

Witness Name: KEITH WARD

Exhibits: KW/01 – KW/11

Dated: 6 August 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF KEITH WARD

I, **KEITH WARD**, will say as follows:

INTRODUCTION

1. I am Police Sergeant Keith Ward 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 a Police Sergeant with Lancashire Constabulary. My collar number is 3384. I joined Lancashire Constabulary on 5 April 2004. I have over 21 years’ experience as a front-line Police Officer.
4. I passed my Sergeants’ exam in 2022. I then started my Sergeant role supervising an immediate response team covering West Lancashire. As of November 2024, I have been working as a Sergeant on the Safer Neighbourhoods Team (“SNT”) which covers Chorley, West Lancashire and South Ribble.

5. At the time of attending the incident concerning AR on 30 November 2021, I was a Police Constable. I was a uniformed response officer performing front line duties on immediate response.

6. I first became aware that I had had dealings with AR when PC 6127 Daryl Hall approached me during work approximately around a week or two after the Southport attack and said that he and I had attended an incident at AR's home address some years earlier. By that time, I had seen AR's photograph and name in the media and I had also supervised the scene that was placed on AR's address. At no point before being informed by PC Hall did it occur to me that I had had dealings with AR or had attended his home address. In order to provide this statement, I have had to refresh my memory by reviewing the documents that Lancashire Constabulary hold in relation to the incident I attended on 30 November 2021.

FACTUAL NARRATIVE OF INVOLVEMENT

7. On 30 November 2021, I was working a night shift based out of Skelmersdale Police Station from 22:00 until 07:00 the following morning. I was given a call sign of 'SBCAR4N' "SB" refers to the area of West Lancashire, and this is the area that an SB patrol would cover, "CAR" refers to the type of vehicle that patrol was in, "4" refers to the call sign number of the patrol, and "N" refers to a night shift patrol. This would have involved me driving a marked police car with emergency lights and sirens. I would have been wearing full police uniform.

8. I can see from reviewing the police incident log LC-20211130-1175, that upon commencing our tour of duty, and before dealing with the incident with AR, PC Hall and I were immediately deployed to another incident. In fact, we were shown as attending that other incident 6 minutes before we were due to start our shift. That other incident was categorised as a 'Grade 1' emergency response, meaning that we would have attended with our emergency lights and sirens activated. Whilst we were given individual call signs prior to commencing our shift, I believe, from memory, that PC Hall and I travelled to the incident in the same vehicle due to the significant distance it was from Skelmersdale Police Station. I cannot remember whose vehicle we travelled in. For reference, Google Maps suggests the journey from Skelmersdale Police station to the incident location would involve around a 33-minute drive.

9. After we had finished dealing with that Grade 1 incident, we were deployed to deal with the incident concerning AR. I have been able to review the data held by the Force Control Room, which shows that that the Grade 1 incident we attended at the start of our shift was in Hesketh Bank. That would be around 8 minutes by car from AR's address.
10. I do not recall the circumstances in which we were deployed to the incident involving AR, however I presume that we were deployed because we were relatively near to AR's address. I have listened to the radio transmission in which PC Hall advised the Force Control Room that we had finished dealing with the previous incident and he asked the operator to deploy us to this incident. I exhibit the radio transmission between PC Hall and the Force Control Room on 30 November 2021 (LC-157) as **KW/01 – LANC000418**. I exhibit incident log LC-20211130-1175 (LC-44) as **KW/02 – LANC000025**. The incident log shows that PC Hall and I were deployed to deal with the incident at 23:25.
11. I can see from reviewing incident log LC-20211130-1175 that the original log had been received into the Force Control Room at 18:47. The log was transferred to Lancashire Constabulary from Merseyside Police. The original details on the log included that AR had become angry at the food his parents had cooked him for tea, and this caused him to throw a plate of fish and chips at a rent-a-car and jump on the car. The log also included that AR had behaviour problems, had autism and had threatened to destroy the vehicle if his parents 'take his brother to music'.
12. The incident log shows that after being received in the Force Control Room, an operator called AR's parents back at 20:29. During that call, it was documented that AR was no longer causing problems and was calm in the living room. I exhibit the call that the operator in the Force Control Room made to AR's parents at 20:29 on 30 November 2021 (LC-45) as **KW/03 – LANC000078**.
13. PC Hall and I arrived at AR's home address at 23:39 (which was approximately 5 hours after the initial call was made). I remember entering the address and speaking with AR's father, away from AR. I saw PC Hall enter the living room to speak to AR, who was sitting calmly. I do not recall speaking with AR at any point myself. I do not recall anyone else being present inside the address. I am not able to independently recall any conversations or interactions that I had with AR's father.
14. From reviewing Investigation Report Print 04/192945/21 (LC-49), I can see that I documented that AR's father had informed me that AR was struggling with his autism, and

that there had been an argument that took place over what was being cooked for his tea. I exhibit the Investigation Report Print 04/192945/21 (LC-49) as **KW/04 – LANC000079** AR's father advised me that AR had kicked him to the leg causing no injury and that he had thrown a plate at the red Ford Fiesta, registration **DPA** causing a crack to the front windscreen. It was documented within the investigation report that AR's father did not support a prosecution and was instead seeking advice and support. AR's father was aware that a referral would be submitted, which would be shared with other partner agencies.

15. Following a discussion between me, AR's father and PC Hall, it was decided that AR would remain at the address with his father and that no arrest would be made. There was no requirement to arrest AR or move him to an alternative address. This is because the incident was approximately 5 hours old, and there had been no further incidents or issues since the initial call to police, AR was calm at the time of police arrival. It was late at night and it was not necessary in the circumstances to remove AR (who was 15 years of age at the time) from the home address. I had no concerns about AR remaining inside his home address and neither did his father, who had been the person that contacted the police in the first place.
16. In explaining the decision taken, I would like to refer to the College of Policing's Authorised Professional Practice ("APP") relating to Detention and Custody for Children and young persons, (available on the College of Policing website). That document states that "Officers must take into account the age of a child or young person when deciding whether any of the PACE Code G statutory grounds for arrest apply. They should pay particular regard to the timing of any necessary arrests of children and young people and ensure that they are detained for no longer than needed in accordance with PACE Code C, paragraph 1.1. Officers should avoid holding children overnight in police cells unless absolutely necessary." In my assessment at the time (and having reflected since), it was not absolutely necessary to arrest AR or hold him in a police cell overnight
17. To arrest a person, I, as a police officer, must be satisfied that the necessity criteria are met, per section 24(5) of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act ("PACE") and PACE Code G of the Codes of Practice. The necessity criteria available to officers when considering arrest are (and as applied to AR):
 - a. To ascertain a person's name – already known.
 - b. To ascertain a person's home address – already known.
 - c. Prevent harm or injury – whilst AR had kicked his father, no injury had been caused and there was no ongoing risk of injury being caused due to amount of

time elapsed (approximately 5 hours) between the initial call and police attendance. AR's father had not suggested that there was any risk of further injury.

- d. Prevent loss or damage to property – damage had been caused, however due to the amount of time elapsed between the original call and police attendance, there was nothing to suggest that any further damage would occur.
- e. Committing an offence against public decency – not applicable.
- f. Causing an unlawful obstruction of the highway – not applicable.
- g. To protect vulnerable child or persons – at that time there was no ongoing risk identified to AR or any other person, vulnerable or otherwise.
- h. Prompt and effective investigation – AR's father did not support prosecution and it was not necessary to arrest AR to investigate the matter.

18. I did not believe that any of the necessity criteria in section 24(5) PACE and as listed in Code G had been met. AR's father did not support a prosecution against AR in relation to the common assault and the low-level criminal damage committed within the family setting. AR's father wanted support for AR's behavioural issues and autism. In making the decision whether to pursue a criminal investigation against AR, I considered the following factors: AR was a child; there had been no injury; only minor property damage had been caused; AR's father did not support a prosecution; and AR's father wanted support to address AR's behavioural issues and autism. Taking all these factors into account, I made the decision that it was not in the public interest for me as a Response officer to arrest AR and take the matter further at that time. AR's father informed me that AR was already receiving help with CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services).

19. My assessment of this incident, including following discussion with AR's father, was that AR's father wanted to receive advice and support, rather than seek an arrest or prosecution of his son. The incident that I was presented with was an argument between father and son over what had been cooked for tea. That argument had escalated, resulting in a low-level assault and minor property damage. I believed at the time (and believe even on careful reflection) that the most appropriate course of action would be for a referral to be submitted via MASH to partner agencies to assist AR with his behaviour and autism, along with family support – as opposed to a criminal prosecution.

20. Whilst I was at the address, I made two entries in my electronic pocket notebook. The first entry is timed at 23:45 and reads 'NO'. I exhibit this entry (LC-47) as **KW/05 – LANC000037** I made a second entry at 23:47 which contained details of AR and his

family as well as details of the damaged vehicle. I exhibit this entry (LC-48) as **KW/06 – LANC000038**

21. The incident log shows that PC Hall and I left the address at 00:08 on 1 December 2021. On leaving the address, I updated the Force Control Room over the radio that I would be submitting a crime investigation for criminal damage and a common assault. I also advised that I would input a standard risk vulnerable child report. I exhibit this radio transmission (LC-158) as **KW/07 – LANC000415**. I am able to see from the data held by the Force Control Room, that I was then deployed to another Grade 1 incident at 00:08.

22. At 01:03 on 1 December 2021, I input a crime investigation using the Pronto system. I also added a vulnerable child report onto this investigation and graded the risk as standard. When I submitted the investigation, the data immediately transferred over to the Connect system and created an investigation with reference number 04/192945/21. I exhibit the report that I submitted on Pronto (LC-195) as **KW/08 – LANC000250**

23. At the same time as inputting the crime investigation and vulnerable child report, I also submitted an Op Encompass referral on the Pronto system to Acorns School. When an Op Encompass referral is generated, my understanding is that the school is automatically informed that the Police have been involved with the child. I exhibit the Op Encompass automatic email of 1 December 2021 that was sent to Acorns School (LC-114) as **KW/09 – LANC000119**

24. As can be seen from the Investigation Report Print 04/192945/21, within the inquiry log, I completed several 'Golden Hour Tasks', which are actions that I considered and completed at the address. Golden Hour Tasks are the initial enquiries that an officer should complete at the time of attending an incident. These enquiries can include obtaining CCTV, completing house to house enquiries, and arresting a suspect. Each Golden Hour Task which is generated on Connect is specific to the crime that is being investigated.

25. I can see from the investigation report that Safeguarding Support Officer 14103 Kerr processed my standard risk vulnerable child investigation in the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub ("MASH") on 4 December 2021. SSO Kerr created a Safeguarding Referral Form with reference 04/192945/21 and updated the investigation report to say that she would share my report with 'CFW' (Lancashire County Council's Child and Family Wellbeing Service). I exhibit the Safeguarding Referral Form reference 04/192945/21 (LC-50) as **KW/10 – LANC000080**

26. I have been asked whether I was aware, when tasked to deal with this incident, that AR had previously admitted to taking a knife into a school to stab someone, said he was 'pretty certain' to use it, and made reference to teachers getting murdered (LANC000041/LC-041). I do not have any memory of being aware of this.
27. 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 following an incident in December 2019 where he brought weapons including a knife into his former school and assaulted a pupil. I do not have any memory of being aware of this.
28. I have been asked whether I was aware that AR's parents had called the police on 5 November 2021 as a result of his violent behaviour inside the home, which led to a medium-risk PVP referral being made. I have no memory of being aware of this.
29. I have been asked whether I was aware that, as at 30 November 2021, 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 did not know about these referrals. In my experience, I have never been told of a Prevent referral when attending an incident and I am unaware of how many cases I have dealt with, if any, where Prevent referrals have been made.
30. I have been asked whether I consider that I ought to have been made aware of any or all of those matters to assist me in responding to this incident. As a rule, I would like as much information as possible when attending any incident. However, I think it is unrealistic for a control room operator to research and pass all information, especially when the incident is, like this one, on the face of it a relatively low-level incident. Even had I been passed all information about AR, I do not think it would have changed how I dealt with this incident.
31. I have been asked whether, when I completed the standard-risk vulnerable child report (LANC000080/LC- 50), I was aware of any or all of the above matters. I do not have any memory of being aware of those matters.

32. I have been asked whether, if I was aware of additional information, it would have changed (1) the content; (2) the risk grading; or (3) anything else about that referral?
33. If I had been aware of further information relating to AR, I would not have changed the content of the investigation report, because previous incidents are already recorded and shared.
34. If I was aware of previous incidents, as well as Prevent referrals, I would have considered grading the referral as medium risk. However, with the information I had at the time of the incident, I felt the grading of standard reflected the nature of that incident. It is not uncommon for MASH to change the grading of referrals once they have reviewed the report, along with previous incidents and other information that they have. This forms part of the MASH process. This then allows for the referral to be shared with partner agencies.
35. There is nothing else I would have changed about the referral.
36. I have been asked why I considered that the risk in this case was standard (as opposed to medium or high). AR's father had reported a minor assault with no injury and minor criminal damage. The grading for standard risk is defined as being "concerns for a person's general lifestyle, health, or well-being". I considered that the incident I attended, and the risk posed at that time, reflected this definition. I had concerns for AR's behaviour and autism. Medium is defined as being "suspicion that a person may or is likely to suffer significant harm". With the information that I had at the time, I did not believe that it was medium risk (nor high). I had no suspicion that a person would likely suffer significant harm as a result of this incident.
37. I have been asked what I expected to be the result of the vulnerable child report I submitted. I would expect this vulnerable child report to be picked up and reviewed by the MASH and shared with the relevant agencies that can offer the necessary ongoing support to both AR and his family in addressing the behavioural issues displayed by AR and his autism. As above, I also completed an Op Encompass referral providing a summary of the incident. I would expect this Op Encompass referral to be a route to pass on this information to The Acorns School which AR was attending at the time. An Op Encompass referral allows for information sharing between the police and schools.

38. I have been asked whether overall I consider that I was provided with adequate information to respond appropriately to the call on 30 November 2021. I do believe I was provided with adequate information to allow me to respond appropriately to this incident.
39. I created a crime report in respect of assault and criminal damage. I have been asked whether I considered this to be domestic offending. My answer is no. This is because whilst AR's behaviour was towards his father, AR was 15 years old at the time of the incident. My understanding is and was that the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (in force from 5 July 2021 and which is included in College of Policing APP relating to domestic abuse, available on the College of Policing website) defines a domestic abuse incident as involving the behaviour of a person towards another if they are each aged 16 or over. Lancashire Constabulary's 'Domestic Abuse – Positive Action' Guidance dated 2021 defines domestic abuse as: any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over. I exhibit Lancashire Constabulary's 'Domestic Abuse – Positive Action' Guidance dated 2021 (LC-201) as Exhibit KW/11 - **LANC000432**.
40. I have been asked whether there is any training, policy or guidance from Lancashire Constabulary or otherwise relating to domestic offending by children. There is none that I am aware of.
41. I have been asked whether my actions were consistent with any training/policy/guidance about responding to domestic offending when there is a lack of support from the victim. For the reasons above, as far as I was concerned the incident that I attended was not, by definition, a domestic abuse incident.
42. I have been asked whether there is any training, policy or guidance (from Lancashire Constabulary or otherwise) relating to offending by children with (suspected) mental health conditions. I was not aware of any such guidance, nor am I now.
43. Having regard to the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the expectation on all witnesses to give a candid account, I have been asked whether there are any other relevant matters that I wish to draw to the Chair's attention. There are no other matters that I wish to bring to the Chair's attention.

INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER AGENCIES

44. I have been asked, so far as I was involved with other relevant agencies, about my reflections on dealing with them in relation to the events under investigation, and I have been asked to address matters such: as any joint working arrangements; information sharing and the effectiveness of communication; and the degree of openness between agencies. I wasn't involved with other agencies in relation to this incident, nor did I feel the need to consult with any other agency. I created a vulnerable child investigation so that MASH could share the information with other appropriate agencies.

REFLECTION ON EVENTS

45. 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 to my involvement with AR. 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. In terms of whether things should have been done differently on what I knew at the time, I don't think so, although I am open to suggestions as to what I could or should have done better. With hindsight – and I have thought very carefully about this – I also cannot see what else I could reasonably have done. As I have explained above, in my assessment this was a call for help from a father who was struggling with his autistic son's behaviour. It was not a father calling for arrest or prosecution of his son or even his temporary removal from the property.

46. 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 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. I think I had adequate training, resources and guidance. I am not sure any further policy or guidance would have assisted me for the reasons explained above.

IMPROVEMENTS

47. I have been asked whether I am aware of relevant improvements that have been made by Lancashire Constabulary since these events and I can confirm that I am not aware of any improvements that have been made.

48. I understand 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 could be made relevant to my own area of involvement that would be practicable and make an effective difference. I believe that there could be better information sharing to allow front line officers to be made aware if an individual is known to Prevent. Whilst I am aware of the sensitive information that Prevent hold, I think by notifying officers in some form, it might allow officers to have a greater understanding and awareness of the individual they are dealing with.

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: 6/8/25 _____

Index to the Witness Statement of Keith Ward

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
KW/01	LANC000418	Radio transmission of PC Ward and PC Hall being deployed to the incident dated 30 November 2021 (LC-157)
KW/02	LANC000025	Incident log LC-20211130-1175 dated 30 November 2021 (LC-44)
KW/03	LANC000415	Call from Lancashire Constabulary Force Control Room to AR's parents dated 30 November 2021 (LC-45)
KW/04	LANC000079	Investigation Report 04/192945/21 dated 1 December 2021 (LC-49)
KW/05	LANC000037	First pocket notebook entry of PC Ward dated 30 November 2021 (LC-47)
KW/06	LANC000038	Second pocket notebook entry of PC Ward dated 30 November 2021 (LC-48)
KW/07	LANC000415	Radio transmission of PC Ward updating the control room after dealing with the incident dated 1 December 2021 (LC-158)
KW/08	LANC000250	Pronto Report 04/192945/21 dated 1 December 2021 (LC-195)
KW/09	LANC000119	Op Encompass email sent to Acorns School dated 1 December 2021 (LC-114)
KW/10	LANC000080	Safeguarding Referral Form 04/192945/21 dated 4 December 2021 (LC-50)
KW/11	LANC000432	Lancashire Constabulary's 'Domestic Abuse – Positive Action' Guidance dated 2021 (LC-201)