

**THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005**

**BEFORE THE RT. HON. SIR ADRIAN FULFORD**

**THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY**

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**PHASE 1 OPENING SUBMISSIONS OF  
THE CHIEF CONSTABLE OF MERSEYSIDE POLICE**

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1. The Chief Constable of Merseyside Police<sup>1</sup> makes these submissions pursuant to the Chair's directions dated 18 August 2025.
2. Merseyside Police's involvement in the events within the scope of phase 1 of this inquiry is principally as follows:
  - a. First, AR's attack at the Hart Space on 29 July 2024 occurred in Southport, which is within the Merseyside Police area. The incident was responded to by Merseyside Police officers and Merseyside Police officers undertook the criminal investigation which led to AR's charge and conviction for three counts of murder, ten counts of attempted murder, having a bladed article, production of a biological toxin and possession of a document likely to be useful to a person preparing an act of terrorism.
  - b. Second, on 11 December 2019 AR (aged 13) attacked a pupil at Range High School, Formby, which is in the Merseyside Police area. The incident was responded to by Merseyside Police officers and Merseyside Police officers undertook the criminal investigation which led to AR's charge and conviction for possession of a knife on school premises, assault and possession of an offensive weapon in a public place. AR was living and (at that time) studying in the Lancashire Constabulary area. The ongoing risk posed by AR and the completion of the 10 month referral order to which AR was sentenced in 2020 were managed by state agencies in Lancashire.

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<sup>1</sup> The Chief Constable of Merseyside Police is Chief Constable Carden, who took over from Chief Constable Kennedy upon her retirement effective 1 September 2025.

3. The Chief Constable makes the following six points by way of opening.
4. First, Chief Constable Carden repeats the deep condolences expressed by his predecessor, Chief Constable Kennedy, to the families and friends of the children murdered by AR, to those who were injured by AR, to their families and friends, and to all those affected in different ways by AR's offending. The brave and profound impact statements given at AR's recent criminal trial and that have been and will be given in this inquiry underscore the importance of the inquiry's work.
5. Second, as to AR's despicable offending, the Chief Constable cannot improve on the sentiments expressed by Goose J in sentencing AR on 23 January 2025. There should be no doubt that Merseyside Police and all police forces in the UK are working tirelessly to prevent similar acts of violence. Those responsible will be investigated with tenacity. And they will face the most severe punishment. As the Chair observed in his opening statement, AR was sentenced to custody for life, with a minimum term of 52 years. If it had not been for his age, he would have received a whole life term.
6. Third, Merseyside Police fully supports this inquiry and its vital work. Merseyside Police has given this inquiry its full assistance from the outset and is committed to doing so throughout its course. To date Merseyside Police has done so principally by the provision of voluminous disclosure, rule 9 witness statements, and by assisting the Inquiry Legal Team in understanding the evidence amassed in its criminal investigations into AR's offending. Merseyside Police has done so, and will continue to do so, with candour.
7. Fourth, it is no part of Merseyside Police's role in this inquiry to be defensive. To give the inquiry proper assistance it may, on occasion, be necessary to emphasise the need to scrutinise decisions and actions in their proper context and to avoid risk of hindsight. If the inquiry identifies shortcomings in Merseyside Police's policies or processes (or in national guidance and processes that apply to the police service) Merseyside Police is keen to understand and to implement that learning.

8. Fifth, while recognising the importance of each aspect of the inquiry's phase 1 terms of reference and the areas which phase 2 is intended to cover, Merseyside Police hopes that the inquiry's process and recommendations will promote change at a national level, in particular:
- a. To restrict access to lethal weapons, and prevent children being able to acquire them via the internet (AR was able to acquire via the internet *inter alia* at least two knives, at least one machete and a bow and arrows);
  - b. To restrict access to material encouraging and giving instruction on the perpetration of acts of violence and terrorism (AR was able to acquire via the internet materials including the *Al Quada Training Manual*);
  - c. To improve multi-agency systems for (i) identifying young people with a fixation or obsession with, and desire to commit, acts of extreme violence *without* the motivation of advancing a political, religious, racial or ideological cause;<sup>2</sup> (ii) addressing effectively the risk posed by those young people; and (iii) managing that risk, including in the transition from child to adult services and following the completion of formal education.
9. Sixth, it is important to recognise the impact of the events of 29 July 2024 on the police officers, members of the other emergency services and members of the public who responded to the incident and the bravery shown by a number of those individuals. PS Gillespie, who entered the Hart Space with PC Holden and PCSO Parry to tackle AR has observed that "our pain and suffering is the tiniest drop in the largest ocean compared to" that of the families.<sup>3</sup> The Chief Constable identifies with that observation, but it does not diminish the effect that this terrible incident has had on those who responded to it.

**JAMES BERRY KC**  
**CHLOE HILL**  
Serjeants' Inn Chambers  
4 September 2025

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<sup>2</sup> Such motivation being one of the ingredients of the definition of 'terrorism' in s.1 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

<sup>3</sup> BBC News 'We faced Southport killer shoulder to shoulder' 28.07.2025  
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cjd2d9kpl4do>