Witness Name: Leslie John Short
Statement No.: WITN4987001
Exhibits: **Nil**
Dated: 19 May 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LESLIE JOHN SHORT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 13 May 2021.

I Leslie John Short, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Leslie John Short. My date of birth is GRO-C 1964 and my address is GRO-C Wolverhampton GRO-C.

2. I am a resource manager for a rotating machinery manufacturer. I live with my wife and we have been married for about 30 years. We have two grown-up children together.

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.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I was born in Blackburn, Lancashire, but my parents moved us to Wolverhampton when I was aged 15. When I was 18, I was riding my motorbike around a local estate, along with a friend who was on his motorbike. As I was driving down the road, with my friend on his bike behind me, I hit a car that had failed to stop a junction from a side street.

5. I hit the car and flipped over the top. I skidded down the road before my right leg hit the curb. My knee bore the brunt of the collision and my right femur snapped in two. I remember awaking to find my right foot was up next to my left ear before I was given some gas by paramedics and I fell unconscious again. The femur bone was sticking out owing to a compound fracture. The bone had fractured in two places roughly 4 inches apart and the bone in between was smashed and splintered. The leg was barely held on by skin, ligaments and tissue.

6. I was taken to Royal Wolverhampton Hospital, where I was attended to by 5 consultants. 4 of the 5 consultants wanted to amputate the leg, but 1 of the consultants, Mr Thomas, thought that he could try and save it.

7. Mr Thomas fitted what I believe was called a 'Cain' nail to my leg, which looked like a steel skewer. My leg was then put in traction and the wound was left open. Mr Thomas then fitted antibiotic beads into my leg, which looked like a bead necklace.

8. I was in hospital for 3 months, during which time the doctors changed the antibiotic beads regularly to prevent any infection. My leg wound was not sewn up until the last beads went in and it was confirmed there was no infection.

9. The operation was effective to a certain extent as I did not lose my leg, but I now have one leg shorter than the other, by a couple of inches. Mr Thomas was unable to fit a rod into my leg that would have made it the same length as my left leg because there was nothing to attach the

screws to as that part of my leg was so shattered. The consequence of me having one leg shorter is that it has put a stress on my right knee to the degree that I am to have a 'new knee' fitted in July this year.

10. I was discharged from Royal Wolverhampton Hospital after 3 months with my leg in a 'Scotch' cast brace, which was effectively a synthetic plaster cast fitted to my right leg. I was immediately sent to a rehabilitation centre in Patshull, near Wolverhampton, where I stayed for 12 months.

11. During my stay at the rehab centre, I had physio 5 days a week. I remember that it took a long time for my bone to heal, but I eventually began to show improvement in my mobility.

12. Around 6 months after leaving the rehab centre, approximately 20 months after the accident, I was called back to Royal Wolverhampton Hospital by Mr Thomas. Mr Thomas inspected my leg and found that the muscle had grown into the bone, which meant I couldn't bend my right leg more than 90 degrees.

13. Mr Thomas decided that he would operate on this by lifting the muscle from the bone and thus allowing for greater flexibility in my leg. I spent a week in hospital prior to this intended operation. I was wrapped up in all the gowns ready for the operation when Mr Thomas came in and said that he had decided not to carry out the operation.

14. Mr Thomas explained that he was concerned that if he opened my leg up he would find something that would cause him to decide to amputate. Upon hearing this I agreed not to have the operation. After this, I did not have any further contact or appointment with the Royal Wolverhampton Hospital, which ceased to be a hospital a long time ago, though the building remains.

15. At the time of my road traffic accident I was a die maker working in a factory. After completing the rehabilitation of my leg, I was signed up to 'Lifeline Europe' which sought to retrain people and help them back to

work. I took a robotics course at Walsall College of Technology for 6 months and then found a work placement, after which I was kept on. I have worked in engineering and machinery ever since. My leg itself did not inhibit me in any way with regard to my work.

16. I married my wife around 1991 and we had two children together. Towards the end of the 1990s, which I remember as my children were still young, I began to feel increasingly tired and nauseous. This persisted for 6 months before my parents paid for me to have a private consultation.

17. I do not recall the consultant's name, however at this consultation I was given blood tests, one of which came back as showing that I was HCV positive. I was informed of my diagnosis at a face-to-face consultation with my wife also present.

18. At this consultation I was asked about my tattoos. I explained that I had four tattoos, all done at a reputable tattoo parlour with proper hygiene standards in Wolverhampton when I was aged 16. I do now have more tattoos but these were added after my HCV diagnosis. I was also asked about any sexual promiscuity in my past, to which I responded that that was never an issue. I was also asked whether I had ever received a blood transfusion. I replied that I had most likely received a blood transfusion after my road traffic accident in 1982. I accept that this was an assumption at the time but I believed it to be inevitable owing to the extent of my injuries and the amount of time I spent in hospital.

19. The consultant explained what HCV is and how it affects the liver. I was then given an appointment for a liver biopsy just a few months after my diagnosis. At this stage my treatment was transferred from private care to the NHS, at the New Cross Hospital Wolverhampton, although I remained under the care of the same consultant.

20. I was also advised by this consultant about risks of passing on the infection and how to avoid it, for example I was told not to share towels, razors or toothbrushes with my family. My wife and I were also advised to practise safe sex.

21. I had to wait for at least a year before I was offered any treatment for my HCV. I was asked if I would like to participate in a trial for interferon and ribavirin treatment. I consented to receiving this trial treatment, and I began a six month course of interferon and ribavirin soon afterwards. At some point prior to starting this treatment I had a second biopsy performed on my liver and I was simply told that I had chronic liver disease.

22. The course of treatment involved me self-injecting interferon into my stomach alternately on each side once a week, which I did on a Friday, coupled with ribavirin tablets taken daily. I was warned that there could be some severe and pretty nasty side-effects, though fortunately I did not experience this. I only ever felt nauseous as a result of the medication, usually it would last for a few days at a time. I was able to continue working throughout the course of treatment. I felt like one of the lucky ones in that respect.

23. Throughout the course of treatment, I do not remember having to attend New Cross Hospital to have check-ups, but I may well have done. All I remember was being told about the treatment and that it was a trial. Upon completing the 6 months course of treatment, I was relieved to be told that I was clear of HCV.

24. After being told I had cleared HCV, I went for my third and final liver biopsy. This was more painful and uncomfortable than the previous two. It knocked me out for a couple of days afterwards. I was told after this liver biopsy that the HCV was clear and that the liver is the only organ in the body that can heal itself. I was not told that my liver had incurred any permanent damage or cirrhosis.

Section 3. Other Infections

25. I have not received any other infections as a result of receiving an infected blood transfusion.

Section 4. Consent

26. I consented to being tested and treated for HCV.

Section 5. Impact

27. My diagnosis came as a complete shock to my wife, and she didn't take it well. GRO-C GRO-C GRO-C That said, at the time of my diagnosis that side of our relationship had tailed off, what with having young children.

28. I kept my infection with HCV amongst my close family. I told my parents and my in-laws, as well as my sister-in-law. I decided not to tell the children at the time, but they know now. I remember doing some research about HCV and reading about the stigma associated with it. After this I made a conscious effort to hide it from people.

29. I felt compelled to tell my manager about my HCV infection after hearing about the potentially severe side-effects of the trial treatment. My manager was fine about all of this, though what he did with this information I don't know. Thankfully I did not experience any side-effects apart from bouts of nausea, and as I previously stated, was able to continue working throughout the course of treatment.

30. I declared my HCV infection to my dentist but this did not cause any problems. The nurses and dentists wore the protective equipment,

maybe where they hadn't previously but that was ok and understandable. Other than that, I didn't really have any other medical procedures during that period between diagnosis and being told I was 'clear'.

31. My memory has deteriorated over the last few years, though I am unable to determine whether this is a result of my previous HCV infection or simply because I am getting older. I also suffer with fatigue now and this is a recurring problem. I am having regular blood tests to try and identify the cause of this, but nothing has been established thus far.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

32. I have not faced any difficulties or obstacles in obtaining treatment, care or support in relation to my HCV.

33. I have never been offered counselling or psychological support in consequence of my infection with HCV. Neither do I feel that I needed any

Section 7. Financial Assistance

34. I cannot remember how I found out about the Skipton Fund, though it could have come from my doctors at the New Cross Hospital. I believe that I applied to the Skipton Fund after I cleared the HCV, which was around 2004 or 2005. I have been unable to find any of the Skipton related papers.

35. When completing the application form I noticed that I was asked to supply medical records to evidence that I had received a blood transfusion. I then applied to the NHS for my medical records. I cannot recall how much this cost, though I do believe there was a cost involved.

36. I received my medical records some time later in hard copy through the post. I photocopied everything I received and submitted this, along with my completed application form, to the Skipton Fund. To give an idea, I would say that the thickness of these papers was about ¾ of an inch.

37. After submitting the application, I reviewed my medical records and I can clearly remember seeing blood serial numbers showing the blood transfusions I had received at Royal Wolverhampton Hospital after my road traffic accident. It was an A4 document in a table showing what the blood was and when it was administered to me.

38. In a column within this table was a description next to the blood. One of these boxes contained the words 'not A, not B'. When I read this I understood it to mean that if it was not hepatitis A and it was not hepatitis B, then it must have been infected with hepatitis C.

39. I have been asked by the Inquiry's investigators who interviewed me, whether I have heard of the term 'non A non B hepatitis'. I have never heard of non A non B hepatitis, and I am unsure whether the writing on the document that I have mentioned is referring to that.

40. Having noticed this document within my medical records I questioned the Skipton Fund about this. I believed it to be a reference that the blood given to me may have been infected with hepatitis but that may also be the way I read it then, with the knowledge that I had been given contaminated blood. It is difficult for me to remember exactly what it meant without now being able to see it. Maybe the Skipton Fund still has these documents.

41. My application to the Skipton Fund was ultimately rejected. I am pretty sure that I challenged this decision, and I believe that I physically spoke to someone at the Skipton Fund, but nothing came of it. After this I decided to move on. I held on to my records for a while and kept them in my loft. Knowing that I was going to be interviewed, I tried to find them but without success. I may have destroyed these Skipton application

papers, including my medical records after being rejected but I just can't remember.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 19/05/2021