

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5695001

Exhibits: N/A

Dated: 14 May 2021

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

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### Section 1: Introduction

1. I, GRO-B, of GRO-B  
GRO-B, make this statement to assist the Infected Blood Inquiry in relation to its investigation arising out of the tragic circumstances of the death of my late father; GRO-B: F

### Section 2: How Affected

2. My Father; F, was born on the GRO-B and tragically succumbed to the effects of both HIV and Hepatitis C infections on the GRO-B GRO-B 1988.
3. I am the son of a person with Haemophilia who received contaminated Factor VIII concentrates for his Haemophilia A condition.
4. He was a person with severe Haemophilia A with a Factor VIII level of less than 1% and required treatment for his Haemophilia condition in relation to spontaneous bleeds, traumas and was regularly in receipt of Factor VIII concentrates.

### Section 3: Impact

5. I had 4 older siblings who were much older than me, I was the youngest and Mum could not leave me. I felt that hospital was my main home, I had to live at the John Radcliffe Hospital, the Haemophilia Centre; in a flat in the hospital

grounds which was located on the ground floor and in various Bed & Breakfasts around Oxford near to the hospitals. I would often wet the bed a lot and would be very embarrassing and I felt ashamed. This happened up until I was 11 years old. My home in **GRO-B** was more like my second home.

6. My Dad was in hospital throughout much of my childhood due to the effects of his haemophilia which were made worse by being infected by HIV and Hepatitis C and was unable to work and make money because of these illnesses. Life was hard and a struggle. I didn't have the usual childhood that others' had and I had to go without so much. This led to finding it hard to fit in with school and to find friends as I didn't attend regularly and this impacted forming relationships, as I normally lived in Oxford Hospitals and Bed & Breakfasts. We never went on day trips or holidays as Dad was ill, except 1 holiday which was paid for by the Haemophilia Society. But we spent the week in the caravan as Dad was too ill to go out or do activities, I felt very bored. I did not have the usual boys' childhood; I didn't have suitable clothes (they were always handed down from my brother), I didn't get to play sports with Dad, or do anything physical with him, I didn't have pocket money, I had a diet of what my Mum could get off the land, we were bound to the house or hospital. I missed out on the father-son learning and playing experiences. I have felt this even more acutely in my adulthood now that I have 5 children of my own. I see what I have missed, and it has affected my relationship with them. I have had to try and learn as I've gone along. I did however learn to collect stamps in the hospital and nurses would bring me stamps in to collect. I played pool in one of the hospitals where Dad had his Hip replacement and used to push the poorly children around in wheelchairs. This kept me slightly occupied. The highlight of my week was to get an egg and cress sandwich from the Hospital Café. I know the John Radcliffe Hospital grounds so well I could draw a map of the grounds as it is still pictured in my head, as well as the views from the top floor as most of my time was spent with Dad in a room near the top floor.

7. I had no idea about what HIV or Hepatitis was. My Dad was ill in hospital and some of those who were being treated suffered very badly. When I was about 9 years old, I saw 2 patients; on different occasions, smash through and jump out of the window and commit suicide. On one occasion a nurse tried to stop the patient and her hands and arms were cut and streaming with blood. This was horrific to see.
8. I watched my Dad progressively get skinnier, jaundice and gaunt as time went by. It was horrible to see my Dad get more ill each day and it made me feel sorry and sad for him. I witnessed my Dad have injections, I saw him bleed, I saw him get sick, I saw Mum cleaning him up after he had accidents in bed; she washed him, changed his bedding and clothes as he felt uncomfortable with strangers (nurses) doing this for him, I saw his mental health decline, He told me of his ambitions to work but felt so ashamed that he couldn't due to being ill. He wrote me a letter in weeks before he died to say thanks for being there with him each time he was in hospital, and that he loved me. I was so angry with myself when I lost this letter as it was the last thing my Dad could give me.
9. I used to see my Dad's family every week prior to his death and used to have a close relationship with [GRO-B] my cousin, and occasionally stay over his house. I would often visit my Aunty [GRO-B] where me and [GRO-B] had a good relationship; he was like my best friend. Also, I used to visit my Uncle [GRO-B] (Dad's brother) when he wasn't in hospital and we would visit Nanny and [GRO-B], which I loved to do as he had a commodore 64 which was the in thing at the time. When my Dad died this all stopped as my Dad's family blamed my Mum for him dying. They fell out and even though they didn't want to see me, Mum never stopped them seeing me. It had a big impact on me when I didn't see them anymore as they were a big part of my life.
10. I missed a huge amount of schooling because of my Dad's illness and constantly being at hospital with Mum. I would often sleep at the hospital and it was like my second home. I tried to go to school in [GRO-B] which lasted only a couple of days due to me not fitting in. I missed huge chunks of my

schooling. I can barely remember being at infants' school, I then went to [GRO-B] was no different; I can only remember attending 1 sports day as I missed all the rest. Dad passed away during my 1<sup>st</sup> year of Senior School ([GRO-B]) and I was so traumatised that I don't remember this year, all I remember was skipping school after mum went to work, I would hide behind the shed at the bottom of the garden until she was gone, then climb through the bedroom window to get into my home as I couldn't cope with school, My tutor said to me one day that I was off school more than I was there. Most of my teachers disliked me and my PE teacher even kicked me on occasion for no reason. I never had a PE kit, stationary for schoolwork, I had hand me down school clothes, which was not nice as I was much taller than my brother and my trousers were too short. I missed all of my exams and when I went to get my end of school portfolio folder, I only had 1 certificate in there and my Deputy Headmaster; [GRO-B] said 'you can have this for all that it is worth'. I learned to be on my own and isolated so fitting into a busy school environment was too difficult and traumatic for me.

11. When I think of it now it is unbearably sad, and I have to shut my emotions off as it is my coping mechanism and I have to survive for my family. This led to me not gaining the education and qualifications that I am intelligent enough to attain which; this has had an impact on my life and that of my family in turn, has limited me to the job I can get. I am capable of earning so much more but cannot cope with a teaching environment to better my education/career.

12. suffered bullying from other students when I went to school, they used to tease me for having hand me down clothes, not knowing any of the work they were doing as I missed so much class time, I didn't have any relationships with any of the students as I wasn't at school a lot. I developed a poor self-image and felt it was my fault that no one wanted to befriend me. I first found out that my Dad died of AIDS when I was 12 years old, I didn't know what it was so me and my friend [GRO-B] looked it up on teletext. I was shocked and bewildered to find out what this was. My so-called friend told everyone at school and that just about finished me off with school. I had not friends and the children thought I was dirty and contaminated, and they said my Dad was Gay. This led to me

hating school even more and having even more time off. I remember getting into a fight at school because a boy shouted out in class that my Dad died of AIDS and the whole class thought it was funny. We had a bit of a scuffle and the teacher told us to sit down and be quiet. I felt ashamed and embarrassed and had no support from the teacher. This would happen quite a lot.

13. Throughout my childhood I would bite my tongue in anger or frustration. On one occasion I bit my tongue so hard that I needed stitches to repair the damage I had done to my tongue.

14. I stayed with my Mums Sister for several days; as Dad was seriously ill at John Radcliffe Hospital, then I was told I had to go to the hospital straight away. I was not told why. We went to pick up my older Sister who was about 17. She was crying and I did not know why so I tried telling her jokes to cheer her up. When we got to the hospital, I was left sitting downstairs with my Dad's best friend, who was married to my Mum's Sister, for several hours and I did not know why. I was eventually taken upstairs to a room where I saw all my relatives in a room together crying and I then worked out something bad must have happened to my Dad. I started to cry. I cried so hard that I spent about an hour hiding my face in the chair trying to hide my emotions. It was a profoundly shocking and distressing experience for me. To this day I can still see the people sitting in the room as if they were sitting in front of me, what the room was like, what they were wearing, what they talked about.

15. When I was taken to see my dead Dad, I was not asked about this and had no choice in the matter. I wished this had never happened due to the effect it had upon and continues to have throughout my life. I was completely traumatised by the experience and in shock. It was like someone flicked a switch in my head and I had to learn to turn off my emotions to survive.

16. I was completely numb during the funeral and I have not got over the shock of this experience to this day. I lived through the worst circumstances and no one ever asked if I was alright. I could not process what had happened to me and

still have to switch off my emotions. The funeral itself was strange and I hated myself as I wasn't sad, everyone was crying, and I felt there was something wrong with me and I felt out of place as I tried to make myself cry and show emotion, but I couldn't, and this made me angry, and I never forgave myself for it.

17. Following my Dads death, I never saw my extended family again, some of which were close to me including my cousins. They seemed to blame my Mum for my Dad's death. This was a big wrench.

18. My paternal Grandmother died recently, and I had not seen her since my Dads funeral. This is not the way things should have been.

19. After my Father died, my Mum struggled financially; her benefits were stopped, and her mobility car was taken from her. Because of this she had to get 3 jobs to make ends meet. I had to help mum bring income into the house by fruit picking. This made me feel isolated and alone and life was very hard. I still didn't know why Dad died. We used to have a good relationship with our neighbours, but after Dad died this stopped as they found out he had HIV.

20. We soldiered on and my Mum she tried her best. My Mum would try to do small things to make me happy, but we had little money and even going to McDonalds was a big treat.

21. It is very hard to put into words the effect Dad's infection has had on us as a family and has driven a deep rift in the family, I endured a lot of spiteful bullying in my childhood. I now only have contact with my Mother. As I was younger than my brother and sisters, I felt that they saw me as a hindrance and never really bonded with me. They never offered to look after me for my Mum while she went to support Dad in hospital, and this caused rifts in the family. I no longer have relationships with them except 1 sister who lives in Canada.

22. About a year after my Dad died my Mum met my Stepdad and they later married. He was very social and ran discos in pubs. This was a very alien environment to me and a complete cultural shock as I had led a very quiet life

and spent time in the countryside. My Stepdad was not a bad man, but he drank a lot and argued with my Mum. He gave Mum a different lifestyle. He had 3 children of his own and worked constantly so never really took the role of Dad with me. I could not cope with the big changes of lifestyle and could not adapt to it.

23. When I was a teen, I noticed that my ears stuck out a bit, but I felt this was why none of the school kids liked me, so I fought to have them pinned. It effected my self-image and my mental health. After I had this done, the kids at school still did not want to be my friend. I broke my arm when I was 15 years old and when I was 17, I had my ears pinned and these are the only times I have been back to hospital. I do not like doctors or pills, and I won't go to the hospital. I avoid it at all costs because the memories are so traumatic. Even now when one of my children has to go to hospital, I get anxious so cannot go with them, my wife takes the children to the hospital and stays with them when necessary.

24. After many years of not getting on with my Stepdad with arguing and fighting I finally moved out into a bedsit. After a few months I had a breakdown and crying that I missed my Dad, I started drinking heavily and taking drugs to numb my emotions. I eventually had to call my Mum for help, and she took me back home. I had such a poor sense of self and poor body image that I did what I could just to feel something. Even now I am not happy with my looks and try to change my body through extreme dieting and bulking up in the gym to binge eating. I was promiscuous during my late teens and early 20's and I didn't use protection. I never thought it necessary to have sexual health screening until I met my wife. After I told her about my past she understood and wanted me to have a safe future, so she encouraged me to get checked out. I feel very embarrassed by my actions before I was married and do not like to talk about this time with anyone.

25. Despite my lack of qualifications, I have managed to get jobs that I am good at but cannot be in an environment where I do not have control and I find it very difficult to cope with stress and uncertainty. I need to have control. My work is good so that is not the issue. This has impacted severely on my ability to earn.

I cannot build relationships with people and I am not good at connecting with them. I go into self-protective detached mode.

26. Since leaving school I have struggled to settle into full time employment. At the moment I am working 35 hours per week in a care home as my wife has had to leave her job due to having a breakdown at the beginning of the year; part of which is from worrying about me, my mum and this Inquiry and also dealing with my low mental health. I used to work at this care home 3 years ago for 21 hours a week but found it too stressful and this inquiry triggered emotions of my Dad dying in a similar environment. I also have now realised that I have subconsciously chosen a working environment similar to that of a hospital; a nursing home, where I feel comfortable. This is what was familiar to me, people come and then die, and new people replace them. It means that I do not have the difficulty of trying to build relationships. I like my environment to be clinical at home and work. I also feel nothing for people that die, or their families. I am numb to most emotions. I spent 20+ years since meeting my wife on incapacity benefits due to my depression. I started cutting grass as part of my own business, which eventually failed due to it being seasonal. The Nursing Home offered me my job back for more money and hours and I had no choice but to take it as my wife was unable to work and we had no money to live on. It still triggers me by working here but I have to do it. I made the decision to go back until this Inquiry ends then I will go back to grass cutting and try setting up my own business again, it brings in less income but makes me happier. I can then choose when I can work and work around my mental health by doing things, I enjoy such as metal detecting and spending time with my family. I feel that I do not fit in with people. I have not had the work opportunities due to my lack of schooling. I have taught myself plumbing and electrical maintenance. I hate school and anything to do with it because of the terrible experiences I had, so cannot go back and retrain. I am frustrated that we have qualified tradesmen come to the Nursing home to do electrical or plumbing tasks and getting paid £150 - £200 for a couple of hours work, which I am capable of doing but am not qualified to do so. If I had a normal school life and upbringing, I would have been able to become qualified in a trade. Going back to education is never going to happen and I have learned to accept that as I have no choice. I have



tried going to college to learn to be a chef, I lasted 3 weeks before dropping out.

27. I am in debt and have had no choice of where I live, I come to accept that I will always live-in social housing and have minimum paid employment (when able) as I have no other choice.

28. I have had to spend my life with my emotions closed down just to survive and this is not normal to feel this way. I feel like a robot. When some of my family members died, I did not attend the funerals and to be honest I did not feel anything for them and that is not right. My Dad dying has affected my emotions and that is not right.

29. I could earn a lot more money if I had managed to get qualifications or even retain as an adult and this has impacted and continues to impact very negatively on my family.

30. I am very fortunate to have a good wife; **GRO-B**, whom I met when I was 21. She has taken the time to understand how I feel and the issues I have had to endure in my childhood. This has taken a great amount of understanding and patience on her part and my depression almost cost me my marriage. When we first met, I didn't want to tell her about what my Dad died of as I thought she may leave me and not understand. I didn't tell her until we had been together for a couple of years. The effect of my issues regarding my Dad has in turn affected her mental health as she supports me and my Mum. This makes me feel guilty. At one point my depression was so bad I could not work for years and we lost our house that we had a mortgage on and had to move in with my in-laws with the children. I felt I let my family down as we lost our only family home. Without **GRO-B** I do not know how I would have survived.

31. I feel I am not a positive role model for my children as I struggle to work, I did not get qualifications and I cannot cope with life. I feel hypocritical when I explain the importance of their schooling and their qualification, and the importance of getting a job, when I cannot do this myself. Which has led some of my children not to have very good education and are struggling in life.

**Section 4: Financial Assistance**

32. Following the death of my father my Mum lost all of her benefits and they took her care back. We had no money. Mum managed to get 3 jobs and had to work long hours. Eventually she managed to buy a very old car that constantly broke down. I cannot describe how awful this time was and this left me very isolated.

33. Due to my lack of education and my mental health I have not been able to reach my employment potential due to my Fathers' illness and death. I have no choice of where I live; my family rents social housing, we rely on government benefits to survive. There have been times where we have been homeless and times where we have had to choose between paying bills or feeding the children. We have suffered being on a low income.

**Section 5: Other Issues**

35. We have 5 children, and I am hypervigilant around them. I would not let my son join the army or train to be an electrician in case he was injured or killed. On occasions I have rages and smash things to vent my anger and frustration and then feel upset and guilty that I have done this to my family. I would never harm my family but my emotions well up and I find it too difficult to deal with.

36. I do suffer with nightmares. I have recently taken up metal detecting with my sons and this is a hark back to the time I spent in the countryside with my father.

37. My life has felt like a prison sentence since Dad got sick and I am glad that I can now let the people responsible for his sickness know how it has affected me and my family.

38. It makes me very bitter that we have been robbed of this time. No child should have to go through what I went through or see what I have seen. I have never been offered counselling, advice or support, or even been given information about the impact that AIDS and Hepatitis C would have on my life.

39. I never go to Oxford and if I need to travel, I will go miles out of my way to avoid setting foot there due to the awful memories and terrible feelings of anxiety it triggers.

40. Losing my Dad still affects me, and I am hopeful that I can find some closure now.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe the facts stated in this witness statements are true.

Signed

GRO-B

GRO-B

Dated

14/5/21