

Witness Name: Geoffrey William Brown

Statement No.: WITN0787001

Exhibits: **WITN0787002**

Dated: 21 March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GEOFFREY WILLIAM BROWN

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 26 February 2019.

I, Geoffrey William Brown, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Geoffrey William Brown. My date of birth is GRO-B and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am currently living with my partner, and do not work due to heart problems. I receive a disability benefit from the government. My father passed away on 18 May 1969, when I was 9. My mother passed away 12 years later on 30 May 1981.
2. I intend to speak about my father, who was a haemophiliac, and his infection with hepatitis. In particular, I intend to speak about how the illness affected him, his death, and the impact it had on myself and my family. As I was a child when my father received treatment as a haemophiliac and was subsequently infected with hepatitis, my ability to comment on the details surrounding how he was infected is limited.

However, the impact that his infection and death had on my family and I was significant.

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

Section 2. How Affected

4. My immediate family consists of my father, mother and brother who is 2 years younger than me. Growing up, my father was at home more as my mother was working full time and my father had to change jobs frequently. My father taught me how to read and I was very close to him when I was young. In the periods he was not working, he would work on cars to fix them up and sell them. I have always felt closer to him than my mother. As he frequently changed jobs, I do not remember where exactly he was working before he died, but I am aware he was working as a bus driver when I was born and was later a delivery driver. Years later, my mother told me that the reason he changed jobs often was because he was let go off when his employers found out that he had haemophilia. This was because employers worried that he might injure himself and bleed to death during the course of his employment with them.
5. As far as I can remember, my father went to the Royal Infirmary Hospital regularly to receive treatment for his haemophilia. I do not know what type of haemophilia he had. My brother and I were always shielded from the reality of his condition and we were never directly spoken to about why our father had to go to hospital frequently. When my mother went to hospital with my father on some occasions, my aunty on my mother's side would look after us for a few days, or my uncle would take us to Liverpool for a few days. At that time, a lot of the Matrons at the Royal Infirmary Hospital did not like children being there so my brother and I never went to the hospital with our father.

6. No one shared any information about my father's treatment with me. While I was aware that he had to go to hospital often, I only found out about my father suffering from haemophilia much later on. I do not know what type of blood products he received as treatment and what medication he may have been given.
7. My father subsequently died in the Royal Infirmary Hospital in 1969. While I do not know his exact birth date, I have been told by my aunt that he was probably born in 1927. He was therefore in his early forties when he died.
8. He had not seemed particularly sick before he passed away. He had gone into hospital for treatment as usual when he passed away at the hospital. His death was sudden and there were no warnings. When my mother came back from the hospital, all I was told was that he died. I was not aware of what exactly led to his death at the time. As a child, I remember associating his death with the final treatment he received at the hospital.
9. I found out about the fact that my father had haemophilia and his infection with hepatitis a few years after his death when I stumbled across my father's death certificate. The death certificate was in a little drawer under a kitchen cabinet. I only saw it because it fell out as I was reaching for the top of the drawer. The death certificate stated the cause of my father's death as haemophilia and hepatitis. It did not specify what type of hepatitis. That was the first time I became aware of what had caused his death.
10. When I tried to ask my mother about my father's haemophilia and the fact that he had hepatitis, she never wanted to speak about it. I started doing my own research by reading about haemophilia and hepatitis in my teens, and understood it was a blood infection. I spent a lot of time in the library reading about what it was. I would also occasionally stumble across leaflets and newsletters from the Haemophilia Society that were still sent to our family home after my father's death.

11. In light of the information I have subsequently learnt in my life, I believe my father was receiving some type of blood product for his treatment, and it was through this that he was infected by hepatitis. I cannot say what type of blood product he was receiving for his treatment because that information was not shared to me when I was a child, nor was it given to me later on in my life by my mother or other family members.
12. I have lost touch with my father's family. When I briefly reconnected with them after my grandmother's funeral in 1980, I learnt that haemophilia ran in the family. I learnt that my grandmother was a carrier, as were my father's two sisters. One of his sisters decided to have a hysterectomy in her early 20s to avoid passing the condition on. I also learnt that my father's brother, had mild haemophilia. I am aware that at the time, he was using Factor VIII as treatment and that he stored the treatment at home in a freezer. Freezers were unusual for the time. I am unsure whether my uncle is still alive as I have not seen him since my grandmother's funeral.
13. I recently found out that my cousin, who was my father's eldest sister's son, also had haemophilia and subsequently died from AIDS. I found out about my cousin's death and the circumstances surrounding his death from a newspaper article. I exhibit the article as **WITN0787002**. After reading it, I contacted the MP mentioned in the article. He informed me of the Infected Blood Inquiry and passed me on their contact details. That was what prompted me to contact the Inquiry team and provide this statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I am unaware of any other infections or medical complications my father may have suffered from. Both my parents did not share information regarding their general health with me.

Section 4. Consent

15. Again, as I was a child when my father received treatment for haemophilia, I do not know whether he was advised about any of the risks associated with the treatment he was receiving.
16. As an adult I understood that my father must have provided consent for the treatment he received. However, not knowing what his doctors had told him about the treatment and how it could affect him, I cannot be sure what he actually consented to.

Section 5. Impact

17. The suddenness of my father's death made it very difficult for me, as a 9-year-old, to understand what had happened. I was very close to him at that age. After he died, no one ever talked about him. My mother never mentioned my father and no one explained what had caused his death to me.
18. After my father died, my mother continued to work full time so was often not at home. A few years later she was also promoted to a new role that meant that she had to go away on business trips. My aunty therefore looked after my brother and I a lot when my mother was working or away. Sometimes we had to go and stay with my aunty and I did not like it. I preferred to be at home.
19. I did not feel like I could talk to anyone about my father's death. At the time, there was only one other child at my school that had lost his father. I think his father had died from a heart attack but it happened when he was 4 so it was not the same. I remember one time we were walking to school together and he casually pointed out where his father's body was buried. I thought it was strange how casual he was about it. I also thought about the fact that I did not have anywhere to point to as my father's body was never buried and he does not have a

grave or memorial anywhere. My father was cremated and his ashes were scattered in the garden of our family home as far as I am aware.

20. While other children at my school had single parents because of divorce, no one else had actually experienced having a parent pass away. When the time came every year for Father's Day I really struggled. At school they would ask us to make cards on the day and it really upset me. Eventually my mother took my brother and I off school on those days. Even now, when I speak to people in passing and they mention that they are going to visit their father or buy a present for their father for Father's Day that seems so foreign to me.
21. My mother sent me to see a psychiatrist when I was about 11 or 12. I think she noticed that I was getting upset at home often. I am not sure whether the school I was attending had any involvement in arranging the counselling. I do remember becoming increasingly upset because my father's belongings remained all throughout our house years after he died as if he were still alive. My mother never cleared it. I specifically remember that his tobacco tin remained on the window sill for years after he died.
22. From what I can remember, I went to the psychiatrist 4 or 5 times but I didn't like talking about my feelings so I stopped going. After seeing the psychiatrist, I became increasingly distant with my mother. I blamed her for my father's death. I believed that in the same way that she had to give permission for me to go to the psychiatrist, she must have had to give permission for my father to go to hospital. To me as a child, this meant that she was to blame because if he had not gone to hospital, I thought he would never have died.
23. After seeing the psychiatrist, I buried a lot of my feelings about my father's passing away and never spoke about it to anyone. I only moved on from my father's death when I lost my favourite cousin from my mother's side when I was 16 years old. My cousin lost his life in a

road accident, through no fault of his own. I shifted my focus and energy onto his death when that happened. My cousin's death was then again overtaken by my mother's death 5 years later. I have gotten used to dealing with death.

24. My brother was 7 when my father passed away. We never talked about it with each other, but he must have been upset at the time as well. I was never close to my brother growing up and we are not in touch anymore. I haven't spoken to him in the past 17 years and I do not know where he is. I don't even know whether or not he knows about the cause of my father's death being haemophilia and hepatitis. I don't think he ever saw my father's death certificate. As I have mentioned previously, I only saw it by chance and that was how I became aware of his cause of death.

25. My brother was always closer to my mother, and knowing how young he was, I think it is unlikely he remembered much about my father. My brother got into a lot of trouble when he was older and when I reflect on the impact of my father's death on my family, I often think that maybe my brother would not have gotten into so much trouble if my father had been alive when we were growing up.

26. My mother never talked about the impact my father's death had on her. As I have already mentioned, she never talked about my father after his death. It was like it was too painful for her and she hated to talk about it. When I used to ask her to talk about my father, she would often make excuses and say that she had a migraine. From my understanding, she did not seem to talk to anyone else about it either. My aunty knows very little about my father and his treatment and has said that my mother did not tell her much about it.

27. My mother was only in her 30's when my father passed away, and I think she became tougher after his death. When I turned 19, she

remarried. However, a year after that she developed cancer and passed away very soon after that on 28 May 1981.

28. As far as I can remember, my family was never financially secure. When my father died, my mother arranged for my father's cremation herself. There was no funeral service, or a grave as she could not afford it. No one apart from my mother went for my father's cremation, not even my brother and I. It was a poor person's funeral.

29. I know that we could never get life insurance as my father's haemophilia was considered a pre-existing life condition and ongoing illness. However, the financial difficulties my family experienced got worse after my father's death. My mother had to work more and manage the family by herself. It meant that my brother and I had to spend more and more time at my aunty's house, which we did not like.

30. Unfortunately, as my mother could not afford a funeral service for my father, this led to a lot of friction between her and my father's side of the family. They viewed events like funerals, birthdays, and weddings as being very important. My mother's decision to not have a funeral service for my father caused a significant rift between them.

31. Because of the friction that caused, I lost contact with my father's side of the family. I did try to keep in contact with them but I have not been successful. After my father's death, I saw them when I was 12 for a family wedding. I saw them next in 1980 at my grandmother's funeral. I tried to keep in contact with them after this and did so for about 7 months. However, my brother got married not long after my grandmother's funeral and did not invite my father's side of the family. This put me in an awkward position and I lost contact with them again after this point.

32. The short time that I spent with my father's family, I got along great with them. I often think that if my father had not passed away, I would still

be in contact with them and it would have been nice to have people in my life that have been there since I was young. When you lose one parent, you lose contact with that parent's family. I have no contact with any of them now. The only person that has stayed constant in my life from when I was young is my neighbour. I have known him since I was 5. This friendship is the one thing in my life that has not changed. I have tried forming a relationship like this with my family at different times, but it has never worked out and I think things would have been different if my father had not died when I was so young.

33. I have often reflected about how different life would have been if it was not for my father's passing. If I had known about the hepatitis infection at the time of my father's passing, and how my father was infected as a result of someone's mistake, I think it would have made me very angry at the time. At the time, I think it would have made things worse knowing that my father's death was not an accidental death. Thinking about it now and knowing my father's death may have been preventable and there are people responsible for his infection with hepatitis, makes me angry.

34. In general, I am aware that haemophilia had a significant impact on my father's life in general. It was his haemophilia that forced him to change jobs often and spend periods of time unemployed. I also remember that he had to go to hospital for treatment very regularly due to his condition, and this being the norm during my childhood. I cannot be sure of the exact impact that hepatitis had on my father. I don't even know if my father was aware that he had hepatitis before he died.

35. The lack of financial and practical assistance that was offered to my mother after my father died meant that we were never able to have a funeral for him. I feel that this affected my ability to process my father's death as a child and have some sense of closure. It also created tension between my family and my father's side of the family as I have already explained, greatly affecting my ability to connect with my father's family throughout my life.

36. Things would have definitely been different if my father had not passed away when I was a child. It was a very confusing and difficult time for me after he died. It makes me angry to know that he may have died because of being given infected blood products.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

37. My father's death was sudden. As far as I am aware, he went to the Royal Infirmary Hospital for haemophilia treatment and on the last occasion he received treatment, he died a few days later. While I know from his death certificate that the cause of his death was haemophilia and hepatitis, I do not know whether it was known prior to his death that he had hepatitis and whether any treatment for it was available and offered. I do not know what, if any, medication my father may have been taking prior to his death.

38. My mother and my family were never offered counselling or psychological support after my father died. While my mother took me to see a psychiatrist a few years after my father's death, I do not know whether she received financial support for it.

39. We were not provided with any general practical or financial support following his death. I am of the view that at least practical support should have been made available to my mother when my father died. She had to arrange his cremation on her own and as I have already stated, due to financial difficulties could not afford a funeral service for him.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. I have been asked whether my father received any financial assistance. I recently spoke to my aunt on my mother's side about this.

She has said that she is not aware of him ever receiving any such support.

41. Since my father's passing, my mother never received any financial support that I am aware of, nor have I. I have never explored the possibility of any financial support being available by virtue of my father's death and the cause of his death.

42. I am of the view that my mother should have received financial support at the time that my father passed away. She was a widow, working full time with two young children and a funeral to consider.

Section 8. Other Issues

43. In general, I believe that to have been infected with hepatitis from blood and blood products, someone has 'slipped up'. A lot of what I have learnt about infected blood products, haemophilia and hepatitis has come from my own personal research and keeping up with news updates. I don't understand how infected blood could have been used for decades.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

21st March 2019