

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name **GRO-B**

Statement No: WITN3227001

Exhibit: 0

Dated: July 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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

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

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is **GRO-B** My date of birth is **GRO-B** and I live at **GRO-B**  
**GRO-B** I live with my partner and our son. I currently work part-time as a window cleaner, in order to help my partner to care for our son, but I am planning to return to full-time employment.
2. This impact statement is made in relation to my late father – **GRO-B: F**  
**F** (dad), born on **GRO-B** who sadly passed away on **GRO-B**  
**GRO-** aged 41, as a result of being infected with Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), which he contracted through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's medical records.

**Section 2. How affected**

4. My dad was born in GRO-B. He suffered from severe Haemophilia A, which was treated with blood products. I recall that he received Factor VIII at the Bedford Hospital, where he was under the care of Mr Saunders and Mr Reilly.
5. I am not aware as to the timeframe when my dad started to be treated with blood products, nor which specific blood products he was treated with, as I was too young to remember. The earliest I can remember is around 1987/88, when I was around 7 or 8 years old. This was when he started getting very poorly. This is the earliest memory of my father that I have.
6. I am not aware as to whether my dad was informed about any risks associated with being treated with blood products at any point before finding out about his infection.
7. As a result of being treated with contaminated blood products, my father contracted Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV.
8. I believe that my father was infected between 1982 and 1983, after my sister was born. He was first tested positive around 1984/85.
9. I do not know when or how my dad found out about his infections, as I was too young to be aware of it.

**Section 3. Other Infections**

10. I do not believe that my dad was infected with anything else, as a result of his treatment with blood products.

**Section 4. Consent**

11. I do not know whether my dad was treated or tested without his fully informed consent, or for research purposes.

**Section 5. Impact**

12. As mentioned above, my dad started to become very unwell around the time when I was 7 or 8 years old (1987/88). I recall that one morning I was going to school and he collapsed at the top of the stairs, so I had to physically pick him up to make sure that he was fine. He was admitted to a hospital and from that point on I remember visiting him at the hospital every single day for around 2,5 to 3 years. I recall that on one occasion we went to Oxford Hospital, where we went as a family
13. My dad was a tall and a strong man – he was 6,5 feet and he had an appearance of a strong builder, however, it changed dramatically, as a result of his illnesses – he lost a lot of weight as his health deteriorated and he completely lost his appetite. He went from 18 or 19 stones to around 8,5 stones and he looked like a bag stretched over a skeleton. He did not look like my dad anymore..
14. I am not familiar with the treatment, if any, that my dad received to manage or treat his infections.
15. I do remember that while my dad was still alive he had tubs of powdered morphine stored in a cupboard in the kitchen. However, this was to ease his pain, rather than treat his conditions. I recall my mum telling me and my sister not to ever touch it because it is dangerous, so I never went near it. I recall that after my dad passed, we had to take all the medication to the hospital so that the doctors would dispose of it.

16. My dad passed away on GRO-B when I was 13 years old. I went to school that day after I found out about it. I carried on like it was a normal day, until I asked the teacher if I could go to the library. It was unusual for me so the teacher let me go, and when I came back everybody was looking at me. This is when I became aware that everybody knew about my dad's passing.
17. My dad's infections also affected us all, as a family, on the psychological level, particularly due to the stigma. He was a hairdresser and many hairdressers at the time were gay. We had to be very careful in keeping his infection to ourselves to prevent other people from thinking that my dad was gay, as there was a great stigma attached to that as well. Whenever people asked what was wrong with my dad we said that we did not know.
18. I feel like to some extent my dad's personality changed, as a result of his diagnosis. He was never an aggressive man – he was a classy gentleman. After he passed away, my mum explained that he was so angry because of what happened to him. He was very frustrated, because he knew that there was nothing that he could do to help himself, so he ended up having a lot of anger in him. He never took it out on us, but I did realise that his temper started to get shorter at some point, so sometimes he would shout at me in Italian, as he had to let his frustration out.
19. My dad also lost the ability to do the things he loved. He used to enjoy playing golf once a week prior to becoming very poorly, and he used to take me with him. He could not physically do that once his health began to deteriorate. He also had to stop working at some point, as he was not able to stand anymore, which affected his life enjoyment, sense of fulfilment and our finances.
20. My dad's illnesses also affected me, as his son. At the time I did not know what was happening, as I was very young. My mum explained it to me, but at that age I could not understand a lot of it. This was when I was around 10 years old, and it

was around the time when he started going to the hospital very regularly to visit my dad. My routine for around 2,5 to 3 years was to wake up, eat, go to school, go to hospital, return home, eat and go to sleep. It was a very difficult period of time for me and my family.

21. My dad's passing was very upsetting and difficult for me. My head was all over the place. I was only 13 years old and I suddenly became the man of the house. I could not go out and get a job and I was extremely worried that something would happen to my sister or our mum. I was too young to do the things that a man of the house should do, and I wanted to make sure that they would be fine. Eventually, I just shut myself off out of the helplessness and frustration. When I started my upper school I got with the wrong crowd of people and I started smoking cannabis at a very young age. It was a form of an escape for me. I also got in a bit of trouble with police, as I did not feel like I cared about anything at the time.

22. It also affected my education. I already struggled with dyslexia, but after my dad's passing I completely gave up on school. All I did was turned up to school, so that my mum would not get into trouble, but I did not put any effort into learning. I believe that had my dad not contracted the illnesses and die my life would have been completely different than what it turned out to be - I would most likely still be living in GRO-B closer to my parents and I would have probably worked with my dad, as a hairdresser.

23. I also believe that an aspect which was lacking in my life after my dad's passing was appropriate counselling and guidance. After he died I felt like all the medical staff were almost relieved that they could close his case and did not need to worry about our family anymore. It was as if they were trying to tell us to just get on with it. We did not even get an apology. I do appreciate the fact that everybody is different, therefore everybody's needs in a situation like this are different, however, my family truly struggled and we did need support which we have never received.



24. This situation also affected my relationship with my mum; I hid a lot of things from her to protect her. Our relationship did improve, however, it took a long time – we speak a few times a week, and I visit her once every couple of months.
25. My dad passed away and we buried him two weeks before my 13<sup>th</sup> birthday. Ever since his passing my birthdays were no longer an occasion to celebrate, as two weeks before I am reminded of what happened to my dad and the fact that he is not here with me anymore.
26. I left school at 16, I then did a year at sixth form, as I could not find a job, and then between the age of 17 and 19 I was a trainee brick layer. I felt like I had to move away from GRO-B in order to get away from being constantly reminded of dad and what happened to him. I first moved away from GRO-B to GRO-B when I was 19 years old. My dad's brother offered for me to do an apprenticeship at his gym, which I have taken on. Following the apprenticeship, I had worked at the gym for three years. I had a massive argument with my uncle, after which I left the gym and I committed to labouring on building sites and in factories.
27. 2006 was the most difficult year for me, as I ended up being homeless for 9 months. I stayed on the streets and at friends' houses on the weekends, if I could. I never told my mum about it – I was tempted to, but I could not face going back home. Being at our family home was very difficult for me – every time I would visit mum, I would walk into every single room, without knowing why; maybe I was hoping to find dad in one of them.
28. My mum sold our family home in 2009 and she asked me to help her to move. I had to decline it, as I did not feel mentally strong enough to do that. That house had all my memories of my dad in it, so I decided that I would much rather remember it as our family home, than remember moving out from there. Even 11 years after my dad's passing I saw this house as his. He worked so hard to get it for us, as a family and it would have been too hard for me to see someone else

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living there. My mum was very understandable of my decision, and she had my sister help her to move.

29. My dad's illnesses and the secrecy surrounding them affected me on a mental level for a very long time. I felt like I had no one to speak to, not even the doctors. In fact, I do not believe that all the medical staff in the hospital knew the full facts of what happened to my dad. I think that National Health Service's approach was: it happened, this is what it is, let's carry on and hope that it does not come out. Even my dad's death certificate does not state that he died due to contaminated blood products; I believe it states pneumonia, as a result of haemophilia. I started to open up to my ex-partner around 2009, we then got married in 2010 – I decided to tell her everything, and so I did. She was the first person I truly opened up to. We later got divorced. I also decided to be open up to my current partner and she has been very supportive. I felt best in my life after speaking to her.

30. My ex-wife had children from a previous relationship. I always tried to do best for them, and I wanted to be fair towards them, like my dad was to me and my sister. I used to teach them that if they will be good there will be a treat, but if they will be naughty they will need to make up for it. My dad taught me that I needed to work for what I wanted. We always had little conversations about it at dinner or after he came home from work. My dad always made sure that he spent individual time with me and my sister. He always tried to spend an hour with each child.

31. To this day I have flashbacks of memories with my dad. Sometimes I would start laughing to myself remembering the funny things my dad did. I try not to think about the negative things, such as dad falling off the stairs, his health deteriorating, not eating and not working.

32. It is extremely upsetting knowing that he is not here anymore. I keep on thinking that he should be here, so that we could play golf together and so that he could

- be a grandfather to my son. To this day I suffer greatly for around two weeks before my birthday, because it reminds me of my dad's death.
33. My dad's illness proved to be very difficult for my mum. She had the burden of caring for him and looking after me and my sister. I recall hearing her crying every night. I do not know how she managed, but I know that it was extremely difficult for her. It took my mum a very long time to pick herself up after dad's illnesses and death. She is now in a happy relationship and she is generally happier in life.
34. During the course of my dad's illness my sister was affected the most out of the two of us, as she had seen more of dad's anger and frustration. She was very young at the time, so she spent more time at home when dad's health deteriorated. She was around 10 years old when he died. Seeing dad's health going downhill affected her later in life. She finally started to rebel against our mum – she would lock herself in her room and smoke cigarettes. She went through a very difficult time between the age of 13 and 16. Despite that she did very well in her GCSEs. She has been getting help from doctors and eventually she went to a university to study law. She now works in human resources at a massive company in London.
35. We did not have much help from other people after my dad's passing, as nobody knew what actually happened. There was only one person who helped us out at the time. It was a lady called GRO-B. I am not sure who she was or where she was from, but I believe that she was a part of the medical team at GRO-B Hospital.
36. I recall that the government gave my dad some money, which we ended up using to go to South Africa, however, even that proved to be problematic, as we had to make sure that nothing would have happened to my dad, as he would not be able to get any medical attention there. The only reason why we ended up going



there was because my aunt and uncle came with us. It was very important for us, as we wanted to have a memory of him being on the trip with us.

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

37. I do not believe that any of us were ever offered any counselling.

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

38. As mentioned above, I am aware that my dad received compensation, a part of which we used to go on a holiday as a family. I believe he received the payment in the 90s. I did not understand it at the time when it was happening, but around 10 to 12 years ago my mum explained it all to me. It was either a one off payment or two payments. I believe it was around £60,000 or £80,000.

39. I am aware that he had to sign a waiver stating that by accepting the payment the case would be closed and my dad would not be able to pursue any further litigation. My mum showed me the letter and I recall it being very vaguely worded; I did not fully understand it.

40. I believe that while I was still at school my mum was getting some money from the MacFarlane Trust, however, I am not aware of how much it was. She then received something from the Skipton Fund around 2010/2012. That was all that my mum received, but I am not sure of the amounts.

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

41. At some point I started reading about the Contaminated Blood Scandal online and I found out that there were some 2,000 other people who went through something similar. In a way I felt better knowing that it was not only my dad but also other people out there. There were boys my age that have been through

what I have been through. This was when I have decided to reach out to people and give them advice on how to move forward in life based on my experience and how to come out from the shadow. I had to learn to be strong for my own future, but also for my mum and dad.

42. My only question is why it took so long for anybody to admit that something went wrong. This situation involved and affected so many people, it was well-known about, but it was hidden away for such a long time.

**Anonymity, disclosure and redaction**

43. I confirm that I do wish to apply for anonymity and that I understand this statement will be published and disclosed as part of the Inquiry.

44. I do wish to be called to give oral evidence.

**Statement of Truth**

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

GRO-B

Signed.....

GRO-B

Dated

03/02/20