

Witness Name: Mavis Slater

Statement No: WITN1710001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: January 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MAVIS SLATER

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I, Mavis Slater, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Mavis Slater, DOB [GRO-C] 1939 and I live at [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]. I am a great grandmother to 12 children, grandmother to 6 children and mother of 3.
2. My husband, Edward David Slater, DOB [GRO-C] 1948, died on 13.08.1994 after being infected with HIV from infected blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late husband's full medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

#### Section 2. How infected

4. Edward suffered from severe haemophilia A. He could bleed at any time and frequently suffered from nose bleeds.

5. Edward did not attend a Haemophilia Centre. We used to keep Factor VIII concentrate in the fridge and if he had a bleed he went to his GP who injected him with Factor VIII.
6. In or around 1984 Edward hit his knee in the garden and had a bad bleed. I called an ambulance who injected him with Factor VIII from my fridge before taking him to the Royal Sussex County Hospital, where he was given more blood products intravenously.
7. Shortly after, Edward and I received a call from the hospital whilst we were working in our shop and he was told over the phone that he had contracted HIV through Factor VIII.
8. We just looked at each other and we were in complete shock. I think it is absolutely terrible that they delivered the news to him over the phone; it is completely unforgivable. They should have called us in to the hospital and told us in person.
9. Neither Edward nor I were given any information or advice as to potential risks about using blood products.
10. We were not told much about the disease other than the fact there was a drug available that could help but it was still experimental. We were also told not to tell anybody. Other than this we were told nothing.
11. I had to go and get tested shortly after this but fortunately I was clear.
12. I was never told any information as to whether Edward was infected with Hepatitis C.

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

13. I am not aware of any other infections that Edward may have been exposed to.

#### **Section 4. Consent**

14. Edward never knew he had been tested for HIV and therefore his diagnosis came as a complete shock to him.

#### **Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

15. There was no such thing as married life after Edward was infected. We slept in separate bedrooms as Edward was worried about infecting me and the house was full of arguments. Every activity had to be considered to determine if it was safe or if it could put us at risk.
16. Edward lost the mobility in one of his legs and had to walk with a stick. He had red marks on his face and for the last year of his life he was covered in a red rash. Edward lost a lot of weight and was physically very weak. As Edward's health deteriorated he became paralysed down one side of his body and was jaundiced. When it was really bad he couldn't move. He also had a brain tumour which made him blind in one eye.
17. Mentally, it was very tough for Edward to be living with a death sentence hanging over his head. We were both worried sick about our family, finances and the general increased pressures in life.
18. We couldn't tell anyone about Edward's illness due to the stigma surrounding it. We couldn't even tell our own families, including his mother and our son. This is one of the reasons that I am still alone as I do not want to tell people what happened to my husband. I have kept this hidden for 35 years until my son started asking questions about the blood scandal.
19. It was a wicked time – we heard stories about people throwing bricks through the windows of people infected with HIV/AIDS and refusing to allow their children to play with the children of anyone infected.

20. It was extremely stressful for me keeping such a big secret from everyone. I had to see my doctor as a result of the effect on my blood pressure. I now have to take medication that I never had to take before and that I don't want to have to take. My family still do not know everything that I went through.
21. When Edward was in the hospital I was unimpressed with the care he received there. On occasions I was made to change his urine bag. I told the nurses they needed to check his urine for blood but they weren't interested. Another time they bandaged over a haematoma on his hand which, as a trained nurse, I knew was wrong. They couldn't even tell that he was jaundiced despite his nails being completely yellow, and when I told them about it they had the nerve to ask if he had come into hospital like that.
22. At the end he was transferred to Hove General which was horrid. They wanted to take him up to level six of the hospital which is where people with HIV went to die. I told them I wasn't letting them take my husband up there. He was a haemophiliac and didn't deserve to be taken there to die.
23. I had been an auxiliary nurse in a nursing home/ hospice. I had to rush home from work to get changed and go to help Edward in the shop, however in the end it just got too much for me and I had to give up my job as a nurse. I absolutely loved that job; I am a carer, that's just who I am. Having to give that job up was very upsetting for me.
24. Edward lost his business when his mental and physical health deteriorated. He ran a shop but increasingly got into debt. I had to give up my job in a hospice to help with the shop, which we ultimately lost because of the financial pressures. He then took a lesser paid job at Gatwick airport.
25. After Edward passed away I also almost lost our house. We were still £35,000 in debt, and I had been reluctant to tell the bank that Edward had died as I was still so scared about the stigma. The day after I told the bank that I had lost my husband, they sent me a letter demanding money and threatening me with the sale of my house if I did not pay. Fortunately, the Citizens Advice

Bureau was extremely helpful and put me in touch with a solicitor who wrote the bank a letter and persuaded them to desist. They ultimately wrote off some of the debt.

26. I struggled financially and could no longer afford to live in our house, so I eventually had to sell it and move into my current home which is a mobile home. I survive on my pension which is not a lot.

27. In 1997 I collapsed due to an ulcer, which was presumably a result of the stress I had been under. I lost four pints of blood and needed a blood transfusion, and I remember worrying when they told me I needed this because of what had happened to Edward.

28. We were worried about our son, David, being bullied at school or banned from playing with the other children; this was a time when people were having bricks thrown through their windows for having HIV.

29. David took his father's death extremely badly. He was only 16 when Edward died and it was years before I could even mention his name and we were able to talk about him. It wasn't until David was around 19 years old that I told him about his father's infection. [GRO-C] he was unable to process the information. He [GRO-C] still wasn't able to tell people the truth about his father. He was angry all the time and I believe he wouldn't have gotten into trouble if Edward had still been alive.

30. Losing my husband was horrific and it almost resulted in me [GRO-C] also.

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

31. Edward was refused dental treatment from his dentist in Burgess Hill, and had to start having his dental treatment completed at the hospital as a result of his infection.

32. I have never been offered counselling in the 36 years I have had to live through this all. Edward was also never offered any counselling and neither was my son David.

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

33. I am not sure what money my husband received from the various Trusts and Funds, other than that he was made to sign a waiver and not tell anyone about it. My son and I never saw any money, and we haven't received anything since his death.

34. The only group we heard from were the Higgins Trust, who invited all of the widows to London. It was one of the worst days I had after losing my husband, as I spent the day with crying widows who were in the same position as me. I didn't find it at all helpful.

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

35. It is probably too late for the Inquiry to do anything to help me, but I want to know that younger people affected will be helped by the Inquiry.

36. I also want to make sure that steps are taken to protect haemophiliacs. We had a death sentence in our fridge in the form of Factor VIII concentrate and someone needs to ensure that history never repeats itself.

#### **Anonymity**

37. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

38. I would be able to give oral evidence to the Inquiry if they thought it would be helpful and provided I wouldn't have to go to London.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed..... GRO-C .....

Dated 26-1-19