

Witness Name: Andrea Chantel Fontaine-Smith

Exhibits: 33

Dated: 18 August 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF ANDREA CHANTEL FONTAINE-SMITH

I, Andrea Chantel Fontaine-Smith, will say as follows:

1. I am currently employed as a Family Support Worker at Derian House Children's Hospice which is a charity offering care for over 400 babies, children and young people across the North West. I have been in this role since March 2021.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 24 July 2025.

Personal Background

3. I have a degree in Social Pedagogy and Youth Work, Community Learning and Development obtained from Canterbury Christ Church University. I also continue to develop my professional skills by regularly attending training courses.
4. At the relevant time I was employed by Lancashire County Council ("LCC") as a Key Worker within their Children and Family Wellbeing Service (CFW"). Prior to this I worked for LCC as a pastoral support worker at Mayfield Primary School in Lytham St Annes, before moving to CFW in the spring of 2019. I remained in this role until I left the organisation in February 2021.

Early Help Team

5. Early Help ("EH") is a term that encompasses CFW at LCC. CFW offers short intervention for families, children and young persons who require additional support

to prevent the escalation of circumstances which may lead to family dysfunction or harm.

6. Referrals into CFW can be made by a range of agencies including health visitors, schools and GPs. Families are also able to self-refer to the service. It is the aim of CFW to try and prevent the need for upward, more intensive, referrals by supporting families before their circumstances get worse.
7. As a Key Worker, I reported into a Senior Practitioner, who reported to the Team Manager, who reported to the Service Lead.
8. My role involved having my own case load of families to whom I provided support. The children within these families could range from the ages of 0 to adolescents. At the relevant time I was supporting around 18 families, and I was often allocated teenage boys because I was generally good at engaging them.
9. When I was allocated a family, it would be my job to meet them and assess their needs. I would also gain input from any other agencies I deemed relevant such as the child's school. I would then analyse all the information I collected upon my initial assessment and draft a proposed support plan which I would share with the family for their approval. As CFW is a consent based service, I would require the family's approval before any support plan could be put in place.
10. CFW intervention aimed to provide a 12-week service to families, which usually consisted of an initial assessment, - two to three TAF meetings, six 1-2-1 sessions if required and a final meet with the family to complete closure documentation.

Allocation of case

11. AR was referred to CFW on 24 March 2020 as part of a step down from LCC's Children's Social Care team ("CSC"). A copy of the referral is exhibited at AF/01-LCC000238 and copies of the CSC closure forms at AF/02- LCC000281, AF/03-LCC000041 and AF/04- LCC000239.
12. When a case was stepped down it was usual process for a meeting to take place between the senior management team within both CFW and CSC to discuss who the case should be allocated to. Sometimes cases were added to a CFW Support

Worker's case list prior to any conversation with a manager but I do recall my manager, Sharon Barrett, calling me in relation to AR's case to reassure me that not a huge amount of direct work was needed as I already had a demanding case load at that time.

13. Whilst I don't recall directly accessing AR's referral form, I know this would have been available for me to review along with the CSC records. It was usual practice for me to review the referral before meeting a family although I cannot be certain whether I did due to the passage of time.
14. Sharon was a very supportive manager, and I am confident she would have had a thorough conversation with me regarding AR's case. I recall being aware that AR's referral into CSC was due to an incident involving a weapon at school in October 2019. My knowledge of this was likely due to my conversation with Sharon along with my review of the referral form.
15. I also recall, assisted by my review of the notes, that AR's case was allocated to CFW for us to support AR and his family in accessing the community, spending time with each other and AR returning to school.
16. It would not be unusual for me to be allocated a case like this, and I felt it appropriate for it to be managed by CFW. If I ever felt a case was too complex for me or CFW, I raised this with Sharon, which I had done previously with other unrelated cases. Sadly, it was not anything out of the ordinary for me to support families where children had carried weapons.

Child and Family Assessment

17. On 9 April 2020 I carried out a Child and Family ("CAF") Assessment in respect of AR and his family. A copy of this assessment is exhibited at AF/05- LCC000283. I cannot specifically recall how I conducted this assessment but as this was during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic I believe it would have been via either Skype or telephone call.
18. A CAF assessment is an information gathering exercise whereby discussions are had with a family about all aspects of their life including work, education, behaviours and relationships. Each category is discussed and explored and a score between 1 and 6 agreed on between the family and Support Worker. Using one radar chart for parents

and one for child/young person, I would ask them to self-score between 1 and 6, 1 being in need of support, feeling lost or low and 6 feeling no support required at all and that things were well.

19. Upon review of the CAF I can see that myself, AR, and his parents agreed on scores between 2 and 4 for each of the categories outlined.

20. As outlined at paragraph 9 above, this would be my first action when being allocated a new case and would have been the first time I contacted AR and his family.

21. Following completion of the CAF assessment I would then draft an action plan in conjunction with the family, which would consider their unmet needs, ensure no needs were missed and how any needs could be addressed and supported. I cannot recall the specific action plan, which is usually appended to the CAF assessment, without reviewing it. Unfortunately, this was not a standout or unusual case for me which does not assist in me being able to recall the specific details.

22. I was allocated the role of lead professional upon being allocated AR's case which meant I was responsible for liaising with other agencies and coordinating the case.

23. From review of the referral notes I can see that the Youth Offending Team, Acorns School and CAMHS were all involved with AR and his family which I would have been made aware of on allocation. It would be usual practice for me to contact all agencies after completing the CAF assessment to ensure all unmet needs had been appropriately identified.

24. During my initial contact with AR's family, I do recall that AR's father was very optimistic about what could be done by CFW and the extent of our involvement. I had to have several conversations with him about what the reality of our involvement was given we were a short intervention service.

TAF meetings 24 March 2020 – 9 June 2020

TAF meeting 19 May 2020

25. From my review of the notes I can see I was involved in one TAF meeting between 24 March and 9 June 2020, which took place on 19 May 2020. I do not specifically

recall this meeting, and I have taken the information provided below from the notes. The notes from this meeting are exhibited at AF/06- LCC001018 and the meeting outcomes at AF/07- LCC000061 and AF/08- LCC000290.

26. A TAF meeting is a meeting held between all agencies involved with a family and chaired by the lead professional. At these meetings agencies discuss a family's ongoing needs and the progress they are making towards their action plan.
27. I do not recall attending any other TAF meetings during this time period and believe it is likely that only one took place. TAF meetings are usually scheduled around every 6 weeks once the initial CAF assessment has taken place. I would have allocated several weeks to completing my CAF assessment before arranging a TAF meeting and the meeting would have also been arranged around the family's availability which could have potentially impacted any delay in it being convened and explain why only one took place.
28. I chaired the TAF meeting as I was lead professional for AR's case. Acorns, AR's father, Educational Psychologist and Operations Social Worker from Youth Justice were in attendance.
29. Case notes relating to the TAF meeting are exhibited at AF/09 LCC000226 (pg 7) I note that the intention of the meeting was to discuss whether the other professionals involved felt it was likely AR would instead benefit from CFW support when lock down lifted due to him finding it difficult to engage over the phone. I believe this to be an accurate reflection of the situation at the time.
30. At the meeting it was identified that AR was not engaging with or completing his schoolwork. AR's father felt that he may be better suited to a mainstream school with a teaching assistant and it was noted that an EHCP assessment was underway regarding this. Acorns confirmed that they maintained responsibility in terms of AR's education and would offer him a place at the school should they reopen. It was also discussed that AR would benefit from work around social interactions but that this would only be effective through face-to-face support.
31. I agreed to liaise with the school once it reopened and AR was able to return, to facilitate direct work with him in relation to his social interactions. It was also noted that the family required some support regarding social isolation but that this would also need to be addressed once COVID-19 restrictions were lifted.

32. Following the TAF meeting myself and Anna Croll, AR's Operations Social Worker from Youth Justice, received an email from Joanne Hodson, Deputy Headteacher at Acorns school dated 20 May 2020. This email chain is exhibited at Exhibit AF/10-LCC000998.

33. Within her email Joanne set out several concerns regarding both the attitude of AR and his father, particularly in relation to the October 2019 incident. She also stated that AR's risk was assessed by Anna as medium based on lockdown restrictions but that if they brought AR back for 1-2-1 teaching this would change, and she believed his risk would increase.

34. I responded to Joanne the following day stating that:

"I appreciate there is concern and frustration around the perceived mind-set of Alphonse and AR. This can be challenged through conversation with Alphonse, which I am happy to do. However, I don't feel that this increases the risk posed by AR, because there is appropriate parenting in place"

"In any case, Alphonse's view of his son's temperament and behaviour, and his expression of his preferred educational placement, does not, in my opinion, influence the risk level"

I considered and understood the concerns raised by Acorns in relation to AR's father and agreed that the attitudes AR's father displayed were not always helpful, but equally he was not encouraging or endorsing the behaviour of AR and I was happy to challenge AR's father's attitude if necessary. However, my role was to assess parenting from a safeguarding perspective and in relation to whether AR's fundamental needs were being met. As AR had a comfortable home environment and was being looked after and cared for, I didn't perceive there to be any safeguarding concerns in regard to parenting.

35. In response to Joanne's concerns regarding the risk assessment of AR I confirmed that:

"As discussed in yesterday's meeting, Anna's risk assessment is not the basis for AR's return to education. Therefore I think it would be beneficial to have a copy of

your risk assessment to be able to see exactly where within school the risk lies and what measures can be put in place through the TAF process to support it"

"I can appreciate that all necessary strategies need to be put in place to ensure everyone's safety, however there does not appear to be any new or additional information shared that would suggest an increased risk."

36. My role was not to assess AR's risk to others (which was the work being carried out by the Youth Justice Team) but the risk he presented to himself and his own wellbeing. It is important that we do not duplicate the work being carried out by other teams as this can lead to contradictions.

37. Given my view that the parenting in place for AR was appropriate I did not perceive there to be any new evidence presented by Acorns that increased AR's risk level to himself, and which might necessitate, for example, a referral back to Child Social Care. I was satisfied that AR's case was appropriate for CFW when it was first referred to me, and I did not feel there had been any new information to change this position.

38. Upon reflection, I do agree that if AR did return to school his risk level may have changed due to him then interacting with pupils and staff. However, the plan was always to re-open the case at the point that AR returned to school.

It is also important to note that upon closing the case, AR's case was not downgraded and still remained at level 2 and other agencies continued to be involved; it was just that the role of CFW could not be completed at this time.

Case closure

39. I closed AR's case to CFW on 9 June 2020. Copies of the closure forms are exhibited at AF/11- LCC00284 and AF/12- LCC000068. This was due to COVID-19 restrictions and my inability to offer AR face-to-face direct work until he returned to school as no other centres were open for me to meet him and he would not engage with indirect contact.

40. It is also noted in the closure form that AR's father had decided to keep AR at home for the remainder of the school term with a view to him returning in September and requested that his case be closed until that time when support could be delivered face-to-face.

41. As stated above, I agreed with this approach and believed it to be the appropriate course of action given I couldn't offer any other alternatives and as a short-term service we could not keep cases open indefinitely.
42. At that time COVID-19 was still very new and people were unsure how to approach it, nothing in the community was open and online support wasn't appropriate. The primary reason for AR's referral to CFW was to support his transition to school and social interactions and this couldn't be completed until he was returning to school, and I was able to engage him face-to-face.
43. Before any case was closed, I was required to inform my manager, Sharon Barrett, of the reasons for doing so and gain her approval. My reasons for closing the case, as explained above, and Sharon's approval are documented in the case notes at exhibit AF/13 LCC000226 (pg 11) Final closure of a case on the system also had to be signed off by a manager.
44. Exhibit AF/14- LCC000998 is an email exchange between myself, Anna Croll and Jane Eccleston, Headteacher at Acorns school dated 9 and 10 June 2020. Within these emails Acorns request that AR's case remain open to CFW so that we could support AR and his family over the summer holidays, given AR wasn't returning to school until September. Jane also notes that Acorns were struggling to engage the family and felt that continued involvement by CFW would support them with this. She also requested assistance with encouraging AR's father to sign their Home School Agreement.
45. As noted in my response to Jane I very much appreciated the difficulties Acorns were having in engaging with the family, particularly AR's father, as this was something I had also struggled with. I explained that I had been in contact with AR's father regarding the Home School Agreement and after talking it through with him he had confirmed that he would sign and return it to Acorns. I also confirmed that I would remain in intermittent contact with the family over the summer period in an effort to encourage engagement. I recall that I did make contact with AR's father over the summer period to see how the family was doing.
46. However, as AR was struggling to engage indirectly, for him to benefit from the work tasked to CFW it had been agreed at the TAF meeting that sessions with him would need to be carried out face-to-face. Due to COVID-19 limitations these sessions were only able to take place directly at Acorns and AR's father had refused to send AR

back to school until the September term. My work and therefore the work of CFW was unable to be completed. As CFW was a consensual service we could also not continue supporting AR and his family if they requested the case to be closed, which they had. I therefore felt that I had no option but to close AR's case at that time..

47. Due to the above, it was my understanding that I would revisit AR's case in September when he returned to school. Despite my involvement in the matter ceasing at this point I felt AR was still being supported by the appropriate professionals from Acorns and Youth Justice.

48. It was the responsibility of all agencies to manage the risk posed by AR at this time. I believe each agency had a duty to assist within the parameters that the case and their service allowed, and I believe CFW did this.

Re-opening of case

49. AR's case was re-referred to CFW on 14 September 2020 and was allocated to me given my previous involvement with the family. Copies of these referrals are exhibited at AF/15- LCC000081 and AF/16- LCC000303.

50. I reopened AR's case and noted that it had previously been closed due to COVID-19 restrictions and AR's parents requesting that CFW support be postponed until face-to-face work could be offered.

51. I also recorded that AR required face-to-face support regarding:

- *Managing peer relationships, building social skills to improve peer interactions and communication;*
- *Resilience building work to go alongside work the YOT team are completing around appropriate responses;*
- *Improving and maintaining attendance at school through TAF process to open up communication between family and school; and*
- *Parents following up with ASD pathway*

Copies of these notes are exhibited at AF/17- LCC000080 and AF/18- LCC000302.

52. I don't recall having any contact with AR between the case being closed in June and reopening in September. However, I do recall having limited contact with AR's father during this time to check how he and the family were coping.

Child and Family Assessment

53. Following AR's case being reopened I completed a CAF assessment on 28 October 2020. Copies of this are exhibited at AF/19- LCC000306 and AF/20- LCC000307.

54. It was usual process for a CAF assessment to be completed when a new case was opened regardless of whether the family had previously been known to CFW. This is because a family's circumstances could change, and it was important that any CAF assessment accurately reflected their current needs. When completing this assessment, it would be usual practice for me to review the needs highlighted in any previous assessment and determine whether these had changed at all.

55. I can see that it took me 6 weeks to complete the CAF assessment, and I am unsure why. The case notes, exhibited at AF/21- LCC000226 (pg 17) indicate that I was on annual leave for a period of two weeks during this time. I also had a demanding case load of 18 families and the beginning of a new school year tended to be busier time period for me, which could explain the delay.

56. As AR's Key Worker my role was to focus on his wellbeing and ensure that his needs were being met. Therefore, throughout the CAF assessment AR remained my focus and any observations I made were in relation to how they impacted him.

57. Within the CAF assessment I assessed AR's parents as *"responding appropriately around the time of the incident last year"*. I don't specifically recall how I made that assessment, but I believe it was likely based on information provided by CSC within their original referral. This is because my involvement with AR was not based on the October 2019 incident as it had already been addressed by CSC. I therefore had limited conversations regarding it as it was not something I was involved in. My work with AR and his family was focused around improving their social interactions and helping AR transition back into a school environment.

58. I also stated that the October 2019 incident was *"not the main focus of this assessment"*. As explained above, AR had already been assessed by CSC regarding

that incident and had also been through the Youth Justice System. AR's case was stepped down from CSC to CFW to focus on AR, his current feelings and how he could appropriately move on from the incident rather than on the incident itself, which I believe was the correct approach. This was mirrored by AR who felt that previous professional involvement had focused too much on the incident, and no one had supported him with his feelings.

In the assessment I note that the incident took place *"under very specific circumstances"*. This was based on my understanding of the incident, and it being an isolated attack at school due to ongoing bullying AR was experiencing. Although I was aware that AR did not attack the individual he believed had been bullying him as he couldn't locate that child, I did not consider it to be random, rather that it had been triggered by specific events which AR perceived to be relentless bullying. This was my understanding gained from the step down from CSC and discussions with my manager Sharon as it was the role of Youth Justice to investigate and risk assess this incident

59. It is also recorded that *"it is important for AR to have influence over the work that is completed with him to ensure continued engagement, as AR will disengage if he feels that there is no benefit to the work being done"*. Whilst AR had no influence over the assessment, I felt it was important that he had some influence over the direct work such as how that was delivered, at what venue and for how long. I took this same approach with all young people I was dealing with as I felt it made them more comfortable with the sessions and therefore encouraged their engagement. With the service being consensual it is also important to note that any young person must agree to the work being undertaken with them and I felt that giving them some influence over that work encouraged agreement.

60. As part of this assessment, I recorded AR as being Level 2 on the Continuum of Need. At the relevant time I believed the Continuum of Need Levels to be as follows:

- **Level 1-** Universal. Universal services such as a GP are appropriate.
- **Level 2-** Coordinated approach. Some unmet need and low risk.
- **Level 3-** Child in Need. Social worker involvement required as higher level of unmet need and medium risk.
- **Level 4-** Child Protection. Where child is at immediate risk. Significant unmet needs and high risk.

AR sat at Level 2 as despite his home environment being a cause of anxiety for him, I felt this could be managed by services such as CFW offering support.

61. Following completion of the assessment I produced an action plan to support AR and his family moving forward. This consisted of 6 direct work sessions with AR and 3 with AR and his father to address issues around anxiety, social interactions and communication. None of the actions produced intended to deal with the risk of AR carrying weapons as outlined at paragraph 50 above, this was not intended to be the focus of my work with AR.

62. I can see from my casework supervision notes, exhibited at AF/22- LCC000391, that I noted there were *“currently no safeguarding and criminal concerns”* and that AR was *“a risk to himself as his way of dealing with injustice or what he feels is injustice can be extreme”*.

63. I felt there were no criminal concerns as AR was not consistently committing crimes, or at risk of ongoing criminal activity at this time. For example, I would assess a young person as being of criminal concern if they were repeatedly shoplifting or socialising with others known to be involved in criminal behaviour.. Despite noting that AR could be a risk to himself I did not believe this to be in a safeguarding capacity.

64. I didn't perceive AR to be a risk to others as a result of his way of dealing with injustice. As expressed above, I understood the October 2019 incident to be an isolated incident triggered by specific circumstances.. The CSC and Youth Offending team would have assessed AR's risk to the wider public and no risk was highlighted within his referral to CFW.

65. I believe I displayed sufficient professional curiosity with dealing with AR's case. I didn't shy away from asking difficult questions and despite there being a clear reason for my involvement with AR, I asked additional questions which brought further information to light. For example, on the original step down action plan from CSC there was nothing mentioned around supporting family relationships or AR's anxiety, but this formed part of the action plan I created on reopening the case after speaking with AR and his family.

TAF meetings 14 September 2020 – 10 February 2021

TAF meeting 4 November 2020

66. I chaired a TAF meeting on 4 November 2020. The meeting outcomes are exhibited at AF/23- LCC000085 and AF/24- LCC000308.

67. I cannot specially recall this meeting but on my review of the notes I can see that it was attended by AR's father and Acorns.

68. It is also noted that AR had been performing well at school and not struggling with anxiety. The agreed actions were to continue with AR's direct work sessions and follow up with CAMHS to ensure AR was on the ASD pathway.

TAF meeting 19 January 2021

69. I also attended a TAF meeting on 19 January 2021. The meeting outcomes are exhibited at AF/25- LCC000310.

70. I cannot specially recall this meeting but on my review of the notes I can see that it was attended by AR's father and Acorns.

71. It is noted that AR was no longer feeling anxious and had declined a referral to CAMHS in relation to his anxiety. It was confirmed that AR was on the ASD pathway and all actions involving CFW had been completed. It was therefore agreed that AR's case would close to CFW.

72. The plans produced following the TAF are exhibited at AF/26- LCC000093 and AF/27- LCC000311. As AR's direct work had been completed and his ASD pathway confirmed I marked those actions as 'to close'. I marked the Acorns reintegration plan as ongoing as AR was still working towards this.

73. I also assessed AR and his family as having no reducing crime needs. The definition of crime needs here refers to any ongoing criminal acts. At this time AR wasn't committing any criminal offences nor were his family therefore there was no reduction required.

Home visit and assault incident

74. From my review of the case notes exhibited at AF/28 LCC000226 (pg 17-18) I can see that I received a telephone call from John Fitzpatrick at the Youth Offending team on 20 January 2021 informing me that there had been a physical altercation between AR and his father.
75. John noted that on his visit to the family home AR had disclosed that he had attempted to break his father's laptop and "*kicked him in the balls*" to which his father responded by "*hitting him in the face*". John explained that he had discussed this with AR who stated he was not hurt or scared, and AR's father who denied the incident occurred.
76. I confirmed to John that I was due to speak to the family over Zoom the following day and he stated that he would let AR's father know we had spoken.
77. Although I do not specifically recall this altercation or my conversations with the family I can see from exhibit AF/29- LCC000488, that I did look into the incident. There is no reason for me to believe these notes are inaccurate.
78. On 26 January 2021 I sent a follow up email to John Fitzpatrick confirming that I had spoken with the family in person and established that AR's father did hit him in response to AR kicking him. I explained that AR's father was remorseful and that I had provided the family with strategies to avoid similar occurrences in the future. I also confirmed that I had discussed the possibility of a safeguarding referral with my manager, but we had decided not to make one based on the information we had at that time.
79. When becoming aware of an altercation such as this, it would be usual practice for me to go out and speak to the family to ascertain what had happened. I would take into consideration their accounts of the incident but also the body language of the child involved. If during those conversations something came to light that concerned me, I would then make the appropriate safeguarding referrals to agencies such as the police or CSC. I would also always discuss this with a manager. Given my decision not to make a referral I don't believe any information came to light to justify a referral in this instance.
80. It is important to note that altercations such as this are sadly not unusual in my line of work and often don't raise the need for a safeguarding referral as the thresholds that trigger those are quite robust. I dealt with multiple cases during my time at LCC

where families had experienced similar altercations and no safeguarding referrals were made.

81. As explained above, incidents such as these were not unusual and wouldn't mean that a case should no longer be closed to CFW if all of our actions had been completed. If there had been something significant I felt needed to be addressed further by CFW, I would not have closed the case. It is also important to note that other agencies such as Acorns were still involved with the family.

82. I did not view AR as having a pattern of violence at this time. AR had a difficult relationship with his father which resulted in this incident and again was not unusual for families I dealt with. There was one other incident in October 2019 which, as outlined above, I believed was isolated. I would not describe this as a pattern of violence.

Closure of case

83. I closed AR's case to CFW on 10 February 2021. Copies of the closure forms are exhibited at AF/30- LCC000096 and AF/31- LCC000305.

84. AR's case was closed due to his needs being met by CFW and completion of all the actions assigned to us. I note that the direct work we undertook with AR resulted in improvements with his anxiety and the relationship he had with his father. AR was also described to be more receptive to engaging with school and health professionals and accepted a referral to CAMHS.

85. From the case notes exhibited at AF/32- LCC000226 (pg 18) am aware that AR's father wished for CFW to remain involved with the family. As referenced in the notes I explained to him that CFW was a short-term intervention service designed to support families when times were difficult, with education and health being longer term support services at universal level. As our short-term actions had been met, I was therefore unable to keep AR' case open. It is not uncommon for families to want to remain with the service but unfortunately this is not something we are able to facilitate long term.

86.I did offer AR's father a 6 week follow up call which was actioned and confirmed that should things decline in the future there was nothing preventing the family from being re referred to the service.

Observations

87.I cannot remember if I was aware that Acorns made a Prevent referral in respect of AR on 1 February 2021. A copy of this is exhibited at AF/33- LCC000891.

88.It would be usual process that referrals such as this would be discussed at a senior practitioner level and then cascaded down to me as the case handler. I would have expected to be made aware if a Prevent referral was made regarding a child that I was supporting.

89.Any decision to close a case to CFW after receiving a Prevent referral would be very much dependant on the nature / outcome of the referral. For example, if Prevent had determined that they were concerned about the referral and the child it involved I would take steps to address that. This would likely result in me calling a TAF meeting between all agencies involved with the child, including Prevent, to discuss any steps that could be taken to manage the concerns. If during the TAF additional work was identified for CFW I would keep a case open. I would also seek guidance from my manager Sharon regarding the referral and gain her approval before making a decision on closure.

Involvement with other agencies

90.There were a number of other agencies involved with AR at the same time as me:

- a) CSC;
- b) CYJS;
- c) Acorns School;
- d) CAMHS; and
- e) PREVENT

91.CSC were originally involved with AR's case as they referred it to CFW as a step down. Once the case was allocated to me, I had no involvement with the CSC team.

92. I was co-working with both CYJS and Acorns on this case and had frequent email contact and TAF meetings with both services. As lead professional it was my role to manage relationships with these agencies and collectively agree a plan for AR.

93. I made a referral to CAMHS in relation to AR and his anxiety upon my closure of the case. This would have been managed by AR's family once my involvement ceased.

94. I am aware that Acorns made a referral to Prevent. I had no contact with Prevent and cannot recall whether I was made aware of such a referral at the time.

95. My dealings with these agencies during my involvement with AR was in line with what I would expect.

Reflection on events

96. I left LCC in February 2021 and had no involvement with any steps LCC or CFW took following 29 July 2024 to identify and assess their prior dealings with AR.

97. Upon reflection of my involvement with AR, I do believe I adequately identified and addressed the risk AR posed to others at that time. I don't believe AR expressed any views or exhibited any behaviours to me that posed any more of a risk than other children I was dealing with at that time nor the level of risk that later transpired.

98. Whilst I believe I did everything I could at the time, my involvement with AR may have been different had it not been during the COVID-19 pandemic as I would have had more flexibility to attend face to face sessions with him. Although, I don't think this would have materially impacted the level of progress AR made whilst under CFW at that time.

99. I believe I had adequate statutory powers, guidance, training and resources available to me when working on AR's case. I had all the resources I required at my disposal as I did with all other cases I was dealing with at that time.

Improvements

100.As I left the service in February 2021, I am not aware of any relevant improvements that have been made by CFW since these events.

101.I believe that there is a shortage of services within communities which families and young people are able to access. Many youth centres have closed and small areas such as Banks do not have access to centres like these within close proximity. Services such as these provide informal education for young people, positive relationships with adults outside of their family and a chance to hear opposing views to their own and discuss these in a healthy manner which would improve outcomes. There would also be opportunities for parents and families to more easily access support around parenting etc.

102.I do think there could be a stronger awareness across professionals around the role each individual service is able to provide. I often spent a lot of time explaining the limitations of my involvement which could have been spent doing more beneficial tasks and therefore making services more efficient.

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: AFontaine-Smith

Dated: 18th August 2025

Index to the Witness Statement of Andrea Fontaine

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference no.	Document Description
AF/01	LCC000238	Referral into Early Help- 24.03.2020
AF/02	LCC000281	Closure form for AR's CSC case
AF/03	LCC000041	Closure form for AR's CSC case
AF/04	LCC000239	Closure form for AR's CSC case
AF/05	LCC000283	Child and Family Assessment- 09.04.2020
AF/06	LCC001018	Notes from TAF meeting on 19.05.2020
AF/07	LCC000061	TAF meeting outcome form- 19.05.2020
AF/08	LCC000290	TAF meeting outcome form- 19.05.2020
AF/09	LCC000226 (pg 7)	Internal case notes
AF/10	LCC000998	Email correspondence between Andrea Fontaine, Jane Eccleston, Joanne Hodson and Anna Croll.
AF/11	LCC000284	Case closure form- 09.06.2020
AF/12	LCC000068	Case closure form- 09.06.2020
AF/13	LCC000226 (pg 11)	Internal case notes
AF/14	LCC000998	Email correspondence between Andrea Fontaine, Jane Eccleston, Joanne Hodson and Anna Croll.
AF/15	LCC000081	Referral into Early Help- 14.09.2020
AF/16	LCC000303	Referral into Early Help- 14.09.2020
AF/17	LCC000080	Internal contact notes
AF/18	LCC000302	Internal contact notes
AF/19	LCC000306	Child and Family Assessment- 28.10.2020
AF/20	LCC000307	CAF Assessment
AF/21	LCC000226 (pg.17)	Internal contact notes
AF/22	LCC000391	Casework supervision notes
AF/23	LCC000085	TAF meeting outcome form- 04.11.2020

AF/24	LCC000308	TAF meeting outcome form- 04.11.2020
AF/25	LCC000310	TAF meeting outcome form- 19.01.2021
AF/26	LCC000093	Early Help plan
AF/27	LCC000311	Early Help plan
AF/28	LCC000226 (pg 17-18)	Internal contact notes
AF/29	LCC000488	Youth Justice case notes
AF/30	LCC000096	Case closure form- 10.02.2021
AF/31	LCC000305	Case closure form- 10.02.2021
AF/32	LCC000226 (pg 18)	Internal contact notes
AF/33	LCC000891	Acorns Prevent referral