

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN3053001

Exhibits: WITN3053002 - WITN3053007

Dated: May 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

I, GRO-B, says as follows:

Section 1: Introduction

1. I am the wife of the late GRO-B: H who was born on the GRO-B and who died on the GRO-B 2019, at the age of 63. We knew each other from the age of 16 having met each other at school and then married in GRO-B at the age of 21.
2. I remember meeting H at school, he was the new boy who joined our class. We were told by our teachers that H had haemophilia, not that we fully understood what was meant by the term, but the school explained that we had to be very careful with him and that any rough play could be potentially dangerous to him.
3. It was clear from that moment that H was not going to let his health condition define him and he was certainly not going to stop him playing football at school, WITN3053002.

Section 2: How Affected

4. My husband suffered with mild haemophilia A, with a Factor VIII of 6%. With the benefit of reviewing his records, it can be seen that as early as 1979 [H] had already contracted Hepatitis A and B following the administration of Factor VIII concentrate. Furthermore, there was a distinct possibility that he was also infected with the then described Hepatitis non A non B. It would seem that the manufacturers would have been notified of the link from 1979. Relevant medical notes can be found at exhibited, **WITN3053003**.
5. He was always a very positive person but when he was diagnosed with HIV in October 1985, our lives changed forever. Undoubtedly, we were overcome with sadness, anxiety and fear, **WITN3053004**. We did not know who we could trust and were so scared and frightened that people would find out that only [H]'s mum and sister knew. I could not tell my family. This was the beginning of our new normal, being petrified about our future and the terrible stigma attached to HIV. Two months prior to the diagnosis, I suffered a miscarriage and we were so frightened that we may never be able to have a family of our own. At that point, it seemed we had no future.
6. We had all heard the rumours circulating about contaminated blood products. While [H] was in hospital in 1984, he received a lot of Factor VIII and as a result I spoke to a Consultant at Walsgrave Hospital Coventry (now UHCW) about my concerns surrounding the rumours.
7. [H]'s dad (who sadly died in 1985) and I attended the meeting with the Consultant who assured us that the blood being utilised was "clean" however I have since found a handwritten report by [H] for a Tribunal in 1990 where the same Consultant admitted that he was aware that the blood at the time was in fact, contaminated but that he had no choice but to use it. I attach an extract of this report at exhibit **WITN3053005**.
8. In 1986, our daughter was born. This was all that we ever wanted, but sadly due to [H]'s status, this was another person in our lives that he wanted to protect from knowing the truth. This is something that we kept from our daughter until she was in her late teens, something I later regretted.

ANONYMOUS

9. In late 1989 [H]'s concerns were raised again when he received a letter asking him to attend for a blood test with the view of commencing AZT. Initially in January 1990, [H] refused to take any medication for his HIV, he did not trust AZT but eventually, due to his deteriorating health, he had no choice as he was suffering, **WITN3053006**.
10. [H] would describe this medication as his "enemy". He suffered from terrible side-effects including nausea, sweating, body changes and he also began suffering from depression and anxiety. We felt so isolated and were very afraid that people would find out about his diagnosis.
11. [H] attempted suicide twice and on one of these occasions, our daughter (who was unaware, at the time, of his HIV diagnosis) returned home from school, found him and had to call an ambulance. She was so confused why her dad was depressed and suicidal.
12. He tried so hard to get on with life but it was all becoming too much.
13. Up until the diagnosis our marriage was good, we were very happy together. However our marriage suffered to the point that we contemplated separation. Our family life suffered and our friendships suffered. We did not have a wide circle of friends but became so isolated out of fear that people would find out.
14. Over a period of 20 years, [H] worked very hard for an Assurance company, was very career minded and received many promotions throughout his career. Eventually, his bosses began noticing his low mood and his attendance record. It was very sad and unfair to witness someone who had worked so hard and excelled in his career, for it all to be robbed by his illness. Some days he would leave the house to go to work, or so I thought, and he would return home once I had gone to work and our daughter to school.
15. In 2004 at the age of 48 [H] eventually retired due to ill health. He told me that he could not keep up the act any longer.
16. The financial pressure impacted us greatly. My husband felt at this point he had no purpose.

ANONYMOUS

17. I was very worried and concerned about my husband during his retirement as I feared that he would have more time on his hands and become more depressed at home. I never know from one day to the next what mood he was going to be in.

18. Every day when I left the house for work or to bring our daughter to school, I was anxious. At first, I phoned him regularly throughout the day.

Section 3: Other Infections

19. [H] was informed by Professor Shinton that there was a possibility that he could go on to develop AIDS. See exhibit referred to in paragraph 28.

Section 4: Consent

20. It was never explained to [H] that he had contracted HIV as a result of someone's mistake. In terms of trying to interpret the positive result, it was demonstrated as not being indicative of any injury having occurred, it was delivered to him as more of a consequence.

Section 5: Impact

21. The life we envisaged together in 1977 changed drastically in 1985 forever. My loneliness and low mood has been exacerbated since his death. I feel my health has suffered since [H]'s death. I am constantly worried about my future and I am short tempered.

22. [H] was my best friend and I am finding life incredibly difficult without him. It made me realise more than ever how isolated we were as a family due to [H]'s status.

23. I want to see that somebody is rightfully held accountable for this tragedy.

24. Until this happens I feel I cannot move forward with my life.

Section 6: Treatment/Care/Support

25. He was informed by Professor Shinton at the Coventry and Warwick Hospital that his HIV result was positive. It was stressed to the both of us that we shouldn't have children and that he could pass on the virus to me. It was explained to [H] that there was a possibility that he could go on to develop AIDS, WITN3053007.

26. [H] received counselling before the HIV test was carried out and went on to have counselling sessions from Professor Geddes at East Birmingham Hospital in late 1986.

27. I was not offered any counselling after my husband's HIV diagnosis. Nor have I received any counselling since he passed away.

Section 7: Financial Assistance

28. In 1991 we received £60,500 in settlement of the first Inquiry that started.

29. In 2016 we received a one-off payment of £20,000 for Hep C due to stage 1 from the Skipton Fund.

30. I cannot recall the date, however we also received a one-off payment of £60,000.

31. [H] received regular payment from Macfarlane Trust but I cannot remember when they started. From April 2018 until his death on 8 March 2019, these were for £18,000 for HIV and £4,000 for Hep C yearly. These payments stopped immediately upon his death.

32. We were at one stage many years ago able to apply and be assessed for funds for certain items. We applied for help with a new boiler, you had to obtain 3 quotes, submit them and then it went in front of a Board. Eventually you were told if you were successful or not. It was not a pleasant situation and you felt like you were begging for money.

ANONYMOUS

33. We received an Educational grant when [GRO-B] went to University in 2006. I cannot recall how much, however I believe it was around £1,200. Out of this, we were able to purchase a computer and printer for [GRO-B].
34. When [H] passed away in early 2019, I received the Bereavement payment of £10,000. Obtaining this payment was not an easy, due to the fact that his cause of death (HIV) was omitted.
35. I had to get a letter from a medical professional to say the death was related to his condition, again this was not easy to retrieve but eventually I managed to get the letter, but bearing in mind you only had a 3 month period from the date of death to obtain this, this caused me a lot of unnecessary upset.
36. I received the funeral costs of approximately £4,000.
37. I also receive a winter payment of £540 in December.

Section 8: Other Issues

38. The Infected Blood Inquiry started just after [H] died, so my daughter [GRO-B] and I were left to deal with all of this on our own.
39. Despite waiting so long for the Inquiry to start, I will be glad when it is over. I want to see justice for [H] and for the rest of the Haemophiliacs and their families.
40. I would like to see someone held accountable for this absolute tragedy.

Statement of Truth:

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

Dated the 18th day of May 2021

Signed: _____

[GRO-B]

[GRO-B]