

Witness Name: NICOLA GAGE  
Statement No. WITN7684001  
Exhibits: N/A  
Dated: 17th March 2023

## **INFECTED BLOOD INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN STATEMENT OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE BROMLEY**

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I provide this statement in response to the request under Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006 dated 24 February 2023.

I, Nicola Gage, on behalf of Adult Social Care, for the London Borough of Bromley, will say as follows: -

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

- 1.1 I am Nicola Gage, Assistant Director of Operations (Adult Services). My professional address is People Department, Adults, Education and Families Bromley Council, Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH.
- 1.2 I have held various short-term positions in retail and banking before I began work for Croydon Council, Adult Social Care Financial Services, in February 1996.
- 1.3 I moved to Croydon Adult Social Care in 2000 where I initially worked as an Intake Worker on a Duty Desk for the Physical Disability Team.
- 1.4 In 2002 I became an Assistant Care Manager within the Hospital Discharge Team until transferring to the New Addington Locality Team where I worked as a Care Manager. I worked under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990, undertaking assessment of needs for adults over 65 and arranging care and support services.
- 1.5 In October 2005, I commenced my social work training as an employee sponsored student at Royal Holloway University of London. I continued to work for Croydon Council in the role of a Care Manager for the duration of my training.

- 1.6 I qualified as a Social Worker in August 2008 and became a Senior Care Manager within the Physical Disability Team in Croydon where I led on Social Work Practice. In 2011, I became a Practice Manager in Croydon's Hospital Discharge Team where I was responsible for the Operational Management of the team.
- 1.7 In 2014 I left Croydon Council to move to East Sussex County Council initially in the role of their Hospital Operations Manager and then as the Eastbourne Locality lead. I remained in East Sussex for 4 years before moving to Surrey County Council to take on a Senior Manager Role for the Epsom and Ewell Locality team covering their Hospital and Community Teams.
- 1.8 I returned to East Sussex County Council in 2019 as the Head of Hospitals, Continuing Health Care and Financial Services, where I led on the strategic development of services in addition to supporting Social Care Teams to discharge their statutory duties and support clients.
- 1.9 In August 2021, I was appointed as the Assistant Director, (Operations) of Adult Social Care, London Borough of Bromley, Adult Services where I take a strategic lead on the development of Adult Social Care services, the workforce, and our services to clients.

## **Section 2: Responses to criticism by W5319**

- 2.1 I confirm receipt of the Rule 13 notification on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and note that the criticism in the witness statement is contained at paragraphs 60 to 61, as set out in the notification.
- 2.2 It is set out in the Rule 13 notification that W5319's late brother received services from Adult Services Learning Disability Team in Bromley from 2007- 2014.
- 2.3 By way of background, the Learning Disability team provides services and support to people with a Learning Disability transitioning from Children's services and for new clients meeting the eligibility criteria for care and support from the Learning Disability Team. In 2007, the team would have been working under the National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990 legislation.
- 2.4 The Learning Disability Team which I currently oversee undertakes holistic and person-centred assessment of needs for clients with a Learning Disability and also

their carers. As part of this assessment, a robust risk assessment is completed and services and support are determined to manage any presenting needs and risk to our clients. Care and support would be offered to support people to manage their activities of daily living, such as personal and domestic care, nutritional needs, and access to the community, work, and employment. In 2007, the Fair Access to Care policy was a National Framework used to help Local Authorities determine what needs they had a duty to meet.

2.5 Although, historically, the London Borough of Bromley did recruit in-house carer workers to visit clients in their homes and provide care and support to clients with complex needs, , we now commission a range of external Home Care Agencies to provide care and support to people in their homes. All Care Agencies are registered and regulated by CQC.

2.6 I have noted a reference within the witness statement, paragraph 59; that the Social Worker, referred to as 'Margaret', was helpful and that she contributed to making W5319's late brother's life better. I am very glad to hear that the family had a good experience with "Margaret". Within Bromley we do promote best practice and we aim to work with people in a strength-based way to ensure they have a voice and control over how they want their care and support services to be delivered.

2.7 Paragraph 60 refers to a 'centralisation' of services that resulted in the standard of W5319's late brother's services declining. We do not recognise this statement and are unaware of any centralisation of services. Adult Services departments do ,however, go through changes in response to new policies, procedures or restructures that can potentially affect the workforce and our clients. We would usually consult with our clients, their carers or representatives about any changes that may potentially affect their direct service delivery.

2.8 Paragraph 61, refers to the carers that were visiting W5319's late brother to provide care; these are referenced as nurses and care workers. The Local authority does not employ nurses. We do provide care workers via Care Home Agencies. Paragraph 61, refers to 50% of appointments and home visits being missed. It is difficult to comment with complete certainty on an individual case from 2007 to 2014 and taking into account our retention procedure (para 3.1) below, however, it is likely given W5319's late brother's diagnosis and other difficulties, that the London Borough of Bromley would have commissioned carers to visit W5319's late brother in his home to support him with his activities of daily living. Prior to services starting, W5319's late brother

would have been sent a copy of his Assessment of Need and his Support Plan. The Support Plan outlines a summary of needs and how the local authority plans to meet or manage those needs. The Support plan would detail how often carers were required to visit him, for what duration and detail of the tasks that they were required to do. Support plans would also detail contact details for his care agency and his Social Worker.

2.9 Though it is difficult to comment definitively on W5319's late brother's individual case from the time period in question, and it is noted from previous communications that the inquiry also do not have records or, indeed, consent to access any records the London Borough of Bromley, Adult Services, take seriously any reports of missed calls or of carers failing to comply with a clients' support plan.

2.10 These matters, when they do occur, are currently managed by initially speaking with the agency, ensuring a care worker is sent out immediately to a client who has had a missed visit and is still waiting for a carer to arrive. Persistent missed appointments/calls to clients as referenced by the witness would be managed under Safeguarding and we would work with the Care Agency to review all clients they are providing care and support to on behalf of the London Borough of Bromley. We would also immediately, with the clients consent, change the agency to ensure any potential risk to a client is reduced.

2.11 All local authorities have a duty to review care and support services in place with clients on an annual basis. All clients are able to contact the department to request a review or reassessment of their needs at any time if there has been a change of circumstances or need.

### **Section 3: Other Issues**

3.1 Although we accept that W5319's late brother, as per the Rule 13 notification, was a client of Adult Services in London Borough of Bromley having reviewed our client record system to obtain information or evidence that may be helpful to this inquiry, this search has resulted in no trace for this client. The department went live with a new client Database, in November 2021. All live client cases were migrated from the previous

system to the new system. As it has been more than 7 years since this client has had an active service with the London Borough of Bromley, we believe that the file has been deleted in line with our retention schedule.

3.2 Whilst the Local Authority is sympathetic to the circumstances giving rise to the inquiry, it is respectfully noted that the criticism in the statement is rather general in nature and the witness has not provided any records kept of the matters complained of. However, the Local Authority has done its best to assist with the matters raised.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed  \_\_\_\_\_

Dated 17.03.2023 \_\_\_\_\_