

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE HOME DEPARTMENT

Introduction

1. At the outset of this opening statement, deepest condolences are expressed on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Home Department and all those who act for and represent her, to the families of Bebe King, Elsie Dot Stancombe and Alice da Silva Aguiar and to all the children and adults harmed so immeasurably by the attack carried out on 29 July 2024. As the previous Home Secretary said,¹ none of us will ever forget the events of that day.
2. On 23 January 2025, after pleading guilty only on 20 January 2025, to Murder, Attempted murder, Having an Article with a Blade, Production of a Biological Toxin and Possession of a Document Likely to be Useful to a Person Preparing an Act of Terrorism, the perpetrator AR was sentenced to 13 sentences of Custody for Life and a minimum term of 51 years and 190 days. It is highly likely he will never be released.²
3. Immediately following the guilty plea and the conviction being secured, on 21 January 2025, the then Home Secretary announced this Inquiry. In doing so, she explained that the families, the people of Southport and the entire country need answers about how this horrendous attack could have happened.³ This was an unimaginably shocking and exceptionally violent attack committed by an adolescent who had been involved with a number of public services for several years. This included, a few years previously, being referred three times to Prevent (on 5 December 2019, 1 February 2021 and 26 April 2021) but AR was never accepted by Prevent and onwardly referred, including for consideration

¹ In her Statement to Parliament on 21 January 2025, the day after AR pleaded guilty: “None of us will ever forget the events of 29 July” <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2025-01-21/debates/70A99479-E1AB-4D28-AC21-024A77A05D3E/SouthportAttack>.

² Sentencing remarks of Goose J [HOM000103]

³ See footnote 1.

by Channel, the multi-agency panel responsible for assessing the risk that an individual may be drawn into terrorism and providing support to mitigate that risk.

4. Although AR was not individually known to the Home Office prior to the Southport attack, as the Department with strategic responsibility for overseeing both the policy and overall delivery of Prevent, the Home Office has asked, and will continue to ask, searching questions about what happened, and about what more can be done to ensure the system is as effective as it can be.
5. Further, AR conducted the attack using a knife he had purchased online despite being under 18. When his home was searched after the attack, further weapons and ricin, which he had produced, were found. When AR's devices were searched, he was found to have accessed a significant volume of violent material, including a terrorist manual. Multiple different agencies were in contact with AR over the years and knew about his history of violence, so how was the danger he posed not recognised? How did he fall through the gaps? Could and should something more have been done? More broadly, how do we, as a society, meet the challenge of youth violence and radicalisation? Those are only some of the questions which the Secretary of State intends to use every endeavour to assist the Chair in answering throughout Phases 1 and 2 of this Inquiry.
6. Following the Secretary of State's announcement of the Inquiry in January, swift work commenced to consult with the coroner and the families before the Chair was appointed, Terms of Reference set, and the Inquiry made Statutory on 7 April 2025. The Secretary of State welcomes and thoroughly endorses the Chair's and the Inquiry Legal Team's approach which puts the victims and survivors, and their families, at the heart of the process; and which expects candour and reflection from Core Participants to assist the Inquiry in its role of identifying what happened and what lessons can be learned.
7. The attack on 29 July 2024 raised profound questions for those who work in the fields of counter-terrorism and crime prevention: how did the machinery designed to prevent such despicable tragedies fail to do so? The Home Office seeks to assist the Inquiry and the public in understanding its own role, and the roles of other bodies within these systems. The Home Office also acknowledges that previous inquests including the Forbury Gardens inquest, as well as a number of independent reviews, have identified concerns

regarding the operation of Prevent. The Home Office will explain the changes that have been made in response and ongoing work being undertaken.

8. In her statement to Parliament of 21 January 2025, the previous Home Secretary outlined some of the changes already made since 2021 (the last time AR was referred to Prevent) including new Prevent Duty Guidance, new training for frontline workers on radicalisation, stronger policy on repeat referrals, and a new Prevent assessment framework. But she acknowledged that the changes did not go far enough. Given the importance of the Prevent programme, Lord David Anderson KC was immediately appointed as the interim Prevent Commissioner to conduct a thorough review of the Prevent history in this case to identify what changes needed to be made to ensure serious cases were not missed, particularly where there is mixed or unclear ideology [HOM000133; HOM000128].
9. The previous Home Secretary also tasked the Home Office with conducting an end-to-end review of Prevent thresholds, including on Islamist extremism [HOM000090] and other steps that have been taken to identify cases where mental ill health or neurodivergence is a factor, and to test new arrangements with other agencies for cases that may not meet the threshold for Channel counter-terrorism support but where other concerning behaviour or vulnerabilities must be addressed: in other words, to close gaps. With that intention, measures are also being addressed through legislation, namely the Crime and Policing Bill, to tackle knife sales online.
10. This opening statement seeks to address, as far as possible, the issues upon which the Chair, in his own opening, invited assistance from Core Participants. More detail has been provided by witness evidence from the Director of Prevent. The Secretary of State also envisages making submissions upon the conclusion of the evidence to further assist the Inquiry. The topics addressed here are as follows:
 - a. The role of the Home Office;
 - b. Prevent;
 - c. Knife crime;
 - d. Biological toxins and petrol bombs;
 - e. Online harms.

The Role of the Home Office

11. The Secretary of State for the Home Department has overall responsibility for the business of her Department, the Home Office. This includes overarching responsibility for the departmental portfolio and oversight of the ministerial team, the National Security Council, public appointments and oversight of the Security Service. The Department's portfolio includes strategic responsibilities – that is, developing and assisting in the implementation of policy and providing oversight - for national security, crime, immigration, border security and counter-terrorism. The Home Office oversees the legislative and policy framework in these areas.

12. The Home Office has strategic responsibility for counter-terrorism and crime prevention policy, including Prevent, knife crime, and malicious use of explosives, and shares responsibilities for developing policy and operational responses to Online Harms with the Department for Science, Innovations and Technology (DSIT). All these policy areas are engaged by the attack and what the criminal investigation revealed about AR following the attack. Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) has responsibility for the operational delivery of Prevent.⁴ A network of partners is involved in the multi-agency delivery of Prevent: statutory partners subject to the Prevent Duty (including local authorities, schools and health bodies), Civil Society Organisations, CTP units, and Channel Panels. The Home Secretary is responsible for setting the national strategic direction of policing in England and Wales. Police forces have operational independence in carrying out their core function of preventing and detecting crime. Further bodies such as the National Police Chiefs' Council, the College of Policing and the CPS have separate roles and responsibilities in the areas of knives and offensive weapons controls, for example developing police and prosecution guidance.

13. The Inquiry will hear evidence regarding the legislative framework in each of the areas relevant to the attack which are addressed briefly in this opening statement (Prevent, knife crime, online harms, biological toxins and petrol bombs) and legislative and policy changes that have been made in recent years.

Prevent

⁴ Section 26(2) and Schedule 6, Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

14. The Prevent strategy, now known as the Prevent programme, or to many as simply ‘Prevent’ was first introduced in 2005 following the 7/7 terrorist attacks in London [HOM000124]. Its aim is to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It is one of four strands of the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, which itself was first developed in 2003 in response to the 9/11 attacks [HOM000065 (CONTEST 2023); HOM000064 (CONTEST 2018)]. The importance of the UK having in place a strategy to try to prevent terrorism is undeniable, but the Secretary of State recognises that challenges for any strategy are of course considerable and it must continue to learn and reform. The Home Office and CTP have sought to revise and refine Prevent to respond to the evolving threat picture over the last 20 years and as a response to learning from terrorist attacks in the UK and recommendations from independent reports.
15. When the unthinkable happens, it is the role of government to seek to understand what occurred; to examine carefully the relevant systems and to put in place measures to prevent a recurrence of anything similar. The landscape has changed since 2019 when AR was first referred to Prevent. The detailed Independent Review of Prevent (IRP) conducted by Sir William Shawcross in 2023 made significant recommendations for change. Since the Southport attack the independent Prevent Learning Review (PLR) commissioned jointly by the Home Office and CTP in August 2024 and Lord Anderson’s Lessons for Prevent report published in 2025 have made further recommendations at both operational and strategic levels. The Inquiry has received detailed evidence about the changes that have already been made, and an overview of the work that is in development, but it is clear to all who work in this field that there remain challenges and tensions which must be addressed. What follows is a brief summary of those changes with reflections on the key issues, intended to assist the Inquiry. The Home Office hopes that full evidence on those changes will enable the Inquiry to better understand: (i) where there were issues with or deficiencies in the systems that were in place at the time of AR’s referrals that might have impacted on individual decision making; (ii) what has already been done to address those matters; and (iii) where improvements still need to be made.
16. **First**, in response to the recommendations of the IRP, the Home Office, working with CTP, has updated guidance, training and the delivery model for Prevent:
- a. The Prevent Duty Guidance was updated in 2023. Key changes involved a renewed focus on ideology in accordance with the recommendations and the threat at the

time which, although becoming more diverse, was predominantly from Islamist terrorism. There was also a change in terminology from ‘vulnerability’ to ‘susceptibility’ to radicalisation so that the term ‘vulnerable’ was only used in the context of ‘a person needing special care, support or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect’.

- b. The training for both frontline staff involved in referrals to Prevent and Channel chairs and members has been updated and improved.
- c. Regionalisation of Prevent was rolled out nationally in response to the IRP as well as online challenges making the threat more diffuse and UK-wide.

17. **Second**, an improved assessment framework has been introduced intended to support and improve decision-making. In 2024, a new tool, the Prevent Assessment Framework (PAF), replaced the previous Vulnerability Assessment Framework (VAF) for CTP officers making assessments as to whether to refer an individual to Channel. The PAF was subject to extensive development, testing and piloting. It was introduced in response to the PLR as well as to learning from the Forbury Gardens attack and murder of Sir David Amess. The Inquiry will receive more detailed evidence about this in the Home Office’s witness evidence.

18. **Third**, repeat referral processes have been put in place. CTP, working closely with the Home Office, in 2023 introduced a repeat referral policy such that new referrals for an open case must now be regarded “as a potentially heightened risk factor” in CTP assessments of an individual. In March 2025 the Home Office and CTP agreed that a senior supervising officer would be required to agree that an individual referred to Prevent more than once does not meet the threshold for Channel referral. In May 2025 the Prevent Case Management Tracker was updated to tag/flag repeat referrals to increase their visibility to officers and enable greater evaluation of these cases. Channel policy has been updated to adopt repeat referral cases and where there is a decision not to adopt, signposting to other services is required where there is a residual vulnerability.

19. **Fourth**, there have also been changes intended to improve interventions tools:

- a. The Home Office has recruited a broader range of individuals as Intervention Providers (who may provide mentoring support to individuals adopted by Channel or Police Led Partnerships (another form of risk mitigation)): previously they were

recruited as experts in Islamist extremism or extreme right-wing radicalisation; now they include those with expertise in supporting those with mental health concerns, autism and wider vulnerabilities that may affect radicalisation risk.

- b. Since April 2024 CTP has commissioned a CT Clinical Consultancy Service, replacing piloted Vulnerability Support Hubs.

20. **Fifth**, the Home Office has sought to increase its own and others' understanding of the delivery of Prevent:

- a. Systems for recording referrals have improved as the Prevent Case Management Tracker now contains both the Prevent referral data and the Channel case management data.
- b. Assurance processes for Prevent and Channel are continually evolving and improving.
- c. By agreement with CTP, in 2024, the Home Office introduced strategic oversight and policy support to develop and improve the Police Led Partnerships model.

21. **Sixth**, there have been significant efforts to improve the overall approach to supporting young people at risk of radicalisation and to address the changing nature of ideology as a factor in identifying risk. In light of the attack and the increasing problem of youth radicalisation, which is closely related to online harm, the Home Office has developed a greater focus on a coordinated approach to this area. Since mid-2023, the Deputy Director of Prevent has co-chaired a joint Prevent-Pursue board (the Minors Senior Oversight Group) which is delivering a programme to work to reduce the number of children under investigation for terrorism offences. Measures include introducing through the Crime and Policing Bill Youth Diversion Orders (YDOs) – a new civil order designed to disrupt young people involved in terrorist offending and divert them from the wider criminal justice system [HOM000078]. A Counter Terrorism Investigation of Minors Outcomes Toolkit has also been developed to offer tactics alternative to prosecution to reduce risk. Other work includes extending Channel to individuals under investigation, expanding and developing family intervention and targeting online harms.

22. The increasing threat posed by young people is closely linked to the very challenging question of ideology. While this attack was not assessed to have been carried out for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause and therefore not classified

as a terrorist attack [HOM000103 (AR Sentencing at §26)], there is evidence that AR was an individual fascinated by acts of extreme violence and mass casualty attacks from a young age. Individuals with this presentation are capable of committing attacks as devastating in outcome as attacks committed by ideologically driven perpetrators, but identifying and managing the risk they pose raises different and complex challenges.

23. One of the difficulties for Prevent has been identifying people who are susceptible to being radicalised. There is no single pathway to radicalisation and there are many potentially contributory factors. These can include exposure to radicalising influences, real and perceived grievances and a person's own susceptibility which may be influenced by vulnerabilities (for example if they need special care, support or protection because of age, disability, risk of abuse or neglect). Also, the role of ideology in radicalisation has become increasingly complex over the last few years: Prevent has seen that individuals including young people are adopting a mix of ideas from different ideologies, conspiracy theories and grievance narratives, often found online which makes it more challenging to assess motivation for violence, whether that violence is terrorist in nature, and the appropriate mitigations to put in place.
24. On 25 June 2019 the then Director of Prevent and the National Coordinator of Prevent, National Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters issued a letter to the Prevent network providing guidance and explaining that individuals whose ideological drivers appear Mixed, Unclear or Unstable (MUU), but who demonstrate a connection to, or personal interest in, extremism, terrorism or massacre, should be given the same consideration for Prevent support as those who present clear ideological motivations [HOM000048].
25. This position was reflected in updated guidance and training with the Prevent Duty Guidance 2023 making clear that whilst the presence or possible presence of any terrorist or terrorism linked ideology is an important consideration, a clear ideology is not a prerequisite for Prevent and other support. In respect of the assessment of referrals, the PAF encompasses a broader range of risk factors outside of solely ideological drivers. Further work is being undertaken to ensure the position is clearly understood and consistently applied. The Home Office recognises that a question for the Inquiry is likely to be whether – avoiding hindsight bias – it is more likely that AR would have been referred

to Prevent and adopted by Channel in 2019 making him eligible for multi-agency support, if his words and actions had aligned with a single ideology.

26. AR's first referral was categorised by CTP as 'MUU – School Massacre'. Recognition of the evolving threat including increasing numbers of individuals presenting with MUU or an absence of ideology, as well as in response to the IRP meant that more detailed categories of concern were developed, including in 2024, a 'fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks (where no other ideology)' category. While the previous categories were capacious enough for those with fascination with extreme violence to be referred and considered for Prevent support, the Home Office recognises the Inquiry may consider it is clearer now (particularly with the new PAF tool) than it was at the time of AR's referrals, that for Prevent purposes, an individual showing fascination with extreme violence apparently without an ideological driver could be considered for Prevent intervention.
27. The Home Office recognises that this Inquiry, which concerns a devastating attack where there is not evidence that the perpetrator was motivated by a clear or single ideology, but who was arguably vulnerable to radicalisation by reason of age and/or disability, may rightly ask questions about whether there was a tension between the renewed focus from 2023 on the presence of ideology (following the IRP) and the rising numbers of MUU referrals to Prevent.
28. The Home Office is also clear that, while there have been many changes to Prevent since the time of AR's referrals, there is still more to be done and is working to address the recommendations in the PLR and in Lord Anderson's report. In particular:
 - a. Ensuring the thresholds for Prevent are clear and consistently applied at each stage of the process, including where there are concerns about mental health or neurodivergence including autism, where other safeguarding services may be providing support and where ideology is unclear or not present. In relation to the latter, the Home Office recognises that for some individuals, a fascination with extreme violence, without an accompanying ideology, could be an early indicator that an individual is on a pathway to terrorism. While other safeguarding services may be appropriate, Prevent is the only programme that has the remit to assess

susceptibility to terrorism and must work in an integrated way with other services, not only as an alternative.

- b. Broadening the interventions available to people supported by Channel – in addition to ideological mentoring, the Home Office will seek to reflect the increasingly diverse drivers of radicalisation, by exploring options to support at risk individuals with cyber skills, family interventions, and practical mentoring.
- c. Delivering improvements from a strategic policy review into how individuals referred into Prevent who are neurodivergent or suffer from mental ill health are supported and managed.
- d. Strengthening the Home Office’s approach to the monitoring and oversight of referrals that do not meet Prevent thresholds, by launching a pilot to test new approaches to oversee and assure relevant cases.

29. Since the attack, the Government has continued to analyse the models it uses to identify and manage the risk posed by individuals such as AR so they can be improved. This includes considering the merits of connecting Prevent to a broader violence prevention system, which has also been recommended by Lord Anderson. That work is in progress. It is a complex task. The Home Office will touch on that work in Phase 1 and cover it in more detail in Phase 2 to support the Inquiry in providing its findings and recommendations to local and national authorities regarding these models.

30. As with other programmes of a preventative nature (for example those seeking to divert young people away from knife crime), measuring success for Prevent is a challenge and there remain gaps in the Home Office’s understanding of the impact of Channel. However, evaluation of Prevent is a priority in order to facilitate further meaningful improvements and, to that end, the Home Office commissioned in 2022 an independent long-term evaluation, which expected to report in 2026.

Knife Crime

31. It is a striking and highly concerning feature of this attack that AR was able to purchase weapons online including but not limited to the knife used in the attack. Evidence before the Inquiry will explain the legal framework in place as at the date of the attack regarding (i) the possession of knives and other pointed or bladed articles and offensive weapons;

(ii) the sale of knives, bladed or pointed articles and other weapons, including remote/online sales; as well as the steps being taken to strengthen controls.

32. In terms of work led by the Home Office to tackle knife crime and new violence, measures over the last ten years have included, non-exhaustively: the Ending Gang and Youth Violence programme (November 2011) [HOM000145]; the Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation programme [HOM000163] (January 2016); the Serious Violence Strategy (April 2018) [HOM000144] which led to Violence Reduction Units [HOM000122]; the National County Lines Coordination Centre [HOM000155]; the Serious Violence Duty [HOM000177] (made statutory by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022); and the new Youth Endowment Fund [HOM000132]; a pilot of Knife Crime Prevention Orders (2021-2023) [HOM000161]; the Home Office Beating Crime Plan (2021) [HOM000126]; the first ever Homicide Prevention Fund (2022) [HOM000174]; the Winter Homicide Prevention Initiative (December 2023-February 2024).
33. Other bodies, including the NPCC, CPS, College of Policing, police forces, and Trading Standards also have roles and have undertaken significant work to tackle knife crime. Stop and search powers pursuant to s.1 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and s.60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 are one of the tools used by police to take weapons off the street and protect the public. In April 2023 a two-year pilot of statutory Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) took place, giving police powers to search those previously convicted of weapons offences, to deter them from carrying knives again while ensuring that those who persist are more likely to be caught. The results of the pilot are currently being analysed. Stop and search is controversial and evidence suggests it may have a low to moderate impact on violent crime. Although its use is primarily a matter for police forces, the Home Office continues to evaluate its effectiveness in tackling knife crime, most recently though the SVRO pilot.
34. Since 29 July 2024, the current Government has committed to halving knife crime in a decade, by 2034. Measures already introduced, many of which were informed by the Clayman Review on Online Sale of Knives which reported 19 February 2025 [HOM000160], include, non-exhaustively:

- a. Hotspot targeting;

- b. Continuation of Violence Reduction Units and the County Lines Programme;
 - c. The Knife-Enabled Robbery Taskforce, successfully supporting seven police force areas with the highest knife-enabled robbery rates [**HOM000119**];
 - d. The Knife Crime Coalition [**HOM000175**];
 - e. The Crime and Policing Bill [**HOM000123**] which introduced Ronan’s Law [**HOM000125**]; new offences for possession of a knife for unlawful violence and new seizure powers for police; stricter age verification requirements for online knife and crossbow sales; sanctions on technology executives who fail to remove illegal knife-related content; a new offence of criminal exploitation of children to address grooming and coercion into knife-related activity.
 - f. The Young Futures Programme [**HOM000157**].
 - g. An extended knife surrender campaign was held in July 2025.
35. The Home Office recognises there is still more to do and further measures, for example, whether round tipped knives should be encouraged as an alternative to sharp-pointed knives, are being considered as well as whether existing controls on crossbows should be strengthened. The Government is providing £1.75m funding in 2025/26 to support a pilot for a new national police coordination unit to tackle the online sale of knives.

Biological Toxins and Petrol Bombs

36. The search of AR’s home following the attack found the plant-derived toxin ricin, presumed components of petrol bombs (also sometimes known as Molotov cocktails) and materials, including castor beans, consistent with the manufacture of ricin. Although AR did not use ricin in the attack, the assessment of the sentencing judge in the criminal trial, was that he was likely to have used it in time, if he had not decided on the mode of attack he did [**HOM000103 at §25**]. The Home Office will provide evidence to the Inquiry regarding the legislative framework, and the rationale, for controls or the absence of controls, on these items.
37. In overview, the manufacture and retention of ricin is an offence under s.1 Biological Weapons Act 1974 (BWA) and s.2 Chemical Weapons Act 1996 (CWA). Possession of castor beans or isopropyl alcohol would only be an offence if it were in circumstances giving rise to reasonable suspicion that it was for use in connection with terrorism (s.57 TACT). Extracting ricin from castor beans is an offence. While castor beans and isopropyl

alcohol are broadly available and have legitimate uses (the latter usually comes with a caution label), the Home Office is considering the feasibility, and potential impacts and proportionality of further regulation as part of ongoing efforts to keep dangerous materials under review.

38. No viable petrol bombs were found at AR's house. The components of petrol bombs recovered are commonly available items with everyday uses and so are not regulated. Had accelerant (petrol) and a wick been found, it could have amounted to a criminal offence to have these items in a home under the Explosive Substances Act 1883 and/or s.57 TACT.
39. In Great Britain, the Poisons Act 1972 regulates the sale of chemical substances and poisons. In determining which substances to regulate (requiring a licence for members of the public to purchase) or make reportable (whereby suspicious activity is monitored) the Home Office considers a range of factors including potential misuse, impact on legitimate use, necessity of regulation and proportionality. Similar factors apply to the regulation of items outside the Poisons Act 1972, such as the potential components for petrol bombs. In October 2023, measures were introduced to strengthen controls and to bring new precursors and poisons into the Poisons Act 1972 regime. The Home Office keeps the regime under constant review.

Online Harms

40. As the criminal investigation established, before the attack AR accessed violent content on his devices, including content which would meet the definition under the Online Safety Act 2023 (OSA) for content that is harmful to children. The then Home Secretary and Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology issued a letter to platforms to remove this specific content after the sentencing of AR. Although the OSA was enacted at the time of the attack, the requirements for platforms to have in place systems and processes to identify and remove illegal content and protect their users from illegal content came into force in March 2025, and the requirements for platforms to have in place age assurance technology to prevent children from accessing various categories of harmful content, including serious violence content, have been in place since July 2025. Offences do exist for the online dissemination or publication of certain types of material, such as terrorist publications or hate crime. However, there are still no powers which would allow

Government or law enforcement to compel platforms to remove specific pieces of illegal content, except for terrorist content.

41. Countering illegal content online is a complex and continuous process, achieved through legislative and regulatory requirements on platforms, cooperation with industry, engagement and collaboration with international partners. The Inquiry has been provided with an overview of the Home Office's work on countering both illegal content and harmful content, and the work of the Prevent directorate to build the understanding of sectors involved in the delivery of Prevent about online radicalisation and how young people may be engaging with content online.
42. YDOs, which, as above, are due to be introduced through the Crime and Policing Bill, will allow the police to impose restrictions on young persons who have committed a terrorism or terrorism connected offence, or have been involved in conduct likely to facilitate such an offence by them or another person. The restrictions imposed may include, where necessary and proportionate, restrictions on use of specific websites or platforms.

Recommendations

43. The Home Office does not at this stage propose recommendations. It has however set out within this opening statement, and in more detail in its witness evidence, particular issues it has identified of particular concern and measures which might address those issues. The Home Office recognises that this Inquiry will raise difficult questions and there may be a range of professional views as to the best approach to be taken. The Home Office therefore welcomes the opportunity to hear from others including witnesses, Core Participants and the Inquiry as to steps which might be taken.

Conclusions

44. The Secretary of State for the Home Department has and will continue to seek to assist the Inquiry as far as possible, in particular in understanding the framework against which decisions that were taken in AR's case should be assessed, what has already changed, and what changes are in train. Whilst everyone recognises that responsibility for this atrocity lies with the perpetrator, this was a personal and national tragedy which demands the highest levels of scrutiny. The Home Office welcomes that scrutiny and whilst not waiting

for the Inquiry's recommendations before it takes action, anticipates the Inquiry will bring increased independence, clarity and focus to the work that still needs to be undertaken.