

Southport Inquiry

Witness Name: PC John Clarke

Exhibits: JC1 - JC8

Dated: 18 August 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

---

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOHN CLARKE

---

**Introduction**

1. I am Police Constable 4004 CLARKE of Merseyside Police. I was attested as an officer in 2013 and since completing my probation I have worked in uniform roles, in Local Policing and Response and Resolution.
2. I am currently posted to a Matrix Disruption syndicate. Matrix Disruption consists of 4 syndicates; each deployable force-wide with the capability to supplement operational activity, provide specialist advice and skills and if necessary, form into a self-sufficient public order unit to meet force mobilisation requirements. In 2019 I was posted to Local Policing. (see below)
3. I have received training during my service as a Constable. At the time of incident, I have dealt with in this statement, my Personal Safety and First Aid Training were in date and I was also trained to use a Taser, to drive a police carrier, as a method of entry officer (for when we have to force entry to premises) and in searching lofts. I have received additional training since joining Matrix.
4. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry ("the Inquiry") with matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 6 August 2025 ("the request").

## 11 December 2019

5. I have been asked about an incident that occurred on 11 December 2019. I produced a witness statement relating to that incident on the day: **JC/1** MERP000186. In that statement I have noted AR's date of birth as 27.08.2006. I now know that it is 7.08.2006 and as such there is an error in my witness statement of dated 11 December 2019, but otherwise its contents are true.
6. On Wednesday 11 December 2019 I was part of the Targeted Team for the Sefton Local Policing area based a Marsh Lane Police Station in Bootle. The purpose of the Targeted Team is to be the proactive targeting, disruption and intelligence gathering capability at Area level for areas of Threat and Risk of Harm, and to support pre-planned and spontaneous policing operations force-wide.
7. I paraded for duty at 08.00 and was deployed on uniform mobile patrol in an unmarked police vehicle in company with Constable 6359 Dodd.
8. At 09.35 hours, I was asked via my personal radio to attend Range High School, Formby, L37 2YN in relation to a report of an expelled student causing a nuisance. Due to the passage of time, I cannot recall precisely what I was told over the radio however, I note from the incident log **JC/2 MERP000186** that the control room were told that AR had previously been excluded from school for carrying a knife, and it is likely that that information was passed to us. In any event I believe that the head teacher did provide us with that information when we met him (see below).
9. As we were travelling to the school, PC Dodd and I would have had a conversation. This is usual, we would ordinarily discuss the job to which we were being deployed and consider the potential options available to us. The course of action adopted could only be determined, however, once we are at scene and are in possession of as much information as possible.
10. When I arrived at scene, I was met by the head teacher Michael McGarry. Mr McGarry took us to his office where he pointed out a male who I now know to be AR, who was sitting in the corner of the room.
11. Mr McGarry stated that AR had previously been expelled from the school. I think that at this stage I was informed that he had been excluded for carrying a knife (which I may

have already been told by our control room). He stated that after he had taken the school assembly, he became aware that AR was in the school and was in possession of a hockey stick. At that time, AR was being followed around by staff.

12. Mr McGarry informed me that AR had run towards another student, [DPA] [DPA] lifted the hockey stick above his head and hit [DPA] [DPA] around three times.
13. At this point, Mr McGarry passed Constable Dodd a hockey stick with paper taped around the handle.
14. I then went to speak with [DPA] leaving Constable Dodd with AR.
15. When I spoke to [DPA] he stated AR had run at him and hit him three times with a hockey stick. This had caused reddening to his left arm and pain to the index and middle finger on his right hand. [DPA] stated that the injuries were caused as he put his hands up to protect his head. He further informed me that that there was no reason for AR to attack him.
16. It is my recollection that I spoke with [DPA] again, later the same day, at his home address and took photographs of the injuries. I can see that at 13.00 a statement was taken from [DPA] mother **JC/3 MERP000186** and that photographs I took appear to have been taken in a living room. I exhibited the photographs in a second statement that I made in relation to these events dated 7 February 2020 **JC/4 MERP000186**. As I recall, [DPA] was reluctant to make a statement and therefore I took one from his mother. It would be for the detectives investigating the matter to conduct an Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) interview with [DPA] if that were necessary going forward.
17. After speaking to [DPA] on 11 December 2019, I returned to the head teacher's office. Constable Dodd informed me that he had recovered a kitchen knife from AR's rucksack. Whilst it was Constable Dodd who arrested AR in light of the fact that a knife had been found in his bag, I agreed that an arrest was necessary.

18. At 09:45 hours, Constable Dodd cautioned and arrested AR on suspicion of section 47 assault, possession of a bladed article on a school premises and possession of an offensive weapon. He then handcuffed AR .
19. To the best of my recollection neither of AR's parents were present at school. I knew that an Appropriate Adult would be needed when AR was taken into custody. We therefore either asked the school to contact a parent and tell them what had happened and ask them to attend at custody or asked for a contact number so that the necessary arrangements could be made. Due to the passage of time, I cannot now recall which occurred here.
20. AR was taken to St Anne Street custody suite. He travelled in our car. As I recall he was quiet and compliant on the way to the custody suite. I don't recall any conversation. Once in custody Constable Dodd relayed the circumstances of arrest to the Custody Sergeant who authorised AR's detention.

#### **Search of 10 Old School Close Banks**

21. I can see from the premises searched record **JC/5 MERP000186** that at 15.08 hours Inspector 1617 Humphrey's authorised a section 18 search (a search under s.18 of the Police and Criminal Evidence act 1984) of AR's home address of 10 Old School Close, Banks. I have viewed the custody record **JC/6 MERP000186**. The record of authorisation completed by Inspector Humphreys reads as follows:

"11/12/2019 15:08 GMT--Sec18(1) PACE Search Authority. DP in custody having been arrested in connection with a triable either way offence, namely Sec 47 Assault and POOW. I have been provided with information relating to the DP's arrest by D/Sgt 2785 Haffenden and there are reasonable grounds to suspect that evidence of this offence and / or other similar offences is present on the premises of 10 Old School Close, Southport PR9 8SB. This is the home address of the DP/ These are premises occupied and controlled by the DP. Therefore I authorise a search of those premises under the provisions of Sec18 (1) PACE 1984 for weapons including bladed articles, electronic devices and associated hardware and software and any mobile telephones and data storage devices. Codes of Practice to be complied with OIC has been requested to update the Custody Officer at the conclusion of this search. Insp Humphreys"

22. The authorisation was put on the custody record in writing at 15.12 hours. I had not seen that before completing this statement.
23. I also note from the Custody Record **JC/6 MERP000186** that at 14.32 hours PS Thompson made the following:
- “I have received a call from Police Officer in Sefton Paul Harrison who states he works with children in schools as part of terrorism PREVENT. He has expressed concerns relating to the DP doing internet searched for beheadings, school shootings and has the intent to kill another student. All this has been relayed to CJMHT and arresting officers to make contact in terms of safeguarding. His intention apparently was to kill the other student today with an adapted hockey stick and if that failed then he would use a knife. Fortunately this child was in today but dp assaulted another student with a hockey stick instead before admitting he had a knife in his bag. All details will be passed to SS and PVPU in terms of supporting the dp”
24. I recall being at Marsh Lane police station when we received a telephone call, but due to the passage of time I cannot recall who received that call. I can recall that we were told that AR had been searching school shootings and possibly acts of terrorism on the internet and that he had been referred to PREVENT as a result. As such, we were deployed to his home address of 10 Old School Close Banks. I specifically recall being told that we were to search for and seize electronic devices. I do not recall being asked to search for weapons. To me, this made sense as we had already recovered a knife in this case. Having recovered the knife, I would not have seized kitchen knives from AR's parents' home as they were not evidence in this case. Had, for example, a machete or any knives that were clearly belonging to AR (e.g. in his bedroom) been found on the premises we would have made contact with the detectives investigating the matter and would have sought their guidance as to whether they wanted it seizing.
25. I was not aware that Lancashire Constabulary had advised the family to secure knives.
26. Whilst I was aware that AR had been excluded from school in relation to an incident with a knife, due to the passage of time I cannot recall the detail of what I was told.
27. A search team was set up which was made up of Constables Dodd 5400 Sims, 6387 Schofield, 4421 Quinn 6214 Lynch and myself. As can be seen from the search record

**JC/5 MERP000186** I was the search team leader as such my responsibilities prior to search were as follows:-

- a. To ensure that the power of entry was in place. As above there was a section 18 Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 authorisation here.
  - b. To brief the team. Due to the passage of time I cannot recall the briefing but usually I would give the circumstances of the arrest (if I was aware of them, which I was in this case) and details of what we were searching for, namely electronic devices. I believe that I would also have told the team about the PREVENT referral and one line searching that we had been informed of.
  - c. I would then have designated roles, as there were only 5 of us there were two search teams of 2 and I also undertook the role of loggist
  - d. I then supervise the search and am responsible for liaison with the occupier.
  - e. Any finds during the search would be drawn to my attention.
  - f. To record the state of the premises pre and post search and prior to the commencement of the search ask to ask the occupier the following questions that are set out on the search record
    - i. Are there any firearms, legally held or not, ammunition or controlled drugs within the property?
    - ii. Are there any large amounts of cash within the property?
    - iii. Is there anyone or anything in the premises you cannot account for?
    - iv. Are there any personal effects or any other item that you wish to keep with you whilst the search is conducted?
    - v. Are there any items in the premises that may be a danger to or cause injury to any officer?
28. To the best of my recollection I was the only trained carrier driver in that team and I drove the carrier.
29. I am aware that my statement **JC/1 MERP000186** indicates that we possibly travelled to Banks with AR's mother, Laetitia. I have no recollection of this and cannot now comment any further on this. However, she was present when we searched the address **JC/5 MERP000186**.
30. Once at the address we split into search teams. The search teams commenced the search at 17.23 hours and finished searching at 18.35 hours. Eleven exhibits were

seized in total and we exited the address at 18.50 hours leaving Laetitia in the property, so we did not need to get it re-secured.

31. The search of this premises was part of a criminal investigation. As such, it is necessary for those on the premises to ensure that any evidence is seized appropriately and that there is no inappropriate questioning of witnesses/potential suspects that could affect criminal proceedings (Code B and Code C of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 should be adhered to when a search is carried out).
32. The conversation with Laetitia is detailed in the premises searched record. As can be seen in relation to each of the exhibits, they related to asking Laetitia to confirm what the exhibit was and confirming to whom the specific exhibit belonged. I believe that Laetitia would also have been told that AR was under arrest and that he had assaulted a student at his former school and that he had been found in possession of a knife.
33. The only person present in the premises at the time of the search was Laetitia. Had anyone else been present, that would have been noted on the search record.
34. I did not have any conversation with Laetitia about knives. It would not have been appropriate for me so to do. Whilst I knew that AR had had a knife in his possession at the time of the arrest and I had seen the knife, I had not asked where he had got it from and nor had he volunteered that information. Those were matters to be explored in his interview. The detectives investigating AR could then have questioned his mother if they had deemed it necessary for their investigation.
35. Following the conclusion of the search, we returned to Marsh Lane police station. I completed my statement and the VPRF1's for  and  **JC/7 and JC/8 MERP000186.**

### **Reflection**

36. I have reflected on this matter, and I do not consider that I would do anything differently if I responded to the same call and was met with the same factual matrix today. I believe that the response of myself, Constable Dodd and the searching officers was the correct response for the role we were performing on the 11 December 2019. We carried out the

tasks that were necessary on 11 December 2019 to allow the investigation team to progress the matter.

37. 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.

**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: 16/8/25