

**Witness Name: Royal Free Hospital (Debra Anne Pollard)**  
**Statement No. WITN30940026**  
**Exhibit No. WITN30940027**  
**Dated: 10 October 2019**

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBRA ANNE POLLARD**

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I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 19 September 2019.

#### **Section 1: Introduction**

1. I, Debra Anne Pollard of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust, Pond Street, London, NW3 2QG, will say as follows:
2. I am employed by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust) as a Lead Nurse Specialist within the Haemophilia & Thrombosis Centre. I have worked for the Trust as a Clinical Nurse Specialist since February 1992 and have been in my current role since May 2014.
3. I qualified as a Registered General Nurse in 1985 (NMC PIN 82Y0007E), obtained an MSc in Advanced Practice from King's College University in 2014 and became an Independent Non-medical Prescriber in 2015.
4. The information provided within this witness statement is based upon facts within my knowledge, save for where I have indicated the source of my information or belief. Where matters are not directly within my knowledge, I believe them to be true.

5. As the Lead Nurse Specialist, my responsibilities include leading and managing a team of specialist nurses and allied health professionals. I am also responsible, together with the Centre Director, for the strategic development and management of the department.
6. Since my arrival at the Haemophilia & Thrombosis Centre in 1992, I have been responsible on a number of occasions for answering questions from the Infected Blood Inquiry (the Inquiry). As a result, I am aware of some of the issues surrounding the Inquiry and know how to investigate matters arising within our archives and systems.
7. I am a member of the Haemophilia Society and was an elected Trustee from 2005-2012 (encompassing two terms).

## **Section 2: Response to criticism of witness W1591**

8. I write this statement to respond to specific matters raised within the witness statement of Mr Mark Ward, dated 23 January 2019. In this statement I respond to five specific questions raised by the Inquiry with regard to points made within in Mr Ward's statement.
9. I attach to this statement a supporting document which is relevant to the comments in Mr Ward's statement dated 23 January 2019. The exhibit number referred to in this statement in the form **WITN3094027** is a reference to the exhibit in that bundle.
10. At paragraph 113 of his statement, Mr Ward describes a time where a doctor at the Royal Free Hospital tried to give him an intramuscular injection of antibiotics, which he couldn't have, due to his severe haemophilia. Mr Ward states that, following this, he went into the Haemophilia Ward to raise what had happened, in case the doctor tried to give any other haemophiliacs intramuscular injections. Mr Ward states that when he told me, I said it was funny how he always

found trouble and that I thought it was time he went to a different hospital. My comments upon this are as follows:

- a. I have no recollection of this conversation and it is not documented in the medical notes.
- b. If I had had any such conversation, it would be my normal practice to record any such incident to provide learning for the future and to avoid any future risk of any such situations reoccurring.

11. At paragraph 128 of his statement, Mr Ward states that I was present at a haemophilia review meeting he had, despite him having specifically requested that I was not present at the meeting, as he had an outstanding formal complaint against me. My comments upon this are as follows:

- a. I was present at the review meeting on 26 August 2014, which is the meeting to which I believe that Mr Ward is referring.
- b. There had been a number of discussions prior to this clinic meeting about how it would be conducted in view of the complaints that Mr Ward had submitted about me and other members of staff.
- c. The decision was taken by senior management that I should be present in the room for Mr Ward's review and that, if he asked for me to leave, I would do so. I believe that I was asked to attend to ensure that Mr Ward was provided with the necessary routine care available within the department.
- d. Professor Nathwani and Paul McLaughlin (Physiotherapist) were also present throughout the consultation.

12. At paragraph 129 of his statement, Mr Ward states that throughout the review he was constantly "provoked, spoken to with contempt, threatened and the information [he] provided was argued against". He also states he was told that if he was unhappy with the way the

review was conducted he could be transferred elsewhere. My comments upon this are as follows:

- a. I took very little part in the discussions during the review, which were led by Professor Nathwani. However I do not agree that at any time the tone of this appointment was intimidating towards Mr Ward, or that his views or opinions were not listened to. There were certainly no threats made towards Mr Ward.
- b. On the subject of moving to another service, this suggestion was made by Professor Nathwani in the context that Mr Ward repeatedly (during this meeting, and on many other occasions) described his dissatisfaction with his treatment at the Royal Free. His dissatisfaction related not just to his haemophilia care but to many other wards, departments and staff that he had encountered. It was clear that Mr Ward had lost trust in the services provided by the Royal Free and it was for this reason that the potential of a transfer was raised during this meeting.

13. At paragraph 130 of his statement, Mr Ward states I took blood from him after this meeting. He states I am renowned for being very skilled at finding veins but that, on this occasion, I put the needle into his hand, moved it around and then apologised saying I had missed the vein. Mr Ward continues by stating that his hand subsequently swelled up and that by the time he got home he had a bad bleed and needed to treat himself. My comments upon this are as follows:

- a. Unfortunately, however skilled a clinician is, there are occasions when a venepuncture (insertion of a needle into a vein) is more difficult than anticipated, and on these occasions the needle may well have to be repositioned. On occasions this results in bruising.
- b. I absolutely deny that I intended to hurt Mr Ward in any way.



14. At paragraph 158 of his statement, Mr Ward states that I am "without compassion" and that he has "lost count of the number of times" that I have suggested that he should change hospitals and that he was a "troublemaker". My comments upon this are as follows:

- a. I agree that, on more than one occasion over the years that Mr Ward was treated at the Royal Free, myself and other members of the team have had conversations with Mr Ward about his lack of trust in the care he received from us and whether he would be better served by going to another Comprehensive Care Centre. These discussions were not an attempt to remove Mr Ward from our care but to try to help and to ensure that he understood that he had a choice about where he could receive his care.
- b. I have never referred to Mr Ward as a troublemaker and I deny lacking compassion.
- c. I have been a nurse since 1982 and have worked within the Haemophilia Centre continuously since February 1992 (having worked within the Haemophilia Centre as agency staff for five months before that). I have never had any other patient or staff complaint raised against me, which I believe would be inevitable if I behaved in the manner described by Mr Ward at his paragraph 158.

15. In March 2015, Mr Ward made a complaint against me to the Metropolitan Police (Crime Number 233150414) that resulted in me attending Holborn Police Station and being video interviewed. I give my permission to the Inquiry to view the video if necessary to assess my responses to the complaints made, specifically that I assaulted Mr Ward with a butterfly needle and that I am homophobic in my language and behaviour. Due to the nature of the complaint (an alleged hate crime), this was referred to the Crown Prosecution Service. After investigation, the Crown Prosecution Service and the

police concluded that there was no evidence to support the allegation.

16. At the same time, Mr Ward made a Fitness to Practise referral to the Nursing & Midwifery Council about me. This was also the subject of an investigation and it was subsequently found that "it is not appropriate for the NMC to investigate this matter further, as there appears to be no concerns regarding [my] fitness to practise as a nurse" (WITN30940027).

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed:

GRO-C

Date: .....

15<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2019

**Table of exhibits:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Notes/ Description</b>	<b>Exhibit number</b>
13 August 2015	Letter of the Nursing & Midwifery Council to Debra Pollard	<b>WITN30940027</b>

