

Witness Name: Martin Abbott

Statement No: WITN7347001

Dated: 10th November 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF MARTIN ABBOTT

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 7th October 2022. I adopt the paragraph numbering in the Rule 9 request for ease of reference.

I, Martin Abbott will say as follows:-

1.Introduction

1. My name is Martin Abbott. My date of birth is GRO-C 1960 and my address is known to the Inquiry.
2. I am the husband of Benjamin Oliver's mother, Pamela Abbott. Benjamin is registered with the Inquiry under witness number WITN7344001 and Pamela is registered under witness number WITN7345001.

3. Benjamin (Ben) suffers from haemophilia. He was infected with hepatitis C although he has since cleared it.
4. I am a retired Police Officer. I was a Police Officer for 35 years. During that time, I worked abroad in the Falklands and Bosnia. I also undertook Royal duties as a chauffeur to Princess Ann. I retired in 2011.
5. Pamela and I were married in 1995. I have a son from a previous marriage. Pamela and I did not have any children together, but Pamela has two sons from her previous marriage, namely Benjamin and GRO-C
6. Pamela and I had been cohabiting for a few years before we were married. I knew both boys from the beginning of the relationship. Benjamin would have been in his early teens at that time.
7. When Pamela and I got together, Pamela had divorced from Benjamin's father Graham, but he still shared parental responsibility. The normal routine was that the boys would spend a weekend with him, and then be with Pamela and myself during the week. Although this meant that I was with Benjamin, I was conscious of the fact that his father still had parental responsibility.

2.How Affected

1. I understand that Benjamin was diagnosed with haemophilia as a young boy, at about the age of 2 years, he cut his lip imitating his father shaving. He had to go to Dryburn Hospital, Durham. There he was referred to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle (RVI) where he was diagnosed with haemophilia. GRO-C
GRO-C
2. Therefore, when I first met GRO-C if GRO-C had a nasty bump and hurt GRO-C would have to go to the RVI.

3. **GRO-C** taught to self-administer blood products. I heard discussion of Factor 8 and Cryoprecipitate being used. I did not have a role in administering treatments **GRO-C**
4. Pamela had a positive relationship with the Haemophilia Centre in Newcastle, and in particular, with the Consultant in charge, Peter Jones. He was a very prominent figure and a dominant cornerstone. He also came across as very empathetic with his patients. The Centre appeared to try to help and assist not only their patients, but the families around them.
5. I became aware from Ben that, at some point, he had contracted hepatitis C. I remember him telling me about it. He was an adult by then. At the same time, he told me that he had apparently naturally recovered from it.
6. I found it hard to believe that he had contracted hepatitis C. As a serving Police Officer, I was aware of hepatitis C and how harmful it might be for someone's health.
7. Ben told me he had been in hospital suffering from an injury and was told, almost in passing, that in the past he had had hepatitis C. Benjamin said this would now be on his medical records. It had appeared to have cured itself as I was never made aware of any treatment he had in relation to it.
8. Again, through my police work, I was involved with people who were exposed to this infection due to their lifestyle choices. For example, sharing needles in drug abuse and sexual lifestyles. I knew they were vulnerable to catch hepatitis C. I have no hesitation in saying that I never observed any indication that Ben would expose himself as such.
9. I remember saying to Ben that it was fortunate, a gift, that he had recovered from it. However, it was clear it was something he was particularly upset about.

3.Other infections

1. I do not believe that Ben received any infection other than hepatitis C.

4.Consent

1. I am unaware whether Ben was ever tested or treated without his knowledge or consent.

5.Impact

1. It was my understanding that Ben had naturally self-cured of hepatitis C. However, it was something which had upset him and stayed with him. He was concerned about its presence on his medical records.
2. It was my observation that Ben could be prone to maudlin moods where he would ruminate about various things, and this would include the hepatitis C.
3. When we heard about the Infected Blood Inquiry, I signposted this to Ben. I thought it would be a cathartic process for him. It would give him a chance to explore what issues he may have about hepatitis C. I researched which lawyers were representing victims and pointed him towards Watkins and Gunn.
4. It was my belief that this would give him some empowerment about haemophilia generally and in particular hepatitis C.
5. When he was a boy, he had gone to a fee-paying school called Newlands School [GRO-C] Pamela told me how a nurse at the Haemophilia Centre came across Ben [GRO-C] records. She also had a son at the same school. The nurse went to see the headteacher, Mr [GRO-D] and said that [GRO-C] [GRO-C] might infect the other boys with AIDS. She told the headteacher that he must take [GRO-C] out of the school and threatened that if he did not, then she

would publicize this, and other parents including herself, would then take their children away and affect the business and name of the school. In my view this was a criminal act of blackmail towards the headteacher and an unlawful disclosure of confidential information.

6. The headteacher summoned Pamela and informed her about this. He told her that he had to “run a business” and that she had to remove GRO-C from the school. She did so that day.
7. After this event, Pamela called Peter Jones, the Consultant at the Haemophilia Centre. He went to the school and remonstrated with the headteacher. They agreed to sort things out. It was believed, the nurse in question was disciplined and GRO-C subsequently returned to the school after a couple of days.
8. However, the whole incident quite understandably greatly upset Pamela. Even though it was supposed to have been resolved, she felt betrayed that it had somehow leaked out to other parents. She was shunned and ostracized at the school by other parents when dropping off and collecting GRO-C
9. I learned of all this when we started our relationship. This whole incident is something which caused her a great deal of distress. Pamela had some other stresses in her life when we met, such as the divorce from her first husband but I think the terrible incident with the school played its part. It is still something which can really upset her to this day. It is easy to forget the ripples of anxiety and distress that this whole incident can cause not just to those suffering from haemophilia but also to those around them.

6.Treatment/Care/Support

1. Ben has received some counselling in general in relation to his depression and self-harm but I do not believe specifically in relation to hepatitis C.

7.Financial Assistance

1. I am not aware that Ben has received any financial assistance as a result of his haemophilia, nor in contracting hepatitis C.

8.Other Issues

1. I am glad that Ben has engaged with the Infected Blood Inquiry. I believe that Ben would like some recognition for things that went wrong, and that he should not have been infected with hepatitis C through treatment. I believe involvement in the Inquiry might allow him to close a door in his mind on this whole affair. I believe this will be beneficial, helpful and positive towards Ben.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.

GRO-C

Dated.....10/11/22.....