Witness Name: Krissie Jane Stephens
Statement Number: **WITN3308001**
Exhibits: **WITN3308002**
WITN3308003
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KRISSIE JANE STEPHENS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 20 May 2019.

I, Krissie Jane Stephens, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Krissie Jane Stephens. My date of birth is GRO - C 1950 and I live in Kent. My full address is known to the inquiry. I am currently single and I have a daughter and granddaughter who do not live with me. I am also retired.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C through the use of blood products. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me.

3. I confirm that I have decided not to have a legal representative and that I am happy to provide the Inquiry team with a written statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. In autumn 1989, I relocated to GRO-C for a year due to my partner's work. My monthly period arrived but was unusually heavy and prolonged. I went to a local doctor who said it was the change in circumstances that had upset the system.

5. When the bleeding did not stop after a few weeks, I went back to the doctor's surgery and saw a different GP this time. He called an ambulance saying that I had a rupture and was 'bleeding to death'. I was taken to Ayrshire Central Hospital where an operation was performed to remove an ectopic pregnancy which had burst out from a fallopian tube. This was on 8 November 1989. No risk of infection was mentioned before I was given the drip - it all happened very quickly and it was all a bit bewildering. One moment I was getting on with life and the next thing I was in the hospital.

6. I don't remember much except being attached to a drip and that I was there for a few days before being let out. My partner confirms this. I was instructed to rest for a minimum of 3 months.

Hepatitis C Diagnosis

7. I didn't fully recover from the operation and became tired, weak and depressed. Over the years after that, I also suffered from low-grade flu, headaches, sore eyes, aching limbs, depression, general confusion, not clear-headed and I found it difficult to concentrate.

8. I had been through all different types of doctors and hospitals. When I was living in London, I visited my GP in Muswell Hill, Hornsey and I was sent to the hospital for infectious and tropical diseases. I had tests there to see if I had anything foreign but nothing came of that. I also went to St Bartholomew's Hospital in London, however they could not find anything either.

9. I didn't find out that I had Hepatitis C until 1997 when I moved to Brighton. I went to the surgery and saw Dr GRO-D of the St Peter's Medical Centre. She said that she was going to do some blood tests to see what was going on. I thought this was unusual because I had already had some done by my previous doctors. After a couple of weeks, my GP told me that I had Hepatitis C at a face-to-face appointment.

10. I wasn't aware that I could infect anybody from it, I was just told that it was a liver condition. I was not offered any lifestyle advice. Looking back, I should have been told if it's possible to infect somebody in some way. I should have been told,

should have been advised of that. I haven't been aware for all this time that it was possible to infect somebody else.

Section 3. Other Infections

11. I was infected with Hepatitis C and as far as I am aware I was not infected with anything else.

Section 4. Consent

12. I cannot remember whether I was told what I was being tested for Hepatitis C.

13. I did consent to be treated for Hepatitis C and I was not aware of any treatment that was undertaken without my consent.

Section 5. Impact

14. I was not really aware of what the diagnosis exactly meant because as far as I was concerned, they had found a reason why I had been ill. Emotionally, it was a relief to have a label for why I was ill and to be treated for it. I had spent all those previous years looking for a reason and a way not to be feeling like how I used to feel.

Medical complications

15. I am not aware of any further medical complications which have developed as a result of the Hepatitis C virus.

First treatment

16. After my diagnosis in 1997, I was referred by my GP, Dr Lawrence, to Dr Cairns at the Royal Sussex County Hospital in 1998 and waited a couple of months for the appointment. I didn't have any further discussions with the specialist. I was just told what the treatment was and that there were 2 different kinds of treatment for Hepatitis C. One treatment lasted for 6 months and the other for 1 year.

17. I had to have the long one between 1998 and 1999. The treatment involved injections.

18. When I was on the treatment, I felt very confused and not clear-headed. It also had a devastating impact on my relationship at the time. My partner was extremely intolerant of my ability to work, function and be emotionally present and all that that entailed. He became abusive towards me because he did not understand the way that I was feeling and me being ill. I had that going on emotionally, so it was a bit confusing all in all.

19. I found the physical effects of the first treatment difficult to cope with. They lowered the dose after several months because I started getting ill, but then it stopped working. The treatment was ineffective.

Second treatment

20. At the end of 1999, I moved to Lincolnshire. In 2000, I was referred to the outpatients department of the Peterborough District Hospital to see Mr MW Dronfield. In March 2000, the hospital put me on a waiting list. However, I did not have any Hepatitis C treatment there.

21. I was then referred to Addenbrooke's Hospital, in Cambridge. In 2001, I was booked in for an appointment at the Joint Liver Clinic, but I didn't get to have any treatment there either. I think the reason why I was not offered any treatment at Addenbrooke's Hospital is because by the time I got around to getting some treatment we had moved again.

22. It wasn't until I moved back to London in 2004 that I was eventually treated for Hepatitis C at the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital. I had a combination therapy of Pegasys 180 mcg 40KD (peg interferon alfa-2a), one injection per week combined with Ribavirin tablets 400mg am, 600mg pm daily. The treatment started on 11 July 2005 and it was scheduled to last 48 weeks.

23. Mercy Nzuruba, the Hepatology Clinic Nurse Specialist at the hospital informed my GP, Dr S Nayak of the Om Sai Clinic in London that they would review my progress with the treatment at 3 months to see if it was adequately supressing viral replication and if it was, then the treatment would be continued. The Nurse

also told my GP in a letter dated 11 July 2005 that I may need his assistance and support with the potential side effects (**WITN3308002**).

24. It is hard to know what the side effects were with the second treatment and what was going on in my body. I was still tired, confused and still had sore eyes and a sore throat, weakness and depression but I was on anti-depressants. I didn't have anyone supporting me through this second treatment.

25. This time, the treatment was successful. Also, in a letter dated 25 July 2007, Dr Shelby Paul, Specialist Registrar in Gastroenterology from the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, said that my liver scarring would not progress, and if anything it may get slightly better (**WITN3308003**).

Access to treatment

26. I am not aware of any difficulties I had in accessing treatments. As I said, I was not clear headed and it was what it was at the time. Things happened as they happened. I had too much going on at home to be aware of anything else really.

Stigma

27. I do not recall any stigma relating to my infection. As far as I am aware regarding professionals, no one treated me differently at the time. I only saw the dentist and there were not problems, probably because I had been clear of it.

Private, family and social life

28. My daughter was an adult when she found out, but I didn't really see a lot of her at the time because she disapproved of my partner. He distanced me from my family and friends so any contact with her was sporadic.

29. My sister was probably aware but I wasn't really allowed to talk to her much either. I was just trying to cope with day to day life so I didn't speak out.

30. I was a very much closed down, not seeking communication with anyone. I didn't really have friends, at least not any personal friends. I sort of had my partner's

friends, neighbour friends rather than my own personal friends. They were not the people I would have mentioned things to.

Education, work and finance

31. The infection did not have any impact on my education.

32. In terms of my work and finances, I had been a Promotion Executive so I was working sporadically anyway. I was able to do occasional work, but I was not capable of doing anything in a sustained situation because it was too exhausting. As I could not earn a lot at the time, I had to claim incapacity benefits. I didn't have any problems claiming incapacity benefits because I had proof of my sickness.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

Counselling or psychological support

33. In 1999, my GP, Dr Lawrence referred me to South Downs Health in Brighton for support from the clinical and counselling psychology department, but this was in relation to my general situation. I don't know whether it was specifically related to my physical health, Hepatitis C or home problems.

34. I received no further support from any other hospital.

35. The Inquiry Team have made me aware of the support provided by the British Red Cross.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

36. I wasn't aware of money from trusts or funds. I vaguely remember seeing something about the Skipton fund or something but I didn't have the mental capacity to deal with anything like that. I think something might have been mentioned to me but the thought of trying to deal with anything was beyond my capability. I didn't investigate it. It was only when I saw this Inquiry in the news that I thought I should do something about it. I felt overwhelmed.

37. I have only been aware of incapacity benefits all this time. However, I am now aware of the England Infected Blood Support Scheme and I am definitely interested in applying for financial support. I have recently found out that I have to move home and I knew that I was going to struggle financially - I am clutching at all straws to get me through.

Section 8. Other issues

38. I do not wish to raise any other issues.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO - C

Dated 2/9/2019