

Witness Name: Deborah Jane Biggs

Statement No: WITN4327001

Exhibits: WITN4327002 – 006

Dated:

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBORAH JANE BIGGS

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 28 July 2020.

I, Deborah Jane Biggs, will say as follows: -

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Deborah Jane Biggs (previously Lee and maiden name Smith). My date of birth is  1962 and my address is   
 I am a live-in warden at a residential complex. I have one adult son and a grandson.
2. I qualified as a nurse in 1984 after 3 years training and worked on a female medical ward at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kings Lynn for approximately 2 years. I took a career break to look after my 2 disabled step daughters and then I became pregnant with my son. My marriage broke up shortly after he was born, so I went into the caring profession when he was 8 months old.

3. I intend to speak about my infection with the Hepatitis C virus (HCV), which I believe I contracted as a result of being given a blood transfusion after an emergency caesarean section in 1991.
4. In particular, I intend to discuss the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment that I received and the impact it had on my life.
5. I confirm that I have chosen not to be legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry team to assist me with my statement.

## **Section 2. How Infected**

6. I gave birth to my son in GRO-C 1991 and had to have an emergency caesarean section at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Kings Lynn.
7. I was told after the procedure that I had been given a blood transfusion and I have always believed this to be the case, yet it is not stated on my medical records.
8. My sister was also informed that I had been given a blood transfusion.
9. I was not surprised I required a blood transfusion, because of the amount of blood I lost.
10. I think I was kept in hospital for 7 or 8 days after the birth and then I threatened to discharge myself.
11. I also ended up with a very nasty wound infection after the caesarean. I am not sure if this was linked to the infected blood. This was not on my medical records either, but I had to visit a district nurse for a number of weeks for the wound to be packed. I was also prescribed various courses of antibiotics to clear the infection.

12. When my son was 3 years old I had to go into hospital for an appendectomy. Again, this was at the Queen Elizabeth. I do not think I had any transfusions, but I am not 100% sure.
13. I had my ears pierced at the age of 5 and have one small tattoo, but both were carried out at registered places in the UK.
14. In July 2016 I went to my GP because I was experiencing problems with my knee. I also explained that I was very lethargic, tired all the time and was having hot flushes – these were not menopausal. I thought I might be diabetic.
15. The GP took various blood tests and found that I had raised liver enzymes. He explained that my liver function was not right and sent me for further tests.
16. Once the test results were received, the GP diagnosed me with HCV. I recall being very shocked and in a daze. I was referred onto the liver specialist, Dr Douds at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
17. He took further blood tests to find out the genotype, which I think was 3.
18. Dr Douds explained how to manage the virus, but I was living alone at this point so there was little risk of transmission. My nursing background helped me to minimise any risk and I knew I had to be careful with bodily fluids.

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

19. I have not contracted any infection other than HCV as a result of being given contaminated blood.

### **Section 4. Consent**

20. I am not aware of being treated or tested without consent. I always found that medical professionals kept me informed with the tests they were doing,

### **Section 5. Impact**

21. My infection with HCV explained the hot flushes and constant tiredness that I was experiencing.
22. I was very depressed at the time, but not to the point where I felt that I required medical help. I am a firm believer in self-healing.
23. Dr Douds referred me to Addenbrookes Hospital. I was seen in December 2016 for a fibro scan, which showed advanced fibrosis and cirrhosis of the liver.
24. I was prioritised for treatment due to the extent of liver damage and it commenced in April 2017. I could have started the treatment in December 2016, but the nurse asked if I wanted to wait for the new treatment that did not involve any injections, so I did.
25. It was a 12-week course of Sofosbuvir and involved 6 trips to Addenbrookes for regular blood tests and to pick up the medication. I took the tablets daily.
26. I recall the nurse saying how expensive the tablets were.
27. I had several nasty headaches whilst on the treatment and had blemishes on the skin. The headaches were throbbing and occurred most days, but it was not anything I could not cope with. I used to take paracetamol to relieve the pain.
28. I no longer experience the headaches now that I have finished the treatment.

29. I was told that I had a very high viral load, but the treatment was a success and I am now clear of the virus.
30. My life expectancy is not what it should be, because of the liver cirrhosis. It is something I just have to live with.
31. I still get tired in the afternoons, but not as much as I did before the treatment.
32. I do not drink alcohol now because of the damage HCV has caused to my liver, neither can I take ibuprofen. I have never been a heavy drinker, but did enjoy a drink socially.
33. I do not put myself in situations where I have to explain to others why I do not drink, by not going out.
34. None of my family realise the extent of the damage caused by HCV. I do not like to talk about it because it makes me feel dirty and I do not want to burden them.
35. I told my employers straight away about the diagnosis, but they have always been very good and I was able to manage my work around the treatment and various appointments.
36. I am on salary pay, so the infection had no effect on my income.
37. The only financial loss I suffered was the expense of travelling to Addenbrookes on a regular basis.

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

38. Once it was discovered that I had HCV, the NHS did a marvellous job throughout and I have no complaints.

39. I had the same specialist nurse at Addenbrookes and she was always very good.
40. Now that I have been discharged I see Dr Douds annually for numerous blood tests and a scan to monitor the state of my liver. Its condition has not changed, but I have not asked any further questions.
41. I have not sought counselling or psychological support.

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

42. I was advised at all stages of my diagnosis and treatment to make an application with the Skipton Trust.
43. My application was refused in 2016 on the grounds that there is no reference to a blood transfusion on my medical records.

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

44. I have nothing but praise for the NHS since I was diagnosed with HCV.
45. I feel rather unlucky to have been infected in 1991 as it was not long before blood started to be screened and heat treated.
46. I am infuriated that the infection was not discovered sooner, because I was a blood donor at Bury St Edmunds whilst training to be a nurse.
47. I would like to exhibit the following documents, that I viewed during my witness statement interview. They are sourced from the Inquiry's document review of Skipton material.

<b>Exhibit Number</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Description</b>

<b>WITN4327002</b>	SKIP0000041_003_image P10 of 62	Blood transfusion form – dated 20.02.91 <i>States No Atypical Antibodies Detected</i>
<b>WITN4327003</b>	SKIP0000041_003_image P24 of 62	Intravenous/infusion chart –dated 20.02.91
<b>WITN4327004</b>	SKIP0000041_003_image P37 of 62	Table re blood loss at delivery - dated 23 & 25 .02.91 <i>They do not normally check HB unless you have had a blood transfusion. Further details of the 'offensive' wound and the nursing action.</i>
<b>WITN4327005</b>	SKIP0000041_003_image P38 of 62	Summary of delivery form – relating to blood loss: 500ml <i>Mentions foetal distress and blood loss. Vitamin K given for a blood clot.</i>
<b>WITN4327006</b>	SKIP0000041_003_image P43 of 62	Post-natal transfer form. Emergency LSCS for foetal distress & blood loss 500ml. <i>Again, mentions blood loss, duration of labour being 7.5 hours and issues with the wound.</i>

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-C \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 10th Aug 2020