Witness Name: GRO-B
Statement No: WITN7545001
Exhibits: WITN7545002-3
Dated: November 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 and I live at GRO-B

2. I was infected with the Hepatitis C Virus (HCV) through a contaminated blood transfusion.

3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my full medical records.

Section 2. How Infected

4. I had a blood transfusion on 28th and/or 29th May 1991 at the GRO-B GRO-B

5. I went into the GRO-B to have my twin boys due to having Pre-eclampsia. They were born 6 weeks premature on Tuesday, GRO-B 1991. After my caesarean section, I needed four units of blood. I don't remember much other than waking up two days later.

6. Once I left the hospital, I was extremely tired. The twins came home five weeks later. Being a new mum to twins, I was so tired that I didn't let any visitors in to see them and celebrate their birth. I thought the exhaustion I felt was down to being a mum of twin babies. I never went to the doctor to report how I was feeling because I didn't want the doctor to think I couldn't cope. I still don't tell the doctors how I feel. Once these things go on your record, you will always struggle to get the correct (medical) cover without being heavily loaded.

7. I refer to Exhibit WITN7545002 being a copy letter sent to me by the Aberdeen and North East Scotland Blood Transfusion Service on 31st May 1995. I also refer to Exhibit WITN7545003 being a copy of the follow up letter from the Aberdeen and North East Scotland Blood Transfusion Service dated 22nd June 1995 confirming that I had tested positive for HCV antibodies. Before receiving the first letter, no-one had alerted me to the fact that there might be a potential problem with the units of blood I was given.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. I do not think that I was infected with anything other than HCV.

Section 4. Consent

9. I was given the blood transfusion whilst vulnerable, giving birth to twins by caesarean section. I wasn't given any information or advice in relation to risk of infection until more than four years after the event. It has come as a huge shock to me and my husband to discover that contaminated blood was being used as late as 1991 in circumstances in which the risk of hepatitis infection was known as early as the 1970s and 1980s. Any unscreened units of blood should have been withdrawn immediately.

Section 5. Impact

10. Once I became aware of the infected blood in June 1995, I struggled to come to terms with the previous four years. I then realised that the chronic fatigue I had suffered with when the twins were still babies was disproportionate and not down to them. I had had a terrible four years. I had pretty much isolated myself from my friends because I was too tired to accept visitors. I remember not answering the door to my friends in the hope that they would think that I was out. I went without the treatment, care and support I deserved.

11. Because of the associated stigma and all the stress, we decided to leave Scotland three months later. Family and friends asked so many questions about Hepatitis C which I felt were unnecessary and unwarranted. So, we moved to Ireland in October 1995, a new country with no National Health Service. It was probably not the best move, but I no longer endured being quizzed about HCV. I felt that we needed a fresh start, away from people openly judging us, but away from any family support. It was a huge decision for us to move so far away but I felt that we had allowed it to affect us enough. The irony of it was that not long

after we moved, I was standing at the bus stop with the twins and someone standing waiting there too openly told me that she had been infected with hepatitis. I remember thinking 'its everywhere, I can't get away from Hep C'.

12. Problems then arose over the years in relation to me getting the right health cover in Ireland and every form I seemed to encounter asked the same question "Did you ever test positive for Hepatitis C etc etc?" People change towards you when they know that you have been infected. I went to a Dublin Hospital to get my wisdom teeth removed. They made me wait all day and I was treated last. I asked why I was treated last (others were taken in ahead of me), and I was quite simply and frankly told it was because of the Hepatitis C antibodies. It was embarrassing.

13. I went to another Dublin Hospital in 2011 to get sterilised because having more children was no longer an option after being informed that I had been infected with HCV. I lay on the operating table awaiting my procedure when two nurses came in and asked me to get up and they then moved me to a smaller theatre. I asked why I was being moved and, again, I was told it was to save them having to sterilise the theatre due to the fact that I had the Hep C antibodies. I never felt as dirty as I did that day.

14. Rightly or wrongly, I have had to live with the worry that the virus will come back. Health care isn't free in Ireland. You have to apply for private medical insurance. Health insurance is an issue and so is mortgage protection. As stated, I find it very difficult to confide in the medical profession when it comes to my feelings about my health. I was diagnosed with Raynaud's Disease 10 to 15 years ago and was offered heart tablets, that I don't take.

15. It is a huge regret to me that I wasn't able to have more children, especially a girl. I would have loved to be a mother of a little girl. That wasn't to be, through no

fault of mine. When the children were young, I used to worry what their lives would be like if I died. It is a worry for me for the future.

Section 6. Treatment/care/support

16. I wasn't offered any counselling. I was expected to accept that I had been infected and get on with.

17. I was given annual follow-up blood tests at my local hospital up until in or around 2016. I haven't seen anyone else since.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

18. I am a Scottish blood scheme recipient. I was given the ex gratia lump sum payment of £20,000 through the Skipton Fund in 2005, 10 years after being told that I had been infected. I remember being told that I would be eligible for compensation when I was first informed of the infection back in 1995.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

19. I wish to remain anonymous, 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......6th December 2022