

Witness Name: EVE RHODES

Exhibits: [ER/01 – ER/18]

Dated: 7 August 2025

## THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF EVE RHODES

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I, **EVE RHODES**, will say as follows:

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am Police Constable Eve Rhodes 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 currently a Police Constable with Lancashire Constabulary. My collar number is 1719.
4. I studied Criminology and Sociology at University and graduated in 2020. Whilst at University I worked at a hotel as a receptionist and I left there in 2021. I was a Special Constable with Greater Manchester Police during the COVID-19 pandemic in the year 2020 for approximately 6 months.
5. I joined Lancashire Police as a probationary Police Constable on 22 February 2021. I joined on the Degree Holder Entry Programme (“DHEP”) which includes a 2-year probationary period. During my probation, I spent the initial 2 months completing classroom-based learning, before joining an immediate response team with an allocated

tutor. I spent a period of time with a tutor to gain competence so that I could work towards achieving my Independent Patrol Status ("IPS"). I achieved IPS on 22 February 2022. Throughout the 2-year probationary period, my time would be split between completing uniformed patrol duties, and classroom-based learning.

6. I have been on immediate response all my policing career. Prior to the attack, I was working in West Lancashire which covers Skelmersdale, Banks, Ormskirk, Tarleton, Parbold and Wroughtington. I currently still cover this area as an immediate response officer.
7. At the time of my involvement with AR, although I had achieved IPS, I was still a probationary constable working towards completing my Full Operational Competency portfolio ("FOC").
8. I first became aware of the dreadful incident in Southport pretty much immediately after it occurred on 29 July 2024. I remember hearing about it on television, however at this time the media did not release any information on the individual who had committed the attack. Due to the attack occurring within Merseyside, there was no reason for me to believe that I had had any dealings with the offender initially. When the news initially broke, the incident location was given, but I did not know where this was in Southport or how close it was to the border of Lancashire.
9. I became aware that the offender was AR when PC David Fairclough contacted me some time shortly after the news was breaking about what had occurred in Southport, and he advised me that we had dealt with AR at a previous incident that we both attended 2 years earlier. PC Fairclough told me this information before AR's name was publicly announced. It is my understanding that Merseyside Police had requested assistance from Lancashire Police to assist with the attacks on the day. I do not know if AR's name was mentioned at this time, or how PC Fairclough came to know this information. I cannot remember when, but I do remember being on scene cover at AR's home address. At the time of covering the scene, I knew that the perpetrator was AR, and that the scene I was covering was the home address of AR. I cannot recall exactly how long after the attack it was that PC Fairclough contacted me. I should say that whilst I remember dealing with AR in March 2022, my memory is not particularly good due to the amount of time that has passed. I have had to review documents provided to me by Lancashire Constabulary to assist me in writing this statement.

## FACTUAL NARRATIVE OF INVOLVEMENT

10. On 17 March 2022, I was on an early shift on immediate response in call sign 'SBCAR7E'. 'SB' is the call sign for West Lancashire, 'CAR7' would indicate that I am in a car, and 'E' indicates I am on an early shift. My tour of duty was 07:00 – 16:00, and I was based out of Ormskirk Police Station. The call sign I was assigned involved me driving a marked police vehicle and I would have been in full police uniform.
11. Prior to dealing with AR on the bus, I was aware that PC Fairclough was dealing with an incident relating to AR during our shift as AR was reported missing from home that morning. I do know that I assisted in conducting an area search for AR whilst he was missing. I know that I assisted with this area search because I have had chance to review the write up that I completed for my FOC which I exhibit as **ER/01** - [LANC000246] (LC-182) At the time of conducting the area search, I was only aware that he was a vulnerable child who was missing and that he may be in possession of a small kitchen knife.
12. At 13:16 I called PC Fairclough on his radio. I know that I called PC Fairclough as I have been provided with a log of outgoing calls that I made on my radio on 17 March 2022 (LC-197) which I exhibit as **ER/02** - [LANC000285] The duration of this call was 161 seconds. I cannot now remember the details or nature of the call however this potentially could have been to ask PC Fairclough for any specific areas that he wanted me to look for AR.
13. At 13:33 on 17 March 2022, I emailed a picture of AR to PCSO 7901 Dachtler-Wood. I cannot recall how I have come into possession of this photograph of AR, but I know from reviewing the image that PC Fairclough would have taken this image on his Samsung device, using the Pronto application. I believe that I emailed this photograph of AR to PCSO 7901 Dachtler-Wood to help with the search for AR. I exhibit the email sent to PCSO Dachtler-Wood (LC-171) as **ER/03** - [LANC000152] I exhibit the picture that was attached to the email of AR (LC-80) as **ER/04** - [LANC000032]
14. At 14:40, incident log LC-20220317-0735 was created, which was a call into the Force Control Room from the supervisor of a bus company reporting that there was a young black male on a bus which was outside the Hesketh Arms in Rufford, Ormskirk. The bus supervisor said that the male on the bus had not paid for his fare and was refusing to get off. The informant said that the male was being stropky, but not threatening, although his demeanour was concerning. I exhibit incident log LC-20220317-0735 (LC-62) as **ER/05** -

**LANC000032** I exhibit the call made from the bus supervisor into the Force Control Room (LC-63) as **ER/06** – **LANC000084**

15. I can see from the incident log that once the log had been updated with the description of the male, PS Daniel Clarke suggested that this could have been AR because the description was similar.
16. I have had the opportunity to listen to a radio transmission where PS Clarke identified that AR could have been the male on the bus. In the radio transmission PS Clarke asked PC Fairclough to attend the bus due to him being allocated to trying to locate AR after he had been reported as missing from home. After hearing that transmission, I advised the Force Control Room over the radio that I was about 5 minutes away from the bus and that I would attend to assist PC Fairclough. I exhibit the radio transmission of myself and PC Fairclough being deployed to the bus (LC-164) as **ER/07** – **LANC000422**
17. I have reviewed incident log LC-20220317-0735 (LC-62) and I am now aware that at 15:03 the Force Control Room placed an update on the log advising that they had recalled the informant who advised that he had to leave but the male was still sat at the back of the bus refusing to get off. I exhibit the call that the Force Control Room made to the bus supervisor to obtain additional information (LC-65) as **ER/08** – **LANC000085** I cannot remember if I heard this update or not at the time of attending the incident, however, I have since been able to listen to the radio transmission whereby the Force Control Room pass this update to PS Clarke. I exhibit this radio transmission (LC-166) as **ER/09** - **LANC000424**
18. I updated the Force Control Room via the radio when I arrived at the bus. I was the first police officer to arrive at scene, and I made my way onto the bus to speak with the male, who I now know to be AR. AR was sat at the back of the bus on the left-hand side. I remember sitting next to him and being able to confirm that he was the missing person, AR. I would describe AR as being a young black male of a slim build. He did not present as being at all threatening. I did not feel at risk, intimidated or threatened by AR or by being in his presence. If I had felt at risk, threatened or intimidated at all, I would not have sat next to him on the bus. I updated the Force Control Room via radio that the male was AR. I exhibit the radio transmission of me informing the Force Control Room that I had arrived at the bus and that the male was AR (LC-167) as **ER/10** – **LANC000425**

19. I waited on the bus with AR until PC Fairclough arrived. I cannot recall if PC Fairclough got onto the bus or not. I asked AR to get off the bus. AR was compliant when I asked him to get off the bus, and did not offer any form of resistance.
20. PC Fairclough retrieved a knife from AR. I cannot recall at what point this happened, whether it was on or off the bus. I also cannot recall if this knife was retrieved because of a search of AR, or if he willingly offered to hand the knife to PC Fairclough. I cannot recall any details about the knife or where the knife was placed once removed from AR.
21. Once off the bus, AR and I remained on the pavement, near the bus. PC Fairclough went to speak to the bus driver to ascertain whether any offences had been committed. I cannot remember if I had any conversation with AR whilst I was alone with him. PC Fairclough returned to me and AR, but I cannot remember what PC Fairclough told me about his conversation with the bus driver.
22. To the best of my recollection, I remained with AR on the pavement, whilst PC Fairclough spoke with PS Clarke about what the best course of action would be. I could see PC Fairclough whilst he was having this conversation, but I could not hear what was being said. I cannot recall what, if any, conversation I had with AR during this time. I cannot recall if I had any conversation with PS Clarke directly myself.
23. I cannot recall how long PC Fairclough was speaking to PS Clarke, but when he returned to me and AR, I do recall that he advised me that a decision had been made to return AR back to his home address.
24. Although I was not privy to the conversation between PC Fairclough and PS Clarke, I agreed with the decision to return AR to his home address and not to arrest him. I had not arrested AR before PC Fairclough's arrival. AR had been cooperative. The knife had been removed from AR without resistance, and there was no suggestion that AR had brandished the knife or been violent during the time that he had been missing. Due to his age and the information relayed by PC Fairclough that he had autism, I considered AR to be a vulnerable child and believed that he needed support from other agencies such as Children's Social Care ("CSC"), mental health team and education, rather than being arrested and placed into a police cell. I was not aware of any other information that would cause me to disagree with the decision made by PC Fairclough and PS Clarke.

25. I moved my Police vehicle into the pub car park, and then got into PC Fairclough's vehicle with AR. Myself and AR were sat in the rear of the vehicle, whilst PC Fairclough drove back to AR's home address. I have since listened to the radio transmissions during which PC Fairclough updates the Force Control Room that AR had been found in possession of a small knife and that PC Fairclough and I were going to take AR home. The Force Control Room also updated PS Clarke of this, who confirmed that he had already discussed this on 'private mode' and was aware of the update. 'Private mode' is a call function using police radios to allow officers to speak with one another privately. I exhibit the radio transmission at 15:09 of PC Fairclough updating the Force Control Room that AR was in possession of a small knife and we were taking him home, as well as PS Clarke acknowledging this and advising he had spoken to PC Fairclough on private mode (LC-168) as ER/11 – LANC000426
26. Google maps suggests that the journey from the incident location to AR's home address is about 12 minutes. This estimated time will of course depend on the time of day and traffic. Due to the decision being made not to arrest AR, I used this time to speak to AR and ask why he felt the need to carry a knife. I wanted to gather as much information as possible to allow this information to be shared with other partner agencies by way of a vulnerable child report, which I knew I would be submitting.
27. I can recall that PC Fairclough and I were asking AR questions. However, I cannot recall the exact questions that were asked or the answers given by AR word for word. I do recall AR saying that there was a video on TikTok that he was being bullied for, and he wanted it to be deleted. AR stated that he was having issues with his TikTok account, and he couldn't delete it. I do not recall if PC Fairclough or I asked what these videos were about. I remember AR saying that he believed that if he did something wrong, and the police were involved, then the police would take his phone off him and delete his social media accounts. I cannot remember whether he said that it was his psychologist or psychiatrist, but it was someone in that kind of profession that had told AR this information.
28. I remember explaining to AR that this was not true, in other words that the police would not delete a social media account in those circumstances. However, AR did not believe me and was adamant that what he was saying was true.
29. I remember asking AR whether he understood the seriousness of what he had done by committing the offence of being in possession of a bladed article. AR seemed completely

unphased. AR showed no emotion throughout my interaction with him in the car. I cannot recall any further conversation that took place in the car.

30. When we arrived at AR's home address, I can recall AR's mother being present. I cannot recall anyone else being present. PC Fairclough and I entered the living room of the address. I cannot remember if AR remained with us or went elsewhere inside the house. I remember PC Fairclough initiating the conversation with AR's mother; however, I cannot remember exactly what was said. I do remember PC Fairclough advising AR's mother to the effect that she should take AR to get a mental health assessment that same day.

31. I remember that the knife that we had taken off AR was returned to AR's mother, but I cannot remember if it was me or PC Fairclough who handed the knife to AR's mother. During the conversation with AR's mother, I remember advising her to keep the knives in the property securely locked away so that AR could not access them. I cannot recall what, if anything, AR's mother said in response to this advice. However, I do know that AR's mother did not disagree or contest any of the advice that PC Fairclough and I provided to her. After providing AR's mother with advice, we left the address. There was nothing to suggest that AR's mother did not take the advice seriously. AR's mother did not seem surprised or shocked about AR having been found in possession of a knife.

32. I can see from the log of outgoing calls made from my radio (LC-199) that at 15:26 I made a call to PS Clarke. The duration of this call was 179 seconds. I cannot now remember the contents of the call and whether it related to this incident.

33. I cannot remember how long PC Fairclough and I were at AR's address. After leaving the address, PC Fairclough drove me back to my Police vehicle that was parked at the pub. PC Fairclough advised me that a high-risk vulnerable child report would need to be submitted for AR. I cannot recall whether I offered to submit this referral, or whether PC Fairclough had asked me to. However, I went on to submit this referral.

34. At 15:57, with the information provided to me by PC Fairclough, I updated incident log LC-20220317-0735 (LC-62) to the effect that AR had not been arrested due to him having mental health issues and that this had been a bad episode. I cannot recall what mental health issues it was said that AR had other than that he was autistic.

35. At 18:54, I submitted a high-risk vulnerable child report on Pronto which then immediately transferred onto the CONNECT system. The high-risk vulnerable child report was given

the reference 04/53311/22. I exhibit the Pronto report (LC-191) as **ER/12** – **LANC000252**. I exhibit the high-risk vulnerable child report reference 04/53311/22 (LC-71) as **ER/13** – **LANC000088**

36. At the same time as submitting the high-risk vulnerable child report on Pronto, I also submitted an Op Encompass referral to Acorns School. The Op Encompass referral is embedded within the vulnerable child report and is not a separate form. When I submitted the Op Encompass referral, I was aware that this would send an automatic email to Acorns School so that they would be immediately aware that the Police had interacted with AR. I exhibit the Op Encompass email sent to Acorns School at 18:55 on 17 March 2022 (LC-117) as **ER/14** – **LANC000122**

37. I have had the opportunity to review the high-risk vulnerable child report reference 04/53311/22 (LC-71) containing the high-risk PVP referral that I submitted in relation to AR. The investigation summary includes: “AXEL SAID HE WAS GOING TO USE THE KNIFE TO STAB SOMEONE FOR THIS REASON AND HAS PREVIOUSLY TRIED TO MAKE POISON FOR THE SAME REASON”. Whilst I do not now recall AR mentioning anything about poison throughout my interaction with him, it could have been that at the time of completing this referral that I did remember AR talking about poison. It may also be that I did not remember this but instead obtained this information from reviewing the update that PC Fairclough had placed onto the police incident log. I cannot now recall how or why I recorded the reference to poison.

38. I can see from the high-risk vulnerable child report reference 04/53311/22 (LC-71) that the report was processed by Safeguarding Support Officer (“SSO”) 12306 Whittaker from the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (“MASH”) on 18 March 2022. SSO Whittaker updated the vulnerable child report stating that they had shared the report with CSC, the Education team and the health team. I exhibit the Safeguarding Referral Form dated 18 March 2022 of which I was the inputting officer, and which was sent to partner agencies (LC-73) as **ER/15** – **LANC000090**

39. Since submitting that high-risk vulnerable child report, I have had no more involvement with AR. To confirm, the safeguarding referral form would have been completed as part of the high-risk vulnerable child report.

40. On 25 April 2022, I completed a FOC submission of my dealings with AR. The FOC was submitted as part of my portfolio for my probationary period. I included my involvement in

searching for AR when he was a 'missing from home' and in dealing with him after he had been located on the bus. I exhibit the FOC submission (LC-182) as **ER/16** – **LANC000246**

41. In August 2024, I was asked by Merseyside Police to provide a statement to them as part of the criminal investigation into the Southport attacks. I provided my first statement to Merseyside Police on 23 August 2024 (LC-77) and I exhibit this as **ER/17** – **LANC000056**. I was also asked to provide a further statement and did so on 28 August 2024 (LC-78) which I exhibit as **ER/18** – **LANC000057**. I can confirm that the contents of the statements I provided on 23 August 2024 and 28 August 2024 are true to the best of my recollection. Within these statements I have not made any reference to poison being mentioned by AR, as I do not remember poison being mentioned at any point.
42. I have been asked whether I am 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). If so, when and how I became aware of this. I was not aware of any of that information at any point throughout my time dealing with AR. I am unsure as to whether I would have checked CONNECT for previous investigations or intelligence. If I had checked CONNECT, I would have been able to view investigations relating to AR that had been created by Lancashire officers.
43. I have been asked whether I was aware that AR had previously been convicted (in 2020) for possession of a bladed article, possession of an offensive weapon, and assault occasioning actual bodily harm. I was not aware of these convictions. I do not recall checking CONNECT in relation to AR. However, if I had checked, I would not have been able to locate the investigation that related to the conviction because it was a Merseyside Police matter. The only way in which I would have been able to find out that AR had been convicted for these offences would have been to conduct a PNC check. I am unable to remember if I carried out a PNC check in relation to AR, however given that I do not remember being aware of the previous conviction, I can surmise that I did not check PNC. I relied on PC Fairclough to have completed the necessary checks and have the relevant information about AR.
44. 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 was not aware of any of these referrals. If I had checked CONNECT, it is my understanding that these Prevent referrals would not show up on the CONNECT system.

45. In light of the above, I have been asked whether I had sufficient information about AR's forensic history and the potential risk he posed to third parties. If this question means whether I had sufficient information at the time, I will say, with hindsight, that I did not have sufficient information. This is because I now know that at the time I was dealing with AR that he had been arrested and convicted for a similar offence, he had been referred to Prevent on three occasions and had previously admitted taking a knife into school in order to stab someone. If I had known this information, it would have helped us risk assess and build a picture of what AR's behaviour was like. It was also evidence that this was not an isolated incident.

46. 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 finding him in possession of a knife on 17 March 2022. I am not aware of any specific training, policy or guidance that I utilised. However, I would like to state that I did not make the decision about how to deal with AR. In effect, I deferred to PC Fairclough who was leading the police response. This is because PC Fairclough had longer service than me and was more experienced. I agreed with his decision-making in relation to AR. Had I not agreed, I would have challenged his decision-making by voicing my concerns to PC Fairclough at the time.

47. I have been asked whether Lancashire Constabulary has or applies any policy in relation to individuals found in possession of knives or weapons. I am not aware of any such policy.

48. I have been asked whether my decisions about how to deal with AR in those circumstances were in accordance with any such training/policy/guidance. As stated above, there is no specific training/policy/guidance that I am aware of that was relevant to my dealings with AR. I therefore used my general training and experience as a response officer when dealing with AR. It is my understanding from being in front line policing that custody sergeants are reluctant to accept children. This was my understanding at the time of attending this incident, and this is still my understanding now. An example of this is an incident I attended recently whereby a 13-year-old was arrested by a colleague for threatening a person with an offensive weapon in a private place and criminal damage.

This child was rejected at custody and which I believe was because of his age. I believe the outcome in AR's case might have been similar if the decision had been made to arrest him, due to AR's age and the knife having been handed over by him. In addition, he had been placed into the care of his parents who had been given appropriate safeguarding advice. I believe a reluctance to accept children at custody would have been a factor in my mind at the time, and a reason why I did not disagree with PC Fairclough's decision not to arrest AR.

49. 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 was not part of the conversation that took place between PC Fairclough and PS Clarke when the decision was made not to arrest. However, PC Fairclough did advise me that the reason we were not going to arrest AR was because he was a vulnerable child who was experiencing a mental health crisis due to issues ongoing at school, and this is why he had gone missing. It was my understanding from speaking to PC Fairclough that the best course of action would be to return AR home and submit a high-risk vulnerable child report. I agreed with the decision that was made by PC Fairclough to return AR home, based on the information that I had at the time of attending the incident. I would like to say that I had less information about AR than PC Fairclough as I did not attend the home address of AR to take the initial details for the missing from home report. I was not aware of any of AR's history. In reference to seeking a criminal justice outcome after returning AR home, I am aware from reviewing investigation report reference 04/53346/22 (LC-72) that PC Fairclough submitted this investigation and was the officer in charge ("OIC"). I was not aware, nor would I have been aware, of what the outcome would have been for this investigation. The decision as to whether a criminal justice outcome is sought remains with the OIC.

50. I have been asked whether if I was not aware of AR's history of possession of weapons and use of violence, whether that would or ought to have been a factor in whether or not to seek a criminal justice outcome. Had I been aware of this information, these would have been relevant factors when deciding whether to pursue a criminal justice outcome. However, at the time of the incident I was a student officer with limited operational experience, and I feel that now, if presented with the same situation, I would be more confident to make my own assessment and decisions. As I have discussed above, I am not sure whether AR would have been accepted at custody. If any criminal justice outcomes had followed, it is my understanding that AR could have been voluntarily interviewed at the police station at a later date.

51. I have been asked whether I considered revisiting the decision not to seek a criminal justice outcome when AR told us, "I want to stab someone". I did not revisit the decision not to seek a criminal justice outcome, and I am unable to recall why.
52. 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"). I have never heard of either of these until I read these questions in the Rule 9 request of me.
53. I have been asked if consideration of options such as a KCPO or referral to the VRN was not my responsibility, whose was it? In the light of my last answer, I am unable to answer this question.
54. I have been asked what I recall about AR saying that he had previously tried to make poison, as recorded in the safeguarding referral that I completed (LANC000090/LC-73). As previously stated, I do not now recall AR mentioning anything about poison throughout my interaction with him, although it is possible that at the time of completing the referral I remembered AR discussing poison. It is also possible that I obtained this information from reviewing the update that PC Fairclough had placed onto the police incident log.
55. I have been asked whether I considered that further or other steps needed to be taken following AR saying he had previously tried to make poison. At the time of the incident, I did not know what further steps could have been taken. This would be due to a lack of experience and training on incidents involving poison. Information regarding poison was detailed on the vulnerable child report which would have been shared with other agencies. However, if presented with the same situation now, I would look to obtain more information in relation to the poison. I would ask questions to ascertain what the poison was, where it was, how it was made, and what AR's intentions were with the poison. However, as these questions were not asked, and the information was not obtained, I am unable to comment further on what poison he was referring to. I do not know what AR deemed as poison and whether that may have involved household items such as bleach. Upon reflection, I should have asked, and now would ask, more probing questions in relation to the comment made about poison.
56. I have been asked what the basis was for the advice I gave to AR's mother and father in relation to locking knives away. I would like to say that I cannot recall AR's father being

present inside of the address. This advice was common sense practical advice provided as a safeguarding measure, to help prevent AR from accessing any other knife from the address.

57. I have been asked whether that advice was in accordance with good practice, and/or any relevant training/guidance or policy. The advice provided was in accordance with my experience from working as an immediate response officer. I am not aware of any relevant training, guidance or policy.

58. I have been asked whether that advice was capable of addressing any access to knives not in the possession or control of AR's parents. No, this would not have prevented AR from accessing any other knives that were not in the address.

59. 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. Due to AR not being placed under arrest, we had no power to search his address. In hindsight, it would have been good practice to seek permission from AR's mother to search the address for any signs of poison or weapons.

60. I have been asked what I expected to occur as a result of the high-risk vulnerable child referral that I completed. I would expect that it would have been picked up by the MASH who would then share this information with the relevant agencies who could offer the necessary support. Due to this referral being graded as high risk, I would have expected this information to be reviewed and shared as a matter of urgency, as opposed to a referral being submitted as standard or medium risk.

61. I have been asked whether it would have been helpful to have had additional information about AR's forensic history when completing that referral. It would have been helpful to have had all the available information when completing the referral, but the risk to AR was still assessed to be high. This was based on the information we had at the time of dealing with the incident. As previously stated, it would have been helpful at the time of the incident to have had additional information when dealing with AR to make an informed decision as to what would happen with him. The information obtained in relation to AR's forensic history would not necessarily need to be included on the referral. It is my understanding that once received by MASH, they would conduct a full background check of AR and review all previous incidents before sharing with the most appropriate agencies. The high risk referral

I submitted was based on the interactions and dealings we had with AR during that incident.

### **INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

62. I have been asked, insofar as I was involved with other relevant agencies, about my reflection on dealing with them in relation to the events under investigation and to address matters such as joint working arrangements; information sharing and effectiveness of communication; and the degree of openness between agencies. Whilst I created a high-risk vulnerable child referral so that the MASH could share the information with other agencies, I was not involved with any other agencies in relation to AR.

### **REFLECTION ON EVENTS**

63. I have been asked on reflection, whether 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 have been asked to 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.

64. Based on the knowledge that I had at the time of the incident, I do believe that I could have done, such as questioning AR or his mum on the poison, and asking if we could search the address on a voluntary basis in order to locate any poison that may be present. I could have taken it upon myself to seek more information around AR and his background whilst dealing with the incident, rather than assuming PC Fairclough had all the available information about AR.

65. 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 and to 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.

66. As stated above, I was not, and I am not aware now, of any guidance that would be relevant to my involvement with AR. With the benefit of hindsight, I do not believe that the training provided to me was adequate, on the basis that I was not aware of the VRN. I believe that the resources to respond and deal with AR in the circumstances were adequate.

**IMPROVEMENTS**

67. I have been asked whether I am aware of relevant improvements that have been made by Lancashire Police since these events. I am not aware of any improvements.

68. I am aware that the Chair is tasked with making recommendations but ensuring, through engagement with relevant practitioners, the recommendations are practicable. I have been asked to set out any improvements that I think could be made relevant to my own area of involvement that would be practicable and make an effective difference.

69. I would personally recommend that information needs to be shared better between police forces. I cover West Lancashire, which borders both Greater Manchester Police and Merseyside Police, and I know that the intelligence and information from these forces isn't readily available to view by Lancashire Officers. Lancashire Police operates on a system called CONNECT which is specific to Lancashire. The information that we input onto this system is not readily available to other forces to access, just as the information submitted onto police systems within Merseyside Police and Greater Manchester Police is not shared with us. If we wish to gain access to any information held by a different force, we need to complete a form and submit this to the force we are requesting information from. This isn't a quick process and can sometime take a matter of days for this information to be shared back to us.

**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

### Index to the Witness Statement of EVE RHODES

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
ER/01	LANC000246	FOC write up completed by PC 1719 Rhodes detailing her involvement with AR on 17 March 2022 (LC-182)
ER/02	LANC000285	Log of outgoing calls made on PC 1719 Rhodes radio on 17 March 2022 (LC-197)
ER/03	LANC000152	Email sent to PCSO Dachtler-Wood dated 17 March 2022 (LC-171)
ER/04	LANC000032	Picture of AR attached to email sent to PCSO Dachtler-Wood dated 17 March 2022 (LC-80)
ER/05	LANC000046	Incident log LC-20220317-0735 dated 17 March 2022 (LC-62)
ER/06	LANC000084	Call made from bus supervisor to the Force Control Room dated 17 March 2022 (LC-63)
ER/07	LANC000422	Radio transmission of myself and PC Fairclough being deployed to the bus dated 17 March 2022 (LC-164)
ER/08	LANC000085	Call that the Force Control Room made to the bus supervisor to obtain additional information dated 17 March 2022 (LC-65)
ER/09	LANC000424	Radio transmission of PC Fairclough informing the Force Control Room that both he and PC Rhodes would be returning AR home, and that he had been found in possession of a knife, as well as passing this update to PS Clarke 17 March 2022 (LC-16)
ER/10	LANC000425	Radio transmission of PC Rhodes informing the Force Control Room that she had arrived at the bus and that the male was AR dated 17 March 2022 (LC-167)
ER/11	LANC000426	Radio transmission of PC Fairclough updating the Force Control Room that AR was in

		possession of a small knife and that he was being taken home dated 17 March 2022 (LC-168)
ER/12	LANC000252	Pronto report 04/53311/22 dated 17 March 2022 (LC-191)
ER/13	LANC000088	High-risk vulnerable child report dated 17 March 2022 (LC-71)
ER/14	LANC000122	Op Encompass email sent to Acorns School dated 17 March 2022 (LC-117)
ER/15	LANC000090	Safeguarding Referral Form 04/53311/22 dated 18 March 2022 (LC-73)
ER/16	LANC000246	Full Operational Competence submission of PC Rhodes dated 25 April 2022 (LC-182)
ER/17	LANC000056	1 <sup>st</sup> Statement provided to Merseyside Police dated 23 August 2024 (LC-77)
ER/18	LANC000057	2 <sup>nd</sup> Statement provided to Merseyside Police dated 23 August 2024 (LC-78)