

Witness Name: Brendan Brown

Statement No.: WITN4496039

Exhibits: Nil

Dated: 24 February 2023

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **FIFTEENTH WRITTEN STATEMENT OF BRENDAN BROWN**

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I, Brendan Brown, Chief Operating Officer of National Health Service Business Services Authority ("NHSBSA"), will say as follows: -

1. I provide this statement in response to the Rule 9 request dated 7 February 2023, following a notification of criticism made by a witness under Rule 13 of the Inquiry Rules dated 26 January 2023. As with my other statements, this statement is based on information available to the NHSBSA from its records of the England Infected Blood Support Scheme ("EIBSS") and the knowledge of members of the EIBSS team. I have made clear where the information is from my own personal knowledge.

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

2. My full name is Brendan Craig McMahon-Brown (known as Brendan Brown), and I am the Chief Operating Officer at NHSBSA as from 1 February 2022. Prior to this date, I was the Director of Citizen Services at NHSBSA, and this fact is reflected in my previous statements. My role is based at Stella House, Goldcrest Way, Newburn Riverside, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE15 8NY. Details of my professional background and career are set out in my first statement.

#### **Section 2: Response to Criticism(s) by witness W5371**

3. My attention has been drawn to criticism made by witness W5371 ("the Applicant"), to the Inquiry in relation to their experience with EIBSS. In particular, my attention has been drawn to criticisms of EIBSS made in the witness' statement. I have copied out these comments below for context, along with my response.
4. Paragraphs 55 - 57, Page 7 of witness statement WITN5371001, states the following:

*“55. It is annoying that we have to re-apply for some of these funds. We have to re-apply and provide evidence for payments such as car payments, respite breaks and home repairs. This is a massively unnecessary process. If I have a car issue, I have to explain what is wrong and submit a quote from the garage, which is all a lot of effort.*

*56. This money has been allocated to us; we should not have to apply for it. It should be given to me whether I use it or not. If I do not apply for the £500 grant for a car for three years, that is £1,500 that is just sitting in a pot.*

*57. You can only claim for new repairs. If you pay for repairs, you cannot split it over a few years to back date it. The amount racks up unless you make a claim. We are entitled to this money but we have not received it.”*

5. EIBSS has been setup to provide primarily financial support for those infected and affected. The support that can be provided is based upon the agreed specification with DHSC. The funds available are to be used for the criteria described within the specification document. EIBSS has an obligation to not only support scheme beneficiaries, but to act as guardians of public funds and to ensure that these funds are distributed correctly to those beneficiaries in need of support, as well as providing value for money for the taxpayer. If the support is available from other available sources, EIBSS is required to first direct a beneficiary to those sources, as those sources are funded separately for a specific purpose. There is also the potential for a beneficiary to claim twice if EIBSS was to provide financial support and it was available from another source, which could result in double funding for the same thing from two separate Government sources.
6. Discretionary one-off payments are a form of financial support that beneficiaries and bereaved spouses/partners may apply for to cover the cost of certain essential health-related items or services. Such payments provide additional, time-limited financial (and non-financial) support to address immediate needs of primary and secondary beneficiaries. The maximum payment levels for each type of discretionary one-off payment are shown in the guidance document on NHSBSA's website, under the heading 'Discretionary one-off payments available at: <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/discretionary-support> Different maximums apply to different discretionary one-off payments.
7. The EIBSS service is responsible for the distribution of public monies to beneficiaries and has a duty to beneficiaries that this money (that is dedicated to their welfare and support) is distributed correctly and fairly. To do so, NHSBSA is required to formulate procedures that reduce the potential for fraud as well as making sure that payments and applications approved are done so consistently against set criteria.
8. For beneficiaries who apply for a discretionary one-off payment, there is a requirement to provide two different quotes, to ensure that the payments made, and products/services bought are more likely to provide value for money, as well as ensuring that EIBSS funding is protected and fairly distributed.

9. The three products of service referred to in paragraph 55 of witness statement WITN5371001, are not considered to be annually recurring payments. I've outlined the purpose of each payment below for ease of reference.

10. Car Repairs

A discretionary payment of up to £500 per rolling 12-month period is available towards car repairs for an infected beneficiary. This does not cover MOT, service, vehicle tax or insurance costs.

This payment is available to acknowledge that EIBSS beneficiaries are likely to rely upon their cars for transport to and from hospital appointments, due to health-related conditions associated with their infection.

11. Respite Break

A discretionary payment of up to £750 is available towards the cost of a respite break for an infected beneficiary and their carer (where required). A respite discretionary payment can be applied for once per rolling 12-month period.

The respite break must be recommended by a medical professional, following a period of ill-health as a direct result of the HIV and/or hepatitis C infection or its treatment.

12. Home Repairs

A discretionary payment of up to £2,500 per rolling 12-month period is available towards repairs to the home that are required to prevent serious risk to the health and safety of an infected beneficiary.

This payment is available to acknowledge that EIBSS beneficiaries are likely to have health-related conditions associated with their infection, which could be exacerbated by certain home related disrepair (such as a broken boiler).

13. EIBSS is able to apply administrative discretion on payment amounts, where they have assessed the supporting information has evidenced a strong case for an additional cost to be supported.

14. As explained above, discretionary payments cover the cost of certain essential health-related items or services. The discretionary payments are intended to be additional to beneficiaries' regular payments, providing time-limited financial (and non-financial) support to primary and secondary beneficiaries to address immediate needs.

15. EIBSS are committed to continuous improvement, as such we have recently completed the 'EIBSS Service Survey', part of the survey seeks to understand where the service could be improved and/or added to. It is possible that the survey results will highlight this as being an area that requires improvement. Once the data has been finalised, a report will be produced, this will be put to DHSC for consideration and an agreed service improvement plan will be produced, which will be published alongside the survey results.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed **GRO-C**

Dated: 24 February 2023