

Witness Name: Sarah Helen Jones

Statement No.: 1

Exhibits: 0

Dated: June 2024

UK COVID-19 INQUIRY

MODULE 3

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SARAH JONES

1. My full name is Sarah Helen Jones and my date of birth is the **Personal Data** I currently reside at **Personal Data** and I am an **Personal Data** by way of employment. I make this statement at the request of the Covid 19 Public Inquiry Module 3 Legal Team and I confirm that this statement has been taken over the telephone by Kim Harrison of Slater & Gordon (UK) Ltd who I understand is the Designated Legal Representative for the Pregnancy and Baby Care Organisations (PBPO) in the Inquiry. The matters stated in the following paragraphs are true to the best of my knowledge information and belief.
2. I currently have one child who is two years of age. I was approached by Munira Oza of The Ectopic Pregnancy Trust (The EPT) to see if I would be prepared to provide some "impact evidence" to the Inquiry. I volunteer for The EPT on and off giving them as much time as I can manage, mainly doing things like proof reading documents and I have been doing this on and off for two years.
3. During the Covid pandemic in 2021 I was pregnant with my first child and at around 6 weeks gestation I started spotting. It was not a lot at first and I phoned my GP who said it was a common thing in pregnancy, but I just knew it wasn't going to stop in my own mind. The next day or the day after the spotting started to get worse. I like many others was working from home at that time as was my husband due to the Covid pandemic. As the bleeding got worse, I rang the local early pregnancy unit and explained what was happening and they said that I needed to

come down to the unit. They told me that my husband could not come with me and I would have to come by myself. At the time I remember feeling flabbergasted by the comment that my husband could not come down with me as I remember thinking surely someone should be with me but because I was panicking so much and I didn't want to go against the advice, I went in. I did not have much time to speak to my husband as he was in a work meeting at home so I had to simply say that I was going to hospital but couldn't really explain why and had to get myself in there. I then sat in the early pregnancy unit in the waiting room wearing a mask. I completely understood why I needed to wear a mask, but I was obviously at that point more concerned about what was happening to me and my pregnancy rather than catching Covid.

4. I remember waiting around 30 to 45 minutes and there was not a lot of people there and I had hoped I would get seen soon. I was then put in another room, and I remember having to explain to the doctor what was going on. I said that I really needed to speak to my husband as I had not had the time to explain to him properly what had happened and because I had rushed out so quickly, my mobile phone was very low on charge and was dying and I was worried about being able to speak to him. I was scrambling around trying to find a relative to call to tell my husband where I was and what was going on. Eventually, I managed to find a relative to do this.
5. Eventually, my husband, Ashley, turned up at the hospital. At that point he was allowed into the room where I was waiting. I don't remember the medical staff being too difficult about that happening. They could see at that point that I was becoming very upset. He came after the point at which I had seen the doctor but before the scan.
6. A scan was organised and my husband Ashley was allowed in for the scan. The scan involved putting a probe into my cervix. Ashley was in the room with me whilst this was happening. The person doing the scan said that they could not see anything in my womb. I was absolutely devastated at that point. I was screaming. I then remembered them moving the probe towards the left and right whilst it was still inside me and when they moved it to the left, I was in a huge amount of pain.

The person undertaking the examination said that should not be happening and some photos were taken.

7. I was then told that I had an ectopic pregnancy. My husband was there when I was told this news. They explained that I needed surgery. They asked me then and there what I wanted to happen to the pregnancy tissue after it was removed from my body. I felt furious about this as I did not want to talk about that now given the shock I was in, I wanted to talk about that later. I remember them giving me a leaflet and them saying I had to choose now. My husband also questioned why the choice had to be done now. I remember choosing that they dispose of the pregnancy tissue.
8. Later on, I received a letter from the hospital saying that they had kept the pregnancy tissue because they needed to keep it on file. I felt very upset that they had gone against my wishes, despite making me decide then and there what I wanted to do. I said that I didn't want the pregnancy tissue locked up in a lab somewhere because in my mind, that was my baby. I then had to go through the whole rigmarole of getting the tissue disposed of as I had asked for originally.
9. I had to have the procedure the same day. They explained that some ectopic pregnancies can be dissolved naturally with an injection but given the size and the bleeding it was too dangerous to leave the pregnancy tissue inside me and that surgery was what was required.
10. It was then explained to me that my husband would not be allowed to stay with me into the evening and had to go home. I felt very upset about this as did he. He was not allowed on the ward.
11. When I got to the ward it was pretty much empty and that made me feel even more upset that he was not allowed with me and yet I was alone, so we weren't putting anyone at risk. Before I entered the ward, I had a Covid test which was negative. I cannot understand why they could not have tested Ashley and if he had tested negative for Covid simply let him sit with me on the ward.
12. Ashley asked why he had to go home, and he was told it was because of Covid. Ashley asked if he could still stay if he kept to the 2-meter rule but was told no.

Ashley went home and brought me some things for the evening, and I remember meeting him at the ward door as he was not allowed on the ward. I remember thinking that there was absolutely nobody there so I really couldn't understand why he wasn't allowed.

13. By this point I was feeling very upset, distressed, shocked and also very hungry as I wasn't allowed to eat before surgery.
14. I then remember the worst part was when I was being taken down to surgery and I was having the anesthetic and going to sleep and I kept saying over and over "I can't do this". I remember there was a very kind nurse saying that I would be absolutely fine, that I could do this, that I needed to have the procedure to be healthy but despite how kind she was to me, I really just wanted my husband to be there with me.
15. I had the procedure and then when I woke up in recovery of course my husband wasn't there. Ashley was at the house waiting for me to phone to say everything was ok. I managed to do this when I was able to do so.
16. I stayed in overnight and went home around 4pm the following day. I did not have any visitors as this was not allowed.
17. Once I got home my stomach was going very red and was very painful and I was struggling to move. I was concerned that something else was now wrong. My husband rang the hospital and said he thought something was wrong and then I went back to the early pregnancy unit and again like last time he was allowed in with me at first into the room. I was examined and the doctor said I had an infection and needed to stay in overnight and be given antibiotics to clear the infection. Again, I was told that my husband was not allowed to be with me and that he had to go home. I would not have expected him to have been allowed with me at this point in time given what was happening, but it was still very difficult for me to be on my own.
18. I was then told by the doctors because of what I had gone through I would be given a private room. I felt quite happy about this and thought that it was very considerate of them to offer and waited hours and hours for the private room. I

then finally chased because I had not been taken anywhere and I was simply told without any explanation by a nurse that it was not happening now. This left me feeling very disappointed. Throughout the night I remember being in a lot of pain and pressing the buzzer. I remember a female nurse coming in and saying very abruptly: "what do you want?" I remember thinking: 'what is wrong with you all I want is some pain killers'. I could not believe how unsympathetic and unkind she was to me given what I was going through alone.

19. In the morning, they brought a heavily pregnant woman onto the ward and sat her opposite me in a bed. This was obviously highly distressing for me given what I had just gone through and that I had just lost my pregnancy in very difficult and shocking and sudden circumstances. I wanted to close the curtains, so I did not have to look at this lady. However, they wouldn't let me close the curtains and said I had to keep them open in the daytime. I thought this was extremely insensitive of them and that they could have made an exception and allowed me to close the curtains given how distressed I was feeling. My husband was not allowed in to visit me.

20. Again, I was released after being in hospital overnight and eventually the infection went. In order to fully help the infection to go, in the hospital they undid my stitches to release a lot of pus from my stomach which was incredibly painful. I then went home.

21. Once I was at home, I was expecting somebody would contact me to talk about what had happened, but I was not offered any aftercare whatsoever. I was simply left, as was my husband, to cope alone with the shock of what had just occurred. I remember having to google 'ectopic pregnancy' myself. Nobody at the hospital explained to me that I might get a number of feelings and emotions once the shock had died down and the pregnancy loss had fully sunk in after the procedure.

22. When I was googling, I came across The EPT. I phoned them and spoke to a woman, and she asked me to explain what had happened. I explained to her that I was feeling incredibly emotional, and I felt like I had lost my baby. Obviously when you are pregnant you think about miscarriage, but you don't really think something like this is going to happen to you. I remember talking to the woman

did help and I felt better for a bit but overall, I felt absolutely heartbroken for a while after what had happened.

23. I then had a second pregnancy sometime later and had early scans and had some spotting again. Thankfully my second pregnancy resulted in a healthy birth and my child is now two, but I couldn't relax fully during this second pregnancy and had a huge amount of anxiety through it.
24. I think that the long-term impact that my experience of having an ectopic pregnancy during the pandemic has made me lose faith a bit in the NHS and has really knocked my confidence in them. I really needed my husband with me when I was waiting for that surgery, and I really needed a little bit of compassion from the nursing staff. I did receive it from some of the medical team, as described, but from other nurses and medical staff, I did not receive any compassion whatsoever. I do not consider myself to be a very demanding person and I did everything they asked me to do so and I just would have liked for them to have been more compassionate given that they knew my husband couldn't be with me and so I was very much alone.
25. I felt that all they cared about during that time was Covid. I felt that the balance between what I was going through physically and emotionally and the risk of Covid were not fully realised. I think my husband should have been allowed with me if he had worn appropriate PPE, a mask, even a protective suit and had tested negative for Covid. In terms of any recommendations that the Inquiry may make, they need to ensure that a partner can be there in the event of another pandemic like this so that women like me are not made to feel so alone.
26. Ashley had every right to know what was happening to his wife. We really were just left to own devices.
27. Due to my experience at that hospital when I gave birth to my daughter I decided to go to a different hospital. I think that the one size fits all approach around visiting restrictions was not helpful and there needed to be a more nuanced approach and more human compassion.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed: Personal Data _____

Dated: 12/06/2024