Witness Name: Danielle Mullan
Statement:WITN2439002
Exhibits: WITN2439003 – WITN2439009
Dated: 28th January 2025

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

SECOND WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DANIELLE MULLAN

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

I, Danielle Mullan, will say as follows:

Introduction

1. My name is Danielle Mullan. My date of birth and address are known to the Inquiry.

2. I live with my husband and daughter and work as a Pharmacy dispenser.

3. I am the only daughter of Marie Cromie and have an older brother, named Russell.

4. Mum gave birth to Russell in 1981. Then a couple of weeks after the birth, she collapsed at home and was rushed to Craigavan Hospital where she received a blood transfusion.

5. My Mum was a victim of the infected blood scandal. I will briefly summarise.

6. Later in 2005 Mum began to feel unwell, She went to see her GP who then referred her on to Belfast City Hospital for blood tests. A couple of days later she saw her Gastroenterologist who informed her that she had a diagnosis of hepatitis C.

7. A short while later, Mum was referred to a liver specialist at the Royal Victoria Hospital in Belfast. Tests showed that she had developed liver sclerosis.

8. In mid-2015 Mum became seriously ill again and was taken by air ambulance to Kings Hospital London where she underwent the second liver transplant.

9. Unfortunately, Mum never regained her health and suffered with serious health issues for the rest of her life.

10. Mum passed away on the 4th July 2023.

11. My mum was not a haemophilic and was, for want of better words an 'innocent bystander' caught up in this terrible scandal. Until the Inquiry came to Belfast, we were living through this on our own. I feel that I have had to fight for Mum a lot harder and struggle to have our voices heard because we are in a small minority group – the transfusion victims – who, as I believe the Inquiry once referred to as 'whole bloods'. I still feel that to be the case with the Government now and IBCA, that 'whole bloods' are not given the highest priority.

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

12. I am not a prominent member of any of the particular campaigning organisations in respect of infected blood victims. Therefore, I have not

been formally invited to any meetings or discussions with the Government or the Infected Blood Compensation Authority (IBCA).

13. I went to a meeting at Stormont in 2024, which I believe was before the publication of the Blood Inquiry Report. Also, after the publication of the report, in June 2024, my solicitors, Watkins & Gunn, organised an updating meeting for their Northern Ireland clients. I attended at that meeting which was held in Belfast. I cannot stress how helpful and important the regular meetings were that we had had over the years, with our solicitors. They would regularly come over to Northern Ireland. It was an invaluable source of contact, which provided us with updates and allowed us to raise questions. It was emphasised by Michael Imperato at the last few such meetings that, one of the implications of the Inquiry coming to an end, was that we would **not** have this kind of support going forward. I have personally kept in contact with Michael and Watkins & Gunn since, but with no funding and no ongoing Inquiry, we don't have those regular meetings anymore, which is a great shame.

14. The kind of work I have been doing has been to be engaging with other campaigners on social media. I also have been liaising with my MP. This came about because the campaign group "Tainted Blood" suggested we should get in touch with our local MP, in order to put pressure on the Government by raising questions in Parliament. My MP is Sorcha Eastwood. She is the alliance MP for Lagan Valley. She was elected in 2024 general election. When I contacted her, I was surprised to get a response very quickly. The reply I received from Scorcha Eastwood to my email of the 10/09/24 is dated 1/10/24 and exhibited at (WITN2439003).

15. The series of questions asked by Sorcha Eastwood range from 22/11/24 to 6/1/25 based on the Tainted Blood report brought to the attention of those in government and are exhibited at (WITN24309004 – WITN24309009).

16. The overall impression I got from the answers to her questions was that the Government did not really want to grapple with the issues raised.

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

17. My mother sadly died as a result of an infected blood transfusion she had some years ago. Therefore, my family were not wholly part of the haemophiliac community. However, Nigel Hamilton, who now runs Haemophilia Northern Ireland, has always been very helpful and supportive to me. I have been able to raise questions about him.

18. I have, of course, signed up to get regular email updates from IBCA. I receive these but they are rather uninformative. They are quite bland.

19. Through Tainted Blood I get better information and updates. Andy Evans of Tainted Blood attends a lot of meetings and he often feeds back on social media, as to those.

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 within [name of organisation] have experienced it.

20. I've not had involvement in the decision-making regarding compensation. I receive some information from what IBCA might put out and answers to my MP in the House of Commons. However, I have had no real opportunity to feed into the process at all.

21. What is of particular concern, is that it was stated in the Interim Compensation Report of Sir Brian Langstaff (April 2023) that victims and also victim lawyers should be involved in the setting up and monitoring of the scheme. I can remember our solicitor, Michael Imperato making this point at several meetings in Northern Ireland in 2023 and early 2024.

However, that never happened. The Government began the process of setting up the scheme and its systems, in secret, before the publication of the Inquiry Report. There was no involvement of any victims, victim groups or their lawyers. It seems to me that the way the scheme is being run now is 'set in stone'. This means that there has been, and continues to be, no input from victims.

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

22. I have a number of concerns, many of which could possibly have been avoided with engagement with victims earlier on.

23. Of particular concern is the length of time and lack of progress that is being made. It seems that the Government/IBCA system is effectively having to wholly re-invent the wheel for each case they come across. Apparently, claims will be assigned a Case Manager, who pulls together a lot of the information. Of course, I am aware that my mother's information is with the BSO in Northern Ireland. They also have some knowledge of my mother's case. It seems odd to me that there was no regional aspect to the scheme whereby officers like the BSO in Northern Ireland could use the information they already had straight away to get things moving in the context of the scheme. I wish to stress that I absolutely did not want a separate regional Northern Ireland scheme. We didn't want a compensation post code lottery. However, I thought there would be some regionalisation of the running of the scheme. Also, the other organisation which holds a lot of documentation about my family's case, and knows the case intimately, is of course my solicitors, Watkins & Gunn. If the system had been that families were able to submit their claims through to a regional centre, via their solicitors, everything would now be up and running on my family's cases, and many, many others. Indeed, cases would be settling and finishing by

now. IBCA would not have to be employing hundreds of case workers to get up to date and on top of thousands of cases. It all seems very strange to me they have come up with a system that makes more work and builds in delay.

24. I am very concerned about some of the difficulties in obtaining Grants of Probate. As a family, we had to do this. We did not know anything about this, but our solicitor advised us that we would have to obtain a Grant of Probate from the Court before we were able to make any sort of application to the Infected Blood Scheme. It is fortunate that my late mother's affairs were in good order and everything went through in a fairly straightforward manner, however, I can see how some families would be less fortunate. It is also a concern that my mother's estate will go through my brother, Russell as the executor. He would then have to make payments out to my father and we are concerned about Inheritance Tax.

25. I know there is information on the Government and IBCA website about this. I am bound to say though, it is very hard to find detailed specifics, or information which is easy to follow. It is all very complicated for a lay person.

26. Another big concern is that affected people seem to be "at the back of the queue". I find this very worrying. Affected people's claims will die with them. Therefore, there may be many quite elderly and ill "affected persons" that will never see any compensation because they will die before their cases are considered. My father is robust, but I do worry if anything happened to him over the next year or so, he would lose his claim. Also, it seems very odd that they don't take families as a unit. Affected victims will normally be associated with an infected victim. Surely it will be easier to deal with them together at roughly the same time?

27. There is a big concern that people whose cases are going forward are somehow being handpicked because they are more important than the others. There is talk of those people having received a "golden ticket" in the various on-line forums. There is no explanation or rhyme or reason as to why certain people are being picked to go forward over others, as far as I am aware.

28. If the way IBCA operates had been done differently, in consultation with campaigners and their lawyers, things would be going through now, far quicker.

Please describe the impact upon you and your colleagues within the [name of organisation] of the matters set out in 1-4 above.

29. Personally, I find the way things are at the moment very frustrating. I have no real idea what is going on. I am quite stressed as to whether I might miss some deadline that I don't know about or that something will happen to me or to my brother/father before we are, so called, invited into the process.

30. I would say this has put myself and my dad's health both physically and mentally under a lot of pressure. I now suffer from cluster migraines and have just recently been diagnosed with hidradenitis suppurativa which I'm told has been triggered by stress and Dad's mental health has also not been great from losing mum. He finds it very hard to keep up with what is happening.

31. The process now – or lack of process – is causing all this stress and strain.

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?

32. There is enormous frustration amongst the community. It feels like no-one is being listened to. It seems like whatever Sir Brian said in his recommendations was wholly ignored.

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 organisation] and/or the infected and affected communities? If so, please set them out.

33. The biggest problem is that everything seems to be taking so long, no one knows what's going on, and that people are not being listened to. I fully appreciate that it takes some time to set up organisations, but we know that the Government was working "in secret" on all this, over a year ago. It has now been more than 8 months since the publication of the Inquiry Report and, as far as I am aware, only a handful of people have received any sort of offers. I accept it might take some time for someone's scheme to be processed but if your claim was at least up and running and working its way through the system, you would feel that some progress is being made. It is the not knowing about anything that is causing such anxiety for the vast majority of victims.

34. I can understand why they would have to have had an Interim Chair at the very beginning, but when does an Interim Chair become a permanent Chair? It feels like the whole scheme is in a permanent state of flux.

35. There are communications and statements coming out of IBCA and the Government, but they don't actually seem to be saying anything. It feels like it is a process of saying something, for the sake of saying something. It feels like the whole thing is "smoke and mirrors".

36. I really hope that the Public Inquiry has the opportunity to call some of the people in the Government and at IBCA before it, to find out exactly what is going on, why we are in this situation, and why they refuse to heed calls to change processes.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed GRO-C

Dated 19/2/25

Table of exhibits:

Date	**Notes/ Description**	**Exhibit number**
1/10/24	Reply from Scorcha Eastwood to Danielle Mullan's email of the 10/09/24	WITN2439003
22/11/24 – 6/01/25	Series of questions by Scorcha Eastwood based on the Tainted Blood Report to those in government.	WITN2439004-WITN2439009