

Witness Name: GARY WEBSTER

Statement No.: WITN1723044

Exhibits: none

Dated: 18 February 2025

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF GARY WEBSTER**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 14 January 2025.

I, GARY WEBSTER, will say as follows:

#### **Introduction**

1. Importantly, and on behalf of the other former Treloar's pupils and families of those no longer with us, I would like to express our gratitude to Sir Brian Langstaff and his team for the production of a most comprehensive final report, especially his findings within the separate Treloar's volume. This acknowledges and recognises the unique circumstances of the malfeasance and abuse that took place at Treloar's on a targeted cohort of young haemophiliac boys. As a group, this has given us a feeling of vindication and a degree of peace that we have successfully fulfilled the first of the promises made to our fellow schoolmates, that we would fight to get the truth told.
2. In preparation for giving this statement I have had discussions with fellow former Treloar's pupils Steve Nicholls, Richard Warwick and Adrian Goodyear. While I am the one giving the statement, we are all of the same view on the matters discussed within this statement.

**Question 1. Please describe the nature of the work which you and your colleagues have been undertaking, in relation to the question of compensation, since the publication of the Inquiry's Report in May 2024.**

3. We, as a group, and when required, our elected individual representative (Richard Warwick) have attended numerous meetings with the Cabinet Office and Ministers both in person and through online forums. On October 29th 2024, I and two other representatives from the Treloar's group of former pupils were invited by IBCA up to Newcastle for a face to face consultation with the organisation and recruited case managers. Along with other campaign groups, unitedly we expressed our views on how to fairly and swiftly proceed. At the time of this meeting we felt listened to and our suggestions appeared to be received positively and enthusiastically. We felt they were supportive, amenable and 'on our side'. Unfortunately, our views have now changed somewhat.
4. This is due to IBCA taking no notice of the views we expressed when we went up to their offices. They asked us specifically about the order people should be paid in and we expressed that the sickest should be paid first. They are not transparent, they give the impression of having made the decision behind closed doors then invite us to a meeting to tell us what they will do rather than actually engage with us and include us in the decision making process.
5. We had expected to hear from them again after our Newcastle visit to arrange another face to face meeting as they promised but we have heard nothing about that. They drag us half way up the country, fill us with hope and expectation, portray an appearance of engaging with us on the face of it but when in reality it is a tick box exercise for them. They don't take a blind bit of notice of us and we have been left feeling hoodwinked by the process.
6. The need to continue to strive for justice is now most apparent. Individually and collectively, we have been campaigning by expressing our frustrations at the lack of and real engagement and delay to implementing the Scheme, to our M.P.'s. On a separate issue, we continue to proceed with litigation against

Treloar's in the form of a G.L.O. Collins Solicitors are representing us on a pro bono basis, legally guiding us and keeping us focussed on the challenging task ahead, for this we are eternally grateful to them.

7. We continue to work with the media on various projects and articles, it is our view that both platforms are crucial in keeping this story current and within the public eye. We hope the Inquiry recognises the vital role the media continues to play in applying pressure upon the Government to fulfil their commitments and act upon the report recommendations with haste. However, as a group we feel saddened and frustrated at the slow pace of Government action and lack of urgency, this only compounds our feelings of mistrust towards the political system and somewhat undermines the Inquiry's report and recommendations.
8. In the online meetings, the first half hour of most meetings have been taken up by waffle, introducing themselves and what they have done, they make out the meeting is for us and the community but they leave hardly any time for us to ask questions and when we do ask questions we do not get a straight answer. They waffle so much it is a talking exercise for them, it should be the other way round, they should ask and let us talk to them, they should listen to us and our concerns.

**Question 2. What if any external support or assistance has been, or is, available to you and your colleagues in undertaking the work described above?**

9. The only external support we receive regarding the compensation process is from Collins Solicitors, who have always remained professional and supportive. This support remains crucial to our group and deserves to be properly and adequately funded. We are aware of conflict in this area, which should not be the case. This worries us all immensely and needs to be addressed.
10. We were very concerned when we were told that IBCA had sought to include a "gagging clause" in the contract for the recognised legal representatives to provide legal advice and assistance to us while we go through the claims process. We appreciate that legal funding is being provided and it is very much

needed but the Government seeking to prevent our solicitors from criticising IBCA in the media is just wrong. We feel that it is important that along with us, our solicitors are able to express any dissatisfaction and or concerns that they have with the claims process publicly, so IBCA are held to account where necessary. IBCA are supposed to be being transparent, and that should extend to being subject to public scrutiny and criticism where it is considered warranted. We understand that a compromise has now been reached with the law firms and IBCA but the fact they sought to impose this in the first place is concerning.

11. Psychological support is available to us via our respective Haemophilia centres. We understand some Government funding has now been made available to support this, we and the centres welcome this.
12. We have also developed professional working relationships with several high-profile journalists and media representatives who are keen to keep abreast of ongoing developments, or lack thereof.

**Question 3. Please describe the involvement of people infected and affected in the decision-making regarding compensation (whether by Government or IBCA or both) as you and your colleagues have experienced it.**

13. Quite simply we have at no point been involved in decision making. We are effectively presented with a fait accompli and asked to comment.
14. Our group has serious concerns regarding the current appointment of 3 individual consultants by IBCA from within the infected/affected community. These people were not democratically elected to represent all. In fact, although highly knowledgeable of their particular circumstances, none have the authority to represent everyone. Most importantly, how can they when there is not a single haemophiliac amongst them? The selection and recruitment process seemed to be done underhandedly. This in our opinion is wrong, lacks transparency and is non-inclusive of the full representation of victims, especially

as it leaves out a large and important cohort, i.e., directly infected haemophiliacs.

15. Again, these actions seem to be following the same pattern that the Inquiry report not only recognised but was highly critical of.

16. It would seem to be that the Inquiry's final report and recommendations are being blatantly undermined. The same patterns of lack of transparency, 'cloak and dagger' tactics and delays remain. This causes considerable anxiety and distress to the victims, compounding our traumas.

17. We also have concerns regarding the pool of 'over 2000' claim manager applications, from which 1000 will be chosen. It appears that the majority of people recruited are from inside HMRC Benton View. These people are trained as tax collectors that work under a ruthless protocol with little consideration given to people's personal circumstances. Surely, this is not the criteria required for a person dealing with this sensitive and distressing issue. We seek clarification as to where these substantial salaries are being funded. Is it from the allocated compensation fund of 11.8 billion?

18. As was evidenced by IBCA's recent online webinar, there is also an overabundance of confusing choices relating to the way compensation can be delivered. Too many variables have been offered at the outset, 'muddying the waters' and causing confusion before the claims are even agreed upon.

19. We do not understand why our solicitors cannot just prepare the paperwork and submit it with all the relevant evidence to allow the correct calculation to be made through the core route.

20. We also have absolutely no idea how the supplemental route is being developed or what legal support will be available to us.

**Question 4. Please describe the principal concerns (if any) which you and your colleagues have in relation to the involvement of people infected and affected in the decision-making regarding compensation (whether by Government or IBCA or both).**

21. The lack of any real involvement of campaigners and their legal representatives in the decision-making process has been incredibly frustrating. It has left us feeling like we have been used and are being used again so IBCA and the Cabinet Office can say they have engaged with us in relation to its decision making when in reality they have only paid us lip service. I don't know if it is the Cabinet Office holding back IBCA, if it is we would rather they just be honest and say so.
22. The lack of engagement is worrying as they are not listening to our concerns and how they can allay those concerns. If they listened to us and others in the community and took on board what we had to say they would have more buy in from the community. As it stands with the lack of genuine involvement there are increasing levels of mistrust and I am concerned that mistakes will be made by IBCA to the detriment of the community that could have been avoided by genuine engagement.

**Question 5. Please describe the impact upon you and your colleagues of the matters set out in 1-4 above.**

23. The matters set out above have had a big impact on me and my fellow former Treloars pupils. The lack of any proper engagement has caused a lot of anxiety and stress for me and our community. They have totally destroyed us again lifted us with the Inquiry's supportive report and with Rishi Sunak's words, they said this would all get sorted, and payments start, but this has not happened how we envisaged it. I am so down about life, I think what's the point they will do their own thing anyway and I think yet again they are compounding the suffering everyone has had to a major degree. It cannot be stressed how demoralising and frustrating it has been to be overlooked in decision making over compensation. It has caused a lot of anxiety and impacted on the health



all of us, we don't need this additional stress. We are struggling as it is, we are one of the sickest cohorts if you like and I think we are being treated abominably. I would have thought at least one of us from Treloars would have been chosen to be part of the early claims. I think they are choosing the easiest cheapest to make a wonderful headline story to say look at what they have paid out. They are cherry picking to be honest when they should be sorting out the sickest people the most. They should look at the sickest first and the longest infected and those near end of life who are not expected to live very long. We are not talking a big number, perhaps 250 that are seriously ill or co infected and ill, why not do those now.

24. It cannot be stressed how demoralising and frustrating it has been to be overlooked in the decision making process. This has increased our levels of anxiety and induced feelings of mistrust towards the Cabinet Office and IBCA.

**Question 6. Please describe the impact you perceive the decision-making regarding compensation (by Government, IBCA or both) to be having on people infected and affected, and why.**

25. It has had a major psychological impact and has affected people mentally, causing stress. The impact on health I think has been to a far greater degree now since we had the report and recognition from the Government about what had happened, we thought it would be done and dusted and they would be paying people out. Peoples anxiety and stress levels are through the roof because they cannot see any end to this when, we are eventually promised an end they are not doing what Sir Brian recommended.
26. We cannot make any plans, we are in limbo and don't know if and when we will get compensation so how do you plan, you cannot. We can't plan even if we try and work out ourselves what we might get by using one of the calculators as keep changing the goal posts. It is constantly on my mind, I worry what next are we going to get the magic email or will it be the end of the year, we just don't know. Why are they treating us like this?.

**Question 7. Are there any particular steps or measures which you consider could be taken by Government, IBCA or both to alleviate any detrimental impact upon you, [NAME OF THE ORGANISATION] and/or the infected and affected communities? If so, please set them out.**

27. Quite simply they should stop delaying, they have the report and its recommendations. They have the compensation framework. The current schemes have all our personal details, there is no reason to delay progressing applications from the infected victims and widows already registered on the current support schemes. This can be undertaken quickly as all of these details are verified.

28. There is no excuse, especially as these people are the most ill and oldest, two of the criteria we advised should be selected first and foremost. The only conclusion we can draw, is the lack of political will to resolve the plight of the victims. Of the 25 proposed cases taken up in October 2024 by IBCA, only 6 have received their full compensation, after a period of 3 months. There is a growing realisation among victims that at the current rate of 'progress' very few of us are likely to see justice served in a timely manner, or even in our lifetime!

**Other Business for Sir Brian's attention and consideration:**

29. Unanimously, an issue that we hold extremely close to our hearts and one that has driven us so hard throughout this campaign, is the timely placement of a separate memorial dedicated to the deceased boys at Treloar College. Indeed, we all felt solace when we read the report and your recommendations regarding this. However, it has caused some, we hope, unintentional confusion and frustrations which I will attempt to outline below.

30. Pre the final report, but as the Inquiry was running, we as a group visited the now Lord Mayor Treloar College many times for the purpose of filming then current News reports for the many different TV channels. On a number of occasions, we met with the current headmaster. Although his attitude was somewhat guarded, we had the chance to discuss with him our desire for such



a memorial. In fact, he actually opened the dialogue with the question "What is it exactly that you want?". We expressed our simple request for a memorial of some kind to be placed at the bottom of the drive, where it would be accessible for all without actually entering the college grounds. He was unsurprised by this and actually stated that this had already been discussed internally. He could see no problems with our request and received it positively. He did mention that a planning application may be necessary and indicated that cost would not be an issue. Perhaps naively, we took this as a sign of recognition and a big step forward in achieving our ultimate goal.

31. However, we have recently (post Inquiry final report) had reason to revisit Treloar's for the purpose of further TV filming and again had a brief chance to meet with the same current headmaster. We were both shocked and outraged that he has now gone back on his previous words and is now quoting the words within the final report (volume 1 page 223 2(b)). With respect, we feel these words have effectively given Treloar's a "get out of jail free card".
32. It was our hope that Treloar's themselves would facilitate and fund, at least partially, such a memorial. It also puts us in an awkward position because four of us have been working on a project for ITV. Our only demand for what has been one year's hard work, was that the company would make a meaningful donation towards the Treloar's memorial and that was agreed. We are also aware of other journalists who wish to contribute should their respective publications go into profit. I hope you can see our dilemma and could possibly help?
33. We ask the question "Would yourself or the Government have any objection to this memorial being funded and facilitated either partially or fully independently?" If the answer is "No" perhaps a statement or letter to that effect could be issued. If the answer is "Yes" perhaps a confidential letter explaining your reasoning could be sent? Our worry is that the parents of the deceased boys are now all elderly and deserve to see this memorial within their lifetime. We are keen to get this issue back into Treloar's court, in the hope of progressing it as quickly as possible. Again, it is a case of "justice delayed is

justice denied". Should you require any further clarification as a group we are more than happy to help.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated

18<sup>th</sup> Feb 2025

**Table of exhibits:**

Date	Notes/ Description	Exhibit number