

Witness Name: Stephanie Elizabeth Clifford

Statement WITN7511

Exhibit No.

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN WITNESS STATEMENT OF STEPHANIE ELIZABTH CLIFFORD

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of The Inquiry Rules 2006, dated 8 November 2022.

I, Stephanie Elizabeth Clifford, will say as follows:-

Section 1 Introduction

1. My full name is Stephanie Elizabeth Clifford and I was born in 1969 and I am now ⁵³~~42~~. I met my husband Adrian Paul Clifford in 1986 when I was 16. My friend had a bedsit and invited me over. This was when I met my husband. We formed a relationship and got married in 1992. We lived in GRO-C and had 2 children called Miles and Demi. Miles has provided his own statement to this Inquiry. Currently I live in Devon at an address that is known to the Inquiry. I have 4 sisters and 2 brothers and work as a teaching assistant at a primary school.
2. I intend to speak about how my husband became infected with hepatitis C (HCV), hepatitis B (HBV) and HIV. In particular how he came to be infected, the nature of this illness in so much as how it affected me, the treatment he received and its impact upon my life, my family, my career.

3. My husband was a mild haemophiliac and was given factor 8 in order to treat any bleeds he may have, whenever it was required, usually after he injured himself. He did not receive a blood product to treat his haemophilia after we met.
4. As a profession my husband did spray painting of wood burning stoves. Adrian was very much a boy racer, so far as cars were concerned before he married me.

Section 2 How Infected

5. My husband had a car accident in 1984 when he crashed into a fence. He was unconscious and was taken to Royal Exeter & Devon hospital where he had a blood transfusion. He would have died if it was not for the blood transfusion.
6. My husband was in hospital for 4 months following this car accident. Adrian's treatment was prolonged and his mother joked, in relation to the blood he was given, that he needed to ensure he did not catch HIV. My husband was treated by Dr Richard Lee and either he or Miles Joiner, another doctor, spoke to my mother in law about the transfusion given to my husband. My husband found out he got HBV, HCV and HIV between 1984 and 1986 as he was aware he had these illnesses when we met. Dr Lee also believed when my husband was given the blood transfusion, the last bag transfused was the infected one. How he came to know this I am unclear of.
7. Adrian did not take drugs or leave a promiscuous lifestyle before he met me. He had never received treatment abroad. We therefore associate the only blood transfusion he had at Royal Devon & Exeter hospital as being the cause of his HBV, HCV and HIV.

Section 3 Other Infections

8. So far as I am aware apart from HBV, HCV and HIV, my husband also had a bladder infection as a result of the transfusion he was given at this stage.

Section 4 Consent

9. My husband did not consent to having a blood transfusion at Royal Devon and Exeter hospital because he was at that stage unconscious and unable to provide consent.
10. I believe my husband's mother spoke to Dr Lee about her son's blood transfusion and I believe she would have raised concerns about the risk of contracting HIV. However if she had been asked to give consent she would have had to give it otherwise my husband would have passed away.

Section 5 Impact

11. I formed a relationship with my husband knowing that he had HBV, HCV and HIV and I was aware that his life expectancy would probably be cut short and sadly it was.
12. Despite knowing about my husband having HBV, HCV and HIV, my husband's father would not talk about my husband's illnesses and would always change the topic of conversation. My husband's parents did not want my husband to tell his aunts and uncles about his HBV, HCV and HIV due to the stigma associated with them, however my husband looked physically weak due to his illnesses therefore his aunts guessed he had HIV. My husband was a healthy looking individual before his transfusion then looked weak after his transfusion therefore his aunts knew there was a health problem with him.
13. One of my husband's sisters used to make sure my husband drank from a specific cup whenever we visited their home and I knew this was because of the stigma associated with him having HBV, HCV and HIV, as she thought you could catch his illnesses from using his cup. Her husband also would avoid

being in the same room as my husband which is also because of that stigma as he believed that HBV, HCV and HIV could be caught by being in the same room as my husband.

14. When my Adrian returned to work following his accident after he was told he had HBV, HCV and HIV, he informed his work colleagues in the belief they would be supportive of him. Unfortunately due to the associated stigma they treated him differently and did not want to use the toilet for a while after he had used it in fear of catching HBV, HCV and HIV. Adrian's work colleagues would also avoid having lunch with him. Previously they used to all eat together in the canteen.

15. My husband's employer requested a doctor's note to inform them that my husband's HBV, HCV and HIV were not contagious and Dr Lee provided the note for them. Even though my husband had worked at this firm for several years before he contracted HBV, HCV and HIV, my husband was treated differently by his work colleagues for about a year before they normalised their relationship with him.

16. Before my husband's car accident, he had a large circle of friends. Following his accident his large circle of friends became fewer and fewer and they eventually stopped seeing him. Some of his friends said this was because my husband had badly injured someone else in the car accident however both Adrian and I believe it was because my husband had HBV, HCV and HIV so they did not want to spend time with him due to the stigma then associated with these diseases.

17. I had my own friends before I met my husband and when I informed them that my husband had HBV, HCV and HIV, I also lost many friends because of the stigma. I and my husband realised that it was best not to inform any other friends that my husband had these diseases.

18. In 1992 my husband stopped working after he had caught shingles a couple of times and he lost a lot of weight. Audrey Smith, a councillor, informed me I

should stop working and become my husband's full time carer, therefore I too gave up my work as a cashier.

19. In 1992 after my husband stopped working as mentioned he stayed at home and when I was asked by friends why my husband was not at work, I said it was because he worked shifts.

20. In 1992 a friend of our neighbours who worked at Royal Devon and Exeter hospital informed our neighbours that my husband had HBV, HCV and HIV. Our neighbours took an aggressive stance towards us and stopped allowing their children to play with our children even though their children had previously been to our house and they had all played together.

21. The MacFarlane Trust put up a fence at the back of our house in order to insulate our children from unnecessary taunts as they played in the garden. Our neighbours told us our kids were making noise when they previously had no issue about the noise.

22. I recall our garage got spray painted with the words "you have HIV" and "you are gay". This happened twice but fortunately our housing association warned everyone in our street to desist otherwise they would take action and the spray painting stopped. There were still children however who told our children that their father was gay.

23. When a new neighbour moved in, the neighbour had already been told my husband was gay. I told my neighbour what my husband had. We always believed our immediate neighbour was the ring leader. Her stated wish was she would get rid of my family living next to her but fortunately she moved out. My husband advised we ignore them, which would in turn make them annoyed and it worked.

24. Outside our house there was a field where kids would go to play. If my children went out then the other children would go indoors. Therefore my children did not go to the field to join them. Demi used to play with a group of

girls then their parents found out about my husband and they were no longer allowed to play together.

25. In 1994 whilst Adrian was on a course of Interferon and Ribavirin treatment, it got him down and he became very depressed.

26. My children Demi and Miles were born in 1997 and we had to inform them once they were able to understand that GRO-C as we needed to undergo IVF treatment due to the risk of contracting HBV, HCV and HIV. Whilst Adrian and I had always wanted children and had hoped to conceive naturally this was not to be.

27. Despite knowing this, their grandparents, on Adrian's side, did not accept them due to GRO-C and their grandparents did not speak to them for 10 years from the date they were born and told my husband GRO-C.

28. When my children attended school I told them to tell their friends that their father worked night shifts when children, parents or teachers asked why he did not pick them up. Most parents thought I was a single mum as they never met my husband.

29. Despite not informing other parents about my husband, a few of them found out he had HBV, HCV and HIV then stopped allowing their children on play with my children even though they had previously played together for 6 months to 1 year.

30. Adrian and I had to bring up our children with my husband's illnesses always in the background. My husband's greatest wish was he wanted to see his children reach the age of 16. Fortunately he managed to do this before he passed away.

31. Due to financial constraints we could only afford to go camping in Cornwall for family holidays. We did go on holidays using the Sun newspaper, discounted £10 holidays as well.
32. Outside our house there was a field where kids would go to play. If my children went out then the kids would go indoors. Consequently my children did not go to the field to join them. Demi used to play with a group of girls then their parents found out about my husband then they were no longer allowed to play together.
33. My children attended a school further afield than their local one as I thought it would be easier for them to attend school further away as children would be less likely to be aware of my husband having HCV, HBV and HIV. I also knew what it was like to lose friends and did not want my children to be left out and not make friends. I had a constant fear of what would happen to my children if other children in their school found out about my husband's illnesses but fortunately this did not occur.
34. When my husband attended the dentist due to his HCV, HBV and HIV he was always the last patient to be seen even though equipment was sterilised. Due to this action by the medical profession I did not want to disclose anything about my husband's HIV to others in the medical profession. I therefore informed nurses my husband had cancer as it was easier to say that than say my husband had HIV.
35. Adrian and I had aspirations, which were to own our own house, enjoy life, retire then go on holiday. My husband wanted to work his way up in his workplace as he started out as an apprentice. However due to HCV, HBV and HIV none of this happened.
36. We lived in council property and when my husband received the Skipton Fund payments, he had been told he only had a few months to live. He therefore spent the money in purchasing a car to build which led to us having debts to pay. I therefore arranged for a debt management company to assist us and

our debts were resolved by putting them into a one lump sum payment. I was put onto our joint account and the debts outstanding rose to £11,000 which took 5 years to pay off.

37. We did not tell our children about our financial problems and we moaned at our son Miles for associating with wealthier children as we were unable to afford what they had. Miles would often ask why he could not have the same toys as other kids when he was younger.

38. My husband was unable to complete the car he wanted to build due to his health problems and as he became weak. He also had a bladder infection which meant he had to go to the toilet regularly and the few former work colleagues he still associated with stopped inviting him out. My husband had to wear incontinence pads and all this made him more depressed and got him down.

39. As a couple we would have gone out and socialised a lot more if it was not for his HBV, HCV and HIV. Equally, our finances would have been stronger and we would have had more friends.

40. Adrian and I were not get accepted for a mortgage due to our low income. I was able to get life insurance for myself only and did not disclose my husband had HBV, HCV and HIV.

41. From 2013 I could see a decline in my husband's mental state. He did not enjoy wearing the incontinence pads and was unable to complete the car project. He was unable to sleep well and said he was generally fed up. My husband had previously been a very positive person however I did not associate him with depression.

42. My husband used to go clay pigeon shooting and in 2015 it was not a concern that there was a gun in the house as it was locked away in a secure cabinet and my children were grown up.

43. As a family were all at home and my husband that evening cooked eggs and toast for Miles. Demi had done the dishes and my husband had said good night to her and he would see her the next day, before she then went to bed. I heard a bang and thought little of it. Later I then went downstairs to find that my husband had shot himself. The police were called and we had to leave our house. My husband was pronounced dead at the scene.
44. My husband's parents attended his funeral as I invited them even though Miles did not want to invite them. Years later they wanted to have contact with my children. However my children did not want to have contact with them due to how they treated my husband.
45. Miles and Demi were 16 at the time and I was constantly crying and tearful. Miles failed all his exams at college that year. I began drinking heavily every night. Demi looked after us and held the family together. I was on sleeping pills called Diazepam and also took alcohol, which was not recommended whilst on this medication. I was out of it for two months and did not know what was going on. Demi did not cry and did not talk about her father she was clearly grieving the loss of her father but unable to express it.
46. I had to build a new life for my children and I was worried about Miles who'd failed college. He retook his exams and passed. Demi passed her exams and went straight to University in her attempt at getting away.
47. I wanted to start afresh therefore moved to GRO-C from GRO-C in 2018 and I now rent a flat.
48. I initially received widow's income support from the MacFarlane Trust. It stopped when the England Infected Blood Support Scheme was introduced for a year until I was contacted by the new Scheme. As previously mentioned I had debts to pay therefore had to work again and initially undertook voluntary work then studied for an NVQ in retail. I subsequently got a job as a housekeeper in a hotel and cleaned offices in the evening.

49. I informed others that my husband passed away from a heart attack as I did not want to tell anyone he committed suicide due to having HBV, HCV and HIV. Also because of the stigma, at that time, still associated with these diseases..

50. At my husband's inquest the report stated he died following a suicide and there was no mention of his HCV status. The bereavement payment of £10,000 was therefore not paid out by the MacFarlane Trust or the England Infected Blood Support Scheme. I believe his HCV should have been listed as a cause of death as my husband had it for over 30 years. It was a major contributory factor to his suicide and my husband was happy before the impact of his HCV on his health which led to his depression and ultimately his suicide.

Section 6 Treatment / Care / Support

51. In 1986 Audrey Smith, my doctor, explained in detail to me about HBV, HCV, HIV and advised me about having protected sex only, with my husband. I also had my blood tested and fortunately was found to be negative.

52. Some GPs at our practice were initially unsympathetic to me and my husband and asked if Adrian was on drugs or sleeping with other men. When I explained to them about my husband's blood transfusion which caused HBV, HCV and HIV they were then sympathetic.

53. The Royal Devon and Exeter hospital knew my husband's liver was swollen however they were unable to test him because of his haemophilia. My husband also had a problem with his spleen however the hospital were again unable to treat him due to his haemophilia.

54. Dr Lee was good to us at the hospital and if there was any health problem with my husband then Dr Lee would stay late into the evening to care for Adrian. I believe Dr Lee felt guilty about giving my husband the infected blood

and said he had no other option apart from giving him the blood transfusion in order to save my husband's life.

55. In 1992 after my husband got shingles, he had to go to hospital to be put on intravenous steroids and they gave him tablets to take home which did not work. Dr Lee advised him not to return to work because he would get tired and it would not be good for his health. My husband was given six months to a year to live following the diagnosis by Royal Devon and Exeter hospital. I was given counselling in order to prepare myself for a future as a single mother.

56. In 1994 Adrian received treatment at Royal Exeter and Devon hospital for his HCV. He took a combination of drugs called Interferon and Ribavirin for a year which required him to have weekly injections into his stomach and also tablets. The treatment worked and cleared his HCV. Dr Lee informed my husband that he had to fight the government for access to the drugs because they were not giving them to everyone due to their cost implications. I am grateful that Dr Lee fought for my husband to have access to the treatment.

57. Our GP informed Adrian and I that people with HIV attended a place called Palace Gate to socialise with others with this condition. Therefore we attended Palace Gate and I enjoyed meeting others to discuss HIV and the implications of living with this disease.

58. In our quest to have children naturally we were advised that sperm washing was not an option. Dr Lee told us it was too difficult to do in Adrian's case. I therefore had to have IVF treatment which the Royal Devon and Exeter hospital paid for. Dr Lee managed to get us six courses of treatment as opposed to the usual three and Dr Wess undertook the treatment. This lasted for a year and a half. After the sixth course of treatment I believed it had not worked so I gave up. Fortunately I found I was pregnant with twins.

59. When Demi and Miles were born I was transferred to Newport hospital because of my high blood pressure.

GRO-C

GRO-C

60. My husband had operations on his bladder over the years at Royal Exeter and Devon hospital and stayed in hospital for a week at a time.

61. When Adrian attended Royal Devon and Exeter hospital in 2013 they said he was healthy and did not mention his depression despite him having bladder problems and being down. He also complained about his ears being blocked to his GP Dr Dolative however she could do nothing about it.

62. Adrian went to Royal and Exeter hospital in 2015 a week before he committed suicide when they were going to put in a bag to deal with my husband's incontinence. However, even this procedure was not found to be advisable because of his haemophilia.

63. Following my husband's suicide the police officer found a councillor for me GRO-C and the MacFarlane Trust paid for Adrian's funeral.

64.

GRO-C

Section 7 Financial Assistance

65. I received limited financial support from the McFarlane Trust and as already stated they paid carer's allowance, paid for my husband's funeral and paid widow allowance. I found out about the McFarlane Trust from my GP.

66. I received £20,000 then £30,000 lump sum payments from the Skipton Fund and then received payments from the Infected Blood Support Scheme.

67. I received the £100,000 interim compensation payment award in 2022 and hopefully I will receive a further payment once recommendations are made following the Inquiry's report.

68. My husband also received a disability payment whilst he was alive. I wish Adrian had received the £100,000 payment when he was alive.

Section 8 Other Issues

69. People in the medical profession should have been aware of haemophilia and the possibility HBV, HCV and HIV being caused by an infected blood transfusion. I believe we would then have been treated differently by nurses, doctors and dentists had they been made aware of blood transfusions as a likely source of these infections..

70. People knew about the cost and risk of importing blood from abroad in 1984. They could have saved lives if they had chosen to by stopping blood imports from abroad. My husband would still be alive today if a decision had been taken in 1983 not to use blood from abroad.

Statement Of Truth

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

Signed: GRO-C

Dated: 9.12.2022

