

Witness Name: A C Howgate-Gray

Statement No: WITN4454001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: June 2020

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF AMELIA CHARLOTTE HOWGATE-GRAY

I, Amelia Charlotte Howgate-Gray, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Amelia Charlotte Howgate-Gray and I was born on GRO-C 2001. I live at GRO-C
GRO-C
2. I make this statement as the affected daughter of my late father, Mathew James Machen, who was born on GRO-C 1971 and passed away, aged only 32, on 29th July 2003. He was infected with both HIV and Hepatitis C via contaminated blood products.
3. My mother, Lorraine Howgate-Gray, has also provided a witness statement to the Inquiry under witness number **WITN4453001**. I defer to her witness statement in relation to key dates and facts because I was only aged 2 when my father passed away.
4. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my late father's full medical records.**

Section 2. How Affected

5. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 3. Other Infections

6. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 4. Consent

7. I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 5. Impact

8. I was only aged 2 when my dad passed away and I struggled without him. Growing up without a dad was tough and my mum told me that soon after he passed away I refused to go to bed and created at the top of the stairs. I was really sad and confused about where my dad had gone and I was too young to understand why he was not coming back.
9. I struggled with my feelings and behaviour to such an extent that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) became part of my life from the age of 4 to 18. I suffered with really bad anxiety and depression. I was suicidal and self-harmed which led to numerous hospitalisations. CAMHS were really good and I remember that Mum and I were assigned a counsellor each.
10. I can't remember how old I was when I found out that GRO-C but I remember just coming out with questions for my mum one day. She was brilliant and answered everything honestly but I did not really begin to understand the HIV element and how he had become infected until I got to High School. It was there that I overheard a girl telling another girl a joke about HIV during a drama lesson. When I got home I questioned my mum

about HIV and we had a long chat about this, including how my dad had become infected, and it was only then that my brain started to take in a small part of what had happened.

11. Not long after this, my class mates found out that my dad had had AIDS and that is when the bullying started and I had to endure some horrid and cruel behaviour which was around the time that I had started to self-harm. My class mates did not even understand anything about HIV or AIDS and had no idea what I had been through.
12. When mum and I left GRO-C and moved to GRO-C it took a while to get me into school and when I started at GRO-C my anxiety was unbearable. I was put on a reduced timetable but I was still really struggling to come into school so they asked me and mum to come into school for a meeting and told me that either I had to return to school on a full timetable or mum would have to home school me. We chose the home schooling option and I was home schooled from that day on.
13. It is only relatively recently, with the advent of the Inquiry and speaking to others in similar positions, that I have really deepened my knowledge and understanding about the Contaminated Blood Scandal. My dad's death was entirely avoidable and that makes me really angry.
14. Looking back, I do think my life would have panned out very differently if my dad had been here. I think I would have stayed on at school, instead of being home schooled, and I believe that I would have struggled less with my anxiety. I would probably have been able to cope with things to a greater degree and developed into a "*more rounded person*".
15. My mum told me that Dad endured so much pain in his short life which makes me really sad. However, I am really proud of my dad and in awe of the fact that he managed to work as a pig farmer, which was such a physically demanding role, despite his severe disabilities. I am pleased that my dad got to work with animals because he was so passionate about them.

16. I have always been really open about what happened to my dad. I am more than happy to explain to people the ins and outs of the Contaminated Blood Scandal. I find that most people are shocked when they realise the extent of the UK Government's involvement. The story is almost unbelievable and what makes it even more tragic is the fact that they then tried to cover up what they had done. I am still completely baffled how they have got away with it for so long and continue to do so. Very recently, my mum and I have been trying to access my dad's medical records and have experienced difficulties in this regard; people don't care or understand how important it is to discover the truth about what happened. I suppose they are just behind a desk on the telephone to us but it feels like we are being fobbed off all the time.
17. My dad's mum used to tell me all the time how alike me and Dad were. We were both really mischievous and had a penchant for dried bread on its own! I also share his passion for animals. It was comforting to discover these little things which I had no idea about. I really do think that I would have been a "*daddy's girl*" if I had grown up with him. My dad was a very kind and caring man who would do anything to help people. There was an accident black spot close to a biker's café, outside the pig farm, and dad would often come across bikers who had parted company with their bikes, on his way home from work. Dad would wait with them until the ambulance arrived and was often late home for his tea as a result.
18. I feel blessed that I have such a close bond and fantastic relationship with my mum. We have always been very open with each other and I remember that when I was a teenager, both CAMHS and the Hospital always included Mum in discussions as I used to share things with her which is the complete opposite of what most kids do. We also pulled together when we were evicted by our landlord about 2 years ago which meant we had to sleep in our car for 4 months with our French Bulldog and Chihuahua.
19. I now feel a lot stronger and more positive about the future. Mum and I have been given a council house that no one is going to take away from us and I feel that we have finally got a home that we can call our own.

20.If Dad had been around I don't think he would have allowed matters to develop to the extent that Mum and I would have been made homeless. He would have been working hard to support and look after us. Mum and I had no pension or life insurance to fall back on. I was also not left anything in his will and it was upsetting not to receive any of his personal belongings which I would have treasured to this day.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

21.I refer to my mother's witness statement in this regard.

22.I received counselling and support from CAHMS.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

23.I refer to my mother's witness statement.

Section 8. Other Issues

24.I want this Inquiry to get the ball rolling to ensure that those people who authorised or sanctioned the use of the contaminated blood are prosecuted and go to prison for murdering thousands of people. There has been so much rioting and support for what happened to George Floyd in the US but it is both absurd and frightening that in the UK we cannot get justice for those who were knowingly injected with killer viruses.

25.I believe that there should be a memorial of some sort with the names of those people who lost their lives in this tragedy.

Anonymity

26. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I believe that my anxiety would preclude me from being able 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... 8-7-2020