

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

OPENING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING HEADQUARTERS (CTPHQ)

Introduction

1. First and foremost, in making this opening statement, CTPHQ would like to offer our sincere condolences to the families and friends of Elsie Dot Stancombe, Alice da Silva Aguiar, and Bebe King, to the other children and adults attacked by AR that day, and to all others who bear the psychological and physical scars of his crimes that day.
2. CTPHQ is integral to the delivery of the Government's CONTEST strategy. CONTEST is divided into four pillars: *Protect* (strengthen protections against terrorist attacks), *Prepare* (mitigate the impact of attacks that cannot be stopped), *Prevent* (stop people from becoming terrorists) and *Pursue* (detect, prosecute and disrupt terrorists).
3. The men and women who work within Counter Terrorism Policing are relentless in their determination to protect the public. CTPHQ always seeks to reflect and improve in order to protect our communities going forwards. In this spirit, CTPHQ welcomes this independent Inquiry and commits to providing its Chair and Inquiry Legal Team with our utmost support and co-operation at every stage.

Overview of CTPHQ

4. CTPHQ's function derives from a collaboration agreement between all policing bodies within England and Wales entered into under Section 22A of the Police Act 1996. This agreement recognises the need for regional policing bodies to work together to effectively counter the threat posed to the national interest from terrorism. One way in which the agreement seeks to do this is by establishing a headquarters function namely CTPHQ.
5. Unsurprisingly, given its legal status, CTPHQ does not sit above "local" police forces as part of a hierarchy, but rather exists alongside them to provide direction, support and coordination to the Counter Terrorism Policing network within England and Wales. The relevant regional chief officer will remain responsible for Counter Terrorism Policing within his or her own geographical area (for instance Merseyside Police) which includes the delivery of policing's contribution to Prevent within that region.
6. CTPHQ seeks to provide the network with strategy, policy and guidance across all four pillars of CONTEST; supporting regional Counter Terrorism Policing bodies in the implementation of common systems, policies, and procedures through effective communication and collaboration. In addition to its policy responsibilities, CTPHQ may facilitate the sharing of CTP resources across the network to provide additional capacity or specialist capability in regions experiencing heightened demand.

Our role in this inquiry

7. CTPHQ had no involvement in AR's case prior to the events of 29 July 2024. Nonetheless, we are ever-mindful that AR was referred to Prevent three times prior to that day. He also came to the attention of numerous criminal justice and social service authorities in advance of the attack. As the Chair outlined in his opening statement, the central task of identifying how AR fell through the gaps in this way is an "*absolutely critical undertaking*".
8. In respect of Phase 1, it is envisaged that the Senior National Coordinator for Prevent and Pursue, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Victoria Evans, will be

able to assist the Inquiry in relation to the role of Counter Terrorism Policing generally. It is hoped that CTPHQ's expertise, communicated through the evidence of DAC Evans, may be of even greater assistance in respect of Phrase 2, when the Inquiry turns to consider what wider reforms may be appropriate.

9. CTPHQ repeats its sincere condolences to all of the victims of this terrible attack. Our witnesses and lawyers are here to assist the Chair in his inquiry and to ensure that we can move forward together, better able to protect the public in the future.

5 September 2025