

Witness Name: Andrew Welch

Statement No.: WITN4199001

Exhibits: WITN4199002

WITN4199003

Dated:

INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY

FIRST WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ANDREW WELCH

I provide this statement in response to a request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 11 September 2019.

I, Andrew Welch, will say as follows: -

Section 1: Introduction

1. My name is Andrew Welch. I am employed by The Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust based at the Freeman Hospital, Freeman Road, High Heaton, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE7 7DN as Medical Director. I have held this position since April 2013, the events of the Inquiry having occurred prior to my appointment as Medical Director.
2. My professional qualifications are

S.A.C. Accreditation	1984
F.R.C.S., England	1981
M.B, B.S, Newcastle upon Tyne	1976

Section 2: Responses to questions asked in letter dated 11 September 2019

3. A complete account of the Trust's archiving system, (whether considered relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference or not).

Records are handled in line with the Public Records Act 1998 (amended 2015). Data is kept for 20 years. Paper records are stored in one of the repositories until the retention period is reached and then it is offered to the national archives or is destroyed in line with the Act. Prior to 2015 the retention was 30 years.

Electronic records were not created until early 2000s and are kept on the corporate servers for the length of the retention period and then offered electronically to the national archives or removed and deleted in line with the Act.

4. A list of all the Trust's repositories, including those storing documents and information in hard copy, electronic format, and any other form (whether the documents and information stored within the repositories are considered relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference or not), together with an indication of the quantity of documents and information stored at each facility.

Currently there are five main record storage libraries centralised on site, as well as a number of local specialised storage areas used across the Trust within individualised departments.

- The Community directorate Health Visiting/Public Health School Nursing maintain and have control of all continuous child health records for all of Newcastle children.
- Balliol Offsite Storage Facility – this storage is used for both Trust and some community services records. Deceased health records are stored in compliance with retention guidelines and the main Health Records Directorate oversee the management of these records.
- Restore Offsite Storage Facility - Community Health Records are transferred offsite once the patient has been discharged. The main Health Records Directorate oversee the management of the community health record and the

external company to ensure compliance with national policy. Restore are accredited to ISO9001/ISO27001 standards.

- Datatron - Health records are transferred and stored with the company prior to scanning. The main Health Records Directorate manage the processes and monitor the company to ensure compliance with policy. Datatron are accredited to ISO9001/ISO27001 and BS10008 standards.
- Corporate office electronic records

When the Royal Victoria Infirmary and Freeman Hospital became a single Trust in 1998 the records were moved to Balliol as the off-site archive.

5. An account of the process for archiving the Trust's documents and information at all places of deposit. To include, but not limited to, the following information: the criteria for the transfer of Trust documents and information to an archive or place of deposit; whether original documents are transferred and if so whether the Trust retains copies; whether as part of the archiving process hard copy material is transferred to electronic format and if so whether the hard copy material is retained.

The process by which the Trust's documents and information are archived is described in the Corporate Records Policy ("WITN4199002") and the Clinical Records Management Policy ("WITN4199003") which are exhibited to this statement. Although the Corporate Records Policy is not currently in date, we are working with the National Archive to bring the Trust in line with the 20 year retention rule.

6. A list and summary of all organisations and agencies that processed information (together with current contact details which may be provided separately) for which the Trust had or has any control, responsibility, or oversight and material potentially relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and/or List of Issues.

As stated above in response to paragraph 4, the Trust uses Datatron to process, photocopy and scan health records and information on behalf of the Trust. Datatron have been contracted to carry out this work since 1999 and have done so

continuously since then. Whilst the Trust is unable to be definitive, it is possible that Datatron have processed health records of individual patients who were given blood products and relevant to the Terms of Reference.

Datatron's contact details are:

6 Mercury

Orion Business Park

North Shields

Tyne and Wear

NE29 7SN

info@datatron.co.uk

0191 2728466

Prior to 1999 and prior to the formation of the Trust, the hospitals used microfiche films. We have limited information on the processes prior to the Trust's formation but it is understood that a company called BAS Microfilm was used from around 1975 to provide microfilming services. BAS Microfilm changed to Microimage Document Systems in 1997, which merged with Datatron in 2009.

7. An account of the searches undertaken in response to the Inquiry's Rule 9(2) request dated 15 August 2018, including the search terms used, repositories checked and documents uncovered (whether considered relevant to the Inquiry Terms of Reference or not).

Material that had already been retrieved from Balliol off-site storage facility in 2004 and 2011 for the purposes of supporting applications to the Skipton Fund were accessed in 2018 to look for the further information requested by the inquiry.

The following search terms were used:

- Hepatitis
- liver clinic
- HIV
- AIDS
- vCJD

- infected blood products

From the retrieved material, the files which were stored in filing cabinets within the joint Haemophilia/ Haematology secretaries' office in Leazes wing, Royal Victoria Infirmary were examined for material containing any of the search terms.

No electronic information could be found on any of the computers within the Haemophilia offices relating to the period 1970-2005.

As per the request in August 2018, information within individual patient notes was specifically excluded.

The documents uncovered included:

- 3 sets of minutes of UKHCDO meetings 1977-1978
- 1 set of Home Therapy Working Party minutes 1978
- 1 report from Hepatitis C Working Party 1978
- DHSS document HC (76)4
- Department of Health report: Self-sufficiency in Blood products – chronology 1973-1991
- Guide book AIDS and the Blood by Peter Jones 1985
- Correspondence from haemophilia centre director to virologists in 1996
- Agendas from weekends held in Durham by the Northern Group of the Haemophilia Society and staff from the Trust between 1994 and 2002
- Letters regarding recall of plasma products in 1996
- Notes documenting a meeting between the Haemophilia Centre Director and RVI hospital administrator in 1997
- A letter dated 4th December 1996 to Consultant Hepatologists in Newcastle
- Examples of local information generated re compensation and treatment via Skipton fund and EIBSS

8. An account of all the Trust's retention and destruction policies, both past and present, together with an account of any material known to have been

destroyed with potential relevance to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and/or List of Issues. Please also provide copies of all destruction policies, past and present, as exhibits to the written statement.

The retention and destruction of material relevant to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference would have been in line with the Trust's general retention and destruction policies, the earliest available policy dating back to 2000. There are no separate retention and destruction policies specific to the Terms of Reference. In your letter dated 18 December 2019 at point 6 you have confirmed that you do not wish for copies of the Trust's retention and destruction policies and so these have not been enclosed. However, the list of available policies is as follows:

- Destruction of Confidential Documents effective from July 2000
- Balliol off-site storage facility – Procedures for Use - May 2002 – 2005
- Balliol Off-Site Storage Facility Policy Statement 2002
- Non-Health Clinical Records Retention Schedule - April 2007
- Clinical Records Management Policy- October 2009
- Corporate Records Policy - September 2015 – 2018
- Clinical Records Management Policy – June 2017 – 2020

The physical location of the Haemophilia Centre has moved within the Royal Victoria Infirmary on four occasions. During the process of relocation and reorganisation of office space, paperwork was rationalised on a number of occasions before 2000 and there is very little paperwork from the 1970s to 1990s remaining, other than individual patient records. There is no inventory of documents which may have been destroyed as part of this rationalisation and we are therefore unable to give an account of any material known to have been destroyed with potential relevance to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and/or List of Issues.

Statement of Truth

To the best of my knowledge, I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

GRO-C

Signed _____

Dated 25th November 2022