Witness Name: Martin Millar
Statement No.: WITN4442001
Exhibits: NOT RELEVANT
Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARTIN MILLAR

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 29 May 2020.

I, Martin Millar will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Martin Millar. My date of birth is GRO-C 1954 and I reside in GRO-C, Yorkshire. I was formerly a production manager. However for the last ten years I have worked as a maintenance manager. I retired in May this year having been diagnosed with cancer. I am married and my wife and I have been together for nineteen years and married for the past five. We each have children from previous marriages.

2. I intend to speak about my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV) and HPV which I contracted from a blood transfusion in 1987. In particular, the

nature of these illnesses, how they have affected me, the treatment received and the impact this has had on my family and our lives together.

Section 2. How Infected

3. In 1987, aged 33 years I was involved in a road traffic accident in Tel Aviv resulting in a broken neck. When I woke up, I was already in a hospital in a town in the centre of Israel. In order to be treated I was asked for half a million American dollars. I only had insurance for the work I was doing and was unable to pay this. Therefore I boarded the first plane into Luton airport, got a bus into London Victoria and then a bus to Harrogate. I went down to my sister's house, supporting my head all the way.

4. The next morning, I walked into Harrogate General Hospital, now Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust. I asked if they could help me as I thought I had broken my neck. I was given an x-ray. Following this the doctor pressed the panic button. All of a sudden, people started running in. I was told that I had sustained a total dislocation of the spine.

5. After unsuccessfully attempting to reattach the bone with traction, in June 1987 I underwent an 8-hour operation to lace my neck vertebra back together with titanium wire. This held my neck in place while a piece of bone was taken from my hip and grafted onto my spine, fusing

the three vertebrae together. During this very lengthy operation, I was administered a 10-pint blood transfusion. The doctors also realised that I had broken two ribs and punctured a lung so they had to drain my lung of the fluid. I had to wear a rigid collar from under the chin that sat on the collar bones. I was in hospital for 3-4 months while everything healed.

6. The doctor who performed the operation was called Dr James Ikpeme. Dr Sefton was the consultant. I have nothing but praise for those who performed the operations on me. Everybody involved in the NHS around me were brilliant. Dr Ikpeme was brilliant. Everybody loved him. I believe he is now retired.

7. Without the blood transfusion, I would be dead. I presume I must have provided written consent for the operation. Whether or not that involved consenting to a blood transfusion, I do not know. I definitely signed a consent form, certainly for the operation and perhaps for the blood transfusion. They didn't know whether I would come out of it or not. Dr James Ikpeme reassured me and told me I would be alright and not to worry.

8. In April or May 2009, I went for a Well Man check at the local GP surgery in Masham. The GP submitted a blood test. He phoned up and told me that he needed to see me for a chat. I was told that I had Hepatitis C and was referred to the liver unit at St James Hospital in Leeds.

9. Two GPs from our practise, Dr Gardner and Dr Roberts, provided a general overview of the infection. During my appointment at St James' Hospital, I was provided with leaflets and booklets; everything that I needed to know. They were well versed in handling this matter.

10. I do however believe that information should have been given to me twenty years earlier. I firmly believe that when the scandal arose and screening of blood products started, we should all have been tested.

11. Looking back I believe that the test results were acted upon quickly and efficiently. Booklets and information were given readily.

Section 3. Other Infections

12. I believe that I have also been infected with Human papillomavirus (HPV) as a result of the blood transfusion I received in 1987. After coming out of hospital when I broke my neck, I suddenly developed acne. When I went to the GP, they told me that I was possibly affected by something coming off a horse chestnut tree. I suffered from acne for 32 years before finally being referred to a skin specialist in 2018. I was treated with courses of Roaccutane for 6 months and it eventually cleared.

13. After finishing the course of Roaccutane in 2018, a sebaceous cyst was found on the scar side of the back of my neck. This is also identified in research with regards to the HPV virus which often

migrates to a scar site. This was later diagnosed as neck and head cancer, the scans and tests of which confirmed that this was linked to the HPV. My doctor considered the sebaceous cyst to be related to the HPV. The cyst filled and burst twice which I think was because of the drug they gave me.

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15. After treatment for HCV, in the following years, I had some blood tests for other reasons and results show that I had some kind of virus which couldn't be identified at the time.

16. The consultant from the ear nose and throat department who looked after the cancer wrote to my GP stating that he believes these illnesses are all connected to the blood transfusion I received in 1987. He handed me a card indicating that I should get in touch with the Skipton fund as I could be due compensation.

Section 4. Consent

17. As earlier indicated, whilst I consented to the operation, I do not recall whether I consented to the blood transfusion.

18. I was not aware that I had been tested for HCV until I received my diagnosis.

Section 5. Impact

19. I went to GPs a number of times over the years just to get creams or lotions to clear up my acne. I cannot explain what it's like as a 33-year old man dealing with this. I had to try to grow a beard to cover some of it up. During one bout of acne I was recently divorced and single. I wanted to go out and have a social life. It is not the nicest thing to try to talk to people I hadn't met before whilst feeling totally unattractive. When we were living in Spain, I was given antibiotic creams to treat the acne. Living in such a fantastic environment in constant sunshine should clear it up. Yet, I still had to use antibiotics.

20. I cannot say what the impact of being infected with HCV is as between 1987 and 2009, I didn't know I was infected. If I was ill, I wouldn't have known that it was because of an underlying issue. I had such a physical job that I was always tired and just assumed that it was related to the work.

21. Following the blood transfusion, I didn't have any feeling in my fingers whatsoever, which I attributed to damaged nerves. I was in so much pain anyway and my body was so sensitive that when I lay in bed, I'd have to hold my arms up in the air because I couldn't tolerate the bed clothes touching my arms. That nerve problem didn't subside for 15

months after the operation when they repaired my neck. I attributed this to the accident but have since discovered that Hepatitis C can cause the loss of feeling in the tips of your fingers.

22. In those years that I was carrying Hepatitis, I think of the kids that I played with, the people that I'd done activities with: climbing, running; cycling. I had no idea that there was anything wrong with me. If I were to discover that I had infected them in any way I would be absolutely mortified.

23. Once diagnosed I lost confidence. I was so afraid of what might happen to other people because of my infection. I didn't want to go near anybody. It is always in my mind, it never goes away; day or night. I worry about the protection of everyone around me, what the future holds and death.

24. In 2009 I was referred to St James Hospital for treatment. I was told I could very likely beat the virus with treatment. I was keen to start as soon as possible. I was treated with Pegylated interferon and Ribavirin (Viraferon and Rebetol). I had an injection once a week and 3 tablets twice a day, morning and night.

25. Because of the way that they delivered the treatment, I had to start the injection at the beginning of the week. I'd take it on the Monday and then suffer the worst flu-like symptoms: shivering, shaking and unbelievable joint pain. I had to go to bed because I felt so cold. I

would sleep with an extra duvet which didn't work at all because the chill was all internal.

26. I had to get up at 5 in the morning to travel from GRO-C across to Leeds where the main bulk of my work was at that time. This was over an hour's drive. I started work at 7am. I worked alone, more or less organising my daily and weekly schedules. It was an extremely physical job involving property and garden maintenance, including hedge cutting, climbing ladders, painting and maintaining buildings I often had to ascend three story staircases carrying heavy equipment.

27. Speed is of the essence in the business of property letting, especially with redecorating. It always has to be done extremely well and in quick time for the next tenant to move in. During this time, I had to attend St James' Hospital for regular blood tests whilst having separate appointments with the nurses to discuss the treatment. As this was during work hours, I was required to make up the hours. This meant that my working day was sometimes 13 hours or more.

28. Throughout the week, I struggled with terrible headaches and excessive fatigue, mostly because of the drugs. My short-term memory got progressively worse and still hasn't recovered. My hair started to fall out, and my hearing deteriorated, neither of which have recovered. My eyesight became increasingly worse, and I was referred for an eye test. I am told I suffer with intermittent optical migraine. I also suffered from penile disfunction and ultra-sensitive skin to the touch.

29. I had to go to work, I couldn't afford not to. I knew that I had worked through the pain of breaking my neck just through having the mental willpower. I thought that I could push myself through it with a little bit of help from paracetamol. To ease the pain after my neck operation, I would have a couple of pints to relax the muscles. But when I went through the treatment for the HCV, my mental acceptance of pain through alcohol was taken away. The paracetamol wasn't enough and they wouldn't prescribe anything stronger.

30. As a result of the treatment, I developed rashes all over my body and it itched terribly. I tried all sorts of creams and lotions but nothing worked. I suffered from muscle pain and terrible mood swings.

31. My wife and I are very social people. We had a brilliant social life and continue to do so. However, during the treatment this took a massive hit as I lost confidence and didn't want to go out anymore. My mother and my sister still live in Harrogate and we would go out with them.

32. I had to explain what I was going through to friends and family because I am ordinarily a calm and amicable person but the treatment turned me into a monster. I had terrible mood swings and gave no thought or care of what I said to others. I was rude and insulting to my family, friends, work colleagues and clients. I turned into someone even I didn't recognise. In the beginning, they thought that they had done something. I could cry now just thinking about it.

33. For my wife it was very difficult. She had to keep apologising to people and reminding them that it was the medication and not me. Once they understood the depth and seriousness of it, they accepted it and even used to make a joke of it. They would turn a bad situation into a funny one.

34. They were frightened for me and I felt frightened for them. GRO-C
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35. The family were just devastated because they just wanted me to be well. During this time my granddaughter was born which was special GRO-C
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GRO-C. I had to stop playing with my granddaughter because the rough and tumble of playing around with a two-year-old no longer felt safe. It was all very sad.

36. It was difficult telling my employer and colleagues. My job involved the continuing maintenance of property and gardens of 10 private child care nurseries and over 100 letting properties with daily close contact with both children and adults. It is very difficult not to get cuts in this work. I used to carry sanitised wipes, plasters and bandages with me in a bag just in case these things happened, to make sure nobody else could be infected. I felt anxious about infecting, not just my colleagues but the people living in these properties including the kids in the day nurseries.

37. It was difficult to deal with questions from others such as how I'd contracted the virus and whether it was transmissible. Family and friends' acceptance of the infection was slow. I felt that everyone distanced themselves from me through fear of contracting the infection. Their reactions are perfectly normal and to be expected, but it hurt terribly. My feelings were battered and isolation crept in. Even after the treatment, questions still remained: 'what if you still have it? Are we safe now? Can I still be infected?' So, the suffering continues.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

38. I have never been refused treatment as a result of my Hepatitis C status. I told my dentists about it. They were ok with it. They wore face masks and gloves anyway. When I told them that I had beaten it, they asked me the next time I went whether I was still in the clear.

39. I cannot recall being asked if I would like counselling or psychological support as a consequence of being infected or the resultant treatment.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

40. In May 2009, my consultant at St James Hospital in Leeds told me about the Skipton Fund and about a possible claim for compensation. He suggested that I talk to them.

41. On 13 October 2009, I received a £20,000 one-off payment from the Skipton Fund and EIBSS.

42. On 19 December 2016, I again received a £3,500 one-off payment.

43. I have no paper records of payments but from November 2017 to March 2018, I recall that I received less than £300 per month.

44. From 20 April 2020 to 19 March 2021, I will receive £1564.33 per month. This is in addition to the winter fuel allowance.

45. I made my original application in May 2009. I acquired proof of my blood transfusion from Harrogate Hospital on 22 July 2009, proof of treatment in 2009 at St James Hospital in Leeds and proof of an independent eye test referral.

46. I initially had some difficulty with Harrogate Hospital not wanting to give me any information. After several attempts, they confirmed that they did have records for the blood transfusion. They commented how "[they] hoped I was not going to sue them".

47. In 1987, I was given Hepatitis C by the NHS. In 2009 I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C by the NHS. This has been in my body for 22 years. An application for compensation was made in 2009 which is now called an assistance payment. It is means tested which means that it is an allocated bracket of payment. Because I was working, I earned more money than some others which meant that I received less money for exactly the same illness.

48. I think everybody should be compensated from the day they were infected, not from when they were diagnosed, as in my case it was 22 years later. They should be compensated equally. I saw a GP on the inquiry's website who was talking to the inquiry and she said similar things. I've been given something, why should it be means tested? I was fortunate to be remunerated for the treatment

Section 8. Other Issues

49. I would hope that all the people who were infected would be compensated correctly. I was given Hepatitis C and HPV, other people were also given horrible diseases. The NHS knew of infected blood and I firmly believe that we should all have been called back for tests as soon as it was discovered. This obviously didn't happen.

Statement of Truth

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

GRO-C

Dated 6 Sep 202