

Scottish Hospitals Inquiry

Witness Statement of

Carolanne Baxter

WITNESS DETAILS

1. My name is Carolanne Baxter. I was born on [REDACTED]. I am [REDACTED] years old. I work as [REDACTED].
2. I am the mother of [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]'s date of birth is [REDACTED] and he died on [REDACTED].
3. I live at home with my children, [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in [REDACTED].

OVERVIEW

4. [REDACTED] was born prematurely, at 28 weeks and 5 days. There had been complications with the pregnancy. [REDACTED] remained in the neonatal unit at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital until he passed away on [REDACTED]. I don't think that the neonatal unit is part of the Children's hospital as it's at a separate bit. There aren't ward numbers there but [REDACTED] was in rooms 1, 5, 6 and 7 during his time in the hospital.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

5. [REDACTED] was very small in the incubator but he wasn't on a ventilator to start with. He ended up intubated and with the ventilator around day 13 and this made it difficult to see his facial expressions or if he was smiling. I remember him gripping my finger at one point.
6. My other kids are [REDACTED], the oldest at [REDACTED], [REDACTED] who is [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] love the outdoors and go out to play a lot.

WITNESS STATEMENT OF CAROLANNE BAXTER

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██████████ would stay out all day if she could, without coming in for food or anything. The kids go to their dad's every second weekend.

7. ██████████ .
██████████ .
██████████ .

SEQUENCE OF EVENTS: HOSPITAL TREATMENT – JANUARY TO JULY 2019

8. I had known that there were complications leading up to ██████████'s premature birth but I didn't think it was as bad as it ended up. My placenta wasn't working properly either. Then they had to get me in to give me injections before I had him. I think it was to develop his lungs and stuff like that. And then I went in to have him. I was worried because it was 28 weeks plus five, but at the same time I was kind of thinking it's not too bad.
9. I was going for weekly check-ups and stuff. I remember the last time that I was there getting a check-up the doctor said, "Right, you'll have to come in on Tuesday". I think it was because it was time to get ██████████ out and he was born on 29 January 2019.
10. On the 11 February 2019, so ██████████'s 13th day, I was told he had an infection. He needed respiratory help and two weeks after this he was put on CPAP and then he was put on a ventilator. He needed this respiratory support for the remainder of his life until he passed away. CPAP is two small nasal prongs and is more subtle than the ventilator. The ventilator was a tube that went into his lungs.
11. I don't recall them telling me that my son had sepsis. I just knew that it was the staphylococcus infection. That's when I was panicking because of the pigeon droppings. I'd seen pigeon droppings myself while I was in the hospital. And obviously I know that it had been in the news and stuff. So I was Googling it and that's when I had seen the staphylococcus and that's when I went into a pure

panic. I asked the nurse something along the lines of is this the pigeon dropping strain that [REDACTED] had but she said it wasn't that strain.

12. On the 19 March 2019, so [REDACTED]'s 49th day, he had a medically managed NEC episode, necrotising enterocolitis. I didn't know this at the time and only found out later, from his post-mortem. His condition had got worse and he was put fully on the ventilator. He was having issues with his lungs as well.
13. Around this time, [REDACTED] had a broken arm and the hospital didn't tell me until 2 days after they knew about it. I was up one day with my sister and I was there all day and I was leaving that night. I was approached by the doctors and they told me that [REDACTED] had a broken arm. They chose to approach me as I was leaving even though I'd been there all day. And they had known for two days previously. I was not happy at all.
14. He was getting an x-ray, I think it was to do with his heart at this point, I can't exactly remember. But they x-rayed him and apparently the break showed up. Although they weren't looking for that, it showed up in the x-ray. They put it down to him being premature and said that he had osteopenia, which means that because of the prematurity, his bones were all soft and brittle and things. So if that was the case, why did they not do scans? Why did they not do x-rays and stuff when he was born? I just don't understand. He was not in an incubator at this stage.
15. The staff said they were treating [REDACTED]'s breathing. But he was fine until he took that infection on day 13, back on 11 February 2019, that's when [REDACTED] went downhill.
16. Around the time of the infection on 19 March 2019, [REDACTED] was put on different medications. I can't remember names and things like that as my focus was on [REDACTED] but obviously he was being treated for infections along with the other medical difficulties he was having with breathing. I was thinking, well he's in the hospital, he's getting the care and they're putting him on medication because he needs it. I didn't have any reason to think that anything bad was

going to happen. I didn't know about the NEC when I was in the hospital. I was concerned that it was all about his lungs. He did have chronic lung disease. With the lung disease, when my son was being ventilated it does damage the vocal chords and stuff as well. Reviewing his medical records now, I can see he was put on midazolam, morphine sulphate (double strength), hydrocortisone, heparin, hepsal, vecuronium, potassium chloride and vancomycin. This is the first time I have learned about these drugs and had no awareness of the names when [REDACTED] was being treated.

17. I also found out from the post mortem that my son had broken ribs which I wasn't told about, in addition to the broken arm I knew about earlier. That got me thinking that if he did have the broken ribs, did that pierce his lungs in any way and make things worse, did it add to it? I just don't know. They never told me.
18. In May 2019, [REDACTED] was to get heart surgery because one of the valves in his heart was very narrow. The heart surgery was to try and correct it and make things better. That didn't go ahead because he took yet another infection, so I was told just about a day before the operation was due to take place that it was being postponed. I can't recall the exact dates. It was too risky to put him under surgery because he took the infection. I don't remember if they said there would be an impact of delaying the operation but it was never actually carried out.
19. I can't recall what I was told about the infections, but I just know [REDACTED] was on antibiotics a lot.
20. I think I had been told that it was pulmonary hypertension that was affecting [REDACTED]'s heart rate because his heart rate was going up really quite high and then it would take a dip as well. I don't think he was born with that. He was hooked up to quite a bit of medicine and things like that as well and I think that's when we were in room one.

21. I don't know if he was actually born with the lung condition either. He was premature, I get that. But I think he would have been put on some sort of respirator straight away if he was born with a lung condition.
22. They did give me injections of some sort before I went in to have him and that was to try and develop his lungs. It was to try and mature his lungs because he was premature. I don't know what the injections were but they went right through my full body from my head and it felt dead, dead warm. I felt as if I was going to die because I felt as if I couldn't breathe properly either. But obviously they had to do that to try and make things better for [REDACTED].
23. At some point, I can't recall when, I was told by Dr Peters that my son would become deaf and blind and mute. But [REDACTED]'s eyesight and his hearing were fine at that point. His condition was deteriorating though and all the medication slowed up and he was on the ventilator and things then as well. But I felt that I was being pressurised to turn his life support off. Dr Peters also told me that I was going to need carers in my house 24/7. I just felt as if he was being quite negative and arrogant and he was putting pressure on me. I felt that a few times when he would have us in for a meeting and stuff. I felt as if they were giving up on [REDACTED].
24. [REDACTED] was now on life support and just wasn't getting any better. The pulmonary hypertension episodes were becoming more regular and his heart rate would go away up really, really fast. He would be sweating, he would be clammy to touch. All that sort of stuff. And in the end, I just couldn't bear to see him the way he was anymore. I turned the life support machine off on the basis that I was told [REDACTED] wouldn't have a quality of life.

EXPERIENCE AT THE HOSPITAL

25. In the neonatal unit, you've got the waiting area outside and then you go through the doors and you've got the nurses' station straight ahead. To the right of you is room one, I think, and across from that, room two. I'm not 100 per cent sure. And then further along there was another room just after the nurses' station. And I think

there were another two rooms after that. And there was another nurses' station. It was just the one long, straight corridor. After the last nurses' station then you had another room and I think it had several incubators in it.

26. In the babies' rooms you obviously had the incubators. There weren't always seats in the rooms but you could easily access one if you needed it, just by asking the nurse to get one if one wasn't available. You had a wee desk at the end of the incubator, that's where they nurses would write stuff down, like write on [REDACTED]'s notes and things like that.

27. For the babies' rooms, I remember one with four incubators in it. There was another one across from that but [REDACTED] wasn't in that room so I'm not too sure what that was like. Then you had another room that had eight babies in it and then the same further down in the next room and the next room again. I think there were six big rooms, where there was more than one incubator. And there were a few smaller rooms. The six big rooms were where they had between four and eight babies in them. Some of the smaller rooms were just for one baby.

[REDACTED] was put into one of them a couple of times. So he was moved around the neonatal unit on several occasions. He was in at least four different rooms within the Unit, including rooms one, five and seven, which I think were multiple rooms, and he was also in at least one room where he was just in there himself.

28. One of the room moves was to move [REDACTED] away from a baby that had an infection and I think one was to get away from a baby who was really upset and crying a lot. One move was because they were doing a deep clean. I don't remember which room number that deep clean was in but it was one of the bigger rooms. I just felt at the time the whole neonatal unit was upset because everybody was rushing about everywhere.

29. I live close to the hospital so was going up every day and then coming back home at night. I wasn't very comfortable with that to start with though because I felt guilty and things like that for not staying with [REDACTED]. I thought he was going to get better because there were times when he was turning a corner and

things were getting a wee bit better. And then he would always just take a setback. It just always seemed to be infection after infection.

30. I did stay overnight in the hospital a few times. I did stay in the neonatal unit itself. I stayed in there for a few nights in total, I can't remember exactly how long for. I remember there was an episode though when [REDACTED] took a turn for the worse and I wanted to stay close by with him. On this occasion I was put into one of the rooms that was on ground level. And this is where we saw the corridor with the pigeon droppings was, before you went into the room.
31. I think I stayed overnight maybe say 15 nights. I obviously wasn't allowed to stay in the same ward as [REDACTED] but there was a room further round, it was away round the back. I slept in there. I can't recall when that was, probably nearer the end. The room on the 1st floor for parents staying over wasn't next to the rooms that the babies were in, it was to the back of the neonatal unit.
32. The room that I was in was okay. You had a bed, there was a toilet and a shower. It had a kettle. There was a chair as well, and a table. I can't remember what else. Obviously, it was decorated and stuff like that but I just felt as if it could have been cleaner.
33. That room I wasn't too bothered about, to be honest, even although it could have been cleaned a bit more. But it was the one on the ground floor that I was put into, that got to me. The neonatal unit was on level one and the rooms on level one were fine but that room I stayed over at on the ground floor was hell.
34. The ground floor had the back entrance of the neonatal unit. You go through the main double doors and it takes you up the long corridor and that's where I saw the pigeon droppings. Then you go through the other doors and you're in the maternity bit. That's the way we'd pass the room I had stayed in.
35. I ended up in that room because the other rooms were all occupied. I was a few nights in it. I was just in it once, but for a few nights in a row. Obviously, I was worried, I didn't want to leave [REDACTED]. So I had to take it as it was the only

room available. And it was just off that corridor where I'd seen the pigeon droppings. There were two single beds in it. It wasn't carpeted. I wouldn't even have said it had vinyl, it was just a hard floor. There were no windows in the room at all, no natural light in it. It did have a toilet in it. I don't think it had a shower so I just jumped home for a quick shower. I can't recall how clean the room was, it was just really dark.

36. There was another wee kitchen type room beside it that had a sink and a microwave and a fridge. I do recall that being dirty. I had enough on my plate with [REDACTED] and didn't speak to anyone about any of the rooms.

37. Though I didn't know anything about the ventilation problems or the contaminated water at the hospital until after my son passed away, I knew from what people had told me that there were problems with the pigeons. I remember speaking to one of the other parents, actually a girl I knew, who was in the neonatal unit with her son as well, and she was talking about the pigeon droppings. I just remember having a conversation and saying it was disgusting and things like that. At the main entrance, you've got loads of traffic in and out of there as well. So if you're standing on stuff like that then you're travelling it along the hospital.

38. I was with my mum and we saw the pigeon droppings in the corridor and my mum was horrified. We noticed the pigeon droppings prior to me staying in that ground floor room. Because you could take the back entrance to the hospital, lots of people used it. We had also seen pigeon droppings at the main entrance to the neonatal unit too.

39. Mum complained three times, because the pigeon droppings were still there in the corridor for a few days after she first reported it. Eventually mum spoke to the staff again and it was cleaned right away. I don't know who it was she spoke to or what she said as I had gone ahead, upstairs to see [REDACTED] in the neonatal unit.

40. I can't recall when this happened. It was maybe around the middle of the period

██████████ was in the hospital, I can't be sure, but we didn't see any pigeon mess again after this. But one of my friends, when I was in the hospital with ██████████, worked in the neonatal unit. He worked in the storerooms and he told me that he had seen pigeon droppings in a storeroom.

WATER AND VENTILATION ISSUES

41. As I have mentioned previously, I did not experience any issues in connection with the water or ventilation problems. I was unaware of the issues until after ██████████ had passed away and I think it was the media that I learned about the problems from.

42. I do remember the sewage smell. I could sometimes smell it when I was in the neonatal unit. I didn't really think anything about it at the time, or raise it with anyone, as I was too focused on ██████████.

CLEANLINESS

43. I felt as if the cleaners were always rushing, as if they were rushing the job just to get it done and get away. It was just the pace they were working at. I felt as if they weren't spending enough time. There were times as well that the hand sanitisers weren't full, they were empty.

44. I remember when I was there once with my sister, there was a cleaner in and she had actually dropped something on the floor from her trolley. She just put it back on the trolley. I don't know what it was because I was too focused on ██████████. I also noticed that when the cleaner entered the room she didn't wash her hands. My sister reported it to one of the staff but I can't remember what they said. We were all having to wash hands, so as a cleaner myself, I know they shouldn't be any different.

45. The windows weren't cleaned very often, but again I thought nothing of it at the time. But I saw in the news that the hospital had problems with windows falling out. I wasn't aware of any of this at the time.

INFECTIONS

46. I think the infections that [REDACTED] was taking and the issues that were going on at the hospital were having an effect on him. Because he kept taking infections after infections and it was holding him back. I was washing my hands with the water which I didn't know at the time was contaminated. Then I'm going into the incubator then touching my son where he's got IV lines in. He had one in his foot, one in his hand and he had one in his head. It wasn't all at the same time. So that's what I was doing. And then you think about what the staff were doing, they were handling my son a lot more. Just thinking about it makes me paranoid and I just think, wow!

47. [REDACTED]'s medications were changed a few times. I can't remember what they were, I'm assuming antibiotics. [REDACTED] was on quite a bit of medication. I don't recall being told about what infections he had but it should all be in his case notes. And the sepsis thing I didn't even know about until it was on the post mortem.

48. Reviewing the post mortem, what I have come to find out now is that

[REDACTED] had suspected necrotising enterocolitis, suspected sepsis, gram-negative septicaemia, bacterial gram-positive sepsis and klebsiella pneumoniae. While I knew about the pneumonia and sepsis, I do not know what the other conditions are.

IMPACT ON WITNESS

49. It's been an absolute nightmare, it's been a living hell. Absolutely horrendous. I went through a stage of my depression taking a dip. And I had turned to alcohol at the weekends, I just had to blot everything out. I was just an emotional wreck. Just the thought of living without [REDACTED] and everything that's happened to him. It's just absolutely horrendous.

50. I just need to get answers as to why all the infections and the issues that are going on with the hospital. And obviously I didn't find out about the ventilation and the contaminated water until after my son had passed. It was my son's anniversary just recently. That's two years and it's still going on. I'm not as bad as I was, I have kind of picked up a wee bit. But even my kids, they were extremely worried about me as well, and my mum and my sister. I've been up and down and up and down. My depression was stable prior to the experience with [REDACTED].

51. There were times I thought I heard a baby crying in my house. I was forgetting things and stuff as well. And that's the reason why I'm being assessed for PTSD as well.

52. It's been really, really difficult and I just need to get an answer. If my lawyer comes back and says look Carolanne we've had a look into everything and there was nothing, then that's absolutely fine. But because I've discovered since then about the contaminated water and the ventilation, obviously I'm wondering if this is why he had so many infections.

IMPACT ON FAMILY

53. I mentioned that my son [REDACTED] has [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and that I struggle to get him out the house. I know that this has got worse since

[REDACTED] passed and I'm sure it's also connected to the reason [REDACTED] doesn't socialise with anybody either

COMMUNICATION

54. I don't remember the hospital staff being the greatest at communicating with me. And I'm not the greatest at asking questions either. So I was just going with everything that they were saying and doing. There's quite a lot of medical jargon as well, like as far as his medication and antibiotics are concerned, which is why I don't remember all the names and stuff either.

55. I felt intimidated by the staff and felt they were avoiding me in case they slipped up. Maybe in hindsight looking back, they weren't telling me the full story. I didn't ask questions as I trusted what they were telling me. They also apologised to me for having missed opportunities in regards to delaying [REDACTED]'s heart surgery and not telling me about his broken bones.

56. The fact that I didn't even know that [REDACTED] had sepsis until after he had died and the post mortem was done shows that that communication was not good.

57. With his broken bones, they didn't tell me about the broken arm until two days after they knew about it. I knew they delayed telling me because I remember my sister was speaking up for me because I was just full of nerves and all that sort of stuff. And obviously I was worried and things like that. So my sister spoke to the doctor and the doctor said that she couldn't read x-rays. But then on the other hand, she said to my sister that she was going to do another x-ray and then she was going to spend time studying the screen to see how long [REDACTED]'s arm had been broken for. So it was just absolute contradiction. I can't remember the rest of the conversation. The broken ribs I didn't even know about until after [REDACTED] died.

58. They also didn't want to give me [REDACTED]'s post mortem results either. And I was horrified at that because I was saying you can't hold that back. They didn't go right into any great detail or explanation. I felt as if because I was very vulnerable that they were trying to take advantage of that. Because on the post

mortem, obviously that's where it told me about the sepsis which I didn't know about and also the broken ribs.

59. I wanted to see his post mortem. And it actually came to the point where we went up to the hospital. I already had a copy of the post mortem at this time because they did give me it eventually. And it was Dr Peters and someone else that was with him that went through the post mortem with me.

REPRESENTATIVE GROUPS

60. I was a member of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Facebook Group but came off it recently. Parents were using it to give updates on their kids and stuff like that. Obviously, I had to then come away from it because it was affecting me mentally as well. I think I deleted it a few months ago.

61. I'm not aware of the Case Note Review or Oversight Board so haven't been involved with any of these.

COMPLAINTS

62. We haven't raised any complaints, other than speaking to our solicitors.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

63. I wouldn't go anywhere near the hospital again. I would go to a completely different hospital for anything if I needed to. It was just such a terrible, terrible experience. I still think about all the issues and worry that they are ongoing at the hospital.

64. This public inquiry will never be able to bring my son back, but I hope it prevents another child suffering unnecessarily and prevents another family going through what I went through.
65. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that this statement may form part of the evidence before the Inquiry and be published on the Inquiry's website.