



Witness Name: Maria Hughes Armour

Statement No: WITN2076/001

Exhibits: WITN2076002-06

Dated: 16th January, 2019

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF Maria Hughes Armour

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 5th November 2018.

I, Maria Hughes Armour will say as follows: -

Section 1. Introduction

1. My name is Maria Hughes Armour. My date of birth is the GRO-C 1963 and my address is known to the Inquiry. I am a single mother and have never been married. I was unable to work while I was bringing my children up. I did have brief payed employment in Social Care.
2. In this statement I intend to speak about my infection with hepatitis C, genotype 1. In particular, I intend to speak about how I was infected, how the hepatitis C virus has affected me, the treatment I received and

Infected Blood Inquiry

Fleetbank House, 1st Floor, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8AE

contact@infectedbloodinquiry.org.uk

Freephone 08081691377

the impact that treatment has had on me and my family.

Section 2. How Infected

3. On 3 June 1981, I suspected I may be pregnant following my first sexual experience with my boyfriend. On 15th June 1981, I attended my GP surgery for the results of my pregnancy test. My GP's name was Dr Berlow, Pine Place, Gorbals, Glasgow. Whilst in the surgery I began to bleed heavily from my vagina. My doctor informed me that I was indeed pregnant and as I was bleeding heavily he wanted to phone an ambulance. I refused this at that time as I did not want my mother to find out I was pregnant. I went home but was still bleeding heavily and eventually went to my Auntie's, who lived around the corner at that time. She took me to hospital, the Samaritan Women's Hospital in Coplaw Street, Govanhill, Glasgow. I do not remember what department I was taken to at the hospital. They admitted me to the hospital as I was bleeding heavily. The following day I had had a miscarriage. When I woke up I was being given blood intravenously, through a drip in my arm.

4. I was never informed before this procedure about the risks of being exposed to infection from a blood transfusion or from receiving the blood product. I was not even told why I had needed a blood transfusion. I was only seventeen and just accepted the medical staff thought it was necessary. My medical records contain a letter from the hospital to my GP giving some information about the treatment which I had received there in relation to my miscarriage in 1981. I note that no mention is made in the letter to my GP of any transfusion having been given to me or any risks which might be associated with me having received it. I can produce the letter in evidence it is exhibit **WITN2076002**.

5. I do not know the name of the consultant I was under though the letter to by GP was from Dr GRO-D locum consultant gynaecologist. I

cannot remember any of the names of the doctors or nurses who dealt with me there. After receiving the transfusion, I stayed in hospital for two weeks as I became very unwell with a chest infection. I have also had a blood transfusion in 1994 following a hysterectomy. I do not know how much blood I received I just remember when I came round from the operation I was being given blood intravenously through a drip in my arm. This was in the Victoria Infirmary, Glasgow.

6. After having the blood transfusion in 1981, I have never felt well again. I have constantly had muscle and joint pains. I have always seemed to be back and forward to the doctors with constant diarrhoea and bowel problems. I complained about pains in my joints and muscles. In 2002, I was referred to the Victoria Infirmary in Glasgow and was seen by Dr Bolton-Jones, consultant gastroenterologist, over a two-year period. I had regular appointments with Dr Bolton-Jones, where my blood would be taken for routine tests. In 2004, I was attending a routine appointment with Dr Bolton-Jones. A nurse was also present. He said to me "I have some good and bad news for you. The good news is you don't have cancer. The bad news is that you've got hepatitis C." I was not expecting this at all. I had been given no indication that I was to be told this news. I just believed I was going to a routine appointment with Dr Bolton-Jones.
7. He did not voluntarily give me any information about the infection. However, I had recently done an HNC in social care at College and I had learned about hepatitis. I knew that hepatitis C was serious and I became very upset. Although I had heard about the condition, I had little knowledge of precisely what it meant or would mean for me in the future. He gave me no information to help me understand or manage the infection. The lack of care, support and explanation from Dr Bolton-Jones left me dealing with my condition alone for many years.
8. I had been attending at the Victoria Infirmary to see Dr Bolton Jones

since 2002 where, on each occasion I attended, my blood was taken. I do not know when it was discovered I had contracted hepatitis C but I do believe that I should have been informed about the infection as soon as it was discovered. I suspect that it must have been known that I was infected before I was told in 2004. I suspect that that was the reason why my blood samples were taken, though I was never told that that was why.

9. I felt the way Dr Bolton-Jones informed me that I had hepatitis C was disgusting. I felt that he looked at me as if I had been wasting his time for the past two years. He asked me about drugs, assuming I was taking drugs and was a drug addict. I told him I didn't do and had not done drugs. He then asked me about my partners in the past and whether they been taking drugs. He spoke to me as if I'd had many sexual partners which is not the case. His attitude to me was terrible. I was crying and extremely upset. He told the nurse to take me out to get more tests to see what type of hepatitis C I had contracted. He gave me no leaflets or any further information about the infection. I was so devastated and upset at the lack of information and advice the doctor had not given me about hepatitis C. When I got home that evening I was in such a state I phoned the Samaritans as I was that depressed.

10. I was given no information about the risks of others being infected as a result of the infection.

Section 3. Other infections

11. I am not aware of having been infected with any virus other than hepatitis C. I was possibly exposed to the risk of other viruses such as HIV. I have never been offered an HIV test. I may have been exposed to other viruses.

Section 4. Consent

12. I was aware that I was treated at the time of miscarriage in 1981, as I have described, though I was not informed of any risks associated with having that treatment.
13. I believe that I tested without my knowledge or without my consent. This may have been the purpose of the blood which was taken from me by Dr Boulton-Jones over the two years when I was under his care. If my blood was so tested, it was tested without my consent. It must at least have been tested without my consent to lead to the positive test which resulted in the diagnosis being given to me in 2004. I do believe that I was not given adequate or full information as to what my blood was being tested for. I do not know if I was being tested or treated for the purposes of research.

Section 5. Impact

14. From the time of having the transfusion in 1981, I have never been well. The physical effects on me have been enormous. I have suffered with constant muscle and joint pain I have consistently suffered from extreme diarrhoea. This has been extremely embarrassing and I have had many accidents whilst out of my home. I have always been extremely fatigued. I had no real idea why these things were happening to me as there was such a long period between my infection in 1981 and being told of my diagnosis in 200. I was a young woman at the time I was apparently infected but I had no energy whatsoever. The pain from my muscles and joints at times was unbearable. I was a very sociable person and enjoyed going to my local pub but I stopped doing that. I was always too tired to go out and my extreme diarrhoea was too embarrassing to go out if I had an accident. I was working at Winlaw Residential Unit at the time. This was a home for the elderly with dementia. It was very hard work as the residents often displayed challenging behaviour. I loved my job and saw my future career

aspirations in social care. I was taking a lot of sick leave as I was so ill and eventually because of this I was dismissed from my role. I was devastated.

15. Shortly after the blood transfusion in 1981, I developed a severe chest infection. I had to stay in hospital for two weeks and was pumped with antibiotics to clear the infection. From the point of receiving the blood transfusion, I constantly had infections. In 1983 I was admitted to the Victoria Royal infirmary Glasgow with an unknown viral infection. I remember this occasion well as I was taken in at Hogmanay and was kept in for four or five days over the New Year. Once again I was pumped with antibiotics until the viral infection had cleared. I am unsure if these were the first signs of the hepatitis C manifesting themselves or if these were other infections. I wonder if I may have contracted other viruses when I was infected with hepatitis C or whether my ability to fight infections with other viruses may have been lessened due to my infection with hepatitis C. I certainly had an unusual amount of serious infections from 1981 onwards.

16. From the point at which I found out that I was infected with hepatitis C, I was in a very dark place mentally. I became severely depressed. I worried about my future as I knew that hepatitis C is a serious condition that can affect you 15 to 20 years after you had contracted it. I did attend my own GP, Dr [GRO-D] and asked for some support and counselling. I was told the councillors would not entertain me as I was just stressed. I could not eat and could not sleep. I was so worried and so depressed. At one point I took an overdose as I wanted to end my life. My daughter found me in the flat and called for an ambulance. Even though I survived this attempt on my life, my depression did not shift. I practically became a recluse. I have a large family, with 29 nieces and nephews. I did not want to be at family gatherings as I was frightened to touch my nieces in case I passed on the infection. My life was unbearable. I have a very close family and I was able to tell them that I

had been infected with hepatitis C. My family were shocked but very supportive. I did a lot of babysitting for my nieces and nephews but I stopped all that for fear of passing on my infection. This clearly affected my relationships with them as I saw my family less and less.

17. I was constantly backwards and forwards to the doctors with various conditions, mainly bowel problems. I had severe diarrhoea. I had aches and pains all over my body, and more recently I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia as a result of hepatitis C. I have received treatment in respect of that condition at the Victoria Hospital, Glasgow.

18. I continued to be treated under the care of Dr Boulton-Jones, to whom I had originally been referred for my bowel problems in 2002. I was also seeing a Doctor Goulding at the Victoria Infirmary, I believe he was a liver specialist. 2009 was the first time that I was talked with about treatment for my hepatitis C. I was told in 2009 by Dr Bolton-Jones that there was a treatment available for hepatitis C. Dr Bolton Jones said that he wasn't going to offer me the treatment because he didn't think my body could cope with the treatment. There was no discussion about it. There was no discussion about what I could do to make the treatment more tolerable for me. I was just told that I could not cope. It was like a vicious circle. I was too ill due to the infection to have the treatment which might cure me of my infection. I was extremely thin and very weak at that time. I was not made aware that there was any treatment available that would be suitable for me.

19. In March 2010, I started treatment for my hepatitis C. Part of this treatment was Interferon and consisted of self-injections at home once a week. I was also given medication in the form of tablets called Ribavirin. My medical records contain an entry about my planned treatment with this a course of anti-viral drugs I produce this letter in evidence and exhibit it as **WITN2076003**.. The treatment was over a 72 week period where I had to attend the hospital every week to pick up my injections.

Whilst on this treatment, my life was a nightmare. Physically, I lost more weight and was very weak and lethargic. I had terrible diarrhoea and felt nauseous all the time. I developed a skin condition called Lupus. This brings me out in large red blotches. I believe this is a side effect of taking the drug Interferon as part of my treatment for hepatitis C. Mentally, I was in a terrible place, I became extremely depressed. I locked myself away and didn't want to see anybody, I couldn't eat and even though I was exhausted, I couldn't sleep. I became extremely aggressive and was a terrible person to be around. There were more holes in my walls and doors where I threw things at them in sheer frustration and anger. I was very short tempered. I was not offered any treatment to help me cope with the effects of the treatment. The treatment which I had resulted in me being told that I had cleared the virus. I produce a letter dated the 19th December 2011 in evidence to this effect and exhibit it as **WITN2076004**. However, I have continued to have symptoms which I believe to be associated with my infection, as described above.

20. I don't believe that my infected status impacted upon any medical or dental care for any other conditions. On one occasion, I did attend the dentist as I had terrible toothache, prior to my treatment I had to fill the form in asking if I had any infections. I had to declare that I had hepatitis C. I remember this distinctly as the receptionist at that time was my friend's daughter. I was really embarrassed that she would find out. The dentist himself was all gowned up and I remember he had three pairs of gloves on and I remember feeling very embarrassed. I felt like a leper. This was at Govanhill health centre in 2011 I cannot be more specific with dates.. I did not go back to the dentist again for another 10 years.

21. Contracting hepatitis C and its subsequent treatment has had a huge impact on my life. I went from being a sociable person, enjoying evenings out at my local pub, to a total recluse. I have a large family but I no longer wanted to socialise. In 2007, my long-term relationship broke down and my partner moved out. My oldest daughter at one point

moved out and declared herself homeless, blaming my aggressive behaviour as the reason she had done so. I would often look after my niece's baby for her. I remember on one occasion her baby fell off my bed and cut herself. I was so paranoid that I may pass the infection on, I refused to have her any more. I did not want to socialise or be around anyone, either family or friends. Contracting hepatitis C also brought me to such a low point in my life that I have even attempted suicide. This was not long after I had been given my diagnosis. I believed having hepatitis C was a death sentence and therefore I did not see the point in living.

22. I am aware of the stigma that surrounds hepatitis C. I know it is associated with sex workers or drug users. I learnt about hepatitis C whilst studying my HNC at Langside College as it was part of the curriculum. I knew that it was a life threatening condition and it affected every part of your body. This was in contrast to what I was told by Doctor Bolton-Jones who only seemed to focus on the liver. He did not emphasise the seriousness of the infection at all. I would often go into my local pub but I stopped going in because of the stigma. I remember one time when I was in the pub one of the customers said to the bar staff that they did not want to drink out of the same tumblers as me. I felt dirty and embarrassed. This happened in 2005, not long after I had been given my diagnosis. I have no idea how it became public knowledge. I know my daughter said it was common knowledge in her school. I remember on another occasion someone pointed at me and shouted "She is riddled with it". This was in 2005 also, roughly around the same time I kept away from my local pub to avoid any further incidents as I felt ashamed and embarrassed.

23. The stigma of my infection affected the whole of my family. My daughters refused to go to school. This was in 2005 not long after my diagnosis. I have no idea how the children at my daughters school found out about my infection. When the word had got round my local area that I had hepatitis C, my children were bullied at school. They

would come home when they did attend school often in tears saying that the other children were saying that their mum was a drug addict. Everyone assumed I injected drugs. My medical records contain a letter from Dr Bolton Jones, referring to an earlier entry in my medical records from 2006 which states I contracted hepatitis C via intravenous drug use I produce this letter in evidence and exhibit it as **WITN2076005**. There is another letter from Dr Bolton Jones to myself, indicating that he had included a letter to correct this error in my medical notes. I produce this letter in evidence and exhibit it as **WITN2076006**. . Also, I remember when I went to get my Interferon treatment even the nurse when handing me the box of needles said "You know what you do with them, don't you?" assuming I was a drug addict. This was at the liver clinic at Victoria Hospital.

24. I managed to complete the course at Langside College Glasgow, in health and social care. This was a two year course doing an SVQ3 in health and social care. I then went on to do a further two year course obtaining a HNC. This was also in Health and Social Care. After this course I was accepted into Strathclyde University to obtain a degree in social work. This was in 2009. The course was for three years and if successful I would have a degree in social work. My intention was to complete the course and become a social worker. I only managed to stay on the course for three months as I was so ill. I started the course in September 2009 and only managed to stay on the course for about three months so in the December I had to leave the course due to my ill health. I had horrendous pains in my joints and was suffering with brain fog. I could not concentrate on the work or focus when I was in lectures. My memory was terrible and I could not retain the information given at lectures. I could not manage the stairs in the University and was unable to carry my books. I did tell the university about my condition and they were fairly helpful. They gave me a Dictaphone so I could record the lectures. There was nothing more they could do. I just could not physically continue with the course. My fatigue made me unable to attend lectures. When I did attend lectures I was unable to

concentrate and take in what the lecturers were saying. This was a terrible time for me because I had wanted to become a social worker for so long. I feel like I could have had a career in social work and been good at it. I was really devastated that I was unable to continue with my studies as I realised without those qualifications I would be unable to achieve my dream of being a social worker. My family were also very disappointed for me as I was the first person in my family to actually get to university. I had to go on benefits to survive.

25. I worked for eight months at Fair Deal, Castlemilk working with adults with learning disabilities. Fair Deal is a residential home for adults with learning difficulties. I would work nightshifts and look after eight or nine adults. They often displayed challenging behaviour and it was very hard work. This was the first job I got when I finished my HNC. I had been looking for employment within the field of social work and my qualification enabled me to apply when I saw the job advertised. My employers did not know about my infection with hepatitis C as I had not been told that I had hepatitis C at this point. I enjoyed the work very much although it was very challenging. At the time things were very difficult. Both my daughters were going off the rails to some extent and I was constantly receiving phone calls from the school and neighbours reporting on their bad behaviour. Together with this and having to take time off for hospital appointments, eventually I was dismissed. As I did not know myself that I had hepatitis C I could not explain to my employers why I was constantly ill.

26. Sometime in 2005 I began working at Winlaw residential home. This is a dementia unit for the elderly at Castlemilk. It was my role to care for the elderly residents. This involved feeding, washing and dressing the residents. I had seen the job advertised, I cannot remember where but I decided I wanted to be back in employment in my chosen field of social care. I loved this job and was earning £21,000 a year, but due to my illness I was taking time off work. I felt unwell often as I have described and I had to take time off to attend hospital appointments.

Eventually, I was dismissed from this job as well. This was exactly a week before I was told that I had hepatitis and therefore my employers were not aware of my condition.

27. As I have said, in 2009, I was devastated when the doctor said that he did not think I could cope with taking the treatment for hepatitis C. I remember I received a routine letter from the Department of Work and Pensions asking about my medical condition. I lied on the form and said that I felt a bit better. I said this because I was desperate to proceed with any treatment that can cure me of my infection. The Department of Work and Pensions took this to mean that I was fit for work and they stopped my benefits. They even took away my bus pass. The specialist nurse at the liver clinic, Victoria Hospital wrote a letter on my behalf to the DWP. She explained in the letter the treatment I was on and the severe side effects I was having. I cannot remember the name of the nurse who did this. This did not alter the decision made by the DWP. This had a devastating effect for me as it was extremely expensive to attend hospital appointments and counselling. I could no longer afford to keep up with these appointments. Eventually I was declared bankrupt in 2011. My benefits were going into my bank account but they were not covering by bills. I was also being charged by the bank for being overdrawn. This went on for a full year and was very stressful. Eventually I had no alternative but to be declared bankrupt. I got some help to do this from the citizens advice, Bell Street, Glasgow. I remember standing outside the citizens advice office in the freezing cold at 8.30am waiting for the office to open. It was a first come first served basis and I wanted to get there early to be seen. I remember I could be sat waiting for hours. This was very unpleasant for me because I was suffering with severe diarrhoea and the building did not have any toilets. I was always running over the road to use the toilets at a café. I went to the citizens advice for two full days.

28. I have kept in contact, via social media, with some of the people that I

was on my university course with and I am aware that many are social workers now and earning £37,000 a year. I feel very depressed and upset for myself at this prospect as my life would be so much different if I hadn't contracted hepatitis C. I would be in the financial position to give myself and my family a comfortable life and follow the career path that I had wanted to follow.

Section 6 Treatment/Care Support

29. Neither Dr Bolton-Jones nor any other doctor such as my GP offered me any counselling or psychological support when he diagnosed me with hepatitis C.

30. I do remember a doctor from the hospital informing me of some psychological support that was available. The doctor's name was Christine McTaggart from the Victoria Infirmary. The group was called C level and I did attend on a few occasions. The group was for people who had hepatitis C. I felt very uncomfortable at this group as it was mainly drug addicts that had got the infection who attended. Plus, we were in a group and I feel very uncomfortable talking to a group of people. I would have preferred one to one counselling at that time.

31. In 2009, when I was told that my body would not cope with the only treatment that was available for hepatitis C, Dr Bolton-Jones referred me to a Dr Barry at Gartnavel, Brownlee centre for support. I believe Dr Barry was a psychiatrist but I'm not sure. He referred me to a woman, I don't know her name but she worked in the same department. I had one meeting with her. She told me that I needed to bring my daughters into the clinic to be tested, also for hepatitis C. She talked about my sex life and said that I would have to inform my sexual partners of my infected status so that they could also get tested. I felt at that time that she thought I must have had many sexual partners and had been promiscuous. I had only had 4 or 5 sexual partners at that time. I knew

who they were and therefore I could inform them, although this was highly embarrassing for me. It did not seem like support for me at all. The woman who I saw was not supportive at all. I remember the appointment was for an hour. She sat with her arms folded and kept looking at the clock on the wall. I felt I was an intrusion and that she wasn't interested in me. I did not go back to see her.

Section 7. Financial assistance

32. At some point after I had been diagnosed with hepatitis C and it had been established that I had been infected via the blood transfusion I had in 1981, my own GP, Dr **GRO-D** told me there was a fund available for anyone needing financial assistance. I remember I went to see a solicitor in town. It was at the firm of Ross Harper. The solicitor said that I would be entitled, from the Skipton fund, to a one off payment of £20,000 and that he would want a £600 fee to act on my behalf. I went back to my doctor and she said that she could apply on my behalf for free. She filled out some forms and I merely signed on the form. A short time later, I received a payment from the Skipton fund of £20,000. This was in 2006 or 2007.

33. Via social media, on the "plenty of fish" website, I got speaking to a man. He was an actor and had acted in the film Batman. He told me that he had contracted hepatitis C through dental treatment he had received in 1979. He said he was a member of a group of people who had also contracted hepatitis C through contaminated blood. He told me the group were called Tainted Blood. He put me in touch with this group via a website. I contacted them online and it was through this group and a number of Scottish victims that I was informed I was entitled to further financial assistance through a fund called the Caxton Fund. Nobody else had told me about that before then, I applied to this fund and for the past 4 years I have been receiving £1,000 a year for fuel costs. This is for household goods replacement and decoration. I have found applying for this assistance to be a long and laborious task. I had to

provide them with a number of quotes before they would agree to the assistance. I also had to troll through catalogues to get prices of the goods I required. The assistance would come in voucher form as opposed to money. I was then tied in to purchase goods from the stores that the vouchers specified. It just didn't seem worth all the hassle to apply for this assistance.

34. I also was put in touch with the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme. In 2016 I received a payment of £30,000 through the Scottish Infected Blood Scheme. Through that scheme, I have now also been awarded £1,575 per calendar month. My first payment began in December 2018.

35. I do not know if there were any preconditions imposed on the making of an application for all the grants of financial assistance.

36. Had I not contracted hepatitis C I believe I would be in a permanent, well paid, secure job, earning £37,000 per year. The £50,000 or so which I have received is a drop in the Ocean compared to what I would have earned throughout my working life. In no way does this amount of money compensate for a lifetime of ill health and worry regarding my future.

Section 8. Other issues

37. Through the Tainted Blood group, I have been an active member in campaigning for justice and compensation for the many who were infected with contaminated blood. In 2013, I attended a protest in London directed, at that time, towards David Cameron. I would like to provide a supplementary statement about my experiences of campaigning to the Inquiry in due course. I have also provided my experience of living with infected blood to the Scottish Infected Blood Forum. My experiences were published in a document dated February

- 2016. I have given this document to Thompsons Solicitors and I can produce this in evidence if required.

38. I have recovered my medical records and I can provide these in evidence if required. These are records from the New Victoria Hospital and Gartnavel General Hospitals in Glasgow and my GP records. They do not include the records of the hospital at the time of my transfusion in 1981. I have not had the opportunity to have these records reviewed on my behalf in any great detail and would welcome the opportunity to have them looked at more thoroughly.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 12/6/2019