

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No: WITN4780001

Exhibits: **WITN4780002-07**

Dated: 4 March 2021

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 16 February 2021.

I, GRO-B will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. I have also had the surname of GRO-B.
I was born on GRO-B 1961. I live in GRO-B. I am currently unemployed due to ill-health. Prior to this, I was a housewife. I have also briefly worked as a health-care support worker and cleaner. I have been married to my current husband for 14-15 years.

ANONYMOUS

2. I am being supported today by my daughter [GRO-B] of whom I like to call [GRO-B]. Some of the dates provided are only approximate as I cannot recall an exact chronology of events. Nevertheless, my daughter has helped me to fill in some of the gaps in my recollection of the course of my illness.
3. I intend to discuss my infection with Hepatitis C (HCV) following blood transfusions after an operation to remove kidney stones and my right kidney in 1984; in particular the devastating impact this has had on my life and the lives of my family.
4. I also intend to highlight the fact that I have not been able to secure any compensation due to the fact that my medical files have been allegedly destroyed in a flood. I originally applied to Skipton in 2005, we are now in 2021 and I am still going through this process.
5. I can confirm that I have chosen not to have legal representation and that the Inquiry Investigator has explained the anonymity process to me. I have decided that for family and personal reasons I will require anonymity.
6. 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.

7. I wish to acknowledge that naturally as time passes, memories can fade. I have been able to provide approximate timeframes for matters based on life events. However, these timeframes should be accepted as 'near to' rather than precise dates

Section 2. How Infected

8. It is my belief I was infected with Hepatitis C (HCV) after receiving blood transfusions in 1984. I will go into more detail later in my statement.
9. I have three children, with every pregnancy; I have acquired kidney and water infections. My eldest son was born 1981. When I was 5 months pregnant, I was so unwell that I requested a termination. I spent 2 weeks at GRO-B. They could not terminate the pregnancy because I was too advanced. I continued with my pregnancy and gave birth to a healthy baby boy.
10. In GRO-B 1982, I gave birth to my second son, again throughout the pregnancy I was unwell with a kidney infection and another water infection.

ANONYMOUS

11. My daughter GRO-B was born in 1984. She was 4 weeks premature, which resulted in a stay at GRO-B. After her birth, a health visitor visited us at home to check on both the baby's health and mine. I told her that I didn't feel very well, and again suffered with water and kidney infections. I contacted GRO-B for an X-ray. However, I was told that this could not be provided until my periods were regular.

12. I had consulted my GP, Dr GRO-B at GRO-B. GRO-B He merely sent me numerous prescriptions through the post. I did not feel as if he really attempted to investigate the source of the problem. So much so I went for a second opinion, I saw a Dr GRO-B from the same surgery. It was as a result of seeing him and the health visitor that I was sent up to the hospital for further examination.

13. The health visitor contacted the Hospital again on the Thursday. The following day, I was given an X-ray, which revealed that I had kidney stones.

14. By Sunday, on 7/8 July 1984, I was admitted into GRO-B. Within 2 days of seeing a medical professional, I was in the operating theatre having the stones removed. When they opened me up, they discovered that I also had an abscess surrounding my right kidney which could have killed me. They removed my right kidney.

ANONYMOUS

15. I wasn't 100% compos mentis so I don't know how many units of blood I was given in the theatre. However, I can recall seeing 2 or 3 bags when I was back in the ward. Whilst I signed a consent form for the operation itself, I was not notified of any risks surrounding the blood that I received. Back then times were different and I would not have asked those types of questions.

16. After that, I was still quite poorly. I was in hospital for about 10-14 days. All three children were under three years old. I convalesced at my sister's whilst my sister in law took care of my daughter GRO-B My other two stayed with my then husband. I tried to carry on as best as I could.

17. After the operation, in around 1989, I became a blood donor. I wanted to give something back to the community; I gave blood around two times a year for between 10 and 12 years.

18. Sometime in the early 1990s', I received a letter from Wessex Blood Transfusion Centre from Southampton to inform me that I had Hepatitis C. The letter informed me that I should not donate any more blood. I was shocked and didn't really understand what this actually meant, by that I mean no one explained to me what it was going to be like living with Hepatitis.

19. To reiterate, these dates are all approximate as I am going back twenty or so years and cannot recall exact dates.

20. At the time, I didn't know what Hepatitis was. I had never heard of it. I panicked. My immediate thought was that I had AIDS. I wondered how on earth I could have contracted this virus. I wasn't doing anything untoward. My ears were pierced professionally. I have never been promiscuous nor have I been an intravenous drug user. I only had my tattoos done after I was diagnosed with the Hepatitis.

21. I was married to my then husband GRO-B at the time that I received the letter. When I told him, he was just as shocked as I. He obviously didn't know what it was either or have any idea how it was going to affect our marriage and our lives.

22. I have never been consulted by any GP to discuss my infection with Hepatitis C nor how to manage the infection. However, from thereon, every time I had blood tests, I would see very clearly, 'Hepatitis C' marked all over my medical notes.

Section 3. Other Infections

23. To my knowledge, I have not contracted any infections other than Hepatitis C. as a result of the contaminated blood I received in 1984. As far as I am aware I have not been tested for anything else.

Section 4. Consent

24. Whilst I consented to the operations in 1984, I do not recall consenting to the blood I received as a result, nor was I informed of any of the associated risks.

Section 5. Impact

25. Hepatitis C has had a devastating impact on not just my life but also the lives of my family. Following my operation in 1984, my health began to suffer, which included ongoing kidney problems. The Hepatitis C could have contributed to this, but I didn't know what the side-effects were so it's difficult to identify the precise effects.

26. At the time, I was with my then husband, GRO
_B with whom I was married to for 21-22 years. I couldn't cope with childcare. I could barely take care of myself let alone three young children. Social services and welfare attempted to take my children away from me.

27. The prospect of losing them put a strain on our marriage. My husband was forced to give up his job so that he could take over the parenting. Up until then, he had been the financial provider; it was difficult for him to give up his career and to handle the financial impact of no longer being able to work.

28. After my diagnosis, I felt like I was a leper. I was paranoid that people were talking about me although of course nobody could have known. If I had a little cut on my finger and my children fell over in the garden, I was very wary of treating them. However, I wasn't warned of the risks of transmitting the virus to my partner at the time or my children. Any precautions I took were taken as a result of my own initiative.

ANONYMOUS

29. To deal with the way I was feeling I began drinking continuously. I would wake up in the morning with a drink and would then drink all day. I would go on binges.
30. Prior to this, I never consumed alcohol. I used alcohol as a coping strategy and a crutch to hold onto. I wanted to suppress how I was feeling. Yet the drink wasn't suppressing those feelings, it just destroyed everything else I had.
31. It ruined the bonds of being a mother and a wife. I wanted the best for my children but I wasn't well mentally or physically. Additionally, no one had told me I shouldn't drink because of the added danger to my liver from the Hepatitis C.
32. Over the course of the years, my daughter GRO-B found it distressing to witness the gradual disintegration of my marriage and my battles with alcohol. It was a massive whirlwind culminating in the end of my marriage when my children were just teenagers.
33. My daughter continues to have a good relationship with her dad. However, as far as my ex-husband and I are concerned, the only thing we have in common is our three children.
34. As a result of my diagnosis with Hepatitis C, my struggles with alcohol, my fractured relationships with my children and the dissolution of my

ANONYMOUS

marriage, I attempted suicide on many occasions. I couldn't see a way out of any of it.

35. On various occasions I took a number of tablets and would end up in hospital with my stomach pumped. On one occasion, I planned to jump off a bridge. I had left my home in GRO-B I was under the influence of alcohol. I hitched a lift from the end of GRO-B I climbed up the bank of a bridge in GRO-B I don't know what was going on in my head or my heart, but something stopped me. It may have been that I had sobered up and come to my senses. I think I realised that my kids needed a mother and that I needed my children. I came down from the bridge.

36. If I had gone ahead, I would have been forgotten about. But I've got a few more years in front of me yet. Today is good, or as good as it is going to get.

37. I am on medication for depression to this day. I have been on antidepressants for years.

38. I was also in residential rehabilitation for the alcohol addiction. I spent several weeks in rehab on more than one occasion.

39. As part of my on going treatment I was a patient at GRO-B this is a centre for substance abuse. Through this I eventually became a volunteer at the Queen Alexandra Hospital as a health-care support

ANONYMOUS

worker. I told them that I had Hepatitis C. I was inoculated for Hepatitis B and received boosters. Then I began on a full-time paid basis. This involved washing and feeding patients and personal care. I left and worked in the community conducting home help thereafter.

40. I am aware that all my children feel cheated regarding the circumstances surrounding my infection. They recognise that I have lost a hell of a lot from this. My marriage failed, as have the relationships with my children and grandchildren. It all originates from this one trigger, the infection with Hepatitis C.

41. My children and my then husband have had to watch me go in and out of rehab. They have had to hunt through the house for bottles of alcohol, returning home from school to see me three sheets to the wind.

42. I have been married to my current partner GRO-B for 14/15 years. He is twenty-one years older than I. Discussing my illness with him was difficult. He was also ignorant of the infection. Bedroom activities were and are 'nil-pois'. This is in part because of my own awareness of having Hepatitis C and the risk of transmitting the virus through sex. Nevertheless, we worked around the situation.

43. In around 2010, through GRO-B (currently run by Inclusion) I began a course of treatment with Interferon. I cannot recall whether or not I took any medication alongside the Interferon. In order for me to

ANONYMOUS

begin treatment, I had to be clean of alcohol. I got clean. I cannot remember for how long I was on the treatment for.

44. Whilst I was undergoing the treatment, I became very unwell. I was experiencing seizures and memory loss; my body was just shutting down. Some days I didn't know who I was or where I was.

45. As my health continued to decline and whilst I was under the Royal South Hants Hospital I was admitted to Southampton General as an in-patient. On a Sunday morning, around 15 consultants gathered around my bed. I asked them what was wrong with me. Nobody answered me. I asked if I was dying. Within seconds, everybody had left. I was still none the wiser.

46. I was on all sorts of medication, a whole cocktail of thirty-four different tablets each day.

47. I was going backwards and forwards to the Hospital at least once a month. This included consultations with other doctors regarding issues relating to bone density and osteoporosis. It felt as if my whole body was failing.

48. After numerous blood tests and a scan at Southampton General Hospital, I was seen by Professor Arthur at the Royal South Hants Hospital. A number of tests were taken. He said, 'GRO-B do you know what's wrong with you?' I thought I had cancer of the liver. He then

ANONYMOUS

informed me that I had cirrhosis of the liver. Since then I have had biopsies done, I remember the large needle.

49. I was and continue to reside under the care of Dr Richard Aspinall, a liver specialist at the Queen Alexandra Hospital in Cosham. He is brilliant. Every year or two I go for a scan alongside further blood tests. However, I do not know what stage my cirrhosis is. He is a busy man, it's straight in, straight out and then I don't see him for another couple of years at a time.

50. Whilst I am aware that the alcohol would have affected my liver, I know that the Hepatitis C would have also caused immense damage. I have not had a drink now for 18 months and have walked around with Hepatitis C for all of 37 years.

51. I have also had varices in my throat, which they treated with tying elastic bands in my throat, this was under general anaesthetic. This procedure was conducted in the Queen Alexandra Hospital.

52. I also recall being accused of being under the influence of alcohol whilst I was in the Queen Alexandra Hospital. I was on so many different tablets at the time.

53. I believe that my infection with Hepatitis C has affected my dental treatment. I have been to so many different dental practices. I was always the last patient of the day. They were all gowned up. All the

ANONYMOUS

equipment was covered in plastic. It didn't make me feel very good. I felt like a leper again. I felt very dirty, as if I had to be held at arms distance from everyone and everything.

54. The practices that treated me like this were in **GRO-B** (Name not

Known)

GRO-B

GRO-B

55. When I discovered that I had Hepatitis C, I was aware that I had been donating blood for 10-12 years. I was doing something for the community to help other people. Yet, it transpired that what I was giving was basically no good; through no fault of my own, my blood could have contaminated somebody else. I am saddened by this and feel very ashamed, even though it was not my fault.

56. My illness and the life I have led thereafter has been a long-drawn out struggle. I continue to feel cheated and exasperated. Today I can discuss my infection but, in the past, I didn't want people knowing about my illness. In the back of my mind, it is still conflated with HIV and AIDS. It was not something I wanted to discuss with the general public; it was and is very personal to me.

57. I continue to feel conscious that people might label me as a drug user. When I had an operation for a broken ankle in January 2019, I received numerous injections. I had to bring home 60 of the sharps. Every so often, I had to put them out on the front step to be collected. I was

embarrassed to put the sharps box on my doorstep. I was worried that people would think I was a drug user.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

58. I have never had a one-to-one consultation with any medical professional about my Hepatitis illness. I have only received bits and pieces of information here and there but never a comprehensive overview of the nature of the illness nor its impact. I still do not know whether or not I have cleared the virus and whether it is now undetectable. I feel that if I don't ask the doctors questions, I am not provided with any information. I am more clued up today, yet I still don't fully understand the full impact of the virus.

59. Apart from the solicitor I spoke to regarding a possible claim on the grounds of medical negligence, speaking with the Investigator from the Infected Blood Inquiry is the first time I have comprehensively discussed my Hepatitis, how I contracted the infection and the impact it has had on my life and the lives of my family.

60. I have never received any psychological support as a result of my infection with Hepatitis C and the circumstances surrounding my illness. For my general mental health, I have spoken to a counsellor from the mental health charity, 'Mind' on a couple of occasions. When I stopped drinking, I felt that I could cope that little bit better. Before that,

I was trying to fight my own corner, perhaps there was a stubbornness to receive help.

61. My daughter is keen to know which of my other medical issues have derived from having Hepatitis C. She has witnessed me suffer from a number of illnesses over the years, never mind the effects of alcoholism. She is eager to learn how my life might have been improved if certain services had been made available and if someone had taken responsibility for what has happened.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

62. In 2005, I applied to Skipton. I was still with my ex-partner at the time.

In or on 27th April 2005, I received a letter from Nicholas Fish, the representative from Skipton, returning my application to Skipton for an Ex-Gratia payment on the basis that the doctor completing my application was unable to confirm that I had received a blood transfusion.

63. On 5 March 2020 I wrote again to the Skipton Fund. I received a response on 10 March 2020, exhibited at **WITN4780002**, informing me that the Skipton Fund is no longer active. They also notified me that my application from 19 April 2005 was “unresolved”. They then directed me to EIBSS to make a fresh application.

ANONYMOUS

64. Skipton forwarded copies of my Skipton application to EIBSS with regards to a potential application for Hepatitis C stage 1 payments. I received a reply on 12 March 2020 inviting me to make an application. This is exhibited at **WITN4780003**.
65. I am currently in the process of reapplying to EIBSS for compensation for Hepatitis C and stage 2 payment for cirrhosis. I applied for Hepatitis C stage 1 payment on 17 April 2020. EIBSS wrote back to me on 10 April 2020, exhibited at **WITN4780004**, requesting that I provide a positive PCR result together with evidence of my treatment with NHS blood or a supporting letter from my GP surgery.
66. I submitted my application on 11 May 2020. However, this was returned to me on 14 May 2020 on the basis that I had not attached the requisite evidence. This letter is exhibited at **WITN4780005**.
67. A copy of my original application to Skipton was forwarded to both myself and EIBSS on 21 July 2020; exhibited at **WITN4780006**.
68. Approximately 12-18 months ago, I left my EIBSS forms with my GP practice, the address is: GRO-B
GRO-B My application form is exhibited at **WITN4780007**.
69. I requested that one of the receptionists complete the application on my behalf with the requisite information regarding the evidence of the transfusion I received in 1984. I was told that I would have to pay a minimal charge for this.

70. However, because of the bureaucracy around Covid-19, my doctor has yet to fill out the requisite forms. I saw Dr. GRO- about my medical notes in the past but now I see any whichever GP is available as and when.

71. When I applied to Skipton in the past, I was thinking in terms of pound notes. I had read that there was a one-off payment and that was it. At the time, I was drinking. However, not receiving the payment was a god-send. It would have killed me eventually. I would have drunk myself to death, in-between trying to commit suicide.

72. Today, I am better. I am looking for some financial compensation from this. I have suffered, my family has suffered and to be honest I have no idea if the Hepatitis has shortened my life expectancy. I recognise that no amount of financial compensation will repair the damage done to me, it will however go some way towards providing financial security for me and my family as I grow older.

73. For the EIBSS to finally accept that I was infected through the 1984 blood transfusion will I believe, provide me with much-needed closure and will amount to recognition of responsibility for what has happened.

Section 8. Other Issues

74. After my diagnosis with Hepatitis C in the early nineties, around thirty years ago, I went to see a solicitor, Ian Clarke in Bolitho Way,

ANONYMOUS

Southsea, Hampshire Terrace. I intended to file a claim on the grounds of medical negligence. Through no fault of my own, I contracted Hepatitis C. I don't take drugs nor was I promiscuous. I was a housewife and a mother to the best of my ability.

75. Mr Clarke sought access to my medical records at St Mary's Hospital in Portsmouth. After he made the Inquiry he told me that all my records from St Mary's Hospital, Portsmouth had disappeared after a flood, they were not available. I question whether this is the truth or just very convenient.

76. These records were and continue to be important to me. I felt as if I had been cheated or kicked in the teeth yet again. I was gutted. I probably had a drink again after that. I couldn't understand why this was happening to me. I had gone into hospital for an operation because I was unwell, believing that after this operation I would be able to live a normal life, but in fact I was left with a life-altering illness.

77. I went to see my GP before the lockdown in March 2020 in a further attempt to access my records. I asked to see my GP medical records. He said he couldn't do anything about it at the time. He said that in 7-10 days, his secretary would organise access.

78. I returned to the surgery and examined what they showed me and there was no mention of Hepatitis C nor the blood transfusions I had received. I was told that everything had gone missing.

ANONYMOUS

79. I don't think any answers will retrieve the years I have lost as a result of my illness. Nevertheless, I would like someone to be held accountable. I want closure on this because it has affected my family and I for all these years.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated 11th MARCH 2021

Table of Exhibits

Exhibit number	Year	Description
WITN4780002	10/03/2020	Letter from Skipton Fund Ltd to Mrs GRO-B to inform the witness that her application is 'unresolved'.
WITN4780003	12/03/2020	Letter from Michael Coulson to Mrs GRO-B inviting enclosing the application forms for EIBSS.
WITN4780004	10/04/2020	Letter from Michele Siladi to Mrs GRO-B requesting further evidence in support of her

ANONYMOUS

		application.
WITN4780005	14/05/2020	Letter from Dionne Bateman to Mrs [GRO-B] reiterating previous request for supporting evidence with regards to her application.
WITN4780006	21/07/2020	Letter from The Skipton Fund Ltd to Mrs [GRO-B] re Request to Skipton. Contains a copy of the witness' previous application.
WITN4780007	17/04/2020	EIBSS Chronic hepatitis C stage 1 payment application form