

Witness Name: Caroline Leonard  
Statement No.: WITN3449111  
Exhibits: WITN3449112 – WITN3449114  
Dated: 19 May 2023

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CAROLINE LEONARD ON BEHALF OF THE BELFAST HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

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I provide this statement in response to a request from the Infected Blood Inquiry for a written statement under Rule 9(2) of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 6 March 2023.

I, Caroline Leonard, will say as follows:

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

- 1.1 My name is Caroline Leonard. My date of birth is known to the Inquiry. My professional address is BHSCT HQ, 2nd Floor, Non Clinical Support Building, Royal Victoria Hospital, 274 Grosvenor Road, Belfast, BT12 6BA.
- 1.2 I am the Director of Cancer and Specialist Services at Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT); as such, I have responsibility for services provided at NI Cancer Centre, some medical specialities, renal transplant surgery, laboratories and pharmacy. The Regional Haemophilia Comprehensive Care Centre falls within my Directorate, and as such, I was nominated by my Chief Executive, Dr Cathy Jack to undertake a coordinating role in support of the Infected Blood Inquiry on behalf of BHSCT.

#### **Section 2: Response to Criticism by W3544**

*The criticism has been made by a witness with Inquiry reference number W3544 in relation to her daughter's treatment at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast in or*

**around 1983 and 1995. The criticisms are in the following paragraphs: 41, 61-64 and 109-119.**

- 2.1 In order to address the criticisms of BHSCT referenced in the Rule 9 request of 6 March 2023, I have spoken with Haematology, Obstetric, Midwifery and School of Dentistry colleagues and reviewed the available medical records for Witness W3544's daughter. I have attempted to answer the criticisms as far as I can based on the information I have been able to obtain from the sources indicated and from my own knowledge and experience of BHSCT.
- 2.2 In drafting this statement, I have also referred to previous statements and exhibits supplied to the Inquiry. In particular, I would refer to my statements to the Inquiry WITN3449028 dated 16 September 2020 and 1 October 2021 and exhibits WITN3449040 and WITN3449041 therein. The statement of 1 October 2021 outlines an account, as then requested, of the BHSCT Infection Prevention Control guidance that was followed during this time. I have also referred to statements made by other individuals that are published on the Inquiry's website.
- 2.3 Regarding the Trust's knowledge of Witness W3544's daughter to have contracted HCV, I would refer to paragraph 3.4 of the statement of Dr Elizabeth Mayne (WITN0736001) published on the Inquiry's website that indicates that precise laboratory testing for Hepatitis C only became available in 1992/93. This would correlate with the advice provided to me by virology colleagues that informed my statement to the Inquiry WITN3449028 of 16 September 2020. Regional Virology Laboratories (RVL) staff within the Trust have advised that with respect to testing for HCV, the first antibody assays were available from 1992.
- 2.4 Witness W3544 refers to an incident in 1983 wherein her daughter was administered clotting factor treatment for the first time in the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children (RBHSC) at the age of 11 without parental consent. To address this concern I have sought medical records from RBHSC. Unfortunately, I can confirm no record of this admission can be found and it is understood these records would have been destroyed in keeping with the extant medical records retention and destruction policy of the time. In the absence of medical records, I can confirm that BHSCT is unable to undertake any meaningful investigation of events alleged to have occurred in 1983 and therefore cannot verify the factual basis of the criticisms made. However, it would be extremely

disappointing if any child had been treated without parental consent except in an emergency as outlined in the statement submitted to the Inquiry by Witness W3544.

- 2.5 Regarding the experience of W3544's daughter in accessing maternity care, the obstetric record relating to the birth of Witness W3544's grandson in 1995 records that W3544's daughter was recorded as having Hepatitis C upon booking to the Royal Maternity Hospital.
- 2.6 Exhibit WITN3449112 is a letter to Dr Elizabeth Mayne from Dr David Boyle, the Consultant Obstetrician Witness W3544's daughter was booked with, dated 23 December 1994 seeking advice on what significance her Von Willebrand's disease and Hepatitis would have on her pregnancy. Dr Mayne replied on 23 January 1995. Exhibit WITN3449113 is a copy of that letter containing advice and stating that her Hepatitis C would not be anticipated to cause any clinical problem with the pregnancy and she also advised sensible precautions were all that was required as "Hepatitis C is not noted for its capability to be infectious in comparison to either Hepatitis B or HIV."
- 2.7 The IPC guidance at that time recommended that mothers with a known risk of viral transmission be accommodated in a single room with en-suite facilities and universal precautions engaged, which includes wearing a mask, apron, goggles and gloves due to the risk of splashing, splatter etc. and the safe disposal of contaminated waste. In the Royal Maternity Hospital, these rooms were located in Johnstone House (G Ward) a ward where patients paid for their single room accommodation. Payment was waived in the case of mothers who had a clinical requirement for single en-suite rooms, as was the case with Witness W3544's daughter.
- 2.8 Johnstone House contains a nursery wherein babies were placed under the supervision of midwives in order to provide post-natal mothers with the opportunity to rest at night or attend to their personal hygiene. The hospital operates a rooming-in policy, whereby the default is that babies remain with their mothers to encourage bonding and successful feeding, except in circumstances outlined above. The entrance to this nursery is located behind the nurse's station off the main ward corridor. Given the policy to ensure the safety and security of babies in Royal Maternity Hospital, I am advised it is unlikely the baby was placed in the main corridor.
- 2.9 Exhibit WITN3449114 is a copy of the feeding record for Witness W3544's grandson during his episode of care in Royal Maternity Hospital following his birth. The record

illustrates the time of each feed and nappy change for each 24-hour period of admission. It would appear from the record that the baby was regularly attended to, with the longest recorded time gap in the notes being 4 hours on Day 3 between 00:45 and 04:05hours.

- 2.10 The antenatal booking record in the obstetric record relating to the birth of Witness W3544's grandson in 2011 has an annotation that W3544's daughter was PCR negative for Hepatitis C for 7 years at the time of booking to the Royal Jubilee Maternity Service on 8 March 2011. As such, I am informed that no specific IPC guidance would have been enacted during this episode of care.
- 2.11 In the absence of any specific annotation in the medical records of Witness W3544's daughter, I can confirm that BHSCCT is unable to undertake any meaningful investigation of events alleged to have occurred over 25 years ago and therefore cannot verify the factual basis of the criticisms made. However, it would be extremely disappointing if any patient or family member had been treated in the manner described in the statement submitted to the Inquiry by Witness W3544.

### **Section 3: Other Issues**

- 3.1 Whilst treatment and care were delivered in keeping with extant guidance at the time, the Trust accepts that some aspects therein may have resulted in the daughter of Witness W3544 having a poor patient experience. The Trust hopes that the additional information contained in this statement goes some way to address the concerns raised.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed 

GRO-C

Dated \_\_\_\_19 May 2023\_\_\_\_

**Table of exhibits:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes/ Description</b>	<b>Exhibit number</b>
23 Dec 1994	Letter from Dr D Boyle to Dr E Butler	Exhibit WITN3449112
23 Jan 1995	Letter from Dr E Mayne to Dr D Boyle	Exhibit WITN3449113
19 July 1995	Infant feeding chart	Exhibit WITN3449114