my mother was concerned she trusted the consultants advice at the hospital and had no reason to question them.
10. Even when HIV became publically aware, the doctors mentioned that the chances of contracting the virus were slim.
11. I found out that I was infected with Hepatitis C during a routine appointment to see my consultant in the hospital when I was in my early 20s. I cannot recall the exact date. There was a trainee nurse who was going through my medical records and she questioned what treatment I was undergoing for my

Hepatitis C infection. It was a flippant comment made in passing as she was unaware that I did not even know that I had been infected. I think she presumed that I knew. I do not think I registered what this meant at the time so I shrugged it off and said I did not know anything about it. The doctor at this stage told me that it was nothing to worry about and that it was treatable.

12. Following that appointment, I was given some information in the form of a basic leaflet about Hepatitis C and I was provided with information in relation to possible treatment. The doctor told me that it was possible that I had contracted it through Factor VIII concentrate. However I was not provided with any further information in relation to the risks of transmission and it was not discussed or explained to me.

13. I was told about certain treatments that were available however I was also told that it couldn't be determined which treatment I would be able to have at that time. The doctor told me that I had to attend the hospital every 3 months for check ups. During my next check up, I was told to have the Ribavirin treatment. In fact, I was told that I had to try the Ribavirin treatment on that day to see whether I would have any side effects. The next time I visited the hospital a week later I started the Ribavirin treatment for the duration of approximately 6 months. The treatment went smoothly at first, however, I then developed many side effects such as backaches, headaches and nausea. I was told that this was the only option for me.

14. I do not recall whether the doctors gave me the results following the treatment. I did complete the entire course of treatment. I am clear of Hepatitis C but I haven't been specifically told that is was as a result of the Ribavirin treatment as it was never confirmed. However I only underwent the Ribavirin treatment and I was not given the option for any other kind of treatment.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

15. I cannot recall exactly when but I also received a letter that confirmed I was exposed to the risk of CJD.

#### **Section 4. Consent.**

16. My blood was taken from me on numerous occasions and without being told what it was for and I believe that I was tested without my knowledge.
17. The nature of the relationship with medical practitioners at that time meant that we went along with what the hospital staff said and simply agreed. As far as my mother recalls, she does not remember being asked to be tested for Hepatitis C.
18. I have been told that my blood has recently been tested for research purposes and I am undergoing a new regime for the treatment of my Haemophilia. Prior to this, I was not told whether my blood was being used for the purposes of research.

#### **Section 5. Impact**

19. When I was approximately 3 years old I was given Factor VIII concentrate for approximately 6 months and my blood test results showed abnormal liver function and my parents were advised by the medical team to stop. It could be that I was infected as early as that. I refer to **Exhibit WITN1277002** which is a letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> March 1979 from J.S. Lilleyman, Consultant Paediatric Haematologist which confirms "abnormalities" of my liver function in blood tests.
20. Looking back because I was young and I really didn't think too much about being infected with Hepatitis C, I just assumed that I would have the treatment and then I would be fine.
21. However that has not been the case and I have suffered with continuous exhaustion and fatigue. It does not matter how many tasks I have completed during the day or how much I have slept, I still feel tired all the time.

22. Following the Ribavirin treatment, I now suffer with back aches, constant headaches and I have not I have been prescribed any medication for these side effects.
23. My teeth have become brittle and started crumbling resulting in some of them falling out. I had no idea that these side effects would continue following my treatment. For many years dentists would refuse to treat me because of my Hepatitis C infection.
24. I also suffer with lack of concentration and this this affects my day to day family life. I have to be a lot more careful in instances when I bleed which affects my family life too.
25. Elocta is the new treatment for Haemophilia which I have been taking for approximately a year. I take this twice a week on a Monday and a Tuesday and if I have a bleed I will also take it on a Wednesday. It keeps most of my bleeds at bay, however my joints are so damaged that once they start bleeding it is hard to stop them. These bleeds also kick-start more bleeds which can be very difficult to control. I receive this treatment from the Lincoln County Hospital but I self-administer the Elocta. My current consultant is Dr Myers. My blood work has to be tested a lot more regularly and I am aware that my blood is checked for the purposes of research.
26. I am a bit more wary about what I am given in relation to the treatment now where I would not have been before.
27. I never used to tell people about my infection. Obviously my parents knew and I told my partner when I met her. I knew that people would react negatively as Hepatitis C is associated with drugs and even now there is still a stigma associated with it. I have withheld it from family and friends.
28. I used to have so many days off school which resulted in me going to a special school called St Francis Special School. However whilst I was at school I was oblivious to the fact that I had been infected with Hepatitis C.

29. Without a doubt the Hepatitis C and undergoing the treatment has affected my work. I used to work as a computer programmer and I had so much time off work to have the treatment. However I did manage to return to it after the treatment. Following some business changes I left that role and achieved a Higher Level Diploma in child care. I had to give this up due to ill-health approximately 10 years ago.

30. It is hard to distinguish between my Haemophilia and Hepatitis C in terms of financial hardship. Haemophilia and the Hepatitis C treatment have both meant that I had to have time off work which ultimately meant that I could not fulfil my full potential.

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

31. I am currently taking co-codamol for pain management but unfortunately they are not working as well as I would like them to. I used to attend a pain management clinic but this has now become a private clinic and I am unable to attend.

32. Dr Myers deals with my medication and he has advised me that I may be able to try something stronger if co-codamol does not work. I think Dr Myers is trying to help, but considering that I am limited to what I can take I do feel that support is at a shortfall.

33. I feel unhappy and let down that I was tested for Hepatitis C without my consent or permission. I also feel very disappointed that I was given contaminated blood. We just presumed that I had to take Factor VIII and we thought that the doctors knew what was best for me.

34. I have never received any psychological support or counselling.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

35. Approximately 10 years ago, I received the Stage 1 payment of £20,000 from the Skipton Fund.
36. For the last 6 months I have received a monthly payment of £1,400 from the EIBSS. I am currently applying for a top-up payment and I hope that this will be granted to me.
37. Before that I used to receive £295 per month and I think that was paid to me for approximately a couple of years.
38. The process of applying was difficult as it is hard to have to explain everything from the beginning to the Trusts on multiple occasions.
39. My partner works as a cleaner and we do not qualify for any other financial assistance.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

40. I am hoping that we finally find out what really happened. When I found out that I had been infected with Hepatitis C I wanted to bring a claim but I could not find a solicitor that would take my case.

## **Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

41. I do not wish to apply to retain my anonymity.
42. I do not wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

22/6/2019