

Witness Name: A A Sparkes  
Statement No: WITN3973001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: April 2020

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

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### FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ALEXANDER ANTHONY SPARKES

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I, Alexander Anthony Sparkes, will say as follows:-

#### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Alexander Anthony Sparkes and I was born on GRO-C 1980. I live GRO-C Cardiff, GRO-C
2. I make this statement as an affected son of my late father, Leslie John Sparkes, who was born on GRO-C 1932 and passed away, aged only 58, on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1990.
3. My father was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C via contaminated Factor IX concentrates.
4. My mother, Susan Elaine Sparkes, has provided a witness statement to the Inquiry under witness number **WITN1713001**. My brother, Richard, is also shortly due to provide a witness statement to the Inquiry.
5. **This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's full medical records.**

## **Section 2. How Affected**

6. My father had moderate Haemophilia B, with a clotting factor of 3-5%, for which he was initially treated with Cryoprecipitate before being moved onto Factor IX concentrates.
7. He was treated at the University Hospital of Wales under the care of Professor Bloom.
8. I refer to my mother's witness statement in relation to further information regarding when and how she was told about my late father's HIV infection and the fact that she only found out that he had also been infected with Hepatitis C after his death.

## **Section 3. Other Infections**

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

## **Section 4. Consent**

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

## **Section 5. Impact**

11. From when I was aged around 5 or 6 there was a change in my father's behaviour in that he became reluctant to be close to Richard and me.
12. I recall one particular incident when my father cut himself in the kitchen and I was quickly pushed out and the kitchen door was slammed in my face. I knew that my father had a bleeding disorder but I did not fully understand the nature of this and was therefore quite nervous about my father's health and resultant behaviour.

13. As I was growing up, my father's hospital visits and bleeding incidents became the norm for me.
14. When I was aged 9, my mother told me that my father had cancer. This was shortly after Richard's birthday, GRO-C in 1990. My father only lived GRO-C before passing away on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1990.
15. I remember it being a very difficult time leading up to my father's funeral. Neither my brother nor I attended as my mother did not want us there. We went to stay with my godmother in GRO-C which was in Cardiff. Whilst the funeral was taking place, my brother and I were playing in a park in GRO-C.
16. Shortly after the funeral my brother and I returned to the family home but from that point on, life changed beyond all recognition. My mother had a mental breakdown and I witnessed her screaming things like "*I want to die*" or sobbing uncontrollably. These difficult memories affected me more than my brother as he was that bit younger and had learning difficulties.
17. I remember my primary school being made aware of my father's passing and following this, I did experience a small amount of bullying although the actual effect of this was significantly reduced because I had a number of really good mates who stuck up for me and put the bullies in their place.
18. Just before I was due to start high school, a social worker came to our house and took me and my brother to the park and had a chat with us. She told us that we were going to be visiting a family. The visit to the family happened and then a short while later we went to see the same family again, but this time we stayed overnight. The number and lengths of visits to this family gradually increased until before we knew it my brother and I were in foster care, without having any idea that that is where we were headed.
19. Whilst I was at high school, I used to spend the week with my foster family and the weekend with my mother. I therefore had to explain to my school mates why I used two different bus stops. They always used to ask why I caught the bus from a different bus stop on a Monday morning.

20. My brother and I progressed through the care system. I was treated well by the first family with whom we were placed with but my brother did not fare quite so well. He used to get sent to his room during the afternoons and then not be allowed out until the next day. He used to watch me play outside from his bedroom window which seemed very unfair. I can still visualise his face as he watched me play. He was treated badly because the foster family did not know how to deal with his disabilities. They managed my brother in quite an aggressive way which was hard for me to watch. In any event, someone witnessed this aggression and it was brought to the attention of the social workers which ultimately meant that we both had to move on again.

21. I initially thought that we were going to go home but this did not materialise. The social workers could not find a family for my brother and me together so we were split up.

22. My brother went on to have two subsequent foster care placements until he left the care system at the age of 16. GRO-C

GRO-C

GRO-C

23. I managed to stay in the GRO-C area which was good as that is where my friends were and I was familiar with the bus routes. I spent a couple of weeks with a new foster family but the house suffered some internal damage which rendered it unsuitable for children so I had to move out. I was then placed with another family where I remained until I was aged 16. I got on with the family really well and I still keep in contact with them today. During my placement with this family, I used to go home for the odd weekend to see my mother. Sadly my brother could only come home very infrequently because my mother could not cope with his learning difficulties. If my brother and I were ever at home at the same time with our mother, it always ended in tears. My mother used to scream and cry, both in public and behind closed doors.

24. In reality between the ages of 16 and 18 I did not really speak to my mother and spent most of my time with my loyal mates. I ended up failing my exams

and having to resit in order to pass. My life plan was to get away and join the Armed Forces but I failed the medical due to having an injured knee.

25. At the age of 19 I applied for critical illness insurance and one of the questions was "*Has anyone in your family passed away as a result of having cancer?*". I therefore telephoned my mother to obtain further details about my father's passing. My mother said something like "*You must come home*" and I remember thinking that it was all a bit odd. I therefore went to my mother's house and she told me that my father was HIV positive and had died as a result of that.

26. Unfortunately, my mother was incapable of explaining the "*ins and outs*" and I was left with more questions than answers. The only people I could think of who had HIV were people like Freddie Mercury. I was really confused as I could not understand how my father had become infected. I thought perhaps that my father had been "*living a lie*" for his whole life in terms of his sexuality.

27. In terms of stigma I confirm that I did experience this on a couple of occasions. My mother disclosed the fact that my father was infected with HIV to the mother of one of my school mates. My mother trusted this woman and she obviously told her son who then used to goad me by constantly saying "*Your dad is a gay*". However, I am still friends with him today as he had no idea about the truth in relation to my father's infection purely because he had not been given an explanation by his mother.

28. What happened to me has negatively affected my relationship with my mother; I bear a degree of animosity towards her for the way in which Richard and I were brought up. My mother is the only person who can really wind me up and I could quite happily never speak to her again. GRO-D

GRO-D However, I maintain a "*relationship of sorts*" with my mother for the sake of my daughter.

My wife does not see or speak to my mother GRO-D

GRO-D

29. When I was growing up, my mother prevented Richard and me from speaking to my nan for several years. I remember my nan saying that she would have looked after Richard and I and that would have meant that we could have circumnavigated the difficult care path. However, my mother prevented this from happening due to the fact that her relationship with my nan had irretrievably broken down. It was not until I could drive that I was able to rekindle my relationship with my nan for which I am eternally grateful.

30. The main reason why I maintained a relationship with my mother is because I did not want what happened to me to happen to my daughter. I have ensured that the door has always been open for my daughter to have a relationship with her nan. However, my mother's behaviour is GRO-D GRO-D She GRO-D which my daughter finds really embarrassing. It has now come to the point where my daughter does not want to see her nan. I have raised my mother's behaviour with her and also told her that my daughter is old enough to make her own decisions now. However, my mother GRO-D says that she wants to keep the family together. I can't help but think "*Why did you not want to do that when Richard and I were in care?*".

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

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

32. I have never been offered any counselling or psychological support in consequence of my father's infections and his subsequent passing. I have never really spoken at length to anyone about my life story before today. In fact, I only told my mates that I had been in foster care about 3 years ago.

## **Section 7. Financial Assistance**

33. When I was aged 18 I was given some money from my mother who told me that my father had put it away for me. I refer to my mother's witness statement for further information in this regard.

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

34. I want this Inquiry to ensure that there is an acknowledgement from the Government confirming that they messed up.

35. There is nothing the Inquiry can do which could change what happened to me as a result of this contaminated blood scandal. I travelled a difficult path and, as a result of which, I emerged permanently scarred.

### **Anonymity**

36. I do not want to apply for anonymity and I do not 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

29.4.20