

Witness Name: Karen Mitchell

Statement No: WITN7433001

Exhibits: 0

Dated: November 2022

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF KAREN MITCHELL

I, Karen Mitchell, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My full name is Karen Louise Mitchell. I was born on [GRO-C] 1980, and I live at [GRO-C], Essex [GRO-C].
2. My brother, Christopher Stephen Mitchell (born [GRO-C] 1976) was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through contaminated blood products.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my brother's full medical records.

4. My brother has provided his own Witness Statement to the Inquiry (Witness Number (WITN1401001-3). My mother, Jennifer Anne Mitchell, has provided a Witness Statement to the Inquiry too (Witness Number WITN3258001).

Section 2. How Affected

5. My brother (Christopher) has (very) mild Haemophilia A.
6. Christopher was not informed that he had HCV until 1992 when he was told by Dr Colvin at the Royal London Hospital that he had been infected through Factor VIII (FVIII) concentrate in the past. I refer to my brother and mother's Statements for further details. We believe it likely that Christopher was infected through FVIII treatment first given to him at Great Ormond Street Hospital in 1977.
7. My brother suffers with insomnia. He takes Amitriptyline. He suffers with anxiety, depression, stress related eczema. He has fatigue. He has a lack of concentration and he is very forgetful.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. I refer to my brother and mother's Statements.

Section 4. Consent

9. My parents were not forewarned of risk of infection before Christopher had any of his treatments. They didn't know that Christopher's blood samples were being used to test for infection.
10. Blood samples were requested from me on an annual basis ostensibly to see if I was a haemophilia carrier. I do not believe that to be the purpose for the request. I was always too upset to acquiesce but every year they would request the blood samples.

Section 5. Impact

11. I find it extremely upsetting to relay how badly my brother and most importantly my mother and myself have found living under a dark cloud of not knowing.
12. Ever since I can remember my life when I was younger consisted of many hospital appointments. Each year I was taken to the Royal London Hospital to be tested. They said it was a test to see if I was a carrier of haemophilia, but what I truly believe now is that they wanted to test me to see if I had contracted Hepatitis C from my brother. Each year I would be so upset that they would then put it off to the following year! Looking back, I really couldn't understand why they were so concerned as to whether I was a carrier. I wasn't showing any symptoms, I wasn't planning on starting a family, I was a child!

13. I grew up scared of hospitals. Every time I was taken I was full of fear and anxiety. I remember the time that my parents found out that my brother, their once healthy little boy had contracted Hepatitis C, not from any fault of his own, but through the actions of our government. I could not understand this as a child. I couldn't understand as when you go to the hospital you do not expect your life to have been put at risk. This furthermore added to my anxiety!
14. Christopher's life has been affected by this tremendously. I have always felt that much more protective over him even though he is four years older than me. I have felt so sad and so angry for him as there were things that the schools he went to wouldn't let him partake in. There were parents that would keep their children away from him in case they were to catch something. Can you only imagine how that must feel!
15. I always felt like I had to look after my brother. I felt guilty that he has suffered this way, so much so that I had to go to counselling, which was arranged by my GP. It did help but my immense health anxiety along with the overwhelming sense of sorrow for my brother and anger towards the NHS meant that I have had to seek more counselling. This time I went to cognitive therapy. Again, I feel that it did help, but still, to this day, I have a deep-seated fear and anxiety when it comes to health issues, and I continually fight against passing this fear down to my own children. I have an overwhelming distrust for the medical professionals which leads to so much anxiety. I question everything. I wonder what they are not telling me and how risky procedures or medications really are!
16. I have spent the past 25 years taking one kind of anti-depressant or another and at times my anxiety has literally been unbearable. We only get one life and my brother's one life has been ruined. My mother's beautiful healthy baby was only

that for a very short time. How can this be fair? How can it take this long for people to be held accountable?

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

17.I refer to my brother and mother's Statement

Section 7. Financial Assistance

18.I refer to my brother's Statement.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

19.I do not wish to remain anonymous, and I understand that this Statement will be published by the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed.....Karen Mitchell.....

Dated.....30/11/2022.....