

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF LIAM DODD

I, Liam Dodd will say as follows:-

Introduction

1. I am Constable 6359 Dodd of Merseyside Police. I am currently posted to the Roads Policing Unit.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 18 July 2025.
3. In order to prepare this statement I have reviewed:
 - a. my witness statement of the 11 December 2019, exhibit LD/1 MERP002907
 - b. Incident log MP201912110196, exhibit LD/2 MERP000499
 - c. Incident log MP20191211-0223, exhibit LD/3 MERP000695
 - d. The premises searched record, exhibit LD/4 MERP002927
 - e. VPRF1 completed in relation to AR. exhibit LD/5 MERP002926
 - f. Statement of Michael McGarry exhibit LD/6 MERP001413
 - g. Statement of Thomas Dolly exhibit LD/7 MERP002909
 - h. Custody Record exhibit LD/8 MERP002937
4. In addition to reviewing the above I have some independent recollection of my arrest of AR on 11 December 2019 and the subsequent search of his premises.

Events of 11 December 2019

5. In December 2019, I was stationed at Marsh Lane Police Station as part of the local targeted team in the Sefton Area of Merseyside.
6. On the 11 December 2019, I commenced my shift at 08:00 hours. I was in full uniform and was placed on mobile patrol in company with Constable 4004 Clarke.
7. At approximately 09:23, I was deployed to Range High School ("the School") in Formby, Liverpool, L37 2YN, in response to a report of an ex-student causing a disturbance. I can see from the incident log MP201912110196 that a 999 call had been received at 09:19 hours. I was call sign LTB42 and I arrived at the scene at 09:32 hours. Due to the passage of time, I cannot now recall precisely what was said to me by the dispatcher when they dispatched me to the school. I cannot also recall the conversations had between Constable CLARKE and myself whilst travelling to the school. On route to a job like this it would be normal for me to discuss the incident that I was being deployed to with the colleague I was paired up with that day. I would speak about the information that had been received, powers and policies I had available to me and possible outcomes. No decisions are made at this stage and I am mindful not to predetermine the outcome before having all information available to me. It is important to note that a report such as this rarely contains all the information possible. The information has been made by a reporting person, to a call handler. It then goes to a dispatcher, sometimes through a radio room supervisor first before it is relayed to myself. I am therefore always open to variables that differ from the initial report.
8. My actions thereafter are set out in my statement of the 11 December 2019 ("my statement") however, I set them out here with some additional commentary for the ease of reference of the Inquiry.
9. Once I arrived at the School, I was met by a Mr Michael McGarry. He identified himself as the Headteacher of the School. I was taken to his office. Within the office there was a male. The male identified himself as AR and I have noted in my statement that his date of birth was the 27 August 2006. I understand that AR's birthday is in fact 7 August 2006, and therefore there is a typographical error in my statement.
10. Mr McGarry told me that AR had previously been expelled from the school. I noted that the storm log states that when the 999 call was made, police were informed that that ex-pupil had been expelled for carrying a knife. It would appear that that matter was not referred to Merseyside Police as there was no NICHE reference in respect of it. NICHE Is MERSEYSIDE POLICE's crime recording system.

11. I was further told that AR had attended that day during a School assembly. When he was questioned by Mr McGarry for attending, he had walked away from Mr McGarry down a corridor, and produced a hockey stick from inside his coat. He had begun hitting another student with the stick before Mr McGarry and Mr Thomas Dolly (a Deputy Headteacher) were able to take it from him. The hockey stick was given to me and I seized it as an exhibit.
12. I spoke to AR who informed me that he had a knife in his rucksack. Therefore, I searched the rucksack and located a kitchen knife which was also seized by me as an exhibit.
13. My colleague, Constable Clarke, left me with AR and Mr McGarry in order to go and speak to the pupil who had been injured. I was informed that that pupil had visible red marks on his fingers and his arms. That pupil is named in my witness statement. At the time of the attack, the pupil would have been 13 years old.
14. At 09:45 hours, I cautioned and arrested AR on suspicion of an assault contrary to s.47 of the Offences Against the Person Act 1861, possession of a bladed article on a school premises, and possession of an offence weapon, namely the hockey stick. He did not make any reply to the caution. When making a decision to arrest, I need to ascertain that the arrest is legal, proportionate and justifiable. I also need to ensure that my arrest meets certain criteria known as an arrest necessity. When assessing this I considered all information available to me. This also includes any historic or previous incidents. In this instance, AR had previously been excluded from school for carrying a knife. He had then made plans and attended the school. He had initially planned to assault another pupil before turning his attention to a different pupil and assaulting them. I then located a knife on this person. All these circumstances taken together provided me with an arrest necessity, namely, to prevent physical harm to others and protecting vulnerable persons. It is my own personal belief that anyone carrying a knife understands the consequences and is prepared to use it. Therefore, possession of a knife alone would have provided me with arrest necessity.
15. I placed AR in handcuffs to the front stack position. I checked them for fit and comfort and double locked them. This was to prevent violence given the nature of the incident we had been called to.
16. I know that AR would have had to have an Appropriate Adult (AA) present to be booked in in custody. I can't recall how this was facilitated on this occasion.

17. I then assisted with the transport of AR to St. Anne's Street Custody Suite where I relayed the circumstances of the arrest to the Custody Sergeant.
18. I did not have any further dealings with AR after that, nor would I expect to unless requested to, other than to prepare paperwork associated with the arrest including a witness statement and to process the exhibits I had seized.
19. I can see that from the incident log that by 12.51 hours, I was marked as being available for further deployment.

Referral from Lancashire Police

20. I also note from the incident log that at 13:21 hours a call was noted as having been received from Lancashire Police which was cross referenced on a log. This call suggested that AR was on his way to the School, that his father reported that he has been expelled from the School for carrying a knife, and that he was hell bent on causing damage to education and schools. I can see that the call from Lancashire Police in fact came in at 09:45 hours, by which time I was already in the process of arresting, or had already arrested AR. However, I don't believe that I was ever aware of this log until I read it for the purpose of preparing this statement.

Search of Home Address

21. For the sake of completeness, at 17:10 hours on the same day, I was directed to attend at 10 Old School Close, Banks, which was the home address of AR. I can recall that the direction came in a phone call that I received from an officer of rank, but I cannot now recall who that was. I understand that Inspector 1617 Humphreys had authorised a search under s.18 of the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 of AR's home address, but I cannot, due to the passage of time, remember if it was him who called me. The officer I spoke with told me that we had received information that Prevent were aware of AR and that he had been conducting online searches in relation to beheadings and other extremist activity. In light of this we were deployed to AR's home address and were instructed to seize all internet enabled devices.
22. A search team was formed of Constable 4421 Quinn, Constable 6214 Lynch, Constable 4004 Clarke, Constable 5400 Sims and Constable 6387 Schofield. We made our way to AR's home address. The door to the address was opened by his mother. Constable Clarke explained the reason for our attendance and were granted entry to the premises.

23. The search team split into sub-teams. I completed a search of bedroom 3 as part of search team 1. I was paired with Constable 6214 Lynch. I completed the search of bedroom 3 at 18:10 hours.
24. At 18:35 hours I completed the search of the living room.
25. I did not seize any items during the search – I assume this is because I did not come across any internet enabled devices. At 18:50 hours I left the property.
26. I did not carry out a search for any missing knives from the kitchen. I was not part of the search of the kitchen and do not recall if any other officer searched for missing knives.
27. I do not recall speaking with AR's mother during the course of the search and it would not usually be appropriate for me to do have done so. All questions should go through the officer in charge of the search, which on this occasion was Constable Clarke.
28. At the time of the search of the home address, I knew that AR had been found in possession of a knife. I had seized and photographed the knife and considered it to be a kitchen knife. I did not know where AR had got that knife from. It was not necessary for me to conduct any enquiry in this regard prior to arresting him, the fact was he had it, and indeed told me he had it. Questions as to where the knife came from were for AR's interview, when AR would have had all the protections of Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 including an Appropriate Adult, a legal representative and the benefit of the interview being tape recorded. He may also have had an medical assessment to consider whether he was fit for interview.
29. I did not have any conversation with AR's mother about knives or securing knives, nor did I think it was appropriate for me to have such a conversation. That would have been for those involved in safeguarding not those involved in the investigation. Questions and conversation during a premises search are usually limited so as to preserve the integrity of the investigation. Questioning or advising AR's mother about his access to knives was something the officers investigating the offence would be able to do if they considered it relevant to their investigation / safeguarding of AR and others. In any event I was not aware that Lancashire Constabulary had previously told AR's family to secure any knives in the home. I have only become aware of this when preparing this statement.

VPRF1

30. I did complete the VPRF1 in relation to AR. I note that I started completing this at 15.21 and concluded at 19.46. Due to the timings I assume that I was deployed to the premises search before I could complete the VPFR 1. The VPRF 1 is set out in full as follows:

"n October 2019, the accused was permanently excluded from RANGE HIGH SCHOOL, FORMBY.

On 11/12/2019 at approximately 0910 hrs, MICHAEL MCGARRY, the Head Teacher of the school, was conducting a year 9 assembly. His attention was drawn to the accused inside the school premises.

MCGARRY has approached AXEL and repeatedly asked the accused to leave, and began asking why he was there. The accused ignored McGARRY and began to walk into the corridors of the school. Deputy Head Teacher Thomas DOLLY then saw the accused and McGARRY walking down the corridor. It is alleged that the accused has then started to run, producing a hockey stick from inside his coat as he did so.

In the corridor was a group of around 6 Year 9 pupils, one of which was the aggrieved. It is alleged that the accused has swung the hockey stick above his head, and then towards the group, striking the aggrieved on his left arm. McGARRY has been able to restrain the accused from behind in a 'bear hug'. DOLLY has then taken the hockey stick from the grip of the accused. RUBAKUBANA was escorted to the head teachers office and police were called.

Whilst waiting for police to attend, the accused is said to have been very calm and insistent that his actions were not wrong. It is alleged that the accused stated that he had attended the school to look for another pupil to attack.

At 0935 hrs , Constable DODD attended the location. McGARRY explained the circumstances to the officer. RUBAKABANA stated to the officer he had a knife in his backpack. The officer searched the bag and located LD/02 - 1 X KITCHEN KNIFE. MCGARRY passed the officer exhibit LD/01 - 1 X HOCKEY STICK.

At 0945 hrs , Constable DODD cautioned and arrested RUBAKABANA on suspicion of Section 47 assault , possession of a bladed article on a school premises and possession of an offensive weapon. There was no reply to caution.

Intel has been received from PREVENT that AXEL is actively searching beheadings and other extremist material on his computer. It is also suggested that AXEL intended to kill a pupil at the school today , and that he was to do this by either beating him with a hockey stick or stabbing him if this not work. It is suggested that due to the pupil not being present, AXEL attacked another pupil randomly.”

31. Further to the VPRF 1 summary as above, there are set questions to answer. Some of which I will list as follows
32. What have you done to safeguard those involved and reduce the risk. I answered “*Male arrested, PREVENT AWARE . VPRF1 COMPLETED.*”
33. What was the victim’s demeanour. I answered “*Calm. Could not see wrong doing . Believed it was acceptable behaviour.*”
34. Is the individual expressing any extremist views e.g to family/friends/social media. I answered “*Intel suggests the victim has researched beheading on his computer. Also suggests he is wanting to kill a classmate.*”
35. Do you consider the victim to be vulnerable? I answered, “*From brief encounter and viewing demeaner, clear victim is vulnerable and does not have a concept of his actions and the consequences they bring.*”
36. Does the victim resist engaging with services. I answered, “*Would not engage police on attendance.*”
37. There are other questions answered but I believe this have already been covered within my statement.
38. I put as much detail as I had in the VPRF1. I did not have any role in making any form of risk assessment (save for the risk assessment inherent in a decision to arrest) nor was I expected to as part of the process of submitting a VPRF1 – the person submitting the VPRF1 is providing the information for the relevant persons / agencies to conduct a risk assessment.
39. I considered that those agencies would review the case, and would have a strategy meeting if required, and consider the appropriate referrals and activities so as to safeguard AR and indeed others who were at risk from his behaviour / intended behaviour. I would not have expected to be part of those processes, unless I was to be asked for any futher information.

Criminal Prosecution of AR

40. I know now, but did not know at the time, that AR entered a guilty plea when he was charged with the offences for which I arrested him. I was not therefore called to give

evidence. I can see from the Court record that he received a referral order that was to be referred to Lancashire Youth Offending panel for a contract for 10 months, and that it was further ordered that his father must attend the panel. I have not been made aware of this until now.

Reflection on events

- 41. Given that AR was arrested, his home address searched, sufficient evidence was obtained to mount a successful prosecution and a referral was made to be dealt with in Lancashire where AR resided, I do not consider that I could have done more or done things differently as regards to my interaction with AR on 11th December 2019. Following the search of the address and completion of my part of the evidential case file , I was not further involved In the case and therefore cannot comment on other officers involvement.

- 42. I consider that the (a) guidance; (b) training; and (c) resources available to me were adequate for the nature of the involvement I had in the incident on 11 December 2019.

Improvements

- 43. I am not aware of any relevant improvements that have been made by Merseyside Police.

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 29-07-25

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF LIAM DODD

EXHIBIT SUMMARY

Exhibit No	Inquiry Reference No	Document description
1	MERP002907	Witness statement of Liam Dodd of 11 December 2019
2	MERP000499	Incident Log MP20191211-0196
3	MERP000695	Incident Log MP20191211 - 0223
4	MERP002927	Premises Searched Record 10 Old School Close Banks 11 December 2019
5	MERP002926	VPRF re AR 11 December 2019
6	MERP001413	Statement of Michael McGarry 11 December 2019
7	MERP002909	Statement of Thomas Dolly 11 December 2019
8	MERP002937	Custody Record of AR 11 December 2019

