

ANONYMOUS

Witness Name: GRO-B

Statement No.: WITN7190001

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 5th January 2023

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 20 August 2022.

I, GRO-B, will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is GRO-B. My date of birth is GRO-B 1981, and I reside in Bristol. Full details of my address are known to the Inquiry.
2. I am married with two children, my daughter is fifteen, and my son is ten. I have always lived in Bristol, and presently, I work in the pastoral and counselling field.
3. I intend to speak about my mum, GRO-B: M, and her infection with Hepatitis C ("HCV"). In particular, the nature of her illness, how it affected her, and its impact on our family's lives together.

4. I was a young girl when my mother was diagnosed with HCV, and my mum did not reveal much about what had happened to her until recent years. Therefore I do not know specific details about her diagnosis and any treatment she received back then.
5. My mum has provided a statement to the Inquiry which describes her diagnosis with HCV and any treatments she received in much more detail. See GRO-B.
6. I confirm that I am not legally represented and that I am happy for the Inquiry Team to assist with my statement.
7. The Inquiry Investigator has explained the Inquiry's statement of approach and 'Right to Reply' procedure. I understand that if I am critical of a medical professional or organisation, they will have the right to reply to that criticism.

Section 2. How Affected

8. I was born in Bristol as the last of my mum's three children. My older sister GRO-B was six years old at the time, and my brother GRO-B was three. My mum met my dad after she separated from GRO-B and GRO-B's father.
9. I was born in 1981 at GRO-B Hospital in Bristol, which is still there today. My mum had a negative blood type, and my dad had a positive one. Therefore, she was given an anti-D injection after she delivered me. I am not sure how long my mum remained in the hospital after this, but she was discharged home with her new baby and life carried on as normal.

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10. Initially, I was too young to understand, but I began noticing a change in my mum's behaviour by the time I was about ten. My mum seemed to be depressed and was always sleeping. She called me aside one day and informed me that she was ill, which is why she was always sleeping.
11. My dad left my mum when I was about two years old, so it was just us children and my mum until she remarried when I was 13.
12. While my mum was ill, my siblings and I had to fend for ourselves. I remember going round to friends' houses for tea and thinking about how different it was from what we had at home, and I resented my mum for this.
13. I do not know when my mum was informed that she had contracted HCV, but when I was about 12 or 13 years old, my mum told us that she had hepatitis, which meant that she was dying and probably had only about ten years left to live.
14. It was overwhelming information to handle at such a young age. I remember that I went around to my friend's house crying because my mum was dying.
15. I told my friend that my mum had been diagnosed with hepatitis, and someone asked me if she was a drug user. After this, I stopped informing people because I was too embarrassed that they would think my mum was a drug user.
16. My siblings and I never discussed our mum's diagnosis, and I am not sure how it affected my sister GRO-B but I know it also impacted my brother GRO-B. In my teenage years, I rebelled because I hated it at home, and that was really my way of coping.

17. I believe my mum contracted HCV through the anti-D injection she received after my birth in 1981.

Section 3. Other Infections

18. I do not know if my mum was diagnosed with any infection other than HCV due to being given infected blood products.

Section 4. Consent

19. I would have no idea if my mum's consent was sought before she was given the anti-D injection. In any case, it would have been necessary for her to have it because of her negative blood type.

Section 5. Impact

20. Following the news of my mum's diagnosis, GRO-C
GRO-C I resented my mum and at the same time felt guilty for resenting her because I knew she was not well.

21. I was aware that my mum was receiving interferon injections as treatment for her HCV, but I cannot remember what the experience was like at the time. I was young, and all I knew was that my mum was always ill.

22. I do not have many good memories of growing up with my mum. My dad lived in GRO-B in Bristol, and although he and my mum had split up, he used to come and pick me up on Thursday nights, and I'd spend the weekend at his house. Sometimes he would pick up my siblings too, and as a result, they are still close to my dad to date.

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23. I remember feeling like I did not want to go back home to my mum on Sunday evenings. My siblings had their dad, so sometimes, they would go to his house on weekends. It made me feel like the odd one out at times and I used to cry all the time because of this.
24. As a result, I found it challenging to have the type of relationship with my mum I believed mothers and daughters are expected to have. My mother never stopped trying to make an effort with me, and it is only now, 40 years later, that we are on our way to rebuilding that relationship.
25. I believe my mum must have known she had HCV for a while, but I only came to the understanding when she informed us that she had hepatitis and she was going to die.
26. As a teenager, I just wanted a normal life like all of my peers. I felt like my needs were not met, and I had to grow up too quickly, so I resented my mum.
27. Growing up, I believe my mum suffered a lot of mental and physical health issues that could have been attributable to her HCV diagnosis. She was very depressed and had to be admitted to the GRO-B Hospital, a mental health facility, and I remember visiting and being there with her from a young age.
28. I cannot remember my mum being as loving as other mums and doing things like cooking dinners and other normal things. I used to return from school and have to make my own food, such as heating up a jacket potato in the oven. We had clean clothes and new school clothes, and we also went to our friends' parties, so I guess she was there as much as she could be.

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29. At that sage I was headstrong and my mum was not much of a disciplinarian. In any event, I did what I wanted to do as a teen and faced up to the consequences later.

30. [GRO-C] I felt like the black sheep of the family. My sister [GRO-B] stayed in her room reading books and was always close to my mum. [GRO-B] used to come out with me, but he would never get into trouble because he was the golden child.

31. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] I hated school and sometimes would skip school and get caught for not attending classes.

32. As far as I can recall, it felt like I had a dysfunctional childhood.

33. My only release was [GRO-C] cry to whoever would listen to me. On one occasion, I went out with my friends [GRO-C] in [GRO-B] an area of Bristol. [GRO-C] I required an ambulance and as they were attending to me, I remember telling the paramedics that my mum was dying. I woke up the next day embarrassed, but things like that happened from time to time.

34. [GRO-C]
[GRO-C] My mum was there for me, cooking me meals and attempting to care for me, but as soon as I recovered, I rebelled against her care.

35. Luckily, I have not suffered too much educationally and career-wise. Although I did not get many GCSEs at school, I have since obtained

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many qualifications which have enabled me to rise into the position I am in now.

36. I have fostered children in the past as I recognise the importance of the nurturing aspects of parenthood and providing the nice family environment which I craved for but did not have. I am currently moving towards working with teenagers.
37. I moved out of home at 17 and never looked back. I began living with a much older boyfriend, who was then 28. I found a job as an office junior, doing filing and general reception work at a local law firm in Bristol.
38. After that relationship fell apart, I moved in with my dad, and I did not see my mum for a while. I never moved back home from age 17.
39. I don't think I have ever told my mum I love her and have only recently felt comfortable enough to hug her. It has been a struggle to build the bridge between my mum and I.
40. It is sad that it has taken this long. I never felt like my mum was my best friend, like other girls feel, and when others would share Mother's Day posts on social media, I could not relate to any of it. I could not even find the right words for Mother's Day cards.
41. My mum has only recently cleared HCV, and it is now that I am finally an adult that I realise how much she was dealing with and the impact the illness must have had on her life. I believe that HCV is responsible for the poor relationship between my mother and me.
42. As a family, we have never openly discussed these sorts of things, and there are a number of secrets within our family which we don't discuss, including some issues which have no bearing on HCV.

43. My mum married my stepdad when I was 13, so I believe he must have been aware of her HCV diagnosis. I think it had an impact on their relationship to the extent I could perceive as a child. Sometimes there were arguments and shouting, and my stepdad was never really there for us.
44. When I was about 20 years old, I had a mental health breakdown, for which I received counselling. Before this, I had never received any form of psychological counselling or support.
45. I was living with my boyfriend at the time, and I felt suicidal so I drove myself to GRO-B a mental health facility. I had a psychiatric assessment and was prescribed counselling. The counselling sessions helped me to come to terms with the reality of my childhood, and as part of this, I decided not to see my mum for about a year.
46. My mum respected my wishes and stayed away during this period. Since then, I have been on medication and have had no further breakdowns.
47. That period helped me figure out what I wanted to do with my life, and after this, I got a job assisting adults with learning disabilities, bought my house and turned my life around. Things have looked up since. Helping others I feel gives me a purpose in life.
48. I met my husband, and we bought the house we are currently living in and have been living here for ten years now. I purchased my first house at 19 in defiance against my mum's saying I would not make it when I moved out at 17. After getting on the property ladder, I was able to buy and sell two more houses before we bought this one.

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49. When I was a teenager, we struggled financially due to my mum's illness and could only afford to go on caravan holidays. There was always food in the house, so things were not too dire.
50. My mum is very proud of my siblings and my achievements in life. She jokes that she does not know how we have all managed to become such good people despite our upbringing.
51. I think about all the time we have wasted not getting to know each other, and I wonder if that is my mum's fault for not understanding or being able to explain her illness or whether she struggled to come to terms with it herself. It could have also been a case of her not having adequate information at the time or not knowing how to relay this to her young children.
52. I believe there was a great deal of stigma aimed at people diagnosed with HCV back in those days, but she was probably able to tell only those closest to her. People associated HCV with party goers, clubbers and drug users.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

53. I would have no idea if my mum was ever provided with counselling and support with regards to her HCV diagnosis.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

54. I have no idea if my mum was ever aware of the availability of financial support from any of the trusts and schemes and if any financial support was ever provided to her.

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Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-B

Dated

5/1/2023.