

Witness Name: PC DAVID FAIRCLOUGH

Exhibits: [DF/01-DF/20]

Dated: 7 August 2025

## THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF PC DAVID FAIRCLOUGH

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I, **DAVID FAIRCLOUGH**, will say as follows: -

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am Police Constable David Fairclough of Lancashire Constabulary.
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.

#### **INTRODUCTORY MATTERS**

3. I am Police Constable David Fairclough, and my collar number is 8620. I am currently based at Ormskirk Police Station. At the time of my involvement with AR on 17 March 2022, I was based at Skelmersdale Police Station on the Immediate Response ("IR") team.
4. I joined Lancashire Constabulary as a Police Community Support Officer ("PCSO") in January 2018. I attested as a probationary constable in March 2020 aged 29. I joined as a constable via the Degree Holder Entry Programme ("DHEP") and was part of the first cohort to take this entry path in Lancashire. I obtained a Graduate Diploma in Professional Policing Practice. I completed my probationary period on 31 March 2022.
5. After leaving school and before becoming a PSCO I worked for Tesco for 8-9 years from the age of 16 until 2015. During this time, I also studied for a degree in Sport and Exercise

Science at Edge Hill University. I graduated in 2012. Tesco made me redundant in 2015, then I worked for 3 months for Amazon before going back to Tesco for 2 years. I always wanted to be a police officer. I was advised PCSO was a good route in.

### **FACTUAL NARRATIVE OF INVOLVEMENT**

6. Insofar as it was not covered by my earlier statements, a chronological factual narrative of my involvement with AR on 17 March 2022 is as follows:
7. On Thursday 17 March 2022 I was on mobile patrol using the callsign SBCAR9E. I was an IR Officer aligned to team 3 based out of Skelmersdale Police Station. I have listened to this radio transmission which began at 11:44 (LC-161, which I exhibit as **DF/01 – LANC000419**) and, for ease, I have set out what was said: “SB48” ... “GO AHEAD” ... “WOULD YOU BE GOOD ENOUGH TO LOOK AT GRADE 2 MFH LOG FOR 16 YEAR OLD AXEL RUDAKUBANA LOG 431 OF TODAY. MISSING FROM THE BANKS AREA” ... “I BELIEVE CAR 9 IS GOING TO HAVE A LOOK AT THAT, HAS IT BEEN PASSED TO MERSEYSIDE AS WELL INCASE HE’S WALKED IN THAT DIRECTION?” ... “NO, ER GOOD SHOUT, I WILL DO THAT NOW”. I do not know how SB48 was aware I was attending this incident. I do not know why AR’s age was stated to be 16 rather than 15.
8. An incident log had been opened in relation to this report by the Force Control Room (“FCR”) and given a unique reference number and I produce incident log LC-20220317-0431 (LC-51) as exhibit **DF/02 – LANC000045**. The report was made by AR’s mother. I arrived at the address approximately 30 minutes later and spoke with AR’s mother. I asked AR’s mother for some background information to assess the risk grading for AR and so that enquiries could be commenced. I detailed what I was told by AR’s mother directly onto a Missing from Home (“MFH”) report using my Police issued Samsung device. I produce the MFH report (LC-58) as **DF/03 LANC000082**. I produce the MFH risk assessment as exhibit **DF/04 (LC-59) LANC000083**. I also used my electronic pocket notebook to record information. I can see that I made 5 pocket notebook entries at the time I attended the home address of AR to take MFH details.
9. At 12:25 I made a pocket notebook entry which states “Axel Rudakubana 7.8.2006. Blue jeans, black Adidas shoes. 5ft6, black male, very slim, Mark on his forehead. Range High School – expelled. Going to Acorns - going to. Jan 2022 The Range high school”, followed by a telephone number. I exhibit this pocket notebook entry (LC-54) as **DF/05 – LANC000027**

10. At 12:30 I made a pocket notebook entry which states "No friends. No family. Sertraline. Autism, ADHA. Small knife". I exhibit this pocket notebook entry (LC-55) as **DF/06** - **LANC000028**
11. At 12:45 I made a pocket notebook entry which states "negative one call taxis". I exhibit this pocket notebook entry (LC-56) as **DF/07** - **LANC000029** At 12:49 I made a pocket notebook entry which states "Pressfield". I exhibit this pocket notebook entry (LC-57) as **DF/08** - **LANC000030**
12. At 13:33, I radioed the Control Room "I HAVE JUST PUT THE MISPER ON THE SYSTEM, BEFORE YOU CLOSE THE LOG CAN YOU PASS THE DESCRIPTION OUT AGAIN PLEASE". I have then asked them "CAN YOU PLEASE BOOK ME OFF ON MISPER ENQUIRIES AS I HAVE A COUPLE OF ENQUIRIES TO DO". I exhibit this transmission (LC-201) as **DF/09** - **LANC000427**
13. At 13:46 I made a pocket notebook entry which states "Vicky Ashworth - Range High School". I exhibit this pocket notebook entry (LC-61) as **DF/10** - **LANC000031**
14. It became apparent that there were concerns around AR's mental health and this seemed to be the reason he had left the address. I was told by AR's mother AR suffered with severe Autism and ADHD, he had left mainstream education and was that day due to meet his new teachers at a school that catered for children with special needs and learning difficulties. AR was aware of this meeting and left his home address when his mother was out. AR's mother described that due to AR's Autism, he did not like change. I was told AR was on Sertraline to help with these conditions and that he did not have this medication with him when he went missing.
15. I had read on the incident log that AR had previously attended his old High School with a knife and attacked another student. AR's mother stated he had done this because he believed he was being bullied. AR's mother then disclosed that AR may be in possession of a knife as she had noticed one missing from her kitchen.
16. Due to being aware of the previous incident and the possibility that AR was in possession of a knife, I contacted Range High School to see if AR had attended, and to warn them that he was missing. AR had not told anyone he was going to attend the Range High School on this occasion. According to my pocket notebook entry at 13:46 (LC-61), the

person I spoke to at Range High School was Vicky Ashworth. I was told that the new school AR would be attending was called Presfield High School and Specialist College. This school specialised in providing an education for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder ("ASD") or Aspergers. AR's mother disclosed that AR was already under Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services ("CAMHS"), but she felt they needed to do more.

17. I asked AR's mother if any preparations had been made by AR to leave that morning. She told me that it was spontaneous and unexpected. I conducted a search of the address to see if there were any obvious signs of preparation made by AR or if there was anything else that would cause concern and affect the risk grading for AR. This was not an extensive search, but rather a search looking for items that might relate to a person leaving home, such as a missing passport or clothes, a packed bag, or even a suicide note. I can remember searching AR's bedroom, front living room and kitchen. This involved actively opening cupboard doors and drawers. I spent approximately 15-20 minutes searching the property. AR's mother was with me during the search, and we were conversing regarding AR. I did not see anything of note. I asked AR's mother if there were any friends or relatives AR may try to visit. I was told he had no other family or known friends.
18. With limited information and no specific addresses to attend, I put what information I had onto the report and submitted it to be linked. I then asked the FCR to circulate a description of AR over the air for the attention of other officers and PCSOs. I also requested that the log be sent to Merseyside Police for their information, because AR lived only a few miles from the border with their Force area and he had previously attended Range High School. I obtained a picture of AR from AR's mother to assist in locating him. I produce this as photograph of AR (LC-80) as DF/11 LANC000032
19. As I left the address, I noticed two Council run cameras which appeared to cover the area around AR's home address. There was a limited timeframe in which AR could have left his home address, and I asked colleagues in the CCTV office if they could view the footage to establish what time AR had left and his direction of travel.
20. After leaving AR's address, I conducted various checks of police systems including CONNECT and custody whilst sat in the police car on my police issue Samsung. I called hospitals to see if he was there. I contacted local taxi companies to see if they had attended AR's home address that morning, but they confirmed that they had not. I had

been told by AR's mother that AR was in possession of a mobile telephone and I called AR's telephone but it went straight to his voicemail service.

21. I then left the vicinity of the address with the plan to update the MFH report on a desktop computer at the police station, because the actions cannot be done on a Samsung device. All the completed actions were listed on incident log LC-20220317-0431 (LC-51), in my Pocket Notebook entries or the Connect MFH report. Other officers remained in the area to continue with an area search.
22. I am aware that the call data retrieved from PC 1719 Rhodes' radio transmission show that PC Rhodes made a private call to my radio at 13:16. Whilst I cannot be certain of the contents of this conversation, I infer from the events that followed that it may have involved PC Rhodes offering assistance in the initial enquiries to locate AR. She would have been the only PC assisting with this search, the rest of the people assisting were PCSOs. I exhibit a copy of PC Rhodes' call data (LC-199) as **DF/12** - **LANC000285**
23. AR was placed onto the system as a medium risk MFH. AR had not made any comment about self-harm and was 15 years old. AR knew the area well and there appeared to be a reason why he had left the address for a few hours: AR did not like change and was due to meet two new teachers that day and he was aware that he would be starting a new school imminently.
24. I am aware that at 14:40 the FCR was contacted by a coach driver who reported that a young black male had got onto his bus and "BEGAN TO GET STROPPY" and an incident log was opened to record the details and given a unique reference number – LC-20220317-0735. I produce this incident log (LC-62) as **DF/13** - **LANC000046**
25. I have had chance to review radio transmissions starting at 14:55. PS Clarke stated: "LOG 735, I HAVE JUST CLOCKED IT, I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN GET A PROPER DESCRIPTION THAT MAYBE OUR MISPER AXEL FROM LOG 431... I THINK CAR 9 WAS ALLOCATED TO THE MISPER HE WAS DOING ENQUIRIES, CAN WE ASK HIM TO MAKE OVER." In response I stated: "CAR 9 I THINK THAT MIGHT BE MYSELF, IS THAT AXEL". Comms confirm it was in reference to AR and the location. I stated: "ATTACH ME TO IT, I'LL TAKE A LOOK". PC Rhodes then stated "BCAR7 TO CONTROL I'M 5 MINUES AWAY, I WILL HEAD OVER TOO". I produce these radio transmissions (LC-164), as exhibit **DF/14** - **LANC000425**

26. At the time, I was in Ormskirk Town Centre, approximately a 15-minute drive from the bus which was stopped outside the Hesketh Arms in Rufford. I made the decision to attend this incident as a Grade One incident and I attended with blue lights activated. This was treated as a Grade One incident as I was aware AR potentially had a knife, we had a single crewed officer going on her own, she was not taser trained, AR was located in a semi-rural area and at that time I was unsure how he would behave. It was also approaching the end of the school day so I knew the roads would be getting busier so I wanted to get there as soon as possible.
27. I arrived at the bus at 15:05. PC Rhodes had arrived a few minutes before me, and she made me aware over the air shortly before my arrival that the male on the bus was AR. I produce these radio transmissions (LC-167) as exhibit **DF/15** - **LANC000422**. The start time of these radio transmissions is 15:05.
28. I got onto the bus. I saw AR sat at the back of the bus talking to PC Rhodes. AR appeared to be compliant. The bus had several elderly people on board. The driver was waiting at the door of the bus. I joined PC Rhodes on the bus for approximately 20-30 seconds. At the first time of PC Rhodes and myself asking him to do so, AR left the bus with us. Having been made aware by AR's mother that AR may be in possession of a knife from her kitchen, either myself or PC Rhodes asked AR if he had anything on him that he should not, and he produced the knife. It was the first time I had seen the knife. It was a small knife with a dark handle and a small non-serrated blade. The knife had been in AR's pants pocket. AR handed it over in a fully cooperative and a non-threatening way. We searched AR, including for any other potential weapons, but we did not find anything else.
29. I gave consideration to handcuffing AR. However, because of his behaviour and compliance I did not feel this was proportionate. I did not feel there was any need to handcuff AR at any point as he was fully compliant at all times. I considered other impact factors including his size, build and his demeanor with myself, colleagues and the general public that was on display. Absolutely no force was necessary and therefore no force was used.
30. After the knife had been removed from AR, I checked with the bus driver if AR had made any threats. This was to check if there were any offences to be reported. The bus driver confirmed that no threats had been made to him or his passengers and he made no mention of a knife. The driver wanted AR to leave the bus because he had not paid and

the driver was concerned by the way AR had sat at the back of the bus in a slouched position. When asked by the driver to leave, AR had not responded. As above, I was only aware of the possibility of AR being in possession of a knife due to his mother making the disclosure to me earlier in the day. Neither the driver nor any of the bus passengers had seen AR with a knife.

31. At no point did AR make any threats to me, PC Rhodes or any other person. As above, AR was fully compliant. I had in mind the disclosure from AR's mother about AR's Autism diagnosis and that he may suffer distress with change. As a result, I afforded him vulnerable person status. When someone has this status, it affects how officers communicate with that individual, for example, we back off from them, give them space and have an evacuation plan.
32. I did not feel it was appropriate to arrest AR as he had been fully compliant and this incident appeared to be a mental health concern, and I believed mental health services were the best agency to address the underlying problem. AR's mother told me that his Autism was severe and he was under CAMHS. I had also seen a prescription for Sertraline with AR's name, so I knew he was under the care of doctors for his mental health. His mother explained that the Sertraline was to help him with his anxiety. I did not believe custody was the appropriate place for AR. I believed AR was a child who needed further mental health support from partner agencies such as CAMHS and this had been echoed by AR's mother. I had been told that AR had difficulties with change, and did not feel a custody environment in isolation would have been beneficial for AR's mental health at the time. Based on my knowledge and experience at the time I did not believe this incident would be pursued criminally, either by my sergeant or the CPS thereafter. PC Rhodes and I were in a position to submit a High-Risk Vulnerable Child Form in order to get AR seen by, and help from, other agencies.
33. I called PS Clarke at 15:26 via Airwave point-to-point (private call) and updated him on what had happened. The call lasted 179 seconds. I have been provided with a copy of the log that records point-to-point calls. For reasons unknown to me now, it appears that I used PC Rhodes' personal radio (LC-199) rather than my own. I have no recollection of doing this. PS Clarke asked me if any threats had been made with the knife and about AR's demeanour. I informed PS Clarke that no threats had been made and that AR was calm and compliant. PS Clarke suggested that the best course of action at that time would be to take AR home to his parents, for them to safeguard him, and for relevant referrals to other agencies to then be made. I agreed.

34. AR was compliant getting off the bus and then stood with his back to a wall and when we asked whether he had anything on him that he shouldn't have, he produced a knife from his pocket, in a non-threatening manner. He handed the knife to us in a non-threatening manner, in a way that a child is taught to carry scissors, meaning that he held the blade and offered the handle. He was searched and had nothing else on him. Before making a final decision about whether I thought the necessity criteria for an arrest had been met, I consulted with PS Clarke and double checked with the bus driver that AR had made no threats: he had not.
  
35. In addition to considering whether to arrest AR, I also considered detaining AR in accordance with powers under section 136 of the Mental Health Act 1983 ("MHA") to take him to a place of safety. Section 136 MHA allows a police officer to remove someone from a public place to a place of safety if they appear to be suffering from a mental disorder and need immediate care or control. The power is intended to ensure the person's safety and facilitate an assessment of their mental health. In my assessment the threshold was not met by the behaviour displayed by AR: he did not look like he was suffering from any mental disorder that would require S.136 detention. At that time, AR was not making any threats to harm himself and had not made any threats to harm anyone else. AR had by that time been missing for several hours and had ample opportunity to harm himself or someone else, including those on the bus, had he wanted to do so.
  
36. PC Rhodes and I placed AR in our police vehicle to take him home. I drove whilst PC Rhodes sat in the rear of the vehicle with AR. The journey from the bus to AR's home was approximately 10 minutes. I cannot recall which specific questions were asked, or who asked them, but PC Rhodes and I talked with AR throughout the journey. AR was asked why he had a knife and stated words to the effect "I want to stab someone". PC Rhodes or I asked AR why he wanted to stab someone and he stated that he had been told by his psychiatrist that the best way for his phone to be seized by Police was for him to commit a serious offence. AR said he knew that stabbing someone would be a serious offence. PC Rhodes or I asked AR why he would want his phone to be seized and he stated that he had embarrassing videos on his social media accounts (I cannot now recall which) that he wanted to be deleted. AR said that he had lost access to his accounts and that this was the only way he could think of to get his mobile phone seized and to delete his accounts.

37. AR stated to PC Rhodes and me that he had also thought about poisoning people for the same reason, i.e. to get arrested so that the police would delete his embarrassing social media accounts. AR was fixated on having his social media accounts deleted. AR did not appear to understand the consequences of what he was saying and the impact this would have, such as causing people to become ill. We explained to AR that this was not a proportionate way to have his phone seized. We also explained that we would not be able to have social media accounts deleted, and that the police would only read his social media accounts but not delete them.
38. PC Rhodes or I asked AR if there was a particular person or people he wanted to stab or hurt, to which he replied words to the effect of 'just people'. AR did not appear to have a particular target. He did not appear to have any political or religious beliefs that were impacting this decision. When I was at the home address I did not see anything to suggest he held any specific religious or political beliefs and throughout our conversations AR had not mentioned religion or politics once. It appeared from all that AR said that his want to hurt someone was all so he could have his social media accounts deleted.
39. I formed the view that these comments and behaviours demonstrated further that AR needed long term support with his mental health. With this new information I ran through the National Decision Making Model ("NDM"). The NDM is a framework used by police services for risk assessment and decision-making. The NDM emphasises the importance of reasonable and proportionate decision-making, allowing for review and learning from past actions. I kept in mind that AR had made these concerning comments. However, AR had just been on a bus with several elderly and potentially vulnerable passengers. He had been in possession of a knife and had ample opportunity to injure someone had he wanted to, prior to police officers attending.
40. AR had also been missing for several hours before he had been reported on the bus and before police got to him. I expected that he would have come across other members of the public during that time who he could have injured had he wanted to. During the time he was missing, AR had not injured himself or (so far as we knew) anyone else. No one had seen the knife, indicating that AR had not removed it from his pocket in the presence of anyone else, and he handed the knife over to myself and PC Rhodes as soon as asked and he had been fully compliant.
41. Whilst AR's disclosures about wanting to stab someone and about poison were concerning, I still did not believe AR presented an immediate risk of harming other people

or himself. AR did not appear to have a specific target and so there was not a particular person or people identified that PC Rhodes or I could safeguard. The conversation in the car kept coming back to AR wanting to have his social media accounts deleted. Even though AR was making these comments about wanting to hurt people, his behaviour and demeanour suggested otherwise.

42. The journey to AR's home address was approximately 10 minutes from the Hesketh Arms. AR's mother and father were present at the home address when we arrived. PC Rhodes and I entered the address with AR and spoke with both parents in the kitchen and told them about AR being found in possession of a knife, as well as the comments AR made about wanting to stab someone and wanting to get his social media accounts deleted. The comments made by AR about poison were not mentioned in this conversation. I can recall advising AR and his parents that a vulnerable child investigation would be submitted and explained that partner agencies may contact them. AR then asked, in front of both his mother and father if the contact from the agencies could be made with his mother, due to him getting on better with his mother, than his father. In my experience as a front-line police officer, it is not unusual for a child, especially a teenager, to get along with one parent better than the other.
43. Upon learning this, I asked AR's mother to speak to me privately away from AR and AR's father. I went with AR's mother into the hallway which adjoined the kitchen. PC Rhodes remained with AR's father and AR in the kitchen, but in close proximity to us. I then told AR's mother about AR saying that he wanted to make poison, and asked AR's mother directly whether or not AR has discussed poison with her. I cannot recall exactly how AR's mother responded, however, I remember there not being much of a reaction or shock on her part. AR's mother informed me that AR had spoken about poison to her previously. When I had searched the address earlier when taking the initial MFH details, I did not see anything of concern in relation to poison. I do not recall AR or his mother telling me of any attempts to make poison. I would like to emphasise that this was the first time that AR's mother had ever mentioned poison to me, and she did so only because I asked her a direct question about poison. If AR's mother had said that AR was researching, or even attempting to make poison, this is something that I would have acted on at the time because it would have been serious and very unusual. I have dealt with what I might have done below.
44. I would like to explain that during my interaction with AR's mother and father, both seemed very supportive and were open to any help and advice that could be made available to

them. Both parents consented to sharing information about AR and the incident with other agencies by way of a vulnerable child report. They were not obliged to consent to this information being shared. Although both parents seemed supportive, AR's mother in particular mentioned several times that she felt she was being let down by CAMHS. It was explained to them that the vulnerable child report would be shared with health services, which would include CAMHS.

45. The knife was returned to AR's mother, and she confirmed that it was the one that had been missing from her kitchen. I recall that PC Rhodes gave advice to AR's mother in relation to locking knives away at the address.
46. AR's mother was advised, by either PC Rhodes or me, to take AR to hospital for a mental health assessment. Having spoken to AR's parents, I was of the view that AR was to be left in the care of both parents, that the parents were aware of the comments AR had made about wanting to hurt someone and poison, and that they were taking the matter seriously, and that AR was safeguarded at his home address. Other than possession of a bladed article, no other offences had been disclosed, including by members of the public on the bus. The relevant referrals to other agencies, including CAMHS, from whom the parents wanted more involvement, were going to be submitted.
47. I was aware that PC Rhodes subsequently completed a High-Risk Vulnerable Child form regarding this incident and I can see from the incident log that this was done at 20:07 and that the referral was shared via MASH with: Child Social Care, Education and Health Services.
48. On 17 March 2022, I completed the MFH referral and I can see from looking at incident log LC-20220317-0431 that I completed the referral at 13:30. I produce the following documentation: MFH Finalisation Question Set dated 18 March 2022 (LC-74) exhibited as DF/16 - [LANC000091] and MFH Finalisation Notification to Local Authority dated 18 March 2022 (LC-75) exhibited as DF/17 [LANC000010]
49. I can see that after I submitted the referral, the MFH Connect Investigation was reviewed on the enquiry log by PC 2616 Hogan from the Early Action Team at 12:09 on 18 March 2022 and consideration was given to making a referral to their team for further work with AR. However, as already stated, this appeared to me to be a mental health condition that had worsened due to AR's concerns around starting a new school. Mental Health services were best equipped to offer a longer-term solution for AR and it had been confirmed on

the vulnerable child referral that this had been shared with health services. Details of who the referral was shared with is documented at the bottom of the investigation summary. This is only a very brief comment that officers would have to actively look for themselves, as this information is not fed back to the officer who has submitted the investigation. After the referral was submitted and shared with the key agencies, I sent the crime report for closure the following week. I had no further involvement with AR or his family after this.

## **THE ATTACK**

50. I exhibit to this statement my 2 earlier witness statements. Those statements were made to assist Merseyside Police in the criminal prosecution of AR. I exhibit the statement I made on 23 August 2024 (LC-76) as exhibit DF/18 [LANC000019] I exhibit the statement I made on 28 November 2024 (LC-79) as exhibit DF/19 [LANC000023] I confirm that the contents of those statements are true to the best of my memory.
51. On the day of the attack on 29 July 2024, I was on duty and self-briefing as is the norm in Neighbourhood Policing. As part of self-briefing, I routinely check ongoing incidents via WebStorm. Webstorm is software that was used at the time of this incident, which listed all ongoing incidents across Lancashire. I noticed a Grade One incident sent from Merseyside Police to Lancashire Constabulary. The log referred to an ongoing, multiple casualty, incident and at which Merseyside Police were requesting our assistance. When someone in the office read out the name of the suspect, AR, it hit me very hard because I immediately recalled my involvement with him in 2022.
52. I was sent by my Sergeant to the Banks area (an area in effect at the Merseyside Police and Lancashire Constabulary border) to conduct reassurance foot patrol. I was then sent to attend AR's home address to assist with scene cover. I remained at AR's address for the rest of my tour of duty.
53. The day after the incident, I was sent to the Banks area again for reassurance patrol. There were no issues until approximately 19:00 when Merseyside Police called for Operation Response, which was a request for assistance from all Forces. At this time, I could see in the Southport area smoke from what I assumed were fires. The smoke was several hundred feet in the air. I realised at this time that this was a huge incident with potential massive and national repercussions.

54. The following day on 31 July 2024, I realised that something wasn't right with me. I had never felt like that before. I had not eaten or slept for three days. I spoke to my Sergeant to see if I could be referred to our Occupational Health department.

I&S

I&S

55. In February 2025 I requested to be put on restricted duties because I could not concentrate at work and I was scared of someone coming to harm because of something I did.

I&S

I&S

I&S

It had been 9 months since the incident in Southport, but I was still unable to sleep or switch off from what had happened.

I&S

I&S

### PREVIOUS STATEMENTS

56. I have reviewed my previous statements dated 23 August 2024 (LANC000019/LC-76) and 28 November 2024 (LANC000023/LC-79).

57. I have been asked to consider whether there is any information I can provide concerning my role or what I witnessed on 17 March 2022 that is not contained in my previous statements and in addition to the details above, I feel it is important to highlight the difference between the way AR looked in March 2022, on the day that I had contact with him, and the widely shared custody photo of him which was released after his arrest in July 2024.

58. In March 2022 I remember AR being extremely thin and much smaller than me in height and build. I cannot recall his exact height; however, I am 5'9" and I remember towering over him. In March 2022 AR did not have the same hair style as he had in the July 2024 custody photo. I would describe his hair when I met him as being a very short afro. AR was very child-like. By this I mean he was smiling, he had a childlike voice (in that his voice hadn't 'broken') and he was sat at the back of the bus, much like a 'stroppy teenager', with his legs spread. I use the word 'stroppy' only to describe AR's body

language. At no time was AR verbally abusive or aggressive towards anyone present. He was dressed in child appropriate clothing, pants and a T-shirt. He seemed immature for 15 and in no way like an adult. He looked very similar (other than his hair was slightly longer) to how he looked in the photograph I obtained from his parents when taking MFH details, referred to above.

59. I also remember that AR struggled to maintain his attention and he didn't seem to take things in. He didn't seem to care about any consequences of having a knife in his pocket even with two police officers stood in front of him.
60. As I have detailed above, AR was entirely compliant with every request made of him, this includes stepping off the bus when requested, handing over the knife when he was asked if he had something on him that he shouldn't, compliance with the search that I conducted of him, and entering the police car at the first request. At no point during my dealings with AR did I feel my safety, or the safety of others, was under threat.
61. I have been asked whether I was aware that AR had previously (in 2019) admitted to taking a knife into a school in order to stab someone, said he was 'pretty certain' to use it, and made reference to teachers getting murdered (LANC000041/LC-01). As I have detailed above, I was aware of some of that information.
62. When I took the MFH details from AR's mother at their home address at about midday on 17 March 2022, she disclosed to me that she thought AR had possibly taken a knife from the kitchen. I asked if she had seen him take a knife and she replied that she hadn't. I asked her why she thought this, and she told me that a knife was missing and he had previously taken a knife into his secondary school as he was being bullied by other pupils. My recollection is that she also told me AR had assaulted a pupil because the boy who had been bullying him had not been in school that day. There was also mention of a teacher being involved. I asked her which school, and she told me it was Range High School. I asked what happened after that incident and she told me the police were involved because AR had 'gone after' those who had bullied him. I asked about the bullying, and she replied that it had been just general kids bullying, nothing specific.
63. After speaking to AR's mother and obtaining MFH details, I returned to my police vehicle and to the best of my recollection conducted a PNC check on AR. I have since been advised that there is no record of this PNC check, however to the best of my knowledge I did check PNC as I was aware of an assault and possession of an offensive weapon by

AR, which seemed to corroborate the account given by AR's mother. I specifically remember having issues with my Samsung on that day (as evidenced in the radio transmission LC-164)

64. As above, I telephoned Range High School to see if AR had been to the school that day and Vicky Ashworth confirmed that AR had not been to the school that day but that she was very aware of who he was due to a previous incident whereby AR had assaulted someone. I advised her to call 999 if AR was seen at the school. She was going to make the senior leadership team aware that AR was missing.
  
65. I want to make it clear that in relation to the previous incident with AR carrying a knife at Range High school, I did not know about AR's apparent intention to use the knife he had taken into the school, nor anything about comments about teachers getting murdered. When dealing with this incident on 17 March 2022 I looked at the CONNECT investigation summary. On that summary it is noted that AR implied he may use a knife, but this is not something I recall reading at the time. AR's reference to 'why teachers get murdered' is included on the 'Actions Enquiries' tab of the CONNECT page, however this is not something I would look at whilst on patrol. As a front line officer you would read the summary of the investigation and expect all of the key information to be in that body of text.
  
66. I thought there was just one incident relating to AR, however, I am now aware that there were two separate incidents. There was one in October 2019 and one in December 2019. I believed that the intel entry and investigation on Lancashire's CONNECT system, the account given by AR's mother and the limited PNC information all related to the same incident. To the best of my recollection, the Police reports and AR's mothers account all make reference to AR carrying a knife and the Range High School, PNC made reference to offences against the person and possession of an offensive weapon. When you conduct a PNC check on 'Pronto' on the Samsung, you are only given a date range and offence category, such as offence against the person, rather than any specific offence. You are not given the summary of offending on Pronto PNC. I believed all this information was in relation to the same incident whereby AR had taken a knife into Range High School and assaulted a person.
  
67. I have been asked whether I was aware AR had previously been convicted (in 2020) for possession of a bladed article, possession of an offensive weapon, and assault occasioning actual bodily harm, as a result of an incident in which he brought weapons,

including a knife, into his former school and assaulted a pupil. I hope that I have answered this question above.

68. I did not do a Police National Database ("PND") request relating to AR as it did not seem necessary for this situation, a MFH job. A PND check is more thorough than a PNC check as this involves speaking with other police forces, and asking them to share any information and intelligence that they hold in relation to a specific individual. This information is not readily available, and a formal request needs to be made to the PND department within Lancashire Constabulary. As this incident took place during lockdown, there was a delay in processing PND requests due to staff working arrangements. I am aware this incident started as a MFH, and we later established the offence of a possession of a bladed article. However, it would not be standard procedure to submit a PND for a MFH investigation, or someone found in possession of a bladed article. Even had I done so, it would have taken months (at the time) to get any response.
69. I have been asked whether I was aware that, as at 17 March 2022, AR had been referred to Prevent on three occasions (5 December 2019, by a teacher at his then-school, in relation to exclusion from prior school for carrying a knife and searching for mass school shootings on the internet; 1 January 2021, by a teacher at his previous school, as a result of concerning posts on social media; 26 April 2021, by a teacher at his then-school, as a result of internet searches for 'London Bomb' and his interest in the Israel/Palestine conflict, MI5, and the IRA). I had no knowledge of this until 20 January 2025, the date that AR changed his plea to guilty in relation to the 29 July 2024 attack. I was shocked to learn this information which I learned from a Sky news article that day.
70. I have been asked whether, in light of the above, I consider that I had sufficient information about AR's forensic history and the potential risk he posed to third parties. Now that I am aware of the three Prevent referrals I feel that I was not equipped with all the information at the time of my involvement with AR. Although I was aware of a previous incident at AR's school, I was not aware of his apparent fascination with violence or violent incidents. The incidents at the high school occurred in 2019 and to my knowledge, there had been no further such incidents in 2020 or 2021. However, the Prevent referrals that have been referred to above appear to show an ongoing fascination on the part of AR with extreme violence or weapons. Had I known about these 3 Prevent referrals and therefore AR's fascination with extreme violence or weapons I believe I would have done things differently on 17 March 2022. I would have highlighted previous Prevent referrals on the vulnerable child referral I made. This would have given the Multi Agency Safeguarding

Hub ("MASH") more context when deciding on a sharing pathway. I would have made my Sergeant aware. I might even have arrested AR. But all of this is speculative because it is potentially distorted by what I now know about the eventual horrendous actions of AR.

71. I have been asked why I decided to apply a medium risk grading to the MFH assessment (LANC000009/LC-60). Whenever a police officer attends a MFH incident, they will make a risk grading based on what information they are given or have access to. Whenever grading a child for a MFH, they are always either medium or high risk. To meet the high risk grading, certain criteria would have to be met. These include but are not limited to: the risk of immediate harm coming to the MFH person – this could be a health condition, or that they have given a clear intent to harm themselves, or their age, or capacity. I did not think that AR met any of the criteria regarding harm to himself.
72. I was aware from his mother that AR was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD. He was prescribed sertraline, and I had seen this medication at his address. The conditions of ASD and ADHD would not have been sufficient to treat AR as high risk. I also considered the wider risk to members of the public. I considered the incident at his school 3 years earlier. However, there had been no other concerns that I was aware of. AR's mother explained to me why she thought AR had gone missing that day. She stated that he was due to meet two new teachers from Pressfield School. Due to AR's autism he did not like change and didn't want to meet the teachers.
73. I was aware from AR's mother that he potentially had a knife with him, but he had not made any specific threats towards anybody or himself. I also conducted a routine cursory search of AR's home address. Such a search is usually done to ensure the person reported missing is not hiding within the property. It is also done to look for any obvious signs of planning a MFH episode. This was not the case with AR. I therefore did not feel there was a risk to the wider community save for the fact that he might have had a knife. As I have previously mentioned, I did feel it important to contact Range High School.
74. With all of the information available to me, I deemed AR to be medium risk. I consulted PS Clarke and he agreed with my decision as to medium risk. I want to add that even though AR was deemed medium risk, this did not affect our response on the day. Even if he had been graded as high risk, I do not think it would have changed our initial response. People reported MFH are regularly reviewed by the duty Inspector and their risk can change depending on circumstances/new information.

75. I have been asked what difference, if any, there would have been if a high risk grading had been applied, whether (i) on the basis of risk of harm to others; or (ii) for any other reason. As I have previously mentioned, I do not think grading this incident as high risk would have changed what was done as part of the initial response. Numerous enquiries were made at the home address within minutes of me arriving at AR's home. Beyond the initial response, with a high risk grading a misper manager may have been assigned and cell phone enquiries may have been requested. However, local enquiries must still be undertaken initially (and which were done) and in any case, AR was located within 2 hours and therefore probably before any additional steps to be performed for a high risk misper could have been taken.
76. AR was in fact located before the MFH investigation was fully updated as I was unable to update actions on the investigation on my Samsung mobile device after it had been submitted. Any action has to be updated on a desktop computer and can't be done on the Samsung mobile device. Likewise, the MFH report has to be finalised on a desktop computer.
77. I have been asked what training, policy or guidance (from Lancashire Constabulary or otherwise) I utilised when making decisions about how to deal with AR after he was found in possession of a knife. I do not believe there was any specific policy in relation to those found in possession of a knife. Police officers use discretion in their decision making at any incident they attend, along with common sense. Police officers have to follow PACE. PACE covers the necessity criteria to make a lawful arrest and the NDM assists in decision making.
78. Based on my training and experience at that time, and with PACE in mind, I considered that I was faced with a young child with mental health concerns who had left home because he was afraid of meeting new teachers. I was aware AR was diagnosed with Autism and ADHD and I was aware that a symptom of Autism can be to not like a change of routine. There was therefore a clear reason for AR to have gone missing that day. I was aware that AR was 15 years of age, and he was much more childlike than his age suggested. He had the mannerisms and the build and physique of a child younger than his actual years.
79. For the reasons explained, I did not feel the necessity criteria for arrest had been met and I felt a more long-term resolution was more appropriate through the sharing of information with the MASH. I would also like to add that my basic training emphasized that not

arresting children was the preferred option and we should look for diversionary outcomes where possible. Had I arrested AR at the bus or after the car journey to his home, I think the custody sergeant would not have authorised detention based on all of the information that I had, especially that his reason for getting arrest was to have his social media account cleansed.

80. I have been asked whether Lancashire Constabulary has or applies any policy in relation to individuals found in possession of knives or weapons. Please see the answer above. I am not aware of any such policy, such as "arrest all those in possession of a knife". There is such a policy for Domestic Abuse ("DA") matters, whereby all suspects would be arrested regardless of the victim's wishes. Although Lancashire Constabulary encourages us not to arrest children unless absolutely necessary, this would not impact on the DA policy as any DA offender must be over 16 years of age. Every DA victim is classed as a vulnerable person, so this is one of the necessity criteria under s.24(5)(d) of PACE.
81. I have been asked about my rationale for not seeking a criminal justice outcome (i.e. arresting or taking any other step with a view to a charge or out of court disposal) in respect of AR's possession of a knife on 17 March 2022. I feel I have addressed why I decided not to arrest AR above. Furthermore, I knew a vulnerable child referral would be made and the issue would be shared with other more appropriate public agencies. I believed these agencies could provide ongoing support which would be more beneficial to AR and could reduce his likelihood of re-offending. I was also aware that the partner agencies could refer back to the Police if AR had refused to engage with them or they had any other concerns.
82. I have been asked whether, if I was not aware of AR's prior possession of, and threats to use, a knife, that would have been a factor in whether or not to seek a criminal justice outcome. Although I consider that a person's previous history should be taken into account, with the circumstances in front of me on that particular day I still don't think that would have justified me making an arrest. The incident at Range High School was over two years ago in 2019 and whilst it would be important information, it didn't change the child or circumstances that I was faced with on the day. The crime was still recorded, and the relevant referrals were made.
83. I have been asked whether I considered revisiting my decision not to seek a criminal justice outcome when AR told me, "I want to stab someone" (and if not, why not). When

AR made this comment, I was concerned, for obvious reasons. I therefore revisited in my mind the NDM. In isolation the comment "I want to stab someone" is not a criminal offence, and did not in and of itself grant me any additional powers to use or policies to consider. His motive seemed to be to get himself arrested to cleanse his social media account. He had also been in possession of a knife in public and on the bus for some time and could have used it had he wished to do so. This comment did not match the behaviour on display.

84. However, having come to that view, I did not then simply ignore the comment. It was recorded on the vulnerable child referral. AR had an elaborate reason as to why he had the knife and wanted to stab someone. He told me on more than one occasion that he wanted to get arrested so that his mobile telephone would be seized, and police would delete his social media accounts. He was asked why he wanted the accounts deleted and he said he had embarrassing videos on them. AR did not elaborate on what the videos were, which we did probe, but he just repeated that they were "embarrassing".
85. Although AR did make this concerning comment, it did not tie in with how he was presenting and behaving. We asked him who he wanted to stab, and he said, "just people". He was smiling when he said this. He had been on the bus with people including the elderly passengers. He had been with my colleague and I for a short time. He had also likely been with other members of the public before getting on the bus. Despite having the knife on him for some considerable time, he had not taken the knife out or taken any step to stab anyone. He was acting completely contrary to his professed intentions.
86. In August 2024 I saw a video that was being widely shared on social media that showed AR doing what I would describe as silly things, wearing a Range High School uniform. This video appeared to have been uploaded a number of years before the Southport attacks, however I cannot recall the exact date. AR's name was shown on the video, and I recognised the person in the video to be AR. This may have been the sort of "embarrassing" video AR had been referring to in March 2022. I have since been shown a video which I can confirm is the video that I saw in August 2024. I exhibit this video of AR (LC-204) as **DF/20** - **LANC000290**
87. I have been asked whether I considered revisiting my decision not to seek a criminal justice outcome when AR told me that he had considered poisoning people (his interest in poison subsequently being corroborated to me by his mother). I have been asked

whether I considered that any further or other steps needed to be taken as a result (and if not, why not). AR only made the poisoning comment once and was again smiling (I could see this in the driver's mirror). As before, I revisited the NDM and decided to ask AR some further questions. AR was asked who he wanted to poison and, again, he did not suggest a specific person or people. AR was then asked by PC Rhodes or me (I can't remember which) what poison he was going to use, and he responded with only a shrug of his shoulders, as if he was winding us up in a teenager-type way. AR was then asked by one of us (again, I cannot remember which) whether he had bought any poison and he answered that he hadn't. He then repeated that he wanted to get arrested. He was again asked why, and he stated that he had had an appointment with a psychiatrist and had been told the best way to get his phone seized was to get arrested for a serious offence.

88. When we arrived at AR's home address we initially sat in the kitchen with AR and his parents. We spoke about the knife in front of AR. However, when we spoke about the poison I did this alone with AR's mother. This was deliberate because AR had disclosed that he got along better with his mother. I explained what AR had said about wanting to poison people and AR's mother said that he had spoken about poison before in what seemed from her account to be a non-specific way.
89. It was my belief that had there been anything in the address about which AR's mother was concerned or aware, including anything to do with poison, she could and would have told me about it at that time. My reasoning was that AR's mother appeared to be very responsible and had assisted us at every opportunity. Not all parents are like this when we attend an incident. AR's mother volunteered information about an incident at the Range High School involving a knife. She had disclosed about the knife she thought AR had taken from the kitchen and may be in possession of. Without that information from AR's mother we would not have had any grounds to search AR. AR's mother disclosed the fact of AR's neuro diversity and involvement with other agencies, and she had reported him missing from home at what appeared to have been the earliest opportunity.
90. With all this in mind, AR's mother behaved exactly as I would expect a responsible parent to behave. I searched AR's home address when I had initially taken the MFH details. Admittedly at this stage I was not searching for poison. However, I did not see or find anything that concerned me. In order for me to conduct a further search after AR had made the comments about poison, I would have had to obtain the parent's consent. I

believed that if AR's mother had any real concerns in relation to her son's possession of poison, she had the opportunity to bring it to my attention but she did not do so.

91. In relation to searching I had three options available to me. The first option was to obtain consent from AR's parents, however, due to how supportive and responsible they had been throughout my interaction I believe that they would have told me if there was anything of concern in the address. I had already conducted a MFH search a number of hours prior and did not notice anything of concern at that time. The second option was to use search powers under S.32 PACE. This power would have enabled me to search where AR was at the time of his arrest, or immediately prior to his arrest. Had I made the decision to arrest AR, this would have been outside of the Hesketh Arms or in my police vehicle. This would therefore not have given me a power to search the address. The final option would have been to search under S.18 PACE. S.18 power arises after a person has been arrested for an indictable offence and enables entry and search of premises. This would have to be authorised by an inspector. However, as I considered the power of arrest several times, and this was not an option that I was going to use, S.18 powers were not applicable.
92. I have been asked whether I agreed with the advice that PC Rhodes gave to AR's mother and father in relation to locking knives away. Yes, I did agree. As part of the job I did, and particularly when I was a PCSO, I used to work closely with children's care homes and vulnerable children. Many such homes lock knives away and account for them because they have children who may cause harm to themselves or others. I believed this was appropriate advice and because of the reasons I have already outlined I felt AR's mother was capable of carrying this out.
93. I have been asked whether that advice given by PC Rhodes was in accordance with good practice, and/or any relevant training/guidance or policy. There is no guidance on police officers giving such advice. As far as I was aware, this was just common sense applied by PC Rhodes and me. As a previous member of the Neighbourhood team when a PCSO, we would regularly be asked to attend addresses and give advice after an incident. I cannot recall receiving any formal training and a lot of what we would offer by way of advice in that regard was based on common sense.
94. I have been asked whether that advice given by PC Rhodes was capable of addressing any access to knives not in the possession or control of AR's parents. It was not. However, I am not aware of how PC Rhodes or I could address the availability of knives

in the world at large. If AR really wanted to get hold of a knife I do not think there was ultimately anything we could have done to stop him. He could simply have ordered one online or stolen one from a shop. I hoped that the MASH strategy would divert him from any interest in knives and help explain to him the dangers of any such interest.

95. I have been asked whether my earlier search of the premises when dealing with AR as a missing person was aimed at locating weapons or poisons. As I have previously detailed, it is routine practice to search the home address of a person missing from home for any evidence of suicidal or self-harming intentions or evidence of an intent to go far away, such as removal of large sums of cash. Had I found weapons or poisons, I would of course have taken appropriate action. When we gave the small knife back to AR's mother, she placed it back into the knife block and into the smallest slot (i.e. it was the smallest knife in the block) and then on hearing our advice as to locking knives away, she took all of the knives out of the block and placed them into a drawer which I believe was to be locked.

96. I have been asked whether I have any training or experience in identifying potential poisons. I have had no formal Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear ("CBRN") training and I do not have any relevant experience from any previous incidents.

97. I have been asked whether in the circumstances it would have been good practice to seek to carry out a further search of the premises for poison or weapons. I hope that I have answered this above.

98. I have been asked whether I considered other options short of a criminal justice outcome, such as seeking a Knife Crime Prevention Order ("KCPO") or a referral to the Violence Reduction Network ("VRN"). Before reviewing the Rule 9 questions, I had never heard of a KCPO and therefore I did not consider one. I had also not heard of the VRN before receipt of the Rule 9 letter.

99. I have been asked whose responsibility it was to give consideration to options such as a KCPO or referral to the VRN. Due to the fact I had not heard of either a KCPO or a VRN I am not able to say whose responsibility it was.

100. I have been asked, having regard to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the expectation on all witnesses to give a candid account, whether there are any other relevant matters that I wish to draw to the Chair's attention. There are not.

101. I have been asked, having regard to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the expectation on all witnesses to give a candid account, whether there are any other relevant matters that I wish to draw to the Chair's attention. There is nothing I wish to add.

### **INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

102. Insofar as I was involved with other relevant agencies, my reflection on my dealing with them in relation to the events under investigation is as follows.

103. I am now aware that three previous Prevent referrals were made in relation to AR. I had no knowledge of that at the time. I believe this information (from what is contained in the Rule 9 question and from what I have seen in the media) should ideally be available to all front-line officers. How this could be done, I am not qualified to say. As I have already stated, this could have affected my decision making when dealing with AR. I would have included this information in the vulnerable child referral I sent to the MASH and this in turn may have affected how they dealt with AR.

104. When a vulnerable child referral is completed, it is done through the Connect system and shared with the MASH. The only update provided to the completing officer (in this case, PC Rhodes) is the name of the agencies that the referral has been shared with. This is only a very small comment at the bottom of the investigation. Officers have to find this themselves. There is currently no automatic notification system in place. Specifically in relation to the referral made for AR I cannot recall being contacted by any agency (for example, if AR wasn't engaging with them).

105. I also want to point out that I feel when an Op Encompass referral is made to the school, the completing officer does not receive any information back on that particular child. I feel that the information sharing in that respect is "one way", i.e. police to other agency and not back to the police.

### **REFLECTION ON EVENTS**

106. I have been asked whether on reflection I consider that (a) I and (b) Lancashire Constabulary could have done more or done things differently as regards my interaction with AR on 17 March 2022. I address this both with the knowledge that I had at the time and, if different, now with the benefit of hindsight and/or wider understanding of the events.

107. In terms of whether on reflection I consider that I could have done more or done things differently, I would say that I could have made further enquiries to establish the full circumstance of AR's conviction in 2020 and any previous contacts he had with Lancashire Constabulary.
108. When I left AR's home address to go to the bus, I conducted checks on my Samsung and saw that AR had been named on an investigation and intel entry. I could have done further checks to establish that these were different incidents.
109. Around the same time, after leaving AR's address sitting in my police car, I checked local police systems to the best of my recollection conducted a PNC check on my Samsung, which showed that AR had a conviction for an offence of offences against the person. When conducting a PNC check on a Samsung device, you are provided with very limited details. You are given the offence, and the time frame of the years that the offence was committed in, and no further detail around the circumstances of the conviction. I would like to say that officers are encouraged, where possible, to complete their own checks, whether this be on local systems or PNC, to keep the airwaves free for emergency transmissions. The only piece of equipment that I had available to me at this time to complete these checks was my Samsung. The Samsung device is not very user friendly when wanting to conduct thorough research and is more appropriate when conducting quick checks.
110. After reflecting deeply about this incident, I am of the view that there are limitations to the Samsung device used by officers. The device is only capable of giving a quick summary of an individual. It is difficult at the scene of an incident to use this device to look up the full history of a person to make an informed decision.
111. Having reflected about resources available to Response officers at the scene, I feel that all Forces should be able to access other Force areas nominal details. Only positive outcomes are stored on PNC, however, force systems will show all intel entries and investigations that have not led to a positive outcome. Such details may help with decision making. This is the information that would be obtained via a PND request and as already stated this would not be available immediately. Had I been able to search for AR's name at the time and looked at his full offending and intel history, this may have affected how he was dealt with by myself on the day. I did seek guidance from PS Clarke whilst at this incident. At the time I agreed with his assessment due to what I was faced with and the

behaviour on display. I am aware the ultimate decision to make an arrest or not rests with the officer at the scene and not the supervisor.

112. Upon reflection, I could have taken further steps to ascertain the full circumstances of the incident that led to AR's previous arrest and conviction, because from reviewing local police systems this was detailed in an intel entry only on Lancashire Constabulary systems as the full details would be saved on Merseyside Police systems. With this in mind, I could have given consideration to submitting a PND check. However, I would not have received the result for several weeks, if not months. Therefore, this would not have assisted me with any immediate decision making or safeguarding concerns.
113. Upon reflection about the comments AR made about poison, I could have located and called a CBRN trained officer for further advice. I did conduct a search when taking MFH details and I did not see anything I considered concerning or that could be used to make a poison of any description. However, I was not looking for such items at the time and I had received no training on this subject and with hindsight could have asked for advice from an officer who has.
114. Due to how she had behaved and the fact that she was positively engaging with me, it was my belief at the time that AR's mother would have brought to my attention anything she deemed as suspicious, including anything related to poison. There appeared to be a genuine call for help from AR's mother, and she was assisting in every way she could.
115. Although it was not a criminal offence for AR to make a comment about wanting to poison people, I could have called PS Clarke and updated him on this comment to see if he had any thoughts on how we could progress this to limit the risk to himself and the wider public.
116. I have been asked whether I consider that the (a) guidance; (b) training; and (c) resources available to me were adequate for the nature of the involvement I had in the events under investigation. Again, I address this both with the knowledge that I had at the time and, if different, now with the benefit of hindsight and/or wider understanding of the events.
117. At the time of this incident I was still in my probationary period. All Police Officers are required to complete a two year probationary period before they are confirmed in their post as fully competent police officers. My initial training was very different from previous cohorts for two reasons:

118. First, when I started as a Police Officer (March 2020) the Covid pandemic had just hit and the country had entered lockdown. This meant all of my initial training (with the exception of officer safety training and first aid) was completed at home using presentations over Microsoft Teams.

119. Second, we were the first cohort of officers entering via DHEP. This meant some of our initial training was delivered by the University of Lancashire ("UCLan") and the qualification was more formal and recognized upon successful completion of the course. I personally found it more difficult to learn and study this way. I had completed my PCSO training a number of years earlier and can remember the confidence I felt attending training school each day and studying with my fellow student officers. We were able to assist each other and help each other develop as officers whereas this was very difficult to do remotely. I do not believe Lancashire Constabulary could have done anything different in respect of this, other than to delay the intake until the pandemic had ended or national guidance was updated.

120. As already stated above, a lot of Police Officers' decisions and actions are discretionary and fall within the parameters of PACE. I know (and knew) what offence had been committed in this instance but I was unaware of any specific guidance relating to how children found in possession of a knife should be treated. I am not aware now of any such guidance.

121. I also feel it would be beneficial to point officers in the direction of diversionary programmes, whether this be through the current MASH system or by using internal systems. Since joining Neighbourhood Policing in the West Lancashire area, I have become aware of specific youth clubs and youth programmes designed to help young people with similar thoughts as AR presented to me. That is why I ensured that a MASH referral was made.

## **IMPROVEMENTS**

122. I have been asked if I am aware of relevant improvements that have been made by Lancashire Constabulary since these events. Other than those below, I am not.

123. I consider the introduction of the Response Investigation Team ("RIT") as an improvement to how the IR model functions. For example, the IR officer would attend the

initial incident and effect any arrest or safeguarding, whereas the RIT officers would progress any subsequent enquiries, interviews and CPS action plans.

124. Understanding that the Chair is tasked with making recommendations but ensuring, through engagement with relevant practitioners, the recommendations are practicable, I have considered any improvements that could be made relevant to my own area of involvement that would be practicable and make an effective difference.

125. I have already mentioned that I believe improving Information Communication Technology ("ICT") systems and what Officers can view on their Samsung device and PNC would make a difference to how officers make their decisions at the incidents they attend. The Samsung device is great for looking at incidents or for a summary of a nominal. However, it could be improved so that full nominal details are accessible across multiple force areas. I believe with the improving technology of these devices that this is a practicable option that could be actioned. This would lead to more thorough investigations and assist greatly with decision making.

126. Beyond access to local force systems, this incident has also highlighted the potential benefit of police officers having access to Prevent referrals and the nature of any such referral. It is my understanding that anyone can make a Prevent referral with the majority of these coming from police forces and local schools. If a member of Lancashire Constabulary makes a referral, this is shown as an intel entry. Any officer can see this if it is not redacted. It is important that training is given to ensure officers and staff highlight clearly that there has been a Prevent referral and why said referral was made. I believe this needs to be followed up with an outcome of the referral to the Force by way of intelligence entry.

127. To the best of my understanding, on the current system if a member of the public is checked by a police officer and has been the subject of a Prevent referral, this would not be reflected on PNC or another Police Force's system but only the Force, or the organisation that made the referral. Furthermore, if a school or other organisation makes a referral, there may be no record on police systems at all (as was the case with AR).

128. I would like to highlight the realities of modern policing, especially for Immediate Response. Often response teams are unable to meet the number of required officers to keep a particular area safe and carry out our duties effectively. This creates an exceptionally demanding work environment, and we often do not finish our duties on time,

i.e. within our shifts. We often find ourselves picking up the duties of other agencies, for example s.136 bed watches (waiting with a person detained under MHA until a place of safety becomes available) and looking after children after police protection powers have been enforced. At the time of my involvement with AR in 2022, IR officers had to progress enquiries and cases following initial attendance. Whilst doing this, IR officers would often be taken away from this work to attend emergency calls.

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: Signature

Dated: 7.8.25

ANNEX B: EXHIBIT INDEX

**Index to the Witness Statement of PC DAVID FAIRCLOUGH**

<b>Exhibit No.</b>	<b>Inquiry reference No.</b>	<b>Document description</b>
DF/01	<b>LANC000419</b>	Radio transmission of PC Fairclough being deployed to the incident LC-20220317-0431 (LC-161)
DF/02	<b>LANC000045</b>	Incident log LC-20220317-0431 dated 17 March 2022 (LC-51)
DF/03	<b>LANC000082</b>	Missing From Home report (LC-58)
DF/04	<b>LANC000083</b>	Missing From Home risk assessment (LC-59)
DF/05	<b>LANC000027</b>	Pocket notebook entry made by PC Fairclough dated 17 March 2022 timed at 12:25 (LC-54)
DF/06	<b>LANC000028</b>	Pocket notebook entry made by PC Fairclough dated 17 March 2022 timed at 12:30 (LC-55)
DF/07	<b>LANC000029</b>	Pocket notebook entry made by PC Fairclough dated 17 March 2022 timed at 12:45 (LC-56)
DF/08	<b>LANC000030</b>	Pocket notebook entry made by PC Fairclough dated 17 March 2022 timed at 12:49 (LC-57)
DF/09	<b>LANC000427</b>	Radio Transmission of PC Fairclough to Force Control Room advising that the MFH report was on CONNECT (LC-201)
DF/10	<b>LANC000031</b>	Pocket notebook entry made by PC Fairclough dated 17 March 2022 timed at 13:46 (LC-61)
DF/11	<b>LANC000032</b>	Photograph of AR obtained by PC Fairclough (LC-80)
DF/12	<b>LANC000285</b>	Log of outgoing calls made on PC 1719 Rhodes radio on 17 March 2022 (LC-199)
DF/13	<b>LANC000046</b>	Incident log LC-20220317-0735 dated 17 March 2022 (LC-62)
DF/14	<b>LANC000425</b>	Radio transmission of PC Fairclough deploying to log LC-20220317-0735 (LC-164)

DF/15	<b>LANC000422</b>	Radio transmission of PC Rhodes advising that she was with AR on the bus (LC-167)
DF/16	<b>LANC000091</b>	Missing from Home Finalisation Question Set dated 18 March 2022 (LC-74)
DF/17	<b>LANC000010</b>	Missing from Home Finalisation Notification to Local Authority dated 18 March 2022 (LC-75)
DF/18	<b>LANC000019</b>	Statement of PC Fairclough dated 23 August 2024 (LC-76)
DF/19	<b>LANC000023</b>	Statement of PC Fairclough dated 28 November 2024 (LC-79)
DF/20	<b>LANC000290</b>	Video of AR which has been circulating on social media (LC-204)