

Witness Name: Carl Barry Coughlan

Exhibits: 31

Dated: 18/08/2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF CARL BARRY COUGHLAN

I, Carl Barry Coughlan, will say as follows:

1. I am employed by Lancashire County Council ("LCC") as a Team Leader in Targeted Youth Support. I have held this position since 1 April 2024. I am also a Borough Councillor; I am a Lead Member for Leisure and Youth Champion.
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 worked for LCC for 23 years. I have a 2:2 BA with Hons in Community and Youth Studies obtained from St Martins in Lancaster. I have also gained a Level 5 qualification from the Institute of Leadership and Management, and I regularly attend professional development training courses.
4. When I started working for LCC it was as a Level 1 Youth Worker, which I did at the same time as studying for my degree. Once I had my degree, I worked as a level 3 Youth Worker. For a period of around 4 years from around 2017 – January 2021, I worked as a Family and Intensive Support Worker.
5. In January 2021 I moved to the West Lancs District as a Professional Range Youth Worker. This was the role that I held during my involvement with AR. As stated above, I was in this role until 1 April 2024 when I was promoted to Team Leader.

Targeted Youth Support (TYS)

6. TYS is a service offered to young people in Lancashire; mainly 12–19-year-olds, but we can work with young people up to 25 years old if they have special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The service offers a variety of different programmes to meet the needs to the young people, for example, group-based programmes of support and 1-1 targeted support.
7. There are four levels on the Continuum of Need:
- Level 1 – Universal services
 - Level 2 – Single agency community response
 - Level 3 - Child in Need
 - Level 4 – Safeguarding response
8. TYS can operate throughout the Continuum of Need and so we can, and do, work with children at all levels if there is a child with an open plan and a lead agency which identifies a need to involve TYS.
9. Not all the team will do 1-1 work, but I did. The intention at the time of my involvement with AR was to roughly split the working week as follows:
- a. 40% group work
 - b. 20% case work (1-1s)
 - c. 40% administrative tasks
10. Our work is solely focused on the needs of the young person and trying to help them with their specific needs whether that be mental health, emotional wellbeing, healthy relationships, risk taking behaviour etc.
11. The service is consent based, voluntary, and intended to be short term over a period of around 12 weeks. The young person must be willing to engage with us for us to do our work. We do not have any powers to compel them to work with TYS.

October 2021 to February 2022

12. I know now from looking at the notes that on 27 October 2021 a request for support for TYS CFW / co working with Family Intensive Support CFW was received. The case and supervision notes regarding this are exhibited at CC/01 and CC/02 – LCC000226 and LCC000401. I can't recall if I looked at the specific referral document when the referral came in.
13. When a referral comes in it is usually discussed in the weekly meeting that team managers attend to discuss cases, allocation etc. I didn't attend these meetings.
14. Deb Cardwell, who was my team leader at the time, allocated AR to me. The referral would be put on the system with any notes. We use a system called Liquid Logic and all our information is stored in the Early Help module.
15. I can't recall specifically what I did in relation to AR, but my usual practice is to understand the reason we are involved and then to meet the young person to gain information from them, rather than reading all about the background in the notes. I find that there is more trust in the relationship with the young person if they are the one providing me with information.
16. To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing set out either in training or in policy documents regarding what information, or how much information, a Professional Range Youth Worker should access prior to meeting with a young person. The reason I adopted this practice is because as stated above, youth work is a voluntary consensual service based on a trusted relationship and it relies very heavily on me building a rapport with the young person. Throughout my degree and work I have built up knowledge and experience which tells me that this approach is the best way to build the necessary rapport, to gain the trust of the young person so that they will speak with me about the particular difficulties they are facing.
17. It is normal practice to have an initial discussion with the senior family support worker who had previously been involved with AR, in this case that was Sharon Barrett. I can't now specifically recall having such a discussion with Sharon about AR, but as we arranged a joint visit to see AR at his family home I believe that some form of communication must have taken place between us.

18. I was aware from the notes that AR had been referred to TYS due to:

- a. Social anxiety and lack of social groups.
- b. Non school attendance.
- c. Lack of confidence

19. Initially it was planned that there would be six direct interventions on a weekly basis with AR, to focus on relationship building.

20. From what I knew of AR I believed that I was appropriately trained and experienced to be assigned the case. The reason for AR's referral in terms of breaking down isolation, tackling social anxiety and encouraging him to access group work is what I do with young people daily.

21. I don't recall being told anything about AR's history and specifically any violence, possession of weapons, and / or concerns over extremism or radicalisation, including any Prevent referrals. However, AR did volunteer information to me about the incident at school in 2019 which I detail further below.

22. All my work on the case is recorded in notes, which I have referred to and relied upon in making this statement. I do recall meeting AR and some interactions / conversations, but due to the passage of time I am reliant for the detail on what is written in the notes. The aspiration is to record notes within 24 hours of an event but where we have a series of appointments this is not always possible. I always try to record them as soon as I can.

23. Every case should have monthly supervision where you meet with the team leader to discuss the case, any issues, current plan, progress etc.

24. On this particular case I was working alongside the Family Intensive Support team who were also involved and providing support to AR's wider family. Because of this, the practice would be for me to join the supervision meetings for the worker with conduct of that aspect of the case, Louise Lewis. Louise was the lead professional on AR's case at this time. The lead professional co-ordinates the agencies involved with a young person and arranges the Team around the Family ("TAF") meetings. I can't say for certain now whether or not I did join those supervision meetings. It was

normal practice for the senior support worker undertaking the supervision to prepare a note of the meeting. This was not emailed to me but was put onto the young person's record on the system. Therefore, I did not keep any of my own notes of these meetings.

25. Notwithstanding the above, if an issue arose on one of my cases, whether or not I was invited to a supervision meeting, I would raise it with my team leader. I wouldn't wait for a supervision meeting if I had any concerns.

Joint home visit 3 November 2021

26. It was planned that I would meet with AR on 3 November 2021 at home to discuss the support being offered. The case notes referring to this are exhibited at CC/03-LCC000226. This was a joint visit with Sharon. We don't do a joint visit on every allocation but because of the strength of the relationship that Sharon had with AR and the family, we felt it would be beneficial for us both to go on this occasion.

27. When we met, I reminded AR of my role and the work I planned to complete with him, which was to help him explore his social anxiety and develop his social skills. We arranged to meet on Monday 8 November 2021 at the youth centre, The Zone, in Skelmersdale. AR favoured meeting either at school or zone. The reason was so that his parents weren't intruding on the meeting, and it offered a protected space for AR to speak freely. It is not unusual for young people to make these types of requests. However, as I will go on to explain, we struggled to follow this plan due to AR's non-attendance at school.

28. In the meeting Sharon mentioned that we both had an interest in politics (because I am a councillor). However, I made clear that I must remain politically neutral in my role and cannot influence the political views of young people. I did not discuss politics again with AR.

29. In my analysis of the information on the notes made at the time I state

"AR has a voice and knows his mind, he has made an informed decision to meet with me and has made his thoughts about how and where this work should occur known, however, at this time if this is disguised compliance to get people to stop talking at him is unclear and will only become clear where the opportunity to meet one to one is

undertaken and we are able to visit his hopes and expectations of the session independently.”

Meeting with AR 8 November 2021

30. My first 1-to-1 meeting with AR was on 8 November 2021. The case notes from this meeting are exhibited at CC/04- LCC000226.

31. I met with AR at the West Lancs Zone and gave him a tour of the building as it was his first time visiting. I explained to AR the purpose of the session was to get to know him and so I asked AR questions. AR was happy to respond and shared the following:

- a. He had been attending Acorns school since year 9 although since starting year 11 in September 2021 he hadn't been in until that day (8 November).
- b. He was kicked out of his former high school because he had told Child Line that he had taken a knife to school because he felt threatened due to bullying which had progressively worsened despite him telling teachers since year 7. This had an emotional toll on him. AR stated he would not take a knife again.
- c. We discussed AR's interests outside of school which were learning German and reading a book by a Russian author.
- d. AR said he would be willing to access activities to help develop social skills with the caveat he did not want to try football.
- e. AR had a distrust of online support as a consequence of the response to him disclosing taking a knife to school.
- f. AR struggled to eat in front of people
- g. AR was concerned about meeting new people and struggles with how to react to simple things like saying help which may make him a target for bullying.
- h. AR agreed strategies for managing social anxiety would likely come from CAMHS (“child and adolescent mental health services”) and my support was about helping him to access/ try new things.

32. The next meeting was scheduled for 18 November 2021.

33. My notes state

“AR has some significant ACERS [adverse childhood experiences] and appears to have felt ignored / let down in the past, he needs opportunity to develop a trusting and supportive friendship group and needs to be able to access provision that will be able to meet his needs for safe social interaction, however living in Banks is a barrier to this and needs to be explored”

34. West Lancs is geographically a large area and there are limited provisions in Banks where AR lived. Therefore, for him to access groups there could be up to a 45 minute journey which was a big undertaking and would need to be supported by the family.

35. I didn't identify any risks to / from AR in this meeting.

36. Although AR made the disclosure about the incident with the knife, this in itself didn't cause me concern. AR said that he was being bullied and even though he had told a teacher, nothing had been done. He volunteered the information to me, he said that he understood why it was wrong to have done what he did, and he would never do it again. AR demonstrated to me that he had the knowledge that this behaviour was not acceptable. There had been a period of intervention around that time led by other services and because he was talking about a historic event, in relation to which appropriate action had been taken, I did not think it warranted any further action.

37. If I did have any concerns at all during this meeting, or any other that I had with him, that AR was a risk to himself / others then we have robust safeguarding measures in place that I would follow. I would pick this up with the lead professional and support worker.

38. The level of engagement from AR during this meeting I would say was positive. He was open, conversed well and shared several key life events and how they had impacted on him. He wasn't just giving yes / no answers.

39. When we look at the initial objective being around developing a positive relationship where AR wanted to engage, I thought the meeting was positive and there had been good progress on establishing that baseline relationship.

Meeting with AR 18 November 2021

40. My next planned meeting with AR was on 18 November 2021. This meeting took place at his school, Acorns. My case notes from this meeting are exhibited at CC/05-LCC000226.

41. When I arrived, AR was completing his input into the EHCP and made a statement about not feeling able to speak at school. The teacher asked if I could discuss this with AR.

42. AR agreed to speak to me about it and was happy for me to feed it back to the school. He stated that he felt unable to speak at school because he becomes anxious and struggles to speak, his mouth goes dry. He didn't feel having water would help.

43. AR went on to say it takes a long time for him to feel comfortable and start to trust and show his true self. Last time he did this he was removed from class which left him feeling like school don't like the true AR.

44. We discussed types of activities AR might engage in and looked at a couple of youth clubs that might be an option. I agreed to gather some information for our next appointment.

45. In my notes I state the following

"AR is able to articulate his view and opinions well in one to ones, he knows his mind and what he likes and is becoming increasingly confident in exploring opportunities to develop his social networks and support. AR is keen to have a voice and it is important this is facilitated in all areas of his life."

46. I didn't identify any risks to / from him AR during this visit.

47. I can't specifically recall this visit now but from the notes, AR was open and engaging. He gave me detail, and he engaged in rebutting suggestions which implies he was engaged.

48. If on any occasion I met with AR and he was not engaging, then I would have recorded this in the notes.

49. In my view we were making progress in this meeting. We were looking to the future and exploring what type of social activities AR might be willing to try and might be interested in.
50. Following this meeting with AR I emailed Maggie Allred at Acorns to feedback what he had told me about why he did not feel able to speak at school. I attach this email at exhibit CC/06- LCC000226.
51. I also emailed Louise Lewis as the lead professional to advise that I had discussed the next Team around the Family ('TAF') meeting with AR. He said that he was unaware of this, and I explained the challenge we had in supporting AR's attendance because he finished lessons at school at 10am and then has a long journey home. To attend the meeting, he would have to travel back for 1pm. I queried if either the timings or the location of the meeting could be revisited to help AR access and engage in his support. A copy of this email is exhibited at CC/07- LCC000226.
52. As the meetings were weekly, I would have expected the next one to be 25 November, but I can't see any record of a meeting on this date. I would expect a meeting, even if it did not go ahead, to have been recorded in my diary. However, I note the following:
- a. There is email correspondence between me and AR's father on 25 November 2021. A copy of this is shown at exhibit CC/08- LCC000767. In it I state:

"This week my planned session was to support AR to attend the TAF, as this meeting was cancelled, yet my diary was already arranged, this session did not go ahead.

I have scheduled in sessions weekly (1 per week) with AR, if they need to be cancelled due to non-attendance there is no opportunity to reschedule for that week as my diary does not offer that flexibility."
 - b. In the TAF meeting on 7 December 2021 AR's father references two missed meetings. On this basis it is possible that there had been a meeting on 25 November 2021 which was missed because the next appointment (described

below) was also missed, which would make two in total. A copy of the TAF meeting outcomes is exhibited at CC/09- LCC000130.

53. Therefore, it does look as though a meeting had been planned for 25 November 2021. I can't explain why there is no record of this meeting.

Meeting with AR 2 December 2021

54. I did have a meeting scheduled with AR on 2 December 2021, to take place at his school. I attended the school but on arrival I discovered AR was not in that day and so the appointment could not go ahead.

55. I have stated in my notes that in light of the repeated absences that are attributed to anxiety, I do have some concern that it may not be the right time for AR to be pushing himself to address all his issues at once and this needs to be explored with him.

TAF meeting 7 December 2021

56. The first TAF meeting to take place following AR's case allocation to me was on 7 December 2021. TAF meetings are arranged by the lead practitioner and invitations are sent to relevant attendees. The family will attend and then education, CAMHS, social care etc. If I am involved with a young person I will receive an invitation to the TAF meeting.

57. I will attend the TAF meetings if I am able to do so. Where I am not able to attend, the usual practice is to send an update to the lead practitioner in advance.

58. I was not able to attend the meeting on 7 December 2021 because it was my non-working day.

59. As I was not able to attend, I emailed Louise on 1 December to invite a discussion in advance of the meeting to discuss AR and in particular I indicated that I felt it was important to "*manage the increasing expectations from dad*". A copy of this email can be found at exhibit CC/10- LCC000996.

60. By this I mean that AR's father had made a couple of requests that were not in line with my working practice:

- a. On 26 November a message was passed to me from the school in which AR's father said *"AR is coming into school. Please get Carl to see him today. Thanks"*

I asked Louise to reinforce with the family that appointments are made in advance and fit around a complex and busy schedule. A copy of this email can be found at exhibit CC/11- LCC000758.

- b. In an email on 28 November 2021 AR's father asked if AR misses a session due to non-attendance, if I will bank it for another day. He also asked if AR does not attend school, if he can notify me on the day so that I can meet / collect him from home. A copy of this email can be found at exhibit CC/12- LCC000767.

I explained to AR's father that I would not be able to divert the appointment to the family because the extended travel time would significantly impact on other appointments.

61. Louise responded to state she was aware of AR's father's expectations of all services being unrealistic. Louise advised this has been addressed and would be reiterated in the [TAF] meeting. Louise asked me to provide a written report as she did not have time for a discussion due to her own work commitments.

62. From the notes, it does not appear that a written report was ever sent. This should have been done. I don't know now why it was not completed. However, Louise would have access to my notes on the system and so would have been able to see the work carried out from those.

63. Following the meeting I was updated on the discussions in the TAF relevant to my work with AR through an email from Louise. A copy of this email is exhibited at CC/13- LCC000777. As mentioned above, the plan we had initially put in place to meet at the Zone or school did not work out because AR was not always in school (the Zone was located close to his school). Therefore, following the TAF meeting it

was agreed I would review the time and location of the meetings to try and encourage better engagement.

64.To accommodate this, I emailed AR's father on 10 December 2021 to advise that commencing 10 January 2022 I would meet AR on a Monday between 1 – 2pm, either as a “walk and talk” appointment from the family home or at a community venue. I exhibit a copy of this email at CC/14- LCC000715

65.From 10 January 2022 the intention was for me to have 6 sessions with AR.

Meeting with AR 10 January 2022 – Direct work session 1 of 6

66.My notes from the meeting are exhibited at CC/15- LCC000226. This was a scheduled “walk and talk” session in which I collected AR from his family home and went for a walk with him.

67.I outlined to AR the aspirations for the work:

- a. Review Radar
- b. Explore opportunities for him to have social interactions
- c. Look at strategies for helping him manage his anxiety

68.Radar is LCC's variation of the “outcome star”. It is basically a tool used to measure how an individual is feeling about certain matters for example, wellbeing, education, online safety, relationships. When Radar is completed, the young person will agree a score against those areas. I normally do Radar during the first meeting, then again at the end, and compare the two scores. If there has been a significant event / change in between, then I might also ask the young person to do one then.

69.In my analysis of information I state

“AR engaged well, and was very open and sharing, he was able to respond appropriately to questions and understand the future plan of the work, and shared he was happy with this plan”.

70.I did not identify any risks to / from AR during this meeting.

71. I felt that AR engaged well, and we were making progress. Although AR had missed a couple of meetings prior to Christmas, my assumption was that this had been because AR did not attend school and the meeting location was either at school or close to it, rather than because he was avoiding the meetings with me. We now had a plan to meet which didn't depend on his attendance at school and AR was engaging again.

TAF Meeting 12 January 2022

72. I don't recall being invited to this TAF meeting and I can see from the notes that I did not attend.

73. I don't know now why I did not attend. Although I can see from my diary that I did have other TAF meetings to attend that day and so it may have been that the appointment clashed with another professional commitment.

Meeting with AR 17 January 2022 – Direct work session 2 of 6

74. At this meeting I completed the Radar review with AR. A copy of my notes regarding this are exhibited at CC/16- LCC000226.

75. AR displayed signs of anxiety throughout by scratching his hands.

76. I agreed with AR that the focus of the next session would be to look at different strategies to manage anxiety and asked him to look at the Minds Matter website to explore options. The Minds Matter website offers tools and resources to help people learn to manage their mental wellbeing.

77. In my notes I have set out the following analysis of information:

“AR engaged with the focus of the session although he did show some frustration completing a task that he had already previously completed, so I explained that things can change in relatively short time and it is helpful to review things regularly for this purpose which AR accepted and therefore agreed to completing Radar

There have been some changes in AR score, not all of them are positive score changes but this could be down to how the categories are described

AR had already had an appointment that day [with a psychologist] and there is the risk this resulted in some information overload.”

78. With the Radar score, it is not unusual for a young person to have negative score changes following a couple of sessions. This might seem counterintuitive, but it is because sometimes, when we first ask a young person to score how they are feeling they say that everything is “fine”. Then when we start our sessions and discussing what is really going on, they realise that perhaps they are not “fine”, as they initially thought, and the score reduces as a result of them reflecting on what is really happening.

79. I didn't identify any risks to / from AR during this meeting.

80. In terms of the level of engagement from AR during this meeting, from reviewing my notes it feels as though this meeting was a little bit more laboured than it had been previously. I would have attributed that to AR being fatigued from other professional involvement on that day (as he had seen a psychologist immediately prior to my appointment).

81. I still felt we were making progress in the meeting. AR had agreed the next steps; he said he would review the Minds Matter website, and we were progressing through the plan to help with his anxiety and social isolation.

Meeting with AR 24 January 2022 – Direct work session 3 of 6

82. My next planned meeting with AR was on 24 January 2022. My notes from this meeting are exhibited at CC/17- LCC000226.

83. AR explained he had been to visit a different school that day and we discussed how he felt about it. AR said ok. I suggested the larger class sizes and location closer to home might be positive way for AR to socialise and make friends with which he agreed.

84. AR said he had not had chance to look at the Minds Matter website as agreed at our last meeting and so I gave him an overview of some of the tools for managing anxiety and then I discussed the following strategies with AR; square breathing, 5 senses

and alphabet activity. I also discussed pre and post regulation activities such as music and exercises.

85. In my analysis of information with my contemporaneous notes I state;

“AR seemed to be positive about changing school, whilst remaining cautious

AR seemed more relaxed during the appointment display less anxious body language

AR has made a positive effort in attending school and this seemed to have impact on his confidence to undertake further challenges”

86. I did not identify any risks to / from AR in this meeting.

87. His level of engagement seemed to me to be positive. I believed we were making progress. In the actions we talked about getting information for a youth group for our next appointment; AR was committing to the next steps of the plan.

Meeting with AR 31 January 2022 – direct work session 4 of 6

88. This meeting took place in AR’s home. My notes from this meeting are exhibited at CC/18- LCC000226.

89. We discussed AR’s attendance at school, whether he had used any of the strategies we discussed on the last occasion (he hadn’t because he said he hadn’t felt anxious) and we discussed AR attending a youth group the following day.

90. In my analysis of information I state:

“AR is reported positive aspirations for change, however he is currently managing his parents and therefore this is resulting in missed education opportunities, Parents need to have supportive yet robust strategies in place to get AR to school and use them consistently.”

91. When I say AR was “managing his parents” I believe I meant that he was doing things like staying up late which in turn had an impact on his attendance at school.

AR's parents needed to manage him going to bed at an appropriate time, so he was able to get up in the morning, but it felt instead as though AR was "managing them" and doing what he wanted. Ordinarily issues like this are usually fed back through conversation with the lead professional, in a TAF meeting or in supervision meetings. I can't see specific reference to this in the notes but that would be my usual practice.

92.I didn't identify any risks to / from AR during this meeting.

93.In terms of his level of engagement, AR did not come to the door immediately when I arrived. But he did eventually come out without his parents pushing him (his father was out at the time) and after that, he did engage. During the meeting we phoned the youth worker at the Moels cop youth group we thought AR might attend. This felt like we were making progress.

Meeting with AR 7 February 2022 – direct session 5 of 6

94.I had planned session with AR on 7 February 2022 but he did not engage. This is recorded in my case notes exhibited at CC/19- LCC000226. A cancelled appointment would not have been recorded as a did not engage, therefore I can only surmise that the appointment failed as AR refused the appointment when I arrived at the family home, however due the passage of time and a change in role I do not have access to any notes from this time to confirm this.

TAF Meeting 10 February 2022

95.I attended the TAF meeting on 10 February 2022. The outcomes of the meeting are exhibited at CC/20- LCC000144.

96.In the meeting AR reported that the support he was receiving from me was ok and he likes going out into the community.

97.AR's parents also reported that AR enjoys attending the Moels cop youth group. As the purpose of my meetings with AR was to try help him with his social isolation, this was progress which is echoed in the notes which state

“The Early Help Plan is progressing. It is positive that AR is starting to show an interest in community based activities for example the youth group and is engaging with support from relevant agencies”.

98.It was stated in the TAF meeting that at the next TAF meeting (scheduled for 11 March 2022) the case will close to CFW as all needs would have been met.

Meeting with AR 21 February 2022 – direct work session 6 of 6

99.This was my last direct work session with AR. We completed the review of AR’s Radar. A copy of the RADAR is exhibited at CC/21 LCC000151

100.In my analysis of information I stated the following;

“through the review process AR agreed that there had been general progress in many areas although this is not supported by the numerical scoring it is supported by the narrative and therefore indicates the initial scores may have been less representative

*2 areas where there are still needs are **Being well (body and mind)** AR agreed that he has the necessary specialist support and relationships in place to help him make further progress in this area and **Work, Education and Learning**. AR is about to go through a school transition and feels that this will help him make further progress in this area.*

Therefore, following the review the work with AR by Targeted Youth Support has been completed.”

101.I didn’t identify any risks to / from AR In this meeting.

102.There was positive engagement, and we had achieved what we had set out to do. AR had begun attending a youth group. He was leaving the house regularly with me and he was positive about continuing to implement what was in place.

103.I believed that the biggest barrier in terms of progressing AR’s engagement with the community was geography. AR lived in Banks which has a much smaller level of

services on offer. If AR lived closer to core provision, then he might have been attending different groups 2 – 3 times a week. Nevertheless, it felt like the vicious cycle of isolation had been interrupted and AR was now able to start / continue engaging in community activities which gave him positive exposure to appropriate friendship groups in a managed environment.

TAF meeting 11 March 2022

104.I attended the TAF meeting on 11 March 2022. The outcomes of this meeting are exhibited at CC/22- LCC000153.

105.In this AR confirmed he was happy for CFW service to close stating "*there is no point keeping it open as they haven't done anything*". AR's father wanted CFW to remain open whilst AR was going through the transition process to Presfield school.

106.It is important to understand the context of these discussions. Parents can often be nervous about support reducing because of "what if" scenarios, for example "what if things recur", "what happens if x, y, and z". However, the answer is that if things get worse, they can re-refer and CFW will become involved again. Also, there were still other agencies involved with AR at this time. So, although there would no longer be a formal plan in place with CFW, there would still be support in place that AR and his family could access. Sometimes it is about reassurance and letting the young person and family know strategies and the support that is available to them.

107.Although AR's father was anxious about CFW involvement closing, there was no longer the behaviours or evidence supporting our involvement and so it was the right decision to close. Building dependency on a service is not good for a family.

June to September 2023

108.A further request for support was received into TYS on 1 June 2023. The case notes relating to this are exhibited at CC/23- LCC000226. I can't recall now what prompted the request, but I believe that AR was not engaging with the family support worker Ashleigh Williams and because I had successfully engaged AR previously, the matter was allocated to me.

109. The intention was for me to do 1-1 sessions with AR to explore coping skills. As it turned out, AR did not engage with these sessions and so the case was closed (see below).

Meeting 8 June 2023

110. I attended AR's family home to meet with AR but he refused. The case notes from this visit are exhibited at CC/24- LCC000226.

111. When I arrived, AR was sat on the sofa, but he ran upstairs. AR's mother tried to encourage him to speak with me, but AR asked her how to say "I don't want it" in her native language.

112. I said that I would try again the following week.

Meeting 15 June 2023

113. This was my second planned meeting with AR but yet again he refused to engage.

TAF meeting 22 June 2023

114. I attended the meeting. The outcomes of this meeting are exhibited at CC/25- LCC000196.

115. AR did not attend which was in line with his non-engagement with me.

116. The attendees at the TAF were informed of AR's failure to engage in our sessions. It was agreed that I would try to encourage engagement but if this could not be achieved by the next TAF then it will be clear that AR does not want support, and the case will likely close.

117. After this meeting I drafted a letter to AR on 27 June 2023 to try and encourage engagement. The letter needed to be signed off by my supervisor and so it didn't actually get sent out until 17 July 2023. The draft letter is exhibited at CC/26- LCC000779 and the final version at CC/27- LCC000423

TAF meeting 17 July 2023

118. I attended this meeting and reported that AR was still not engaging. The outcomes from this meeting can be found at exhibit CC28- LCC000197.

119. It was confirmed that the letter would be sent out to give AR the opportunity to contact TYS on his own behalf. No response was received.

120. I was not really surprised by him not engaging. Sometimes young people wonder what's new / what will be different if they speak to the same people again. As mentioned above, youth work is about a voluntary relationship. It is not something that can be forced and so if a young person is not willing to engage at a particular time, it is right that the case is closed. It can always be re-opened if / when circumstances change.

Observations

121. At no time did I become aware of any interest AR had in weapons, violence or extremist views. The only time we discussed weapons / violence was in my first meeting with him on 8 November 2021 when we discussed the incident at AR's school in December 2019. AR explained what had happened and said that he understood why his actions were wrong.

122. During my first involvement with AR at the end of 2021 / early 2022 I felt that he engaged relatively well, and we achieved the aim of our meetings. The second time there was no engagement at all.

123. Aside from the 1-1 meetings which were face to face, if I needed to contact AR it was via his parents because AR told me he did not have a phone. It is not very often that a young person will not want direct contact over phone / email although it does happen. Where this is the case, they usually start by asking for contact to go through their parents but after one or two meetings they are happy to be contacted directly. That did not happen with AR.

124. So far as engagement from AR's family is concerned, if anything AR's father was overly involved. I was mindful of preserving the independence of my relationship with AR. I think because AR's father was quite involved with the other services which AR

was being supported by such as CAMHS, Acorns and CFW AR's father expected the same with me. However, my work focused solely on AR and trying to engage him.

125. I know now that LCC received information from Lancashire Constabulary following their dealings with AR / his family on 5 November 2021 and 30 November 2021. I don't recall being notified of either of these incidents at the time.

126. In my experience, police safeguarding referrals are not passed to LCC on the same day as an incident but can be a week or so afterwards. The practice is for the referral to be put onto the system and for the lead professional to be tagged so that the information is brought to their attention. If the lead professional considers it appropriate, they will pass the information on to others.

127. In relation to the incident on 5 November 2021, I think I would have understood AR's behaviour as being linked to his ASD diagnosis. A negative reaction after being taken by surprise with someone turning up to the house unexpectedly could be said to be a typical response from someone with ASD. I knew AR had ASD. If I had been informed of the incident I would have explored with AR alternative ways to help manage those types of situations. A copy of the Police Incident Report relating to this can be found at exhibit CC/29- LCC000125.

128. In relation to the incident on 30 November 2021 when it gets to the point that a young person is causing criminal damage, if I had been made aware I would have had a conversation with him about what led to that level of escalation and whether there were other strategies that AR could have used to avoid it. However, in the context of the work that I do with young people and the range of young people I work with this in itself sort of incident is not an unusual occurrence and, while I would have explored what had happened, I don't think I would have made a big deal of it. A copy of the Police Incident Report relating to this can be found at exhibit CC/30- LCC000129.

129. I am also now aware of an email sent by CAMHS to Louise and Sharon on 22 November 2021 to advise of an email from AR's father describing two incidents over the weekend when AR exhibited intimidating behaviour. I was not copied into this email, and it was not brought to my attention. A copy of the email can be found at exhibit CC/31- LCC000975.

130. Having reviewed the email I feel that had I known about these incidents I could have explored and unpicked them with AR. I would have been able to review with AR what had led to this escalation and supported AR to consider alternative strategies to express himself. However, as the specific task was around signposting AR's parents to the Emergency Duty Team ("EDT") contact information for out of hours advice, that may be why I was not included in this interaction

131. It has also been brought to my attention now that AR was reported missing on 17 March 2022 and was located by police in possession of a knife, talking about intending to stab someone and also about poison. I was never made aware of this. Given that my involvement with AR had ended by the time of this incident, I would not expect to have been made aware, unless the incident itself was deemed to warrant a re-referral into TYS. That did not happen following the 17 March 2022 incident so far as I am aware.

132. At no time did anyone within CFW, or within any other agency, raise with me concerns about AR having extremist views and potentially needing to be referred to Prevent. As stated above, I personally did not ever have such concerns during my dealings with AR. I never observed any knives or weapons on AR or within the family home. AR never expressed to me any concerning views about politics / mass casualty incidents. If I had any concern in respect of either it would have been documented and I would have taken appropriate action starting with a discussion with the lead professional.

Involvement with other agencies

133. There were a number of other agencies involved with AR at the same time that I was:

- a. CFW;
- b. CAMHS;
- c. Acorns School; and
- d. SEND

134. I was co working with CFW and so I had relatively frequent email contact with them and the lead professional Louise. As mentioned above, I should have attended the

supervision meetings held by CFW, but I can't recall now whether I did. I haven't seen any notes of these.

135. There was no particular need / reason for me to be in frequent contact with Acorns, CAMHS or SEND. The lead professional's role is to manage relationships with other agencies and so if there are any significant updates or matter to discuss it is done via the lead professional or in TAF meetings.

136. I would liaise with Acorns regarding appointments and respond to queries if received. For example, on one occasion CAMHS asked about the extent of my involvement. I responded to confirm *"I am working with AR to help him explore his social opportunities and to help him explore groups he could access and support him to look at breaking down the barriers to this"*. A copy of this email exchange is exhibited at CC/32- LCC000754.

137. My work was focused on AR and the appropriate time to liaise with other agencies was during the TAF meetings. The purpose of those meetings is for professionals to come together, describe their work and collectively agree a plan.

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

Reflection on events

139. On the day of the tragic events, I was informed and assisted in pulling together a chronology of TYS involvement with AR. That is the only post incident review I have been involved in. I know that a rapid review has been carried out, but I was not part of that.

140. Having reflected on my involvement with AR, I believe that whilst I was involved with him, I addressed the risks presented to me at the time adequately. I did not witness any behaviours that demonstrated AR presented the level of risk that later transpired. There were no indicators at all to me.

141. I do believe I had adequate guidance, training and resources available to me to manage the case. In terms of any statutory powers, the reality is that I was working with AR around strategies to manage anxiety and reduce social isolation. It is a

consent-based service. If the level of risk was raised to such an extent that overriding AR's consent was appropriate, then it would need to be referred to another service.

Improvements

142. There have been several improvements to TYS since this incident. I have also reflected on my own practice and introduced improvements.

143. As a team leader, now when a referral is received, I will ask 4 questions about every case and one of those questions is whether a Prevent referral is appropriate. This means that we think about whether such an action is required on every case. I also facilitate a weekly opportunity for youth workers under my management to discuss their case work in a group supervision style format, this provides the opportunity for professionals with expertise in youth work to support each other, discuss barriers and explore solutions

144. I know that CFW attend Prevent meetings more frequently. Attendance has doubled from monthly to fortnightly and the primary CFW representative is the Senior Manager who has the strategic leadership role for Targeted Youth Support.

145. We now also have youth mentors. A youth mentor is a member of staff either qualified to or working towards the national occupational standards of youth work, who are employed with a primary focus of case work with young people 12 – 19 and where appropriate up to 25 (SEND). They do not typically have any lead professional responsibilities nor group work planning and management, or line management responsibilities which means that they are able to offer a greater flexibility in their practice when engaging with and supporting young people, than a professional range youth worker may be able to offer, due to the range of responsibilities that they have to manage.

146. In terms of our own safety and that of the young people we work with a number of actions have also been taken for example; the risk assessment for delivering events in public spaces has been reviewed, there are briefings on what to do in the event of a terrorist attack at the start of every event we deliver and TYS has introduced branded workwear.

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: 18/08/2025