1	Thursday, 25 September 2025
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2 (10.00 am)

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- 3 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Yes, Mr Moss.
- 4 **MR MOSS:** Thank you, sir. Our first witness this morning is Gary Poland, please.

Mr Poland, there will be somebody there assisting you and I wonder if you could just start by taking the oath or affirmation. You don't need to stand for that because you are giving evidence remotely.

GARY POLAND (sworn)

Questioned by MR MOSS

- 12 MR MOSS: Thank you. Just start, please, by giving us your13 full name.
- 14 A. Gary Malcolm Poland.
- 15 Q. Just keep your voice up a little bit because we all needto hear the evidence you are going to give.
- 17 A. Gary Malcolm Poland.
- 18 **Q.** If we can have on the screen, please, individual witness statements -- so that is IWS000038.

Can you just confirm, please, Mr Poland that this is
a statement that you have provided to this Inquiry and,
if we go to page 8, we will see it is a statement you
signed on 22 August this year; is that right? You
signed it on 22 August?

25 **A.** Yes, that is correct.

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- 1 Q. You have been doing that for some 27 years, or at the
- 2 time of the attack you had been doing it for some 27
- 3 years?
- 4 A. Yeah, that's correct, yeah.
- 5 Q. You had been with One Call Taxis or its predecessors for
- 6 that time; is that correct?
- 7 A. That's correct.
- 8 Q. Your taxi, I think, was a white Toyota?
- 9 A. Yeah, correct.
- 10 Q. Is this right, that you were self-employed, you ownedyour own taxi?
- 12 A. Yeah, correct.
- 13 Q. And you took jobs, effectively, off One Call Taxis?
- 14 A. Yeah, that's correct.
- 15 Q. They would send you the jobs through a mobile phone app?
- 16 A. Yeah, correct.
- 17 Q. You could accept or decline the jobs as you chose; you
- 18 weren't obliged to take them?
- 19 A. That's correct.
- 20 Q. I think, as a matter of personal choice at the time, you
- 21 liked to stay reasonably locally, you worked mainly
- 22 within the Southport area?
- 23 A. Yeah, that's right, I don't do out of town jobs no more,
- 24 I just do local jobs.
- 25 Q. I think that, more recently, since the attack, you have

- 1 Q. Thank you. Are the contents of this statement true to
- 2 the best of your knowledge and belief?
- 3 A. It is
- 4 Q. Thank you very much. If we could also have on screen,
- 5 please, MERP000266. You will be familiar with this,
- 6 this, Mr Poland, is a statement that you made to the
- 7 police, isn't it, on the day of the attack, 29 July last
- 8 year?
- 9 A. That's correct.
- 10 $\,$ **Q.** There is a time given, I think, for this statement that
- 11 it was given at 5.16 in the afternoon; is that right?
- 12 A. That's correct.
- 13 Q. Thank you. Mr Poland, there will be two parts to my
- 14 questioning. In the first part, I just want to
- understand how you, in overview, were involved in the
- 16 events and to look at an overview of them, and to look
- at your role, and then, secondly, I'm going to go
- 18 through matters in a little bit more detail, do you
- 19 follow?
- 20 A. That's fine.
- 21 $\,$ Q. If you can have your Inquiry statement back on the
- screen, that is IWS000038 on page 1. I'm looking at
- paragraph 1. I think you are an experienced private
- 24 hire taxi driver; is that right?
- 25 A. That's correct.

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- 1 certainly, for a period, been working reduced hours and
- 2 tending only to collect customers you know; is that
- 3 right?
- 4 **A.** Yes, I don't do many hours no more. I only pick up people I know, to be fair now, after what's gone on.
- Q. Is that because of the impacts of the attack on youpsychologically?
- 8 A. It is, yes.
- 9 Q. Just in outline, I'm not concerned at all with overall
- 10 how much money you earn, that's really not relevant but,
- 11 financially, just explain how it works. Do you have to
- pay a monthly amount or weekly amount to One Call Taxis
- or do you pay for hire of the telecommunications kit;
- 14 how does it work?
- 15 A. You just pay for the app, you have an app off One Call,
- 16 you pay for that, £110 a week, and then obviously it's
- my own car. You've got to buy a car, private hire
- 18 insurance, and all that.
- 19 Q. Thank you. Then do One Call Taxis take a proportion of20 the fare and you get the rest; is that how it works?
- 21 A. No, no, you just pay for the app --
- 22 **Q.** You pay for the app through them, I follow. So to look
- 23 at matters just in broad outline to set the context, on
- 24 Monday, 29 July, we have heard that you accepted a job
- that involved taking AR from his home at 10 Old School

- 1 Close to 34a Hart Street, yes?
- 2 A. That's correct, yes.
- 3 Q. The journey was effectively done in silence; he didn't
- really talk to you? 4
- 5 A. That's correct.
- 6 Q. Can I ask you this, leaving aside what you have thought
- 7 about since, so leave aside hindsight: at the time,
- 8 during the journey itself, did AR give you any cause for
- 9 suspicion at all while you were driving him?
- 10 A. No, none at all because quite a few of our customers are
- 11 black and I know he was wearing a face mask, which a lot
- of them still do, the black people, we pick up a lot of 12
- 13 care workers that look like that, and I just presumed he
- 14 was going to pick his car up from Masters next door to
- 15 where we ended up.
- 16 Q. Thank you. So having a young, black man with a Covid
- 17 face mask on, your thought at the time was that you
- 18 might be taking a carer?
- 19 Α. Yes, correct.
- 20 Q. You dropped him on the street in Hart Street and I think
- 21 he didn't pay you?
- 22 A. That's correct.
- 23 Q. You followed him towards the garage, Masters garage,
- 24 demanding payment and he didn't pay?
- 25 Α. That's correct.

- 1 Q. I'm going to come on to the detail of it but, just to
- 2 deal with it in outline, you then heard some very loud
- 3 bangs, four to five and what you thought were gunshots
- 4 at the time?
- 5 A. Yeah, I thought it was between four and five gunshots at
- 6
- 7 Q. I'm going to come on to it but just to deal with this at
- 8 the moment, you have touched upon it, you heard loud
- 9 screams?
- A. Yeah. 10
- 11 Q. You have said in your statements that it was terrifying,
- you were fearful, you were in a state of shock and you 12
- 13 drove away at that stage from the scene, thinking that
- 14 there was someone shooting?
- A. Yeah, I just thought someone was shooting, I thought, 15
- "Oh no", that's when I went into panic mode. 16
- Q. While you were still driving away -- sorry, once you had 17
- 18 got out of the driveway and turned on to the main road,
- quite quickly while you were still driving you called 19
- 20 your friend Julian Medlock?
- 21 A. Yeah, he was next door at Masters. He is my best mate
- 22 of, like, 40-odd years and I just thought of him
- 23 straightaway because we'd been up that drive to begin
- 24 with and I just thought, if someone's got a gun, he's
- 25 going to have to be careful.

- Q. You followed him down the parallel driveway, towards the 1
- 2 Hart Space, he was on foot, you were in your car,
- 3 demanding payment but he didn't respond?
- 4 A. That's correct.
- 5 You threatened to call the police?
- 6 That's correct, thinking he might pay then.
- 7 Q. Yes. And he still didn't pay?
- 8 A.
- Q. 9 You saw him, I think, enter the Hart Space?
- Yes, he tried one door, banging on one door but I'm 10
- 11 thinking, "What's going on here? Is someone going to
- 12 open the door?" Then he walked to the other door, which
- 13 was pretty close to it and just walked straight in.
- 14 Q. Thank you. Meanwhile, I think in that carpark you had
- 15 done a bit of a -- half of a three-point turn, you
- 16 reversed up and you were waiting for your next job, at
- 17 that stage, resigned to the fact that this young man had
- 18 not paid?
- 19 A. Yes, I wasn't waiting for my next job.
- 20 Q. What were you doing when you were waiting there?
- A. I was waiting for money and then I was thinking perhaps 21
- 22 he's running up for money, you know. I thought, "Give
- 23 him a minute or two", which I did and then --
- 24 Q. I follow.
- A. -- I heard all the screaming --

- 1 Thank you. I will come back to that. You stopped on
- Brompton Road and, having stopped there, you then 2
- 3 accepted another fare and you drove that other passenger
- 4 to her destination, making a stop en route, so that she
- 5 could go into a shop?
- 6 A. That is correct.
- 7 Q. You had a further call with Julian Medlock?
- 8 A. That's correct.
- Q. Then you called the control room for One Call Taxis to 9
- confirm what the pickup address for AR had been? 10
- 11 A. Yeah, that's it, just so I got the details for when
 - 12 I rung the police, yeah.
- 13 Q. You then drove home, discussed things with your wife and
- 14 then called the police from home, called 999 from home?
- 15 A. That's correct.
- Q. By the time that you had called the police, it was 16
- 17 12.36, about 50 minutes after the attack had taken
- 18 place; do you agree?
- 19 A. That's correct.
- 20 Q. Now, that's just an outline and, as I say, we will pick
- 21 up some of the detail but, if we look at paragraph 27,
- 22 please, of your Inquiry witness statement, it is at
- 23 page 7. At the bottom half of the page, you say this
- 24 and I'm going to read this to you, Mr Poland, so that we
- 25 have it as part of your evidence:

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"I do consider that I should have called the police earlier, in hindsight I wish I had done and it is something that I think about every day, what I should have done, and how this is my fault because I drove him there.

"I should have checked on the welfare of the children and helped, I thought there was a gunman shooting at people and believed this to be the person who I had just been shouting at to pay me a fare and threatened to call the police, so I did believe that I was in danger of being a target. I regret not helping the children, their screams were harrowing and I can still hear them when I think back to that day.

"I regret not doing more, I do regret not calling the police sooner and have done my best to explain my actions and thought process on the day within this statement. I cannot imagine what the victims and the families of the victims have been through and they have my deepest sympathy for what happened that day. Since the incident, I have suffered periods of depression, I have had to reduce my work hours and will only collect customers who are known to me. There isn't a day that passes when I don't think about that day and the 'what-ifs', what if I had called the police, what if

careful in your statement to the Inquiry to repeat in a number of places, in a number of ways, both your regret at not calling the police sooner but also seeking to explain that the reason for it was that you were fearful and panicking?

A. That's correct.

Q. We should look at one more reference just on this theme, please, and it is back in your police statement, and I'm sorry to jump around between the statements. It is MERP000266 at page 3, please.

This is in your police statement given very soon after the events, as we have seen, on the same day. If we look at the next to last paragraph, so the penultimate paragraph, right at the end of that paragraph, you say:

"This was terrifying, I was in a state of complete mortal terror and shock."

Is that accurate, Mr Poland?

19 A. Yeah, that is correct.

20 **Q.** So that's matters in overview. I'm going to turn now to the second part of my questioning to look at some matters in more detail. Could I start with the licensing arrangements, please. You tell us in paragraph 2(a) of your Inquiry witness statement that at the time of the attack and now you hold a private hire

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I had got out of my car, what if I had apprehended him for not paying me but I do not know the answers.

"I accept that I could have done more, I still believe my actions as a taxi driver were fit and proper. This is not something that happens every day, it is a tragic event that should never have happened. I did what I did based upon fear, shock and panic, these are human emotions which I could not control."

Are those sentiments that you still feel now and that you would wish to stand as part of your evidence?

11 A. It is, yes.

12 Q. Thank you. I will not go through it all but it is right
 13 to record, if we could just have page 4 of your
 14 statement, please, paragraph 13:

"I can only say that I was in complete shock and that is why I did not do anything to check on the children's welfare."

Also at paragraph 14, page 5 the last part of paragraph 14:

"Despite this I accept I did not call the police.
I can only say that I panicked, and I fled for my own safety. I believed I had heard gunshots ..."

You go on to explain that you weren't thinking clearly.

So on any view, Mr Poland, I think you have been

1 taxi licence issued by Sefton Council; is that right?

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. You remain licensed, you have exhibited your licence.

4 Sir, that's at page 11, we don't need to turn it up.

5 You also say -- if you want to look at it in your own

6 statement, it is paragraph 2(b) on IWS000038, page 1 --

7 that there are terms and conditions of your licence,

8 which you have exhibited to your statement; is that

9 correct?

10 A. That's correct.

MR MOSS: Sir, you have those at pages 13 to 16 of thisstatement.

13 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much.

MR MOSS: Mr Poland, it is right -- we don't need to turn
 those up -- those conditions, the formal conditions of
 the licence, contain matters such as the maintenance of
 your vehicle, the signs you have to display, the rules
 about charges, the duty to report road traffic

about charges, the duty to report road trainc

19 accidents, matters of that kind; would you agree?

20 A. That's correct, yes.

Q. You say at paragraph 4, I'm looking now at IWS000038, at
 page 2, please, top of the page, that there are no terms

and conditions that you are aware of from One Call

24 Taxis. Can you help with that: is there any kind of

25 handbook from One Call Taxis? We have seen a reference

1	to a nandbook in the evidence of Mr Rice, who we are
2	going to hear from as our next witness. Do you recall
3	any kind of a handbook?

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- 4 A. No, there's no handbook.
- Q. What did you understand your safeguarding duties to be
 and your duties in terms of when you should call the
 police when you were, if I can use the phrase, on duty
 as a taxi driver?
- A. Well, yeah, I mean, obviously an incident like that, you think you'd call the police straightaway. But until you're actually there and you are involved in something like that, you don't know what you are thinking. In my mind, I was not thinking straight, I don't know what was out there. My mind had just gone.
- Q. So would you accept that, really, it is a matter just of
 common sense that, if there is a serious incident where
 people may have been seriously injured any, member of
 the public, but perhaps importantly you as a taxi
 driver, when you had taken the perpetrator, it is
 a matter of common sense to call 999?
- 21 **A.** Well, yeah, you automatically think that, yeah.
- Q. The Inquiry has received from Sefton Council -- and can
 we have it on the screen, please, it is SEF000169, the
 council's handbook for taxi drivers. Could we just go
 to the second page, please.

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1 "Required standards and the council's conditions of licence"; do you see that there?

3 A. Yes.

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4 Q. Also reading on a little bit, that:

"All licence holders are expected to familiarise, understand and abide by the relevant parts of the handbook."

It has been adopted as the policy document of the council. It goes on to deal with the requirements of legislation, which I don't need to read to you. Then it says:

"Please ensure you also read the section
'Safeguarding children and young people and child sexual
exploitation' (pages 8-10). As a taxi driver, you are
well placed to see signs of children and young people
being exploited or abused. Information you have heard
or seen could be vital to keeping the child or young
person safe."

19 Mr Poland, had you read and understood that?

20 A. That's correct, yes.

Q. Did you take anything from the fact that the
safeguarding obligations towards children was something
which the council were keen to emphasise in the
introduction to their handbook?

25 A. Could you repeat that question, please?

1 I think that might be the third page. Could we go 2 to the second page, thank you.

3 Is this document familiar to you?

4 A. Yeah, yeah.

5 Q. Had you read it?

6 A. Yeah, yeah.

7 Q. Were you familiar with its content?

8 A. Yes

Q. Can you remember whenabouts -- I don't mean exactly the
 date, nobody can expect you to say that. But can you

11 help us with whenabouts, prior to the attack on 29 July,

12 you would have read it? This is a revised version dated

13 March 2024.

14 A. You get one when you plate your car up.

15 Q. When would you have plated your car up?

16 A. I don't know when it was due. Was it June? Around June17 time, I think.

18 Q. So that's an annual thing, is it?

19 A. Yeah.

Q. Thank you. If we go, please, to page 4 -- thank you --we see the introduction to it, and do we see that it

22 says:

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23 "This handbook contains details of the relevant24 legislation."

Do you see under "Introduction to the handbook",

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Q. Yes. Did you take anything from the fact that the
council flagged up the particular importance of
safeguarding in their handbook?

4 **A.** Yeah.

5 Q. What did you take from that?

6 A. Well, I read it and, you know, what more ...

7 Q. Did you understand from the emphasis --

8 A. Oh, yeah, I understand it --

9 Q. -- that it was particularly important. This was

something that in the introduction was being flagged upby the council:

"Please ensure you also read the section'Safeguarding ...' As a taxi driver, you are well

placed to see signs of children and young people beingexploited or abused."

Did you understand from that that was something that the council was saying was particularly important for taxi drivers, such as yourself?

19 **A.** Yeah.

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20 Q. Then if we just look at that section. It is page 8,21 please. Thank you very much.

22 If we look at the top, please, at paragraph 1, first 23 of all:

"As members of the general community, drivers of hackney carriages and private hire cars are in a good

. 16 1 position to help to keep children and young people safe.

- 2 Drivers work with all sorts of members of the public and
- 3 will often see things that seem strange or troubling,
- 4 but they do not necessarily know what to do about it.
- 5 The following advice is given in order to help licensed
 - drivers to help us protect the children and young people

7 in our area."

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- That's making two points, isn't it, first of all, that while all members of the community may be expected to deal with this, taxi drivers are in a particularly good position to play a part in keeping children and young people safe because you see things; would you agree?
- 14 Yeah, that's right. I mean, if I was to pick somebody
- 15 up and somebody was abusing their kids, I thought they
- 16 weren't treating them right and were really nasty,
- 17 I would be getting in touch with, like, social services
- 18 to ... you know.
- 19 Q. If we just scroll down and we look in the middle of the
- 20 page, advice is then given, it is the second part, on
- 21 the sort of things to look out for. Paragraph 3. I'm
- 22 not going to go through those one by one but, as well as
- 23 emphasising the importance, this was giving guidance to
- 24 taxi drivers such as yourself on things to look out for;
- 25 would you agree?

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- 1 A. It took me three years. Nowadays they give licences to 2 anybody.
- 3 Q. All right. Did you have any safeguarding training 4 within that? I know it's a long time ago?
- 5 A. I think when they brought the NVQs in, I think that it
- 6 was about 15 years ago, at a guess, we did a few nights
- 7 at college and there were all sorts involved in that.
- 8 Q. In those few nights of college, I appreciate it was
- 9 a long time ago for you, but did that touch on your
- safeguarding duties towards children? 10
- A. I can't -- I would have thought so. I can't remember, 11
- 12 it went into everything.
- 13 Q. All right. It sounds, from what you are saying, as
- 14 though there wasn't a requirement for any refresher
- 15
- A. No. As I say, nowadays they give a licence to anyone. 16
- 17 I get picked up when I get a cab, the foreigners that
- 18 can't even speak English, simple as.
- 19 Q. Let's focus on your driving as a driver, Mr Poland, and
- 20 your training and what you did, all right?
- 21 Notwithstanding -- so apart from the fact that you
- 22 hadn't had refresher training, we should take from your
- 23 evidence that you well understood, if a child was being
- 24 mistreated you would be on to social services, if there
- 25 was a more immediate physical harm, you knew to call

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- A. Yes, I would be straight in touch with social services 1
- 2 if I thought there was anything wrong, if there was
- 3 anything I thought wasn't right.
- 4 Q. Then just at the bottom of the page, please, it gives
- 5 a number in paragraph 4 to be contacted, if you see any
- 6 of those signs but then in bold:
- 7 "If, of course, you feel a child or young person is 8 in serious danger of immediate harm, you should call the
- 9 emergency police telephone number, 999."
- 10 So you see that there?
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. As we have already touched upon, while this is set out
- 13 in bold in the handbook for taxi drivers, that's just
- 14 common sense?
- A. That's right. 15
- 16 Q. Thank you. Did you undergo any training to become
- 17 a taxi driver? We have heard reference to a taxi driver
- NVQ, had you done that yourself? 18
- 19 A. Yeah, we did that years ago. That's not involved with
- 20 taxiing no more, that's gone. I had to do a -- it took
- 21 me three years to become a taxi driver. Years ago, you
- 22 had to do -- it was hard work. Nowadays it's easy, they
- 23 let anybody have a licence.
- 24 Q. Right. So a long time ago, you had quite a long period,
- 25 you say, to qualify?

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- 1 999?
- 2 Correct.
- 3 Q. Let's turn then to the collection of AR and your journey
- 4 to Hart Street. We have seen quite a lot of this
- 5 evidence directly and it is evidence both by DCI Pye and
- 6 by the tracking information, so we can take it guite
- 7 shortly. But I think that you received a notification
- 8 on the phone booking app at 11.14 and you would have
- 9 been given the address of 10 Old School Close; is that
- 10 right?
- 11 A. Correct.
- 12 Q. The destination, I think, for this one was given and it
- 13 was to 34a Hart Street?
- 14 A. That's correct.
- 15 Q. Perhaps we should have it on the screen for this, it's
- 16 MERP000266, so your police statement at page 1. Just
- 17 the bottom paragraph.
- 18 The instructions, as you said in your police
 - statement, were to take the customer to 34a Hart Street
- 20 and the passenger was listed as "Simon", yes?
- 21 A. That's correct.
- 22 Q. We now know that "Simon" was a false name. It may sound
- 23 an obvious question, but did you, Mr Poland, have any
- 24 way of knowing at the time that that was a false name?
- 25 A. No.

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- 1 Q. In some ways it may be a trivial matter but when you did
- 2 the pickup, there is no requirement for you to check the
- 3 name at all? You are not expected to check --
- 4 A. No, I picked up at the address where he came out of, so
 I'm not going to ask him his name.
- 6 Q. So, as we have seen from the transcript and we will come
- 7 onto it, your practice was what: just to check the
- 8 destination that they were going to?
- 9 A. Yeah, the destination came up on my app.
- 10 Q. I understand that but I think we can see from the
- 11 transcript that you would say something about the
- 12 destination, trip to wherever it is?
- 13 A. Yeah, when he got in the car I said, "Hart Street", he
- 14 said, "Yeah". That was it.
- 15 Q. Yeah, thank you. We have heard about a previous
- incident on 22 July. In very short terms, that involved
- 17 a disagreement between AR and his father, Alphonse R, as
- to whether or not he could continue to use a taxi, which
- 19 we now know was booked to go to his old school and that
- 20 was a One Call taxi, as well, but a different driver,
- 21 Mr Evanson; do you know him?
- 22 A. I know Steve, yes.
- 23 Q. On the morning of the 29th did you know anything about
- 24 that? Had you heard about that, that --
- 25 A. No.

- 1 that you collected AR at 11.31.03. You give a slightly
- 2 different time in your statement but, if that's what the
- 3 tracking shows, I don't suppose you would disagree with
- 4 it?
- 5 A. Well, the time I picked him up was what I said because
- 6 it had that on my app at the time, so.
- 7 Q. All right. The fare, which may become relevant to some
- 8 questions I will have for you in a little while, was
- 9 £9.70. MERP000266, page 1, bottom of the page, if that
- 10 can stay on the screen for the moment.

11 The approximate fare, do you see at the bottom, was

- 12 £9.70, yes?
- 13 A. That's correct.
- 14 Q. Try to put what you have learnt since out of your mind,
- 15 just thinking how it was and how it appeared to you at
- the time: what do you remember now of the journey
- 17 itself?
- 18 A. I just remember seeing the space. I can't sleep at
- 19 night, I shut my eyes, I see his face, it's just there
- all the time in my head.
- 21 Q. Do you remember that he was sat in the back diagonally
- 22 opposite you, so behind the passenger seat?
- 23 **A.** Yes.
- 24 $\,$ **Q.** Thank you. If we have on the screen, please, ILT000017.

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25 Again, this is not a criticism of you, in terms of what

- 1 Q. -- at this address there was a previous --
- 2 A. No.
- 3 Q. -- aborted fare?
- 4 **A.** If I would have heard about that, I wouldn't have picked 5 him up
- ${\bf 6} \quad {\bf Q.} \quad {\rm Was \ there} \ {\rm a \ system} \ {\rm for \ you} \ {\rm being} \ {\rm warned} \ {\rm about \ that} \ {\rm sort}$
- 7 of case where somebody had ordered a taxi but then
- 8 aborted it? We will hear evidence that AR's father
- 9 actually paid £5 to Mr Evanson to cover his costs but is
- 10 there a system to report those sorts of things
- 11 happening?
- 12 A. Well, generally, yeah. If there's -- it's like if
- 13 I picked someone up and they were really nasty or
- something, I wouldn't pick them up again, I'd ban them
- from my cab and, if they were really bad, you'd get in
- touch with the office and say "Block that address". And
- then no taxi in our firm will pick them up again but
- they could go to another one anyway, so it makes no
- 19 difference if you did block them because they would use
- 20 another taxi firm, so.
- 21 Q. But this address, by definition, certainly hadn't been
- 22 blocked in that way?
- 23 A. Well, they obviously hadn't been blocked, no.
- 24 Q. So far as the timings are concerned, the Cab9 system,
- which is the app, I think, that does tracking, shows

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- 1 was said initially and on the drop off, you gave
- 2 an account in your statement but we actually have
- a transcript of it. So, you see the first thing that's
- 4 transcribed is:

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- "You all right, mate? Lift to Hart Street?"
- 6 That's consistent, isn't it, with what you told the
- 7 Inquiry a moment ago, that you wouldn't check on the
- 8 name, no need to, you just check the destination, yes?
- 9 A. Yeah, I just presumed he was going to pick his car up at
- my mate's spray shop, which is next door to where the
- 11 incident happened.
- 12 Q. Thank you. Then all that he said was, "Yep". If we
- look at the timings, that's the only thing that appears
- 14 to have been said throughout the whole journey?
- 15 A. That's correct
- 16 Q. The app shows that when you reached Hart Street it was
- 17 11.44.48; does that sound about right?
- 18 A. Yeah, that's correct.
- 19 Q. Let's look at the arrival then, sticking with what we
- 20 have on the page there, please. So we can see you say:
- 21 "Just here mate, is it?"
- He says:
- 23 "Is this 34a Hart Street?"
- 24 Do you see that there?
- 25 A. Yeah, yeah.

- Q. We have looked at that for a slightly different purpose,
 Mr Poland, in seeing how clear AR was about the address,
- 3 34a, which is the correct address for the Hart Space.
 - Was the Hart Space itself something you were familiar with?
- A. No, it used to be a gym years ago, down there, I've
 never picked up or dropped off there for years and
 years. I didn't even know it was used. There is no
- 9 sign up there saying there was something going on,nothing like that.
- 11 Q. So, as we see in this exchange, although he had askedfor 34a Hart Street, the exchange was:
- 13 "That's it, yeah, down there?"

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- He said, "Down there?" questioning, and you say:
- 15 "Yeah, it's there, down there, the spray shop."
- 16 I don't raise this critically of you, it's just
- a matter of fact that it looks from that as though, in
- 18 fact, you directed him slightly in the wrong way to his
- 19 intended destination because you were pointing him in
- 20 the direction of the spray shop, the garage, thinking
- 21 that's what he actually wanted?
- 22 **A.** Yeah, as I say, I thought he was picking his car up.
- 23 I didn't even know that next alleyway was used, as
- 24 I say. I never picked up there, dropped off for ages.
- 25 I just thought it was an empty building, and it looked
 - something with his arm or his hoodie. He appeared to be holding this tightly and not swinging his arms whilst he walked. MALE ONE headed towards Julian's business."
 - Do you have any recollection of that aspect now or not at all?
- A. Not really, I don't have a recollection of that now but,
 thinking about it, he might have walked that bit funny
 but nothing suspect, you know, at the time.
- 9 Q. So whatever it was that was slightly odd about how he
 10 was walking, it wasn't enough to arouse your suspicion
 11 at the time?
- 12 **A.** No
- 13 Q. Mr Poland, I think it is probably most helpful that if 14 you really don't know the answer to my next question 15 that you don't try to guess, all right? But knowing as 16 we know now that AR must have had a knife on him, from what you did see, are you able to help the Inquiry and 17 18 the families with where he may have been hiding the 19 knife or were you simply not able to say and, again, if 20 you don't know, please don't guess?
- 21 **A.** No, I haven't got a clue where he was hiding the knife.
- Obviously, I didn't know he had a knife, did I?
 Q. Thank you. It's an obvious question but one I should ask you, just so that it's absolutely clear, you didn't see a knife or any other weapon at any time during the

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- an empty building because there's no signs up there or anything.
- Q. I follow. Then, we get the start, don't we, of you, notat all unreasonably, asking for payment:
- 5 "So are we cash or card, mate?"
- 6 He says:
- 7 "Spray shop?"
- 8 You say:
- 9 "Number 34a, yeah? Are we cash or card, mate? Are to we cash or card, mate?"
- 11 Presumably at that stage you start to realise that
- he doesn't seem to be paying and, indeed, was walking off?
- 14 A. Yeah, that is correct.
- 15 $\,$ Q. Can we go back, please, to your police statement at
- MERP000266 and just look at page 3, please. Mr Poland,
- 17 I want you to understand that there is no criticism of
- 18 you on this aspect implied in my questions. I think the
- 19 families, in particular, would just like your assistance
- 20 because, at this stage, I think you did notice something
- 21 about how AR was walking. Can you remember that now?
- 22 A. Not really, no.
- 23 Q. So what you said in your statement was:
- "MALE ONE kept heading away from me, ignoring my
 honest questions. It appeared that MALE ONE was doing
- 1 journey or indeed when he had got out?
- 2 A. No, if I thought he would have had a knife on him,
- 3 things would have been different.
- 4 **Q.** Thank you. So, he is going towards the garage, he has
- 5 not paid, I think you followed him in the car; is that
- 6 right?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. You saw Colin Parry, I think, who is Mr Medlock's
- 9 business partner?
- 10 **A.** Yes.
- 11 Q. There is a reference to the fact in your police
- 12 statement -- we don't need to turn it up -- that
- Mr Parry, and others perhaps, were saying to pay the
- 14 driver, to pay you?
- 15 A. Correct.
- 16 Q. We don't need to look at the detail of this, I can just
- 17 lead the evidence from you because it is something that
- 18 you corrected in your statement to the Inquiry, which
- you think wasn't clear enough in your police statement.
- 20 But I think that, at this stage, he walked back past you
- 21 heading back towards Hart Street; is that correct?
- 22 A. That's correct.
- 23 Q. You reversed out of the Masters Spray Shop driveway and
- 24 followed him at a very slow speed as he walked into the
- driveway and then the carpark of the small industrial

- 1 estate in which the Hart Space is located, yes?
- 2 A. That's correct.
- Q. You were effectively driving alongside him as he was
 working in the direction on foot, and you are still in
 your car; is that right?
- 6 A. That's right.

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Q. If we can have back on screen, please, ILT000017, if we
 can just have the bottom half of the page, please. We
 had seen the start of the "Are we cash or card", then:

"Excuse me, mate. Oi, not paid, mate. You've not paid. How ya -- what are you doing?"

Then over the page, please. Can we have the top half of the page just enlarged. There just seems to be a difficulty with that page. If I could just have one moment, please.

What I'm going to do just for a moment is take a break and get the IT fixed but I think you will be familiar enough with the material to know that, within the transcript which you have seen before, one of the things that you say, Mr Poland, as AR was walking across the carpark is:

"You pay now or the police are on their fucking way, you knob."

Okay? Now, don't worry about the language, I'm just interested in exploring that with you. Obviously, at

prepared to shout the odds; you are not a shrinking violet; would that be fair?

3 A. Correct.

- Q. You explain in your Inquiry statement -- we don't need
 to turn it up -- that you then saw him try one door,
 which wouldn't open, then he tried the other door which
 did and you saw him walk upstairs?
- 8 A. Yeah, he went straight up and I was thinking, "He's not 9 said much", I'm thinking, "He's gone to get some money", 10 I was thinking. I thought, "He's gone up to get my 11 money". And then that's when, a minute or two later, 12 I heard all these screams, and I thought, "What's going on there". What I thought I heard was gunshots, four or 13 14 five gunshots, that's when I got worried and I thought, 15 "I'm not going to confront anybody with a gun", I don't
- 16 think anybody would. 17 Q. Just, at that stage, I was asked on behalf of some of 18 the Core Participants to ask you why you didn't call the 19 police at the stage that he'd walked off without paying his fare but, if I have understood your evidence today 20 21 correctly, you're saying when he was going up the 22 stairs, you thought he might be somehow going to go and 23 get some money still to pay you?
- 24 A. Yeah, I thought he was going up to pay me.
- 25 **Q.** We can see from the CCTV footage, which we won't play 31

that stage, he has still not paid and, by then, you have asked him a number of times, yes?

- 3 A. That's correct.
- Q. You are entitled, of course, to be angry to an extent
 about that. How often is it for fares not to be paid,
 for people just to walk off without paying the fare?
- A. It's not very often now, to be fair. Years ago it was
 happening every week. Nowadays, it doesn't really
 happen, to be fair. That's the first time I'd had it in
 probably 18 months, two years.
- 11 Q. Thank you. In fairness to you, no doubt, if you had had any suspicion at all that AR was carrying a knife, you probably wouldn't have been saying things to him like,
 14 "The police are on their way, you knob". You probably wouldn't have confronted him in that way, if you thought
- 17 A. If I thought he had a knife, I probably would have got18 out and disarmed him.
- 19 Q. You would have got out and disarmed him, you think?

20 A. Yeah, it's only a knife.

he had a knife?

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- Q. The fact that you were prepared to confront him
 verbally, "You pay now or the police are on their fucking way, you knob", might be thought to suggest,
- Mr Poland, that you are the sort of person who, if somebody has done something wrong to you, you are

you have mentioned the gunshots that you thought that
 you had heard. Are we able now to bring up
 ILT000017_0002? ILT000017, at page 2. Just the bottom

for obvious reasons, that you waited a short while and

of that page.
 Now, I'm going to come back to this call, Mr Poland,
 that you made to Mr Medlock in a moment. But the timing

of this call was only a minute after you had left the

9 Hart Space, all right?

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. I'm really raising this transcript at this stage, in
 fairness to you, because straightaway, when you made
 this call to Mr Medlock, you were saying:

14 "I think he shot some people."

Do you see that there transcribed as part of your call to Mr Medlock?

17 A. Yeah, that's correct.

18 Q. So I'm not going to suggest to you for a moment,
 19 Mr Poland, that you didn't genuinely believe that what
 20 you heard was gunshots, all right, because it is
 21 something you were saying straightaway afterwards?

22 A. That's correct, yes.

Q. I'm not going to ask any more about what caused you to
 think that, it is distressing for the families and

25 I apologise that we even have to go into it in that

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1 detail, all right?

> So gunshots and screams. In terms of the severity of what you heard because you thought that you had heard gunshots, it stands to reason, doesn't it, that you would have realised immediately that this was a very serious incident?

7 A. Oh, yes.

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- 8 Q. It wasn't just that you believed that AR must have had 9 a gun, you believed that he had a loaded gun and had 10 used it?
- A. That's correct. 11
- Q. You give -- I don't think there's any need to turn it 12
- 13 up -- but you give, sadly, an extremely vivid
- 14 description of the screams, which I think stays with you
- 15 to this day?
- 16 A. That's correct.
- 17 Q. It is in that context that you use that phrase that
- 18 I looked at in the overview at the start of my
- 19 questioning, "complete mortal terror and shock"; is that
- 20
- 21 A. That's correct.
- 22 Q. If we could have on screen, please, MERP000266. It is
- 23 your police statement at page 3. Right at the bottom of
- 24 page 3, bottom paragraph:
- 25 "I then saw a massed huddle of children, aged
 - 33
- 1 Did you see more children fleeing?
- 2 A. I think there was probably four or five, I would say.
- 3 Q. You say in your Inquiry witness statement -- I'm just
- 4 going to give the reference, we don't need to bring it
- 5 up, paragraph 13(a) -- that you did not know that the
- 6 children had been hurt or injured; is that right?
- 7 A. I didn't know that anybody had been injured because
 - I wasn't in there. Like I say, I heard the gunshots so,
- 9 you know, I didn't see anyone injured but, as I say,
- 10 I heard the gunshots, so I was presuming something had
- 11 gone on.

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- 12 Q. It was a little bit more than that, was it not,
- 13 Mr Poland, because you'd said to Mr Medlock, "I think he
- 14 shot some people".
- A. I'm just presuming he shot people because I heard the 15
- gunshots. I didn't know, I wasn't in there. 16
- 17 Q. No, and while we all can understand that you can't have
- 18 known for sure and you didn't know, from what you say in
- your statement, "I saw the children running but did not 19
- know they had been hurt or injured", but your belief at 20
- 21 the time was that he had shot people?
- 22 A. Well, yeah. I mean, that's why I rang me mate up to
- 23 tell him, "I've heard gunshots and just be careful", you
- 24
- 25 Turning to then you leaving the scene. We know from the Q. 35

approximately six or seven years old, stumble and run in 1 2 a panicked hurry out of 34a Hart Street. They were 3 screaming."

> Again, I apologise to the families for the detail but, in this context, it is relevant:

"It was like a stampede for their lives. I could not describe the children any further."

If we go over the page. You say that, as a result of that, you then feared for your life and you thought that he was going to harm you, this is your police statement given on the day, because you had been shouting at him asking for the money and you immediately made your way away from the scene in your vehicle; is that still true and accurate?

- 15 A. That's correct, yes. That's accurate.
- 16 Q. We have given you, Mr Poland, and I do understand that 17 it would have been difficult for you as well as for 18 others, access to your dashcam footage. Do you accept
- 19 that, as you were driving away, children were fleeing,
- 20 they were alongside your car, yes?
- 21 A. That's correct.
- 22 Q. And that, as you drove further down the driveway, you 23 can clearly be seen in the rear-facing dashcam looking
- 24 in your rear view camera?
- 25 That's correct.

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1 dashcam footage that you drove for something in the 2 region of two to three minutes away from Hart Street.

> Sir, for your note the route is right onto Hart Street, left up Lime Street, right onto Sussex Road and then Oak Street, continuing onto Manning Road and then the Brompton Road but the details, in essence, don't really matter.

"Complete". The data shows that you marked the job "Complete" when you were parked up on Brompton Road, which was 11.49.16. Just help the Chair to understand why you marked the job complete at that stage?

Could I just understand about the marking of the job

- 13 Because I never actually considered marking a job
- 14 complete when what had gone on, do you know what I mean.
- 15 Just help us to understand that. Was there anything on 16 the app that you could say -- for example, to mark it as
- 17 not complete because he hadn't paid or there has been
- 18 an incident?
- A. No, when you finished a job you swipe it, as if the job 19 20 is completed but I wasn't bothered about doing that.
- 21 That's, you know, irrelevant to what's happened, isn't
- 22
- 23 Q. It is an obvious point, Mr Poland, but I have to ask you 24
- about it: you were not so shocked that it made you
- 25 incapable of driving, were you, because you were able to

- 1 drive lawfully and normally, not erratically, for three 2 minutes before pulling up on Brompton Road? 3 A. I don't remember where I was driving or what happened, 4 it just -- I don't know, my mind had gone. 5 But what's the answer to my question? You were not so 6 shocked that it stopped you from driving, were you? 7 A. I was driving, yeah, but I couldn't recall where I drove 8 or what I did. 9 **Q.** From the overview and your repeated statements of regret 10 and acceptance in your statement, should we understand that you accept that what ought to have been done by you 11 12 at this stage was you should have stopped on Hart 13 Street, as soon as you were out of harm's way, and 14 called the police? 15 A. Yeah. 16 Q. Had you heard about the police advice, "Run, Hide, 17 Tell", the general advice that's given by police and 18 counter-terrorism police on what to do in the event of 19 an attack? Is that something you've come across on 20 adverts or on telly or on social media? 21 A. No. 22 Q. No? 23 A. No. 24 The first call that you made to Mr Medlock, we have Q. 25 touched on it: you made that call while you were still 1 page 2, could we have the bottom half of the page 2 expanded. So "Caller 1" is Mr Medlock. You are calling 3 him but he is answering the phone. Presumably, he's 4 your number saved, so he knows it is you. He starts by 5 saying: 6 "Dude." 7 You say: 8 "Mr Medlock, are you in work now?" 9 He says, "Yeah". 10 You say: 11 "Well, fucking -- I've just dropped a lad off, 12 I chased him down your thing. Carl was there." 13 Is that possibly a reference to "Col was there", 14 Colin Parry? A. That's "Col". 15 "He ran down next door. That attitude thing and I think 16 Q. 17 he shot some people." 18 I have asked you about the "shot some people": 19 "Do you not hear the screaming and shots go off?"
 - Mr Medlock says: "Yeah, I can." You say: "He just fucking shot everyone, ain't he?" You say -- sorry, "Lucky you weren't in it", which is, I think, what Mr Medlock was saying. 39

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driving to Brompton Road, the timings show it was about 1 2 a minute after you had pulled away. Why did you call 3 Mr Medlock? 4 A. Because he is my best mate of 40-odd years and I was 5 just scared for his welfare. 6 Q. Would you accept that, in addition to Mr Medlock, many 7 others may have been at risk. If you were scared for 8 his welfare, the best thing to do would have been to 9 call the police? 10 A. Yeah, thinking about it, I can't understand why I did 11 call Julian, I don't know why I didn't call the police. Like I say, my mind had gone, I was in shock for a good 12 13 24 hours after. 14 Q. I understand. If we look at your police statement, 15 please, MERP000266 at page 4. The second paragraph 16 please: 17 "I was in a state of shock, I called my friend 18 Julian, as I referred to previously in this statement, 19 in order to tell him to mind his safety and keep 20 21 When you told the police that in your initial 22 statement, that that's the reason why you called 23 Mr Medlock, was that true? 24 Α. 25 Q. Could we look at ILT000017, please. If we go back to 1 If we go over the page please, top of the page: 2 "A black guy I picked up from Banks. Then there's 3 me chasing him. I went down the thing and said, 'You're 4 going to fucking pay now?' And, like, he shot up stairs 5 and I heard these fucking shots, and I just fucking shot off, Jim." 6 7 Then you say: "Lucky he didn't fucking shoot me, weren't it?" 8 Mr Medlock says something that's not picked up and 9 10 then: 11 "Are you there, Jim?" 12 It looks like the call drops out. So, that's the call between the two of you. There was, in fact, no 13 14 mention there at all, Mr Poland, of you saying to 15 Mr Medlock, "Stay safe, stay indoors", was there? 16 A. I'm not sure. 17

20 A. I rang him up and said, "Be careful". 21 Q. With respect, you didn't say, "Be careful". I have just 22 read out the totality of what's caught on the dashcam, 23 which is why I asked you if it was true that the reason 24 for you calling Mr Medlock was to check on his welfare 25 and to advise him to stay indoors. So why did you call

- Mr Medlock? 1
- 2 A. I thought that's what I said to him.
- 3 Q. Could we have it back on the screen, please. Again, we 4
- are not going to play this footage but you could have 5 been calling 999 at this time, couldn't you, instead of
- 6 Mr Medlock on a hands-free --
- 7 A. I could have done, I knew the police were on their way.
- 8 Q. Well, how did you know that the police were well aware 9 at this stage?
- 10 A. All the noise, there was every police car about going 11 there.
- 12 That is not accurate. At this stage, one minute after Q. 13 the incident, the police were not there. It was, in 14 rough terms, some 9.5 to 10 minutes before the emergency 15 services attended.

16 We are not going to play this footage but the Chair 17 has seen it and Mr Poland we have given you a chance to 18 review it. The outside observer listening to this 19 exchange may pick up a sense of disbelief from you about 20 what had happened but not mortal terror and shock, as 21 you described in your police statement. That wasn't 22 your state at the time that you made this call, was it?

- 23 A. All I can say is I was in shock and, you know, I didn't 24 know what was what.
- 25 Q. The outside observer considering this exchange might
- 1 Q. We can see that the call dropped, Mr Poland, but you 2 didn't try to call Mr Medlock back to ask, "Are the 3 girls okay? Has anyone been injured? Has somebody called 999?" You didn't do any of that? 4
- 5 A. I don't think so.
- 6 Q. Well, you didn't, did you, because we have looked at the 7 transcript; it is not a question of "I don't think so"?
- 8 A. I can't remember, really, what went on, so ... I'm just 9 going by what's in front of me now on the screen.
- Q. All right. Could we have on the screen, please, 10 11 MERP000248. If we just look, please, at that. This is 12 the statement of Mr Medlock, and note please that it is 13 a statement that he also gave on 29 July, and I want to 14 focus on the third paragraph. So on 29 July, present at 15 place of work, and so on, and then he says:

"I was in the workshop and I received a phone call from my friend [that is you] who is a local taxi driver in the area. He (Mr Poland) stated to me, 'There is a lad just come down your alleyway, who has not paid the taxi fare. I wouldn't phone the police for a tenner'."

Do you see that there?

22 A. Yes.

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23 Now, Mr Poland, so that this is not misunderstood, the 24 Inquiry has had carefully transcribed the two phone 25 calls that you made to Mr Medlock, and nowhere in those

- 1 think that the purpose of this call was more a sort of
- 2 "Guess, what's just happened to me" call to your friend
- 3 Mr Medlock; is that fair or unfair?
- 4 A. Unfair.
- 5 Q. At any time during this call, did you say anything about 6 those young girls or their welfare?
- 7 A. I don't think so. I really don't know.
- Q. Did you ask Mr Medlock whether he knew whether the girls 8 9 were injured or not?
- 10 A. He told me. He said they had run out into the road and 11 they'd been cut.
- 12 Q. Not in this phone call because I have just read you the 13 totality of the transcript.
- 14 A. That might have been the next phone, was it then?
- 15 Q. So on this call, did you ask after the girls in any way 16 whether they are injured, whether they were okay?
- 17 **A.** No, because I drove off because I heard the gunshots.
- Q. Did you ask if the police or ambulance had been called 18 19 by Mr Medlock?
- 20 A. I think that was on the next phone call, I'm not sure.
- 21 That's what Mr Medlock had told me.
- 22 So, at this time, you didn't know whether 999 had been
- 23 called at all, you hadn't called it yourself and it's
- 24 not something --

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25 A. The first call, no, I wouldn't have thought so, no.

two phone calls, while you were still driving, is there any sign of you saying, "I wouldn't phone the police for a tenner", all right? So it's simply not captured in the phone calls that you made and it doesn't appear that you said that in the calls that you made to Mr Medlock during the journey.

But if we look at your Inquiry witness statement, please, at paragraph 20(a), so that's IWS000038, and it is page 5, bottom of the page. This is where the Inquiry was asking you about your use of that phrase, and you said:

"I can see from the dashcam footage that this is not something I said to Julian in the call. I cannot recall specifically saying this to Julian, however it is right that I would not call the police if someone did not pay a £10 fare and so I may have said this to him at some point."

So I just want to explore that with you. If we just go over the page to complete your paragraph 20, you go on to say:

"I do not believe that the police would assist if I were to call about a £10 fare. Given matters they have had to deal with, this would be very low priority and in my view it is not worth the time in reporting as it is wasting their time. I have never called the

police for non-payment of fare, however, there have been other times when this has happened."

So if I have understood your statement correctly, what you are saying is you may have said that to Mr Medlock at some time, and it would have had to have been on the day, "I wouldn't phone the police for a tenner", but what you are saying is that that should be understood as you saying, "If there was a £10 fare that someone hadn't paid, I wouldn't bother calling the police over such a small amount of money"?

A. That's correct. 11

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- 12 Q. That's why, in fairness to you, I emphasised, when we 13 looked at the data, that the fare was £9.70 because, in 14 fairness to you, that's very close to a tenner. But 15 Mr Poland, another way that the phrase "I wouldn't phone 16 the police for a tenner" could be read is you saying 17 simply, "I wouldn't call the police even if somebody paid me". In other words, "I'm not somebody who likes 18 19 to call the police and I wouldn't do it unless -- even 20 if someone paid me a tenner". Is that the sense in 21 which you said that to Mr Medlock, "I wouldn't call the 22 police even if somebody paid me?"
- 23 A. I don't know what you mean by that, "I wouldn't call the 24 police if somebody paid me". If somebody paid me to 25 call the police --

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- 1 before we break. We know that, after this call and 2 after stopping, you took another fare and I just want to 3 deal with that. That is presumably something which you 4 actively had to accept off the app; is that correct? 5
- A. Well, no, you have got an "Accept" button and a "Reject" 6 button, and I was going to reject it, obviously,
- 7 I didn't really want to do another job, I accepted it
 - and I thought, "I will just go and get this job done",
- 9 I must have thought at the time, you know, which
- 10 I shouldn't have done but, obviously, with my mind the 11 way it was at the time.
- 12 Q. Is that actually right? Are you sure it wasn't just 13 that you went on to do your next fare?
- 14 A. Yeah, I went on to do another job --
- Q. You are saying now that, effectively, what happened is 15 16 that you pressed "Accept" by mistake and you meant to 17 press "Reject"?
- A. Hmm. 18

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- Q. Is that true? 19
- 20 Α. That's true.
- Q. It might be suggested that what you did was deliberately 21 22 accept the next job, moved onto the next thing; what do
- 23 you say about that?
- 24 Well, no. I certainly wouldn't have accepted another 25 job -- I did accept it and I don't know what was going 47

- In other words, if somebody who didn't like the police, 1
- 2 somebody who didn't like dealing with the police and
- 3 wouldn't phone the police, even if they saw a crime,
- 4 might say something like, "I wouldn't phone the police
- for a tenner", in other words, "I wouldn't phone the 5
- 6 police even if you paid me because I don't like them".
- 7 I'm asking whether that is the sense in which you used
- 8 that phrase to Mr Medlock or whether you really did
- 9 mean, "I wouldn't call the police over a £10 fare";
- 10 which was it?
- 11 A. If I didn't get paid a fare, I wouldn't call the police.
- 12 Q. Do you have any problem with phoning the police if there
- 13 is a need for you to do so?
- 14 A. If I thought -- if there was a need to call the police, 15 I would.
- 16 **Q.** You are not somebody, is that your evidence to this
- 17 Inquiry, who would say, "I'm not going to call the
- 18 police whatever the circumstances, I wouldn't call them
- 19 even if you paid me?" You are not somebody who holds
- 20 that attitude?

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- 21 A. No, I would call the police if I thought I needed to on
- 22 an incident but, obviously, this time I was that
 - shocked, I had to get me head together and then I went
- 24 home and called them.
- 25 Q. I'm just going to deal with one small further topic

- 1 through my mind then but I took the job -- like I said,
- 2 if I accepted the job by accident, I should have just
- 3 rang One Call up and said, "Listen, can you take that
- 4 job back off me", but I did go -- I went ahead and did
- 5 the job, which I don't know why. I couldn't tell you
- 6 why. My head just wasn't there.
- 7 Q. That job, we know, lasted for about 15 minutes, yes?
- 8 A. I would have thought so. As I say, I don't really know 9 what I was doing.
- 10 Q. We know that during that -- and this wasn't you,
- 11 Mr Poland, it was your female passenger but she asked to
- 12 have an intermediate stop, to stop and go to a shop,
- 13 and, I think, you drove around the corner and picked her
- 14 up from the carpark; do you remember that? If not, you
- 15 may have seen it on the dashcam?
- A. I remember stopping at a shop on the way to where she 16 17 was going.
- 18 During the course of that journey, we know from the
- 19 transcript that you started off by having a chat about
- 20 very mundane things, very normal things. So, there was
- 21 a discussion between you and your female passenger about
- 22 the fact that you wouldn't be working for very much
- 23 longer. She said it was a nice day, saying you have got
- 24 to be working, and the effect of your response was,
- 25 "I won't be working for very much longer, I'm a very

1		early riser, I normally finish about this time, I won't
2		be out for very much longer", and she was asking you "Do
3		you go to bed early?", and you were explaining matters
4		of that kind to her. So a very normal, run-of-the-mill,
5		normal conversation; do you accept that that's a fair
6		summary?
7	A.	I can't remember anything of that but, if I've said
8		that, I've said that, haven't I? I honestly can't

- 9 remember what I --
- 10 Q. But it is on the transcript, so perhaps you will take it from me at the moment. Also, during that journey, you 11 passed a police car that drove in the opposite direction 12 13 with its sirens and lights on, blue lights on, 14 travelling at quite high speed, and your female
- 15 passenger says, "I wonder what that was", and you said: 16 "He's in a rush, isn't he?"
- 17 Have you seen that on the transcript?
- I don't recall that. 18 Α.
- 19 Did you think that that vehicle might be going to the 20 attack that you had witnessed?
- 21 A. I would have thought so.
- 22 Q. Did you think that at the time?
- 23 A. I couldn't tell you.

24 Later on, I think there was heavy traffic you and said Q. 25 to the passenger:

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like a fairly normal exchange with no signs of you

- 2 shaking, you are driving normally, you are talking 3 normally, is it really right that you were suffering 4 from shock to the degree that you state? 5 A. I would have thought so because that evening, when my 6 car got towed, all I could say to the person who took my 7 car away, I said, "I need to work in the morning" and, 8 looking back now, why would I ever possibly, after what 9 went on, even if I'd have had my car. I wouldn't have 10 gone to work -- I'd have had like a good month off.
- Q. All right. Mr Poland, we are going to take a break, all 11 12 right, and I appreciate that I'm asking you these 13 questions in a lot of detail but, as has been explained 14 to you, I think, one of the reasons I'm asking you 15 questions in a lot of detail is it will very much limit 16 the number of questions, if any, that others have to ask 17 you. Do you understand?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 MR MOSS: All right. So we are going to take a short break 20 and we have got a good way through your questioning but, 21 if the learned Chair is content, we will come back in 22 about 15 minutes or so. Somebody is taking a note of 23 your evidence here and we need to give them a break. So 24 we will just break for 15 minutes, if we may, Mr Poland?

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25 **A**. Yes.

1 "You can tell the kids are off, with the traffic." 2 Again, have you seen that in the transcript? 3 A. If that's what I said, that's what I said, yeah. 4 Q. When you dropped her off, so that she could go to the shop, you had a period you had to drive to park up 5 6 somewhere, but you did that. That was another opportunity, when parked up, to call 999, wasn't it? 7 8 Yeah, I think that was when I rang One Call, to make 9 sure I got the right address to where I picked him up --10 Q. Mr Poland, I'm going to stop you there because, in fact, 11 it wasn't. That was still to come. You still had the second call with Mr Medlock and you still had, after 12 13 that, the call to One Call Taxis. But this is a little 14 while after the immediate event and you had been 15 chatting to your fare in certainly what, on the dashcam 16 footage, appears to be a very normal way and you have 17 got an opportunity, parked up, and that was another 18 opportunity that you didn't take to call 999; would you 19 accept that? 20 A. 21 Q. She comes back in the car, you take her to her final 22 destination, and there is a normal exchange about the 23 fare and wishing each other well at the end. Again, 24 although your evidence to the Inquiry is that you were 25 incredibly shocked, to the outside observer, that seemed

SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: We will sit again just after 11.45. 2 (11.27 am) 3 (A short break)

4 (11.48 am)

5 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Yes, Mr Moss.

6 MR MOSS: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Mr Poland.

7 Mr Poland, I have been asked to remind you just to keep your voice up. We all appreciate it is difficult but just try to keep your voice up if you can?

A. Yeah, no probs.

Q. Thank you very much. We have been dealing with the fare, with the young lady that you took. I want to turn to your second call with Mr Medlock. So can we go back to the transcript, please. It is ILT000017 at page 5. If we can look about a third of the way down, we see:

"Mr Medlock, are you in one piece?"

It may not matter: do you remember whether he called you or whether you called him?

- I don't know, I can't remember.
- Q. So you are saying:

"Mr Medlock, are you in one piece?" He says something inaudible:

"... he's stabbed about 15 kids, one's dead."

Again, I'm going to apologise because the content of this is relevant but distressing. You say:

1		"You're joking? Christ."	1		You continue:
2		Mr Medlock:	2		"I went in and asked him for me money"
3		"And and"	3		Top of the page, please:
4		You say:	4		" and then I followed up the other entry and
5		"It wasn't a gun then?"	5		that's when they went inside and I'm sure I heard
6		Mr Medlock:	6		shots."
7		"No, well, we don't think it was."	7		Mr Medlock:
8		You said:	8		"I know police will want to know where you picked
9		"I thought I heard gunshots."	9		him up from."
10		Again, pausing there. Just in fairness to you,	10		Just pausing there. This was Mr Medlock making
11		absolutely no doubt that that was a genuine belief on	11		clear to you, wasn't it, that the police were going to
12		your part. Mr Medlock:	12		want to speak to you?
13		"Kids are all over kids are all over the show."		Α.	Correct.
14		"Fucking hell", you say, "it's a good job I didn't			You say:
15		"	15	α.	"Oh, I know, yeah. It was in Banks. I think it was
16		Then there's something inaudible. Then Mr Medlock	16		10b Old School Close, opposite the Co-op there, the new
17		asks:	17		Co-op."
		"How come he came to 36a?"	18		Mr Medlock says:
18					•
19		You say:	19		"Couple of guys seen a taxi come down our way, none
20		"He just said, 'Is this, like, number 34?' That's	20		of them knew it were you."
21		all that's all he actually said."	21		You say:
22		Mr Medlock:	22		"I wonder what he was playing at."
23		"Number 34?"	23		Mr Medlock:
24		You said:	24		"I don't know but obviously the police want to know
25		"And I pointed him at yours and he went up yours." 53	25		your" 54
1		Then there's something inaudible. So for a second	1		"Fucking hell, of all the people I pick up, Jim.
2		time, Mr Medlock was advising you that the police would	2		Unbelievable, innit? Unbelievable, Christ. And there
3		want to speak to you; would you agree?	3		is me chasing him and shouting at him saying, 'I want
4	A.	That's correct.	4		fucking paying'. Christ. I was lucky there myself,
5	Q.	He goes on to say:	5		weren't I?"
6		"The police, they will ask for ya."	6		Mr Medlock says:
7		You say:	7		"Yeah, yeah."
8		"Yeah, yeah, okay. No problem, yeah, yeah."	8		Mr Medlock says:
9		Again, in fairness, to you, you weren't indicating	9		"All right, mate, no worries."
10		any difficulty with you speaking to the police; would	10		You say:
11		that be fair?	11		"All right."
12	A.	Yes.	12		It is transcribed as "Jim" but I don't know whether
13	Q.	You were saying "No problem".	13		it might be "Jule" but:
14	A.	That's correct.	14		"I will catch you soon, mate."
15	Q.	"No problem", and Mr Medlock says:	15		That exchange, when you re-read it now and you are
16	٠.	"I'll speak to you later but there must be about 15	16		saying, "Of all the people I pick up. Unbelievable.
17		kids stabbed."	17		And there's me chasing him and shouting at him, 'I want
18		Mr Medlock:	18		fucking paying'. I was lucky there myself", in response
19		"One body's dead on the floor. Another one was dead	19		to what Mr Medlock was saying to you about the fact that
		on the floor."	20		
20 21			20		15 kids had been stabbed, when you read that now, does
22		You say: "You're joking?"	21		it seem to you that you were quite preoccupied with how lucky you had been, rather than with the injuries to the
23		He says:	23		girls?
24		"No."		Α.	I think I was lucky that with him being sat behind me,
			24 / 25	Α.	
25		Then you say:	20		me not knowing he had a knife on him, he could have just

1		got me just like that. I mean, but he didn't, did he?	1		that will be fine, I think. So this is the start of the
2		No.	2		call that you are making to One Call Taxis and, if we
3	Q.	No, but when you are told about quite how serious it is,	3		just go to the bottom of page 7 for context. You are
4		in the terms that we see set out here, "There must be	4		giving a description:
5		about 15 kids, one's probably dead on the floor, dead on	5		"He had a mask on, a black guy, and then he went
6		the floor", your reaction is to think about how lucky	6		into sort of next door but of me mate's place, like
7		you were and, again, there is no further questioning	7		a fitness place."
8		from you about the girls, is there?	8		If we can go over the page, please, to the top of
9	A.	It does sound pretty bad, yeah.	9		page 8:
10	Q.	As a matter of factual accuracy, I appreciate that	10		"He went in there and the gunshots and the screaming
11		after, this call, you did call One Call Taxis and ask	11		and I shot off quick. I thought, "Fucking hell, could
12		about the pickup address. But you did do that and then	12		have been me that". I know I shot off quick though."
13		drive home and then speak to your wife before you made	13		The caller from One Call Taxis says:
14		the 999 call. Why didn't you make it straightaway after	14		"I don't blame you. I tell you what, it's the best
15		the call to Mr Medlock, who had really been saying the	15		£10 you have never had."
16		police are going to want to speak to you?	16		That's what the caller from One Call Taxis is
17	A.	I just thought the police, like, were on the way because	17		saying. You say:
18		I had heard, like, a lot of sirens.	18		"Yeah, I know, I'm absolutely shaken, I tell ya."
19	Q.	As I have indicated, you stopped and you made a call to	19		The call operator says:
20		One Call Taxis. Mr Poland, I'm not going to go through	20		"I can tell by your voice", and I think it is your
21		the totality of that. Can we just have it on the	21		name Gary.
22		screen, please, at ILT000017, page 7, first of all.	22		So you know I have been asking questions about how
23		There is one point that it is only right that I should	23		shocked you were. Did you know this person? It is
24		bring up as a matter of fairness to you.	24		a male voice, I think, at the other end of the line.
25		So, if we could look at the bottom half actually, 57	25		Did you know the controller who was speaking to you? 58
1		I spoke to him before a few times, yeah.	1		the err I just rang up One Call to make sure it was
2	Q.	I brought this up on screen because it is only right	2		the address I picked him up from. And the lad who's
3		that we should see that that person was saying that they	3		done everything I picked him up from, it's called"
4		could tell by your voice that you were shaken up; do you	4		The call handler says:
5		see that there?	5		"Slow down, slow down. What's your name, sorry?
6		Yes.	6		"It's Gary Poland.
7	Q.	After that call, you drove home. You remained in your	7		"And you're a taxi driver for where?
8		car briefly on your drive doing something with your	8		"It's One Call.
9		phone. What were you doing with your phone at the time,	9		"Right, okay.
10		can you remember? Can you remember what you were doing	10		"I'm just a bit shook up. I can't believe it. My
11		at that time with your phone?	11		heart's going like I don't know what."
12	A.	I couldn't remember, no.	12		Again, Mr Poland, you might understand the reason
13	Q.	Thank you. You then called the police, and we have seen	13		why I'm taking you through that is, as a matter of
14		that it was at 12.36. We know from records that the	14		fairness to you, the emergency call handler on this call
15		call lasted some 20 minutes. I'm not going to go	15		for the police needed to ask you to slow down and you
16		through it all because I have covered much of the ground	16		were saying that you were shook up and that your heart
17		but could we look at a few aspects, please. Could we	17		was "going like I don't know what".
18		have MERP000647 on the screen.	18		Was there any sense in which, when you got home,
19		If we can just deal with the start of the call. So	19		that the shock and emotion of it all started to come out
20		they say it is Merseyside Police:	20		a bit? Were you particularly shocked when you got home
21		"I'm just ringing up about an incident that's	21		and you were making this call?
22		happened probably about an hour ago I'm a bit	22	A.	Oh, yes, yes. I was shocked for a good 24 hours after
22		shakan un Hart Straat	22		14

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it.

Q. Thank you. Can we go on. I don't think I need to go

through the totality of this call by any means but can

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shaken up. Hart Street.

"What it was, I'm a taxi driver and I just rang up

59

"Right, okay.

we go on, please, to the middle of page 6.

Bottom half of the page, please. There is one detail that I do want to ask you about. Do you see the long answer there? You say:

"The thing is, that's why I said, 'I'm sure I heard gunshots', 'cos I rang my mate and said "are you all right'. Apparently, he thinks it was just a knife he used, so have I dreamt it, have I heard gunshots or what? I don't know."

Call handler:

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"He hasn't paid the fare and you've said to him
'I want my money'. You have asked the male for money.
You have asked him for the fare. Did you say how much it was?"

You say:

"No, it would say what it was on the meter anyway. I don't know. I think it was about $\mathfrak L9$ -something, $\mathfrak L10$."

Call handler:

"And he's walked up the drive of this play place?"

Then you said this:

"Yeah, it was obviously planned, wasn't it?

Obviously all planned."

What led you to think that it was obviously all planned? Why did you say that? What gave you that impression?

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That's when I shot off then. I thought, 'I'm not getting shot'."

Again, that does emphasise, doesn't it, Mr Poland, that you had an absolute understanding immediately of how very serious this event was?

6 **A.** Yes.

Q. During this call, we don't need to turn up the detail but you were able to give a rough description although he had a mask, you were able to give a rough description of AR, including a rough description of what he was wearing and you would have known that your dashcam might have captured information of relevance; would you agree?

14 **A.** Yes.

15 Q. That can be taken from the screen, thank you. I just 16 want now, Mr Poland, just finally to take a step back 17 and draw the strands together. I have taken you through 18 the seriousness of the event and what you knew and what 19 you believed, which was that people had been shot and 20 that you had seen young girls running away. You have 21 been frank in your statement, to the extent that you 22 have accepted repeatedly in your statement that you 23 should have called 999 and you have expressed regret 24 about that. Yes?

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25 **A.** Yes.

1 A. I just presumed it was, which it was.

Q. Thank you. I think we also see and we don't perhaps
 need to turn it up within the transcript, but you also

4 do say, within this transcript to the call handler, that

you can't drive now. So you were saying, at that stage,
that you thought you couldn't drive any further. Do you

7 remember saying that on the call?

8 A. Drive any further from where? I was at home there.

9 Q. But you were saying "I can't drive now". I think the10 context being that you were so shaken up you couldn't

11 drive now?

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12 A. I don't know. I can't recall that.

13 $\,$ **Q.** All right. Could we just go, please, to the final page.

Thank you. The call handler was getting the information

15 back from you to check that they had correctly

16 understood, and you said:

"Yeah, it would be about -- I was just about to drive off then I heard these gunshots and screaming, proper screaming. I thought 'What's that?' and then there was, like, young people coming down the steps, like running down."

Call handler:

23 "And you'd seen them running down ..."

24 You said:

25 "I think they were young, probably 6, 7, 8 not sure.

62

Q. Would you accept that it would have been the responsible
 thing for you to have stopped and called 999 very much
 earlier?

4 A. Well, yes, looking back now, yes.

incident at a much earlier stage?

Q. Do you accept that it would have been the morally right
 thing for you to have stopped and reported this dreadful

8 A. Oh, yes, certainly.

Q. Thank you. The reason you have given in your statements
and in your evidence this morning throughout is that the
reason you did not do so is shock and that you were not
thinking clearly. Does that remain the evidence that

you are asking the Inquiry to accept?

14 **A.** Yes.

Q. It may be that no one who was being completely fair to
 you would doubt that you were suffering from some degree
 of shock but, if it were suggested that, while you were

shocked, the main cause of the delay in your 999 call

was that you were too preoccupied with what had happened to you and your lucky escape, and not concerned enough

about the girls, what would you say to that?

22 A. Yeah, looking back now, if I could change things,

23 I would, obviously. But, as I say, at the time, I don't

24 know what was going on in my head, in that situation

25 to -- I don't know. I think about it all the time.

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- 1 Q. I understand. But I do want to make sure Mr Poland that
- 2 you have understood my question. What I'm giving you
- 3 a chance to comment on is that it might be thought that
- 4 the real main reason why you didn't call 999 earlier was
- 5 that you were preoccupied with yourself and this event
- 6 that had happened to you and to your lucky escape -- not
- 7 shock -- and that mainly you were thinking about
- 8 yourself and not concerned enough about the girls. Is
- 9 that fair, do you think?
- 10 A. No. Looking back, I should have called the policeobviously a lot more sooner than what I did.
- 12 Q. Finally this, as an Inquiry, we need to look towards the
- 13 future. It is, on any view, deeply regrettable that you
- 14 did not call 999 earlier, as a matter of fairness to
- 15 you, you should understand that the evidence to the
- 16 Inquiry is that it did not make any difference to the
- inquiry is that it did not make any difference to the
- 17 speed of the response from the police and the Ambulance
- 18 Service because Leanne Lucas, one of the organisers who
- 19 was stabbed, called the police just 27 seconds or so
- 20 after you could first have done so.
- But if we look to the future, what would have made a difference for you, what would have made the
- 23 difference so that you did call 999 earlier, if
- 24 anything?
- 25 **A.** Could you repeat that question again, please?
- 1 time, I do appreciate that it is not easy. Before
- 2 I check if there are questions from anybody else, is
- 3 there anything else that you wanted to say or anything
- 4 that I haven't asked you about that you want to make
- 5 clear?
- 6 A. I would just like to say I feel really sorry for the
- 7 families, everyone that's been involved in it and I know
- 8 it's never going to leave their minds for the rest of
- 9 their lives. I just can't understand how the parents
- are thinking, how everybody involved's -- you know, it
- 11 is just awful.
- 12 MR MOSS: Sir, there was a question from Mr Bowen, who
- 13 I know is not here today, and from Mr Temkin, but
- 14 I don't think Mr Temkin has any questions.
- 15 Those are my questions.
- 16 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much. Thank you for17 your assistance, Mr Poland. We can now close the link
- 18 please.
- 19 MR MOSS: I think we need to break for a short period
- 20 probably no longer than 5, absolute most 10 minutes to
- 21 reconfigure the room. The question is whether you want
- 22 to take a very early lunch now or whether you want to
- 23 reconfigure the room and make a start.
- 24 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: It might be more sensible to take lunch
- 25 now.

- 1 Q. Yes. You delayed before calling 999, and I'm asking if
- 2 anything would have made a difference, if any training
- 3 or any terms and conditions or reminders would have made
 - a difference, would have made you think, "The first
- 5 thing I've got to do, once I'm safe, is call 999"?
- 6 A. Yeah, I should have done, looking back, and, yeah.
- 7 Q. If you had known that your licence might have been at
- 8 risk if you didn't call 999, do you think that would
- 9 have made a difference on the day?
- 10 A. I couldn't say. I really couldn't say what was going
- 11 through my head on the day. I couldn't say yes or no.
- 12 It is not what you think of, is it, when something like
- that happens, you are not thinking --
- 14 Q. I follow. There has been reason, the Inquiry has been
 - told, for One Call Taxis to give you support and the
- 16 Inquiry has been told about why that was necessary, and
- 17 I don't overlook that. Have you been through any
- 18 process of review with One Call Taxis, has there been
- any investigation by One Call Taxis about what happened
- and the delay in you calling 999?
- 21 A. No
- 22 Q. There's not been any disciplinary process of any kind at
- 23 all?
- 24 A. No.
- 25 **Q.** Mr Poland, I have asked you questions for quite some
- 1 MR MOSS: Might we say 1.00?
- 2 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Certainly, we will sit again at 1.00.
- 3 Thank you very much.
- 4 (12.11 pm)
- 5 (The short adjournment)
- 6 (1.00 pm)
- 7 MR MOSS: Sir, our next witness is Liam Rice, thank you.

LIAM RICE (sworn)

- 8
- 9 Questioned by MR MOSS
- 10 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Do have a seat, Mr Rice.
- 11 Yes, Mr Moss.
- 12 MR MOSS: Thank you, sir. Mr Rice, please just start by
- 13 giving us your full name.
- 14 A. Liam Anthony Rice.
- 15 **Q.** Thank you. If we could have on screen, please, OCT, for
- One Call Taxis -- and it is OCT000001.
- 17 Mr Rice, I think you can confirm that this is the
 - statement which you provided to this Inquiry and, if we look, please, at page 4, we have redacted your signature

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- 20 on privacy grounds but we can see that this is
- a statement that you signed on 23 July 2025; is that
- 22 right?

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- 23 **A.** Yes.
- 24 Q. Just keep your voice up.
- 25 A. Yes.

- 1 Q. Is that statement true to the best of your knowledge and
- 2 belief?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Thank you. If we look, please, also at MERP000730. We
- 5 will see an earlier statement that you provided to
- 6 Merseyside Police. We can see, can't we, that that was
- 7 dated 8 August 2024?
- 8 **A.** Yes.
- 9 Q. Thank you. We can see that you signed it under the
- 10 standard terms of providing a statement to the police,
- 11 with a declaration there?
- 12 A. Yes.
- 13 Q. Thank you. Go back to your witness statement to the
- 14 Inquiry please at OCT000001, page 1. Just to introduce
- your role, you were at the time, and I think still are,
- is that right, the General Manager of One Call Taxis?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. You explained in your police statement that One Call
- 19 Taxis was founded, was it, back in 2015?
- 20 A. 2017, it was, but there is obviously the wrong date on
- 21 there, but it was 2017.
- 22 Q. I think it was created though when a number of different
- 23 taxi companies merged?
- 24 A. Yes, that is right.
- 25 Q. You yourself, I think, Mr Rice have a lot of experience.
 - 69
- 1 **A.** 26.
- 2 Q. Thank you. I'm asked just to check this: we know that
- 3 AR's father, Alphonse, worked at times as a taxi driver.
- 4 Could I just check whether Alphonse R, same surname as
- 5 AR, has he ever worked for One Call Taxis?
- 6 A. No.

- 7 Q. Thank you. I want to ask you about the mechanism of
 - bookings, although we have heard a certain amount about
- 9 this already. If somebody phones the number for One
- 10 Call Taxis, they get through, is this right, to
- 11 an automated booking system?
- 12 A. Yes, it is, yeah.
- 13 Q. There's recognition software presumably that captures
- 14 what's been said as to the name and also as to the
- 15 pickup address and the destination address?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. If I have understood it correctly, so far as the
- 18 destination is concerned, if that's not picked up,
- there's a way that that can be put in later on when the
- 20 driver does the pickup?
- 21 A. Yeah, it just sets it as "as directed", so.
- 22 $\,$ Q. We have seen from your police statement -- there is no
- 23 particular need to turn it up -- that all of the calls
- 24 that are made to One Call Taxis are recorded and stay on

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25 the system until they are manually deleted; is that

- 1 You have worked as the General Manager, if I have
- 2 understood your statement correctly, for about five
- 3 years, as the General Manager?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. But I think before that you held the same position with
- 6 Kwik Cars North West Limited, one of the companies that
- 7 merged to become One Call Taxis?
- 8 A. Yes
- 9 Q. Even before that, I think you were working in the same
- 10 business?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. Thank you. One Call Taxis, at the time of the attack,
- should we understand, I think it was in your police
- statement, you said that it had a fleet of about 1,000
- 15 taxis?
- 16 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 17 Q. So a big operation?
- 18 **A.** Yes.
- 19 $\,$ **Q.** As we have understood it from your statement, all of the
- 20 taxi drivers work on a self-employed basis; is that
- 21 correct?
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. Just so that we have a feel for it, how many staff do
- you have in the office, how many are on the payroll, as
- 25 opposed to self-employed?

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- 1 right?
- 2 A. Yes.
- 3 Q. So you have quite a good audit trail of the incoming
- 4 calls?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. If somebody is calling in and for any reason they have
- 7 an issue or a problem, so they don't want to book a taxi
- 8 but they need to speak to someone, is the standard sort
- 9 of option, whatever number it might be, to speak to
- 10 an operator?
- 11 A. Yes, it tells you, if you -- say you are not trying to
- 12 book a taxi and you say something that it doesn't
- 13 understand, it would automatically transfer you to
- 14 an operator or it says "Press 3" after the first option,
- so you can always get through.
- 16 Q. Thank you. We will come to it in the context of a call
- 17 that AR's father believes he made to the taxi company,
- 18 which, in context, would have been your company. But so
- 19 far as you are aware, if he had made such a call, would
- 20 it have been retained on your system?
- 21 A. Yeah, that's why I asked -- I asked Tech to check it
- because, although I can check it, they can do a more
- 23 in-depth search and they said there was no call found
- 24 for that number.
- 25 Q. Thank you. Once the person has made the booking, it

- 1 then goes through to drivers to accept. Just tell us
- 2 the essence of that: does it go to the drivers that the
- 3 system knows are closest to it and gives them the option
- 4 of accepting or rejecting?
- 5 A. It does. It will hit the screen basically and it will
- 6 try for three minutes to find the nearest car, who's had
- 7 the most free time, that's how our system works. If
- 8 after three minutes no one has accepted it or there are
- 9 no cars in the area, it will then go to bid, and then it
- goes to bid and the car that's nearest that bids within
- 11 10 seconds will get the job.
- 12 Q. I follow. Is that system all automated, so there is not
- 13 a controller who is choosing?
- 14 **A.** No
- 15 Q. So it wouldn't have been someone choosing Mr Poland, for
- 16 example, to do this one. It would have been automated
- 17 who basically accepts it first, and then a system if
- 18 nobody accepts it?
- 19 A. Yes, that's it.
- 20 Q. There is a tracking system. Your system, is it called
- 21 Cab9?
- 22 A. That's the dispatch system, so that's what we use to
- 23 dispatch the jobs, as well as the tracking.
- 24 Q. Thank you. If we have on the screen MERP000665 -- see
- 25 if that works -- I think is this the tracking
 - 73
- 1 at. At the time and indeed now, does it follow from
- 2 what you have been telling us so far that a 17-year old
- 3 is able to book a taxi without having any prior
- 4 registration of any kind with you, you just call
- 5 a number and give the details and the taxi will turn up.
- 6 **A.** Yes.
- 7 Q. Do you have an app or an account system for those who
- 8 use you a lot?
- 9 A. We have an app where people can register on the app but
- 10 we wouldn't set up accounts for individuals, they would
- just literally just book on the app.
- 12 Q. On the app, I don't want to go through the technical
- details, can you do the sort of things as storing
- 14 a payment card and paying via the app?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. If it were appropriate to do so, I appreciate there
- 17 would be economic impacts for you as a firm but, if it
- 18 were appropriate for you to do so, could you move to
- 19 a system whereby only those who were registered with
- a form of ID and a card linked could book the cabs?
- 21 A. If it was an industry-wide thing then we would,
- 22 obviously, because we would have to but then it would --
- the elder generation are less likely to use an app or
- a phone, so you would be alienating them and they may
- not be able to book a taxi, if that was put in place.

- 1 information that we can see, the pick up for Mr Poland
- 2 picking up AR, and the information about the distance
- 3 driven, and so on, that's the sort of information that
- 4 you can get from the system; would that be fair?
- 5 A. Yes

- 6 Q. I think there is a second page on that, which shows,
 - actually, in quite a lot of detail -- we can see here
- 8 the effect of Mr Poland going down Masters Vehicle and
- 9 coming back up and then the route he took on exit, which
- 10 I was asking about this morning. So the system tracks
- 11 all of that in quite a lot of detail, including speed
- 12 and things like that?
- 13 A. Yeah. Yeah, it does.
- 14 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: What do the green dots mean?
- 15 A. That means that his meter is active, so he is on the
- job. So that means he is actually on the job. When he
- is driving to the job they will be light blue and when
- he's done "Arrive", which is swipes and say he's
- 19 outside, it goes purple. So it tells us what stage
- 20 they're at. So that just means his meter is still live.
- 21 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much.
- 22 MR MOSS: Mr Rice, can I just ask you, taking a step back,
- about one aspect about the system. I ask this, not as
- 24 a criticism of you as an individual but in terms of the
- 25 forward-looking aspects that the Inquiry needs to look
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 - Q. If I have understood the elements of that answer, there
- would be problems with that, one is that it would have
- 3 to be industry wide because otherwise you would be at
- 4 a disadvantage compared to your competitors --
- 5 A. Yes.

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- 6 Q. -- and the point that you are making is that more
- 7 elderly folk are less happy using that sort of
- 8 technology?
- 9 **A.** Yes.
- 10 Q. Do you think, in general terms -- and I will come onto
- 11 this later again in a different context, but do you
- think in general terms that there might be a case for
- that, where the passengers are children, that you should
- 14 be registered?
- 15 A. I do but we kind of have our own industry standard
- 16 within the Southport area and Merseyside, which anyone
- 17 under the age of 12 or 13, we don't allow to travel on
- 18 their own. Obviously, I know it doesn't cover the age
- group that we are looking at but we do kind of have our
- own industry standard just because, obviously, they are
 exceptionally vulnerable.
- 22 **Q.** The industry standard that you refer to there, is that
- 23 an informal one, just a regional area?
- 24 A. It is regional, it depends on what town you go to,
- 25 different towns have different standards, amongst their

1 own taxi companies.

- 2 Q. But if you wanted to extend a system whereby, say, those
- 3 between 12 and 18 or 13 and 18 were allowed to book cabs
- 4 but had to be registered to do it, is that something
- 5 that could be looked at?
- 6 A. It could be but it would be very difficult to implement
- 7 because it is the age verification. Once you turn 16,
- 8 you obviously can have a provisional driver's licence,
- 9 but anyone younger than that, it's going to be hard.
- 10 **Q.** Thank you. Can we turn then to the events of 22 July
- and that's something that you were asked about in your police statement. If we could just have on the screen
- 13 MERP000730 and page 3. Thank you.
 - You go through the details there, which the Inquiry has heard quite a bit about now. So this was, as with
- the 29 initially, an attempt to book which was aborted.
- No booking was made. But at 12.21 a further call was
- to the second material and the second materials and the second materials and the second materials and the second materials are second materials and the second materials are second materials.
- 18 received from the same mobile phone number; is that
- 19 right?
- 20 A. Yes.

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- 21 Q. The customer said his name was Simon. We know that that
- 22 is not correct now. Presumably, on this system, the
- 23 customer can give any name they want, true or false?
- 24 A. Yes.

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25 **Q.** We heard from Mr Poland this morning that he didn't do

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- statement that there had been a report of sorts made in relation to this by Mr Evanson. Could we just have a look at paragraph 5 of your statement. It is OCT000001 at page 2:
 - "I remember a message being sent around either verbally or via the internal messaging system to not send any more taxis to the address."

I think reading the totality of this statement, would this be fair, you are not totally sure exactly how this message was conveyed?

- 11 A. No.
- Q. Would that sometimes just be done informally between thedrivers, as opposed to a formal stop being put on the
- 14 system?
- 15 A. No, generally, with this instance, because the driver
- 16 has driven quite a long distance for basically not
- 17 picking up a fare, he would ring up and just say, "Don't
- send any more taxis, they're probably not going to pick
- 19 up", and it just means for that day. And then
- 20 an internal message would be sent between the booking
- 21 staff to say "Don't send any more taxis", or to watch
- out for the job, to cancel it because obviously they
- 23 won't get paid.
- ${\bf 24}~{\bf Q}.~$ As the evidence so far has come forward to the Inquiry,
- 25 there doesn't seem to have been any warning on the One

- 1 any sort of check. I think some of us might be used to,
- with some cab firms, that they do say, "Is it Nick", for
- 3 example, when you get in the cab. But I don't think you
- 4 have that requirement, even at that basic level?
- 5 A. He wouldn't because it was a home address. If it was
- 6 a public, like a pub or a supermarket, you would check
- 7 the name, obviously, to make sure. But because it was
- 8 a home address, if you pull up and someone comes out of
- 9 that house, nine times out of ten, it is going to be for
- 10 you.
- 11 Q. Thank you. We know that Mr Steven Evanson was allocated
- 12 to this job and we know that the destination was Range
- 13 High School.
- Sir, for your note, the reference for Mr Evanson's statement about this is MERP000216.
- 16 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much.
- 17 MR MOSS: I'm not going to ask you about the detail because
- 18 you weren't there but I think you will know in broad
- 19 terms that there was a disagreement between AR and his
- father, Alphonse R, that led to that booking not going
- 21 ahead. Yes?

22 **A**.

- 23 Q. And that Mr Evanson, the taxi driver on that occasion,
- 24 was paid £5 to cover his expenses. Can I ask a few
- 25 questions about that. You say in your Inquiry witness

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- 1 Call Taxis system about this address when it came to the 2 29th.
- 3 A. Yes, because there was -- there would be nothing that
- 4 flagged up that would make us put a warning on. There
- 5 was no -- the driver's driven there, he's been paid and
- 6 obviously there's been a family dispute, so he's not
- 7 gone to that. It wouldn't make us put a blocker on it
- 8 permanently, it would just be literally for that day, to
- 9 stop another driver driving out there and not picking
- 10 up.
- 11 Q. All right. So should we understand there are two types
- of things: a sort of informal warning for a short period
- of time, "Something is going on there, it is probably
- not a reliable one, if we get another booking" --
- 15 A. Yes
- 16 Q. -- don't go there today"?
- 17 **A.** Yes.
- 18 Q. But if something more serious happens, you could put
- 19 a block on it saying, well, that passenger, whatever it
- 20 may be, was violent in the cab or threw up in the cab or
- 21 whatever and you can put up a blocked account,
- 22 effectively?
- A. We would block the phone number, so they couldn't ring
 up and if there was a threat of violence the drivers
- 25 would actually block the address. You'd just draw

- a zone round it, so they could not book any taxis on anyplatform.
- Q. Thank you. On the evidence the Inquiry has received inwriting and heard so far, I think it is important that
- 5 I should make clear that we have not seen any evidence
- 6 that there was anything that would have alerted
- 7 Mr Evanson, the taxi driver, to the fact that the reason
- 8 why AR's father was concerned was that he was concerned
- 9 that AR might use the taxi to go and launch an attack on
- 10 his old school. So, there's no indication at the moment
- on the evidence that that was known to Mr Evanson. From
- 12 your understanding of what happened on the 22nd, did
- 13 Mr Evanson do what would have been expected of him as
- 14 a taxi driver?
- 15 A. Yes. It said to drive away because, obviously, therewas a dispute.
- 17 Q. If there was any indication of weapons or a suspicion of
- weapons or a suspicion that they might be using the taxi
- 19 to go and do a criminal offence, what would then happen?
- 20 Is there some system to deal with that?
- 21 **A.** You notify the office and then the operator would ring
- the police on the driver's behalf.
- 23 Q. Have you had incidences such as that, where that's
- 24 happened?

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25 A. Not for a long time but we have had incidences where

go to the Range, he called the taxi company.

Now, in relation to that, if we look, please, at paragraph 3 of your Inquiry statement, that's OCT000001, the first page, you touched on this a little earlier, I think you got your technical people to search the system and we the Inquiry provided you with what we understand to be Alphonse R's then telephone number and I think you can confirm that you don't have any record of that telephone number phoning you on that day?

- 10 **A.** No, we don't.
 - Q. What he says about it is that you were not prepared -not you personally, but the company -- was not prepared to indicate whether you had a booking or not because of data protection reasons. In paragraph 4, as we can see on the screen, what you say is:

"We would have had no way of knowing if the person calling was AR's father as it is very difficult to verify a person's legitimate relationship to a caller or to verify the age of the original booker."

Then you say this:

"We come across this quite a lot in the taxi industry where jealous partners, ex-partners and/or stalkers call to try and find information about others' journeys. For this reason and the Data Protection rules, we do not give any information out unless it's

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threats of violence has made us call the police for the driver.

3 Q. But you tell us that there is a system whereby drivers,
4 if they have those sort of concerns, can raise them with

- 5 control and control will then raise them with the
- 6 police?
- 7 A. Yes, there's like a warning button and when it presses
- 8 it sends an alert to all the operators, so then the
- 9 operator would ring the driver. So if there was
- 10 obviously a threat, they would get in touch with them.
- 11 Q. So to round this topic off, the reason why Mr Poland
- 12 didn't get any kind of warning was simply that, on
- 13 22 July, so far as your cab company was concerned,
- 14 there'd have been a temporary unreliability problem that
- 15 had a temporary warning but not a longer-standing more
- 16 serious warning?
- 17 A. Yeah, because the way it looked to us, he had driven out
- there, he'd been paid for the journey but he hadn't
- 19 picked up. It wouldn't raise any flags. It's not
- 20 uncommon
- 21 Q. You will be aware but, for those who wish to look at it,
- the reference is MERP001060, the fifth page, the third
- 23 paragraph on the page -- you will be aware that
- 24 Alphonse R, AR's father, has told the police that when
- 25 he realised that AR had called a taxi, was planning to

from the original booker, ie the same phone number, or if we get a UK GDPR request from the police."

3 Is that right?

- 4 A. Yes, that is correct.
- Q. Now, in the forward-looking aspects of the Inquiry, we
 have to be pragmatic and our terms of reference require
 us only to make recommendations that will be pragmatic
 and to ensure that we take account of what those who are

8 and to ensure that we take account of what those who are

- 9 working in the area say.
- So, anything in this area would need to take account, wouldn't it, of the risks that you indicate,
- that there are people who could make that sort of a call
- for bad motives, the jealous lovers, et cetera, the
- 14 stalkers?
- 15 **A.** Yes.
- 16 **Q.** Can I just explore the contrary risks with you. If AR's
- 17 father made this call, he was the father of a 17-year
- old child, who was concerned about what his son might be
- about to do and, if he made the call, he would have been
- a genuine caller trying to limit harm to others.
- 21 **A.** Yes
- 22 Q. Can you see a way in which the technology could be used
- so that you would have a system of being able to
- 24 recognise or test the relationship of those who are
- 25 calling and making that sort of a call?

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(21) Pages 81 - 84

- A. I can't think of any technology that would allow
 a separate caller from a different phone number to
 verify that they are related -- I can't think of any to
 verify who they are, in relation to the person that they
 are phoning about, unless it is from the same phone
 number.
- 7 Q. Can I explore that with you just a little and 8 I positively invite you, if you disagree with me, to say 9 so because we are looking for what might work. If you 10 had a system in which child users had to be registered, would you be able to list the parents' phone numbers and 11 12 the teachers' phone numbers, or have some code or 13 something like that, so that, for children -- not for 14 others but for children -- those with a duty of care, 15 whether parents or teachers, phoning up would be able to 16 get that information? Could a system around that be 17 made to work?
- 18 A. I mean, you'd have to develop one because there's
 19 nothing like that available at the minute. You'd have
 20 to have it developed and then you would have to have all
 21 the children -- it could be developed, yeah, but I don't
 22 know anyone that's making anything like that, at the
 23 minute.
- Q. Thank you. Please don't be unduly perturbed by the
 following document because it doesn't directly concern

1 morning, the taxi driver's seen him get into a different 2 cab from a different firm ..."

Are you following, so far?

4 A. Yes.

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5 Q. Thank you:

"... and he's still not arrived at school, which is extremely unusual. Now, we're -- we obviously have concerns over weapons for AR, we don't know his whereabouts because when I have rang -- he's booked the taxi himself, so it's been a pre-meditated, you know, situation."

If we just go down:

"I have rang up All White taxi firm, which is the taxi he's got into and his dad works for them and they won't give me any information on where they have dropped him off. They won't even confirm whether they've picked him up or anything like that because they say for data protection. But as you can imagine we are quite concerned."

Do you see that there?

- 21 A. Yes.
- 22 $\,$ **Q.** So that's another taxi firm doing the same thing as
- 23 I think your taxi firm would have done in that
- 24 situation?
- 25 A. I don't know if we would because it's a school phoning.

1 you and it may not concern One Call Taxis at all but

2 I think we have given you notice of it. It is

3 LANC000072, please. Just so that we have the context of

4 this, can you see at the top of the page this is

5 a Lancashire Constabulary transcript of a phone call.

6 If you take it from me for the moment that what is

happening here on 11 December, which we know is the day
 that AR, back in December 2019, went to the Range School

9 and carried out a serious criminal assault on a pupil

and carried out a serious criminal assault on a pupil
there. The caller is Ms Martindale, who is one of the

11 members of staff of Acorns School, who is phoning the

12 police to raise her concerns.

So that's the background to it. You can see: "I'm wondering if I could give you a previous log

number please", and so on.

16 Can we go down to the bottom of the page. She gives 17 the address, "10 Old School Close", which you will 18 recognise?

19 A. Yes.

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Q. If we go over the page. So what Ms Martindale wassaying was this:

"So we're his current school and there's been quite an urgent safeguarding thing this morning. We organise a taxi firm to collect [AR] every morning, take him home. Yeah, when a taxi driver's turned up for him this

Obviously, you can Google a phone number for a school and ring them back. Our problem is confirming who these people are that are ringing. Now, because that's a school, you could just ring the school back and ask to speak to the person, and then you could give them the information. It's making sure the person is a safe person to give the information out and it also depends on what they told the taxi company as well. If they've said, "I think he's got a knife", that might have changed the mindset.

But, for me, I think our company would have. It is like if the police phone us, you know it's a police number. If you can Google the number and check that it's a real number, or legitimate one, sorry, then you would give the information out.

- Q. Would I be right in thinking that for many taxi firms,
 the regular orders to take children to and from school
 is a significant source of business?
- 19 A. Yes, quite a lot of them it is, yeah.
- Q. Do you have arrangements with local schools, so that in
 this sort of a scenario you can impart information? Do

you have numbers that are recognised?

A. Different parts of the company do have different
 contracts with different councils. So they would know

25 the phone numbers coming through because they would ring 88

1 them directly. But it wouldn't be impossible to just 2 export -- if we could get every phone number of every 3 school in Merseyside then we could import it into the 4 system and put "trusted phone number" or "ring back to 5 confirm". So with the schools, you could list every 6 school in the system with that note and then ring back 7 and ask to speak to the person, so you can confirm that: 8 (1) it is a school phoning; and (2) that it is a trusted 9 person.

10 Q. Thank you. Could you have a system with parents that 11 you would provide the information if they could provide 12 identification, so if they could provide birth 13 certificate or proof, passport or something of that 14

A. I mean, we would but the problem is, as shown, a false 15 16 name was given anyway and it was a first name. It would 17 be hard to say this person is related to this person 18 unless, obviously, they were booked on the app and it 19 did have ID verification on it.

20 Q. Thank you. Turning to the events of the 29th. You deal 21 with this in your police statement, if we could go back 22 to that, at the fourth page please, so that's 23 MERP000730, page 4.

> Again, much of this now is familiar, that the automated phone says, "Hi Simon", because he has used

Q. Clearly, in this situation, your expectation of any of your drivers, if they thought that there had been a serious assault or something so extreme that gunshots had been fired, you would have expected them to call 999 as soon as they got to a safe position?

A. Yes, as with anyone, we would expect them to ring 999.

6 7 Q. Following these events, I covered in outline with 8 Mr Poland that there was a need for you as a firm to 9 provide some support to Mr Poland. There are some 10 financial aspects, there was obviously a forensic 11 examination, his car was required, matters of that kind, 12 and a financial impact on him, and I think some 13 emotional support as well.

> Is it right that no disciplinary action has been taken in relation to Mr Poland?

16 A. No, there hasn't.

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17 Q. If we look, please, in your Inquiry statement at the 18 third page, so that's OCT000001 at page 3, what you say 19 is:

> "As a firm, One Call Taxis did not perform an internal review in regard to the dealings with the perpetrator/his father. I now know that I was not fully aware of what Mr Poland reported to the police about what happened on 29 July 2025."

Is that right?

that name before from that phone, yes? 1

2 A. Yes.

Q. The pattern of a call which dropped and then a further 3 4 one being made, I think, and going through this time to 5 Mr Poland, our previous witness?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Thank you. We know that he was very particular about 8 the destination because 34a was what he said in answer 9 to the call. I don't need, I think, to go through the 10 timings with you because they're a matter of record. 11 Can I ask about this, what happened, as we heard this 12 morning, was that AR initially went off without paying

13 and I think Mr Poland was seeking to explain that his 14 options, so far as the app were concerned were fairly 15 limited because you sort of swiped to indicate that the

16 job was clear.

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Is there anything that you can do to indicate that there 19 has been a problem at the end of a booking:

20 a non-payment or something similar?

21 A. You ring the operator and inform them and then we would 22 generally block the phone number and explain why it was 23 blocked.

24 Q. That's what you would have expected a driver to do?

25 Yes.

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A. Yes.

2 Q. Would it be fair, in overview, to say that when the 3 Inquiry wrote to you and set out in its request for 4 a statement from you some details about the delay in the 5 calling of 999, was that the first you had understood of 6 that?

7 A. I knew he had accepted a job but, in my mind, he had 8 accepted a job and then obviously come out -- in shock and then phoned. But, obviously, there was a lot more 9 10 of a delay than I thought.

11 Q. You set out in paragraph 10 what you had previously 12 understood and what you had been told about the incident 13 and what you thought was to be true before reading the 14 statement from Mr Poland. What you say in the 15 subparagraph is:

> "If I remember correctly, I was told he dropped AR off and confronted him over not paying and as he was driving out, he heard 4 or 5 loud bangs that could have been gunshots."

Do you now understand that he was firmer than that, he definitely thought it was gunshots and phoned a friend to say, "I think he shot someone"?

23 A. Yes.

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24 Q. You say:

25 "I was under the impression that Mr Poland did not

1 know what building AR had gone into ..."

2 Do you now understand that he was right in front of 3 it in his cab and saw it?

4 A. Yes.

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5 Q. "Then he accepted a job and realised he should report it 6 to the police. He then called our office to confirm the 7 details, then went home and reported it to the police."

I think you indicated a moment ago that you now understand the delay was much lengthier?

- 10 A. It was, yes.
- Q. You tell us, in terms of other matters, in relation to 11
- 12 the aftermath of these awful events, that you have
- 13 checked your systems, this is something that I think you
- 14 reported to the police, and that, other than the 22nd
- 15 and the 29th, you haven't identified any other bookings
- 16 that AR made from the mobile phone number concerned on
- 17 the 22nd and the 29th?
- 18 A. No, we got the dispatch company to check it from the 19 beginning. There wasn't anything shown.
- 20 Q. Thank you. Can I ask you a couple of matters, please,
- 21 about your policies and how they work. I don't know
- 22 whether you were able to hear Mr Poland's evidence this
- 23 morning where he said that there were no terms and
- 24 conditions for drivers from One Call Taxis; is that
- 25 right?

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- 1 Q. Thank you.
 - As it stood at the time, did it include, insofar as it matters, the section in bold from Sefton Council which said, "If you see, effectively, anything that may put a child immediately in danger, you should call 999", that's in bold in Sefton's?
- 6 7 A. Yes, and call MASH as well.
- 8 Q. Call MASH?
- 9 A. MASH online, saying it is a -- it is an exact copy, so
- 10 it is --
- 11 Q. We should understand, should we, that you are reviewing 12 that and you think you might strengthen it?
- 13 Α. Yes, just for the general reporting of crimes because
- 14 when you see safeguarding, you think of more like people
- 15 moving kids around the country. So I just want to put
- 16 a separate section about any crime, obviously violent
- 17 crime as well, just to be reported immediately.
- Q. I understand. But just to be clear, perhaps we can have 18 19 a look at it, paragraph 12 of your statement, it is at
- 20 page 3 of OCT000001. What you said was:
- 21 "After reading the attached statements I will be 22 creating a policy for our driver's handbook with
- 23 a section on the reporting of crimes ..." 24 A.
- 25 Q. There you are talking about a handbook, rather than

No, it is not right. We do have terms and conditions. 1

- 2 We email them out, probably every 18 months, if we
- 3 update them, but we do email them to all drivers.
- 4 Q. Is that something you provided with the Inquiry?
- 5 I don't think you have provided --
- 6 Α. No, I've got it, there is copies on my laptop, so I can
- 7 always send it over.
- Q. Could you please just make sure this evening, if you 8
- 9 would, that you provide a copy of those. Have they
- 10 changed since?
- A. They haven't changed since. We are in the process of 11
- 12 updating it for the reporting of crimes and just doing
- 13 a separate section from that but I wanted to see what
- 14 comes from this first.
- 15 Q. I follow. Do the terms and conditions currently have
- 16 anything about reporting crime?
- 17 Safeguarding. It is basically a copy of Sefton
- 18 Council's safeguarding policy.
- 19 So it's got the things we have seen already from page 8
- 20 of that safeguarding manual -- sorry, the handbook from
- 21 Sefton, which has a safeguarding section in it?
- 22 Α.
- 23 Q. Does it reflect that?
- 24 A. It is the same as theirs because one of our operator
- 25 licences is Sefton, so that's what we used.

- 1 terms and conditions --
- 2 A. Sorry, for me, it's the same thing as terms and
- 3
- 4 Q. Will you consider making it a condition, so
- 5 a requirement, that if they witness crime they must call
- 6
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. -- such that, if they fail to do that, that might become
- 9 a disciplinary matter?
- 10 A.

22 Q.

- 11 Q. Thank you. Are there any other changes or improvements
- 12 that you have made or that you are contemplating making,
- 13 arising out of these events?
- 14 No, I can't think of any -- anything else.
- 15 Is there anything more that you can think could be done
- 16 to prevent children booking taxis using false names?
- 17 A. The only way to do it would be to just go fully on the
- 18 app and only take app bookings and then, obviously, you
- could maybe verify the age but, at the minute, I don't 19
- 20 think practically it is something we could do as
- 21 a company or most taxi companies could do.
- Thank you. Is there a system now in place that means 23 that, if there was an issue of concern at an address,
- 24 that that would be flagged on your systems?
- 25 **A**. It would but, again -- did you mean the incident on the

1		22nd?	1	questioning <i>pro forma</i> . I don't know if Mr Temkin has
2	Q.	Yes.	2	any questions?
3	Α.	There would be nothing that would flag up as	3	Questioned by MR TEMKIN
4		an incident. The driver's gone to an address, he's not	4	MR TEMKIN: Thank you. Mr Rice, I just want to raise two
5		had the journey, he's been paid and he's gone. No one	5	discrete matters with you.
6		said, "He's got a knife in his bag", or he is going to	6	MR MOSS: Mr Temkin, I'm so sorry, it is completely my
7		be violent. The driver has just turned up at the	7	fault, do you want to step forward.
8		address and not picked up.	8	MR TEMKIN: Certainly. (Pause)
9	Q.	Understand. If it had gone further, do your systems	9	Thank you, Mr Rice. Just two matters. The first is
10		allow for that to be flagged up?	10	this: when a call is made to book a taxi, the name of
11	A.	Yes, again, the driver would either send a message in or	11	the caller is requested?
12		he would phone up and we would depending on what it	12	A. Yes.
13		was. If they were just drunk or drunk and violent we	13	MR TEMKIN: The caller then, of course, gives a name, which
14		may just block it off because it might just be a day	14	may be the correct name or may be a false name.
15		thing but, obviously, if he was being violent towards	15	A. Yes.
16		the driver or anyone else, then we'd ring the police.	16	MR TEMKIN: Does your system then associate the name they
17	Q.	Thank you. You have explained that there has not	17	give with the collection address?
18		previously been an internal review in terms of what	18	A. Yes, it creates a profile for them.
19		Mr Poland did and didn't do, for the reasons that you've	19	MR TEMKIN: But is the name that is given recorded on any
20		made clear. It might be thought that, with the greater	20	separate database?
21		knowledge that you now have, that there may be grounds	21	A. Sorry, I don't quite understand.
22		for that just to be looked at again; is that something	22	MR TEMKIN: Is the name that's given by the caller recorded
23		you are intending to do?	23	separately so that you build up a database of caller
24	A.	Yes, I do agree.	24	names?
25		MOSS: Sir, those are my questions. There was one	25	A. No, the name is linked to the phone number.
		97		98
1	MR	TEMKIN: Do you think it would be useful for such	1	I'm very grateful to you. Thank you very much. You
2		a database to be created?	2	are now free to go.
3	Α.	Sorry, again, I'm not quite following.	3	THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.
4		TEMKIN: So that caller names that have been given can be	4	MR MOSS: Sir, our next witness will probably be the
5		retained in one particular database?	5	briefest of the day but I wonder if we should take
6	Α.	Well, that is what we do.	6	a short break.
7	MR	TEMKIN: All right. The second issue is this: the	7	SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: 15 minutes.
8		present system doesn't require any form of	8	(1.46 pm)
9		identification to be given by a caller or by	9	(A short break)
10		a passenger; is that correct?	10	(2.02 pm)
11	Α.	Yes, that is correct.	11	MR MARK TOOHEY (sworn)
12	MR	TEMKIN: Do you think there would be any benefit in	12	Questioned by MR BOYLE
13		a caller or a passenger being asked to show	13	SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Do have a seat.
14		an identification document?	14	MR BOYLE: Mr Toohey, would you give your full name to the
15	Α.	I think it would have I mean, it obviously would but	15	court, please.
16		I think it would have a negative impact. Customers	16	A. Mark William Toohey.
17		don't like people prying and, at the end of the day,	17	Q. Thank you. Could we have document SEF000170 on the
18		your ID has all your information on you're then showing	18	screen, please. Do you recognise that as your
19		it potentially to just a taxi driver who you don't know.	19	statement, Mr Toohey?
20				
		I think it would cause problems. Yeah, I think it would	20	A. Yes, I do.
21		I think it would cause problems. Yeah, I think it would cause problems. People don't like people enquiring	20 21	A. Yes, I do.Q. Thank you. Could we turn, please, to the last page of
21	MR	cause problems. People don't like people enquiring about their information.	21	Q. Thank you. Could we turn, please, to the last page of
21 22	MR	cause problems. People don't like people enquiring	21 22	Q. Thank you. Could we turn, please, to the last page of that statement, penultimate page, page 7. Thank you.

- 1 A. I did, yes.
- 2 Q. Thank you. Is it true to the best of your knowledge and
- 3 belief?
- 4 A. It is, yes.
- 5 Q. Thank you very much.
- 6 Mr Toohey, you are employed by Sefton Metropolitan
- 7 Borough Council; is that right?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Your role involves managing the daily operation of taxi
- 10 licensing functions of the council --
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. -- is that correct?
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 Q. Can you just tell us, please, what that entails?
- 15 A. So it is probably just over ten years ago I was
- 16 previously employed as a Principal Trading Standards
- 17 Officer and, because of some internal adjustments to
- 18 roles, I took on the role of licensing and taxi
- 19 licensing. I look after two teams, the licensing team
- 20 and taxi licensing team. Taxi licensing enforcement
- 21 team do day-to-day operations involving inspections,
- 22 dealing with complaints. I liaise with our customer
- 23 services team who employ approximately 14 full-time
- 24 equivalent staff to deal with the face-to-face delivery
- 25 of the service, issuing of licences to drivers, vehicle
 - 101
- 1 attempt in statutory standards was to put some meaning
 - into it as to what would an ordinary person think; would
- 3 you allow this person to carry family members; would you
- 4 feel safe with your own children in the back of the car.
- 5 We obviously attempt to put some provisions in relation
- 6 to convictions, any convictions policy. But the
- 7 information can be quite far and wide as to what makes
- 8 a person fit and proper.
- 9 Q. Thank you. So it is wider than just having certain
- 10 convictions?
- 11 **A.** Yes.

- 12 Q. Thank you. Could I just ask you, Mr Toohey, just to
- 13 keep your voice up, please. Thank you.
- 14 Is this right: the council will investigate if there
- are allegations regarding a driver, to determine if that
- 16 driver remains fit and proper?
- 17 A. Yes, that's correct.
- 18 Q. Thank you. So, if allegations are referred to the taxi
- 19 licensing enforcement team, they carry out
- 20 an investigation into those allegations to determine
- 21 whether there should be a penalty?
- 22 A. Yes, we receive quite a lot of complaints about the
- 23 actions or behaviour of drivers over the course of the
- length of the licence. So, depending on the allegation,

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25 it will depend on the type of investigation required.

- 1 owners and operators. And I deal with consultations and
- 2 policy changes and deal directly with the Licensing and
- 3 Regulatory Committee in the operation of policy changes
- 4 or setting fees, et cetera.
- 5 Q. Thank you Mr Toohey. I'm now going to move on to the6 legal framework in relation to licensing.
- legal framework in relation to licensing.
 At page 2, paragraph 4 of your statement
- 7 At page 2, paragraph 4 of your statement, if we 8 could have that up on the screen, please, you talk about
- 9 the legislation that is in place around licensing and
- 10 you cite three statutes there. I think the one that
- 11 matters for our purposes today is the Local Government
- 12 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1976?
- 13 **A.** Yes.

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- 14 Q. Is it right that that Act allows the council to set
- 15 local conditions as it deems necessary and appropriate,
- 16 to ensure drivers and operators are fit --
- 17 A. Yes, once the council adopts the provisions relating to
- 18 private hire vehicles, the private hire system itself,
- 19 it allows for a set of conditions relating to driver's
- 20 vehicles and operators.
- 21 Q. Thank you. We will come on to the provisions of the
- taxi licensing handbook but, in terms of what is meant
 - by fit and proper, should those words just be given
- their ordinary meaning?
- 25 A. Well, there has been an attempt -- I think the latest
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- 1 **Q.** The outcome of an investigation could be a warning,
- 2 a suspension or a revocation of the licence?
- 3 A. Correct, yes.
- 4 Q. I just want to move on now to the licensing of One Call
 - Taxis and Mr Poland. One Call Taxis had been licensed
- 6 by Sefton since 5 December 2019 and Mr Poland a licensed

Q. Thank you. When he gained his licence, he would have

- 7 driver with Sefton Council since February 2012, correct?
- 8 $\,$ A. Yes, that's as far back as the records of Mr Poland
- 9 went.
- been required to meet various checks and requirements,
- such as an enhanced DBS check; is that correct?
- such as an enhanced DBS check; is that correct?
- 13 **A.** Yes.
- 14 Q. For a driver to remain licensed, do they have to renew
- their licence with Sefton annually?
- 16 A. Driver licences are every three years, vehicle licences
- 17 are annually.
- 18 Q. Thank you. Is it right that Mr Poland renewed his
- 19 licence shortly before the attack happened, in June
- 20 2024?
- 21 **A.** Yes.
- 22 Q. Thank you. Sorry, we can have the statement off the
- 23 screen for now, thank you.
- 24 Are you able to recall: was that the vehicle licence
- 25 or the driver's licence?

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(26) Pages 101 - 104

- A. I would have to check my statement for the driver 1
- 2 licence renewal but there has been a 2024 and a 2025
- 3 vehicle licence issued by the council.
- 4 Q. Sir, we have those documents disclosed recently. Just
- 5 for your note, they are SEF000191 and SEF000192.
- 6 SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you.
- MR BOYLE: When a driver renews their vehicle licence, does 7
- 8 that involve any assessment of their suitability as
- 9 a driver themselves?
- 10 A. Not currently, no. It's vehicle condition and insurance
- 11 and vehicle testing governs the suitability of the
- 12 vehicle itself.
- 13 Q. The safety of the vehicle, et cetera?
- 14 A. Yes
- Q. It's every three years, is it, that the drivers --15
- 16 sorry, on the third -- every third year when the
- 17 driver's licence is renewed, does that require the
- 18 council to look at their suitability as a taxi driver?
- 19 Α.
- 20 Q. When that process is undertaken, is a driver required to
- 21 declare any relevant history, for example, any
- 22 complaints that might have been made or convictions
- 23 that --
- 24 Α. Convictions or pending legal action, in relation to any
- 25 possible convictions, and plus, during the length of the
- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Can I check I have understood this correctly: does that
- 3 relate to the taxi licensing handbook that we're going
- 4 to come onto?
- 5 A. That's the council taxi licensing handbook. The line is
- 6 badly worded. It should say "the licensing handbook"
- 7 rather than "this".
- 8 Q. That's the policy of guidance that we're about to come
- 9 onto?
- A. Yes. 10
- 11 Q. Thank you. So the licence itself does, through that,
- 12 emphasise the importance of the handbook but is it right
- 13 that there is not a condition specifically requiring the
- 14 licence holder to abide by the guidance in the handbook?
- A. Not a separate condition. The handbook itself contains 15
- 16 all relevant conditions relating to drivers but there
- 17 isn't an actual condition to carry the handbook.
- Q. Understood. So, the council considers that the handbook 18
- itself is effectively a condition of the licence? 19
- 20 Α. Yes, it contains all relevant information that we think
- 21 is applicable to licence holders.
- 22 Q. Should that be made clearer, do you think, on the face
- 23 of the licence?
- 24 A. I think it is something that we could consider making
- 25 much clearer, yes.

- 2 Does the council look any wider than just whether there
- 3 have been any convictions at the time of a driver

licence, it should be declared as well.

- 4 renewing?
- A. Drivers are now subject to the DBS Update Service, so we 5
- 6 get notifications if a driver acquires a conviction
- 7 during the length of their licence. If a driver is
- 8 unable to sign up to the Update Service, we issue
- 9 six-monthly licences so we will physically check for
- 10 fresh convictions every six months.
- Q. If there had been a complaint about a driver, is the 11
- 12 process of investigating that separate to the renewal or
- 13 could it be taken into account?
- 14 The enforcement team would investigate the complaints
- 15 about the driver, separate to the licensing process
- 16 itself.

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- 17 Q. Thank you. Could we have Mr Poland's current licence up
- on the screen, please. It is SEF000165. If we could, 18
- 19 please, just scroll through to page 3. So, if we just
- 20 quickly see -- thank you very much. We saw the front
- 21 page there, briefly.
- 22 Under "Responsibilities of licensed drivers", at
- 23 (b), one of the responsibilities is:
 - "To ensure that this licensing handbook is carried
 - within their licensed vehicle for inspection."

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- Turning now to the handbook itself, which we have
- 2 already seen, but you summarise it in your statement as
- 3 the main document which summarises the relevant
- 4 standards and policies which have been adopted by the
- 5 council in relation to taxi drivers, correct?
- 6 A. Yes.
- 7 Thank you. You describe it as an all-encompassing
 - document that brings together legislation and policy, so
- 9 there are no other relevant guidance documents to
- 10 consider. So the aim is, is it, to provide a taxi
- 11 driver with a single document for them to consider?
- A. Yes, the document is intended as -- it contains policy 12
- 13 advice and guidance that we thought was relevant to all
- 14 the licence holders, so that it was easily available in
- 15 one document.
- 16 Q. So that, I think, covers the licence, its conditions and
- 17 the handbook.
- 18 Can I just consider one discrete topic with you
- 19 before turning to the actions of Mr Poland, and that is
- 20 the evidence you will have heard about under 18s using
- 21 private hire vehicles.
- 22 A. Yes.
- 23 Q. I think you have been in the Inquiry today --
- 24 A.
- 25 Q. -- so you have heard the evidence in relation to that.

Can I ask that we just have up, please, page 5, paragraph 20 of your statement. So SEF000170, page 5.

Paragraph 20, at the bottom of the page. Just specifically looking at the last line of that, you made the point that there is no conditions or guidance covering this situation and:

"Such a situation would currently be left to the discretion of the firm to handle."

- 9 A. That is correct, yes.
- 10 Q. You will have heard of the two examples where this issue 11 arose in the background of AR, one was in December 2019, 12 where he went back to the school that he had been 13 excluded from and attacked another pupil with a hockey
- 14 stick, whilst armed with a knife?
- 15 A. Yes.

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- 16 Q. The school that he was currently at tried to call the 17 taxi company, who would not provide details about his 18 taxi journey. The second example was a week before the 19 attack, where AR booked a taxi back to that school 20 again, the Range, and AR's father says that he called up 21 One Call Taxis but they would not confirm the details of
- 23 A. Yes.

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24 Q. Given that it appears that two separate firms have 25 refused to share information with a school and a parent 109

where the booking has been made?

- 1 require careful consideration before we make a change to 2 any policy to say that information should be given out.
- 3 I think identity is a problem from what was alluded to 4 previously.
- 5 Q. Just trying to put the practicalities of how you would
- 6 do this to one side to begin with and asking you whether
- 7 you agree with the principle that there would be 8 circumstances --
- 9 A. I think there could be certain circumstances, yes, where 10 it should be possible.
- 11 Q. In terms of the practicalities then, am I right in 12 taking from your answers that you haven't really
- considered how those might be tackled at this stage? 13
- 14 A. No, a lot of this information only very recently came to 15 light from the council's point of view. So we've not
- 16 had an opportunity to review since the Inquiry got in
- 17 touch.
- Q. Is it something that you are intending to take away and 18 19 consider?
- 20 A. I think it would be sensible for us to take away and 21 consider, yes, definitely.
- 22 Q. In terms of your early thoughts, can you think of any 23 ways that there might be to allow such a system to work,
- 24 examples that have been given are that a parent, for
- example, provides the birth certificate of their child? 25

- 1 making enquiries about a person under 18, do you agree 2 that this is an area where the council should consider 3 giving guidance on?
- 4 A. I have not previously considered giving guidance on this 5 situation. It's obviously part of a legal framework
- 6 covering data protection. We make it a condition of
- 7 licence that they share information with us and we
- 8 remind them that they should share information with
- 9 police but we use a gateway provision under the data 10 protection of legal obligation and I think, outside of
- 11 that, I am aware that people are careful about what data
- 12 they share. So, as much as we could consider a dialogue
- 13 with the operators to cover the subject, I think it
- 14 would require careful consideration before any changes
- 15 are made.
- 16 Q. So I understand that there are data protection issues 17 that have to be considered, and also that there might be challenges in terms of practicality but do you accept 18
- 19 that a school or a parent should be able to get details
- 20 of where their child is going?
- 21 A. I think Liam Rice alluded to the problem of identity
- 22 checks. I know he has had some suggestions about
- 23 schools and parents. From a safeguarding point of view,
- 24 there might be situations where children are looking to
- 25 get away from certain adults. So, as I say, it would 110
- 1 Again, we would have to examine those ideas and see what
- 2 would work practically. From the sound of it, it would
- 3 be more of a national issue, rather than just a local or
- 4 a Sefton issue.
- 5 Q. If that is a national issue, who would Sefton Council be 6 liaising with --

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- 7 **A.** Well, we have a regional group. I think we would start
 - liaising with regional partners and then feed into
- 9 Government departments.
- Q. What is that regional group? 10
- 11 A. There is a city region licensing officers' group.
- 12 Q. Thank you. I'm going to move now onto the fit and 13 proper provisions, which I think we have already
- 14 discussed to some extent.
- 15 Could we just, please, have the handbook up briefly 16 at SEF000169, and page 11. Thank you. I'm looking at (g). We have there the fit and proper assessment 17 18 process being referred to. Is that what we have already 19 discussed, when a new driver's licence is renewed?
- 20 I think so, yes.
- 21 Q. Would a failure to follow the guidance in the handbook 22 call into question whether a person is fit and proper?
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Next is the requirement to report. I'm not going to
- 25 pull up the guidance because we have seen it on a number

- 1 of occasions today. But I don't think it could be
- 2 suggested that the guidance fails to make clear the need
- 3 to call 999 in circumstances such as these; do you
- 4 agree?
- 5 A. Yes, Lagree.
- 6 Q. However, the way the guidance is written is in the
- 7 context of safeguarding issues; is that right?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Should the guidance make clear a duty to report
- 10 criminality more generally?
- 11 A. I think it is something that we should consider.
- 12 I think at the moment it is in a guidance section rather
- than a policy section I know that might not be clear for
- 14 drivers. So, as a guidance, we expect drivers to report
- any and all safeguarding issues. I think the wording
- of -- those areas of the handbook could -- it would be
- 17 right to review those after the Inquiry.
- 18 Q. Thank you. Just keep your voice up, please.
- 19 A. Sorry.
- 20 Q. Should the guidance also make clear that a failure to
- 21 report criminality could result in an investigation and
- 22 penalties?
- 23 A. Again, yes, something we could consider. Changes to
- 24 policy normally require consultation, obviously
- agreement by a regulatory committee, but it is something
- 1 well as driver licences.
- 2 Q. Okay. So actually on an annual basis then?
- 3 A. Yes.
- 4 Q. Thank you. You have said that they have to confirm that
- 5 they know it is available online. Should they be asked
- 6 to confirm that they have read it and agree to abide by
- 7 its contents?
- 8 A. I think that would be a sensible rewording of that
- 9 requirement, yes.
- 10 Q. Thank you. You say that the council has introduced
- 11 a knowledge of conditions test at your paragraph 18.
- 12 First of all, can you just explain when a driver has to
- 13 carry out that test?
- 14 A. So, all new drivers since -- I think the end of 2013
- 15 have had to -- it's effectively a test on the contents
- of the handbook and, in particular, the policy sections
- 17 in the handbook. So, all new drivers -- previous to
- that it was a topographical route test but lately it has
- 19 been a test of everything in the handbook, basically.
- 20 Q. So new drivers are tested on knowledge, including the
- 21 safeguarding section?
- 22 **A.** Yes.
- 23 Q. But not drivers when they renew?
- 24 A. No, not currently. No.
- 25 $\,$ **Q.** Again, do you think that is something that may be --

- 1 that we could consider for the future, yes.
- 2 Q. Thank you. So when you say we should consider, you are
- 3 saying that because it is not within your own power to
- 4 just go and --
- 5 A. I can't change policy overnight by myself, no. There is
- 6 an entire legal framework and a process to go through.
- 7 So that would have to be considered as part of that.
- 8 Q. Thank you. Mr Poland suggested that he was aware of the
- 9 handbook --
- 10 A. Yes.
- 11 Q. -- and its conditions. You say at your paragraph 15,
- 12 which is at page 5 of your statement, that all drivers
- are expected to read and understand the current handbook
- 14 of conditions and, when completing their licence
- 15 application, all applicants have to confirm that they
- 16 are aware that the handbook is available online and
- there is a link to the handbook provided at that stage,
- 18 correct?
- 19 A. Yes. correct.
- 20 Q. This might be a question of terminology, but does
- 21 a licence application include a renewal of a licence?
- 22 A. After three years, yes.
- 23 Q. So every three years they have to confirm that they have
- 24 seen the handbook?
- 25 **A.** Yes, for driver and -- sorry, for vehicle licences as 114
 - A. Yes, moving forward, as part of our training course we
- 2 are planning, we are looking at refresher training for
- 3 all drivers, yes.
- 4 Q. We will come onto that shortly.
 - I now just want to talk specifically about
- 6 Mr Poland. He is still a licensed driver with Sefton
- 7 Council now, as we have seen?
- 8 A. Yes.

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- 9 Q. You say at your paragraph 21 that the council were not
- 10 made aware of any concerns relating to his behaviour
- during and following the attacks; is that right?
- 12 A. Yes, I was not aware of any of the information that was
- shared, as part of this Inquiry, to the council
- 14 recently.
- 15 Q. You haven't received any complaints against Mr Poland?
- 16 A. No. No complaints on record.
- 17 Q. There might have been some reporting but you have been
- in the Inquiry today to hear the evidence of Mr Poland
- 19 and Mr Rice. Do you agree that when Mr Poland left the
- 20 immediate scene, he was aware that AR had made off
- 21 without paying?
- 22 **A.** Yes
- 23 Q. That he had heard what he believed to be four to five
- 24 gunshots?
- 25 A. Yes.

- 1 Q. That he believed that AR had actually shot people?
- 2 **A.** Yes
- 3 Q. And that he had a loaded gun that he was using?
- 4 **A.** Yes.
- 5 Q. That he had heard screams and seen a group of children
- 6 running from the Hart Space and he continued to see that
- 7 when he looked in his rear view mirror as he drove away?
- 8 A. Yes, that was his evidence, yes.
- 9 Q. Do you also agree that, because of his role as the taxi
- driver who had transported AR, he was uniquely placed to
- 11 assist the police because he knew the address that AR
- 12 had been collected from?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 **Q.** That and he could give a description of AR's appearance
- and demeanour immediately before the attack?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. And that he also had dashcam footage on his vehicle?
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. Given the provisions of the handbook that have been
- 20 considered, do you agree that Mr Poland should have
- 21 called 999 immediately after he was satisfied it was
- 22 safe to do so?
- 23 A. I would say, yes.
- 24 Q. We know, after leaving the scene, Mr Poland called his
- 25 friend on more than one occasion, who was in the
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- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Thank you. Obviously it is not my role in any way to
- 3 make a suggestion as to the outcome of any such
- 4 investigation but do I take from your earlier answer
- 5 that the council intends to do so?
- 6 A. Yes. I don't make decisions in isolation, we have
- 7 a licensing panel and a driver such as Mr Poland would
- 8 be invited to make representations and supply any
- 9 information that he thought was relevant to support him
- 10 before any decision was made.
- 11 Q. So he will have the chance to put forward his case?
- 12 **A.** Yes.
- 13 Q. Thank you. Can I ask you now, please, about changes
- 14 that have been made in this area.
- 15 You mentioned earlier a training programme --
- 16 **A.** Yes.
- 17 Q. -- which is in the process of being procured; is that
- 18 right?
- 19 A. Yes, the procurement process has started.
- 20 $\,$ Q. That will include training of safeguarding, child sexual
- 21 exploitation, human trafficking and then the general
- 22 conditions --
- 23 A. And disability awareness, plus council policies, as
- 24 well
- 25 Q. Thank you. That's to be done by all new drivers,

- 1 neighbouring garage, he took another fare, then drove
- 2 home and spoke to his wife. Do you accept that it was
- 3 contrary to the terms of the handbook to fail to make
- 4 a 999 call until 50 minutes later?
- 5 A. Yes
- 6 Q. We covered earlier in your statement that you said the
- 7 council will investigate if there are allegations
- 8 regarding a driver to determine if a driver remains fit
- 9 and proper. Any driver who breaches conditions or
- 10 examples of inappropriate behaviour can be dealt with by
- way of warnings, suspension or revocation of licence.
- 12 Has the council conducted any such investigation into
- 13 Mr Poland's actions to date?
- 14 A. Not as yet. Due to the confidential nature of the
- 15 information we were given, we thought it would be
- prudent to wait until this part of the hearing had been
- 17 concluded.
- 18 Q. Now more light has been shed, do you agree that there is
- 19 a question as to whether Mr Poland's actions amounted
- 20 to, taking wording from your statement, "inappropriate
- 21 behaviour"?
- 22 A. I think it warrants an investigation into the actions of
- 23 Mr Poland, yes.
- 24 Q. Would that also consider the question of whether those
- 25 actions were fit and proper?

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- 1 correct?
- 2 A. Yes. It will be for all drivers. Initially, we will
- 3 start with new drivers but then for anyone looking to
- 4 re-licence, they will be required to attend the same
- 5 mandatory training session.
- 6 Q. Thank you. Can I look, please, at your paragraph 23 on
- 7 page 6 and could we have that on screen, please. So you
- 8 have helpfully given some recommendations as measures
- 9 that could be brought in. You recommend consideration
- 10 is given to including in the training reporting of
- 11 criminality, and that training to be mandatory for all
- new and existing drivers. You recommend periodic
- 13 refresher training regarding safeguarding and any
- 14 changes to legislation or council policies every three
- years be incorporated as a condition of the licence and
- 16 you also recommend a review of conditions to consider
- 17 the issues raised by this Inquiry?
- 18 **A.** Yes
- 19 Q. Those all sound like recommendations that Sefton Council
- 20 could put in place as part of the training package
- 21 that's being brought in?
- 22 **A.** Yes.
- 23 Q. Is the intention to do that?
- 24 A. Yes. I think the idea of the wider reporting of
- criminality, we are in an ideal position to include that

time set aside, for a procedural hearing in case any of

2	Q.	Is there anything else in terms of changes that you can	2	the Core Participants wished to raise procedural
3		think of that may be relevant?	3	matters. That's been dealt with administratively this
4	A.	Not outside of what we have already discussed, I don't	4	week and I'm pleased to say that there are no matters
5		think so.	5	that have been raised or certainly none that require
6	Q.	Will you be able to update the Inquiry in writing as to	6	a procedural hearing.
7		the progress that has been made on these changes and	7	That is a good outcome and may I thank all of the
8		improvements?	8	legal representatives for their ongoing assistance, so
9	A.	Yes.	9	we won't need that slot on Monday.
10	Q.	Thank you. If we were to say by the end of November,	10	Sir, if the logistics and the preparation that is
11		would that be possible?	11	necessary permit it, we will, with your permission,
12	A.	I can certainly give an update by the end of November,	12	bring forward the outline of further written evidence on
13		yes.	13	the attack phase from Tuesday to Monday afternoon
14	Q.	Is there anything else you would like to raise?	14	because Tuesday has a very full day.
15	A.	No, thank you.	15	SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: I would strongly encourage that.
16	SIR	ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much indeed for your	16	MR MOSS: I think 11.00 on Monday.
17		help. You may now leave.	17	SIR ADRIAN FULFORD: Thank you very much, Mr Moss. Then we
18	MR	MOSS: Thank you, sir, that completes our evidence for	18	will sit again at 11.00 on Monday.
19		today and indeed for this week.	19	(2.33 pm)
20		Can I just mention, if I may, the programme for	20	(The Inquiry adjourned until 11.00 am on Monday,
21		Monday. So, on Monday, sir, we will be hearing our	21	29 September 2025)
22		final witnesses in the attack phase of our evidence.	22	
23		That's Ms Jenie Scholes, who will be giving evidence	23	
24		remotely, and Leanne Lucas.	24	
25		After that, on Monday, the plan had been, and we had	25	
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in this training package that's being developed, so yes.

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