

Witness Name: Neil McDowall

Exhibits: N/A

Dated: 18 July 2025

## THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF Neil McDowall

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I, Neil McDowall, will say as follows: -

#### INTRODUCTION

1. I am Neil McDowall, Operations Manager (Cheshire and Mersey Mental Health and Community Health Services) of The Care Quality Commission ('the CQC'), City Gate, Gallowgate, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 4PA. I have been employed by the CQC since January 2011 first as an Inspector, then as an interim Inspection Manager returning to inspector following completion of that secondment. I have worked across all directorates in the CQC including Secondary care, Adult Social Care and Primary and community Care. I have been in my current interim role of Operations Manager since 1 September 2024.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 request dated 10 July 2025.

#### BACKGROUND

3. Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust (Alder Hey) was registered with CQC on 1 April 2010. Alder Hey provides community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) out of Sefton CAMHS and Liverpool CAMHS.

#### INSPECTION

4. Between 25 March to 27 March 2025, as part of our assessment process we undertook an inspection of Alder Hey CAMHS in Sefton and Liverpool and also looked at the provision of services for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Autism Spectrum Disorders which are provided at Alder Hey hospital.

5. When we undertook the inspection, we used our assessment service group framework for specialist community mental health services for children and young people. During our visits we spoke with staff, children and their parents or carers. We also reviewed clinical records, systems and processes in line with our methodology.
6. Following the inspection, we drafted a report based on the evidence collected at the time of our assessment which focuses on the provision of CAMHS.
7. On 11<sup>th</sup> July 2025 we sent the draft report to Alder Hey to check for factual accuracy and to provide Alder Hey with the opportunity to make any factual accuracy comments. There are certain types of corrections which can be made as part of this process. These are set out in our guidance as:
  - Typographical or numerical errors or, for example, incorrect job titles.
  - Information that has contributed to a judgement, but which providers believe is factually inaccurate. They will need to provide supporting evidence. This must relate to the position at the time of the assessment.
  - Additional information, or information that was omitted, which providers think we should consider. Again, this must be relevant to the time of the assessment.
8. As part of our process, we routinely give providers of services 10 working days within which they can review the draft report for factual accuracy and to provide any comments to us. We will not extend this period unless there are exceptional circumstances. We will then review the comments in line with our process and proceed to finalise the report. We received Alder Hey's comments on 18 July 2025.
9. Given that the report is in draft, and is currently being reviewed following receipt of Alder Hey's comments in line with our factual accuracy process, we are reluctant to share the report at this stage.
10. We currently aim to publish the final report on our website in the third week of August. The report will be made available to the Inquiry as soon as the factual accuracy process is completed and the report is finalised, prior to publication. We anticipate being in a position to share the report with the Inquiry by early August.

## Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Neil Mcdowall \_\_\_\_\_  
Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ 18/07/2025 \_\_\_\_\_