Witness Name: Diane Stones
Statement No.: WITN3558001
Exhibits: nil
Dated: 10.10.19

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DIANE STONES

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 21 August 2019.

I, Diane Stones, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Diane Stones. My date of birth is GRO-C 1964 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I have been widowed from since 2016. I have four children and they were born in 1982, 1985, 1988 and 1994. I am the legal guardian of my two young grandchildren, who are 11 and 9 years old, and they reside with me. I intend to speak about my diagnosis of Hepatitis C (HCV) and Cirrhosis. In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness has affected me, the treatment received and the impact it has had on my life. I do not have medical records or any notes relating to any of this.

Section 2. How Infected

2. In 1988, I was pregnant when I separated from the father of my third child. GRO-D GRO-D GRO-D GRO-D GRO-D. I was between 8 and 9 months pregnant and GRO-D. An ambulance was called and I was rushed to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

3. I was admitted into hospital immediately and needed an emergency caesarean to save the life of my baby. After the birth, I was given four pints of blood. I can remember being told by the medical staff that I had lost a lot of blood.

4. The hospital was extremely concerned for my new baby daughter, as she had been internally and externally bruised. After the birth, my baby was kept in intensive care and I was told by the doctor that she had two hours to live, so serious were her injuries. However, against the odds, my baby survived.

5. After the birth, I moved in with my mother and she assisted me with the care of my children. I never went back with the father.

6. For the years following the birth of my daughter, I was regularly in and out of either the GP surgery or hospital. I always felt generally unwell with illnesses such as chest infections and I suffered constantly from fatigue. The doctor never got to the bottom of my health issues despite the repeated occurrences.

7. On Christmas Day in 2016 and I was feeling very unwell; I could not stand, I was dizzy and extremely tired. I did not feel right at all and so I

called for an ambulance. The hospital tested my bloods however, once I was released from hospital, I was never informed of the test results.

8. In June 2019, again, I was feeling very unwell and I felt so bad that I had to call for an ambulance. I was admitted into the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford and I was kept in for a week whilst tests were taken. After a week's stay, I requested to be an outpatient because I needed to take care of my young grandchildren as I am their legal guardian.

9. On approximately 17th June 2019, the hospital called me with my blood test results and I was informed over the phone that I had the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV). During the call, I was asked by the nurse whether I was a drug user or alcoholic, to which I responded "No". Then she asked whether I had ever received a blood transfusion and I said that I had explaining the birth of my daughter in 1988. The nurse then informed me that it was highly likely that the HCV was contracted from the blood transfusion.

10. I was in shock when she told me. It is still so recent that it is still 'raw'. I was only diagnosed less than three months ago. I am so angry, as I have been in and out of hospital for many years with undiagnosed health issues. The blood transfusion has always been on my medical records, yet doctors have never connected the possibility of my illnesses to HCV. In 2016 I know for sure that I had my bloods checked, why was this not detected then?

11. Following the phone call and within a couple of days of being informed that I had HCV, I was given an appointment to go back to the hospital. Once I arrived at the hospital, I was taken into an appointment room with a nurse. She explained that I should not research HCV online as I would find all sorts of conflicting information, but that I should check out the Hepatitis Trust's website for further information on HCV. I was given a piece of paper with the nurse's name 'Jeannie', her telephone number and the website address for the HCV trust.

12. At my most recent appointment at the beginning of September, I was told by the nurse that I also have scarring on my liver, and I was diagnosed with Cirrhosis of the liver.

13. I rarely drink alcohol and when I do I only drink on the weekends, so the Cirrhosis cannot be due to my alcohol consumption.

Section 3. Other Infections

14. I have Osteosis and Emphysema which has caused me to have a lung removed; I only have one lung. I take medications for Osteosis and Emphysema.

Section 4. Consent

15. I have not been treated or tested without my consent. I was told by the doctor that I would need a blood transfusion and I consented to it, however I obviously did not and would not consent to being given contaminated blood.

Section 5. Impact

16. I must say that I was only diagnosed less than three months ago and therefore I am still coming to terms with how I contracted HCV. The impact as far as the fact that I was 'given' Hepatitis is still sinking in.

17. My late diagnosis has made me question all of those times that I have been ill over the years and have come away from the doctors and hospital without a diagnosis. It has made me question every illness that I have suffered since the 1988 blood transfusion. I now believe that the reason why I was in and out of hospital was down to the symptoms of the HCV.

18. If my diagnosis had been reached earlier, and there were numerous opportunities, I could have had treatment that would have prevented the Cirrhosis I now have.

19. I have been very depressed over the years and this has been worsened by attending the hospital and doctors so frequently. I have been told that HCV can cause depression. I have suffered from depression most of my life. However, I was very young, being only 25 years old, when I had the transfusion and so, this has made me question this. It is hard to know whether the HCV has caused me depression over the years. Ultimately, I do not know whether I would have suffered from depression without having HCV.

20. I have been instructed by my doctor that I can no longer take one of the medications that I was prescribed for my Emphysema as it clashes with my HCV medication. This may have an impact on my Emphysema and my condition may worsen without the recommended medication. I do not know what affect this may have on my health.

21. My friend and I normally meet for a drink on Saturday evenings. I am now scared to even have a drink, so it has impacted me socially.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

22. The nurse at the Princess Royal Hospital told me on my first appointment following my diagnosis, that I would go onto medication that would cure the HCV and that I would go back for regular testing. During this appointment, I was put onto a medication named Velpatasvir/Sofosbuvir, and I have to take one tablet a day. The label on the container states 100/400mg. I take this to mean the quantity of each drug but cannot be sure.

23. I am given 28 days' worth of tablets at a time. My first batch was prescribed to me at the beginning of August 2019, and I'm currently on my second batch which I was prescribed to me on 29 August 2019.

24. I attend the hospital for blood tests and scans. I have been told that I will need to keep having blood tests until the HCV is cleared. I will continue with the treatment until I am directed otherwise by the nurse, presumably when the HCV has cleared.

25. I have not yet had any side-effects from the treatment that I have been prescribed, although this treatment only began a month ago.

26. I have not been offered counselling following the HCV or Cirrhosis diagnosis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

27. I was told by a friend about the financial assistance available. I went onto the English Infected Blood Support Scheme (EIBSS) website and I was sent an application through to my email. I have printed off the application, I have filled out my personal details and have handed it to my GP surgery as I have been told that they will complete the rest and send it to EIBSS on my behalf. Although, I should say that my diagnosis with Cirrhosis came after I handed in the application and so I will need to update the application.

28. I am on benefits; I get Personal Independence Payments (PIP), child tax credit and income support.

Section 8. Other Issues

29. When I was diagnosed I did not know anything about contaminated blood and how it happened. All I know is that I was given a blood transfusion after the birth of my child. I never knew there was anything

wrong with that blood and I have lived for over thirty years with no diagnosis.

30. I did not think for one second when that blood was going into me that I would end up like this. I put all my trust into the health service to do the right thing for me.

31. I have had a lot to deal with in my life that has nothing to do with the blood I was given. However, I now think that a lot of what I have suffered over the years in terms of my health could well have been because of my HCV. It is only recently that I have been able to look back and compare the symptoms I have suffered with those attributable to HCV and liver disease. I now face the prospect that, in addition to the other health issues that I have, my life may be shortened by the state of my liver. I have my grandchildren to care for and there is an obvious concern about what may happen to them. Nobody should ever have been put in this position.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 10.10.19