

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF SARAH ADAMS

I, Sarah Adams, will say as follows:-

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Sarah Adams, DOB GRO-C 1980 and I live at GRO-C Leicestershire, GRO-C
2. My father, Alan Burgess, was infected with HIV and Hepatitis C through receiving contaminated blood products. He has provided a witness statement to the Inquiry which can be found at **WITN1122001**.
3. This witness statement has been prepared without the benefit of access to my father's medical records. If and in so far as I have been provided with limited records the relevant entries are set out in the medical chronology at the end of this statement.

Section 2. How Affected

4. I was very young when my father was infected, and as such the information as to how my father was infected has been addressed in his witness statement.
5. I was told when I was 11 years old that Dad was HIV positive. He told me he had been given some "bad blood" which is how he became infected. At this time the TV was full of adverts of headstones and I was absolutely terrified. I hadn't suspected anything before; I

was an innocent child, but after he told me his news certain things started to make more sense.

6. I was so worried that Dad was going to die tomorrow. I couldn't get that out of my mind. He swore me to secrecy and I wasn't able to tell any friends and I couldn't even tell my siblings as I was the eldest and they didn't know yet. It was so difficult to keep that bottled up when I was only 11 years old. I sometimes got up in the middle of the night and was so upset that my mum would have to come and sit with me. I think she kept that side of things from my Dad because she didn't want him to be worried about me.
7. Dad told us about his Hepatitis C infection pretty much when he knew, and this has always been looked at as a secondary illness when in reality it is very serious. He tells you that he is suffering from all of these illnesses and conditions and you just think how much more does he have to go through? I know there is still so much that he doesn't tell us – he is still trying to protect us now.

Section 3. Other Infections

8. My father has been told that he may have been exposed to vCJD.

Section 4. Consent.

9. This section is addressed in my father's witness statement.

Section 5. Impact

10. When I was 13 I asked my Dad's permission to tell my best friend about his HIV status as I felt that I had to tell somebody. This was the worst thing I could have done because she spread horrible rumours through the entire school and made my life miserable.
11. At this stage my parents were on benefits and we were provided with free school meals. We had to queue up in a separate line to receive lunch which just made you stand out, so I just wouldn't eat because I didn't want anyone asking me questions about why I was entitled to free school meals or what was wrong with my Dad. I didn't want any more reasons to be bullied.

12. Before all of this I loved school. I had lots of friends at primary school and in the close we lived in. After rumours started to spread about Dad's infection my friends stopped coming round to play.
13. With everything that was going on I just ended up burying myself in my school work so fortunately I still performed okay academically. It was a bit of an escape for me.
14. Dad had his first mental breakdown when I was 15 years old. He had terrible anger issues and some times I was scared of him. This then turned into seclusion. If you asked if he wanted a cup of tea he would almost be in tears and unable to speak as he couldn't decide whether he wanted one or not. He also went missing for periods of time; sometimes overnight. I remember being really worried that he would do something to hurt himself. Dad was admitted as an inpatient to the psychiatric hospital (St Clements's Hospital) and was admitted again two years later after a further breakdown. This was at a time when my sister was old enough to know what was happening.
15. The neighbours in our close became very hostile to us – we had cooking fat thrown over our windows and paint thrown over Dad's car. The stigma attached to Dad's illness was horrific.
16. I had to endure other pupils at school making jokes about AIDS and about the psychiatric hospitals. I just went along with the jokes because otherwise it made things worse, but inside it would tore me apart.
17. At the age of 19 I got a job with Virgin Atlantic as cabin crew. This meant I didn't have to spend as much time at home, and I would either spend my time flying or at my boyfriend's house. I just couldn't be around either of my parents then as it was such a difficult time and an unhealthy environment.
18. My parents separated when I was around 20 years old. It was just too much for them dealing with his health and with my sister who was also struggling. My siblings and I were put in the middle – Mum wanted us with her because she wanted to make sure we were okay and support us, but Dad needed us for his health and his sanity. After a few years apart, they got back together and have never been stronger. They are an amazing couple and I am very proud of both of them.

19. The impact of my Dad's illness didn't hit my brother until more recently. He has been diagnosed with PTSD for which he needs to go to counselling. **GRO-C**
- GRO-C** I think everything is just catching up with him now (particularly with the Inquiry), and it shows the lasting effect that Dad's infection has had on our family. With Dad still being here and Liam still suffering, we still have to deal with the fallout daily.
20. When my husband and I decided to try for a baby in 2005 there were so many questions going through our minds. What if we had a haemophiliac boy and the same thing happened to him? Should we screen for haemophilia when I became pregnant? I was offered no real counselling or advice at that time. I am blessed to now have two girls and a boy! **GRO-C**
- GRO-C**
21. Dad took my daughter to the memorial at St Botolph Without Bishopgate and he told her what had happened to him. **GRO-C**
- GRO-C**
- GRO-C** She knows about the Inquiry but we try not to involve her in things that she doesn't need to know. I don't want her to go through any undue stress or anxiety.
22. I have the most supportive husband and friends. I am very open about everything that has happened, and if someone wants to react badly to what my family has been through then that is their problem, not mine.
23. The Inquiry has brought everything back to the forefront of my mind. Having to dig deep and bring back all of these emotions that I had buried is extremely difficult. There isn't a day that goes by now when I'm not thinking about it.
24. Sometimes I just wake up in a really low mood. This started the day the Theresa May made the announcement that there would, finally, be a Public Inquiry into this scandal. I remember I was in McDonalds ordering my son a happy meal when my sister texted me to tell me the news; I broke down in tears in the restaurant.
25. I have always known about Dad's campaigning. He had become very weary and very tied in the last few years, but I think the Inquiry has spurred him on and given him a new lease of life.

26. I thought my Dad was going to be dead by my 18th birthday so the fact he is still here and I'm 38 is unbelievable. I worry because I am living in [GRO-C] and my Dad is in [GRO-C], so if he ever needs me it will take me a few hours to get to him.

Section 6. Treatment/Care/Support

27. I have never been offered any counselling and I am not sure what support was offered to my Dad.

Section 7. Financial Assistance

28. I was never aware of any financial assistance.

29. I know my brother and sister received a small amount of money, possibly £500, but apparently I wasn't eligible for whatever reason.

Section 8. Other Issues

30. There are no other issues I would like to raise with the Inquiry.

Anonymity, disclosure and redaction

31. I do not wish to apply for anonymity.

32. I would like to give oral evidence to the Inquiry.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed..... [GRO-C]

Dated..... 27-02-19