

Witness Name: Louise Cannon

Statement No: WITN0726026

Exhibits: **WITN0726027**

Dated: 5 August 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF LOUISE AUGUSTA CANNON

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 05 March 2019.

I, Louise Augusta Cannon, will say as follows: -

1. I make this statement in addition to my statement of 20 November 2019 (**WITN0726001**) to provide additional information detailing interactions with medical professionals, my health situation in the intervening period and observations made from the Inquiry hearings.
2. I would also like to record my feelings on the stress and worry of someone who has been infected with HCV during the COVID 19 pandemic. No medical professional ever contacted me to help me feel secure during this period so that I knew how to protect myself from the virus. I live on my own and manage with no support. As mentioned in my first statement, I was diagnosed with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) 4 years ago, due to the effect of taking medication to clear my body of HCV, along with the impact of HCV itself, which has taken its toll on me.

3. I find it hard to believe that despite the work of the Infected Blood Inquiry and the information coming from it, I was not classed as one of the 'vulnerable' people on the government's shielding list. I spent 27 years of my life carrying a death sentence once I was infected with HCV, only to be ignored yet again by the government and the health profession. Those who contracted HCV through no fault of their own, should be treated with respect and we should be recognised by the government as 'vulnerable' in relation to the COVID 19 Pandemic.
4. I have not been well at all since providing my first statement and my GP has been very dismissive in regard to this. No referral or further investigation has ever been made in relation to my giddiness and debilitating sickness. I have only ever had one fibroscan and my liver is not regularly monitored. Despite the information Sir Brian has submitted to the NHS, I have been told since submitting my first statement that I cannot have regular scans on my liver because there is no funding available and I would only be referred to a liver specialist if problems arose. Having contracted HCV through no fault of my own, my liver should be monitored regularly and I deserve to know about its condition before it is too late.
5. A few weeks ago I asked for a blood test because I have been so poorly. I was informed that the results were fine and a urine sample was taken and processed during the appointment. I do not trust the health profession and believe the sample should have been sent to the laboratory.
6. I was very worried at the start of the first lockdown about whether I should shield because of my health conditions. My friend [GRO-C] has Crohn's disease and he received a letter to shield during the first lockdown. All of my family and friends said they would not come and visit because I was vulnerable, but I had not been informed that I was and did not receive a government letter, which in itself is confusing to me because I don't know whether I am being overly cautious or the opposite. I have

no idea about my vulnerability and have to monitor it myself. Some people say that with ME you have a low immune system, but I have never been told this by a health professional. I made a telephone call to my GP to ask where she thought I was in terms of vulnerability to the virus. She was very angry in her tone, dismissive and responded that I should know myself. I explained that was the purpose for my phone call.

7. Within seconds of the phone call ending, I received a link for an app for depression. I felt very angry about being labelled as depressed – after the course of Interferon treatment, I know what depression is and I was not depressed at all. If I had been depressed when she sent me the link for the app, it would have made matters worse. The GP did not understand my valid concerns and completely dismissed my questions. I felt neglected yet again by the health profession. She made no follow up calls after this conversation.
8. I am very lucky that I have a natural ability to see the positive side of everything and I am not a negative person, but when I need to find something out, I expect to be provided answers so I know where I stand.
9. Sometime after my telephone call with the GP about my vulnerability, I sent an email on 12 October 2020 to my local MP, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (please refer to exhibit **WITN0726027**). I never received any acknowledgement to my email and it appears that he will not respond to any communication about my HCV infection and anything related to the virus. He has only ever responded to something completely unrelated to my HCV infection. I do not have the energy to chase a response because of my health conditions. My energy and health symptoms are in charge of what I do – I cannot take most painkillers because of the side effects on my body. My acupuncturist thinks that I suffer with visual migraines and therefore I have not found it easy to pursue an answer from my MP.

10. I tried to wear a mask to protect myself from the coronavirus, but I could not cope with wearing one as it affected my breathing and exacerbated my feverish symptoms. I since wear the lanyard to show that I am exempt from wearing a mask.
11. I spoke to a lady from the Hepatitis C Trust on the subject of shielding and she mentioned that a few people had been in contact with them to determine whether they are vulnerable or not. I am too frightened to take the vaccine – my body does not react well to medication and vaccines and I think it would kill me. I spoke to my GP about this but she has not said anything in response. I wanted to know if my GP's surgery had anything to give me to prove exemption from taking the vaccine to avoid being discriminated against. However, my doctor's surgery does not issue any exemption forms.
12. For two years I have had the flu jab, on the recommendation of my GP, but I have had more fevers and flu-like symptoms during this period and I never experienced such symptoms to such an extreme before having the flu jab. I attribute this directly to the long-term effects of my Interferon treatment.
13. During lockdown I had to stop my acupuncture treatment and I experienced a comedown from not receiving the treatment as my body was used to it. It works well for me for my neck pain, inflammation and energy. I have now got used to not having it again and try to keep myself well. I am frightened to start treatment again in case there is another lockdown and I have to experience another comedown from stopping the treatment.
14. Dr Marlow, who looked after me throughout the HCV treatment was a lovely doctor. When she retired from practice, I still received counselling from her privately and she is also a fully qualified acupuncturist. I had counselling from other sources which did not help at all, but I felt more of a complete person after seeing Dr Marlow. She knows more about me than anyone else. Just before the first lockdown I submitted an

application form along with a supporting letter from Dr Marlow, to EIBSS for the counselling grant, but it was rejected. My interpretation was that it did not tick their box of them choosing a counsellor for me. I received a generic letter stating that I could not put forward a counsellor myself. I chose not to pursue this, because I require a counsellor that I trust. It made me feel that I was requesting money that was not legitimate and I felt embarrassed by this. I let Dr Marlow know that the application was refused and I thanked her again for taking the time to write the letter. I do not think Dr Marlow was very shocked at the response from EIBSS. I will still pay to see her privately despite not receiving the grant, because it is a priority for my wellbeing.

15. Since submitting my first statement to the Inquiry, I have had time to further reflect on the impact on my children as a result of my HCV infection. I feel as though I did not recognise the trauma they would have gone through until now because I had to think about getting myself through the treatment. I perhaps did not acknowledge how difficult it was for my children when I was very unwell. My daughter lived with me during the time that I was told that if the treatment did not work I would die. It was a difficult period for both of my children and it is ongoing as they constantly worry about my health.
16. Unless an expert can tell me any different, I put my son's health conditions down to my HCV infection, but will I ever know whether they are a direct consequence of the fact that I was infected with HCV when he was born?
17. I was disgusted to watch Charles Lister, who was the trustee of the Caxton Foundation between 2011 and 2015, provide evidence at the hearings. He asked why only 25% of those infected as a result of the contaminated blood scandal applied for financial support and made a comment 'that they obviously did not need it'. The onus was always on the individual to apply for support and I was never informed by the government and health profession about available support. I was

unaware of any further financial support because I was told by my specialist nurse, 'that was it' after receiving the £20,000 Stage 1 payment from the Skipton Fund. Charles Lister must have been aware of this and he came across as very condescending at the hearings.

18. The more I hear about people having received a blood transfusion because they haemorrhaged or because of a bleeding condition, the angrier I get. No disrespect to haemophiliacs, but I was a healthy young woman about to embark on a new life as a county farmer's wife when I received infected blood. I had no need for a transfusion as it was not required to save my life. I have since been told that everyone is mildly anaemic after giving birth and I question why was I given blood in the first place, when it was known at the time that it was contaminated.

19. Further to paragraph 91 of my original statement, dated 20 November 2019. I have since made further attempts to retrieve copies of my medical records from the London Road Clinic in Gloucester. I was informed by Gloucester Hospital that the clinic is now closed and there are no records left. I distinctly remember my Hepatitis nurse bringing all of my medical records during a home visit, which detailed everything about the blood and treatment I received. He commented that he had more than enough information needed to prove the blood was contaminated and he had pictures of the bags of blood they gave me. It seems uncanny that it has all been destroyed.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

05-08-2021