

Witness Name: C M Quinn  
Statement No: WITN3259001  
Exhibits: 0  
Dated: June 2019

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF CLAIRE MARGARET QUINN

---

I, Claire Margaret Quinn will say as follows:-

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

1. My name is Claire Margaret Quinn and I was born on GRO-C 1966. I live at GRO-C Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, GRO-C
2. I make this statement as an affected person in relation to my adopted sister Rosemarie (Rosie) Yelland , who was born on GRO-C 1983 and passed away aged 10 on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1993.
3. Rosie received eight blood transfusions within the first three months of her life and as a result she became infected with HIV and died from AIDS.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to Rosie's medical records.**

#### **Section 2. How Affected**

5. Rosie was born severely premature, at only 26 weeks on GRO-C 1983, with a birth weight of 0.73kg.

6. Rosie's premature birth necessitated that she received eight blood transfusions within the first three months of her life. The blood was contaminated and as a result Rosie was infected with HIV in 1983. Her birth and subsequent blood transfusions all took place at Northwick Park Hospital in Middlesex.
7. My parents did not adopt Rosie until she was 18 months old and therefore our family has no knowledge as to whether or not Rosie's family were given any advice or information regarding the risk of infection in relation to the blood transfusions.
8. Our family only found out that Rosie was HIV positive in July 1991 which was when she had reached the age of 8.
9. Prior to her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday, Rosie had been poorly for a while and had been a frequent inpatient at Booth Hall Hospital in Manchester. Rosie's poor health baffled the medical professionals. My mother kept a diary note of Rosie's health issues and she recorded in April and May of 1991 that Rosie was taking a lot of antibiotics and had been to see an endocrinologist to find out if there was anything wrong with her hormones. She had terrible mouth thrush, chest infections and diarrhoea and the antibiotics were not working as expected. My mother had made a real nuisance of herself with the doctors over the thrush and the fact that Rosie was unable to eat anything.
10. Rosie's doctor was Jon Couriel and he was based at the Booth Hall Hospital. He was literally pulling his hair out because he was unable to work out what was wrong with Rosie. I believe that he looked at her medical records and noted her numerous blood transfusions in 1983 and, as a last resort, tested her blood for HIV.
11. Having discovered that Rosie was HIV positive, I believe that Jon Couriel made a telephone call to my father to break the shocking news. I believe that my mother and father then went to see him at the hospital to discuss matters further. They were understandably shocked, distraught and horrified. Their

whole world came crashing down when they found out that their 8 year old daughter had HIV.

12. I was at University in Lancaster at the time when this horrific and life changing news was delivered to my mother and father. I remember receiving a telephone call from my parents requesting that I come home the following weekend as they had something to tell me.

13. The following weekend my siblings, (with the exception of my older brother, Phillip Michael Yelland, who was living in the US), and I descended on my parent's house. My sister Sarah Marie Yelland was there as was my younger GRO-C brother Damian Matthew Yelland. My two GRO-C sisters, who were Charlotte Annmarie Woods (previously Yelland) and Rosie, were too young to be told the shocking news.

14. I was absolutely devastated when my parents told us that Rosie had got HIV. I doted on Rosie and we were really close. It is fair to say that life as we knew it changed from that point onwards.

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

15. As far as I am aware, Rosie was not put at risk of vCJD.

### **Section 4. Consent**

16. My parents were not aware that Jon Couriel was testing Rosie for HIV. I think that he carried out the HIV test as a last resort because he was at a complete loss to understand what was causing Rosie's health problems. This is not in any way meant to be a criticism of Jon Couriel, who I believe dealt with matters admirably given the very difficult set of circumstances that presented and the eventuality that was an 8 year old girl being diagnosed with HIV.

### **Section 5. Impact**

17. Due to Rosie's premature birth, she spent much of her first year in intensive care in Northwick Park Hospital. She was fitted with a tracheostomy during her first year of life due to paralysis of her trachea.
18. Rosie was also hypoxic at birth so initially there was a question mark over her cognitive function. However, as time went by it was evident that there was very little impairment in this regard.
19. Rosie had hearing difficulties and also underwent a minor heart repair at only 5 weeks old.
20. Rosie was tube fed for quite a while because she could not swallow and it was sometime before the reflex kicked in.
21. However, none of the problems which Rosie presented with at the time of her adoption were lifetime or life threatening problems.
22. My mother was a nurse and had experience in both changing tracheotomy tubes and administering drugs and therefore my parents were extremely well placed to raise Rosie.
23. Rosie was adopted at 18 months old by my parents, Michael (deceased) and Mary (deceased) Yelland in 1984. I was aged 18 at this time and it was not long before I fell in love with my new little sister.
24. When my parents brought Rosie home she was absolutely tiny; the size of a 4 month old baby. I was still living at home at this time and I remember seeing this strange looking baby who looked a bit like an alien. This was because her little nose had been pushed up by the constant intubation procedures.
25. When Rosie arrived, she had just learned to feed herself but she wasn't very good at chewing. However, with lots of patience, love and care Rosie came on in leaps and bounds and her developmental progress surprised everyone. By the time she was aged two she was walking and had developed into a beautiful and headstrong toddler. She made great strides in her life and lived

her new life to the full, even with all of her disabilities. Rosie was able to talk and interact with most people.

26. Because she was so close in age to Charlotte, with Charlotte being only six months older, I think that Charlotte helped bring Rosie on at a faster rate as she always wanted to do what Charlotte was doing. I remember that my sister, Sarah, and I would always help our mother out with bath times and generally looking after both Charlotte and Rosie. It was a really happy time for our new extended family.
27. During this time my parents ran a children's nursery from our house and it was such a lovely environment to be in and Rosie continued to flourish and went from strength to strength.
28. However, everything changed in July 1991 when we found out that Rosie had been infected with HIV shortly after her birth. It is extremely upsetting and painful for me to remember this time but it is fair to say that the whole family were utterly heartbroken.
29. Rosie's health had been slowly deteriorating prior to the diagnosis and following her diagnosis it plummeted further. She was very poorly and was frequently vomiting and had diarrhoea.
30. My mother and father did not know who they could confide in, due to the stigma which surrounded HIV and AIDS at that time. They were also worried that parents who came to the nursery to drop their children off would not want Rosie to be there if they were aware of her diagnosis.
31. My parents therefore moved into rented accommodation with Rosie to circumnavigate this issue.
32. Rosie was started on AZT almost immediately following her diagnosis. However, it was evident that the HIV treatment was not working and it was not long before Rosie developed AIDS.

33. Around this time my parents felt able to disclose Rosie's infection to a couple of their friends, who were both [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] My mother and father [GRO-C] Damian from the [GRO-C] in 1971 [GRO-C]  
[GRO-C]  
[GRO-C] My parents had been [GRO-C] since about 1973.

34. My parents also disclosed Rosie's infection to one of my father's good friends and his solicitor.

35. My parents really struggled explaining what was wrong with Rosie to people who did not know about her diagnosis. It was plainly obvious to anyone how extremely poorly Rosie was. My mother and father did not want to disclose her diagnosis due to the stigma that existed at that time.

36. When Rosie reached the age of 10, she looked like a frail and gaunt 7 year old. She was extremely thin and constantly exhausted. During this time, my poor mother found herself on the receiving end of some [GRO-C] by the staff at the Booth Hall Hospital who thought that she was intentionally [GRO-C] Rosie.

37. My mother made a diary note shortly before Rosie passed away which recorded the fact that her CD4 and CD8 levels were extremely low. The level noted by my mother in respect of her CD4 count was 6.

38. Despite the fact that Rosie had struggled on with both grit and determination since her diagnosis at aged 8, she lost her fight for life on 24<sup>th</sup> February 1983, aged just 10. The final months were terrifying for Rosie as she bravely dealt with things that no child should ever have to.

39. The effect on my mother and father was devastating. They thought that they could give Rosie a good life with love, guidance, nurturing and a family unit. I don't think my mother and father ever got over losing Rosie in the way in which they did.

40. When Charlotte was old enough my parents sat her down and explained what had happened to Rosie. It is fair to say that she was absolutely devastated. Even today, Charlotte says "*Rosie is always with me*". They were very close and Rosie's infection and passing deeply affected Charlotte.

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

41. Apart from the one episode of the finger pointing at my mother, the medical professionals and staff at the Booth Hall Hospital were fantastic with Rosie.

42. I do recall that once Rosie was diagnosed with HIV the staff at this hospital would glove up when clearing up any of her vomit which contained blood.

43. None of our family has ever been offered any counselling or psychological support.

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

44. I believe that my mother and father received a small amount of money following the 1991 HIV Litigation.

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

45. I want to know who knew what and when. In my view the US were well aware that there was a problem with blood transfusions at this time and therefore I don't know why the UK were still allowing the importation of contaminated blood.

46. It is devastating that a little girl, who already had a multitude of health problems, was given contaminated blood which killed her at the age of only 10.

#### **Anonymity**

47. I do not want to be anonymous and I wish to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.



**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed:

GRO-C

Dated.....1/7/19.....