

Witness Name: S P Merry
Statement No: WITN1390001
Exhibits: WITN1390002-9
Dated: March 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SIMON PHILIP MERRY

I, Simon Philip Merry, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Simon Philip Merry and I was born on [GRO-C] 1977. I live at [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] Warwickshire, [GRO-C]. I am married and have two daughters aged 7 and 3. I am currently working as a mentor for IT apprentices.
2. My mother (Jennifer Margaret Merry), father (Philip Laurence Merry) and my brother (Matthew James Merry) have also provided witness statements for the Public Inquiry.
3. I make this statement as an infected person in my own right and as an affected person in relation to my mother, who was infected with Hepatitis C, and my brother, who was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C; both as a result of receiving contaminated blood products.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to our full medical records.**

Section 2. How Infected/Affected

Myself

5. I have severe Haemophilia A and received Factor VIII from 1979. **Exhibit WITN1390002** is an extract from the UK National Haemophilia Database evidencing which blood products I received.
6. I was treated at Coventry and Warwick Hospital and my consultant was Dr. Strevens.
7. My parents were not given any advice regarding the risk of me receiving Factor VIII when I was young. Once I was old enough to manage my own affairs, I received no advice regarding the risks of receiving Factor VIII, despite having already being infected.
8. I was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII.
9. My mother informed me that she had a meeting on 8th April 1982 with Dr.Vinaygmoorthy at the Coventry and Warwick Hospital. My mother recalls, Dr.Vinaygmoorthy speaking about a form of Hepatitis. He assured my mother that this was nothing to be concerned about and it wouldn't affect me. My mother believes that he said that it was NANB.
10. Dr.Vinaygmoorthy went on to briefly convey advice on washing hands and the procedure of clearing up after blood spillages and using the sharps box. Thankfully my mother was very aware before then and was already extremely careful. Dr.Vinaygmoorthy guaranteed my mother that there were no risks of transmission. She clearly recollects this, as she asked about the risks of transmission as both Matthew and I were attending friend's houses

for various children's birthday parties at the time. This was something my mother was particularly distressed over.

11. In relation to Hepatitis B, I am unaware of the timing of the date I tested positive for this virus. My mother confirmed that she was given no information regarding the management of this virus. I also have never been given any information which would allow me to either understand or manage Hepatitis B.

12. With regards to HIV, receiving the unimaginable news of their young son being positive for this virus will always haunt my parents.

A) The news was thrust upon them in 1985 at GRO-C Railway station. My parents met by chance, another mother of a child with haemophilia that they knew. Her child was being treated at the same hospital as my brother and I. The lady asked my parents if they had received a letter from the hospital. My parents had no knowledge of this. And just like that, stood on the platform, our world fell apart, she responded with "In that case, your children are HIV positive!"

B) Shortly after this incident, my parents were contacted by the hospital and were asked to speak to Dr. Strevens. My mother has described this meeting as a blur and both my parents struggle to remember exactly what was said. She does however, recall a lab technician, Mr Lavendon also being present. I think during a discussion, Mr Lavendon referred to the results of the HIV tests by saying "Well, you didn't ask then?" implying that my mother didn't ask for the test results of HIV. My parents were completely unaware of any tests regarding HIV and did not give consent. My parents truly believed that HIV was a death sentence. This was the decade where HIV and AIDS caused absolute hysteria. People truly believed it was a death sentence! Our family had seen the devastating effect of the epidemic in the US and the hard hitting government television advert containing a tombstone with the word AIDS chiselled upon it.

- C) No sufficient information was given to my parents to allow them to understand or manage the HIV virus. No information was relayed to my parents on the risks of transmission. Furthermore, the consultants provided absolutely no follow up care. No regards were given to the psychological implications we were to face for the rest of our lives!

13. The delivery of Hepatitis C was again another devastation.

- A) Initially my parents were told by Dr Strevens that I did not contract Hepatitis C however, my brother Matthew had been tested positive. I believe this was in 1990.
- B) At the age of 18, I was attending appointments without my parents. During a routine consultation on the 29th January 1996, Dr Strevens and I were discussing my HIV. Towards the end of the meeting he very casually uttered the words "and of course you have Hepatitis C."
- C) My reactions very clearly illustrated that I had no idea of this. This was a complete new discovery to me. Nonetheless, Dr Strevens allowed me to leave and drive home. He would've known I was in complete shock by the emotions I displayed. Neither did he contact my parents.
- D) My parents came to greet me at the door on my return. They had heard a car engine revving and came out to investigate. My car had lost traction on the hill due to snow and ice. I was erratic and my driving was not controlled. I approached the front door screaming and shouting at my mother. I was angry and upset at the thought of her not telling me! It took a while for my mother to calm me down and bring me inside, where she explained that she knew nothing of this news either. At that moment in time I was not aware of the severity of Hepatitis C, however, I fully understood that this disease was transmitted and I could pass it on to other people.
- E) An urgent appointment was scheduled for the following week by my parents. When Dr Strevens was questioned, he answered by explaining that he had tested my brother Matthew and I for Hepatitis C. Initially Matthew had tested positive and my result was negative. He wasn't convinced by my results and therefore had them re-tested. The re-test was carried out without our knowledge. The second results showed that I

was positive for hepatitis C. This information was withheld from us for a period of approximately 5 years. He apologised for this. Despite his apology, he did not provide any details on how to manage my Hepatitis C diagnoses. My mother clearly remembers the rudeness of Dr Strevens trying to defend himself by saying he was hoping that I would still be around after the previous appointment, so that he could explain matters further to me. This made no sense to me, as this wasn't something I would normally do. I felt like he was treating me like a fool! He showed no compassion, empathy or any understanding. My head felt overloaded, I had too much to deal with. Being dealt with hepatitis was just another 'thing' added to the misery.

Matthew

14. Matthew has severe Haemophilia A and received blood products from 1978 which comprised of Armour and NHS. Due to the severity of Matthew's Haemophilia he required regular treatment with such products. **Exhibit WITN0139003** is an extract from Matthew's medical records confirming the batch numbers of the treatment he received between 1978 and 1984.
15. Matthew was treated at Coventry and Warwick Hospital.
16. When Matthew was very young his consultant was Dr Shinton and as he became older his main consultant was Dr Strevens.
17. My parents were not given any advice regarding the risk of Matthew receiving Factor VIII when he was young. As far as I am aware, when Matthew was old enough to manage his own affairs, he received no advice regarding the risks of receiving Factor VIII.
18. Matthew was infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C as a result of receiving contaminated Factor VIII.

19. In relation to NANB Hepatitis I repeat paragraphs 9 and 10 above as this relates to both of us.
20. With regards to Hepatitis B, as far as I can recall no information was provided to our family with Matthew's diagnosis which was made on 14th April 1983. **Exhibit WITN1390004** refers. No information or advice was imparted to my family by the medical professionals.
21. In reference to HIV, I repeat paragraphs 12 above as this relates to both of us.
22. Regarding Hepatitis C I believe that Dr Strevens advised Matthew that he had Hepatitis C in 1991. I am unsure if he was given sufficient information in order to enable him to understand or manage his infection. By this time Matthew was managing his own affairs.

Jennifer

23. My mother has a very mild deficiency of Factor VIII which was noted to be 13 percent just before her gall bladder operation which took place in November 1979. The only time she ever received Factor VIII was during this operation which took place at Coventry and Warwick Hospital. The consultant who carried out her operation was Mr Waterworth and her Consultant Haematologist was Dr Strevens.
24. At no time was my mother advised that there was a risk of with receiving Factor VIII.
25. My mother was infected with NANB Hepatitis as a result of receiving the contaminated Factor VIII in 1979.
26. My mother became very ill with jaundice at the beginning of 1980. Initially, she spoke to her GP. The next appointment was with Dr Strevens who confirmed that she had been infected with NANB. He sent her to a tropical diseases doctor despite confirming that she had been infected via the

contaminated Factor VIII. According to my mother, there was absolutely no possibility that she could have been infected in any other way.

27. She was not given sufficient information to allow her to understand or manage NANB. She was also given no information regarding the risks of transmission. She was led to believe that NANB was something she wouldn't need to be concerned about. Therefore, did not really think much about it at the time and continued as normal. She certainly had not been told that NANB could become an issue in the future.
28. In 1998 my mother donated blood. Shortly after she received a letter stating that she could not donate blood because she had Hepatitis C. Distraught, she then immediately went to see Dr Strevens at Coventry and Warwick Hospital. He carried out some further blood tests and confirmed that she had been infected with Hepatitis C, however, her body had now cleared it naturally.
29. Dr Strevens said that he would monitor her progress. Unfortunately, this did not materialise.
30. My mother felt appalled and was very distressed with this horrendous news and thus recalled the diagnosis of NANB in 1980. She was reassured by Dr Strevens to not concern herself with worry at the time of the diagnoses and therefore completely dismissed the information. However, she was acutely aware of the severity of Hepatitis C and the ramifications of what being infected with this virus meant.
31. Worryingly my father had been donating blood on a regular basis long before he married my mother and continued to do so throughout their marriage. My mother's concern was that he could have unwittingly put numerous people at risk of contracting Hepatitis C as a direct result of the

medical professionals failing to correctly and fully advise my mother about her infection at every juncture.

Section 3. Other Infections

Simon

32. In 2000/2001, I recall a conversation with Dr **GRO-D** at Birmingham QE Hospital. He informed me that I had been put at risk of vCJD. He went on to explain that this can only be tested for in an autopsy. This distressing news was yet another impossible piece of information to comprehend!

33. **Exhibit WITN1390005** confirms that I was put at risk of vCJD. This is a letter dated 2nd October 2008 from Dr I B Draper to "Dear Colleague" which states "*Many thanks for seeing Simon who is 31 years of age and HIV positive, he has a history of Haemophilia A (Factor VIII deficiency), hepatitis C and is at risk of Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease*".

Matthew

34. I believe Matthew has also been put at risk of vCJD.

Jennifer

35. My mother received a letter in February 2009 advising that she had not been put at risk of vCJD.

Section 4. Consent

Simon

36. I was tested for various viruses when I was younger without my parent's knowledge or consent. I was also tested for various viruses when I was

older without my knowledge or consent. Additionally, **Exhibit WITN1390006** contains a number of test results demonstrating that I was tested for both HTLVIII and Hepatitis B without our family's knowledge or consent.

37.I strongly speculate that being young severe Haemophiliac patients; presented medical professionals with the perfect research group. Our young age meant that Matthew and I had not been exposed to drug abuse or sexual activity.

Matthew

38.I repeat paragraphs 36 and 37 above in respect of Matthew as I am of the view that he was tested for various viruses without our family's knowledge or consent.

Jennifer

39.I do not believe that my mother was tested for any viruses without her knowledge or consent. I do not believe that she was treated or used for the purposes of research without her knowledge or consent.

Section 5. Impact

40.I vividly recall sitting in my parent's dining room when my mother announced the horrific news that I had been infected with HIV. I believe I was around 10 years old. I was old enough to appreciate exactly what this meant for me. Death. I was numb and initially I didn't react to the news.

41.Hysteria swept the nation with shocking adverts about AIDS in the 80's. I clearly remember as child the word AIDS chiseled on a blackened grave. Another advert showed an iceberg which, beneath the surface, revealed giant letters AIDS. The message of both adverts were bleak, simple and clear – a deadly disease for which there is no known cure.

42. I knew exactly what HIV meant for me. I used to lie in bed with these images going through my mind and crying myself to sleep, night after night, wishing that I was already dead so that I did not have to experience the pain and anger that I was feeling
43. My father used to take my brother and I to church every week, I used to wonder that if God existed what had I done that was so bad that God would punish me in this way and if he wasn't punishing me, why would he let this happen to me
44. At school I was popular and outgoing until I was met with this news. I changed overnight; retreating into a shell, becoming a shadow of my former self. I isolated myself. I knew that I could not talk to anyone or tell anyone about this for fear of what may happen, the stigma surrounding HIV and AIDS in the 80s was immense. It's hard to put into words the darkness that enveloped my life, self-loathing, fear, hate, anger, despair were the tip of an emotional iceberg of trauma that I as an 11 year old child had to live with.
45. I have absolutely no idea how I passed my 12 plus exam. In fact, I was the only boy in my class who passed. In hindsight, this was not a good thing for me mentally, passing the exam meant that when I went to secondary school I was separated from my friends who all went into different classes than me, leading to further isolation.
46. Looking back it's clear to me that I was suffering with severe depression, having thoughts that no 11 year old should ever have to process. I struggled at secondary school and found it very difficult to make friends. I overate as I desperately tried to find some sort of comfort in my life. I became overweight which led to constant bullying at school.
47. I felt completely isolated often wishing I was dead. I had no idea how to talk to my parents or brother about how I was feeling. I used to imagine the life that I was never going to have, girlfriends, marriage, children. I did not receive any

counselling or therapy to help me deal with any of the thoughts or feelings that I was experiencing.

48. At school I didn't apply myself to my studies. I didn't see the point. As far as I was concerned I was going to die soon. I left school with 6 GCSE's, in subjects I found easy and didn't have to apply myself. I massively underachieved.

49. At the age of 16, [GRO-C] with no fear of the consequences. After all I had no future I was going to die anyway.

50. It was around this time that my brother and I started talking to each other about what we were going through. We spent many tearful nights together and although this sounds inappropriate, I was actually relieved that he was in the same position as me because there was someone that could begin to comprehend how I was feeling. We sought comfort in each other.

51. When I reached the age of 17 I started to tell some close friends about my infected status. Those I told were extremely shocked yet thankfully supportive.

52. It was around this time that I had my first relationship with a girl. We dated for almost 5 months when I decided to explain my situation. She also was extremely shocked and again supportive. This relationship continued for another 6 months before it ended for reasons unrelated to my infections. I found it difficult to form any further relationships with girls as I felt I would have to reveal my status much earlier in the relationship, before being able to determine whether I could trust them with this secret. It took nearly 10 years before I found the confidence to begin relationships again.

53. During my late teens I [GRO-C] spent a lot of my life at parties. My parents encouraged me to go to University. I had to enroll onto a foundation course due to failing my A levels. I had absolutely no ambition. I couldn't see a future. I saw it as an opportunity to party hard. However this lead to a sense of even more meaninglessness and emptiness.

54. Whilst attending Plymouth University my consultant offered me Interferon treatment for HCV. I declined this offer because I was not experiencing any symptoms from HCV and I was well versed in the miserable side effects of Interferon.
55. I struggled through my foundation year and commenced a degree at Plymouth. The friends I made at University knew that I had Haemophilia but they did not know about my infections. I hadn't known them for long enough to imagine how they may react. Once again I began to feel isolated and alone. I dropped out of University halfway through the first year of my degree after falling too far behind with the course and returned home to my parents. My mind was chaotic and I couldn't concentrate.
56. The state of mind that my infections caused me have massively impacted upon my social life, education, and future job prospects.
57. After returning home from University I lived with my parents for a couple of years, here I just existed. I found myself lost, my close friends could see that I was struggling. In 1999 I embarked upon a 4 month trip to New Zealand and Australia with a couple of my friends, I wanted to experience more of the world while I could.
58. Once I returned home I drifted for another 6 months. After some time, I had an epiphany - I started to realise that I had been living with these infections for most of my life and that my body had been dealing with them. My brother had not yet developed AIDS and I thought as we were both genetically similar and had received the same infected treatments we may either have some strain of infections that was going to remain dormant, or that somehow our bodies were able to keep HIV at bay naturally.
59. Finally I began to think that I was going to have a life, a future. I began applying for lots of jobs. I had no qualifications or experience and therefore kept being rejected. After months of rejections I applied for a computer maintenance course in Coventry to try to help my job prospects. I felt a huge

sense of pressure and I was desperate to be accepted, it felt as if this was my last chance. Thankfully I was accepted and after completing the course I managed to get my first job at the age of 24. It was a low paid job. However, given my experience and education I had little choice in my employment options. I was excited and felt like it was the start of my life.

60. As time passed, I naturally cleared HCV and HIV became almost a distant memory. It was something that I would have to tell people now and again but it didn't feel any more like the consuming evil creature that had destroyed my childhood and adolescence.

61. I was made redundant from my first job and after 6 months of job hunting I was successful in obtaining another low paid post in IT, at a secondary school. Here I met my future wife, Kelly, in 2005.

62. Kelly and I knew each other as work colleagues and friends for about a year before we started dating. The first night we went out I felt compelled to tell her about my HIV straight away. I knew I had to be upfront, I could deal with the immediate rejection. However, it would have been completely unfair to the both of us to build a relationship without her knowing. Kelly is the most incredible person, friendly, caring, generous and selfless to name just a few of her qualities. I knew immediately that this was the woman I wanted to spend the rest of my life with. Thankfully, although shocked, Kelly accepted my status and our relationship progressed very quickly from this point onwards. We married in 2009 and shortly after, due to my HIV, began IVF to try for a baby.

63. The IVF treatment made Kelly seriously ill and she was admitted to hospital on 2 occasions spending weeks in agony as her body reacted badly to the drugs she had been given. It was, however successful and Kelly was pregnant, our baby girl was born in 2011. To say I was a proud father would be an understatement, this was a moment that for the majority of my life I'd never thought was possible.

64. Exactly one month after the birth of my daughter, I visited my consultant for what I thought was a routine appointment. He told me that he had bad news, my HIV viral load had gone from nearly undetectable to 10s of thousands and that my CD4 count had dropped to worryingly low levels. This was absolutely devastating for both Kelly and I. After reaching a stage in my life that was an impossibility 10 years earlier, and now with a 4 week old daughter dependent on me, it was all being stripped away again. My body was beginning to be consumed by HIV.
65. My mind went back to the dark place that it dwelled in when I was a child. I was filled with thoughts of never seeing my daughter grow up, never walking her to school let alone down the aisle. My daughter was going to grow up without a father and without the love that I had for her. Would she always be wondering what kind of man I was? Questioning her own identity? Kelly would become a widow after only a 2 years of marriage, having to support our newborn baby all by herself whilst dealing with the death of her husband.
66. My consultant immediately started me on strong medication in an attempt to control my HIV. The side effects were miserable, including nightmares and difficulty focusing and concentrating. Kelly and I kept this news to ourselves as we tried to process what was happening. Thankfully the medication started to work and my viral load became undetectable and my CD4 count went up to normal levels. I then confided in my parents and brother about what had happened. Obviously they were all upset by this news, it also had added implications for my brother as he started questioning whether his body might one day also stop being able to naturally fight the HIV.
67. The only reason my brother and I are still here today, is because our bodies resisted HIV and HCV for as long as they did. We've lasted long enough naturally for medical advances to catch up with us and offer us hope of an extended life. So many have not been as lucky, of the 1243 haemophiliacs infected with HIV and HCV less than 250 are still alive today.
68. Kelly and I now have another daughter and I feel truly blessed. However, the NHS refused to fund the second round of IVF because we did not meet

criteria of "exceptional need." If being given HIV, Hepatitis A, B, C and exposed to vCJD by the NHS at the age of 5 isn't exceptional need, I'm not sure what is?

69. Looking to the future I always wonder if one day my HIV medication will stop working and that my family will be left without me. That thought never leaves me, I cherish every minute I have with my family.

70. There will come a time when I have to tell my daughters about my infections and what I have gone through. I have to decide when to tell them, make a judgement as to when they are mature enough to deal with and understand my infections.

71. What has happened to me still affects me today, it will never leave me; contaminated blood has both shaped and molded my entire life. Now as a parent myself, I still struggle to imagine what my parents went through on the day they were faced with the heartbreaking news at the railway platform. I cannot comprehend how they dealt with the fact that both of their sons were infected with HIV, Hepatitis B and C as a direct result of receiving treatment that was meant to help them, treatment that potentially was administered by their own hands as we were treated for our Haemophilia at home.

72. My parents had to watch my brother and I self-destruct in front of them and there was absolutely nothing they could do or say to stop us or make us better. All they could do was give their full unconditional love and support. I have no doubt that my darker days would have led me to paths from which I would not have returned. For that I truly thank them.

73. My brother and I have come a long way from our predicted paths and in that regard I refer to two psychiatric reports which were produced in 1990.

74. **Exhibit WITN1390007** is a psychiatric report of Bryan Lask, Consultant Psychiatrist, dated 18th May 1990, in respect of me which states "*I found Simon to be a very pleasant boy who spoke openly about himself. He fully understands that he is HIV positive and that he was infected from Factor*

VIII. He knows that he will never be able to have children, and that he may contract Aids, for which there is no cure and from which he might die. He did not know what the chances were of developing Aids, or of dying. He tells me that he does not like to think about his situation as it upsets him when he does.....It is very likely that in the next few years he will experience more psychological distress as the full implications of his illness impinge upon him. It is very much to the credit of his parents that he is coping so well at present".

75. **Exhibit WITN1390008** is a psychiatric report of Bryan Lask, Consultant Psychiatrist, dated 18th May 1990 in respect of Matthew which states "He tries not to think about the future and when he does feel upset he tries to distract himself....he would like to have girlfriends but knows that he will never be able to have children.....his main concern is that he does not know what will happen to him....my impression of Matthew is that he has a strong psychological defence system which protects him from the true reality of his situation. This defence system is easily penetrated at which point he becomes clearly distressed.....However, it is clear that infection with the HIV virus has had a major impact on his life, and in particular on his emotional state. It is very likely in the next few years, even if he does not develop Aids, he will suffer major emotional difficulties. He will have to adjust to the probability of a far shorter than normal life, and a period of chronic ill-health. In addition it will be difficult for him to make satisfactory and lasting relationships with people of the opposite sex, because of the very real danger of cross-infection. He is already worried about this and distressed at the fact that he will not be able to have children. It is much to his parents' credit that his coping so well at present".

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

Myself

76. When I was aged about 14, I was admitted to hospital following a bad bleed in my kidneys. Instead of being placed on a ward I was placed in an isolation room.

77. **Exhibit WITN1390009** is a letter dated 16th January 1995 from Iain Barker, Laboratory Manager to Dr D Galliford which states "*I know you are aware of this patient's high risk status. When requesting any tests from the Pathology Laboratory on him please could you attach one of the enclosed biohazard stickers on the top left hand corner of the request form? This will alert pathology staff without communicating to anybody else the high risk nature of this patient*".

78. During our IVF they told Kelly and I that being HIV positive was not an issue but because I used to have HCV, despite the fact that my body had already cleared this naturally, I was still classified as dual infected and our embryo had to be stored in a separate incubator to all the other embryos. This meant that it had to be removed from the incubator to monitor its development instead of being able to be monitored in the incubator, this did not foster the best developmental conditions and reduced the chance of a successful result, our 1st attempt at a second child resulted in a miscarriage.

79. I was never offered any counselling or psychological support to help support me living with my infections.

Matthew

80.

GRO-C

81. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C]
[GRO-C] In my mother's words "Matthew was treated like a modern day leper."

82. I recall seeing a sign on Matthew's hospital door [GRO-C] which said "*Risk of Infection*".

83. Matthew was never offered any counselling or psychological support.

Jennifer

84. As far as I am aware my mother never suffered any obstacles in relation to accessing any medical or dental treatment.

85. She was never offered any counselling or psychological support either as a result of her own diagnosis or in relation to her son's diagnoses.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

Matthew and I

86. From about 1990 Matthew and I received £15 per week from the Macfarlane Trust (MFT). We also received a winter fuel payment of £440 per annum.

87. I believe that the MFT also provided about £500 in respect of each of us in or around 1991 so that we could go on holiday as a family to Bacton in Norfolk. They also funded a further £250 in respect of the same holiday.

88. The MFT refused our applications for grants for things such as bedding because my father's salary was considered to be sufficient. We were

therefore not entitled to a number of grants or other payments on the same basis.

89. My mother found the application procedure for the MFT relatively straightforward but then the usual outcome was that we were refused any help or support.

90. My mother found the MFT fit for purpose up to around 1995 and we were grateful for the scraps of support that came our way. We were knocked back on so many occasions so when we finally got something from them we were extremely grateful. I suppose this is one way to keep those people already suffering "happy".

91.

GRO-C

92. Once I was old enough to deal with my own affairs, I took over the management in relation to matters pertaining to the MFT. I applied for a number of white goods but I only received minimal support. I was ashamed asking for money, the process strenuously tested my need for the money. I had to plead for money. The MFT asked me to justify in great depth every time I applied. The process was demeaning. These viruses were given to us, through no fault of our own and yet they made us beg. I rely on these payments and there is so much uncertainty as nothing is guaranteed year upon year. Life is uncertain enough for us without the arbitrary behaviour of the MFT.

93. Since the monthly payments were increased, I have to justify what I am earning to the MFT. I get discretionary payments to top up my income and extra payments for my two daughters.

94. I did not receive any money from the Skipton Fund because they successfully postulated that my body had naturally cleared the Hepatitis C

virus. This seems entirely unfair and ludicrous that the psychological impacts were not taken into account.

95. We were involved in the previous HIV litigation of 1991 which necessitated that our parents signed a waiver. Matthew and I received 2 ex gratia payments of £20,000 and £21,500 the later was held in Trust for us by Queens Bench Master Turner.

96. I also received a payment in the region of £20,000 from a previous litigation with Irwin Mitchell in or around 2006/2007. The only reason that I could get this was because I could obtain my medical records from Coventry Hospital. Matthew was unable to obtain his because they had been destroyed and therefore, unfairly, he could not obtain any payment.

Section 8. Other Issues

97. The ex-gratia payments that Matthew and I received was the value placed on our lives. I was a child; expected to die and thus had very little value.

98. I have always longed to be an active campaigner for contaminated blood however, my previous job was in a school, and I had to be extremely careful to keep my infected status private for fear of losing my job. I worried that the parents of the children wouldn't be accepting of my condition.

99. However, I contacted our local MP, Mark Pawsey, to seek his support and speak on our family's behalf before the Inquiry started. I did however, at that stage, request that our family remained anonymous. I no longer wish to be anonymous.

100. My brother went public on television in July 2018. Both my wife and I were still employed at the same school at this time and were, understandably, very nervous in the run up to the programme being aired. However, it was pure coincidence that we had actually both left the school before the programme was broadcasted.

101. I find the Tainted Blood Website a good source of information and I am of the view that they are doing a lot of good work.

102. I would like the inquiry to consider historically the impacts; on me as 5 year old child infected with contaminated blood and how that has shaped my life, upon my parents effectively being told their sons would soon die and upon me as a new father discovering his daughter may grow up never knowing him.

103. I want answers and justice from this Inquiry. I want people to be held accountable for the terrible decisions that were made at the time. I want to know what they knew and why they chose to take decisions which had horrific consequences for thousands of people's lives.

104. I want the Government to accept responsibility and liability for the actions they took that lead to the worst treatment disaster in the history of the NHS

105. I want the government to promise to act upon the findings and carry out any recommendations of this public inquiry.

Anonymity

106. I do not wish to apply for anonymity and I would like to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated: 24th April 2019