

Witness Name: Victoria Prouse

Statement No: WITN5260001

Exhibits: None

Dated: 04/01/2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF VICTORIA PROUSE

I, Victoria Prouse, of GRO-C London GRO-C will say as follows:-

1. I make this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 24 April 2020 ("the Rule 9 Request").
2. I was born on GRO-C 1980. I have a Post Graduate Masters Degree in Voluntary Sector Management and Grant Making.
3. I was Director of Operations of The MacFarlane Trust ("the Trust") from 6 May 2014 – 28 February 2019. I was also Director of Operations of The Caxton Foundation from 6 May 2014 – 3 August 2018.
4. Since I am no longer employed by the Trust and it has closed, I no longer have access to any of the Trust's documents apart from those which were attached to the Rule 9 Request. This statement is therefore necessarily based solely on my recollection of events and without the benefit of reviewing other relevant documents.
5. As Director of Operations of the Trust and The Caxton Foundation I oversaw the grant making of both organisations and managed the grant administrators. In October 2017 when the Department of Health and Social Care transferred the work of the Trust (and The Caxton Foundation, The Skipton Fund, MFET and The Eileen Trust) to the NHS Business Services Authority, I was asked to remain

with the Trust to manage a final grant programme and assist the Chief Executive in the administrative tasks associated with the closure of the Trust and other charitable trusts and associated entities ("the Closure").

6. Jan Barlow was the Chief Executive of the Trust and The Caxton Foundation, and Company Secretary of MFET until 4 October 2018. The Trustee Board appointed a part-time Interim CEO, Gill Edelman, on a consultancy basis to lead the final stages of the Closure from 4 October 2018. A part-time interim Finance Director, Ben McGrath, was also employed on a consultancy basis. I was therefore the only employee of the Trust after 4 October 2018.
7. Until 4 October 2018, I reported to Ms Barlow and supported her in undertaking the Closure. After 4 October 2018 I reported to Ms Edelman, who reported to the Trustee Board. Ms Edelman's contract ended on 7 February 2019 and from that date until the end of my employment on 28 February 2019 I reported to the Trustee Board directly.
8. There was no employed Office/IT Administrator for the Trust after the transfer to the NHS Business Services Authority in October 2017. There was an IT company that continued to provide IT support for the equipment after that date. To the best of my recollection the company was called Node4. I expect that documentation relating to this company will be among the documents now held by The Skipton Fund following the Closure.
9. To my knowledge the Trust had two servers, one which contained the GP database and the other which held the emails and documents. The servers also contained the electronic records of The Skipton Fund, The Eileen Trust, The Caxton Foundation and MFET.
10. To the best of my recollection myself and Ms Edelman recommended to the Trustees that, as part of the Closure arrangements, a copy should be taken of the complete contents of the Trust's two servers and that this information should be stored on an encrypted hard drive so that the Inquiry could access any electronic records as required. The IT company advised on the best method to ensure the contents of the servers was stored in a way that would be accessible to the Inquiry.

11. Consideration was also given to the Trust's obligations in relation to data protection, particularly since the servers contained sensitive personal data relating to the beneficiaries of the five organisations. At various points during the Closure process we sought advice as required from the Trust's solicitors, Russell-Cooke, including in respect of this issue.
12. I recall that Ms Edelman sought advice from our contact at the Inquiry, Thomas Powell, in relation to a number of issues during the Closure, including the preservation of electronic and hard copy files. Following those discussions Ms Edelman and I recommended to the Trustees that a copy of the servers was made to preserve all documents for the Inquiry. I do not recollect any discussion with Mr Powell or anyone else at the Inquiry in which it was suggested that the Inquiry required the computer hardware to be retained.
13. I note that the Inquiry was informed by Ms Edelman in her email dated 21 January 2019 (attached to the Rule 9 Request) that :

"We will make arrangements to transfer our electronic records onto encrypted storage devices for transfer to Skipton in advance of the charity's closure next month and will ensure that these are appropriately indexed for ease of access."
14. To the best of my recollection the decision to destroy the servers was made as part of a wider process of decision making by the Trustees in relation to the Closure. In all matters relating to the Closure Ms Barlow (and after Ms Barlow's departure, Ms Edelman and I) investigated what was required to meet the needs of the Inquiry, to satisfy the Trust's legal responsibilities and to ensure an orderly Closure. Reports containing our findings and recommendations were presented to the board of Trustees who made the final decision. I expect that the Board papers and minutes will document this process.
15. The Trust took great care to ensure that all information was captured for the Inquiry's use, as reflected in my email to Julie Collingham of Russell-Cooke dated 19 February 2019: *"We have decided to take a back up of our server data to ensure all information is captured that may be required by the Public Inquiry before the computers are destroyed."*

16. I can confirm that in implementing the Trustees' decision to destroy the servers it was not my intention to destroy documentation which may be relevant to the Inquiry, and nor to my knowledge was it the intention of Ms Edelman. My recollection is that at all times the Trust made every effort to preserve information and documents which may assist the Inquiry.

17. In relation to the remaining questions in the Rule 9 Request:

- a. The reference to "Carla" in my email to Julie Collingham dated 19 February 2019 is Carla Whalen, a solicitor at the Trust's solicitors, Russell-Cooke. She advised the Trust on matters relating to data protection and employment law.
- b. So far as the Trust's email server is concerned, I recall making sure that a copy of the contents of both servers, including the email platform, was copied to the encrypted hard drive to which I refer above so that it could be accessed by the Inquiry as needed. The file that contains the email data will require software to read the files, unfortunately I do not recall the names of any of the programmes that can be used to access this type of data file.

18. To the best of my knowledge The Skipton Fund holds all relevant documents relating to the Trust and the Closure. I am not aware of any other employees of the Trust who are likely to hold "additional information relevant to the destruction of the computers or the whereabouts of the Trust's email server".

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____

GRO-C

Dated 4/10/20