

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B and I live at GRO-B.
GRO-B I was born on GRO-B 1980. I am single and I currently work as an GRO-B for the NHS.
2. My mother, GRO-B was born on GRO-B 1953 and died on GRO-B 1993. She was infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Hepatitis C (HCV) through my step father GRO-B who was born on GRO-B 1958 and died on GRO-B GRO-B 1993 (eight days before my mum). GRO-B was infected with HIV and HCV through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my mother's full medical records nor my step father's full medical records.

Section 2. How Affected

4. My father GRO-B and my mother GRO-B were divorced when I was around 2 or 3 years old and my mum remarried. I am not sure of the date when mum married GRO-B; I was still very young.

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5. I lived with [GRO-B] and mum during the week and spent every other weekend with my father.
6. I have a brother who does not wish to be involved in the Inquiry and a younger half-sister, [GRO-B:S] who was born on [GRO-B] 1983. [GRO-B] has already given a statement to the Inquiry [GRO-B]
7. [GRO-B] was a severe haemophiliac and received Factor VIII concentrate.
8. I remember it being drilled in to us from the beginning of their relationship that he was a haemophiliac and whilst he was home treating himself we would have to stay away from him.
9. I understand from [GRO-B] that he first had blood taken to check for HTLVIII (subsequently known as HIV) on 3rd April 1985 and tested positive on 13th May 1985. He was diagnosed with Hepatitis B on 15th October 1992 and Hepatitis C on 26th October 1992.
10. My mum was diagnosed with Hepatitis C on 5th September 1991 and first tested positive for HIV on 22nd May 1991. She was infected by my step father.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I am not aware of any other infections that my mum had. I do not have any of her medical records.

Section 4. Consent.

12. I believe that Mum was tested on a regular basis for HIV following [GRO-B] diagnosis in 1985 and that her tests remained negative until 1991.

Section 5. Impact of the Infection

13. My brother, sister and me were not told initially of what Mum's illness was. I remember that she sat down with us one day, a few months before she died, and told us that she was really poorly. She said that we would be having time off school to spend together as a

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family. I remember that we went off to a theme park and spent days out in the local parks. I remember at the time thinking it was great to be missing some school; not understanding the severity of the situation.

14. I know now that Mum was trying to make memories and spend as much time as possible with us. We knew at the time that GRO-B was poorly but we did not know what was wrong with him either.
15. Mum's health deteriorated during those months. She was in and out of hospital and I remember that there was a rapid decline in her health.
16. At this time, for a brief period, she was also leaning on alcohol. I remember one occasion coming back from my dad's on weekend and finding vodka bottles hidden around the house. I think she probably started drinking as a coping mechanism.
17. In the final stages of her life Mum was in the same hospital as GRO-B. I was not really close to GRO-B. My brother and I went to live with my dad at the time.
18. When Mum was really poorly she told my father that she did not want the last image of her to be of her dying in bed. We did however continue to go to see her at our request and one day when we got back from the hospital we had a phone call to my dad's house; she had passed away.
19. Whilst I knew that Mum was going to die; it was still such a shock. I knew then that she had HIV but I did not know about the HCV.
20. When Mum died my whole world was pulled apart; I felt numb for a long time.
21. I went to live with Dad on a rural country estate in GRO-B. My brother and I were split up from our sister GRO-B who went to stay with our aunt and uncle. Not only had we lost Mum but we had been split up and we did not see each other regularly. Dad wanted us all to stay together but he was not her blood relative; it was awful losing my sister. I took on a caring role within the new family situation. My dad could not cook and so I often took this on for all of us.

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22. This was a difficult time for Dad too and a big change for him as suddenly he had me and my brother to stay full time and also he was coping with the loss of his ex-wife whom he still loved and was still on good terms with.
23. I was about 13 when Mum died and I was at secondary school in GRO-B Fortunately the mother of a friend of mine worked near the school but lived near my dad and so she drove us in to school and back which was about an hours journey each way. I was grateful for this as my school life remained stable at such a difficult time.
24. My relationships with friends changed as they didn't know quite what to say to me. They knew that my mum had died but I think at that age it is difficult to know how to react.
25. I remember that I was off school for a short time after Mum died but dad lived in a cottage on a rural country estate which was in the middle of nowhere and very cut off; there was no public transport and so it was not long before I went back to school. It was difficult for me to socialise as I lived so far away from my school and therefore could not socialise with friends after school nor play football or join in any clubs.
26. I was more of a town person at the time Mum died and I feel I've missed out on somethings. At the time mum died I loved going to the shops, playing football, riding my bike and going to the cinema. That all came to an abrupt end. My whole external support structure was shattered with losing links to my friends.
27. I was devastated when Mum died and I did lose interest in just about everything. I remember being very angry and frustrated as I did not know why it had happened. I was of an age that I could talk but really had no idea what was going on and when you are told from a young age not to talk about certain things so often, this sticks with you.
28. Losing a Mum at any age must be difficult but losing Mum when I was in my early teens was very difficult for me. Whilst I love my dad very much it was mum who was more the academic and her emphasis was very much on education and she had always encouraged us to do well at school.
29. I lost my way a little at school and did not do well in my GCSEs; I lost focus and I lost interest in learning. I left school at the age of 16 and went to college and completed an NVQ in GRO-B I became a chef for many years until I fell out of love with cooking.

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30. I think I went into the catering business because at the time Mum died I was interested in cooking and I remember receiving positive praise for my cooking from my grandmother so I went into that line of work.
31. After this I went back to college and completed a course in **GRO-B** I worked in a warehouse for 3 or 4 years and then I moved to **GRO-B** with a girlfriend and started a job in customer services. The relationship didn't work out.
32. I was introduced to the idea of becoming an **GRO-B** and this grew on me. I decided to look further into it and to go down this career route. I had to retake my GCSEs and I then studied at college for two years after work to complete an access course. I was then able to go to University for 3 years; I was 30 years old at the time.
33. I am dyslexic and this was not picked up until quite late during my secondary school years. I wonder now if Mum would have picked up on this sooner. She was definitely more focussed on us doing well at school and took a keen interest in our education.
34. I remember one day bunking off school for a day. I went out with my friends cycling by the canal and messing about. We did not take any food or drink with us and we got hungry so we cycled to my grandparents house. Whilst grandma gave us food; she also called Mum to tell her we were there and what we had been doing. I had a big lecture from Mum at the time not only about the importance of education but also the fact that she was cross and upset that I was cycling near the canal when I couldn't swim.
35. Both my mother and father have given me the strong work ethic which I still have today.
36. I feel I am still trying to prove myself and do myself justice, by pursuing a career I can be proud of. I'm now a qualified **GRO-B** working in a busy rural community.
37. I have found it hard to maintain relationships. I have a great circle of friends but relationships with partners have been more difficult, and I feel this is a result of my past. I have found commitment difficult due to worries/concerns of losing them and the hurt it would cause me and others, feelings that I feel stem from losing my mother at such a young age, and feelings which in turn have led me to not yet having children of my own.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

38. I wasn't close to GRO-B and he died shortly before Mum so my grieving was focussed on Mum. I was offered counselling. I remember someone coming round asking if I wanted to talk but I just clammed up at that point. Looking back I feel this was offered too early and I strongly feel this should have been followed up/re-offered at later dates, or in different ways/mediums. I did feel very lost; Mum was a huge person to lose. I think I dealt with things internally.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

39. GRO-B applied to the Skipton Fund and received stage 1 and 2 payments and split this between the three of us.

40. I feel that we lost the financial security of having both parents alive.

Section 8. Other Issues

41. I feel that although public awareness has improved there is still a stigma that remains. I would hope that this inquiry sheds light on this and raises public awareness further, I hope it encourages individuals and families to come forward and seek advice, support, and gives them a voice, but more than anything I hope for justice for the people involved, for a heartfelt apology, and for accountability to be adhered.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

42. I wish to apply for anonymity.

43. I understand that my statement will be disclosed and published as part of the Inquiry.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

GRO-B

Dated 26/02/2020