

Witness Name: ANDREW MARSTON

Exhibits: AM/01 – AM/08

Dated: 5 September 2025

## THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

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### FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANDREW MARSTON

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I, **ANDREW MARSTON**, will say as follows:

#### **INTRODUCTORY MATTERS**

1. I am Detective Inspector Andrew Marston 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 16 July 2025 seeking a statement addressing Lancashire Constabulary’s involvement in and operation of Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (“MASH”). In respect of that Rule 9 Request, Detective Inspector Kelly is providing a statement in respect of MASH. My statement is therefore confined to the issue of Operation Encompass (“Op Encompass”), which is covered in Rule 9 questions 5, 6 and 9-15.
3. I joined Lancashire Constabulary in March 2007 and following my initial training I was stationed in Nelson, Lancashire as a Police Constable. I remained on immediate response until November 2013 when I moved to the planned response team and began my career development into CID. In March 2013 I passed the Sergeant part 1 Objective Structured Performance Related Examination (“OSPRES”) exam and completed the part 2 OSPRES in October 2013. I also passed the national investigators’ exam (NIE) in June 2013.

4. In June 2016 I was posted into the Child Protection team in East Lancashire as a trainee investigator. I attended the PIP2 training course in September 2016 and became PIP2 accredited Detective Constable in May 2017. In May 2018 I completed the 'Specialist Child Abuse Investigators: Development Programme' ("SCAIDP") course. I have remained accredited in both PIP2 and SCAIDP since that time.
5. In August 2018 I was temporarily promoted to Detective Sergeant in the Lancashire East Child Protection team. I passed the promotion process to Sergeant in March 2019. I remained in Child Protection until July 2023 as a Detective Sergeant. In July 2023 I moved to Lancashire Police Headquarters as a Project Support Officer for the head of crime. In November 2023 I passed the OSPRE Inspectors exam.
6. In April 2024 I was temporarily promoted to Detective Inspector in the Vulnerability Governance Unit ("VGU"). The role of the VGU is to provide force direction and governance for areas of vulnerability. My thematic areas are child protection, child exploitation and missing persons.
7. As part of this role, I oversee the governance and ongoing development of Op Encompass. This means that I am responsible for reviewing how Op Encompass is used across the constabulary and identifying opportunities for improvement so that it meets the overall objective: which is to support children when they attend their educational establishment following Police involvement.

#### **FACTUAL NARRATIVE OF INVOLVEMENT**

8. I have had no previous involvement with AR, and I have not been involved in any of the investigations that I have reviewed as part of preparing this statement for the Inquiry.

#### **OPERATION ENCOMPASS BACKGROUND**

9. I have been asked to explain Op Encompass, by referencing several topic areas. I take each topic in turn:

##### **(a) The purpose of Op Encompass**

10. Op Encompass is a process created by Elisabeth and David Carney-Haworth OBE. Elisabeth Carney-Haworth explains on her website that Op Encompass was developed because in her experience as a schoolteacher, she had a child in her class who was

reacting in a way that appeared out of character. No one could explain the reason for this. A short time later she was informed that the child had been present during a serious domestic abuse (“DA”) incident. Elisabeth Carney-Haworth explains that in that moment the child’s behaviour made sense. She explained what had happened to her husband who was a Police officer at that time. David Carney-Haworth knew the Police would have had that information. Elisabeth explained had she known before the child attended school she could have supported that child and made them feel safe. The couple then started to develop Operation Encompass.

11. “Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023: A guide to Multi-Agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children” December 2023 (“Working together”) states as follows at footnote 61:

“An example of where schools and local police forces work together successfully to better support and safeguard children after experiencing domestic abuse, is through the Operation Encompass notification scheme. Operation Encompass works by directly connecting the police with schools. When officers have attended a domestic abuse incident, police share the information with a school’s trained Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) before the start of the next school day, so that school staff can provide appropriate emotional and practical support at the earliest opportunity to children affected by domestic abuse”.

12. Lancashire Constabulary’s Data Protection Impact Assessment (“DPIA”), which I exhibit as **AM/01 – LANC000399**, on page 2 notes the following in relation to the purpose of Op Encompass:

“Operation Encompass is a national initiative with the aim of helping to protect children, through better communication between the police and education establishments”.

“The purpose of Op Encompass is to safeguard and support those children and young people who have witnessed and/or been present at a domestic incident, been identified as a vulnerable child following an incident or been subject to a missing person episode. Following such an incident taking place, children will often arrive at school distressed and unprepared.

“Op Encompass is a joint-agency procedure to provide support for children and young people who have been involved in an incident which would have caused them to be considered a victim having experienced DA in their household, having been reported as

missing from home or a vulnerable child by way of exploitation, neglect etc, by ensuring that schools and colleges are made aware of an incident at the earliest possible opportunity”

“Operation Encompass does not replace or supersede existing protocols or, singularly address child welfare. The Protocol does not replace or supersede existing safeguarding processes or protocols rather it seeks to support these operationally. The Protocol should always be followed in conjunction with the Pan Lancashire Safeguarding Children Board’s safeguarding processes as detailed in the Pan Lancashire Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children Manual. The child’s safety and welfare always remain paramount.”

“Op Encompass is a national partnership between Police Forces and designated staff at educational establishments, known as Key Adults. Working together to safeguard children, Lancashire Constabulary Police Officers/Police Staff will inform the Key Adults within educational establishments about any domestic abuse, vulnerable child or missing incident where the child or young person has been present. Op Encompass aims, by directly connecting police and schools, to secure better outcomes for children, to enable schools to better understand the impact living with domestic abuse has upon children, to help schools to better understand a child’s lived experience and to therefore be able to support and nurture each child, making a child’s day better and giving them a better tomorrow.”

13. I exhibit Pan Lancashire Operational Encompass Protocol as **AM/02 – LANC000402** For the Pan Lancashire Policy and Procedures for Safeguarding Children Manual, please see <https://panlancshirescp.trixonline.co.uk/contents/contents>.
14. Lancashire Constabulary adopted Op Encompass in April 2019. Prior to this Lancashire Constabulary did not have any similar process that would update an educational establishment directly. To summarise, as previously highlighted by Elisabeth Carney-Haworth, prior to Op Encompass, children witnessing or being involved in domestic abuse may present at school tired, withdrawn, upset or displaying behavioural changes. Without the knowledge or awareness of why the child presented in that the way, the school was unable to effectively support them. Providing this early alert to the educational environment, gives the educators knowledge of what is happening in the child’s life at that time, enabling better support in the educational setting. Op Encompass does not replace existing safeguarding processes but is an additional component allowing educators to better support children. Prior to April 2019, in Lancashire the schools would receive

notification following the MASH protocols, which is that the information would be shared with education MASH, they would look up the child's school and share information with the school. The main issue was the timeliness of this sharing. Op Encompass was designed to get this information to school much earlier than the MASH process.

**(b) Op Encompass' relationship to the MASH and to the other information-sharing forums**

15. Op Encompass is described in the Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire (Pan-Lancashire) Safeguarding Partnership Procedures Manual (under the domestic abuse section) in the following terms:

“Operation Encompass is a police and education early information safeguarding partnership enabling schools to offer immediate support to children experiencing domestic abuse. Operation Encompass ensures that there is a simple telephone call or notification to a school's trained Designated Safeguarding Lead / Officer (known as key Adult) prior to the start of the next school day after an incident where police have attended domestic abuse and there were children related to either of the adult parties involved. Following such an incident taking place, children will often arrive at school distressed and unprepared. Operation Encompass aims to ensure that appropriate school staff are made aware at the earliest possible stage in order to provide relevant and tailored support to children and young people in a way that means that they feel safe”.

As highlighted the options are to refer via telephone call or notification. Our local agreement is that this would be done via email notification and not telephone.

16. This manual also supplies a link to the Op Encompass website which has a wide range of resources.
17. Op Encompass's relationship to the MASH is noted in the MASH Operational Manual. I exhibit the MASH Operational Manual as **AM/03 – LANC000379**. There are two Education Support Officers (“ESO”) who are employed by Lancashire County Council (“LCC”) MASH. Their roles have been jointly agreed by MASH and the School Forum. Their role profile requires the following:
- (1) “Ensure compliance of Police Op Encompass to ensure the effective information sharing in all Lancashire schools.”
  - (2) “Maintain a database of Encompass email addresses for all Lancashire schools.”

- (3) "Share Op Encompass reports with Schools when required."
18. Op Encompass is designed to notify educational establishments when a child attending their school has been involved in or present at a police-attended incident. This notification helps schools understand potential changes in a child's behaviour and enables them to provide appropriate support. The attending officers complete either a vulnerable child report, domestic abuse report, or a missing person report. While further safeguarding processes may be undertaken by MASH or other partner agencies, Op Encompass is limited to this early notification role. Op Encompass does not have a formal relationship with other information-sharing forums.
19. In most Op Encompass referrals made by Lancashire Constabulary, the police do not receive feedback on the outcome of the referral. However, LCC education officers may contact Lancashire Constabulary's VGU directly to raise concerns or issues about specific referrals.
20. Examples of such contact from the ESO's include:
- (1) Incorrect school jurisdiction: Officers selecting an "out of force" option when the child actually attends a school within Lancashire.
  - (2) Insufficient referral detail: Referrals lacking adequate information for the Key Adult to understand the nature of the incident. In some cases, officers have written only "domestic abuse" in the main text box.
21. The main text box in an Op Encompass referral should include an overview of the incident and the officer completing the referral should include the voice of the child. In Lancashire Constabulary we use the VOICE principles (shown below) to assist officers in understanding how to capture a child's voice. I exhibit the VOICE principles as **AM/04 - LANC000406**.
- V – Vulnerability:** Record all vulnerabilities, their impact, and reasons why they may not be immediately obvious.
- O - Observe:** Note appearance, behaviours, and activity. Consider Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and record observations from the child's perspective.
- I – Intelligence:** Treat every interaction as an opportunity to gather intelligence, especially regarding exploitation or criminal concerns.

**C – Curiosity and Communication:** Use active listening and questioning to understand the child’s feelings, safety, and needs. Record their responses and how they align with observations.

**E – Environment:** Assess living conditions and external factors affecting the child, including relationships, domestic abuse, educational issues, and contextual safeguarding concerns.

Note: These elements should not be viewed in isolation but used to inform overall professional judgement.

22. An example of an adequate referral would be:

"Police have attended the home address of (name of child) following the report of a domestic abuse incident. One member of the family was arrested on suspicion of assaulting their partner. The child was seen at the address and spoken to alone in their bedroom. They were visibly upset and said they did not witness the incident but they heard their parents shouting at each other. The bedroom appeared clean, warm with sheets on the bed. The child said they had not eaten that evening and last ate at school during lunch. The child was told that a notification would be sent to their school, to let the school know what had occurred. The child has remained at home and said they would be going to school the following day."

23. Lancashire Constabulary’s VGU and Education Safeguarding Officers (ESOs) from LCC, Blackpool Council, and Blackburn with Darwen meet twice a year face-to-face to discuss Operation Encompass. These meetings are informal, and no minutes are recorded. They serve as a platform for:

- (1) Sharing planned improvements.
- (2) Discussing issues or concerns.
- (3) Exchanging ideas among local authority representatives.

**(c) The statutory or policy underpinning for Op Encompass (and any policy documentation)**

24. On 24 May 2024 Royal Assent was granted to the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024. Section 20 of the Victims and Prisoners Act 2024 amends the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 by inserting a new section 49A which provides as follows:

“(1) A chief officer of police of a police force maintained for a police area must ensure that arrangements are in place to secure the objective in subsection (2).

(2) The objective is that, if a member of the force has reasonable grounds to believe that a child who resides in the police area may be a victim of domestic abuse, any relevant educational establishment is notified as soon as is reasonably practicable except in such circumstances as may be specified in regulations made by the Secretary of State”.

25. This statutory amendment placed the Op Encompass notification scheme on a statutory footing and provided a national requirement on the police to share information with educational establishments about concerned children as victims of domestic abuse. Lancashire Constabulary have adopted Op Encompass to facilitate their referrals from police to schools.
26. In September 2021 Lancashire Constabulary produced the Protocol which outlines the responsibilities of the Police, Schools and cross border considerations. To my knowledge Lancashire Constabulary did not have any supporting policy during the period 2019 – 2023 relating to Op Encompass, although a policy is now currently being developed. Lancashire Constabulary instead used the Protocol as from September 2021.

**(d) To whom Op Encompass referrals are sent, both within and outside Lancashire Constabulary**

27. Lancashire Constabulary share the information from the Op Encompass referral with educational establishments using Lancashire Constabulary’s IT system PRONTO. PRONTO is available to all Lancashire Police Officers and is the IT system used on their handheld devices. PRONTO can also be used on a desktop computer. For the period October 2019 to March 2023 (and currently), the PRONTO system works as follows:
28. When an officer attends an incident that results in the submission of a domestic abuse investigation, a vulnerable child investigation or a missing child investigation, an Op Encompass referral will automatically become available to be completed by the attending officer, either on the officer’s hand-held device or using PRONTO on a desktop computer.
29. Therefore, an Op Encompass referral becomes a mandatory section when completing investigation types noted in the paragraph above. PRONTO links the information provided by the officer into the CONNECT investigation under the tab ‘referrals’.

30. The IT team have prepared a video to demonstrate how an officer would complete an Op Encompass referral when completing a vulnerable child investigation. I exhibit this as **AM/05 – LANC000405**
31. The officer will complete the relevant fields as they would in any investigation (as shown in exhibit AM/05) and are then given more mandatory fields to complete for Op Encompass.
32. One issue with PRONTO is that there is nothing explicitly relating to or informing the officer that the information is requested for 'Op Encompass'. What the referral box asks for is a 'Brief overview for school': The officer is asked: "Please enter a summary of the event for school to include the demeanour of the child and the child said. This will be sent to the school (they will not get the full summary) when you complete this form. This will not be recorded in the investigation". Whilst it may seem obvious that the information is for a school, PRONTO is not explicit in referencing Op Encompass. As part of ongoing corporate development, this will be fixed in future PRONTO developments which I will explain later in this statement.
33. This referral box has a total of 1600 characters. The system will inform the officer if the maximum number of characters has been reached.
34. Officers are asked to select a town. This should be the town of the school the child attends. Sometimes incidents occur in a different town to the child's school and the officer mistakenly selects the town of the incident rather than town of the school. In this scenario, the school will not display as an option which may prompt the officer to select an 'out of force' option (as noted in the paragraph below). However, the officer can type the name of the school in the relevant box and, if known, the correct school will appear, and the officer can select it. The system is reliant on the officer asking the child and/or family members which school the child attends.
35. When the Op Encompass system in PRONTO was initially designed, in Lancashire Constabulary a number of options were added to aid officers (but also provide a failsafe – explained below). The options are:
  - a. Out of force
    - Out of Force (Blackburn)
    - Out of Force (Blackpool)
    - Out of Force (Bolton)

Out of Force (Burnley)  
Out of Force (Chorley)  
Out of Force (Croston)  
Out of Force (Darwen)  
Out of Force (Fylde and Wyre)  
Out of Force (Hyndburn)  
Out of Force (Lancaster)  
Out of Force (Leyland)  
Out of Force (Ormskirk)  
Out of Force (Other)  
Out of Force (Pendle)  
Out of Force (Preston)  
Out of Force (Ribble Valley)  
Out of Force (Rossendale)  
Out of Force (Skelmersdale)  
Out of Force (West Lancs)

b. NEET – The Not in Education, Employment or Training

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Other) Only use if absolutely necessary.

Other

Other Blackpool Only use if absolutely necessary Other.

Other BwD Only use if absolutely necessary Other.

Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary Other.

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Blackburn)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Blackpool)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Bolton)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Burnley)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Chorley)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Croston)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Darwen)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Fleetwood)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Fylde and Wyre)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Hyndburn)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Lancaster)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Leyland)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Ormskirk)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Other)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Pendle)

Not in Education, Employment or Training (Preston)  
 Not in Education, Employment or Training (Ribble Valley)  
 Not in Education, Employment or Training (Rossendale)  
 Not in Education, Employment or Training (Skelmersdale)  
 Not in Education, Employment or Training (West Lancs)

c. Other

Other BwD Only use if absolutely necessary	Blackburn
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Bolton
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Burnley
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Chorley
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Croston
Other BwD Only use if absolutely necessary	Darwen
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Darwen
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Fylde and Wyre
Other BwD Only use if absolutely necessary	Hyndburn
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Hyndburn
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Lancaster
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Leyland
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Ormskirk
Out of Force (Other)      Out of Force      Other	
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Pendle
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Preston
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Ribble Valley
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Rossendale
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	Skelmersdale
Other LCC Only use if absolutely necessary	West Lancs

36. **Out of force option** – This option has been widely used if the correct information has not been captured by the police officer about which school the child attends. There are a number of out of force options (as listed above). When this option is selected the referral is sent directly to the local authority safeguarding team in either LCC, Blackpool Council or Blackburn with Darwen Council. A business support officer (part of the administration team) from LCC will then research the name of the child on the referral on the local authority system to identify an educational establishment. If an educational establishment is identified, then the referral is sent to the Key Adult within that school by the business support or ESO team.

37. If a school cannot be identified by LCC's business administration team, the referral is closed by LCC and Lancashire Constabulary are not updated by LCC that the referral has been closed. When a school is identified for the child within the Op Encompass referral by LCC they aim to have the referral sent to the correct school before 09:00 the following day. In some cases, the school will not receive the referral until later in the school day which will delay contact and support for the child in the referral. The purpose of the 09:00 deadline is to ensure the Key Adult in the school reviews the referrals made and can then put a support plan in place for the child's arrival. Key adults in educational establishments know that if an Op Encompass referral has been made relating to a child that attends their location prior to 09:00 it will be in their secure mailbox for them to review. Key adults often have other roles within the school such as a teacher, DSL or both. Therefore, a Key Adult may not have another opportunity to review the secure Op Encompass mailbox for some time during the school day due to commitments in other roles.
38. When an officer selects 'out of force' and the child is educated out of force, the Police officers are required to put the details of the school in the summary of the incident along with information about what has occurred. There is no formal method in place for the local authority to send a referral out of force. However, on occasions where a member of business administration team in the local authority has a known contact elsewhere, they may share the report with their personal contact. If these details are not available, the Op Encompass referral will be closed at that point and no educational establishment will be made aware. Lancashire Constabulary will not be informed that the referral has been closed without an educational establishment receiving it.
39. LCC ESOs estimate that approximately 50% of referrals sent using the 'out of force' options are identified to be at a school in the Lancashire area. LCC can receive up to 700 - 1000 out of force referrals in a month. Lancashire Constabulary intends to improve the 'out of force' options within Op Encompass to reduce the number being sent to the local authority, and I detail this below.
40. **NEET** – The Not in Education, Employment or Training option should only be used for children within the further education age brackets 16-17 years old. NEET is a new addition to the Op Encompass referral system. It has been identified as being used for children under 16. These referrals will also go to the local authority to review and progress to the correct location if appropriate.

41. **Other** – This option is included to capture those children who refuse to provide the name of their educational establishment, or where they have been excluded from school, or where they are elective home educated. If the 'other' option is selected, the referral will again go to the local authority to review. If a school is identified, then the local authority will send the referral directly to the school.
42. Once an officer selects the option they require, they can complete the Op Encompass referral. This referral needs to provide a summary of information to the Key Adult in the school, including the context of the incident with enough detail for the Key Adult to understand what has occurred and include the voice of the child. The Key Adult in the school will hopefully then have a clearer understanding of what occurred regarding the child and be able to provide the child with the relevant support as per the individual school's policy and procedures.
43. Once an officer has completed all the relevant sections on the PRONTO system, the Op Encompass referral will automatically send directly to the educational establishment or the local authority. Therefore, if an officer completes an Op Encompass referral at scene, the referral will arrive at the educational establishment or the local authority a short time later. As above, the objective is that all Op Encompass referrals are available for the Key Adult in the school before 09:00 the following day.
44. When an officer selects the correct educational establishment, the Op Encompass referral will arrive once the investigation has been recorded as complete on PRONTO. For example, if an investigation is completed at 02:00 the referral will be sent via email at that time to the school or Local Authority dependent on the selection made. In those instances, whereby the local authority needs to identify which school a child attends there is a slight delay, but the referral will be shared the same day and normally before 09:00. There are some instances whereby due to the number of referrals sent via Local Authority, the referrals are delayed due to processing time (by which I mean how long it takes a Business Support Officer ("BSO") in the administration team to process an Op Encompass referral received from Lancashire Constabulary in relation to the early years project for Op Encompass using the LCC computer system called 'Synergy').
45. The 'failsafe' (referred to above) is that even where a school has not been identified by the police officer at the incident, a referral will still go to the local authority. This failsafe has provided some administrative processing issues because the volume of Op Encompass referrals has increased. This means that the business administration team in

LCC have seen an increase in the amount of Op Encompass referrals that have been sent to them rather than going directly to the school that the child attends. This therefore impacts on the business administration team for the local authority in managing other demand and a delay in a referral going to the correct school before 09:00.

46. Op Encompass referrals should arrive at the school prior to 09:00 so they are prepared for the child's arrival. If a referral is received later in the day, the school would not be able to put the relevant support in place in preparation for the child arriving at school but can do so later. As noted above, it is the responsibility of the ESO and/or BSO in LCC to send Op Encompass referrals to the relevant school where 'out of force', 'NEET' or 'other' has been selected.
47. As previously explained, a common issue arises when officers select a different town to that in which the school is located and then the school name provided does not appear in the list of schools. In those circumstances, officers will select either an 'out of force' option linked to the town of the school e.g. out of force Blackburn or an 'other' option.
48. Some 'other' options will state that the school will not receive this information. There is no clear rationale why this option has been added to the IT system, as the purpose is to inform educational establishments. The only explanation I can provide for this is that the phrase 'the school will not receive this information' has been added to warn officers a school will not be informed. However, it is unknown if this information had been provided to front line officers at the implementation stage in 2019. The issue was noted by the VGU in October 2024. A review of the Op Encompass processes commenced in October 2024. This review was, I believe, prompted following a rapid review after the attacks on 29 July 2024. I will address some of the findings of the review into Op Encompass in the improvements section of this statement below. One issue was the IT infrastructure.
49. The IT mapping process Lancashire Constabulary currently uses, and which was in use between October 2019 and March 2023, is also currently under review and I will explain proposed improvements later in this statement. Lancashire Constabulary's IT team have produced a process map for Op Encompass within PRONTO which shows the 'As Is' meaning how it looks now and the 'To Be' showing what the agreed changes have been. I exhibit this **AM/06 – LANC000403**.

**(e) Any risk assessment that takes place as part of Op Encompass, or after a referral to/from Op Encompass**

50. When an officer completes a DA investigation, vulnerable child investigation or a missing person investigation, they will complete a risk assessment. An Op Encompass referral is submitted regardless of the risk assessment graded by the officer. The risk grading is noted on the referral sent to the educational establishments with the following information attached: 'this has been graded by the officer as part of the whole incident, not the specific risk to the child'. This is to highlight to the Key Adult within the educational establishment that the risk assessment is not relating to Op Encompass or the individual child but on the whole information that the officer had available to them at the time.

**(f) The expected outcomes after a referral to/from Op Encompass**

51. The Key Adult for every school who receives Op Encompass referrals should complete the Key Adult training provided on the Op Encompass website. I have viewed the training provided online by the Operation Encompass charity and it provides clear guidance on the expectations of a Key Adult once a referral has been received. This training is not attended by Police Officers as it is designed for the Key Adult role and not police.

52. The important elements to the Key Adult training are that the Key Adult shares as much information as is necessary to the class teacher. The Key Adult should consider the additional information they hold as a school to help them decide on what to do next. Any decision by the Key Adult should be recorded on the school system. The Key Adults need to ensure that any action taken does not endanger the non-abusing adult or child. The process also notes that Key Adults should not share the Op Encompass information with any third party other than social care.

**(g) Who decides what the appropriate outcome should be**

53. It is the school's responsibility to manage the outcome of an Op Encompass referral and decide what support measures they need to place around the child. What these measures are is not something that is shared back to the police.

54. Once the Police have sent an Op Encompass referral to an educational establishment it is the school who manage any outcome of the referral. Other safeguarding processes are in place to support children and families which are implemented following information sharing conducted by the MASH to relevant partner agencies. Therefore, an Op Encompass referral with the limited information noted within it would arrive with the school before 09:00 and if a decision is made to share a Police Safeguarding Referral ("PSR")

in the MASH, the school would receive a more detailed report of the incident within that PSR at a later time. This is a MASH function and will be addressed in the statement of Detective Inspector Kelly. Op Encompass is a process to enhance those safeguarding processes by providing the educational establishment with early information to help them understand why a child is behaving in a certain way and provide a safe environment for them while at school.

55. If an educational establishment has further information which, following an Op Encompass referral, changes their risk assessment of a child, they can make a direct referral to children's social care.

**(h) Responsibility for following up or checking that those outcomes have been (1) delivered; and (2) effective; and the process for deciding whether further steps or interventions are required**

56. In relation to Op Encompass, this is a process designed specifically to alert the school to an incident that police have attended. How the school responds is a matter for them to determine and there would be no obligation or expectation for police to progress the Op Encompass referral any further. There are additional procedures and safeguarding measures outside of Op Encompass, but this does not form part of my statement.

**(i) The training provided to frontline officers about Op Encompass**

57. Now, in 2025, police officers are provided with training in relation to Op Encompass during their initial officer training. It is covered during the safeguarding / vulnerability lessons and within the DA lessons.
58. I was not involved with Op Encompass during 2019 – 2023 so do not know what training was then provided to front line officers. However, I am aware of that various articles relating to Op Encompass have been placed on the Lancashire Constabulary intranet (the internal system accessed by all officers in Lancashire Constabulary, called Sherlock) at various times within this period of time. I am not aware if these articles were mandatory for front line officers.
59. Op Encompass is also raised during the DA module of officer safety training. This is when officers discuss what they need to complete and/or consider when attending a DA incident. Police officers must complete officer safety training every 12 months.

60. In December 2024, the VGU released some communication on Sherlock in relation to Op Encompass. This included showing a video produced by Cheshire Constabulary in relation to Op Encompass. Starting in April 2025, each BCU has refreshed Op Encompass training with their response teams. This has been completed on several separate dates to ensure each team is captured.

### **OP ENCOMPASS REFERRALS RELATING TO AR**

#### **The Op Encompass referral by Lancashire Constabulary in respect of AR as a vulnerable child on 8 October 2019 (LC-12/LANC000067; LC-125/LANC000126)**

61. In respect of AR as a vulnerable child on 8 October 2019 I have reviewed the Op Encompass referral linked to investigation number 04/176978/19 [LC-125 / LANC000126].
62. At this time Op Encompass was in its infancy: In October 2019 South BCU completed 268 referrals and in October 2024 South BCU completed 683 referrals. This shows how the use of Op Encompass has expanded over the last 5 years.

#### **Content of the referral**

63. The information is limited. The summary provided is 'Summary: Axel carries knife at school due to bullying from [DPA] The MASH will contact you with further information should this be necessary'. It does provide information which the school could have acted upon as it references what AR had done in relation to carrying a knife in school and it notes AR's reason by stating it is to do with bullying and the name of the other child involved. A Key Adult would therefore be able to assess what support is needed for AR prior to his attendance at school and also consider the safety of the other pupil.
64. I note that within the summary of the investigation, the attending officer has completed a more detailed response which includes the school AR attends. The officer has then stated that they emailed the school directly. I have not seen the detail held within that email, but the referral implies the detail would have been more than what is recorded in the Op Encompass referral. The Op Encompass referral in this specific instance was one sentence. In this case the officer has exceeded the requirements of Op Encompass and provided the school with more detailed information. The information within the investigations notes the school have been able to act on the information provided.

How it was created and how it was subsequently handled

65. This Op Encompass referral was created in Pronto. The officer has only been able to select an 'out of force' option due to the school being outside the Lancashire boundary. The school was the Range School in Formby which forms part of Merseyside.
66. The referral shows that it was sent to Lancashire County Council at 22:44. Our system does not provide any further update from the local authority if this referral was forwarded to the school. The local authority business administration team do not notify Lancashire Constabulary if a referral is forwarded onto a school or not.
67. If the school had been inside the Lancashire boundary, then this referral would have arrived prior to 09:00 the following day.
68. The CONNECT investigation evidences that a further request by the attending officer was made for a Sergeant to contact the school the following day to follow up the email already sent. It is not clear if this action was completed but as also evidenced in the CONNECT report, PC McNamee reports that he contacted the school the following day and provided an update on the investigation from the school. The entry within the enquiry log on CONNECT by PC McNamee states the following:
- “Spoke with David Cregeen Saefguarding Lead from RANGE SCHOOL, FORMBY, where AXEL goes to school. He thanked us for the referral and updated me with actions the school have taken. They have searched AXEL'S bag this morning and did not find anything. They have spoken to him about the knife carrying and had broadly the same concerning conversation that police had with him. In addition, it has emerged that when given detention by a teacher last week AXEL was overheard to say "THIS IS WHY TEACHER'S GET MURDERED" - When asked about this he said that it was an off-the-cuff remark but obviously due to carrying a knife and saying he thinks he could use it this is additionally concerning. AXEL has been indefinitely excluded from school whilst a conversation is held about his future at the school and Mr Cregeen is to update me via email once this is known”.
69. The follow up to the school from the officer does not form part of the requirement for Op Encompass and was a self-generated action from the officer.

The original risk grading, who applied it, and the basis for the same

70. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Any changes to that risk grading, who decided to change it, and the basis for the same

71. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Whether I agree with (1) the original risk grading; (2) any decisions to change the risk grading

72. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

The outcome to the referral

73. The Op Encompass was sent to the local authority.

What steps were taken, by Lancashire Constabulary or any other agency, to follow up on the outcome to the referral

74. In this investigation PC 4658 McNamee has taken extra steps to notify the school via email and request that a Sergeant contacts the school the following day. It is then recorded within the investigation at 15:50 on 8 October 2019 that PC 4658 McNamee has spoken to the safeguarding lead with the school and has noted what action the school have taken. This information is set out in paragraph 68.

Whether I consider that the relevant training, policy and guidance in place at the material time was followed as regards the referral

75. During the period of 2019 – 2023 I was not involved with Op Encompass so I can only reference my working knowledge at that time and report on information established from colleagues. As above, I reference the Protocol.

76. PC 4658 McNamee has followed the Protocol. The officer has also taken extra steps to ensure the school fully understood the information provided.

**Lancashire Constabulary's involvement in forwarding a safeguarding referral about AR received from Merseyside Police on 12 December 2019 to the MASH (LC-128/LANC000128; LC-129/LANC000129)**

77. As this is a safeguarding referral from another force it would not require an Op Encompass referral from Lancashire Constabulary. I am unaware as to whether Merseyside Police implemented Op Encompass or similar in 2019.

**The Op Encompass referral by Lancashire Constabulary in respect of AR as a vulnerable child on 5 November 2021 (LC-113/LANC000117; LC-43/LANC000077)**

78. I have reviewed the Op Encompass referral linked to investigation number 04/178716/21 [LC-112 / LANC000117].

**Content of the referral**

79. The content of the Op Encompass referral provides sufficient information for a Key Adult to understand why the Police have attended AR's address, namely "Child has autism and due to person knocking at front door, child has become agitated and has been throwing things at walls. Child calmed significantly on parent contacting police".

80. This information would provide some context to the incident involving AR and might provide an educational establishment with some understanding of AR's behaviour within school and what could trigger a change in AR's behaviour.

**How it was created and how it was subsequently handled**

81. The referral was created on PRONTO. Op Encompass referrals can only be created using PRONTO on either a handheld device with which every response officer is provided or via PRONTO desktop which can be accessed on the computers within a Police station.

82. The Acorns school was an available option within the Op Encompass referral on the 5 November 2021. The officer has written the name of the school "Acorns Ormskirk" in the option "reasons for selecting other". The Officer had potentially identified the wrong town, and therefore the Acorns school would not have shown on the list.

83. The selection of 'other' is incorrect – the Officer should have identified the school Acorns in Ormskirk from the dropdown list as it is located in Lancashire and was available for selection. The failure to do so would have delayed the referral being sent to the school as it would have required Local Authority to redirect it.

The original risk grading, who applied it, and the basis for the same

84. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Any changes to that risk grading, who decided to change it, and the basis for the same

85. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Whether I agree with (1) the original risk grading; (2) any decisions to change the risk grading

86. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

The outcome to the referral

87. The referral was sent to the LCC mailbox. LCC do not report to Lancashire Constabulary if that referral has subsequently been forwarded to an educational establishment.

What steps were taken, by Lancashire Constabulary or any other agency, to follow up on the outcome to the referral

88. Op Encompass referrals are not routinely followed up by Lancashire Constabulary. Other well established safeguarding procedures are in place in relation to whether further steps or interventions are required, for instance the MASH processes.

Whether I consider that the relevant training, policy and guidance in place at the material time was followed as regards the referral

89. The officer followed the process save for the error in entering 'other' for the force area, though he did enter the school's name so that the local authority would know where to direct the referral.

90. As per the Protocol, the officer has completed an Op Encompass referral with the correct information. However, the "other" option selected is incorrect. The officer has clarified the name of the school within the reason for selecting 'other'. As this is recorded in the incorrect location it will not have been automated to the school secure email address. It is likely that the local authority business administration team will have been able to forward this referral to the school. However, this cannot be confirmed on the information

we hold. The consequence of selecting the “other” option means that the school may not have been able to support AR if or when he arrived at school the following morning as they would not be aware of the incident in a timely manner.

91. A vulnerable child report has been submitted which is appropriate in these circumstances. The referral has then been shared with the local MASH team for further assessment.

**The Op Encompass referral by Lancashire Constabulary in respect of AR as a vulnerable child on 1 December 2021 (LC-114/LANC00119; LC-50/ LANC000080)**

92. I have reviewed the Op Encompass referral linked to investigation number 04/192945/21 [LC-114 / LANC000119]

Content of the referral

93. The content of the referral is a good example of the correct level of detail required. It provided the educational establishment with enough information for it to understand what had occurred during the incident. The referral states “Offender (Axel) with MH issues (autism) during argument with victim (father) over what was cooked for tea, has kicked Father to leg causing no injury. Offender has then thrown plate at red Ford fiesta DPA parked outside on driveway, causing front window screen to crack. Police attended several hours after incident occurred and Axel (suspect) had calmed down. Victim (father) does not want to support a prosecution against son and was after advice and support. Victim is aware that a referral will be submitted and consents for contact to be made”.

94. Based on the above, a Key Adult could see who had been involved and what had occurred and the reason behind it. The referral does not note AR’s thoughts or comments as in line with the VOICE principles. This information would have provided more context for the school.

How it was created and how it was subsequently handled

95. The referral was created at 01:11 on 1 December 2021 which is sometime after the report of the incident occurring, which is noted to be 18:30 on 30 November 2021. PC 3384 Ward does record that the Police attended several hours after the incident.
96. The referral has been sent to The Acorns School in relation to AR.

The original risk grading, who applied it, and the basis for the same

97. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Any changes to that risk grading, who decided to change it, and the basis for the same

98. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Whether I agree with (1) the original risk grading; (2) any decisions to change the risk grading

99. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

The outcome to the referral

100. The Op Encompass referral is sent to the Acorns School, Ormskirk, which was AR's school at the time of the incident.

What steps were taken, by Lancashire Constabulary or any other agency, to follow up on the outcome to the referral

101. Op Encompass referrals are not routinely followed up by Lancashire Constabulary. Other well established safeguarding procedures are in place in relation to whether further steps or interventions are required, for instance the MASH processes.

Whether I consider that the relevant training, policy and guidance in place at the material time was followed as regards the referral

102. During the period of 2019 – 2023 I was not involved with Op Encompass so I can only reference my working knowledge at that time. I will also reference the Protocol. I do not know what training was provided during this period.

103. The officer has completed a vulnerable child report and an Op Encompass report in relation to this incident. This is in line with the relevant guidance provided at that time.

**The Op Encompass referrals by Lancashire Constabulary in respect of AR as missing from home and as a vulnerable child on 17 March 2022 (LC-73/ LANC000090 LC-117/LANC000122; LC-116/LANC000121; LC-60/LANC000009; LC-75/LANC000010)**

104. There are two Op Encompass referrals on the 17 March 2022. The first referral relates to when PC Fairclough submitted the missing person investigation (LC-116 / LANC000121). The second relates to the vulnerable child report submitted by PC Rhodes (LC-117 / LANC000122).

**Content of the referral**

105. In reference to the first Op Encompass referral that day relating to AR as a missing person, the referral does not provide the Key Adult in the school with sufficient information other than saying that AR is a missing person. This is not uncommon when officers submit an Op Encompass referral for a missing person as they provide a lot of detail within the investigation summary. Furthermore, because they have not spoken to the child who is missing, the detail of the Op Encompass referral is often lacking in information. An Op Encompass referral should include the voice of the child.

106. The referral in this case simply notes AR has gone missing from home. The guidance at the time was to provide an overview of the incident. The officer could have included information from the investigation summary within the Op Encompass referral that would provide clear information to a Key Adult, provided it was an overview, not the whole detail. This is because of the maximum number of characters permitted in the relevant box which is 1600. The clothing AR was wearing or timings he left the house would be appropriate.

107. The content of the second Op Encompass referral linked to investigation number 04/53311/22 provides a copy of the investigation summary except for the following which was not included:

- (1) "AXEL SEEMED NOT OF SOUND MIND AND WAS ARGUMENTATIVE ABOUT POLICE NOT DELETING HIS TIK TOK ACCOUNT."
- (2) "AXEL WAS TAKEN HOME WHERE MUM WAS ADVISED TO KEEP KNIVES SECURE IN THE HOUSE."
- (3) "CONCERNS ABOUT HOW AXEL WAS NOT BOTHERED ABOUT HURTING SOMEONE."

(4) "PLEASE CAN ANY CONTACT BE MADE TO AXELS MOTHER LAETITIA REGARDING THIS AND NOT DAD AS AXEL DOES NOT LIKE HIS DAD."

108. I do not know why the officer has not included the above-quoted information. The information provided in an Op Encompass referral should only be an overview and not the full information presented in the investigation summary provided on CONNECT.

109. The main PSR was shared with CSC, Education and Health the following day, as noted in the investigation, but I cannot see the time that this was done. This highlights how Op Encompass facilitates support for children as soon as they arrive at school. Before Op Encompass was introduced, a school would not receive the PSR before 09:00 and sometimes not necessarily at all on the day after the incident. With the introduction of Op Encompass, the Key Adults in educational establishments are able to check, before 09:00, if an Op Encompass referral has been received and start the support process as soon as the child arrives in school.

How it was created and how it was subsequently handled

110. PC 8620 Fairclough has recorded the investigation on the CONNECT system, creating missing person investigation 04/53134/22. The circumstances were that AR was due to meet his new teachers and have a tour of Presfield School that day but subsequently was reported missing. Presfield school is outside of Lancashire. When PC Fairclough submitted the Op Encompass referral, he has selected 'out of force' due to Presfield being outside of Lancashire.

111. AR was subsequently located, where a Vulnerable Child report was submitted 04/53311/22 and a further Encompass referral made. In this Encompass referral, the Acorns school is selected, which is inside the Lancashire boundary.

112. Clarification should have been sought from AR's parents as to the correct registered school for AR. It is not clear if the parents provided any clarity to the attending Police officers of AR's registered school at the time of either of these reports or if an assumption was made. The report does state AR was due to visit his new school and meet his teachers, however that does not confirm if AR had been officially registered at Presfield or was still registered at the Acorns School. The Acorns School should have been the correct option as the registered school. Had AR subsequently moved to Presfield High School as an officially registered pupil, the information could have been sent to that

location by the Acorns School or returned to the education support team for further forwarding.

113. The referral in relation to AR being reported missing was sent to LCC at 13:31 on 17 March 2022. Our system does not note what action the local authority took when they received the referral.

114. The referral made in relation to AR being located (04/53311/22) is record as high risk. This referral is sent to the Acorns School. This is sent at 18:55 on the 17 March 2022.

The original risk grading, who applied it, and the basis for the same

115. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Any changes to that risk grading, who decided to change it, and the basis for the same

116. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Whether I agree with (1) the original risk grading; (2) any decisions to change the risk grading

117. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

The outcome to the referral

118. The Op Encompass referrals were sent to the locations noted above.

What steps were taken, by Lancashire Constabulary or any other agency, to follow up on the outcome to the referral

119. Op Encompass referrals are not routinely followed up by Lancashire Constabulary. Other well established safeguarding procedures are in place in relation to whether further steps or interventions are required, for instance the MASH processes.

Whether I consider that the relevant training, policy and guidance in place at the material time was followed as regards the referral

120. When AR was located, the officer had correctly completed a vulnerable child investigation.

This would then generate a new Op Encompass referral. The Op Encompass report in relation to the missing person does not provide a sufficient overview of the incident as required by the Protocol, in that it provides no overview information relating to AR as a missing person. PC 8620 Fairclough has also selected the 'out of force' option. I have considered this above at paragraph 110.

121. I have also responded in relation to the information within the vulnerable child referral in paragraph 107 and 108. An overview is provided as per the Protocol. This referral goes over the number of characters and as previously noted misses some information.

**The Op Encompass referral by Lancashire Constabulary in respect of AR as a vulnerable child on 14 May 2022 (LC-119/LANC000124; LC-86/LANC000094; LC-87/LANC000208)**

122. I have considered the Op Encompass referral relating to investigation number 04/86720/22 [LC-119 / LANC000124]

Content of the referral

123. The content of the referral does not provide an overview of the incident. It simply states, 'He refuses to attend education'. This may have been the situation at that time, but AR was registered at a school and could still have attended at some point. Therefore, it would be important for the school to receive the information known to the officer in more detail than was provided. Whilst more detail is contained within the PSR, the decision as to where and when to share information in a PSR is made in the MASH. In some cases, the MASH may decide not to share the information to education if it was deemed unnecessary, which demonstrates the importance of the Op Encompass referral having sufficient detail. Fortunately, the more detailed PSR was appropriately shared by the MASH with education in this case.

How it was created and how it was subsequently handled

124. The referral was sent at 06:18 on the same day as the incident. Out of Force was selected but no school was named in the Op Encompass referral. It is only noted in the investigation summary that it was in Southport. The Op Encompass will have been sent to LCC ESO's. The Protocol notes in relation to cross border referrals: 'Currently there is no capacity to include notifications to their schools; however, where there are

safeguarding concerns local health and social care agencies will continue to be notified by the Police'. Our system does not record if the referral was sent on by the local authority to the school AR was registered at.

The original risk grading, who applied it, and the basis for the same

125. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Any changes to that risk grading, who decided to change it, and the basis for the same

126. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

Whether I agree with (1) the original risk grading; (2) any decisions to change the risk grading

127. The Op Encompass referral does not have a risk grading. The risk grading is applied to the vulnerable child investigation and sent to the MASH. The risk grading will therefore be commented upon in the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly.

The outcome to the referral

128. The referral option is noted as 'out of force' and therefore it will have been sent to the LCC business administration team. Our records do not record if the referral was subsequently sent on.

What steps were taken, by Lancashire Constabulary or any other agency, to follow up on the outcome to the referral

129. Op Encompass referrals are not routinely followed up by Lancashire Constabulary. Other well established safeguarding procedures are in place in relation to whether further steps or interventions are required, for instance the MASH processes.

Whether I consider that the relevant training, policy and guidance in place at the material time was followed as regards the referral

130. During the period of 2019 – 2023 I was not involved with Op Encompass so I can only reference my working knowledge at that time. I will also reference the Protocol. I do not know what training was provided during this period but as referenced earlier I am aware that guidance and awareness documents were released on the Lancashire Constabulary intranet.

131. The Op Encompass referral has not identified the correct school. The CONNECT investigation summary notes AR attends a school in Southport. The use of out of force is a correct option as noted in the Protocol regarding cross border considerations.

132. The detail in the Op Encompass as noted above does not provide an overview of the incident.

### **REFLECTION ON EVENTS**

133. I have been asked whether I consider that Lancashire Constabulary's Op Encompass referrals identified and/or addressed, adequately or at all, the risk that AR posed to others. If not, I am asked why I think that this was the case, in circumstances where he was (1) referred to the MASH/Op Encompass on multiple occasions; and (2) multiple referrals identified that he was in possession of weapons and/or had been violent, or threatened violence, towards others.

134. Op Encompass does not involve separate a risk assessment grading separate to the wider circumstances of the case. Op Encompass is a process implemented to enable prompt information sharing with the educational establishment for safeguarding measures to be implemented the next day by the school, to support the child involved. They are in addition to the main investigations completed by the officers attending. Therefore, Op Encompass is not the right tool or framework to review the risk AR posed to others.

135. In relation to the handling of the Op Encompass referrals, they have been managed within the limitations of Op Encompass during the period that they were referred. I explain below how improvements have been made and those which are in progress.

136. When AR attended a school in Lancashire, referrals via Op Encompass were relatively straightforward for officers. The complexity came when AR transferred school outside of the Lancashire boundary. We know that AR attended The Range High School (Merseyside), The Acorns (Lancashire) and Presfield (Merseyside). As previously noted, the out of force referrals are sent to the local authority to progress which can cause a delay in the referral being forwarded to the educational establishment or not being sent to any educational establishment.

137. The purpose of Op Encompass is to prepare the school for the child arriving and supporting them the following day. Where a child is not attending school, the benefit of this process is limited as there are limited ways in which the school would be able to act to make a positive difference. Therefore, my assessment of the Op Encompass referrals made in this case is that when AR attended a school in Lancashire the referrals made would have arrived prior to any attendance at the relevant school.
138. I have previously mentioned the quality of the referrals made. In some cases, they provide the school with sufficient information so they could support AR if/when he attended. In the Op Encompass referrals made using either the 'other' or 'out of force' option I am satisfied these will have been sent to LCC. However, the protocol states in relation to cross border considerations "Lancashire Operation Encompass recognises that there will be children attending education settings outside the borough boundaries. Currently there is no capacity to include notifications to their schools; however, where there are safeguarding concerns local health and social care agencies will continue to be notified of incidents by the police." The impact of this is that it is likely the educational establishments would not have been aware AR had been involved in any incident requiring Police attendance and would not have been prepared to support him when he attended school following the incidents.
139. Op Encompass supports other safeguarding processes, such as the MASH. In these cases, when AR was either out of force area or between schools, the MASH would decide on the sharing of the PSR to the school. This can therefore be best addressed in relation to the MASH processes statement by Detective Inspector Kelly.
140. Where there is a risk identified to another child, other mechanisms would be better placed to notify the educational establishment, such as direct contact from the officer or information sharing via the MASH.
141. As regards the forwarding of the Merseyside Police referral on 12 December 2019, I have been asked whether any steps were or should have been taken by Lancashire Constabulary to quality assure, risk assess or develop that referral, either before or after it was forwarded and whether, for example, a non-crime investigation report should have been created to manage the case. It would have been the responsibility of Merseyside Police to fulfil the sharing of Op Encompass-type information to the educational establishment. I would have anticipated that information would be subsequently shared

via the MASH. There would not be any expectation for Lancashire Constabulary to submit an Op Encompass referral in this instance.

### **Other General Issues identified on reflection**

142. There is variation in the quality of the summaries contained within the Op Encompass referrals, and they do not follow a set structure.

143. The voice of the child is not always recorded within Lancashire Constabulary Op Encompass referrals. Therefore, educational establishments may receive an Op Encompass referral that will say 'missing from home' or 'child present during a domestic abuse incident'. They do not provide a child's voice. This is not only what the child has said to the Police officer but also what the Police officer can add to provide the child's experience of the incident. An example could be that the child was asleep at the time of the Police attending and the Police officer did see the child who was visibly sleeping in a bed and could not be woken (through deep sleep). The Key Adult then understands that the Police have not spoken to the child, but they had seen the child. Officers now are requested to complete a referral considering the voice of the child, as per paragraph 21.

144. Our local authorities will raise quality issues if and when they are made aware by an educational establishment of poor Op Encompass referrals. When this occurs the officer, their supervisor and the BCU SPOC are contacted directly so they are aware of how to improve their next submission. This is addressed within the BCUs through their increased scrutiny and understanding of Op Encompass referrals. This has seen comments from educational establishments which are positive in relation to the detail of the Op Encompass referral. Op Encompass is now embedded in the relevant governance meetings to ensure quality of the referrals remains under scrutiny.

### **IMPROVEMENTS**

145. I have been asked if I am aware of relevant improvements that have been made by Lancashire Constabulary since these events. If so, I am asked to provide: a brief description of what the improvements have been; Whether, in my experience, the improvements have been effective, and why; and a brief outline of the training / guidance with which I have been provided.

146. In May 2025, the VGU and the Force Crime Management Unit (“FCMU”) identified an issue relating to investigations involving children that are initially conducted by the FCMU and which require an Op Encompass referral.
147. The system the FCMU uses does not include the Op Encompass function. The FCMU form is called a ‘101’ form. This form is completed by FCMU to record investigations onto CONNECT. The lack of Op Encompass inclusion on the form was an oversight that was not appreciated during the initial development. The 101 form does not link to Pronto and Op Encompass. I am not aware of the official implementation of the 101 form but staff indicate it has been used for a number of years.
148. The impact of the 101 form not having the capability to complete Op Encompass referrals is that when FCMU send an investigation to the correct department to further investigate, the OIC is required to complete the Op Encompass referral at that time. This involves deleting the initial details of the child and adding them back into the investigation to complete a referral. This does not take much time as only personal data is required to be added to the relevant fields using PRONTO desktop. This will then allow an Op Encompass referral to be completed. This has caused some delays in referrals going to a school. These FCMU investigations are allocated to an officer in the appropriate BCU team in accordance with the crime allocation policy. The BCU officer must then review the investigation and acknowledge whether an Op Encompass referral has been conducted. The scrutiny now conducted in the BCUs involves reviewing investigations that are identified as having no Op Encompass referral and contacting the officer to request that an Op Encompass referral is submitted.
149. In some cases, it also means an Op Encompass referral has not been completed at all, since by the time officer identifies that an Op Encompass referral has not been made, other safeguarding processes such as the PSR have been conducted and shared with the school. In those instances, it would not be required to send the referral, though the rationale for not doing so must be documented.
150. The issue identified with the 101 Form has been raised within the relevant departments mainly by PC Jack Smethurst who is the subject matter expert for the 101 form. On 28 May 2025 a meeting was held with PC Smethurst, Ch Insp Chris Valentine (who oversees FCMU) and IT consultants within Lancashire Constabulary and development meetings have been conducted between our internal IT team and FCMU to add Op Encompass

into their form. This action is still ongoing, and no specified timeframe for completion has been provided due to demand within the IT department.

151. The Op Encompass referrals conducted in the reviewed investigations for this case highlight the limitations with the original process. In this case issues arose due to the child residing on the border of different Police force areas. Where the child attends a school across the border from the force area they reside in, the sharing of Op Encompass referrals become restricted; as the protocol notes in section 6 'Cross border Considerations' "Currently there is no capacity to include notifications to their schools". How we are going to address this is noted in paragraph 159.

152. The review highlighted that due to a lack of clarity around governance for Op Encompass, continued development was limited and poor practices were continued without scrutiny or challenge. This is seen in the use of the 'out of force' option that has continued to increase in number. Microsoft Power BI data analysis software has shown that 'out of force' is the most consistently used option by officers since the records began for Op Encompass in 2019. Rather than this being explored for ongoing development, there appeared to be little to no scrutiny from either the central PPU team or the local BCU's (and notwithstanding that the data was available within its own Power BI dashboard for all BCU supervisors to review). Once this was identified by the VGU, it has seen much needed change to Op Encompass scrutiny within the BCU's and acknowledged by senior management teams in monthly governance meetings where the data is regularly reviewed, improvements identified and acted on. This is further explained in paragraphs 164 and 165.

153. The central PPU team were also undergoing a departmental restructure whilst it migrated to the VGU. This meant the Local Authority Education Support team had a period of time (approximately about a month) in April 2024 where there was no acknowledgement of issues with referrals. As noted previously, VGU now have direct contact with the local authorities so they can raise issues with individual Op Encompass referrals. The face-to-face meetings also ensure Lancashire Constabulary and the local authority are working together to ensure Op Encompass continues to improve and achieve its objective to support children in educational settings. Once this issue was identified by the VGU, it has seen much needed change to Op Encompass scrutiny within the BCU's and senior management teams in monthly governance meetings regularly review the data and identify any areas of improvement.

154. Further improvement came from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, which has been amended and placed Op Encompass (or equivalent processes) into law and placed a statutory obligation on police forces to share Op Encompass notifications with schools. The inclusion of the Op Encompass process into statute has ensured that every Police force in England and Wales is supplying information to educational establishments in their force areas following a DA incident. Therefore, every Police force in England and Wales has supplied a contact email address relating to Op Encompass, which enables direct sharing with the relevant force when the child is out of area, an option not available originally as not all forces were required to adopt Op Encompass.

155. As Lancashire Constabulary had already adopted Op Encompass (and has done since 2019), we are already abiding by this legislation change. Lancashire Constabulary further extends the use of Op Encompass to vulnerable child investigations, missing person investigations and child victims of domestic abuse.

156. A new Lancashire Constabulary Op Encompass policy and Standard Operating Procedure is in the process of being drafted and is expected to be finalised very soon, subject to local authority approval. This new policy and SOP ought to ensure that Lancashire Constabulary officers better understand their role within Op Encompass and provide them with clearer directions. I exhibit the draft SOP as **AM/07 – LANC000401**. The delay in finalising the new policy and SOP is due to the inclusion of early years referrals for children aged 3 and above in a nursery placement. Including the early years process changes the PRONTO system and these elements to Op Encompass are all in the development stages. Communication to front line officers relating to the SOP would have a greater impact if repetitive amendments can be avoided.

157. A review of Lancashire Constabulary Op Encompass IT processes has also been conducted. This has been completed over several meetings with our IT team in 2025. Following the attacks on 29 July 2024 a Multi-Agency rapid review meeting took place. I was then tasked by the then department head to review the process of Op Encompass. This has highlighted a number of opportunities for improvement including IT fixes to reduce the options for selecting the incorrect school/area on referrals.

158. As the investigations reviewed for the Inquiry have revealed, and as detailed above, officers can select an option of 'out of force'. In some situations, this is an appropriate option as the child will attend a school outside of Lancashire. However, the local authority

does not always have the contact information to forward the referral to the force area which results in either no referral being sent to a school or even the correct force area.

159. The new PRONTO process will now ask an officer if the child is educated in Lancashire.

If they reply 'no', the out of force option will become available and a list of each Police force in England and Wales will be available. The officer will then select the correct Police force and the referral will go directly to them. That Police force will then be responsible for identifying the school and forwarding the referral. This will remove the involvement of the local authority and ensure the referral goes to the correct Policing area as soon as the referral has been made. That Policing area will then follow their processes in ensuring the Op Encompass referral is sent to the child's school.

160. If the officer replies 'yes' to the child being educated in Lancashire, the IT process will then ask a series of questions to assist the officer to identify the correct school in the correct area. This will ensure officers have a clear step by step process to identify the correct location.

161. The officer will then move onto to the actual referral, and it will be clear that the section they are completing relates to Op Encompass. The current process does not make this clear. The new SOP identifies what detail should be included within a referral.

162. Recently Lancashire Constabulary amended its Op Encompass referral system to include children aged 16 and 17 that are not in education, employment or training (NEET). We have experienced some compliance issues as Police officers have not fully understood why this category has been introduced. NEET is a nationally recognised acronym used by the department for education (DfE) and therefore local authorities to identify children who fall into this category. LCC requested that this category was included within the PRONTO options, so that the BSO would be able to forward the Op Encompass referral to the relevant department within LCC. Officers have been selecting this option for children under 16 or for children that do not fall into the category of NEET. The new IT process will ensure that this option is only available for the correct age groups (the system will only display this option when the date of birth that has been added means the child is 16 or 17 years old). These amendments can be seen in exhibit AM/07. Recent training that has been conducted within the BCU's as noted in the paragraph below, which has raised this issue with frontline officers.

163. In terms of training, an internal Lancashire Constabulary communication in relation to Op Encompass was released on 17 December 2024. This communication focussed on the incorrect options selected by officers and what each referral should include. All BCUs were also provided with a briefing pack for the response teams containing the same information as the said internal communication. Within this communication we included a video produced by Cheshire Constabulary in relation to Op Encompass which explains why an Op Encompass referral is important to support children. The video shows two separate child stories both saying, 'don't forget about me'. This was included in the internal communications as it has a powerful message, and it is an impactful way to show our officers the importance of Op Encompass. I exhibit the internal communication release for Op Encompass as **AM/08 – LANC000397**.

164. The governance relating to Op Encompass has now been embedded into various strategic meetings across Lancashire Constabulary. This means that senior management teams within the BCU receive regular updates in relation to the compliance of Op Encompass by their front line teams. The data can also be reviewed using the Power BI tool which has its own data section relation to the Op Encompass. This Power BI data tool allows the supervisor to review compliance within their individual teams.

165. This has been the position since it was included as part of the Victim Focus Review ("VFR") meeting chaired by DCC Mackenzie in January 2025. This meeting is attended by senior management teams in each BCU from the rank of Superintendent and above. This is a monthly meeting.

166. Each BCU now has a SPOC in relation to Op Encompass. These are all at the rank of Chief Inspector. They are responsible for the scrutiny into referrals and ensuring updated training is provided to front line teams. The training to response teams has been completed in all three BCUs to refresh officers in relation to the importance Op Encompass and how to make an effective referral.

167. Once the improvements have been implemented, officers will have access to an improved IT process to utilise while at a scene. The added training focuses on the quality of a referral required for a Key Adult in an educational establishment. Therefore, our Op Encompass referral should in the future provide the correct details and improve how they are sent to the correct location. This will achieve Op Encompass's objective of ensuring the educational establishment receives a timely and complete notification which allows them to support children when they next attend the educational establishment.

168. The new IT process is now with the IT team to consult with Motorola to agree the required changes. Our expectations are that we will go live by the end of 2025.
169. I note 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.
170. As the Op Encompass referrals reviewed in this inquiry have identified, once a child attends a school outside the boundaries of the Police force, the referrals cannot be automated directly to the correct location without a delay and without third party involvement. I have recently spoken to a consultant with a company called Studybugs. They are currently working with the Metropolitan Police in using AI to identify the school a child attends through the school registration systems. This will ensure the correct school is automatically populated when the child's details are added into a referral. This would make an effective difference to ensuring the Op Encompass referral goes to the correct location no matter where in the country the child attends school. Studybugs did not provide a timeframe, and they are only in the initial stages of contacting Police forces in relation to their Op Encompass processes. We will closely monitor this project.
171. In light of this Inquiry, an issue of Op Encompass referrals being limited to 1600 characters has become apparent. This is a matter that I will take forward to ensure that officers are aware and to avoid data being lost when adding details from the investigation. The training and guidance does not advise officers to copy and paste information from the investigation into the Op Encompass referral. An Op Encompass referral should focus on ensuring the information provides a brief overview of what has occurred and not the volume of detail that is expected in an investigation summary. Officers will be advised that they need to type manually into the referral, so they are satisfied that no key information has been left out.
172. Awareness will be conducted through learning and development teams, internal communication via Sherlock and utilising the BCU SPOC'S to ensure consistent information is provided to the front line teams.
173. The improvements Lancashire Constabulary are currently making in relation to Op Encompass should improve how referrals are processed to the correct location. This,

complimented by the increased focus and scrutiny in governance, should see improvements in information provided to schools which will achieve the objective of schools being able to support those children and young people and ensure we protect vulnerable children.

**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: 05/09/2025 \_\_\_\_\_

**Index to the Witness Statement of ANDREW MARSTON**

<b>Exhibit No.</b>	<b>Inquiry reference No.</b>	<b>Document description</b>
AM/01	<b>LANC000399</b>	Lancashire Constabulary's Data Protection Impact Assessment
AM/02	<b>LANC000402</b>	Pan-Lancashire Operational Encompass Protocol
AM/03	<b>LANC000379</b>	MASH Operational Manual V17 dated June 2024
AM/04	<b>LANC000406</b>	VOICE principles
AM/05	<b>LANC000405</b>	Video to demonstrate how an officer would complete an Op Encompass referral
AM/06	<b>LANC000403</b>	Process map for Op Encompass
AM/07	<b>LANC000401</b>	Draft Op Encompass Standard Operating Procedure
AM/08	<b>LANC000397</b>	Internal communication release for Op Encompass dated 17 December 2024