

# Southport Inquiry

## Directions

### *Broadcasting the Impact Evidence*

1. There is a division in the approach of the families of the surviving children and the adult victims of AR's attack as to whether the Impact Evidence should be broadcast. The families of the surviving children are unanimously against broadcasting this phase of the Inquiry whilst the adult victims would prefer the impact evidence, including their own, to be broadcast.
2. The BBC and ITV have submitted that whether broadcasting occurs should depend on the wishes of those concerned with the particular statement.
3. I have been provided with the four impact statements that are to be read on Wednesday 9 July 2025. They are deeply felt, highly personal and sensitive descriptions of the impact of what happened on the particular young people who were present, their families and friends. The desire to restrict the ambit of those who can view the delivery of these statements is entirely understandable, given their intensely intimate nature. Similarly, I understand why the adult victims would prefer to adopt a different approach, given their particular circumstances.
4. I have needed to consider the approach to be taken globally because the respective interests are intrinsically interrelated. The families of the surviving children stress the almost incalculable impact of AR's attack on them. As a result, it is critical, in my view, that nothing avoidable occurs during the Inquiry that appears to diminish the consequences of these events for the surviving children, their families and friends. If the public only hear, via broadcasting, the impact statements of two of the adult victims and nothing from the children and their families, I apprehend that the surviving children and their families will understandably perceive this as tending to diminish the public perception and understanding of their long-term suffering.
5. This would be a highly regrettable and unfair consequence which should be avoided. One of the objectives of the Inquiry is to communicate to the public in a fair and balanced manner the true human toll of acts of violence of this kind.
6. Accordingly, I consider there should be a consistent approach to broadcasting the Impact Evidence. For the reasons set out above, this will not occur as regards any of the victims. A transcript of what is said (appropriately redacted to remove identifying information wherever this is necessary) will be available on the Inquiry website within 24 hours of the delivery of the statements. That will ensure that the public receive an account of what has been said.

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## *Broadcasting the Attack Evidence*

7. The evidence concerning the attack by AR is, as with the Impact Evidence, extremely sensitive. The accounts of the individual injuries, to the extent that they are in the public domain, have been devastating for the families of the deceased and the surviving victims. There is strong risk of further traumatising of the families of the deceased and the victims, along with their siblings, parents and friends if this material is broadcast with the consequence, amongst other things, that this material will then be permanently available online. A visual recording of the attack evidence given in Court, available constantly to be replayed, will in my assessment carry a significantly greater risk of further traumatising than other forms of reporting of what is said in the hearings. That is a result that I wish to avoid.
8. This evidence will be available within 24 hours by way of a transcript on the Inquiry website. In my view that is a wholly sufficient means of communicating the relevant material to the public whilst avoiding, to the greatest extent possible, further distress for the families of the deceased and the survivors, along with the surviving children.

## *Broadcasting the Preventability Evidence*

9. I intend to keep this issue under review, and it will be the subject of further Directions in due course.

## *Live-streaming to the Accredited Media of the Impact Evidence*

10. My minded to indication suggested that the live-stream of the Impact Evidence and attack evidence would be (only) to the Core Participants and their legal representatives. This issue has been raised as to whether the live-link (not for broadcast) should be extended to the media to help them follow the evidence remotely. This is not an easy issue. On the one hand the families of the surviving children are concerned at the risk that this may result in the inadvertent release of material which has not been authorised for disclosure to the public. The press, on the other hand, argue that this makes the reporting of the Inquiry far easier, and they suggest that the orders restricting the dissemination of material will be respected. The adult victims favour maximising access to the evidence for the media by way of broadcasting (see above) and I infer they would support live-streaming to the media.
11. On balance, I consider that permitting the media to have a live-link (not for broadcast) to the Impact Evidence and evidence regarding the attack is a sensible step which should be adopted. However, the media must understand the high importance of following the Restriction Orders and the Media Broadcast Protocol which will address the broadcasting permissions. It is helpful to give an example of the kind of errors that are to be avoided, as occurred during the Fishmongers' Hall Inquests. The City of London Police firearms officers who shot the attacker on London Bridge were protected by anonymity orders and ciphers. The anonymity order included a Contempt of Court Act provision prohibiting the publishing of material liable to identify those officers, including by way of non-pixelated footage or footage showing their facial features. Both the BBC and Sky failed to comply with these restrictions and broadcast footage on the evening news and on their websites in clear breach of the order. Infringements of this kind, should they occur during the course of the present

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Inquiry, will be treated with the highest degree of seriousness, given the acute sensitivities I have stressed above. The potential for severe damage to the families and the surviving children is acute. Live-streaming to the press is a discretionary permission for professional convenience. It is critical that this method of sharing information is utilised with the greatest care and without mishap. It is likely to be withdrawn for all media if the directions and protocol requirements are breached.

## *Potential Restrictions on reporting the medical treatment and evidence of injuries of Alice da Silva Aguiar*

12. The Inquiry is investigating the question of whether the injuries to Alice da Silva Aguiar may have been survivable. Alice's family, as Core Participants, have indicated that they wish to seek reporting restrictions on the injuries she sustained and the medical treatment, insofar as these issues may be examined in the Inquiry's hearings. I am likely to invite further submissions, including from Alice's family and the media, as to whether I should impose such reporting restrictions. However, this issue is most appropriately assessed after receipt by the Inquiry Team of independent evidence which has been commissioned.
13. Since the injuries to Bebe King and Elsie Dot Stancombe were not survivable, the Inquiry hearings will not include any detail of the injuries they suffered. Similarly, I will be limiting the evidence adduced as to the precise injuries suffered by the surviving victims, calibrated in each case having regard to their individual wishes.

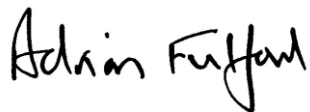
## *Junior Officials' Names*

14. The relevant Minded To Note at paragraphs 24 & 25 did not, as a matter of general principle, follow the approach that the names of junior officials ("JCS") are to be redacted, either as regards the Core Participants or the broader public. The following caveat, however, was envisaged: "This would not affect any redaction that may be sought on separate grounds appropriate to any individual based on individual factors."
15. The Core Participants who are departments or agencies of His Majesty's Government, in a joint submission, have argued that the presumption, which is not the subject of challenge, in favour the names of junior officials being disclosed to Core Participants should be open to being displaced "by showing that a particular JCS did not, in fact, make any decisions relevant to the inquiry's Terms of Reference". Therefore, if the individual was not a decision-maker on any matter within the scope of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, the name should not be disclosed.
16. I am unpersuaded by this suggested approach. This issue concerns Crown servants who were in paid positions. The proposed exception to the disclosure of names, whilst simply stated, would be extremely time-consuming and difficult in its application. It will result in a case-by-case, document-by-document examination of the circumstances of individual employees, leading to submissions on whether it has been demonstrated that the particular individual was "a decision maker" on any matter within the scope of the Terms of Reference, for instance on the basis were not a party to a particular "decision" simply as a result of being included as an addressee in an email. It will lead, moreover, to disputes as to whether the relevant person was within the definition of being a junior official. For the Civil Service, there is a

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conventional division between junior official and the Senior Civil Service (in simplistic terms Deputy Directors, Directors, Directors General and Permanent Secretaries). However, deciding what equivalent distinctions should apply in local authorities or the other state agencies involved would be fraught with difficulty and lead to delay. The Inquiry is working, at the Home Secretary's direction, to a very tight timetable and in my judgment this suggested approach will significantly delay its progress. Instead, in my view, if the individual about whom there is concern was wholly uninvolved in a material decision, that can be addressed when the evidence is given in order, if necessary, to clarify the position.

17. I decline, therefore, to make the proposed amendment to the wording of the Minded To Note in this regard. I observe finally that no sufficient basis has been provided as to the asserted "legitimate privacy interests".



1 July 2025