

# ANONYMOUS

Witness Name:

GRO-B

Statement No: WITN5601001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: September 2022

## INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF

GRO-B

I, GRO-B will say as follows:-

### Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B I was born on GRO-B 1986, and I live at GRO-B  
GRO-B
2. My father, GRO-B: F (born on GRO-B 1964), was co-infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products. He died on GRO-B 2020, aged 56. My father's brother, GRO-B: U (my Uncle U) was similarly infected (with HIV) through contaminated blood products. He developed AIDS and died in 1993, aged 32.
3. This Witness Statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's (and uncle's) medical records.

## **Section 2. How Affected**

4. My father (Dad) had Haemophilia A, as did Uncle U. Their mother (my 'Nanna') was a haemophilia carrier. Dad and Uncle U were under the care of the Haemophilia Centre at the Royal Victoria Infirmary (RVI) in Newcastle.
5. Dad told me that he and U were called in to the RVI for tests and that they were subsequently told that they had been infected with HIV through the Factor VIII (FVIII) treatment they had been given.
6. They were not prewarned of the risk of infection before the treatment was given. When people donated blood back then (in the 1980s), no screening tests were done. It should never have been like that. Dad felt very let down by his doctors. He felt used. Dad said that he felt like he had been put in a lab, with the infection(s) as the outcome.
7. Dad was also very scathing about the treatment trial Uncle U had participated in before he died. U's health went into decline when he went on the trial. Dad said that something (else) that was supposed to help U had actually made it worse and killed him.

## **Section 3. Other Infections**

8. I am not aware of any other infection.

## **Section 4. Consent**

9. Dad felt that he and U were used for the purposes of research.

**Section 5. Impact of the Infection**

10. Dad was poorly for as long as I can remember, but to a lesser degree in the early years. Dad was given full custody of me after my mother left when I was young. My Nanna and Grandad played a big part in bringing me up, but Nanna died in 1992 and Dad and U became my exclusive care givers. When U died the following year (in 1993), it was just me and Dad. We had lots of time together. We were very close. We lost Grandad in 1997.

11. I didn't know at first that anything was wrong with Dad apart from his haemophilia issues. I don't know whether the news of Dad and U's HIV infection hastened the death of my Nanna. As the haemophilia carrier, she must have carried a lot of guilt. After U died, Dad became very depressed. In his head, every day could be his last. I used to listen from the top of the stairs to conversations he had with his then partner. He would wonder how long he had left and whether a birthday or Christmas would be his last.

12. Dad was never able to kick a ball or do other father and son type things. After we lost Grandad, Dad sat me down and told me the truth about what had happened to him, but I knew more about it than he thought I did from listening in to his conversations. Because of the stigma, we kept it a secret. I didn't tell anyone outside the family, not even my one good friend. I was always protective of Dad. He brought me up when he was poorly himself. I was quite insular and didn't have a wide circle of friends. I think I instinctively knew he needed me with him. The good friend I had would come round and we would play on the computer. Dad liked the company in the house. After a couple of drinks into the evening, he would lighten up and have a bit of a joke. He called my friend his 'second son' and joked that we were never going to get rid of him.

13. My education suffered and my career more so. When I left school, I was going to join the army. Dad wanted me to join the army. We are an army family of a few generations. I think that Dad wanted me to go before his health really

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started to deteriorate. An army career would of course involve me being away on active duty for a couple of years at a time. At aged 17, I completed 42 weeks basic training at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate. I was able to return home at weekends and I could see that Dad wasn't very well. Because of Dad's health, when it came to joining a Regiment, I had to give up on the idea of an army career and stay closer to home.

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14. My relationships were affected too. I had some dates over the years, and I have an 18 year old daughter. However, I have only ever had one real, long-term relationship, being my current 10-year relationship. We have two children together, 5 and 6 year-old boys. Subject to finances, my fiancé and I plan to marry next year.

15. When Dad was alive, I was only ever able to take basic local warehouse type jobs, enabling me to finish after work at 5 pm and take Dad's shopping around and to keep an eye on him in general. Dad felt like he was a burden, and I didn't want him to feel that way. I would purposefully only ever bring him shopping to last him two days even though he would tell me to buy more and come less often. About 12 years ago, I was going to go offshore on the oil rigs. I actually had the tickets but the week before I was due to go Dad became very poorly for a week to 10 days and I didn't go. It wasn't right for me to leave him. With every hospital admission, I would always ask myself 'Is this it?'

16. From as young as aged 16, I took Dad from GRO-B to all his hospital appointments at the RVI. I always stood outside. I didn't go in with him. I didn't feel comfortable with it. I would tell him to go in alone and explain what was wrong if he wasn't well. Dad was in a really bad place mentally too. He used to see a Social Worker at the RVI for counselling and support. At home, Dad would start drinking (Bacardi and coke) at about 7 pm and wouldn't get up until at least around midday the next day, often 1 pm or 2 pm. That was his way of getting through the day. When Dad's partner left (three to four years before he died), he pretty much gave up. I don't think he could really see the point and

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gave up on himself. Dad was a hermit. He said himself that he was 'just existing'. That was hard to hear.

17. Dad had all manner of serious health issues through being co-infected with HIV and HCV. He had heart problems, COPD, liver damage and swelling in his legs and abdomen. I have always wanted to switch it around and care for him, the same way he had cared for me (even when he was poorly himself). When Dad's partner left, he needed me more than ever. I was leading two lives. In one life I was with my young family and the other me was looking after Dad, shopping for him, doing his housework and trying to manage his health needs. Dad would call me, sometimes at 3.00 am, in agony at least once a week. The worry, stress and strain of it all became unbearable. In the end, I said to Dad 'I know it is a secret, but I am worried that I am going to lose her (my fiancé) and the kids' and he understood (as did my fiancé who was unbelievably supportive). I had formerly kept it to myself as it was not my secret to tell.

18. Dad had to have his legs and stomach drained every few months for the last two or three years of his life. Ultimately, they were unable to do anything more for him. Dad told me he was going to die the next day. He said 'tomorrow is my day'. He died on **GRO-B** 2020 which was the exact day **U** died in 1993.

19. An association was made with alcohol when it came to cause of death on Dad's Death Certificate. It irks me that the doctor certifying Dad's death has used Dad's drinking to blame him. We all know how Dad's liver issues started. I find it horrendous that the lives of people have been ruined and that the same people have been lied to and brushed off. It is inhuman. It is a terrible thing. At the very least, fault should have been accepted by those responsible straight away.

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

20. Dad had some help and support through the Social Worker at the RVI but it wasn't really adequate given the huge mental strain he was under and everything he had to contend with.

**Section 7. Financial Assistance**

21. Dad had to fill in forms for grants for things like windows and a washing machine. Dad used to worry about his mortgage repayments. It would have helped Dad to have received a lump sum payment to enable him to pay his mortgage off in full. The recommended interim compensation payment of £100,000 has come too late for him. When Dad died, I obtained funding to help pay for Dad's funeral and a £10,000 bereavement payment which I passed to Dad's daughter (my younger half-sister) **GRO-B**. She and I are Dad's Next of Kin and his only surviving relatives. Dad lost his brother, mother and father all in a space of five years (1992-1997).

22. I have never been able to pursue a lucrative career. I am currently working as a roofer, but the pay is modest, and the work is not always available. I have been given another opportunity to work offshore on the oil rigs (which pays approximately £1,000 per week) but I need to pay for and complete an Offshore Survival Course (£3,500) before I can do so. I rang EIBSS to see if they can help fund the course or loan me the money, but I was told there wouldn't be any funding for me as it is only made available to a spouse/partner. I do not think that the EIBSS rules are fair. I like many other family members have sacrificed everything to help their loved one. Not everyone has a partner. How does that work?

23. I am my Uncle **U**'s Next of Kin, but I have been informed by EIBSS that I would need to apply for Probate or Letters of Administration to prove that I am my

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Uncle's legal representative before I can progress a claim. This seems to be to be a disproportionate and unnecessary step to have to take.

### **Anonymity**

24. I wish to apply for anonymity, and I understand that this redacted Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed..... GRO-B .....

Dated .....21<sup>st</sup> September 2022.....