

Witness Name: Sylvia Ann Matthews

Statement No: WITN0741001

Exhibits: **WITN0741002-11**

Dated: 06 February 2019

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SYLVIA ANN MATTHEWS**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 07 December 2018.

I, Sylvia Ann Matthews, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is name is Sylvia Ann Matthews, I prefer to be called Sam. My date of birth is GRO-C 1943. My address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I'm originally from GRO-C I came from a middle-class family and wanted for nothing; I had a good life. I married my first husband David Pott (deceased) in 1965 and had three children with him. Simon born in 1968 at St Marys Manchester Hospital, Carol in 1969 at Stepping Hill Hospital and Linda born on GRO-C 1971, also at Stepping Hill Hospital.
3. I came to GRO-C in 1978. I arrived with my finance John (Also Deceased, we married in 1979) I came over one day to meet my parents

who lived here. We found a house and decided to stay. I love the island and I won't go back. My children and family are all on the island.

4. I have always worked. I started off as a shorthand typist, along with working in the fish yards and the Isle of Man telecom's. I was also really into catering; I bought a restaurant named 'Niarbyl Bay', which I ran for three years, and I also ran a pub in 1995 for 18 months. I've worked in pubs and kitchens. I have also been a housekeeper.
5. I intend to speak about my infection of the Hepatitis C virus ("HCV"), which I contracted as a result of a blood transfusion due to a post-partum hemorrhage following the birth of my daughter, Linda on [GRO-C] 1971. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on my life.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

6. It all started with the birth of my third and last child, Linda on [GRO-C] 1971 at Stepping Hill Hospital, Stockport. I went to hospital as I was in labour. It was pretty straight forward, but I was left on a table in a dark room with gas and air on my own; they just left me to get on with it. It was in the early hours and I could hear all the nurses having their dinner. I kept saying I want to push and they kept saying we'll be there soon; by the time they came I was half way through and the baby was well on her way.
7. They showed me Linda when she was delivered; she was fine. Then suddenly all hell broke loose, there were doctors everywhere and I was haemorrhaging out; I heard a doctor shouting out "he couldn't stop it" I was absolutely bleeding out. From there onwards I don't remember what else happened; I was unconscious, I have no idea.
8. The next time I woke up I believe was the following day, I was on a drip in a side ward. My arm was swelling up and I asked the girl opposite me to get someone. They hadn't put the drip into the vein properly and my arm was swelling up. They had to remove the drip and put it in my other arm. Some damage had been caused to the original arm and they had to

bandage it up really tightly, they daubed some black stuff all over my arm. I couldn't hold my baby to feed her as both my arms were now unusable, the nurses had to hold Linda onto me. I struggled to breast feed her.

9. I had a post-partum haemorrhage (PPH) and was given blood. The hospital records show that I was given 4 pints of blood and sent home.

**EXHIBIT WITN0741004** refs.

10. There is also is a letter from the Stockport NHS trust dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2012 in which it states I was given 2 units of plasma followed by 2 units of blood which confirms the transfusions. **EXHIBIT WITN0741008** refs.

11. About ten days later I woke up and I was as yellow as a canary, I rang the doctor and was told to go straight to the hospital, Stockport Infirmary and I was then hospitalised. I was kept in until it calmed down on a salt free diet. I was then sent home and I heard nothing about it again.

12. In a letter **Exhibit WITN0741003**, which I believe to be dated 11 August 1971 (The copy is clearly damaged) from Stepping Hill Hospital to Dr Barker, there is an entry, which reads 'I think this must have been infective hepatitis'.

13. Then around 6 or 7 years ago, I was having some blood tests for my heart problems. As a result of these tests the doctor told me my liver results were abnormal and it has gone from there.

14. I was referred to a specialist at Nobles Hospital, Isle of Man and I asked for a second opinion; I was seen by a doctor from Birmingham. Despite my specialist saying, 'No established cirrhosis' **Exhibit WITN0741006**.

15. I was not happy with this, I gathered every copy of my blood tests and the ultra sounds results for a six month period and showed him the copies, he said 'you need treatment, you have cirrhosis'

16. In 2012, I cannot remember exactly when, I was told I had Hepatitis C (HCV) by Dr Chalmers. I believe I was told when I was on my own and presume I was going for an appointment due to previously having heart problems and having had two ablations. See Exhibit **WITN0741005**. This is a letter dated 23 February 2012, concerning my appointment with cardiology clinic. I received no instruction or guidance on how I should manage the HCV. I was asked if I had been a drug user, to which I said

- no. I realised it must have been the blood transfusions so I set out to get as many documents as I could to find out what had happened to me.
17. I was very concerned about the HCV. This is clearly shown in a letter dated 10<sup>th</sup> September 2013 from Nobles Hospital to Dr ARS Vaughan **Exhibit WITN0741007** refs, I had Hepatitis C Genotype 1.
18. A couple of days before my operation I attended my clinic for my 6 monthly check up. Linda was with me. During the check up one of Dr Ashdowns registrars told me that I had Hepatitis C and that my liver was diseased and that it could kill me. She did not say I had cirrhosis but she explained that Hepatitis C attacks the liver and my liver was fatty and that eventually it could lead to my death. We came out of the room crying. I then went to ward twelve and informed them I was an 'at risk' patient.
19. Several days later (17<sup>th</sup> July 2013) I had the knee operation. As I was waiting the anaesthetist asked me where I had got the bad blood from? That's the last thing I heard before I went to sleep.
20. My knee was still bandaged and I was in a lot of pain when Dr Ashdown said he wanted to do a liver biopsy on me, which he then did. (1<sup>st</sup> August 2013) During the biopsy he made me lie on my left side, which was very painful.
21. I found out many years later on my medical records from my doctor there was a note saying 'Infections Hepatitis', written in the margin after the date 15/7/71 yet this was never mentioned to me. The fact that they knew and I was never told I find awful. I could have infected anybody. Including my two now dead ex husbands. **Exhibit WITN0741002** refs.
22. I would like to add in those years since the transfusion, I have had 'D and C's' and a total hysterectomy, where I presume they tested my blood?

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

23. I was not awake during the transfusion so I did not consent to it. I would have died had I not had it. I have consented to all the other tests. However I do not know if I have ever been tested for HIV.

## Section 5. Impact

24. I must say that even though it has transpired that I was infected with HCV for over 40 years I never had any real symptoms. I have spent a normal life, it has not stopped me from working, and financially it has not affected my life at all. But if someone had told me I had HCV in 1971 I would have been more careful regarding my alcohol consumption I was a landlady, it went with the territory.
25. It has been nineteen years since I stopped smoking, and I stopped drinking alcohol the minute I was told I had HCV. I would have stopped sooner if I had known. **Exhibit WITN0741006** refs, letter dated 22 July 2014, Noble's Hospital.
26. After the initial shock that I had a fatal disease, I have just got on with it. I was not aware of it, so it did not change my life at all. It has never bothered me, it is one of those things.
27. The only thing left with me is the anger of not knowing, it wasn't my doing, my lifestyle, it was the needle they put in my arm, and I could have infected other people. I have lived over three quarters of my life with HCV. I should have been told straight away that I had been given Hepatitis. The infection could have had far reaching consequences to both my family and hospital staff.
28. I do get itchy skin, which is apparently a side effect. Diarrhoea has also been a problem for me, and mouth ulcers. I had my teeth removed due to ulcers, and this could have been related to the HCV.
29. In 2017, I had to go across to the mainland for a colonoscopy to check my colon for cancer. I have been told that there is chance of liver cancer. I do not want any more examinations of this type.
30. As far as the cirrhosis is concerned I cannot tell if I have any symptoms as my knee issues I suffer from takeover. I take paracetamol and have a morphine patch for the pain in my knee.
31. 

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32. I was infected 48 years ago, and I have lived with my first and second husband as well as a couple of long term relationships. Both my ex-

husbands are now dead, and I wonder did I pass this on to them? The thing that worries me is that both my ex-husbands died very young and maybe I infected them? Had I been told, we could have taken the appropriate measures?

33. I have also fostered six babies from birth, and it really scares me that I had HCV. I'm sure if I had disclosed to the Foster agencies that I had HCV I would not have been allowed to foster these babies.

34. My friends and family are aware and I have had no adverse reaction.

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

35. As I mentioned earlier, when I was diagnosed with HCV, I was given no instructions of how to adapt my lifestyle, GRO-C

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36. I was only told to stop drinking. Any precautions I had to find out for myself.

37. I had the treatment for Hepatitis C around March 2017 lasting three months. The treatment was being trialled in England, and Dr Ashdown went to 'Nice' to get permission for the trial. **Exhibit WITN0741009** refs, stating that my treatment was 'Sofosbuvir, pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin'

38. I had to take pills three times a day and a nurse injected me weekly at Ramsey Cottage Hospital into my stomach. During the treatment I was hospitalised three or four times from falls. Other side effects were dizziness, heavy sweats, foul taste in my mouth, I had then and still get mouth ulcers and my concentration levels were rubbish. The falling was very worrying, I would fall flat on my face; this was a really really bad time for me.

39. I was on the treatment for three months, it ended and I waited another three months before I got the all clear, the virus had been eradicated I felt fantastic when I got the letter.

40. Since the diagnosis of HCV, it has taken over my life. I have been told it can come back and that I'm now more prone to get liver cancer. I have tests every 6 months for this.

41. My doctor, Dr Ashdown had said to me that the HCV was down to my drinking, He had me labelled as a heavy drinker, but I am not. I never saw eye-to-eye with him and we have had several disagreements, his manner is not good. He was not good at giving me information. I have had three appointments cancelled for clinics with him and I should have seen him last September. I believe he is ill again. The only reason I am still with him is due to the fact that he is the only one who can authorise a certain type of blood test I require.
42. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support.

### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

43. Dr Chalmers from Snaefell Surgery, Isle of Man told me about the Skipton Fund. He knew that I was HCV positive and if it wasn't for him I would not have known about Skipton. He said there is a fund if you have been diagnosed with HCV and you know where you got it from
44. I registered with Skipton on 24 August 2012; they sent me a form, which had to be completed by my doctor. I requested this from Dr Ashdown and I received a response requesting payment of £200. **Exhibit WITN0741010** refs, confirming this request from Dr Ashdown, Nobles Hospital. I was disgusted that he was asking me to pay £200 for his signature; this is the measure of this Doctor.
45. I then spoke with Nick Fish from Skipton and explained the doctors request. He put this to the directors and they decided to take my word for it and to go ahead without the doctor's signature, due to the large amount of documentation I had already provided.
46. They awarded me £18,000 as the first payment and the second was £50,000; where I had been diagnosed as having cirrhosis, and I now receive monthly payments of £1,500.
47. This changed my life and if it hadn't been for Dr Chalmers I would have never of known about this, they should have told me the minute I was diagnosed.

## **Section 8. Other Issues**

48. After I was told of my diagnosis, I then started to try and get copies of my medical records. I was pushed from pillar to post. I went to Stepping Hill Hospital in Stockport, the Town Hall and national records centre in London.
49. On the 29 October 2012, I first contacted Stepping Hill Hospital where I gave birth, I was told they deleted records after forty years. I was also told that due to me moving to GRO-C that my records would have been destroyed.
50. I have odd pages of notes and a copy of the medical records after the birth. I have paid to have copies from Nobles Hospital, and I eventually got records from my doctor.
51. On 11 July 2017, I wrote to an MP named Philip Dunne, I wanted to tell him my story, and I queried as to why I was given contaminated blood? I believe I received an automated response. **Exhibit WITN0741011** refs.
52. I consent for my statement to be used at the hearings and also to be made public if required. It would be very difficult for me to attend the hearings due to my mobility.

### **List of Exhibits**

<b>WITN0741002</b>	Clinical notes dated 1 September 1971, stating the word 'Infections Hepatitis' in the column of the notes.
<b>WITN0741003</b>	Letter dated 11 August 1971 from Stepping Hill Hospital to Dr Barker. Re: her admission and stating 'I think this must have been infective hepatitis'. As you can see from the state of this document, the date has been obliterated, but in the title of the document it states Sylvia is aged 27 and so this must have been written in 1971 and after the birth of Linda.
<b>WITN0741004</b>	Medical record dated <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 5px;">GRO-C</span> 1971, stating 'transfused four pints'.
<b>WITN0741005</b>	Letter dated 23 February 2012 to Dr Vaughan, Snaefell Surgery from Noble's Hospital. Re: appointment with cardiology clinic concerning ablations



<b>WITN0741006</b>	Letter dated 22 July 2014 to Dr Vaughan, Snaefell Surgery from Noble's Hospital. Re: stating no diagnosis of cirrhosis, and that Sylvia has cut out all alcohol and has not smoked for 14 years.
<b>WITN0741007</b>	Letter dated 10 September 2013 to Dr Vaughan, Snaefell Surgery from Noble's Hospital. Re: Sylvia's Hepatitis C Genotype 1 diagnosis and stating that she is very concerned to discuss this.
<b>WITN0741008</b>	Letter dated 29 October 2012 from Julie Estcourt, Head of Midwifery Stockport. Re: confirming following the birth of daughter at 4.00am on <b>GRO-C</b> 1971, Sylvia received two units of plasma and two units of blood.
<b>WITN0741009</b>	Letter dated 17 October 2014 from Dr Holt, Noble's Hospital to Dr Armour, Ramsey Group Practice. Re: treatment for Hepatitis C named 'Sofosbuvir, pegylated Interferon and Ribavirin' would be offered to Sylvia.
<b>WITN0741010</b>	Letter dated 7 October 2014 from Dr Ashdown, Nobles Hospital. Re: request for £200 payment for the completion of Skipton Fund form.
<b>WITN0741011</b>	Email dated 11 July 2017 from Sylvia to MP Philip Dunne Re: explaining her story and questioning as to why she was given contaminated blood.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

**GRO-C**

Dated

6/2/19