

Witness Name: Erica Saunders

Statement No.: WITN4194007

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 18 May 2021

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ERICA SAUNDERS

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 31 March 2021.

I, Erica Saunders, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. I am the Director of Corporate Affairs at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust (the Trust), Eaton Road, Liverpool, L12 2AP a post which I have held since September 2010. I have occupied board level positions within the NHS since 2003 and have worked in general management within the service since 1993, having completed the two year national graduate training programme. I am accountable directly to the Chair and Chief Executive of the Trust. My principal functions relate to wide ranging matters of corporate governance, regulation and compliance, which are at times highly sensitive, complex and confidential in nature. I hold an MBA as well as a BA (Hons) degree from the University of Liverpool.
2. I wish to make clear both my own and Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust's wish to assist the Inquiry to meet its terms of reference. I would also wish to confirm our commitment to candour, openness and transparency and to assisting the Inquiry as far as possible.
3. The events which are the subject of the significant criticisms to which I am asked to respond, occurred sometime before I took up my post at the Trust and the response

which follows is based on the outcome of enquiries with individuals employed by and/or working for Alder Hey Children's Hospital who have some memory of the relevant events. I understand that there are very few people who have relevant experience or memory still working in the Trust and I am sorry that this response is therefore limited in its nature.

4. I have not sought access to medical records in order to respond, but do so on a general basis.
5. The information I provide in this statement is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and is based upon responses to the enquiries that have been made.

Section 2: Response to Criticism by W1267

6. I note the criticism that has been made by a witness with Inquiry reference number W1267 in relation to her son's treatment at Alder Hey Children's Hospital after 1989. The witness's sons were infected with HIV and hepatitis C ("HCV") as a result of having been treated with infected blood products.
7. At paragraph 58 to 60 of the witness statement, witness W1267 states that her son was transferred from the leukaemia ward, where he had always been treated and the nurses knew him, to the general ward. She states that her son was treated by a doctor who had never treated a haemophilia bleed before, and that she had sought out the assistance of her son's former doctor to help. She states the doctor had been instructed to not treat HIV/AIDS patients anymore, but that she fortunately treated her son on the day.
8. I have obtained information from a semi-retired consultant Paediatric Haematologist who advises me that these events all occurred before their appointment to Alder Hey in 1996. They were aware of the changes in service provision only through information provided by staff in post or families under treatment at that time.
9. Dr John Martin had established one of the early childhood cancer centres at Alder Hey. Due to the lack of specifically trained paediatric haematologists, much of the care of children with non-malignant haematological conditions defaulted to clinicians running the malignant service and was provided on the Oncology Ward. Very sadly,

the information I have received is that this led to some inappropriate care and delays in adopting improvements in the management of children with bleeding disorders at that time.

10. To improve services, a consultant Dr Lynne Ball was appointed and took up her post in January 1989 in recognition of the developing speciality of Paediatric Haematology but I understand that there was a lack of additional support for the non-malignant clinical elements and the laboratory service. The separation of clinical care of the inherited bleeding disorders from the Oncology service was partly precipitated by the development of a cohort of boys infected with HIV.
11. I very much regret that according to the information provided to me, this process happened without appropriate consultation with the families affected or a plan to educate the staff on the General Paediatric ward to which their care was transferred. Members of the Haematology Team welcomed this separation as they felt that care of children with malignant conditions took precedence on the Oncology Unit.
12. I am sorry that I cannot now explain these apparent failings. I understand that at that time, Dr Ball was one of only 13 specialist trained paediatric haematologists in the UK and Alder Hey had not had the benefit of anyone of her knowledge and experience prior to her appointment. She had only just been brought in at the time of this criticism and I believe that with help of others, was ultimately able to achieve great improvements in our care of patients with bleeding disorders and those tragically infected with HIV.
13. I am relieved to learn that in relation to this particular issue, the previous doctor provided the care that was needed, but that does not excuse the poor experience of care and distress caused to witness W1267 and her sons.
14. I understand and believe that Dr Ball, was able to improve services and bring them more into line with those in place in more advanced combined care centres. The Trust is grateful to her and other doctors involved for the huge improvements in services to our patients that she and they were able to achieve following her appointment, which as I understand it had been for that purpose.
15. I would like to apologise sincerely on behalf of the Trust to witness W1267, to the patient concerned and their family for the distress these events must have caused to

them. This clearly fell below the high standard that we set ourselves in patient care at Alder Hey and I am very sorry that we let this patient and his family down in this way.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed

GRO-C

Dated ____ 18th May 2021_____