

Witness Name: **GRO-B**

Statement No.: WITN3751001

Exhibits: WITN3751002-012

Dated: 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF **GRO-B****

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29<sup>th</sup> August 2019.

I, **GRO-B**, will say as follows: -

#### **Section 1. Introduction**

1. My name is **GRO-B**. My date of birth is **GRO-B**, 1961 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am not in employment due to my ill-health. I currently receive PIP and employment support allowance. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness has affected me, the treatment I received and the impact it had on me and my family.
2. I can confirm that I have appointed Thompsons Solicitors to be my legal representatives. I can confirm that the Inquiry should send all correspondence regarding me to Thompsons.

## **Section 2. How infected**

3. On the 28th March 1983 I was walking home after a night out. I decided to take a shortcut home and I jumped over some metal railings. Part of the railings collapsed and I impaled myself on a metal spike. It was near some shops and there were some passers-by. At the time there was only a small hole in my side but I remember there was a lot of blood. A passer-by took me to the Western General Hospital, Edinburgh but I was transferred to the Eastern General Hospital, Edinburgh. I had emergency surgery where I had a section of my bowel removed. During the surgery I had a blood transfusion due to my blood loss. I exhibit a discharge summary and letter that refer to this incident as **WITN3751002**.
4. Prior to the operation I was given no information about the risks should I need a blood transfusion. I do remember signing a form before the operation. I do not remember what the form was for. I assume it was for my consent to the operation going ahead. My solicitors have reviewed my medical records and they have been unable to locate this form.
5. When I came round after the operation I was informed that due to excess blood loss during the operation I had received a blood transfusion. I think it was the surgeon who told me that. I do not know his name.
6. As a result of having a blood transfusion I was infected with hepatitis C.
7. In October 2014 I went to see my doctor. I had been having a lot of stomach pains and was feeling generally unwell. My GP was called **GRO-B**. **GRO-B**. He took my bloods for testing. He also examined me looking into my eyes. I remember he made a comment about my skin colour. I had just come back from a sunshine break and had a tan so I didn't think much of that at the time. Two weeks after this appointment I received a phone call from **GRO-B**. He told me over the phone, quite bluntly, that my blood tests had revealed I had hepatitis C.

8. I knew a little about this infection and I was completely devastated. I was unsure about how I could have got it. **GRO-B** did not give me any information about hepatitis C and he didn't explain to me how to understand or manage the infection.
9. **GRO-B** did ask if I was an intravenous drug user. I told him I was not. I got the impression from him that this was how he thought I had caught the infection. From 2005 until 2014 I had been at the doctors on numerous occasions with severe stomach pains. I would sometimes see **GRO-B** but I would also see the other doctors at the practice. It would depend on who was available. I had my bloods taken on numerous occasions and therefore I do believe my hepatitis C should have been discovered earlier. I exhibit a letter dated the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2014 from Sara Lamond the Specialist Nurse, who noted that my LFTs had been raised for a number of years as **WITN3751003**.
10. Informing someone over the phone that they have hepatitis C is in my opinion inappropriate. I knew it was potentially a fatal infection and I came off the phone completely devastated as I had it in my mind that I had been given a death sentence.
11. **GRO-B** did say that the infection could be passed on through sexual intercourse. He did say that it was a low risk but he recommended that my wife and two daughters got tested.
12. When I was informed by **GRO-B** that I had hepatitis C he didn't give me much information about the infection. I contacted the Hepatitis C Trust by telephone. I got more information from them than I did from him or anyone else.
13. I immediately began to question how I had been infected. **GRO-B** wrote to the Blood Transfusion Service in June 2015 seeking further information on the transfusion. I exhibit this letter as **WITN3751004**. I exhibit their response dated the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2015 as **WITN3751005**. In their

response, they advised that they could not locate any records but that transfusion records from this period were often incomplete and paper based. I also exhibit a letter dated the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2014, which was shortly after my diagnosis, where my GP **GRO-B** wrote to Sara Lamond advising her that their records were also missing information on my transfusion and were incomplete as **WITN3751006**.

### **Section 3. Other infections**

14. I do not believe I contracted any infections other than hepatitis C.

### **Section 4. Consent**

15.. In 1990, I attended hospital for an HIV test. I had only heard of hepatitis A and hepatitis B and asked the nurses at the clinic if I should have been tested for these as well. They advised no, that the hepatitis tests were only for drug addicts. I had not even heard of hepatitis C at this point. I was aware of the public information adverts that advised people to ask new partners about their sexual history. I had met my partner who is now my wife, and this is why I attended hospital for this particular test. It wasn't until 2014, when I went to see **GRO-B** complaining of pain in my upper and lower stomach were things looked at further. He thought it was a hernia, and he told me he would take some bloods, but he didn't explain what they were for, until a week later when he diagnosed me over the phone with hepatitis C.

16. It is clear to me that the NHS have deliberately, not tested me for hepatitis C even when all the warning signs indicated that was what was going on over the years. To let the decades roll on and my health decline, I feel is deliberate. They destroyed the blood transfusion records and then to cover their tracks, they tried to destroy my character by making out I was a drug addict, when I am not.

### **Section 5. Impact**

17. In 2005, I began to suffer severe abdominal pain. I remember I was on a bus and the pains in my abdomen were horrendous. It felt like I was being stabbed in the abdomen with a knitting needle. I had to stand up on the bus for the remainder of the journey, such was the pain. I was constantly going back and forth to the doctors because of the pain I was in. GRO-B would just say that I must have pulled a muscle. I remember my stomach would swell and then go down. It was very painful and uncomfortable. I began to feel very lethargic, everything became very much an effort. I felt very nauseous and was vomiting regularly. I had no appetite or interest in food. As a consequence I lost a lot of weight. I remember the whites of my eyes and skin were a yellow colour.

18. Mentally, from the mid-1980s I have always suffered with mental health issues. I suffered with depression and had psychotic episodes. It is unclear to me whether this is related to hepatitis C.

19. I now suffer with diabetes and arthritis. I believe these conditions were caused by the hepatitis C infection. I also suffer with short-term memory loss and lack of concentration. Again I believe this is due to hepatitis C. I have also been left with stage four cirrhosis of the liver.

20. After he informed me that I had hepatitis C, GRO-B referred me to Ward 41 at the Western General Hospital. This is the Infectious Diseases Department. I saw a consultant there, I can't remember his name. The consultant asked me about my sexuality and whether I took drugs intravenously. I assured him I was in a happy, monogamous marriage and that I had never taken drugs intravenously. He then asked me if I had ever had a blood transfusion. I told him about the blood transfusion I had in 1983. This appointment took place in December 2014. He said there was a new treatment available for hepatitis C. I exhibit a letter dated the 23<sup>rd</sup> December to discuss my treatment as **WITN3751007**.

21. In March 2015 I started the treatment. It was a three-month course of tablets. I received pegylated interferon, ribavirin and sofosbuvir. I also

simultaneously received risperidone and escitalopram for my psychological troubles. Throughout the three months I attended the hospital every week, to see the liver specialist nurse, to have my bloods checked.

22. Last year a nurse told me that I should have been automatically tested for hepatitis C in 2006, she told me I should see a solicitor about it. I had developed pain in my right hand side after 2006 and different doctors kept telling me that I had pulled a muscle. I could have been treated for hepatitis C 8 years before I ended up actually accessing treatment. Now the consequence of not being properly advised and treated has left me with stage 4 cirrhosis.

23. I was led to believe that the treatment I received was the most recent treatment. I do not believe there were any other treatments available at that time.

24. I do remember the skin on my hands and feet becoming itchy and the skin began to peel off. It felt like I had been burnt.. The Interferon treatment caused me to become incredibly anxious and I started to experience auditory hallucinations in September 2015. I attended the hospital for help but this was very upsetting. After the three months had elapsed my hepatitis C was undetectable

25. My infected status did not impact upon any other medical or dental care for any other condition.

26. My life has been destroyed by my hepatitis C infection. I have become very pessimistic about life in general. I am on strong antidepressants. I just feel like I am living a death sentence. I became a different person. I **GRO-B** **GRO-B** and I was a sociable person who enjoyed the company of others. I have now become almost a recluse and rarely leave the house.

27. My wife **GRO-B** gets very upset and tearful at times as she worries about the future. Our sex life has suffered, as even though I have cleared the virus

there is always a possibility it could come back and she may get infected.

28. **GRO-B** is always cleaning the house. My wife, our two daughters and I, all have our own towels. I am also conscious of cutting myself when in the house. All of these measures are to avoid the infection spreading to others.

29. I didn't drink alcohol very much before I was diagnosed with liver damage but now I am completely abstinent. **GRO-B** and I very rarely go out socially.

30. I am aware of the stigma that surrounds hepatitis C, it is associated with intravenous drug use. **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B**. It is because of the stigma that I have never told anyone I had hepatitis C. I have never taken intravenous drugs in my life and didn't want to be associated with this lifestyle. My wife also suffers with the stigma of hepatitis C. She would never come to an appointment with me at the hospital. She worried she would see a nurse or a member of staff that she knew and that they would judge us. We have a close extended family, but no one knows of my hepatitis C status.

31. I have worked as **GRO-B** for many years for different companies. **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B**. Due to my mental state, loss of memory and lack of concentration, I feel uncomfortable being around people. I suffer panic attacks if I am in social situations. My physical capabilities with my arthritis have made it impossible for me to do **GRO-B**. I no longer work and am now on benefits.

32. The impact of having hepatitis C affected me physically even though I didn't know I had it. In 2006 I had cancelled my life insurance policy in order to get a cheaper one. I remember a doctor was sent by the new insurance company to do a medical assessment of me. He examined me and took my bloods. A few weeks later I received a letter from the insurance company stating that I had been turned down by them because it had been discovered I had lipids and abnormal liver function levels in my liver. I couldn't believe

it, I had never been told that I had problems with my liver before. I did go and see **GRO-B** about this who originally told me there was nothing wrong with my liver. When the insurance refused to change their decision, I returned to him again and he sent me to the liver department at the Western General Hospital. He later informed me again that my liver was fine. I exhibit the letter from HSBC which rejected me from receiving a new life insurance policy as **WITN3751008** and the subsequent letter from **GRO-B** asking for further investigations on my liver as a result of this rejection as **WITN3751009**. Despite this, it still took nine years to diagnose me..

### **Section 6. Treatment care support**

33. I have had no real care or support since I was diagnosed with hepatitis C. I now have stage four cirrhosis of the liver and feel I have a death sentence. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support. I really do feel I would have benefited from psychological support as I have been very depressed for the last five years. I don't like to speak about my feelings too much to my wife as I know she gets very depressed about our situation as it is. Due to the stigma I do not discuss my situation with anyone else. Therefore I believe counselling and psychological support would have been a benefit for me.

### **Section 7. Financial assistance**

34. In 2014 I saw something in the media about the Skipton Fund. It was a fund that had been set up to help the people who had been infected with HIV and hepatitis C. I contacted the fund and they sent me a form to fill in. I filled the form in and took it to my doctors who had a section to fill in and he would send it back to the Skipton Fund. I exhibit the completed application which was completed by my GP **GRO-B** as **WITN3751010**.

35. I have received no payments from any trust or fund set up to assist people who were contaminated with infected blood.



36. The process of filling in the form I was sent was easy and straightforward.

A few weeks later however I was devastated when I received a letter from the Skipton Fund rejecting my claim. [GRO-B] had written in my Skipton form "*past illegal drug use but no record of high risk behaviour or injecting drug use*", however in my referral letter to the Western General in 2014 he had written on the referral form that I did inject drugs. I exhibit this referral letter as **WITN3751011**. This letter is the reason I was rejected as it was provided to the Skipton Fund. I did appeal and [GRO-B] wrote a letter reminding the Skipton Fund about my injury in the 1980s, which I exhibit as **WITN3751012**. Nevertheless, I was again, rejected and I feel this is because of what [GRO-B] wrote in the referral letter.

37. In August 2019 I heard about a scheme run by the Scottish Government that had been set up for people contaminated with infected blood. I did apply but I was again rejected.

38. I feel extremely angry and devastated by being rejected. I feel that because I was in prison for a time and that both my brothers used intravenous drugs that I have been stereotyped. I have been in a monogamous relationship with my wife since 1989. I have never taken intravenous drugs.

#### **Section 8. Other issues**

39. I do wish to remain anonymous in this statement.

40. I would like answers about why I was rejected for financial assistance. I am led to believe that there is no mention on my medical records of me having a blood transfusion. Indeed, I believe some of my medical records are missing. It would seem in my mind that there has been some cover-up.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed 

<b>GRO-B</b>
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Dated Jun 30, 2020

**NOT RELEVANT**