

ANONYMOUS

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN4425001

Exhibits: WITN4425002 - 005

Dated: 16 September 2020

### INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

---

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GRO-B

---

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 13 September 2020.

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

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1958 and I live at GRO-B, Lincolnshire. GRO-B GRO-B
2. I live with my wife GRO-B having been married for 30 years, we have two sons aged 25 and 29. I work as an industrial cleaner, and GRO-B is a secretary for a company director. My memory can be blurry, and I have been assisted in providing this statement by my wife GRO-B

## ANONYMOUS

3. I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C ('HCV'). In particular, the nature of my illness, how the illness affected me, the treatment received and the impact it had on me, my family and our lives together. I will also speak about my failed application to the Skipton Fund.
4. For reasons, which will become apparent, I wish to remain anonymous. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation.
5. The Inquiry Investigator has explained to me the 'Right to Reply' procedure, and I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.

### **Section 2. How Infected**

6. I grew up in GRO-B with my parents and three siblings. I had a happy childhood, and enjoyed my school years. I decided to leave school aged 16 as I wanted to start earning money. I didn't know what I wanted to do and did not have a lot of encouragement to learn a trade. My father believed that not having a trade had been good enough for him, so it would be good enough for me.
7. I worked in a shop for two years, and then got a job working in a factory. I worked for two years at a tyre factory, which began to affect my breathing. I had been diagnosed with asthma aged 12, and this ultimately forced me to leave this job. I subsequently worked in a number of other professions, including construction and engineering.
8. On 15 August 1981, when I was aged 21, I went out drinking with friends in Nottingham. My friend decided to drive us back despite us all being drunk. My friend had an Opel that was left-hand drive which he had bought from Germany.

9. I didn't trust the driver as he was drunk, so I remember putting a seat belt on. I sat in the front passenger seat on the right-hand side, with three other passengers in the back without seatbelts. On the drive, my friend hit the curb, forcing the car to swerve across the road and hit a ditch. The car went from bonnet to boot and twisted over about 8 times. Every time the car rolled over, I smacked my head on the door pillar to my right with the seatbelt holding me in place.
10. I don't recall much else about the accident. I have been told that in addition to the cuts and glass all over my face I was also having an asthma attack. I still have scars on the right side of my face. The seatbelt meant that I didn't break any bones. The accident resulted in me sustaining a traumatic brain injury, as opposed to physical, external injuries.
11. The next thing I knew, I woke up in Queen's Medical Centre ('QMC') in Nottingham. I had been in a coma for a week. I remember a nurse sat at the side of my bed, and I couldn't speak. I struggled with the cognitive tests such as putting shapes in the correct boxes. My mum recalls that I was attached to wires and a drip when I was unconscious.
12. I enclose a letter within exhibit **WITN4425003** from R McQuillan (Registrar at the Accident & Emergency Department, QMC) to Dr GRO-B dated 08 September 1981. R McQuillan wrote that, on 25 August 1981, I had a psychological assessment that showed 'generalised intellectual impairment with marked preservation of ideas'.
13. R McQuillan also wrote that 'An attempt was made to do an Emiscan on 26<sup>th</sup> [August 1981] at Derby: however as he was very restless this was not possible. On the 1<sup>st</sup> September, unexpectedly, there was a marked improvement in his intellectual status and his family felt that he had returned to normal.'

## ANONYMOUS

14. I was discharged from the QMC after 18 days and went back to live with my Mum and Dad. My walking was difficult at first, and I had to learn to speak again. I don't remember much about this period. It took me two and a half years until I was anywhere near well enough to go back to work. This whole time was a blur. To this day I still cannot remember exactly what happened.
15. I do remember one day walking to the corner shop with my Mum. As we were leaving the shop I just walked out into the middle of the road into oncoming traffic. I was not thinking straight and was not aware of my surroundings. I told my mum I was determined to get better and to prove it I would pass my driving test, which I did.
16. Around two years after the road traffic accident, I was put on a course called 'The Community Programme'. There, I was taught skills such as building and construction. I had always been practical and good with my hands. Afterwards, I was lucky enough to get a full-time job. I remember during the training that I was told certain things and then the next day I could not remember them. I did however seem to remember the important parts.
17. After the car accident I had begun to develop severe anxiety and I would become upset very easily. I also noticed that I became a lot angrier than before. This was described in a letter from A F Dove (Senior Registrar, A&E Department) to Dr [GRO-B] dated 18 December 1981 (enclosed within exhibit **WITN4425005**). A F Dove wrote that 'his only complaint is that he tends to lose his temper easily. I have reassured him that this is a common occurrence after head injuries...'.
18. My medical records from my GP show that I was seen by Dr [GRO-B] [GRO-B] (Principal Clinical Psychologist, [GRO-B] General Hospital) on a number of occasions between 29 December 1981 and 11 October 1982. This is detailed in a number of letters from Dr [GRO-B] to Dr Dave (Consultant, A&E Department University Hospital Nottingham) enclosed within exhibit **WITN44259005**. I cannot recall any of these

## ANONYMOUS

appointments and do not remember having undertaken any psychiatric assessments during this time.

19. On 10 June 1984, I had been for a few drinks and felt extremely depressed; this had been going on for some time. I didn't know what I was here for? When I got home I decided that I wanted to end my life. I used my father's old-fashioned double-sided razor blade and tried to cut my wrists.
20. I succeeded in cutting both of my wrists whilst sat in the kitchen of my Mum and Dad's house. When my Dad came down to check why I hadn't been to bed, he found me lying in a pool of blood on the floor. He called an ambulance straight away. I remember him saying, what have you done son.
21. The ambulance took me to GRO-B Hospital, and I remember being rushed straight into the A&E department. I was attended to straight away and kept in overnight. I remember the pain was excruciating when the doctor was sewing my wrists up. I do not recall being given anaesthetic. The doctor explicitly told me that if I had cut one or two millimetres deeper I would've lost the use of my hands.
22. I remember losing a lot of blood during this episode, and can vividly recall the pain when my wrists were sewn up. In a letter dated 12 June 1984 (and enclosed within exhibit **WITN4425003**), Dr GRO-B (Associate Specialist in A&E/Orthopaedics, GRO-B General Hospital) wrote to Dr Glendinning saying that I 'attempted to cut both [my] wrists and succeeded in wounding [myself] superficially'.
23. I believe the term 'superficially' significantly underestimates the severity of my injuries and the amount of blood that I lost. On reflection, I believe that I may have been given a blood transfusion during this incident owing to the amount of blood lost. The scars on my wrists are still evident today; this was not a superficial cut by any means.

24. Between 1984 and 1990 I was working full-time and felt a lot better generally. I had a job laying roads, and then found a job working in London. I had no health problems during this period.
25. Around 1987 I moved into a new house, and was working part-time as a taxi driver. [GRO-B] moved in next door to me, and this is how we met. We ended up getting married in 1990. When I met [GRO-B] I always upfront about the accident and how it had affected me. I had no inkling that I could have had hepatitis C at that time. There were no obvious health problems, and I was extremely fit through working long hours and heavy lifting.
26. When I got to around age 50 I started to notice aches and pains more frequently. I became tired more easily, but I attributed this to old age. I had stopped working on building sites, so I started going to the gym as my muscle began turning into fat. I had lived for 28 years since my traumatic brain injury and my cognitive function was good. I then started to develop brain fog, which was more than just memory loss. My wife recalls that I complained that I felt like I was drowning.
27. In June 2009, I went to see Dr. [GRO-B] at [GRO-B] Medical Centre in [GRO-B]. I did not go to the doctors often, so it must have been bad for me to go and see my GP. I explained to him that I had not been feeling well, having experienced aches and pains with general brain fog and confusion.
28. Dr. [GRO-B] physically examined me and felt that my liver was enlarged. He sent my blood tests to the hospital, telling me that he would test for everything, including HIV and HCV. He called me back a week or so later and asked me to come in to the surgery; it was then he told me the results.
29. Dr. [GRO-B] told me that I had tested positive for hepatitis C genotype 3, and that I had a high viral load. At the time I did not know what HCV was, though I had heard of hepatitis B. He said that I could either go

through medication and treatment, which would be tough, or I could live with it. His attitude was 'It's up to you mate'. It felt like I would have to either go and get it sorted or learn to live with it.

30. Dr [GRO-B] did not give me any information about HCV and did not offer any explanation as to how I could have contracted the virus. He did not ask me whether I had any tattoos, whether I had ever been an intravenous drug user, whether I had any piercings or if I had ever been treated medically abroad. In respect of all of these, I have no tattoos, have never taken intravenous drugs, I have no piercings and I have never been treated abroad.

31. That night after being diagnosed with HCV, I sat in the kitchen with [GRO-B] eating dinner. When I told her that I had HCV, I was not particularly concerned. [GRO-B] had heard of HCV and she remembers thinking that it was associated with bad things such as drug use, alcoholism and AIDS.

32. [GRO-B] went on the hepatitis C trust website and was alarmed. She was concerned about our sons shaving with my razor, and she instantly stopped us all sharing towels. I had always been laid-back and positive, but [GRO-B] was very worried about me transmitting the virus to the rest of the family.

33. It was only because of [GRO-B] that we started to take HCV more seriously. After reading about it online, we began to understand the significance of the effects the virus could have on my health. [GRO-B] herself went to get tested for HCV, and thankfully tested negative. [GRO-B] felt dirty when going to the test as she had to explain that she was not an intravenous drug user or an alcoholic.

34. The way my diagnosis was conveyed to me meant that I was not certain about the severity of my infection with HCV. When I was offered treatment, I did not want to be treated like a child by the doctor. I wanted to know clearly and honestly what the treatment would entail. I

## ANONYMOUS

recall that Dr. [GRO-B] had indicated that the treatment would be tough, though he did not go into further detail.

35. I was offered the treatment under the care of the hepatology department at the QMC. I was seen by a specialist liver nurse who was very helpful. She was honest and straight forward from the outset. The nurse explained to me that I would self-inject one dose of pegylated interferon once a week (on a Monday) and would take several tablets of ribavirin daily. She also gave us information and leaflets about HCV and the treatment, and said that I could ring her at any time if I had any questions or concerns. She was very good and treated us well.

36. [GRO-B] was shocked when the nurse asked if I had been tested for HIV as well. Although I had tested negative for HIV, this hit [GRO-B] like a bus at the time.

37. The course of pegylated interferon and ribavirin lasted for six months. During this time, I stayed at home and tried to do sudoku puzzles to occupy my mind. I had been made redundant, and [GRO-B] was off sick from work for a month. She was under a huge pressure and could not face going into work.

38. We chose not to tell our boys, aged 14 and 18 at the time, what the cause of my illness was. We just told them that I was ill and would get better soon. They do not know I was infected with HCV. This is one of the reasons why I would like to remain anonymous.

39. The treatment itself was horrendous. My wife says that it looked like I was a cancer patient. I would get tired just doing a sudoku puzzle, and it was like I was there but I wasn't there. It took away all of my energy. I used to sleep downstairs on a sofa bed so [GRO-B] would not be disturbed. I went into my own little world by cutting myself away from society. I strived to stay focused and concentrated in the belief that it would work in clearing the virus.



40. Throughout the treatment, I went to QMC regularly for tests of my viral load. On the first two occasions, my viral load did not change. It then began to decrease gradually until 23 December 2010 when I was told that I had cleared the virus.
41. On that day, I received a letter from Dr S D Ryder that stated: 'I am delighted to say that your PCR test was negative indicating that you have been cured of your hepatitis C and that nothing else is required.'
42. We were ecstatic to hear this news having put up with so much. I am physically a lot fitter now, apart from the occasional aches and pains. I have been working in current job for 6 years, which is a physical job that keeps me fit. I have not been given any advice about looking after myself after clearing the virus, and I have not been back for an appointment since receiving the letter saying I had been cured of the virus. I have never had a liver biopsy or ultrasound to check the condition of my liver.
43. I get pains in my legs and I get tired easily. I also had a wound that turned into an ulcer on my leg but I have no knowledge as to whether this is due to the infection I had or whether it is all age related. I am also losing some teeth but again this could be age related. I have high blood pressure for which I take tablets. Aside from this, I have no other health problems. Whilst on the subject of density, I did tell my dentist that I had cleared HCV and they didn't alter the way they treated me.

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

44. When Dr [GRO-B] sent me for blood tests in June 2009, he said that he would test me for everything, including HIV. Fortunately, I only tested positive for HCV, and I have no other infections.

**Section 4. Consent**

45. I consented to being tested for HCV and HIV as I wanted to know what the cause of my illness was.

46. I consented to being treated with pegylated interferon and ribavirin for my HCV infection. I'm not sure now that I was given adequate information as to the potential effects of the treatment.

**Section 5. Impact**

47. My HCV infection and subsequent treatment had a significant impact on our marriage. It was a horrible time for both of us. [GRO-B] suffered from anxiety as a result of the stress involved with my illness, and was forced to take time off work. She was extremely worried about the children becoming infected, and took a number of precautions to prevent this. She was also anxious about becoming infected herself. On one occasion during intercourse she was crying throughout because of the fear of contracting HCV.

48. When I started my course of treatment [GRO-B] was off sick from work. She had lost a lot of weight, and felt isolated as we decided not to talk about it to anyone. She entrusted one friend at work who she was able to talk to about my illness.

49. When [GRO-B] returned from a month of work, everyone assumed that I had cancer. Her boss sat her down for a meeting and asked how she was doing. [GRO-B] did not feel able to discuss this with anyone apart from her one close friend. It was awful for her to witness the effects of the treatment on me.

50. Our sons were not obviously affected by my illness. We decided not to tell them about my diagnosis and treatment, and they still do not know to this day. They were always at school when we went for

appointments, and we simply told them that I was ill, but on the mend. We wonder now if they knew, or if they have since worked it out. At the time we believed it was best to protect them from this and to prevent them worrying.

51. The stigma associated with HCV had a significant impact on our lives. I was always worried about what people would think of me if they knew I had HCV. I have never told my own family, not even my mother or my brothers. GRO-B did tell her sister, who is a nurse, that I had hepatitis, but did not specify which type.

52. When I was about to begin the six-month course of treatment, GRO-B told her family that we were going to have a rocky few months and she would appreciate their support. She did not however feel able to tell them about the HCV.

53. I have always been fit and active, though the virus definitely made me lethargic and fatigued. Even now I get tired easily, though I am better than I was before the treatment. I am still working full-time at the age of 61 and am proud that I am still fit and healthy.

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

54. I did not encounter any obstacles in obtaining treatment for my infection with HCV.

55. My wife and I have not been offered any form of counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with HCV. The specialist liver nurse at the QMC was helpful and supportive, telling me to call her at any time with any concerns. This did not extend to any offer of formal counselling, which I believe would have been of some use to use both.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

56. **GRO-B** found out about the Skipton Fund through her online research. She googled the hepatitis C trust and it came up saying that we could apply to the Skipton Fund. **GRO-B** then wrote to various hospitals and doctors to request any medical records relevant to my hospital treatment in 1981 and 1984.

57. Both the QMC and **GRO-B** Hospital both confirmed that they did not have any medical records pertaining to my treatment under their care.

58. I applied to the Skipton Fund on 14 December 2009. I enclose a copy of my application form sent to the Skipton Fund as exhibit **WITN4425002**. The sections to be filled in by my GP were completed by Dr **GRO-B** of **GRO-B** Medical Centre, **GRO-B** My Skipton number was **GRO-B**

59. Within exhibit **WITN4425002**, I note that in Part 2B, the doctor is asked to confirm whether the infection arose indirectly, to which 'yes' has been crossed out leaving 'no' as the answer. It also confirms that I had HCV genotype 3.

60. I also note that in Part 4A (i) Dr **GRO-B** wrote 'patient involved in a road traffic accident and treated in accident and emergency department.' This information is not complete as I was in a coma for a week and subsequently transferred to a ward during which I have no knowledge of the treatment I received for my injuries.

61. In part 4A (v) it reads 'superficial cuts to wrists self inflicted again no mention blood products I enclose copy of this letter'.

62. In part 4B the question reads 'In your view is it possible that the infected person's HCV infection was acquired in consequence of NHS treatment received before 1 September 1991?' to which 'no' is crossed

out and 'yes' is left as the answer. It would appear that the Skipton Fund ignored this answer.

63. Dr GRO-B wrote 'I am unable to identify any other cause for his infection, although there are limited details available in the GP records'. I take this as meaning my doctor, from the information she was able to access, was of the view that there was no other cause other than my treatment received for my road traffic accident in 1981 and my self-harm (cut wrists) in 1984.

64. As I have eluded to earlier, I question the use of the term 'superficial' regarding the injuries to my wrists as the A&E doctor stated that had I gone another one or two millimetres down I would've cut my tendons and permanently lost the use of my hands. I required several stitches in each wrist, for which I still bear the scars to this day.

65. I remember my father came downstairs and found me in a pool of blood. I was drunk and I have no further memory of that night or the following day.

66. I remember being kept in the hospital overnight. I question whether I received a blood transfusion or units of blood that evening as a result of my blood loss. Unfortunately, through no fault of my own, the medical records detailing the treatment I received that night are no longer available.

67. My application to the Skipton Fund was rejected on 12 January 2010. This was communicated by letter from Nicholas Fish (Scheme Administrator) enclosed within exhibit **WITN4425003**. This letter reads: 'It is with regret that I must advise you that this application has been declined. This is due to the lack of supporting confirmation that NHS blood or blood products were administered to you during your treatment in 1981 and 1984 and that this was therefore the likely source of your infection with hepatitis C'.

## ANONYMOUS

68. I reapplied to the QMC for any medical records in relation to my treatment in 1981 after the road traffic accident. On 19 March 2010, Diane Carruthers (Administrator, Patient Records service, QMC) wrote to me saying that 'the records you have requested have now been destroyed' in accordance with the 'Department of Health Circular advice (HSC 1999/053)' (enclosed within exhibit **WITN4425003**).
69. I appealed against this decision on 28 April 2010 and enclosed a confirmation of my HCV PCR positive status, a personal statement of appeal and a letter from QMC records department confirming my records had been destroyed (all contained within exhibit **WITN4425003**).
70. My appeal against the original decision was rejected on 24 June 2010. In a letter from Mark Mildred (Chair of Appeal Panel) and contained within exhibit **WITN4425003**, it reads: 'Our expert members were of the view, supported by the clinical records we have seen, that there is insufficient evidence to show that your medical condition at the time would have been treated by a blood transfusion. Further, there is a full discharge note from the Registrar in A&E that makes it clear that no transfusion was given in 1981. As a result of these conditions we were not satisfied that it is probable that the infection resulted from NHS treatment and accordingly regret that we must refuse your appeal.'
71. I dispute the sentence where Mr Mildred states, 'Further, there is a full discharge note from the Registrar in A&E that makes it clear that no transfusion was given in 1981' This is not a full account of the treatment I received; there is no mention of the coma I was in. There is no mention at all of the treatment I received when I was admitted via the A&E. No mention of being transferred to the ward. How can they make the leap to say there was no blood transfusion based on this letter? I feel that Skipton just used this as an excuse not to agree my application.

72. After this final rejection, we just thought 'oh well' and that was that. We thought there was nothing else we could do. We later heard of the English Infected Blood Support Scheme ('EIBSS'), which we are now in the process of applying to.

73. I reapplied to the QMC in order to support my application to the EIBSS. I received a response on 23 July 2020 from the Data Protection Administration Service (enclosed as exhibit **WITN4425004**). The letter reads: 'Regrettably we must advise you that we no longer hold the records that you requested.' It states that the records were destroyed in accordance with the NHS publication 'Records Management Code of Practice for Health and Social Care 2016'.

74. In July 2020 I applied for all GP records pertaining to my treatment in 1981 and 1984. I received these on 27 July 2020 and enclose them as exhibit **WITN4425005**. Within this exhibit is a 'Summary of Treatment Card' which begins 'Asthma 1960'. I note that this appears to be the front page of a folder, which I now intend to request in full. Having initially applied for records only relevant to the treatment in 1981 and 1984, I now intend to apply for a full account of my medical records.

75. I believe that the previous Skipton Fund application was too broad and did not focus enough on what happened. I submit that it is fundamentally unfair that my application was detrimentally affected by my lack of medical evidence, which was through no fault of my own. My medical records should have been kept by the hospitals that treated me.

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

76. I can't understand why they didn't test the blood before it was used. I question why they didn't test it when they knew that the blood being collected from US prisoners, who were at high risk of having infections. I also question whether someone will eventually be taken to task over this. I hope that in some way my statement can contribute to the Inquiry

## ANONYMOUS

finding out what happened and to prevent this from happening ever again.

77. I am glad that the Inquiry investigator contacted us, but I now realise that it has opened up a lot of old memories that we had previously moved on from. It angers us what happened and we feel it is very important and serious that the Inquiry is successful.

78. This is the first time we have ever really spoken about what happened to me. At least we had each other to talk to. Most of the time we just want to forget. I have not even spoken to my own mother about this. We have not had the opportunity to have counselling. We have welcomed the opportunity to speak openly about this.

79. Through no fault of my own, my medical records have been destroyed. This should not be held against me in my application for financial support in consequence of what happened to me. Skipton based their decision on a 'snap shot' of incomplete letters.

80. Since my diagnosis in 2009 I have had to live a lie out of fear of the stigma associated with HCV. I have enjoyed the opportunity to talk about all these things without fear of being judged or having to cover things up.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed GRO-B

Dated 16 . 9. 2020.



## TABLE OF EXHIBITS

| Exhibit     | Description  |
|-------------|--|
| WITN4425002 | Skipton Fund application form, dated 17 December 2009                      |
| WITN4425003 | Skipton Fund file, reference number 7516                                   |
| WITN4425004 | Letter from Data Protection Administration Service, QMC dated 23 July 2020 |
| WITN4425005 | GRO-B Medical Centre medical records                                       |