
**FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF
DC PAULA MURPHY**

I, Paula Murphy will say as follows: -

Introduction

1. I am Detective Constable 3120 Paula Murphy of the Merseyside Police.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 22 July 2025.
3. I was attested as a Police Constable in 2004 and became a Detective in 2014. In December 2019 I was stationed at Marsh Lane Police Station, Bootle, and was posted to 'Level 2 Investigations'. I am a PIP2 detective. PIP stands for "Professionalising the Investigative Process". PIP is a nationally accredited course. When you have completed PIP level 2 satisfactorily, you can call yourself a Detective Constable.
4. I have been asked by the Inquiry to describe my involvement with AR following his arrest on 11 December 2019. I have limited independent recollection of this matter, and I make this statement by reference to the Niche occurrence enquiry log report (OEL) (PM/1 **MERP002919**) and documents that were created by me and others and which formed part of the investigation in 2019 / 2020. I needed to revisit the OEL in 2025 for reasons that I will explain at the end of this statement.
5. I am now posted to the Child Criminal and Sexual Exploitation Team (CCSET). I remain an accredited Detective Constable.

The events of the 11 and 12 December 2019

6. I can see that at 12.54 hours on the 11 December 2019, the Niche crime record, resulting from the arrest of AR was considered by Emma Howard, who is a Case Development Officer. She scored this as 75 out of a possible 200 on the **Investigation Allocation Model** (IAM). IAM is a method used in Merseyside Police to assist with the allocation of crime investigations to the most appropriate person / department. A score of 75 meant that the case should be investigated by Level 2 Investigations, and by a PIP 2 detective.
7. The case was sent to my supervisor, Detective Sergeant Joanne Haffenden, for allocation. I can see from my Day Book (5696) that I was notified that AR had been arrested and taken to St Anne Street Police Station custody suite. DS Haffenden asked that I process this detainee.
8. I note that I did not make any entries on the OEL on 11 December 2019, the date of AR's arrest. I was being supported by colleagues at these early stages of the investigation and so would not ordinarily update OEL whilst processing the detainee. I can see that the Niche crime was allocated to me for investigation by DS Christopher Smith on 13 December 2019. I made entries on niche recording my progress with the investigation.
9. Prior to me having any engagement with AR, I noted the following: -
10. AR had been arrested by my colleague, Constable Dodd, at 09.45 hours on 11 December 2019. He had been arrested for:
 - a. Assault contrary to section 47 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861.
 - b. Possession of a bladed article (a knife).
 - c. Possession of an offensive weapon (a hockey stick).
11. On 11 December 2019 statements were taken by my colleagues from:
 - a. Michael McGarry – Headteacher at Range High School (PM/2 **MERP001413**);
 - b. Thomas Dolly – Deputy Headteacher at Range High School (PM/3 **MERP002909**);
 - c. Stephen Paul Martin – Teacher at Range High School (PM/4 **MERP002908**);
 - d. **DPA** – mother of the victim **DPA** (PM/5 **MERP002900**).
12. Statements had also been supplied by:
 - a. Constable Evans, who had spoken to **DPA** mother of **DPA** AR's intended victim on the 11 December (PM/6 **MERP002899**);

- b. Constable Dodd – the arresting officer and one of officers who searched AR’s home address for electronic devices later that day (PM/7 **MERP002907**);
 - c. Constable Clarke – assisting officer and lead officer for the search (PM/8 **MERP002904**);
 - d. Constable Lynch – one of the searching officers (PM/9 **MERP002906**);
 - e. Constable Sims – one of the searching officers (PM/10 **MERP002905**);
 - f. Edward O’Callaghan – who seized AR’s mobile phone whilst he was in custody (PM/11 **MERP002897**).
13. In addition, a VPRF1 (a vulnerable person referral form) in relation to AR had been completed by Constable Dodd (PM/12 **MERP000186, Pages 88-94**). VPRF1s in relation to AR’s intended victim **DPA** and the actual victim **DPA** had been completed by Constable Clarke (PM/13 **MERP002938** & PM/14 **MERP002938**).
14. AR spent the day of 11 December 2019 in custody (see custody report **PM/15** **MERP002937**). During that time there was engagement with the Criminal Justice Mental Health Team (CJMHT), Youth Offending Team, Child and Adult Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Sefton Emergency Duty Team. However, it was noted that, as AR both lived and was at school in Lancashire (having already been expelled from Range High School, Formby, which is in the Merseyside Police area), AR should be dealt with by Lancashire authorities.
15. Whilst I was not present, there was I believe a meeting with Sefton Social Services and others on 11 December 2019 (PM/16 **MERP002881, Page 5**), and it was determined that AR could be bailed to his home address overnight to return to St Anne Street Police Station the following day for interview.
16. There was also a need for Steph Halloran of the CJMHT to assess AR prior to interview. She did this on 11 December 2019 and produced a note (PM/17 **MERP002881**).
17. It became apparent that AR was already known to Lancashire Police as Lancashire Police Constable Paul Harrison had sent an email to Merseyside Police that was copied onto the OEL (PM/1 **MERP002919**) at 16.06 on 11 December 2019. I cannot now recall when I saw this OEL entry. The email recorded that:
 - a. AR had previously lived in Southport and had previously attended Range High School, Formby.
 - b. AR had been expelled, having been found in possession of a knife.

- c. Due to his behaviour, he was placed at Acorns school in Ormskirk, Lancashire. It was noted that this school was a special school.
 - d. In the two weeks prior to the 11 December 2019, AR had been referred by Acorns school to Social Services. It was understood that this was due to him accessing websites at the Acorns school and researching mass shootings. It was also noted that he had a fixation with beheadings and guns, and a dislike for teachers.
 - e. Following the referral to Children's Social Services, the Child Early Action Team became involved, and the information had been sent to the Prevent Team in Burnley.
 - f. A meeting had been due to take place at Acorns school on Friday. The incident at the Range School, Formby, happened on Wednesday 11 December 2019, so I assume the Friday referred to would have been Friday 13 December 2019.
 - g. AR's parents were British Rwandan nationals who had previously fled from Rwanda.
 - h. AR's father was in denial, and he was of the opinion that the Acorns school were exaggerating things.
18. There is then a note on the OEL which provides details of the Acorns school in Ormskirk, details of the safeguarding lead there and also details of a Prevent contact.
19. As a result of the information from Constable Harrison, it was determined that the home address of AR should be searched for electronic devices, so they could be reviewed, and likewise that a statement pertaining to AR's internet browsing history should be obtained from the Acorns school.
20. In view of the late hour, AR was granted police bail to return the next day for interview. His bail conditions were: -
- a. Not to be within 400m of Range High school, Formby L37 2NY
 - b. Not to contact by self, servant or agent [DPA] or [DPA] [DPA] by any means including electronic
 - c. Not to attend the Acorn Centre, Ruff Lane L39 until confirmation of return is given by Social Services or the Appropriate Authority.
21. The bail conditions were applied for by DC Povey: see the application form **PM/18** [MERP002879] They were considered by the Custody Sergeant, Sergeant 3086 Mellor and then signed off by Inspector 1613 Millward who noted: -
- "I A/Inspector 1613 Millward have reviewed the submissions by DC Povey and / or regarding the bail request relating to [AR].

Information / Intelligence – Allegations have been made that the detainee has been arrested in his old school on suspicion of assault (sic) and possession of a bladed article.

Threat – Due to the allegations made, there is a threat to [DPA] and [DPA] if the detainee was to be released without conditions.

Powers / policy – Bail Act 1976 and ECHR apply. PACE 1984 as amended by the Policing and Crime Act 2017.

Options – (1) To release from custody without bail (release under investigation) or (2) to authorise an initial Applicable Bail Period (ABP) of 28 days without conditions or (3) to authorise an initial Applicable Bail Period (ABP) of 28 days with conditions.

Decision – Having reviewed the proposed bail in line with the threat of harm or risk identified I believe that bail..... necessary and proportionate.”

22. As far as I can tell the bail conditions were not varied during the course of the criminal investigation and post charge up to trial. The assessment of risk as part of the custody / bail process was therefore made by DC Povey, PS Mellor and Inspector Millward.
23. On 12 December 2019 AR returned to St Anne Street Police Station with his mother. I interviewed AR between 16.37 and 17.02 hours in the presence of his mother as appropriate adult, and his solicitor. AR gave a prepared statement and then answered no comment. In his prepared statement AR stated that he had attended at Range High School the previous day to speak with [DPA] who he said had bullied him whilst he was attending the school. AR had not seen [DPA] but he had seen [DPA] and had hit him 2 - 3 times with a hockey stick. He said that he did this because he couldn't see [DPA]. He further stated that he took a knife to the school but that he didn't take it out. He alleged that the teacher misrepresented him when the teacher alleged that he said he was going to kill [DPA]. He stated that he meant that he was going to assault [DPA] as [DPA] had bullied him.
24. I made a statement (on 6 February 2020) exhibiting AR's prepared statement and the photographs of the hand injury to the victim, [DPA] (PM/19 [MERP002898]), see also the statement of Constable Clarke of 07.02.2020 (PM/20 [MERP002903]). By the time of interview, I had also received statements from Andrew Pritchard (PM/21 [MERP002896] - with the CCTV footage and stills from the Range High School) and a further statement from the victim's mother [DPA] (PM/22 [MERP002901]), detailing the effect of the attack on the victim [DPA] and providing consent to obtain his medical records.

25. The questions that I explored with AR in interview are set out in the pre-decision charge request (PM/23 MERP002882). Save for the prepared statement, it was a no comment interview. I have set the questions out below for ease of reference:

- 25.1 Did you attend Range High School? How long were you there?
- 25.2 When did you get expelled? Explain why you were expelled
- 25.3 "Bringing a knife into school and expressing an intention to use it" (Thomas DOLLY) Tell me what you said at that time about using the knife?
- 25.4 How did you feel about being expelled?
- 25.5 Angry towards any person?
- 25.6 Have you had thoughts about returning to the school? If so, when did the thoughts start?
- 25.7 How are things going at the new school?
- 25.8 Like it?
- 25.9 Any issue?
- 25.10 Anything happened over the past 2 weeks?
- 25.11 What have you been researching online?
- 25.12 School said you've been researching mass shootings, is that correct?
- 25.13 Why?
- 25.14 Have you ever watched videos of mass shootings? How did that make you feel?
- 25.15 Researching Beheadings, is that correct? Why?
- 25.16 Have you ever watched a video of a beheading? How did that make you feel?
- 25.17 How do you feel about guns?
- 25.18 Do you watch videos where guns are being used?
- 25.19 How do they make you feel?
- 25.20 Do you know anyone with access to guns?
- 25.21 Are you in contact with any people who have an interest in beheadings, mass shooting etc?
- 25.22 How in contact?
- 25.23 How do you feel about teachers or people in authority?
- 25.24 Do you have any thoughts to harm a teacher?
- 25.25 Had anything been going on in the run up to this morning? This morning when you woke up what happened?
- 25.26 What was going through your mind? Who was at home this morning?
- 25.27 Were you meant to be in school? Why didn't you go to school?
- 25.28 Who does the hockey stick belong to? Where did you get it from? When?
- 25.29 Who does the knife belong to? Where did you get it from?

- 25.30 Who packed your rucksack?
- 25.31 Did you put the knife in your bag?
- 25.32 When you packed the knife what were you thinking? Did you intend to use it?
- 25.33 On who?
- 25.34 When you took the hockey stick what were you thinking? Did you know at that time you were going to use it?
- 25.35 Know who you were going to use it on?
- 25.36 What time did you make the decision to go to Range High School? What was going through your mind when you decided to go to Range? How did you get to Range?
- 25.37 Travel with any other person?
- 25.38 How were you feeling when you arrived at Range? How did you get inside the grounds of the school?
- 25.39 How did you get inside the school building?
- 25.40 Who spoke to you?
- 25.41 What was said?
- 25.42 What teachers approached you? Recall what they were saying?
- 25.43 Did they ask you to leave?
- 25.44 Recall them telling you to stop and not go any further? Why didn't you stop?
- 25.45 How were you feeling at this point? What was going through your mind? Where was the rucksack at this point? Where was the hockey stick?
- 25.46 Why did you conceal the hockey stick in your coat?
- 25.47 Teacher described how you ignored their request and at one point you ran Why did you run?
- 25.48 Where were you running to?
- 25.49 What could you see?
- 25.50 Know a male called **DPA** How did you get on with **DPA** ?
- 25.51 Any problems between you both?
- 25.52 Tell me what happened when you saw **DPA** in the corridor?
- 25.53 Did you strike **DPA** with the hockey stick?
- 25.54 How many times?
- 25.55 How were you holding the hockey stick?
- 25.56 Recall where on **DPA** body you struck him?
- 25.57 Did you say anything?
- 25.58 Did **DPA** say anything? What did **DPA** do?
- 25.59 Did he put up his arm to defend himself?
- 25.60 Why did you assault **DPA** ?

25.61 IMAGES - Hockey stick - Whose is it? Where come from? How did you come to have it in your coat?

25.62 Knife-Whose is it? Where come from? How did this come to be in your rucksack? Injuries - **DPA** arm. Reddening. Did you cause that injury?

25.63 How do you feel now about what happened? Do you regret it?

26. The statements of the other witnesses that were presented to the CPS (and are exhibited above) are the ones that deal with AR's intent. We did seek to investigate his online activity but there was nothing of evidential value found (see below).

27. Following the conclusion of the interview, my supervisor DS Christopher Smith attended to safeguarding matters and made the following note on the OEL (PM/1 **MERP002919**) at 17:45 hours:

"I have this evening spoke to Chris Gover from Lancashire EDT. I have provided an update of this report and am currently awaiting a result from Police / CPS. EDT have reviewed their case notes and are satisfied that [AR's] can return home with parents if necessary.

They have sent a message to [AR's] caseworker requesting to make contact with family. I have also spoken to Anna Cookson, Manager of Early Help Lancs who are aware of the family and will be making social care with consideration that they take ownership rather than Early Help".

28. My first entry on the log is at 20:00 hours where I noted as follows: "I have spoken with Shaun Spencer from CPS and given brief circumstances (as note these as youth on school premises with a knife and a bat and attacked a pupil. Inappropriate content viewed, concerned raised). Shaun Spencer stated to me that this did not meet the CPS criteria for a charging decision to be made that evening and that they would only review in custody matters and high-risk domestic violence cases." I made arrangements for the digital media to be sent to the CPS.

29. I updated my supervision. DS Smith stated that he would provide an update to all agencies involved in the incident. Thereafter, at 21:24 hours DS Smith sent a group email that read as follows:

"Forgive the large group email but I want to ensure I have captured everyone who has expressed an interest in [AR] while in Merseyside Police custody and requested a result.

As you are aware, [AR] was arrested for an assault on a child at Range High School, Formby, Merseyside (with use of a hockey stick), possession of an offensive weapon (the hockey stick) and also possession of a bladed article (knife) which was on his person at the time of the assault, although remained in his bag and was not used.

Whilst in custody, further information was shared regarding concerning internet research completed by [AR] and suggested that the attack at the school was planned due to a booked taxi.

He was bailed from Police custody on the 11/12/2019. Due to the late hour and a request to return on 12/12/2019, the following day which he did with his mother acting as an appropriate adult. Checks have been made with Lancashire EDT who confirm there are no concerns regarding [AR] returning back to the family home on release. Appropriate referrals have been made within Merseyside to be transferred to Lancashire. I am sharing this information under working together for any help, protection and support required to allow appropriate safeguarding considerations.

[AR] has now been interviewed with legal representation. He provided a prepared statement admitting the assault, admitting possession of the hockey stick and knife but states he had no intention of using the knife or kill the alleged target of the tact and denies researching inappropriate material at the school on the internet. The report was referred to CPS, who following their instruction was bailed for charge decision to be made. He has been bailed with the following conditions: Not to be within 100 meters of Range High School, Formby, L37 2NY, not to contact by self, servant or agent DPA or DPA by any means including not to attend the Acorn Centre, Ruff Lane, L39 until confirmation of return is given by Social Services or the appropriate authority. I have updated Lancs EDT this evening of this.

I have been informed that the Acorn school in Ormskirk where [AR] currently attends are unsure if he would be able to attend there and are looking to complete a risk assessment once further investigation is known. Custody have requested [AR's] mother contact the school before attendance and seek appropriate authority before attending, hence the condition regarding Acorn.

Regards, Chris"

30. At 13:45 hours on 13 December 2019, DS Smith received the following email from Lucy Parkinson, a key worker "Thank you Chris for the update, this case is now sitting with

Lancashire's CSC. Many thanks" and it is signed by Lucy Parkinson with details of her contact information.

31. Thereafter, on 13 December 2019, DS Smith reviewed the case by reviewing the case file and speaking with a number of partner agencies including colleagues in Lancashire. I retained the investigation due to my involvement to date. The brief circumstances as set out above were outlined on the log. It was noted that it was not known at that time if there had been any communication between AR and the person whom he had intended to attack. **DPA** had been updated via his parents to ensure safeguarding. It was also noted that there may be a line of investigation around the electronic devices for consideration of any threats or other matters relating to this investigation. As part of the investigation plan, medical evidence was required in respect of victim **DPA**. It is noted within the entry that, in terms of managing the risk, there were bail conditions in place and that Lancashire Social Services were aware and were progressing the matter.
32. DS Smith noted that the electronic devices were to be submitted and that the file was with the CPS for review. As part of the investigation plan, DS Smith outlined several lines of enquiry to be considered throughout the investigation. He noted that all the children involved were vulnerable due to their age and the nature of the offence, which is why VPRF1s were submitted for all children.
33. On 13 December 2019 at 14:23 hours, I asked for permission to access the victim's medical records, and this was granted by his mother. It was also noted that the Acorns school was to provide a statement regarding AR's online search activity. As I recall, this statement was never provided. This was because the search history was no longer available.
34. On 13 December 2019, an email from Constable Harrison of Lancashire Police was also copied onto the log. This email had been sent to PS Tara Thompson who was a Custody Sergeant at the time and read as follows:

"Hi Tara, as per our telephone conversation, I am part of the Community Safety Team at Ormskirk who generally try and work with people, mainly youths, to keep them out of bother. He lives in Banks, Lancs. Over the last fortnight, we were contacted by our child and family wellbeing service. They had a referral from Acorn school in Ormskirk where [AR] has been a pupil for a short period.

The school were reporting very concerning traits and behaviour from [AR]. They explained that [AR] had been expelled from the Range School in Formby due to carrying knives into the school (exact details unknown).

He has been logging onto websites at school which involve school mass shootings. He also wants to talk about guns and beheading and seems to have a certain hatred of teachers in particular.

Due to our extensive dealings with the aforementioned establishments, this info was gleaned to us but due to it's worrying and potential serious mature (sic) the school were informed to refer the info' into our Prevent Team which deal with potential terrorism offences.

Acorn school duly did this and at this time our Prevent Team are conducting background checks and obtaining specific details.

However, we now have this incident which has occurred in the school in Formby for which [AR] is currently in your custody.

This email is sent for your attention and assistance ensuring that you have full knowledge of the individual in your care and that the investigating officers have a full picture of the circumstances and his alarming and worrying behaviour.

Acorn school have informed me that they have had detailed communication with the Formby school and that they have stated [AR] went into the school with the sole intention of killing a particular pupil with a hockey stick and if that didn't work, he would use the knife, but the pupil in question was thankfully not at school today!!

Could you please ensure the investigating officers get this additional information please. Thanks for your time"

This is signed by Constable Paul Harrison from Lancashire Constabulary and his contact details are provided.

35. On 17 December 2019, I attended a strategy meeting with Lancashire Social Services. I cannot recall how I became aware of the need to attend the meeting. I note that there is a typographical error in the notes which suggests that the meeting took place 16 December 2019. I provided a full update in relation to the incident and my investigation. The CJMH nurse Ms O'Halloran was also present, and she provided her own update. I do not recall receiving any notes from the meeting.
36. In my attendance at this strategy meeting, my role was to provide an update in respect of the criminal investigation and that was my focus. On the basis that AR was living in Lancashire and at school in Lancashire, I did not consider that there was a further role for Merseyside Police in these particular circumstances. The actions from the meeting and the PREVENT and social services interventions that were proposed did not require any steps to be taken by Merseyside Police or by me.

37. I have seen my email to DS Smith regarding the follow up strategy meeting set for 6 January 2020. I advised DS Smith that I was on annual leave and therefore unavailable for this strategy meeting. I have been made aware that supervisor Sgt Jo McDermott (nee Haffenden) attended this meeting, where her understanding is that no follow up actions were recorded for Merseyside Police. I have been made aware that there was then a subsequent follow up strategy meeting set for 4 March 2020. I have seen the email from Anna Jameson of 11 February 2020 (**LCC001462**). I am not a recipient of that email. I can see that 27058@merseyside.police.co.uk was included in this email. 27058 is the employee number for Inspector Amanda French. She is currently posted to Merseyside Force Intelligence Bureau. I have been told that in 2019 Inspector French was posted to the North West Regional Crime Unit (NWRCOU). My supervisor Sgt McDermott (nee Haffenden) has an identification number of 52785 (I don't know if the email was intended for her).
38. On the 16 December 2019 I also spoke with **DPA** mother of the victim, and a statement regarding the medical records of the victim was to be sent later that day. **DPA** advised me that there was talk at Range High School that AR had a "list" which contained the names of three children that he wished to target. Those names were **DPA** **DPA** and an unknown female. I explained that no list had been brought to my attention. **DPA** also advised me that **DPA** mum was very concerned about the information. I also noted that **DPA** had previously been spoken to. Nobody was ever able to provide me with a list; this appeared to be a rumour that was circulating at the school. To the best of my recollection, I did not provide any information about the rumours of a list to Counter Terrorism Police North West.
39. On 17 December 2019 at 15:16 hours, I sent a chaser for the medical records of the victim, attaching the statement from his mother giving consent.
40. On 21 December 2019, I made a processing request regarding the CCTV in this matter. On 27 December 2019, I received the medical reports from the Southport & Ormskirk Hospital and scanned them into Niche. I then had a conversation with the mother of **DPA** about her concerns that her son was on a list to be targeted by AR. I provided her with reassurance that no list had come to light at this stage, but should that change, I would update her. **DPA** stated that AR did not know where they lived, and **DPA** didn't have any contact with AR. I advised **DPA** to contact me should this change. I also submitted a VPRF1 for **DPA**

41. At 18:30 hours on 27 December 2019, I updated the log as follows “[AR] attended Range High School with a bat and a knife. His intention was to hurt [DPA] (VPRF1 completed – reference number 19100723491). [DPA] was actually hit with the bat, (VPRF1 complete).”
42. At 15:02 hours on 28 December 2019 I noted that Sandra Belvin made a referral to Children’s Social Services for [DPA]
43. On 30 December 2019 at 14:31 hours, there was a note that the exhibits at Digital Forensics Unit (DFU) had had their packaging damaged and that they needed repackaging. I attended to this. By 9 January 2020, this task had been completed.
44. On 7 January 2020, it was noted that the matter was still with the CPS for a charging decision and on 8 January 2020 the CPS were requesting the CCTV. I noted that they should already have had it, but further material was requested from Range High School. This was forwarded to the CPS. Updates were provided to the victim’s mother regarding AR’s bail.
45. On 14 January 2020, the log was updated from an administrative perspective as to the storage of the CCTV in this case.
46. Also on 14 January 2020, a colleague, Kirsten Jones received a call from Alphonse (AR’s father) asking for his laptop that was seized to be returned to him as he needed to complete his tax return.
47. On 16 January 2020 I sent an email to AR’s father as follows “Hi Alphonse, in relation to your recent call to police regarding your laptop. The laptop is waiting to be examined so can’t be returned at this stage. This can take a minimum of three months. I will return the laptop as soon as I can. Can you contact the tax office to inform them of your situation? I can be contacted on the below numbers should you need to discuss this. Kind regards, Paula Murphy” and provided my contact details.
48. On 17 January 2020, it was noted that the case had been returned to the CPS with the digital media.
49. By 28 January 2020 I had received information that the CPS had made a charging decision, and that AR was to be charged with a section 47 assault, possession of a bladed article

- and possession of an offensive weapon. The charge was due to occur on 2 February 2020. I updated the victim's mother by email on 28 January 2020 at 17.08 hours.
50. On 31 January 2020 the Visual Evidence Unit (VEU) placed a report on the log stating that they had been unable to download the exhibit AFP/1 (the USB stick from Range High School).
 51. On 2 February 2020 AR duly answered his bail and was charged. I was not present when this occurred, and I do not know why it was that the offensive weapon was described as a baseball bat. I knew that it was a hockey stick and the pre charge decision request that I had submitted stated that it was a hockey stick.
 52. Thereafter, I received some queries regarding some evidential matters that needed to be formalised in order for the case to be presented before the Court.
 53. On 6 February 2020, I advised the victim's mother that AR had been charged and his further appearance was to be at Youth Court on the 19 February 2020.
 54. I was not warned to attend Court and therefore did not attend, but I understand that AR was given a referral order. A Referral Order is a Court order issued to young offenders (typically between 10 and 17 years old) who have pleaded guilty to a first-time offence. It is a way to address their offending behaviour and prevent future criminal activity through a contract with a referral order panel. The Order typically lasts between 3 and 12 months. In this case, the Court decided that it was to last for 10 months, and AR's father was to attend the Referral Order panel meetings with AR. The Referral Orders are managed by the youth offending team and not the police, and I would not have expected Merseyside (or Lancashire) Police to be involved in this process in any way.
 55. On 4 March 2020 the DFU placed a note on the file regarding the electronic devices seized during the investigation. The exhibits CL 1, 2 and 4 were negative for data related to the investigation, meaning that no relevant data had been downloaded. The mobile phone EO/01 was still under review. Ultimately it was not downloaded because the PIN could not be decrypted. I did not consider a notice under section 49 of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (essentially a requirement to provide police with a means of accessing a seized device or face a penalty). This may be an area of weakness in the investigation, but we could not unlock the phone, and AR had already been convicted of the offences for which he was arrested. The criminal investigation was therefore over and there was no reason in law for the force to hold onto the devices seized during the investigation. I am now aware that, per procedure, the DFU deleted all material generated as a result of their

examinations. This deletion of data occurred on 4 March 2020. No contact was made by the investigation team with Prevent as we had nothing to provide to them with.

56. On 15 March 2020 it was determined that AR's digital devices and devices belonging to family members could be returned, and I contacted Alphonse regarding that.
57. During May 2020, I addressed the issue of returning items to Alphonse. He was initially concerned about some items that appeared to be missing. It would appear that all items were returned by 12 May 2020.
58. The final email recorded on the OEL was sent by PS Whincup to me on 6 February 2025. It reads as follows:

"Hi Paula, sorry for the delay in emailing. Basically, as per our conversation, I have been providing reassurance for a [DPA] is the father of a [DPA] [DPA] who was the victim in a hockey stick attack at Grange (sic) High School in 2019 whereby the offender was AR who as we know, went on to commit the atrocities in Southport last summer. Prior to the trial of AR, it was widely publicised in the press that AR had been racially bullied in school, and he had been excluded from the school for a possession of a knife. Whilst excluded, he returned to the school and attacked a fellow pupil [DPA] with a hockey stick – from the above Niche. I have obtained your details as being the OIC (I haven't viewed the OEL). So, the press are aware that [DPA] was the victim and they attended the [DPA] home address looking for an interview. They resisted all press requests and became concerned that [DPA] would be branded a racist if as the victim of the hockey stick attack, it was portrayed that he was attacked due to him being the perpetrator of the alleged racist bullying when in fact he was an innocent victim and just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

I contacted our press office and the message given to them was that the victim of the hockey stick attack was an innocent victim and that the family did not wish to speak to them. The press then backed off.

The head of school assured the family that [DPA] was an innocent victim and was in no way connected to any bullying but despite this, rumours circulated around Formby that [AR], at the time of the hockey stick attack was in possession of a "kill list" of those alleged racist bullies. The [DPA] family were told that their son WAS NOT on the list and when they raised the issue with the school, the Headteacher said that no such list existed.

The [DPA] family are now concerned, despite all the assurance I have provided them, that at some point in the future, it will emerge in a documentary by the likes of

Netflix, that their son was the intended target of the hockey stick attack and therefore, will be branded a racist.

I have explained that there are many ifs and buts and that they are worrying about something that in all likelihood may never happen. However, they are persistent despite all my reassurances and are asking if anything on the original file confirms their son is not a racist bully. I have explained that I cannot access the original file to confirm this, but I did say that I would see if I could speak to OIC to see if you have any knowledge – hence my email to you and I apologise for involving you!! If there is anything that you can provide me that will put their minds at rest, then great. I&S

I&S but he is still contacting me going over and over the same things no matter what I say. I would appreciate any help that you can provide. Regards, Rick.”

59. My next entry on the log is on 14 February 2025, after the Southport attack. This entry resulted from contact PS Whincup received from the father of DPA AR's victim in December 2019 at Range High School. DPA father was expressing concerns that his son may be seen to be racist. I provided an email as follows to PS Whincup: -

“I have now reviewed the above case file in which I was the OIC. To the best of my knowledge and upon reviewing the documents, I can confirm that DPA has not been referred to as racist.

DPA name does not feature on the list of children he wished to target (the list was never in police possession; however, names were provided), DPA was not one of them.

Within the prepared statement, [AR] admitted he was there to target another male but saw DPA in the corridor, he assaulted DPA because he couldn't see the intended male (no other reason stated). There is nothing within the file to suggest anything other than DPA being in the wrong place and the wrong time. Obviously, as you are aware, we must be careful with what we disclose to the family, but I will leave the above information with you. If you need anything further, let me know”.

60. Thereafter, there was a discussion on the log as to what information could be disclosed to DPA family and this led to a discussion between myself, and Merseyside Police colleagues DS Cietak and PS Whincup.

Reflections

61. In terms of the police response following the incident on 11 December 2019 at Range High School, I consider that this matter was addressed in an effective and proportionate way.

Executive action was taken in the form of an arrest, a file was prepared for the CPS who authorised charges, and there was a positive criminal justice outcome. The appropriate safeguarding referrals were made in respect of all concerned, namely AR, his victim and his potential victims.

62. I consider that the guidance, training and resources available to me were adequate for the nature of the involvement I had in the events described above.

Improvements

63. I am not aware of any relevant improvement that have been made by Merseyside Police since the events described above.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court 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 04/08/25

