

Witness Name: Claire Wrigley

Statement No.: WITN5673001

Exhibits: nil

Dated:

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CLAIRE WRIGLEY**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 26 March 2021.

I, Claire Wrigley, will say as follows: -

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

1. My name is Claire Wrigley. My date of birth is GRO-C 1973 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I work full time as a HR consultant for Lloyds and have been in employment all of my adult life, except for when I had my children. I am married and have two children aged 15 and 13. My husband and I have lived in Chester since 2003 and prior to that we were based in London.
2. I intend to speak about my late father William Peter Baggott, who was born on GRO-C GRO-C 1937 and sadly passed away on GRO-C 2012, at the age of 75. He was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV), as a result of receiving a blood transfusion after a tonsillectomy.
3. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of his illness, how the illness affected him, the treatment received and the impact it had on him and our lives together. My

statement is to be read in conjunction with my mother's, Pamela Baggott (WITN5674001).

4. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

### **Section 2. How Infected**

5. My father underwent a tonsillectomy in 1950 at the age of 13. He haemorrhaged during the procedure and required a blood transfusion.
6. I remember being told that Dad had been diagnosed with HCV and I was unclear as to what that meant, so googled it to find out more.
7. Please refer to my mother's statement (WITN5674001) for further detail on how my father was diagnosed with HCV.

### **Section 3. Other Infections**

8. As far as I am aware, my father did not contract any other infections other than HCV as a result of being given infected blood.

### **Section 4. Consent**

9. Please refer to my mother's statement (WITN5674001) in relation to consent.

### **Section 5. Impact**

10. I regret not urging Dad to go back after his appointment with the consultant where he mentioned about the liver biopsy. I should have encouraged that to happen so we were fully aware of the condition of his liver. After that appointment, life took over and it was only when Dad started to experience cellulitis that I realised he was getting older. He had always been so active and healthy and it was unusual for him to have a health complaint. I never made the link between the cellulitis and HCV.

11. My second regret is that when I was informed of Dad's swollen abdomen, I did not insist that he was seen by a consultant for a second opinion. I wish I had been around to see it for myself, but I was not living close to my parents at the time and could not see the changes in Dad that Mum described. I feel very upset that the initial GP did nothing and said it must be a hernia, when he was aware of Dad's HCV infection. I now have a very negative attitude towards the NHS as a result of this – they are writing people off and dismissing them to this day.
12. I was lucky to be there when Dad passed away, although it was the worst experience of my life. He did not go in a nice way – the hospital let him deteriorate so much that I had to watch him die whilst blood foamed out of his mouth and nostrils. This is something that I cannot forget.
13. After Dad passed away, Mum was not able to cope too well. She was due to help provide childcare for us but that did not come to fruition. I also worry about her financially because she no longer receives Dad's pension and does not have the funds to look after herself. I persuaded my parents to move to closer and Mum would have been fine if she moved with Dad, but she ended up moving to Chester on her own and had to start all over again whilst she was still grieving.
14. The impact on my children has been minimal because they were very young when Dad passed away. Dad loved to get involved and play with them – they had a great relationship and we would spend as much time together as we could. My children did not attend Dad's funeral – I made the decision based on their age and that it would be too upsetting for them. They remember him fondly, but it has been a long time and they only have limited recollection. It hurts me that they do not have much of a memory of him and their future will be one without his warmth and wisdom.
15. I miss Dad every day, but life has to go on – I have my own family, a full-time job and have Mum to look after. His death did affect my mental health – whilst I knew he had HCV, I did not expect him to deteriorate so quickly and it was almost too late to do anything when he became seriously ill. The impact of Mum's grief has

also weighed heavily on me because I feel that I need to support her and this in turn has left me more anxious.

16. I do not take any medication for my mental health, but I am up and down with anxiety. I have experienced some small bouts of anxiety at different stages of my life, but I did not expect to lose my father so early. He was very fit and active and my paternal grandfather lived until the age of 87. Had Dad not been infected with HCV, I believe he would have gone on until his 90s.
17. I did have a lot of anxiety over the HCV itself. Dad's diagnosis made me anxious over whether my children had contracted it, but I felt ok once Mum and I tested negative. I had to push for the HCV test because the doctor did not want to give it to me, but I had to put my mind at ease. I did have counselling over my anxiety, but Dad's HCV infection was not the only reason.
18. I am probably more of a hypochondriac as a result of Dad's infection and treatment and tend to question things a lot more than I did previously. I look at my medical records from any consultation and do the same for my children. I do also worry about my children's health a lot more.
19. I worry a lot about my brother. He is 45 years old and has only ever moved out of home to go to university. After Dad passed away, he could not work for 18 months because of GRO-C. He has no social contact outside of work, and has no partner. He was socially nervous before Dad's ill health, but this has made everything worse. Moving to Chester after Dad just passing away really held him back – it was his idea to move here initially, but he did not expect that we would lose Dad in the way that we did.
20. GRO-C and I think the main cause of this is due to our father's HCV infection and death. I think he feels as though he has to stay at home to look after Mum. He internalises everything and does not tell Mum or I know how he is feeling – I think this is why he has not attended the statement interview today.

21. Since Dad passed away, there has naturally been a loss of relationship with his side of the family.
22. I worry about my mum and what may happen to her. I have no confidence at all that a hospital will provide Mum with compassionate care as she gets older. When patients get to a certain age, medical professionals do not try as hard.

#### **Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support**

23. None of my family were ever offered any counselling or psychological support as a result of Dad's HCV infection.
24. From the moment Dad was admitted to hospital, he was treated abysmally. The standard of care was awful and once you are over a certain age, My impression is the medical professionals do not try as hard. I feel very guilty that I did not do more about this, because the standard of care let Dad down and the moment he stepped through the door he had no chance. He was going to die of the HCV, but he would have lived longer had he received better care and communication.
25. I would go up to the nurses to find out information, but I was constantly fobbed off and it felt as though I was hitting a wall. Occasionally someone would be human and find out something, but that was a rare occurrence. 95% of the medical professionals in that hospital did not care. They would remark that they were busy, but this was evidently not the case and often they were sitting down chatting amongst one another. There was an overall lack of care and compassion and I feel a huge sense of guilt in that I should have done more on Dad's behalf.

#### **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

26. We found out about the Skipton Fund as a result of my brother in law, who is a GP in Cambridge, Dr Tom Rigley. No medical professional ever mentioned it to us before.

27. Mum made the initial application in March 2013, which was rejected in July 2013 on the basis that there was insufficient evidence to prove that Dad received a blood transfusion. We appealed the decision, but this was also rejected in October 2013 because they did not think blood in the 1950s would be subject to contamination.
28. I was very annoyed when the Skipton application was turned down. We did not know about the HCV infection until Dad was 60, but he suffered as a result of the infection. It was not the financial gain that we wanted, but the recognition that he contracted the virus through no fault of his own. It was another slap in the face after the poor hospital treatment he received. There was certainly a lack of justice for Dad, but after the appeal we put it behind us. What else can you do?
29. I was very upset that medical records were not available to prove that Dad received a blood transfusion and I felt it was unreasonable that we were not believed. The managers at Skipton must know that there is little chance of retrieving these records after all this time – yet they ask for them. I do not know how Mum and I managed to go through the process of applying for financial support whilst we were in grief.

#### **Section 8. Other Issues**

30. I feel that every effort should be made to reflect the fact that people's lives have been severely impacted because of the contaminated blood scandal.
31. It should be recognised that the individuals who received bad blood contracted infections through no fault of their own.
32. I am pleased that the Inquiry is happening and I hope that many others will find some peace in having their stories listened to, which will provide evidence to the Inquiry.

### Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 26.8.21