

Witness Name: Alan Rook  
Statement No.: WITN4683001  
Exhibits: 0  
Dated: 12th April 2021

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALAN ROOK

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 30 October 2020.

I, Alan Rook, will say as follows: -

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

01. My name is Alan Rook. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1967. I live at GRO-C I joined the Caxton Foundation as a result of a wider conversation I was having with a recruitment agency. I had limited time available, running my media services businesses, but wanted to make efforts to explore opportunities outwith my own companies. I wanted to again become involved in the charity sector, having previously worked with military charities through my role at the British Forces Broadcasting Service. I hoped my career experience as a broadcast executive, producer and journalist might be relevant in a board setting - and that I might make a useful contribution to a worthy cause, while also acquiring some useful experience in return. It's my recollection that at the interview, it was shared with me that such professional experience was one of the Caxton Foundation considerations in making, what I recall to be, two or three Director

appointments at that time. In terms of specific qualifications, I qualified as an indentured trainee with the National Council for the Training of Journalists and - by the time of my appointment - had worked for regional, national and international broadcasters, as well as for regional newspapers for more than 20 years, as detailed here in answer 2.

02. My employment history is set out below:

**2011 - Present, Consultant, BlackRook**

I head up four companies: three media and events businesses - BlackRook Media, BlackRook Productions and, in Africa, Enterprise BlackRook (based in Abuja, Nigeria) [www.blackrookmedia.com](http://www.blackrookmedia.com). In fashion, I am a Director of Discreet Bowtique – which makes affordable, fashionable clothes for breastfeeding mothers: [www.discreetbowtique.com](http://www.discreetbowtique.com). I specialise in project management of TV and online channel start-ups and in pitching and production of location documentaries and studio programming internationally. Our teams also offer consultancy on staffing and recruitment, workflow and technology, compliance and licencing - as well as distribution, communications and broadcast journalism training. Among our credits, BlackRook teams have produced more than 300 studio and location programmes for the international news channel, Iran International. I led the formation of the Nigerian channel Arise News training and guiding teams in London, Abuja, Lagos, Johannesburg, Nairobi and New York. I and colleagues delivered production training to news and current affairs journalists at the Rudaw news channel in Iraq. In the UK, a BlackRook consultant has, since 2017, trained all of the BBC's editorial apprentices in broadcast writing and Ofcom compliance regulation.

In our events work projects have included leading teams providing production support for the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in London in 2018 and for Facebook and BuzzFeed's day-long EU Referendum debate coverage in 2016. We've also provided hands-on consultancy across the last five years of the world's biggest global banking event – Sibos. For Sibos, our

experts were flown into Geneva, Switzerland (2016), Toronto, Canada (2017), Sydney, Australia (2018) and in London (2019). We ran TV services for the 2020 digital version of the event from Crawley in Sussex after the pandemic forced cancellation of the physical event planned for Boston, U.S.A.

I have provided project leadership, production services, media coaching and strategy consultancy for a diverse role of global clients including, among others: the international banking transaction business SWIFT, car-maker BMW, Sainsbury's the UK supermarket chain, ARISE News, Rudaw news, Iran International, The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (Rome, Italy) and VNS 24/7 (Johannesburg, South Africa).

### **Key Achievements**

Launching and maintaining international output for the new global news TV station ARISE News with teams and programme production in Europe, Africa and North America. Production of now more than 300 live and studio TV shows for Iran International Training production staff in news, sport and current affairs at the Rudaw news channel in Iraq Providing media training and team building for the entire staff of Sainsbury's Nectar Card marketing company i2c Devising and delivering media training over four months of sessions with senior managers at BMW's Plant Oxford in specific preparation for the launch of the new 'Mini'.

### **2010 - 2011, Head of News, ITV Breakfast, GMTV, Daybreak and Lorraine**

Tasked with building a refreshed network news team and improving the production ethos across the GMTV and later Daybreak and Lorraine teams, while delivering a strategy for the launch of the Daybreak programme, building on-air editorial credibility within news, sport, weather and current affairs output Liaising with colleagues as part of the ITV network's National Senior Management Team to produce 'One ITV News' – combining and exploiting resources across ITN and ITV Nations and Regions teams Managing the budget and a team of correspondents, producers and technicians internationally in conjunction with the Daybreak Editor, undertaking responsibility for newsgathering, planning and approval for all news

production, sport, current affairs and weather content.

Responsible for managing content for ITV's nations and regions across England and Wales, as well as regional news provision in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Channel Islands.

Managing teams of more than 100 direct reports, as well as deputising for the Daybreak Editor across all programme content and work as a member of the senior executive team that manages all of ITV news across the entire schedule and online.

### **Key Achievements**

Co-ordinating network breakfast time coverage of the Royal Wedding, the killing of Osama Bin Laden, The Japanese Earthquake, The Arab Spring and the plight of the trapped Chilean Miner.

### **2010, Head of News and Factual, British Forces Broadcasting Service**

Responsible for an international, tri-media news and current affairs team to provide a service to 250,000 service personnel and their families, building relationships across the military welfare community and with the Ministry of Defence. Managing broadcasting teams in Germany, Cyprus and Afghanistan with teams also across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, relaunching the television news service with a new set, graphics and modernised production processes, with new anchor Kate Gerbeau.

Additionally responsible for launching the charity's news website with video content, archive material and editorial contributions from across the world

Managing and monitoring the global radio news service to ensure updates are provided 24/7.

### **Key Achievements**

Introducing a video rich, interactive website and formulating an international social media strategy recognised by the charity's Chief Executive (former Head of Sky News Nick Pollard) and the Board of Trustees for dramatically increasing both broadcast audience share and brand recognition globally.

**2007 - 2009, Head of News, Sport and Current Affairs, ITV News Group**

Managing the news, sport and current affairs programming of England's biggest TV region – ITV Central (East and West Midlands regions). Serving a potential audience of almost 10 million, with responsibility for managing an annual budget of £10m and a staff of 133 management, journalists and technicians producing 12 hours of television each week.

Provided with a specific brief to implement major changes, leading the merger of two regional teams, reducing the headcount to 70 and establishing plans and strategies in shaping new news service Launching the new ITV Central in 2009, with responsibility for the ITV regional output across all of the Midlands in news, in current affairs, in weather, sport and politics with teams across Birmingham, Nottingham, Leicester and London.

**Key Achievements**

Building Central Tonight audience share from 13% to 20%. Winner of the Royal Television Society's Midlands Centre Best Regional Programme and Best News Programme Awards after staff reductions - and ahead of a significantly better resourced regional BBC.

**2005 - 2007, Editor, ITV News Group - East Midlands Region, ITV Central**

Establishing the agenda for the news service, ensuring all production values are maximised, overseeing a team of 50 staff and freelancers across multiple sites and with a budget of £3m per annum Integral to three national ITV committees charged with providing training and harmonisation between news services, terms and conditions and production capabilities. Regularly producing editions of the flagship half-hour Central Tonight news programme and Extra Tonight in current affairs output.

**Key Achievements**

Building Central Tonight audience share to reduce the ratings gap with the BBC from a 20% deficit to just 5%. Winning 3 Gold, 1 Silver and 3 Bronze awards at the 2006 ITV News Group Awards as the most successful ITV regional newsroom. Delivering the highest interactivity conversion rate in

Britain, with a greater proportion of the audience participating in feedback, phone polls and competitions than any other ITV news programme.

**2005 - 2006, Presenter, September Films**

Presenting a series on ITV1 and ITV2 called Haunted Homes, achieving what was, at that time, the most successful originally commissioned series ever broadcast on ITV2.

**2005 Editor, This Morning, ITV Daytime**

Recruiting a team of 50, with a management budget of £1.5m, running the programme throughout six months, including – for the first time – the school summer holidays with a new team of presenters Fulfilling the requirement to make the programme bolder, with more studio movement and more outside broadcasts.

**2004 - 2005, Head of News & Features / Producer, This Morning, ITV Daytime**

Undertaking a move to network Daytime programming with responsibility for managing teams, researching, booking and producing content and guests for This Morning. Providing assistance to the Editor with establishing the agenda, approving running orders and conducting debriefings for presenters and production teams. Producing the programme, with additional responsibility for special projects including the outside broadcast features for reality show “I’m a Celebrity, Get Me Out Of Here!” Responsible, as series producer, for two weeks of two-and-a-half hour, live, outside broadcast programmes based entirely at the Ideal Home Show.

**2003 - 2004, Acting Editor, Meridian East, ITV News**

Responsible for training and reorganising the structure of the company’s south east-based operation following the merger of the parent ITV companies Granada and Carlton. Managing multiple, major outside broadcasts, responsibility for training, staff development, internal communications, recruitment, budget management and quality control, in accordance with

editorial strategy and compliance with the law.

**1998-2003, Deputy Editor, Meridian Tonight**

Producing programmes, including Meridian Tonight and Focus, with responsibility for content. Reporting and presenting. Directing multi-camera shoots. Training and implementing resources in accordance with the budget. Recruiting and training team members. Documentary making over five years – including international award-winning coverage of the asylum seeker 'crisis' in southern England.

**1997 - 1999 Presenter, Series Producer and Producer / Director, Network, Regional and Satellite Series, Meridian Television**

Programmes include producing and presenting Straight Up, anchoring Meridian Tonight and series producing Tool Box.

**1994 - 1997, Correspondent, Meridian Tonight (South East)**

**1992 - 1994, Bulletin Editor / Reporter, Meridian Tonight (South East)**

**1985 - 1991, Freelance Radio Reporter / Features Writer, BBC Radio Kent**

**1989 - 1991, Deputy Chief Reporter / Sub-Editor, Kent Messenger Group**

**1987 - 1989, Trainee Reporter, Kent Messenger Group**

**1985 - 1987, Page Planner / Paste-Up Artist, Kent Messenger Group**

**Professional Training**

2005 - 2011, Training the ITV Leadership Programme - Developing Senior Manager;

2008, Training Risk Assessment in the Broadcast Industry, Institute of Occupational Safety and Health;

2005, Training Digital Editing;

2005, ITV News, Training Manager Pressure;  
2005, ITV, Training Budget Management;  
2004, ITV, Training Career Development Review Assessor;  
2004, ITV, Health and Safety at Work/Risk Assessment Proficiency;  
2002, ITV, Training Linear Editing and Video Journalism;  
1995, Meridian Broadcasting, Training Page Layout and Sub-Editing;  
1991, Kent Messenger Group, NCTJ National Council for the Training of  
Journalists;  
1989, Stradbroke College, Sheffield, Law, Public Administration and  
Journalism.

03. Over my three years with the Caxton Foundation I only ever attended main board meetings and at no time sat regularly on other committees. I recall visiting one sub-committee meeting observing decisions on beneficiaries' claims.

04. After seven years, my recollection is that the induction included an explanation of processes in awarding grants and organisational context; how the Caxton Foundation fitted into the wider grouping of 'blood charities'. There was some discussion about the challenges and sensitivities in dealing with the claimant community. The need for transparency and consistency was stressed. The lack of awareness of successful Caxton Foundation interventions was mentioned.

05. I'd describe my own contribution of time as minimal. I attended main board meetings and offered contributions and votes on agenda items having previously read reports. I had been transparent about not being able to regularly commit to other meetings and had anticipated my likely involvement in project-based work, relevant to my experience in media and communications. This never transpired in any meaningful way though I recall



suggesting and presenting a proposal for improved external communications.

06. I have no other connections, business, voluntary or personal relevant to the Inquiry.

## **Section 2: Establishment of the Trusts and Schemes**

07. I was steered to, and subsequently fully understood, the aims of the Caxton Foundation (“CF”) as set out by the Charities Commission here:

<https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-details/?regid=1142529&subid=0>

and by the Department of Health here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-discretionary-payments-for-people-infected-with-hepatitis-c>.

08. These themes and specific conditions/qualifications for assistance were routinely referred to at board meetings. I understood its regulation to be as laid down by the Charities Commission. I cannot recall being concerned enough to ‘double check’ any operational matter (over and above my general knowledge and those notes provided for board meetings) against regulatory guidance, but was aware when proposing my own company might usefully assist with a communications project that the highest level of transparency would be required, if that proposal was to be enacted.

## **Section 3: The AHOs**

### *Appointment of Directors*

09. I cannot recall the detail of being involved in Director appointments. I recall that there was a desire to ensure a diversity of experience in social background and professional experience – as well as geography, as applied to the nations and regions eligible for CF assistance. There was also agreement that a board member with ‘lived experience’ was a ‘must have’

ingredient. After seven years, I do not recall the specifics of that appointment (just one of them during my tenure), but do recall that I was satisfied the choice made appeared a sound decision and voted accordingly. My opinion was - and remains – that the ‘lived experience’ delivered objectively was an important ingredient when discussing the full range of issues in which the CF was involved. My recollection is that a recruitment agency was used to shortlist Director candidates generally during my time and budget made available accordingly.

10. My recollection is that the accepted pattern was for a Director to serve for three years before resigning. This is the pattern that I followed, serving in 2013, 2014 and 2015.

11. In terms of remuneration, I can’t recall ever personally claiming any expenses as a Director, though I knew that such expenses (almost exclusively travel - and accommodation when strictly necessary) were available to board members.

12. Seven years on, I don’t recollect any detail about overlap involvement of Directors in other AHOs.

#### Structure of the AHOs

13. On questions 21 to 23 inclusive, I don’t recall any serious issues during my tenure and I don’t retain any notes that can add anything to the Inquiry’s understanding.

#### Relationship with Government

14. On question 24, my memory is that my appointment had to be effectively ratified by the Department of Health (“DoH”) and I believe that was the case with all Director appointments. Unhelpfully, that may be an erroneous recollection. These several years on, I have no note. I wasn’t part of the

sub-committee that made grants, but recall no mention of DoH involvement in setting levels of grant. They were, as I understood it, entirely independent decisions, based on the level of justified/proven need. The overall annual budget was, I think, a matter of liaison with the DoH (which set that figure), again based on projections derived from evidence of need and uptake from claimants, as efforts to identify and contact those eligible for assistance progressed.

15. On question 25, my time at the CF was at a point where a new CEO was settling into her role – dealing with issues of personnel and process. The detail of this is somewhat distant now, of course – but those matters and matters of claimant welfare were a focus of all the conversations I was part of. I do not recall any practical/operational concerns about the DoH.

16. I do not recall any issues, as raised in question 26.

17. I do not recall any issues, as raised in question 27. I understood the CEO and Chairman has a direct line of communication to the DoH, as required.

#### **Section 4: Funding/finances of the AHOs**

18. On question 29 (and also relevant to subsequent questions in this section), my memory is that the abiding issue on funding was that the level of need was, in reality, genuinely unpredictable with any great accuracy year-on-year. Estimates based on the criteria explained in the Trustees' Reports you've again shared with me (specifically summarised in the document CAXT0000034\_008) were indeed the practical issues that endured across my tenure.

19. My recollection is that the priority often stated, was the question of how the CF could appropriately reach out to people and how the charity could raise awareness of what it was - and what it offered. This effort being directed at both those already involved with the 'family' of infected blood charities,

(Skipton Stage 1 beneficiaries etc) – but also importantly among communities and individuals outside that sphere. People with need who had no knowledge that help from this source might be available to them.

20. On questions 31 to 45 inclusive, given the limited level of my own hands-on involvement (in sub committees), as previously outlined - and also my own recollection of detail of process after the years that have now passed, I can personally contribute nothing extra here that can add anything to the inquiry's understanding.

21. The contemporaneous CF paperwork - summaries and reports - that you have again presented to me here, several years on, were, I remember, in my opinion, accurate records that reflected both the issues at hand, what was explained to me at that time by colleagues and also the board conversations that I was a part of.

#### **Section 5: Identifying beneficiaries and engagement with the beneficiary community**

22. Our estimation of communications issues between the CF and its potential beneficiaries was informed by what I had learned in board meetings - and also by what professional colleagues and I could see online and as reported in the media. In our opinion, there were key issues to address:

- a) Using communication strategies to reach potential claimants that were not easy to locate – including developing relationships with mainstream media that might win broader coverage;
- b) to review and refresh what was, at that time, a rather tired and uninviting website greeting those who did engage;
- c) reassuring all stakeholders about the CF and its work – its process and its impact on people's lives;
- d) to better establish awareness of the CF – its independence as a charity;
- e) devising ways to engage an audience that might be resistant or reluctant to deal with the idea of 'charity' in the first place;

- f) to consider leading the external communications messaging by - when appropriate;
- g) putting the charity on the front foot, rather than routinely having to react. Instead, our counsel was to move to a state of constant preparedness for the possibility of any likely coverage in sector or mainstream media. This needn't be a negative and, in fact, was always an opportunity. What might be reported and where? What do we have to say about it? Is there a benefit in saying that first? How?;
- h) to champion success and use a range of media channels to demonstrate transparency, telling the engaging and illustrative human stories that would foster greater and faster engagement;
- i) ensuring all of this was done with appropriate regard to tone, to presentation and to anonymity (when required/requested). Also that none of it was in any way detrimental to the efforts of other charities in this sector. There may indeed have been opportunities to co-operate with related charities in this work.

23. The email proposal you already hold very obviously speaks for itself, but was only written as a 'conversation starter'. Some proposed actions with some costs attached for further clarity. I can explain here what motivated me to put some ideas forward. As previously stated, I was appointed as a Director mainly, I suppose, because of my specific career history and associated contacts. Not having the time to dedicate to membership of the Welfare Sub-Committee or the relevant experience to contribute expertly to CF groups dealing with matters of finance and budget, I was keen to make some sort of impact. I wanted to contribute to positive change and get stuck in.

24. I was also aware that my own business might potentially – if that involvement was deemed appropriate - offer very significant financial savings in this work. This would be through my own unpaid involvement and in identifying a suitably qualified colleague with any margins transparently set aside. I regarded this as important given the need to conserve and target funds to potential beneficiaries – and understanding well the rates likely to be charged in this sector generally.

25. In response, my recollection is that a phased approach was discussed and that it was agreed that should start with a website refresh before the wider and - in fairness – more complex matters of the detail of outreach and media engagement were dealt with.
26. I did see a potential issue of perception in the CF using my company, but thought that if significant and demonstrable savings resulted in doing that, this could be seen to have been dealt with reasonably and transparently under scrutiny. Ultimately, if it came to a decision, it wouldn't, of course, have been one that I would have been involved in.
27. My feeling was that action was certainly needed sooner rather than later if the CF wanted to make improvements in this area that could so greatly assist in its mission. In retrospect I feel progress in this area was frustratingly slow. In all honesty, I probably could myself have pushed colleagues harder and suggested alternative approaches, for us to consider, but having already put my own company forward as a potential money-saving solution, I think now looking back that I was more comfortable going with the flow at that point...
28. In terms of past criticisms, my memory is of reports that a general feeling of suspicion and sometimes hostility existed across the affected community that the CF served. This was that an 'inquiry and compensation' route should long ago have been pursued, as in other nations. The themes at play, of course, often focused on the very idea of 'victims' of a 'scandal' of this scale having to 'beg' for financial assistance. To that extent the CF was unsurprisingly under particular scrutiny from a community, many of whom were understandably extremely angry and suspicious.
29. Sometimes that public criticism and anger might have been misinformed or inappropriately personal. The fact that the CF had no communications infrastructure or strategy to address these issues effectively as they happened was an impediment, in my view, to building success.
30. Ultimately my proposal was never acted upon. My company did no work for

the CF or any other related charity. From memory, I'm unsure to what extent changes to the website were made at this time - and also if they were anything other than cosmetic.

31. My feeling was that sensitively and appropriately highlighted stories of the CF in action were by far the best way to reach a wider audience – to win them over with human stories of positive engagement and charity in action that would help pick up some of those potential beneficiaries we were missing.

32. Using video and printed materials in places that people affected were likely to visit. Using locations online and across social media where those engagements were most likely to occur. Using existing media contacts and establishing new ones in local, regional and national TV, radio and print to help place those stories and the information we wanted to share.

33. This sort of strategy would, I believe, have helped the CF with its particular outreach and reputation issues – but also perhaps those associated charities too.

34. Even in 2013, these techniques were not ground-breaking, but would certainly have required a spend to achieve the results required... a team – possibly working across several of the 'infected blood charities' as a shared resource with dedicated time and clear goals set.

35. My feeling is that an argument could have been made for a specific and separate budget, funded from the DoH – however that resource was then to be deployed.

## **Section 6: Eligibility for the CF**

36. On questions 51 to 84 inclusive, given the limited level of my own hands-on involvement (in sub committees), as previously outlined - and also my own recollection of detail of process after the years that have now passed, I can

personally contribute nothing extra here that can add anything to the inquiry's understanding.

37. The contemporaneous CF paperwork - summaries and reports - that you have again presented to me here, several years on, were, I remember, in my opinion, accurate records that reflected both the issues at hand, what was explained to me at that time by colleagues and also the board conversations that I was a part of.

38. With regard to question 85, my recollection is that the performance of some staff members in the transition from one CEO to the next was revealed to be poor. I do not remember specifics, but think that these performance issues and recruitment took some time to resolve. This is what I was referring to in my letter of resignation.

39. To the best of my recollection these issues added to day to day pressures – as reported by the CEO – but did not affect outcomes.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed: GRO-C

Dated: 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021