

Witness Name: Debra Pollard
Statement No.: WITN3094065
Exhibits: WITN3094066-68
Dated: 15th August 2023

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF DEBRA ANNE POLLARD

I provide this statement on behalf of The Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust in response to the notification under Rule 13 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 24 August 2022 and the request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 10 May 2023.

I, Debra Pollard, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. I am employed by the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust ("the Trust") as Lead Nurse Specialist within the Haemophilia and Thrombosis Centre ("the Centre"). I have been in this role since May 2014. Prior to that I worked for the Trust as a Clinical Nurse Specialist since February 1992. I have therefore worked at the Centre for 29 years. I retired from this full time role in October 2020 and returned part time in December 2020. My job title remains Lead Nurse Specialist.
2. As 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. In my role as Lead Nurse Specialist, 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.

3. I have been asked to write this witness statement on behalf of the Trust to respond to certain criticisms raised in the witness statement of W1177 dated 16 February 2019, in which she raises criticisms regarding the care received by her late son .
4. For the purpose of preparing this witness statement I have reviewed the records held by the Trust in relation to W1177's son and provide this statement on the basis of those records. Where matters within this statement are not directly within my own knowledge, I believe them to be true.
5. The Inquiry has requested that the Trust respond to the following comments made by W1177

At paragraph 23, W1177 states that after her son was diagnosed with cancer, she cared for him at home but he had to be admitted to hospital on several occasions. She states: "it was a difficult and stressful time for us as no-one (ie the various hospital departments/specialisms and the MacMillan Nurses) seemed to want to take responsibility for his care. The nurses seemed to avoid us. There was a talk of moving W1777's son to a local hospice but he passed away in hospital. W1777's son died so quickly. I was overwhelmed. W1777's son had been stoic and uncomplaining and the one thing I could not do was face up to him dying. I do not feel like I made the best decisions for him. I feel very sad about that. I had no-one to turn to for support as W1777's son had always been my support."

6. I attach to this statement **Exhibits WITN3094066-WITN3094068**. These are extracts from the Trust's records detailing various aspects of W1177 son's care which are relevant to the criticisms made by W1177 .

Section 2: Background Information

7. W1177's son was born in 1971. His first Factor VIII treatments were at Birmingham Children's Hospital until he was 5 years old when he was transferred to the Royal Free Hospital Haemophilia Centre. Whilst we cannot comment on what may have happened at another hospital, we note that the risk of HIV was unknown when W1177's son would have first been treated, as the first known cases were not reported until the end of 1981 in the United States. The Hepatitis C virus was not identified until the mid-1990s, however it was known for many years that some people with haemophilia developed jaundice and abnormal liver function tests after treatment. This was known

as Non-A Non-B Hepatitis. At the time of W1177 son's first Factor VIII (FVIII) treatments, the long-term consequences would have been unknown.

Section 3: Response to Criticism of W1177

8. W1177 notes at paragraph 23 of her statement that *"after her son was diagnosed with cancer, I cared for him at home but he had to be admitted to hospital on several occasion"*, which she states was *"a difficult and stressful time for us as no-one (ie the various hospital departments/specialisms and the MacMillan Nurses) seemed to want to take responsibility for his care"*. She adds that the *"nurses seemed to avoid us"*.
9. W1177's son's condition sadly deteriorated very quickly and there were a number of hospital admissions towards the end of his life. Every effort was made to support W1177's son during his admissions to hospital and whilst at home, with referrals being made to the District Nurses and the Community Palliative Care Team (see WITN3094067). Various aids, such as a hospital bed and air mattress, were provided to make it possible for W1177's son to stay at home as much as possible. In my role as the Haemophilia Centre Community Liaison Nurse, I also visited W1177's son at his home on a number of occasions to administer the FVIII treatment. We are very sorry that W1177 felt so unsupported during this very difficult and distressing time.

Section 3: Other Issues

10. W1177 alleges at paragraph 9 of her statement that she and her son learned that he had cleared HCV naturally in the early 2000s and that *"up until then, and for many years, we had lived our lives with worry that he also suffered from this disease. I was told by a sister at the Royal Free that this could kill him before the HIV"*.
11. The first tests for Hepatitis C were based on tracing an antibody to the virus. Anybody who had been exposed to the virus would test positive for the antibody. Later, a test called PCR was developed to determine if there was any active virus present. W1177 son's PCR test was negative in 1995, meaning there was no active circulating virus (see **Exhibit WITN3094066**). However, W1177's son had abnormal liver function tests and repeated virology tests on a number of occasions to confirm there was no virus present. It was suggested by Dr Christine Lee in 1996 that W1177's son attended the Liver Clinic (a joint clinic with her and the hepatologists at Royal Free Hospital) but it was noted that he was reluctant to do this and a referral was therefore not made (see

page 4 of WITN3094066). It was also noted that there was no treatment for HCV indicated as the PCR was negative. Although it is not expressly documented as such, it appears there was a conversation about this.

12. W1177 also notes at paragraph 30 that “*counselling was never made available*” to her. She adds that she believes “W1177’s son *was offered counselling but it wasn’t something that W1177’s son was interested in*”. From my review of the records, I have seen that it is documented that W1177’s son was regularly seen by the Haemophilia Centre’s counsellor, Mrs Riva Miller, at his medical reviews. It is also noted that on some occasions W1177 was present (see WITN3094068).

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

| |
|--------------|
| GRO-C |
|--------------|

Dated __15th August 2023_____

Table of exhibits:

| Notes/ Description | Exhibit number |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Referral Notes | WITN3094066 |
| Treatment Notes | WITN3094067 |
| Counselling Consultation | WITN3094068 |