

Witness Statement Ref No.

**WITNESS STATEMENT TO THE PUBLIC INQUIRY INTO THE OUTBREAK  
OF CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE IN NORTHERN TRUST HOSPITALS**

**WITNESS NAME: LOUISE ENGLISH**

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE**

I Louise English say as follows:

1. My name is Louise English and I live at an address which is known to the Inquiry Team. I am a married woman with two children.
2. My first child was born in October 2004 and my second child was born on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2007.

**Altnagelvin Hospital**

3. I gave birth to my second child at Altnagelvin Hospital on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2007. It was a natural birth and I returned home about three or four days later.
4. I was at home for about two weeks when I felt fine but on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2007 I suddenly started to have diarrhoea and vomiting.

5. I phoned my mother who came over to my house to look after the children so that I could take to my bed. However the condition worsened. I was running to and from the bathroom all the time.
6. I phoned my general practitioner and he prescribed a medication but this did not stop the diarrhoea.
7. The condition was so bad that we phoned the family doctor again who said that he would send an ambulance to take me to hospital. My husband arrived home and as the ambulance had still not arrived he decided to put me in the car and drive me to hospital as my condition was worsening and I was feeling very weak.
8. We went to the Accident & Emergency Department of the Mid Ulster Hospital in Magherafelt but they informed us that I could not be seen by a doctor for at least four hours and so my husband decided to take me to Antrim Area Hospital.

### **Antrim Area Hospital**

9. We drove to the Accident & Emergency Department of Antrim Area Hospital and when we got there my husband had to get a wheelchair as I was feeling too weak to walk.
10. I was immediately put into a bed at the Accident & Emergency Department, examined and then sent to the Intensive Care Unit where I was given fluids and was sedated.
11. I was there for approximately thirteen days and I cannot remember very much about my time there, although my husband has told me that I was

on various monitors and drips. There would appear to have been a number of other patients in the Intensive Care Unit in a similar condition.

12. I was then transferred to either Ward A1 or A3 which was an open ward. The hospital carried out various tests but nothing was found.

13. I was then discharged from Antrim Area Hospital sometime between 25<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> June (I do not know the exact date).

14. I was only home one night when the symptoms started again with very severe diarrhoea.

15. I was readmitted to Antrim Area Hospital the next day to either Ward A1 or A3 (a different ward to the first time but am not sure whether it was or A1 on the first occasion and A3 on the second occasion or vice versa).

16. On this occasion I was put into an isolation room where I stayed for about three weeks.

17. About one week after my admission on this occasion I was told that I had C difficile. No further information or instruction was given regarding this condition or what precautions I or my family should take.

18. I received medication and my condition improved to the extent that I was discharged home on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2007.

19. I would like to point during my time in isolation and once my condition had improved, that I was free to walk around the ward and go wherever I wanted. I was therefore mixing with other patients and staff.

## **Visits**

20. My husband and my parents visited everyday. My brother and some personal friends also came to see me. My young daughter also came and sat on the bed.
21. No member of staff ever told my family to wash their hands, use the gel or take other precautions for their own protection. No advice was given regarding personal hygiene and there was no mention of protective clothing or anything else.
22. Other patients also came into my room to talk to me and no one wore aprons, gloves or anything else. Nurses also came in without any protective clothing.

## **Care**

23. The doctors and nurses were first class. I got excellent attention and care at Antrim Area Hospital. If I buzzed for help it always arrived straightaway. I got everything I needed.
24. The doctors and nurses were all very sensitive and caring. The nurses provided great support. They knew how upset I was and would come in and talk to me when I needed help. I used to cry on occasions and they would always come in and provide reassurance and comfort. They were brilliant at lifting my mood.
25. If I needed a bed pan then this was given to me immediately and taken away after use. The staff were excellent and very pleasant to deal with.

## **Cleanliness**

26. I could not complain about the cleanliness of the hospital. I saw the wards being cleaned and all spillages were mopped up. Any soiled linen was immediately removed and changed.
27. No food or anything else was left lying around. Bed pans and commodes were always removed after use.
28. My pyjamas were taken away by my husband for washing, I was never told that they should be washed separately. No special bags that disintegrate when placed in the washing machine were however available or given to us.
29. I never noticed any smell or odour in the hospital.
30. I received bed baths in the Intensive Care Unit and a shower. I also received bed baths and a bath when I was in the ward.
31. The nurses and staff were always very attentive to my personal hygiene until such time as I was able to attend to these matters myself. My hair was also washed and brushed.
32. The toilets were always clean and tidy.

## **Washing**

33. The only advice I got regarding my own personal hygiene was to make sure that I washed my hands thoroughly after going to the toilet. Soap and towels were provided and the towels were replaced daily.

34. There were plenty of gel dispensers in the hospital although I and my family were not told to use them.
35. I do not remember any doctors wearing white coats but they all had ties. I do not think they all wore protective clothing.
36. Some nurses wore protective clothing and some did not.
37. None of my visitors were told to wear protective clothing nor was any advice given regarding the washing of hands or use of gels.
38. Some of my visitors would sit on the bed as there were not enough chairs to sit on.

### **Communication**

39. Neither I nor my family received any leaflets, brochures or any other written documents or notices from the hospital giving us advice on C difficile or any other hospital infection.
40. I was only told that I had C difficile about one or two weeks before I was discharged. I was not given any other information or advice.
41. I had never heard of C difficile and would therefore have appreciated one of the doctors or nurses spending some time with me to explain the diagnosis and prognosis.
42. All I was told was that "I might have picked it up off the street" or "I could have got it in the Intensive Care Unit" or "it was due to the antibiotics".

43. No one ever gave me a proper explanation of how I contracted the infection or what precautions I should take when I got home to protect myself and my family.
44. My husband has had to look up the internet in order to obtain details of C difficile and he has supplied me with more details of the symptoms and precautions than I obtained from the hospital.
45. I am very worried about giving the infection to my husband and children and if I had known how infectious it was I would not have allowed my child to visit me in hospital. She was even jumping on the bed while I was in hospital.

#### **Condition**

46. Physically I am well recovered but mentally and emotionally I am still badly affected by the experience. Every time I get a pain in my stomach I am worried that the infection has returned.
47. Shortly after my discharge I was recalled in or about July for further tests when they checked my colon and bowels. They told me that I had a mild inflammation and not to worry about it.
48. I have also received crisis management from Holywell Hospital as I was suffering from hallucinations and post natal depression.
49. The Community Mental Health Nurse has also called with me at home and provided support and assistance.
50. Despite this support I suffer from panic anxiety attacks. I am still on antidepressants and have to attend counselling sessions.

51. I have still not received any communication or information from the hospital as to how I contracted the infection. I am still trying to piece things together from what happened to me. No one sat me down and said this is what happened, this is what you have been through. It is now three years down the line and it still affects me mentally.

52. I suffer from nightmares and have been told that I have post traumatic stress.

53. I visit my general practitioner on a regular basis regarding my mental condition.

### **Comments**

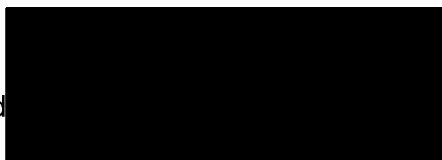
54. The care was great but the communication was terrible. I am still trying to cope with it all and piece it all together. I have been suffering for the last three years because of what happened. My hair even started to fall out because of the stress of it.

55. I would like to have had more children but the experience has put me off. I would never want to experience it again. Physically I am fine but mentally I am still suffering.

56. I do however receive great support from my husband, children, family and friends.

I declare that this statement is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signed



Dated: .....10/09/10.....