

LUCY MCLOUGHLIN

Exhibits: LMC1 to LMC11

Dated: 18/08/2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF LUCY MCLOUGHLIN

I, LUCY MCLOUGHLIN, will say as follows: -

Introductory matters

1. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 29th July 2025.
2. I have been provided with assistance from solicitors who have been instructed to represent Presfield High School during this investigation.
3. On behalf of the whole school community and myself I would like to express my profound condolences to the families of Elsie, Alice and Bebe and to all those who were injured or affected by the events of that day.

4. I have a B Ed in psychology and a degree in teaching, I have completed my NPQH and NPQSL training. I have worked at Presfield High School (Presfield) since 2014 and became deputy head teacher in March 2020 and head teacher from May 2023.

Previous statements

5. I exhibit statements dated 29th July 2024 and 23rd August 2024 which I have previously provided to officers of Merseyside Police they are referred to as LMC 1 and LMC 2 – MERP001163 and MERP000931. I reaffirm that these statements are true to the best of my recollection and belief.
6. Since making the above statements, I have provided to the Inquiry a detailed chronology of the school's involvement with AR LMC 3- PRE001795.

Internet usage

7. When AR joined Presfield he was provided with a Chromebook. This was never used by AR and was never taken home with him. I requested the head of the school IT department to search the history of the Chromebook, and it was confirmed to me that the device was never used. As a consequence, there are no records for internet usage.

Handover from the Acorns School and Risk Assessments

8. The process for any handover begins with receipt of a request for placement. That request will come from a local authority who has considered the needs of the child and has agreed to an EHCP (Education, Health, and Care Plan). The plan will be considered and the first question for us will be to decide if we can meet the need of the student. Once that decision is taken, a visit to the current placement will be undertaken to discuss the student with his/her current teachers and to observe the student (if possible) in the placement. The visit to the current placement is an essential opportunity for us to gain information regarding the student. When students are to be transferred to us there is an opportunity to discuss the student with his/her current teachers and to ascertain what we need to know. This discussion is easier when the school has worked with us previously and relationships have been established. Presfield is not entitled to any safeguarding

information from the transferring school until after confirmation of placement has been made. In the case of Acorns School, this school is located outside of the borough of Sefton, and we had not worked with them previously. No information was forthcoming at the meeting between our head of sixth form and Acorns School regarding the transfer of AR. Once a placement has been agreed the student will transfer onto the roll of Presfield and a request will be made for transfer of CPOMS information. CPOMS is not universally used by schools and is an electronic system used to retain safeguarding information. If the transferring school does not use CPOMS, a request for the paper safeguarding file is made. A receipt for the file is given to the transferring school and the paper file is uploaded onto our system. The file once received in whichever format is given to the Designated Safeguard Lead (DSL).

9. Informal discussions can take place regarding transferring students. Often at headteacher meetings which occur termly a headteacher may mention an outline of a potential student's needs and issues. As the meeting occur for schools within the borough, headteachers from other local authority areas are largely unknown to us. We also have good working relationships with Social Care case workers within the borough. Again, this is a local function and we have no relationships with Social Care case workers from outside of the borough.
10. When AR was being transferred to Priestfield's, I was aware of the EHCP, a copy of which had been provided to me. I was aware from reading the EHCP of the knife incident at Range School and did not consider this in isolation to be a reason for refusal of a place at Presfield. I was aware of the school visit by our head of sixth form and was also aware of the plan for an extended transition into sixth form. I was informed of the decision to offer AR a place at Presfield's and was probably consulted about this decision. I now know that AR was formally enrolled at Presfield on 28th March 2022.
11. Following enrolment at Presfield a Lancashire County Council document (personalised risk assessment profile) was submitted to Hayley Dawson our head of sixth form. This document was printed off and taken to the headteacher for his consideration. A copy was provided to our DSL and was uploaded to CPOMS on the day after her return to work following illness. I understand that this document is identified as PRE000004.

12. In September 2024 I was made aware of the email dated 22nd March 2022 from Maggie Aldred of Acorns School to our DSL which contained the confidential CPOMS information relating to AR. It was clear to me that the personalised risk assessment profile for AR was not an accurate reflection of his needs as identified within his EHCP.
13. At the time that I was deputy head teacher communication regarding safeguarding was between the head teacher and our DSL. I have been asked if I was aware of any of the following incidents: -
- i. The fact that AR admitted, in October 2019, that he had brought a knife into the Range High School on 10 occasions to “stab someone”;
 - ii. That he had made a comment at the Range High School that “that’s why teachers get murdered” in September/October 2019;
 - iii. An incident at the Acorns School on 15/11/2019 whereby AR was found to have been searching for school shootings in America during an ICT lesson;
 - iv. An incident at Acorns School on 03/12/2019 whereby AR said, during an art lesson, “why can we have these with guns but can’t look at guns on the internet” and “can we have a picture of a severed head then”;
 - v. An incident at the Range High School on 11/12/2019 whereby AR attacked a student with a hockey stick whilst in possession of a knife in his backpack;
 - vi. An incident whereby AR was sharing social media posts relating to Colonel Gaddafi in early 2021;
 - vii. An incident in April 2021 whereby AR was observed during a lesson to be conducting searches in relation to the London Bridge terror attack, and he then spoke in detail about the Israel and Palestine conflict and the IRA.
 - viii. That AR had been referred to Prevent on three occasions: 05/12/2019, 01/02/2021, and 26/04/21;
 - ix. An incident on 17 March 2022 where AR went missing from home and was found on a bus in possession of a knife and AR stated that he wanted to stab someone and that he had tried to make his own poison.
14. I was not personally aware of any of the incidents identified by Acorns save for the incident dated 11th December 2019 at the Range School where AR had struck a pupil with a hockey stick while having a knife in his backpack. The incident dated

17th March 2022 was reported to Presfield on 27th May 2022. At that time, we had assumed that AR had been the victim in this incident based upon the information that we had received. The Operation Encompass report indicated that the incident involved a vulnerable child. As I was unaware of the incidents I took no action regarding them.

15. I would have been expected to be made aware of the incidents referred to above. I would have expected to have been briefed by either our DSL or the headteacher.

16. I was not made aware of them as the email containing the information remained unopened.

17. Had I been advised of the incidents above, a discussion would have taken place within the senior leadership team. The team would have needed to consider if Presfield could continue to meet the need for AR. It would also require an immediate update to the Risk assessment in place for AR. Consideration would also be given to making a PREVENT report. I would also have sought answers as to why a case worker for Lancashire County Council had failed to include such important information in AR's EHCP. Had the EHCP included details of previous Social Care involvement, this would have led to Inquiries being taken regarding the suitability of Presfield as a placement for AR.

18. I would suggest that had the school been knowingly aware of the material known by Acorns, a placement would not have been offered as the needs of AR could not be provided by Presfield.

19. I have been referred to a record of activity dated 5th September 2024 LMC 4-PRE000358. The record states: -

“It appears that Acorn transmitted records for AR electronically, but these were not accessed, opened, or incorporated into Presfield's system. It appears that Acorn repeated the transfer using a second, encrypted system but the file was not accessed or opened.”

20. I am unable to answer why these records were not accessed or opened and incorporated into Presfield's system. They should have been.

21. The record continues:-

“on a third occasion Acorn sent a summary Risk Assessment. This was opened and read. It gave the view that AR had behaved without incident during the

- previous 12 months and now presented low risk. However, the full implications of his previous history may not have been fully appreciated at Presfield.”
22. The summary risk assessment is the document referred to at paragraph 11 above LMC5 PRE000009. The document includes a scoring rating against various risks. The conclusion drawn by the Youth Offending Team was that AR was low risk. From a school perspective AR was not low risk and should not have been categorised as such.
 23. The full implications of AR’s previous history were not fully appreciated as the email dated 22nd March 2022 containing that information had not been opened.
 24. The record continues further:- “Presfield’s actions focussed on the risks to AR rather than any posed by him, on getting him to engage and on meeting his needs.”
 25. Presfield were not knowingly aware of any risks posed by AR and were looking at him through the lens of a vulnerable child. This view was wrong as I accept that professional curiosity was narrowed. This was not the correct approach.
 26. In addition, the document concludes by identifying a potential security issue :- “security of [Presfield’s] systems for information handling, particularly on student transfer”.
 27. As a consequence of the terrible events under consideration, an audit was conducted as to the number of requests for CPOMS transfers made for the schools then current pupils. The audit revealed that CPOMS had not been requested for 53 children. Our DSL was the only person tasked with this action. A system is now in place for transfer of all such records and an audit trail to ensure compliance. More staff have now been provided with safeguarding training and are able to assist with these tasks as and when required.
 28. As a consequence of the failure to open and access the email dated 22nd March 2022, an investigation has commenced to ascertain whether there has been any breach of staff discipline. This issue is ongoing and is yet to be resolved.
 29. I am asked to review a statement of Howard Cooper CBE dated 10th October 2024. LMC6 -PRE001732. Mr Cooper was at the time of these events the Chair of Governors at Presfield. He prepared the statement without any formal request. I can only assume that it was produced in connection with any potential investigation referenced in paragraph 28 above.

30. Mr Cooper indicates:- "There are systemic problems in the transfer of data under CPOMS from providing to accepting schools. For example, not all schools use CPOMS, and uploading is impossible. Where uploading is possible, Presfield cannot access data until after the student is on roll, making risk assessment and planning impossible."
31. I have indicated above what the system for handover for schools is. CPOMS is a computerised system utilised for the storage of confidential information which is only provided after any student is formally transferred. The data referred to above remains confidential until after transfer and consequently there is no systemic issue. Where a school does not use CPOMS they can share the confidential information by means of any other secure platform. In this case the material was shared using Egress. Some schools retain paper files which are again shared after transfer.
32. In the case of AR. The confidential material was provided to the school by an Egress email and was capable of being accessed. The email is exhibited as LCM6-**PRE001717** and the confidential material is exhibited as LCM7-**PRE001764**. The issue in this instance was that the email was not opened and accessed.
33. I exhibit two risk assessments undertaken by Presfield in connection with AR they are LCM8 and LCM9 -PRE 001741 and PRE001742. I can confirm that no other risk assessments were undertaken by Presfield regarding AR.
34. All risk assessments are reviewed on a termly basis and more frequently for students with more complex needs. The risk assessments are assessed on an annual basis.
35. The risk assessments for AR would have been assessed and updated with any information available to the assessor. Unfortunately, as AR did not attend school, it was impossible to add any detail to that risk assessment.
36. The risk assessments were clearly inadequate and did not take into account all of the risks that should have been known. There was no interaction with AR and a lack of information provided by AR's parents.

AR's attendance

37. AR's level of attendance while on the roll at Presfield was 0.7%.

Steps taken to engage/re-engage AR

38. Schools such as Presfield have various options depending upon the age of the student. If the student is above the compulsory school age those options can be limited. Parents can be prosecuted where a student within the compulsory school age fails to attend school. This is an option of last resort and infrequently used in a special school setting. Options available include allowing a student to attend on a reduced timetable, providing the student with work experience. Presfield has a school dog which can be utilised to encourage the student to attend. Lesson plans can be tailored to suit the interests of the student.
39. In the case of AR, we attempted to transition him over a prolonged period. This was to allow him to become familiar with staff his teachers and other students. He was also provided with a tutor who taught him subjects which were important to him. He was encouraged to come into school over lunch as we knew that he liked pizza and this was made available to him. He was invited to play basketball which he liked. He was given a reduced timetable and had 1 to 1 tuition. AR was also given his own room so that he would not need to interact with other students. The school also arranged many home visits by the same familiar staff to create relationships enabling him to feel comfortable in the school environment. In essence we tried anything to get him through our door.
40. I am certain that steps taken to attempt to engage, re-engage with AR were more than adequate.

Referrals/Interactions with other agencies

41. I did not make any referrals to external agencies, and I am not aware of any referrals being made regarding safeguarding or other concerns by any members of staff to other agencies. Requests were made for assistance to other agencies where they were already involved in the care of AR. CAMHS, Lancashire County Council Social Care, MASH, NEET etc were all aware of AR and yet he appeared to receive none of the service that was available.
42. I am aware of an email dated 21st March 2023 from Cheryl Smith LCM10 - PRE000220. This email was in effect a cry for help. Cheryl had attempted to engage any of the services connected to AR to provide some insight into his wellbeing. Presfield had not been able to see AR for a considerable period and concerns were raised regarding his failing mental health. We were even unsure if

AR was still living at his home address. I did not consider the response from Lancashire Police to be adequate as they were aware of our concerns. They knew that we were a provider of education to children with autism and consequently those children should be considered to be vulnerable. A welfare visit was appropriate in the circumstances.

43. As a consequence of the response, we continued with our planned home visits. Fortunately, several days after this email. AR voluntarily attended school.
44. Presfield received an email from Children Missing Education at Lancashire County Council dated 22nd March 2023 LCM11 -PRE001691. That email suggested that as AR was above compulsory school age and that he was on our school roll there was no action for them to take. Again, I considered this response to be inadequate. AR had an EHCP, he was vulnerable and should be treated as a student of statutory school age.
45. The school continued with its efforts to have AR removed from its roll and to obtain a placement that he needed. It was clear that his mental health was now his primary need and that needed to be addressed.
46. My reflections when dealing with other agencies varied. In my view the support from Lancashire County Council was virtually non-existent and they did not attend AR case annual reviews. CAMHS tried to support our efforts but were hampered in regard to the information they could share with us. AR's parents positively prevented the sharing of information. The Youth Offending Team had closed off any involvement with AR when they assessed him (wrongly in my view) as low risk.
47. At no stage did I have any cause to consider that a referral to PREVENT should be made. It was not made due to the fact that the information necessary to make such a referral was contained within an email that had not been opened or accessed.
48. With the benefit of hindsight, a referral to PREVENT should have been made.

Withdrawal of AR's place at Presfield High School

49. A decision to remove AR from the roll at Presfield was taken during the summer of 2022. AR's lack of attendance at school and his failure to engage with staff meant that AR was blocking the place for a student who might benefit from our service. The father of AR was notified of this decision during an annual review meeting

which was not attended by Lancashire County Council on 7th July 2022. The decision was further confirmed in September 2022.

50. Funding for AR was not withdrawn until 20th March 2024. The reason provided at that time was that AR had been out of education for a period of two years.
51. Following the withdrawal of funding and the cancellation of AR's EHCP, the father of AR appealed the local authority decision. This was not an issue that we had any direct involvement with as the Local Authority is responsible for creating and funding the EHCP. The school followed up the notification of appeal with Lancashire County Council and was eventually informed that Lancashire had no further involvement and AR was no longer on our roll. This notification occurred on 12th June 2024.
52. AR was formally removed from the Presfield High School roll on 27th June 2024.

Reflection on events

53. I have no doubt that reflecting on the actions of Presfield taken at the time and with the benefit of hindsight things could and should have been done differently. An email containing relevant information was not opened and accessed. This led to various actions not being taken. Those actions include a referral to PREVENT and the creation of a risk assessment which would have reflected the real risks posed by AR as they were known. On behalf of the school, I apologise for that failing.
54. When asked if training and guidance together with the resources available were appropriate, I would have to say that based upon the EHCP presented to Presfield by the local authority they were. Had that EHCP contained many of the details which are now known, I would have to say that they were not. However, had the EHCP been a true reflection of AR's needs, Presfield would not have been able to provide for those needs and a place at Presfield would not have been offered.
55. Since these tragic events, Presfield High School has undertaken improvements to remove the risk of emails remaining unopened. A dedicated safeguarding email address now exists which allows any member of the safeguarding team to access them. More staff have been trained in relation to safeguarding issues and safeguarding staff have more time available to deal with safeguarding issues away from their teaching duties.

56. In my dealings with Sefton Borough Council Social Care Team and Merseyside Police, it is apparent that they have access to a system known as Liquid Logic. This system contains full histories of people within their care and has full family histories. Access to this system for a dedicated member of school staff would have been extremely useful in our dealings with AR and his family. As indicated within this statement AR was viewed through the lens of a vulnerable child and open to possible abuse from his family who did not always cooperate with the school. Had access been available our view of AR may have changed and any concerns regarding his family support may have altered.

Dated this 18th day of August 2025

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.

Signature

Signed [Lucy McLoughlin](#) (Aug 18, 2025 12:03:36 GMT+1)

Lucy McLoughlin

18/08/2025

Dated

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LUCY MCLOUGHLIN

Final Audit Report

2025-08-18

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Signature: Signature

Lucy McLoughlin (Aug 27, 2025 17:56:47 GMT+1)

Email: lmcloughlin@presfieldschool.org

LUCY MCLOUGHLIN - signed

Final Audit Report

2025-08-27

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