

THE SOUTHPORT PUBLIC INQUIRY

CLOSING STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF COUNTER TERRORISM POLICING NORTH WEST

A. INTRODUCTION

1. This closing statement is made on behalf of Counter Terrorism Policing North West (“CTPNW”). For obvious reasons, the focus of much of the evidence in this Inquiry has been on the perpetrator (“AR”) and the dealings which various agencies had with or about him. His name and image deserve to be forgotten: his crimes and the lessons to be learnt from the failings in the agencies’ responses to the risks which he presented should not. Noting the Chair’s observations as to what submissions would be of assistance, rather than seeking to address the conduct of all of the other state core participants this closing statement is deliberately focused on issues that directly relate to the conduct of CTPNW and its officers.
2. At the outset of this document CTPNW reiterates the profound sense of loss and sorrow felt by all of the officers and staff of CTPNW at the events of 29th July 2024. As Detective Chief Superintendent Sarah Kenwright said when giving evidence, the officers and staff of CTPNW come into work every day to try their best to help protect people from terrorism.¹ Their condolences remain with the victims, families and those affected by AR’s actions. Their impact evidence was profoundly moving.
3. The Inquiry has exposed systemic failings by multiple agencies over many years in how the risks presented by AR were handled. For its part, CTPNW recognises that there were missed opportunities to exhaust further aspects of the three Prevent referrals. These will be addressed more fully below, however in summary CTPNW accepts that input should have been sought from the Vulnerability Support Hub. Had the Prevent officers done so it is possible that AR’s mental health may have been better understood. CTPNW also accepts that further steps should have been taken to obtain the school internet browsing history from the Acorns’ School and for any results from AR’s electronic devices which were seized by Merseyside Police.

¹ DCS Sarah Kenwright (13th October 2025, 180:10–20).

B. CORE PROPOSITIONS

The status and weight to be attached to previous reviews and reports

4. The involvement of CTPNW, and in particular Prevent, has been the focus of at least three significant reviews: the Prevent Learning Review [CTPHQ000055], the Dignate Review [CTPHQ000028] both undertaken by CTPHQ, and the Lessons for Prevent review conducted by Lord Anderson [CTPNW000114]. Various witnesses have placed reliance on the outcome of those reviews (for example, the Home Office corporate witness, Cathryn Ellsmore;² the Department for Education corporate witness, Kate Dixon;³ and Stephanie Roberts-Bibby of the Youth Justice Board⁴). Further, emphasis appears to be placed on the conclusions of the three reviews when Counsel to the Inquiry questioned DCS Kenwright.⁵
5. Where reliance has been placed on the conclusions of those reviews, that reliance has been selective and ignored, for example, the observation of the authors of the Prevent Learning Review that “Overall, the Reviewer considers there to have been a high level of compliance by the Prevent officers with process timescales, assessment completion and adherence to policy that were in place at the time” and “processes and polices have been largely followed correctly”.⁶
6. In any event, limited weight should be placed on these earlier reviews. None had the benefit which this Inquiry enjoyed of hearing directly (in witness statements and oral evidence) from the primary actors. Those reviews were conducted at pace, were focused on the role of CT policing and did not consider the multi-agency handling of the risks which AR presented.
7. By way of illustration, the Inquiry will recall that the Prevent Learning Review was couched as a possibility (“There may have been an over-emphasis on the presence of ideology to the detriment of considering AMR’s susceptibility. These two elements may have been

² Cathryn Ellsmore (13th October, 57: 9-11): “Yes, I mean, I believe this case should have been in Channel, and I note the findings, as well, of the three different reviews into this case.”

³ Kate Dixon (27th October, 101:5-7): “...and I think the general conclusion is that they would have been taken through to Channel and should have been.”

⁴ Stephanie Roberts-Bibby W/S, §138 [YJB000076_0029]: “The YJB agrees with the findings of the Prevent Learning Review ... that AR should have been referred into the Channel at his first referral to PREVENT in December 2019. ... The YJB agrees that the threshold for onward referral was also met in February and April 2021.” This is despite the YJB having had no direct involvement in AR’s case (§117 of Ms Roberts-Bibby W/S) nor having contributed to any of the learning reviews following the attack (§136).

⁵ DCS Sarah Kenwright (13th October, 165:18-23).

⁶ CTPHQ000055_0034.

separated and addressed in isolation rather than considered together.”⁷ (emphasis added)). The authors presumably expressed themselves in this way because they had not had the benefit of speaking with the individuals involved.

8. Further, the Inquiry has now received evidence as to the weight which the CTCO and CTCO supervisors in fact placed on the conclusions of the FIMU and JAT (discussed below). This was the focus of the Prevent Learning Review’s first conclusion.⁸ Further, the Inquiry has now received evidence as to the emphasis in fact placed on the presence of absence of an identified ideology by the CTCO and CTCO supervisors (discussed below).
9. The Inquiry explored with DAC Evans the observation in the Dignate Review that “each time the case was entirely police led, seemingly with a reluctance to share the risk / decision making with the Dovetail lead.”⁹ The provenance of this view is not stated within the report, and as DAC Evans confirmed it would not have come from any of the individuals in fact involved in AR’s case: “it could have been their [the Dignate Review’s authors] general knowledge about the outcomes of the Dovetail pilot and review, as opposed to something specific.”¹⁰

The visibility of Prevent

10. In considering the evidence, the Inquiry should guard against falling into the trap - as some witnesses and public commentators have - of pointing to Prevent as the vehicle through which AR’s risk should have been managed. That seems to have been because (i) Prevent is a well-established, defined, and recognised system for the management of individuals that posed a certain species of risk; (ii) the absence of a similar or equivalent system for those who fall outside the parameters of Prevent; and (iii) the highly public focus of the decisions taken by Prevent in the Prevent Learning Review and the review conducted by Lord Anderson.
11. In Phase 2 the Inquiry will likely consider the adequacy of multi-agency systems to address the risk posed by young people whose fixation or obsession with, and desire to commit, acts of extreme violence presents a significant risk to public safety. In doing so, it will have in mind the issues raised by others including Jonathan Hall KC, Independent Reviewer of

⁷ CTPHQ000055_0034.

⁸ “While accurate in the context of [the policy on intelligence] guidance and assessor standards, the FIMU assessments were potentially used out of context in Prevent. This can lead to pre-empting or influencing of decision making within Prevent by both CTCO and their supervisors.” [CTPHQ000055_0034].

⁹ CTPHQ000028_0003.

¹⁰ DAC Victoria Evans (14th October, 31:13-32:23).

Terrorism Legislation, in his March 2025 report¹¹ and Sir William Shawcross’ review of Prevent from February 2023 [HOM000071], as to the scope of Prevent. Aspects of Sir William’s report was considered with DAC Evans (14th October, 16:21-19:3 and 86:16-90:9) and Cathryn Ellsmore (13th October, 59:7-60:17).

12. The breadth of Prevent and the resultant number of referrals are further addressed below in the recommendations section.

The respective roles and responsibilities of the FIMU and Prevent

13. The Inquiry has received evidence as to the roles and responsibilities of the FIMU (and the Joint Assessment Team).¹² As to the roles and responsibilities of CTCOs and CTCO supervisors, see, for example: section 7 of ‘*The Counter-Terrorism Case Officer Guide: ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors*’ (August 2020) [CTPHQ000034_0016-0023]; §§14-21 of PC Carmen Thompson’s statement [CTPNW000180_0003-0005]; §§24-29 of DS James Neale’s statement [CTPNW000166_0006-0008]; §§21-24 of PS Rachael Treharne’s statement [CTPNW000177_0005-0007].

The observations of FIMU officers

14. The Inquiry has fairly explored the use of language by officers within the FIMU and whether this was indicative of “overreach”. The documents do show multiple instances of FIMU officers expressing themselves in ways which may reasonably lead the outside observer to conclude that they were mistaken as to the extent of their role and responsibility and hence the suggestion of “overreach”. For example:

- a. In Officer B’s email to PC Thompson of 16th December 2019 [CTPNW000373_0007], Officer B wrote:

“This has been returned [from] the JAT for a prevent referral to be inputted onto the pcm tracker and referral to channel/dovetail”

¹¹ <https://terrorismlegislationreviewer.independent.gov.uk/classification-of-extreme-violence-used-at-southport-in-july-2024/>

¹² See, for example, Officer B’s first statement at §§11-17 and 19-21 [CTPNW000175_0003-0005]; Officer A’s first statement at §§17-29 [CTPNW000179_0005-0008]; DC Timothy Aspinall’s statement at §§12-19 [CTPNW000173_0004-0005]; and PC Philip Blundell’s statement at §§8-16 [CTPNW000171_0003-0005].

b. In Officer A's email Prevent of 1st February 2021 [CTPNW000140], Officer A wrote:

“...I do not believe this new intelligence is worthy of a new Prevent referral as I do not assess it would meet the thresholds for adoption at [Channel]...”

c. DC Aspinall's assessment of 22nd April 2021 [CTPNW000143].

15. Insofar as it may be considered that the FIMU inappropriately influenced PC Thompson and the CTCO supervisors, it is of some significance that the apparent view expressed by the JAT and FIMU was arguably not followed in respect of the first referral: AR was not referred to Dovetail/Channel (what PC Blundell in fact intended by his comment is discussed below). Hence, in assessing whether the FIMU's assessment inappropriately influenced PC Thompson and the CTCO supervisors, the obvious point is that it evidently did not in at least one of the three referrals in issue.

16. All guidance and policy documents were clear that it was FIMUs role to conduct de-confliction checks and it was for Prevent to decide whether an individual should be referred to Dovetail/Channel. For instance, Annex B to the National Standards for Intelligence Management (NSIM) (May 2018) [CTPHQ000042] explained (emphasis added):

“All cases, whether an individual, institution or ideology, deemed suitable for Prevent by an Intelligence Management Unit are referred to a local Police Prevent team. This team will determine whether there is a vulnerability requiring a safeguarding response or extremist activity requiring disruption.” [CTPHQ000042_0002]

“Local Prevent teams will use the PGA to determine whether a case is suitable for management under Prevent or whether it should be exited from the process.” [CTPHQ000042_0004]

17. Annex B broadly reflected how things worked in practice (Officer A's first statement, §31 [CTPNW000179_0008]).

18. The evidence of the FIMU (and JAT) officers is clear: they understood that it was not for them to decide the outcome of a Prevent referral:

a. Officer B understood PC Blundell to be “making a recommendation that Prevent should consider referring AR's case to the Dovetail team and Channel panel. In my role as a FIMU officer, I do not recall making a recommendation to refer a case to Channel, since I do not have the training or knowledge on the thresholds for making a Channel referral”.¹³

¹³ Officer B first W/S, §70 [CTPNW000175_0015].

b. Officer B “did not make any assessment for Prevent to close the case since this is outside the scope of my role as a FIMU officer.”¹⁴

c. Noting the criticism made in the Dignate report, Officer B explained:

“We work very closely with Prevent, but the FIMU assessment of CT/DE relevance is not intended to be a Prevent assessment.”¹⁵

d. Officer B confirmed that it was his understanding in December 2019 that it was not for the FIMU to decide whether the subject of a referral should be taken on by Prevent (8th October, 130:7-23). His email was not seeking to tell Prevent “how to do their job” (8th October, 161:11-163:6).

e. PC Blundell has explained his assessment and the wording used in the JAT Research Document assessment at §§46-47 of his statement [CTPNW000146_0003-0004]. In oral evidence, PC Blundell explained:¹⁶

Q. ... Was it part of your role to decide what the Prevent officer did with the referral?

A. No. Two completely different strategies, therefore, at the conclusion of my Pursue, it would be up to the Prevent to develop.

Q. Would you accept that, to put it in layperson’s terms, you were stepping on Prevent’s shoes a little by asking them to sight Dovetail or the Channel panel?

A. Yes, but I was only trying to help.

f. Officer A explained in his first statement [CTPNW000179_0014-0015]:

“56. I am asked whether I understood the distinction between the FIMU and Prevent teams. I knew it was not the role of the FIMU officer to make Prevent assessments, or to tell Prevent what they should or shouldn’t do with a case. I don’t have a sufficient understanding of the Prevent thresholds and role to make such an assessment.

57. I should also make clear that the FIMU team have no access to make entries on the Prevent Case Management Tracker (‘PCMT’) and have no knowledge of or training in how those entries are to be made and what they should entail. Most significantly, FIMU are not involved in the Prevent team’s assessment of the case and are not consulted and do not have involvement in the Prevent team’s decision as to whether to refer a case to Channel. FIMU’s assessment, insofar as relevant here, is whether a case should go to Prevent.

58. I note that concerns have been raised about the way in which my assessment of this referral was worded, and whether it could be read as seeking to direct the Prevent team towards a particular outcome to pre-empt their assessment. I understand the concerns raised and I accept that

¹⁴ Officer B first W/S, §76 [CTPNW000175_0016].

¹⁵ Officer B first W/S, §88 [CTPNW000175_0018].

¹⁶ PC Philip Blundell (8th October, 200:6-14).

my assessment could have been worded differently, but I do not consider that assessors should be restricted in setting out their views. My assessment is a record of my thought process and rationale and was based on my experience and the national picture of Prevent referrals at the time. Providing a detailed rationale means I can look at it now and remember what I was thinking at the time. It was intended to underpin the RADO assessment and reflect on the first referral and the context it gives to the second referral. My assessment was not intended as a guide or instruction to the Prevent team. As an assessor, it is important that I can record my rationale, within reason, without fear that it will influence others in carrying out their roles. I am confident that the Prevent team would have understood that.”

19. It is important to note that this approach is consistent with the guidance from the material time (albeit none of the witnesses were taken to this part of the guidance when they were giving oral evidence). The guidance made clear that, when FIMUs have conducted their deconfliction checks and decided to pass a matter to Prevent, they are expected to provide their observations about the case – see, for example, *‘The Counter-Terrorism Case Officer Guide: ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors’* (August 2020):

“3) A de-confliction result from the FIMU should, wherever possible and practicable, include:

a) FIMU observations around the Case - although the final decision for whether the Case is relevant for PREVENT management lies solely with CTCOs and their CTCO Supervisors...”¹⁷

20. Equally, PC Thompson and the CTCO supervisors have been clear that they were aware the decision on whether or not to refer to Dovetail/Channel was for them to make (and not the FIMU) and therefore were not inappropriately influenced by the FIMU and JAT assessments. For obvious reasons, it is entirely appropriate and consistent with the relevant policies for Prevent to not only take account of but to accept research and analysis conducted by the FIMU, e.g. searches conducted on databases. PC Thompson explained:

“It is important for the CTCO to have a good working relationship with the FIMU officers. ... In my experience it was dependant on who the FIMU officer was as to whether they may seek to offer a view on the likely outcome of the referral. In cases where FIMU did offer an opinion, that would be something taken into consideration by the CTCO.”¹⁸

21. The working relationship PC Thompson had with the FIMU “meant that they would express their views about my assessment, and had they raised any such concerns, then I would have taken them into account.”¹⁹ She would take into consideration the views

¹⁷ CTPHQ000034_0033.

¹⁸ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §18 [CTPNW000180_0004-0005].

¹⁹ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §42 [CTPNW000180_0010].

expressed by FIMU officers, but “it didn’t affect my decision-making or what steps I took next”.²⁰ That is entirely appropriate. PC Thompson was asked about this:

“Q. ... In general terms, it’s right, isn’t it, that the consideration of whether or not you were recommending the case to be taken on, in one form or another, was your responsibility as the CTCO?”

A. Yes.

Q. Was there any sense in which you personally would defer to views of the FIMU when they were expressed?

A. I would take into account anything discussed with the FIMU or anything that they provided to me but that decision, as to the next steps, would be my assessment on the information that I had available. I would take considerations into account but the decision would be mine.

Q. Turning away from anything about individual officers working in the FIMU, just looking at the position generally, did you understand that there was a distinction between the assessment that was being done in the FIMU and the assessment that you had to do as a CTCO?

A. Yes.

Q. How would you describe that difference?

A. My understanding is the assessment that the FIMU carry out would be looking at other intelligence, were they known to any other part of Counter Terrorism, were there any flags or any other intelligence held, were they already known to a different part of Counter Terrorism, for example were they under investigation. They would do all those sort of checks, basically to say whether it may need to come to Prevent, suitable to Prevent or may need to go to Pursue, if they were known and there were flags and intel that suggested that it needed to go that way.

Q. Did you appreciate that, if the outcome of the work of the FIMU and the assessment that was done by the FIMU was that there were no counter terrorism or domestic extremism concerns, or any limited concerns, that the case might very well still be appropriate for Prevent support?

A. Yes. My understanding, as I’ve just explained is that they were checking that there wasn’t any concerns in relation to flags or intelligence that they had or counter terrorism or ideologies, domestic extremism. They would then -- that was part of their assessment and deconfliction to say, right, this can come to Prevent for your assessment to what I think should happen next.”²¹

22. In respect of the first referral, PC Thompson stated:

“I would have noted the wording of the recommendation from JAT/FIMU that “preference would be for continuance and recommend dovetail team and channel panel are sighted with regard safeguarding and AR vulnerabilities going forward”. I understood this to mean that JAT were suggesting that when I conducted my assessment, I should consider a referral to Dovetail if I considered that was appropriate. However, it was not a direction or order. It was my role to undertake my own assessment taking all matters into consideration. Any recommendations from JAT/FIMU would always form part of my decision-making process. In this

²⁰ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 49:16-50:22).

²¹ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 38:25-40:19).

case I did not refer it to Channel/Dovetail as I formed the view that there not sufficient concerns identified for reasons I will set out later in this statement.”²²

23. Her assessment was based on the information known to her: that included the FIMU assessment, but also information provided by other agencies that were supporting AR and his family, information from the referrer, information from AR’s parents, how AR presented to me and the information AR provided.²³
24. Similarly, with the second and third referrals PC Thompson took into account the FIMU’s assessment but was clear that the decisions were hers.²⁴
25. In her statement, PS Treharne expressed her initial concerns about the delineation between the roles of the FIMU and Prevent. She “took exception to the idea of FIMU being seen to direct my team” (emphasis added).²⁵ However, “from the outset [of being a supervisor] I was very aware that decisions on whether to refer to Channel were for me to make.”²⁶ She would have viewed the FIMU assessment as being “persuasive when conducting my assessment”, however:

“I am also aware, however, of how conscious I was at the time of any suggestion of FIMU directing or being seen to direct the Prevent team, and how keen I was to ensure proper delineation and assertion of our team’s role and my role. I was very aware that it was not for FIMU to decide whether the referral met the thresholds for adoption at Channel. So while FIMU assessments, given the information they have access to, are persuasive, was aware that the decision was for me to make as the Supervisor, and this assessment was just one factor to be taken into account.”²⁷

26. DS James Neale explained that the FIMU assessment “is not determinative”, however their assessments “do have an impact on our case handling”:

“They have access to information that informs their assessment and their assessment is persuasive, but the decision on closure is for supervisors to take with all of the available information. I would have never closed a case that was considered to be CT/DE relevant. The areas where the FIMU assessment was significant in this case were their assessment that the known violence was criminal not terrorist in nature; that there would be no CT investigative action undertaken; and that there was no perceived current CT risk.”²⁸

27. In light of the evidence which the Inquiry has now received, it can be satisfied that although aspects of the language used by the FIMU officers might appear to be directive and

²² PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §23 [CTPNW000180_0005-0006].

²³ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §34 [CTPNW000180_0008-0009].

²⁴ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §§50, 58-59, 66, 73, 100 [CTPNW000180_0012, 0013, 0015, 00016, 0022].

²⁵ PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §52 [CTPNW000177_0014]. See also PS Treharne (9th October, 147:17-150:18).

²⁶ PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §53 [CTPNW000177_0014].

²⁷ PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §65 [CTPNW000177_0017].

²⁸ DS James Neale W/S, §50-51 [CTPNW000166_0013].

determinative of decisions that were properly for Prevent officers, all were clear that a decision on whether a referral should be made to Dovetail/Channel was a decision for the CTCO and CTCO supervisor. In none of the three referrals were the CTCO and CTCO supervisors inappropriately influenced by the observations of FIMU officers.

28. The distinction between how FIMU officers may express themselves and actual overreach appears to be a broader issue which DAC Evans described:

“I think the difference being the language they [the FIMU] use may lead to that consideration. But the CTCOs do understand their responsibilities and the decision. So irrespective of what the FIMU writes, the CTCO should, and is clear through policy and guidance and training, as to what their role is and what assessment they are making.

Q. Assuming that the CTCO has the experience and knowledge not to over-defer to what may look like a direction from the FIMU?

A. Yes, that could always be a risk. However, then you have layers of supervision to check and support decision-making.”²⁹

PC Thompson’s liaison with the FIMU

29. PC Thompson and Officer B were also asked about PC Thompson’s use of language within an Action Report [CTPHQ000087]. Both explained their shared understanding that PC Thompson was not seeking the FIMU’s permission to close the Prevent referral, although accepted the use of language was open to misunderstanding.³⁰ Their evidence is consistent with the chronology: PC Thompson’s entry on the Action Report was made on 7th January 2020 and was plainly after the multi-agency strategy meeting the day before (it is referred to in her entry). If PC Thompson’s note to the FIMU on 7th January 2020 was (as was explored during questioning) an attempt by to seek the FIMU’s consent to close the Prevent referral (and not the action as she and Officer B explained), it is difficult to reconcile with what she told the meeting the day before that she did not consider there to be any issues for Prevent Channel [LCC000023_0002].

Mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies / violence fascinated individuals

30. Following the attack on 29th July 2024 no evidence was found by Merseyside Police, in conjunction with Counter-Terrorism Policing, that AR’s crimes were motivated by any political, religious, racial or ideological cause.³¹ As such, the attack was not declared a

²⁹ DAC Victoria Evans (14th October, 25:21-26:8).

³⁰ See PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 104:11-106:10) and Officer B (8th October, 165:18-169:19).

³¹ DCI Jason Pye (23rd September, 37:10-38:20) & DAC Victoria Evans (14th October, 83:10-84:19).

terrorist incident and AR was not convicted of terrorist offences (he was convicted of the possession of the Al-Qaeda Training Manual, contrary to s.58 of the Terrorism Act 2000). However, as the Inquiry has heard, potential vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism for the purposes of Prevent is considered more broadly than simply by reference to s.1 of the Terrorism Act 2000.

31. At the time of the three referrals to Prevent, PC Thompson and the relevant Prevent supervisors (PS James Neale and PS Rachael Treharne) were aware that no particular ideology was required for referral to Channel. This was set out within Dynamic Investigation Framework [CTPHQ000040] and the 25th June 2019 letter from the Director of Prevent and National Coordinator for Prevent (“the joint letter”) [CTPHQ000134].
32. PC Thompson explained that whilst she could not recall seeing the joint letter at the time, “I considered the guidance referred to in it in any event throughout my decision making.”³² She was aware of substance of the letter and thought it was likely that it was discussed during team meetings.³³ As to the possible relevance of an interest in school massacres, PC Thompson explained that she was aware of this “having previously dealt with another individual presenting with this ideology that required support from Channel/Dovetail.”³⁴
33. Although PC Thompson felt more formal training would have been beneficial, she felt she understood the potential relevance of a mixed, unclear and unstable ideology and indeed had previously referred such an individual to Channel.³⁵ Similarly, PC Thompson was aware of and applied the guidance contained within the Dynamic Investigation Framework [CTPHQ000040].³⁶
34. Her decisions not to refer AR to Dovetail/Channel was not due to a lack of understanding of the potential relevance of mixed, unclear and unstable ideology, but rather because she found that AR did not meet that threshold.
35. PS Neale authorised the closure of the first Prevent referral. He was aware of the joint letter: he remembered this being “something that was very much on the team’s radar. as a team, we were very driven to stay on top of changes to guidance and protocol. As new

³² PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §78 [CTPNW000180_0017-0018].

³³ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §88 [CTPNW000180_0020] and PC Thompson (9th October, 24:4-17).

³⁴ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §78 [CTPNW000180_0017-0018] and PC Thompson (9th October, 31:23-32:15).

³⁵ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 30:23-31:11).

³⁶ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 32:16-36:14).

information, guidance and/or protocols came out, we would familiarise ourselves with it.”³⁷ He explains at §67 of his statement:

“I was very aware of the Joint Letter and its contents. In fact, it was something that we as a team really welcomed at the time. The guidance in the Joint Letter not only helped us with decision-making, but made clear that mixed or conflicting ideology could form the basis of a referral to Channel — that issue arose a lot. It also provided a basis to make an argument for referral in cases where an apparent fixation on mass casualties or similar was present. In cases, for example, where there was an interest in terrorism or terrorist-related activities but without a clear-cut ideology, that guidance was helpful for my decision making and for the team’s assessments. Against that background, concepts such as the mass casualties or fixation/obsession with school shootings would have been an active consideration in this case — obsession with mass killings is something Prevent would be interested in. The assessment of AR was that he did not appear to have such an obsession or display other factors such as to constitute the ideology to justify a referral.”

36. PS Treharne has explained that whilst she does not recall specifically receiving or viewing a copy of the joint letter, “when I was Prevent Supervisor, I was aware of the substance of the letter and specifically, about mixed or unclear ideology/school shooting or mass casualty ideology, and that it could in principle form the basis of referrals to Channel. This was something that was definitely brought to our attention, and I relied on mixed or unclear ideology/mass casualty interest multiple times to form the basis of a referral to Channel.”³⁸ However, she also explained that “The concept of mixed or unclear ideology set out in the Joint Letter was less well understood in that it was an emerging and new area, but this was progressing at the time and was a focus of the team.”³⁹
37. The Inquiry has explored various policies and guidance documents from the periods in which AR was referred to Prevent. As to these:
- a. Neither the CTPHQ ‘*Policy for Prevent Practitioners: Management of CT/DE Risk within the Community*’ (June 2018) [CTPHQ000014] nor the ‘*Prevent Case Management by CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors*’ (August 2020) [CTPHQ000117] mention mixed, unclear or unstable ideologies; fascination with violence, school massacres or mass casualty events as being an indicator of potential vulnerability.
 - b. ‘*The Dynamic Investigation Framework*’ [CTPHQ000110] was applied by CTCOs when conducting Prevent Gateway Assessments.

³⁷ PS James Neale W/S, §66 [CTPNW000166_0016-0017].

³⁸ PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §58 [CTPNW000177_0015]. See also §97 [CTPNW000177_0025] and PS Treharne (9th October, 141:3-142:11).

³⁹ PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §59 [CTPNW000177_0015].

- i. Section 5 (page 6) concerns “Ideology”. CTCOs are directed to “consider & describe the Subject’s exposure to or interest in any extremist ideology or causes. Refer to CTP Prevent’s working definition of “extremism” within the CTCO Guide. Remember, Subjects do not have to be “true” or “fanatical” believers of such a toxic ideology in order to be vulnerable to it.”
- ii. Sub-paragraph 5(a)(x) provides (emphasis underlined added):

“A concerning fascination with extreme violence, or the tactics of terrorism, mass-casualty attacks or school massacres *per-se*, even in the absence of a unifying ideology or narrative reason for this interest, **may** also be indicative of a Subject who requires support through Prevent. The context needs to be explored around this interest. An obsession like this, combined with complex needs or grievances, might be suggestive of a higher risk Subject. Explore & explain circumstances.”
- iii. Section 8 (page 8) concerns “Intent”. Sub-paragraphs 8(a)(ii) and (v) relevantly provided (emphasis added):

“ii) Has the Subject had fantasies (or made notes or “hit-lists”) about committing murder or mass-killings?

...

v) Has the Subject shown a particular fascination (openly or in private) with mass-killings (e.g.: school massacres) or terrorist attacks, or the tactics used in them? This could include an obsession with the attackers / terrorists themselves. Consider the wider context of this fascination in relation to the Subject’s baseline behaviours.”
- c. *‘The Counter-Terrorism Case Officer Guide: ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors’* (August 2020) [CTPHQ000034]:
 - i. Paragraph 8(6)(a) (at page 24), the DIF was highlighted: “The presence of any factor that appears within the DIF may designate PREVENT relevance.”
 - ii. Paragraph 8(6)(c) (at pages 24-25) explained (emphasis underlined added):

“In the context of an Individual’s exposure to or behaviours around extremism, consider:

...

viii) Someone who seems to be obsessed with, or who has apparently fantasised about, committing murder or mass murders (like school-massacres, rampaging shooter attacks or similar).

(1) This is particularly concerning if they have also made notes drawn up a “hit list” or diagrams of attack plans, even if on the face of it these lists seem sketchy or juvenile, and

even if on the face of it the person concerned does not appear physically capable of acting on these lists / plans.

(2) For PREVENT, what a Subject **believes** they are capable of is often just as relevant as what we **perceive** them to be physically capable of.”

- d. The joint letter [CTPHQ000134] is focused on unclear, mixed and unstable ideologies. At page 2 the authors note that they have seen many similar and often overlapping Prevent cases, including individuals who *inter alia* “are obsessed with massacre, or extreme or mass violence, without specifically targeting a particular group (e.g. ‘high school shootings’)”. At page 3 the authors say that (emphasis original): “individuals whose ideological motivations are unclear, mixed or unstable, but who demonstrate a connection to, or personal interest in, extremism, terrorism or massacre, **should be given the same consideration for support** as those whose concerning ideological motivations are more consistent and obvious.” This leads the authors to ask at page 4 that the recipients of the letter consider carefully *inter alia* “the possibility an individual’s obsessive interest in public massacres of any kind as a possible signal of vulnerability.” (emphasis added).
38. Where the policies and guidance address the issue of school massacres or other mass casualty events at all, they are consistent that an interest in such matters is distinguished from an ‘obsession’ or ‘fascination’. The addition of the words ‘obsession’ and ‘fascination’ by the Home Office and CTPHQ was clearly intended to reflect those organisations’ understanding that an interest in school massacres or other mass casualty does not of itself indicate a vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism. Put another way, those words clearly operate to raise the threshold above mere interest in school massacres or other mass casualty events: it necessarily requires an assessment by CTCOs and CTCO supervisors of whether the individual has an ‘obsession’ or ‘fascination’. That is an evaluative exercise that the CTCOs and CTCO supervisors must perform, weighing the information available to them. To the extent it may have been suggested within the Inquiry that an interest in school massacres or other mass casualty events is sufficient to refer to Channel, this materially understates what the policies and guidance at the material time provided.
39. The difficulty faced by CTCOs was acknowledged by DAC Evans:
- “...we ask our practitioners to make very difficult and finely balanced decisions. So that’s not to suggest that the decisions they have to make are simple. I was just really saying the actual steps in the process can be broken down and are straightforward to work through. The decisions are very difficult.”⁴⁰

⁴⁰ DAC Victoria Evans (14th October 2025, 35:11-16).

“...the job of the CTCO then is to take into account the context and balance all of that information and make their decision.”⁴¹

40. The point is illustrated by guidance published by the Department for Education (and which was exhibited to the statement of Kate Dixon, the corporate witness for the Department [DFE000256_0020], at §66(xi)). The Department’s guidance includes case studies [DFE000125]. This version (which, the Inquiry wish to note, remains online) was last updated in September 2023. It includes in the second case study (“Brian, 14 years old, school massacre ideology”) a school student who, during a lesson, was seen “accessing inappropriate material on his computer. The teacher in the class saw this and feeling that the material was related to school massacres, shut down the website. The teacher asked the student about the material on the website, but he just seemed evasive and angry.” It might be felt that there are parallels between AR’s case and that of ‘Brian’. The Department’s case study notes, without demur, that in these circumstances “the police did not find any issues relating [to] Prevent.”
41. Identifying vulnerability as a result of mixed, unclear or unstable ideologies or a fascination with violence is complex and is not as easily accommodated within Prevent as those individuals who do have an identified ideology. Indeed, as Cathryn Ellsmore explained, the reason for the 2019 letter was because mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies were not as clearly understood as they should have been. Nevertheless, the 2019 letter was not the optimum way to communicate policy to Prevent practitioners and those within the wider Prevent system. The language within the 2019 letter could and should have been clearer: it was open to the criticism that its authors were indeed trying to ride two horses at the same time.⁴²

Notification of the outcome of Prevent referrals

42. The Inquiry has heard evidence from Joanne Hodson and Janet Lewis of the Acorns School expressing their disappointment as to the amount of feedback provided by Prevent following the three referrals. For example, in her statement Ms Lewis has said (at §30):⁴³

“There was overall a lack of feedback following each referral and Acorns were left in the dark in terms of what work was being done by Prevent with AR and his family following each referral. However, Carmen Thompson was approachable and did generally keep in touch with the school via email. Whilst I was surprised

⁴¹ DAC Victoria Evans (14th October 2025, 56:16-18).

⁴² Cathryn Ellsmore (13th October, 38:22-40:11).

⁴³ Janet Lewis W/S [LCC001774_0007].

at the lack of feedback, I trusted that the appropriate action had been taken by the body responsible for dealing with the referrals.”

43. Ms Hodson was also critical of the feedback provided by Prevent, although it should be noted that her evidence that “The feedback from Prevent was that the third referral was a knee jerk reaction by the school”⁴⁴ is erroneous as this comment (which was unacceptable)⁴⁵ was an internal observation by a FIMU officer and is likely to have been picked up by Ms Hodson only when reading the Prevent Learning Review or Lord Anderson’s report. This was explored with Ms Hodson (23rd October 2025, 189:10-191:3): the phrase does appear in the Prevent Learning Review [CTPHQ000055_0030] and Lord Anderson’s report (at §3.40) [CTPNW000114_0070]. Accordingly, the Inquiry may wish to approach with caution Ms Hodson’s evidence that the Acorns School “were made to feel like we were overreacting”.⁴⁶

44. In respect of the first referral and feedback provided on that referral, PC Thompson attended the multi-agency meeting on 6th January 2020. The meeting was attended by *inter alios* Ms Lewis (of Acorns School) and Anna Jameson (AR’s Allocated Case Worker) (see the minutes of the meeting [LCC000023_0001]). In respect of Prevent, the minutes noted [LCC000023_0002]:

“Axel has been seen by the team and it is not felt that he has any issues regarding the Channel/Prevent programme. there were no concerns that he was being led into criminality or radicalised. It was noted that he showed no remorse for the incident.

assessment to be shared.”

45. On 3rd February 2020 PC Thompson emailed Julie Hamill (Community Support Worker, Children’s Social Care) who was a colleague of Anna Jameson.⁴⁷ PC Thompson’s email explained:⁴⁸

“This case is now closed to prevent as per the following assessment;

I do not feel that there are any CT/DE concerns at this stage, however the subject is extremely vulnerable and needs support from other agencies that are already in place, I have advised agencies to re refer to prevent should they have any more

⁴⁴ Joanne Hodson W/S, §167 [LCC001773_0044].

⁴⁵ PC Thompson did not agree that the third referral was a “knee-jerk referral” (see her §64 of her W/S [CTPNW000180] and 9th October, 128:22-129:17 & 131:13-15: “I don’t agree with the terminology of “knee-jerk reaction” because the school were doing what they had been advised to do.”). PS Treharne agreed with PC Thompson (9th October, 181:9-13). DC Timothy Aspinall who wrote the words, accepted his language could have been better chosen (see his W/S, §§49-50) [CTPNW000173_0013]. In fairness to DC Aspinall, his email continued to observe: “I think the [referral] has been done with the best intentions” [CTPNW000143_0002-0003 / LANC000175_0220].

⁴⁶ Joanne Hodson W/S, §289 [LCC001773_0077].

⁴⁷ As to the professional relationship between Ms Jameson and Ms Hamill, see Anna Jameson’s W/S, §57 [LCC001767_0018].

⁴⁸ LANC000175_0168-0170.

concerns in the future and also if any relevant information is found on his internet history from the school or from his devices.

This information has been assessed by FIMU as suitable for closure at this stage”

46. This was in response to a request from Ms Hamill for assessments to be shared with Ms Jameson “as they are vital in informing the C&F Assessment and determining the appropriate level of support for Axel and his family”.⁴⁹
47. Ms Hamill entered the text of PC Thompson’s email onto the Lancashire County Council’s Case Notes [LCC002301_0014]. Ms Jameson accepted that she was aware of PC Thompson’s assessment at the time of completing her child and family assessment.⁵⁰
48. During the relevant period the policies and guidance did not require feedback to be given. Some guidance was introduced within the North West region in 2022 (after the Prevent referrals) through the ‘CTPNW Prevent Triage Policy’ (December 2022) [CTPNW000411_0015]:

“In all instances where a case is closed following triage assessment, feedback will be provided to the referral originator informing them of the decision.”

49. Notwithstanding the foregoing, CTPNW accepts that in respect of all three referrals, the outcomes and the reasons for those outcomes should have been provided to the Acorns School as the referring agency, even though there was no national requirement, or even guidance, that this should occur. It will not always be appropriate to provide such information: there may be sensitivities specific to the individual or the referrer, however that was not the position with AR or Acorns School at the material times. However, as there will necessarily be cases where fine judgements are required, CTPNW suggests further guidance is needed from the Home Office and/or CTPHQ as to the circumstances in which the outcome of a referral (and the reasons for a decision to refer or not refer onwards to Channel) should be set out within the relevant policies. Whilst Kate Dixon has suggested that discussions are taking place between the Home Office and the Department for Education,⁵¹ it might be considered a missed opportunity if national policy is directed to feedback to schools only.

⁴⁹ LANC000175_0168.

⁵⁰ Anna Jameson (28th October, 108:7-109:6).

⁵¹ Kate Dixon (27th October, 102:13-104:5).

Record keeping

50. CTPNW acknowledges that there were instances of poor record keeping, for example in respect of what (if any) internet or social media checks were conducted. As the Inquiry has heard, CTPNW have now updated the forms used to record social media searches.⁵²

C. THE FIRST PREVENT REFERRAL

51. The first Prevent referral was made by Janet Lewis, the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the Acorns School on 5th December 2019. This was around 3 weeks after AR was observed looking at a webpage concerning school shootings.⁵³
52. Shortly after Ms Lewis' email was received and on the same day, Officer A contacted Ms Lewis to ask that she resubmit the referral and asked that she set out her concerns using the appropriate Prevent form [LANC000175_0021-0025]. It was reasonable and appropriate for Officer A to request Ms Lewis to provide further information and to set that out within the relevant form (which was provided as an attachment to Officer A's email). Officer A has explained his rationale at in his second statement at §§16-20, 27-31 and 34-37 [CTPNW000417_0005-0010]. In summary, the referrer's concerns were not clear from the covering email (the substance of which read "Please find attached a referral for [AR]") and attachments. The form has been designed to capture relevant information and to ensure that the referrer's concerns are clearly identified so that these are not otherwise missed.

The internet browsing history

53. The Inquiry has explored at some length which documents were provided by the Acorns School to Prevent and in particular whether AR's internet browsing history from 15th November 2019 [LCC001401] was ever provided. Ms Hodson has asserted that LCC001401 "was...provided to Prevent as an attachment to the referral made on 5 December 2019".⁵⁴ Upon the Inquiry seeking further information, Ms Hodson provided a second statement [ACO000004] in which she explained that having analysed the CTPNW

⁵² Officer B's first statement, §§40-42 [CTPNW000175_0009-0010]; Officer B (8th October, 146:5-17); and 'COSII Research Document' [CTPNW000375]. See also DS James Neale W/S §126 [CTPNW000166_0032].

⁵³ Janet Lewis explained why she did not make a Prevent referral purely on the basis of the school shootings CPOMS entry (W/S, §§8-9 [LCC001774_0003] and 23rd October, 60:18-24). See also Joanne Hodson W/S, §149 [LCC001773_0039-0040].

⁵⁴ Joanne Hodson first W/S, §133 [LCC001773_0036].

emails in LANC000175 she thought Ms Lewis had sent two emails (at 16:10 and 18:32) inferring that the internet browsing history was likely to be attached to the one which did not contain the attachments labelled “Axel Rhudakubana [sic] Current CPOMS.pdf.txt” and “Re_Child AR_Urgent_safeguarding.zip.txt”.⁵⁵

54. The Inquiry can properly conclude that the Acorns School did not provide to CTPNW the internet browsing history. That was despite requests by CTPNW for that browsing history.
55. First, Ms Lewis, as the person making the referral, does not recall sending it to Prevent, nor indeed even seeing the internet browsing history.⁵⁶
56. Second, there is no contemporaneous record of the internet browsing history having been sent. The Acorns School have not retained the emails themselves,⁵⁷ and no note was made on CPOMS as to precisely what documents were submitted.⁵⁸
57. The emails retained and made available by Lancashire Police are not as helpful as may have been wished: attachments appear not to have been recoverable and the times and dates have become corrupted. However, insofar as Ms Hodson has pointed to two emails being sent on 5th December 2019 with one at 18:32 (see LANC000175_0020) this is clearly explained as a corruption of the data.⁵⁹ The point was explored with Ms Lewis (23rd October, 52:18-54:8)
58. It was (faintly) suggested in questions to Ms Lewis and Officer B⁶⁰ that, aside from the email purportedly timed at 18:32, there may have been emails sent at 16:06⁶¹ and 16:10 on 5th December 2019. As to that possibility, the Inquiry should proceed with some caution:
(i) it is known that the email dates and times are unreliable; (ii) the text of the two emails appearing at pages 42 (“16:06”) and 21 (“16:10”) are identical; and (iii) there is no

⁵⁵ Ms Hodson has explained the content of the zip folder in her second statement at §7 [ACO000004_0002].

⁵⁶ Janet Lewis W/S, §§11 and 29 [LCC001774_0004 & 0007] and 23rd October, 49:8-50:23. As to §11 of Ms Lewis’ statement it will be recalled that this was explored with her as there is no evidence that any Prevent police officers attended the Acorns School as described by her (23rd October, 48:10-49:7).

⁵⁷ Joanne Hodson second W/S, §2 [ACO000004_0001].

⁵⁸ Joanne Hodson first W/S, §136 [LCC001773_0037].

⁵⁹ Aside from the fact that so many emails purport to have been sent at 18:32 (which is itself improbable), the point is clearly illustrated by comparing (as examples) the times recorded at LANC000175_0071 which shows an email timed at 6.32pm, but is clearly incorrect when compared to the same email within the embedded chain at page 72 (the time is 13.00). Page 73 shows an email timed at 6.32pm (which is in fact a response to the email at page 71), but is clearly incorrect when compared to the same email within the embedded chain at page 74 (the time is 13.10). Page 88 which shows an email timed at 6.32pm, but is clearly incorrect when compared to the same email within the embedded chain at page 89 (the time is 09.23) – and is obviously not 6.32pm as it refers to event which was to happen at “1400hrs today”.

⁶⁰ Officer B (8th October, 135:6-22).

⁶¹ In questioning Ms Lewis, CTI referred to “4.04” which appears to have been an error and should have been “4.06”.

suggestion in either email that there was to be two emails sent in short succession (e.g. “further email to follow” or “email 1 of 2” etc), nor that the first was sent prematurely (*cf* Ms Lewis’ email at page 42: “Apologies I forgot to attach the completed referral form.”)

59. Third, in oral evidence Ms Hodson suggested at one point that the internet browsing history had been printed off and handed over a strategy meeting (23rd October, 178:4-181:21). Noting that even Ms Hodson appeared to be unsure whether this did happen (when asked whether the document was discussed at the meeting “with it all in front of you”, she conceded “I can’t remember”)⁶², this is inherently unlikely:

- a. There is no record in either set of the minutes of the multi-agency meetings on 17th December 2019 or 6th January 2020 that this happened.
- b. It is inconsistent with DC Paula Murphy’s evidence that a request was made of Acorns School for the internet browsing history but that this was never provided “because the search history was no longer available”;⁶³
- c. It was not noted by PC Thompson in her daybook [CTPNW000157] (despite the quality and detail of those notes), nor in her Action Result Documents [CTPNW000132 and CTPNW000134]. To the contrary, in her notes of the meeting on 17th December 2019 PC Thompson recorded that “Acorns IT are looking [unclear] internet searches” [CTPNW000157_0015]. That is consistent with Officer B’s understanding.
- d. Bearing in mind LCC001401 is a 522-page of dates, times and URLs – it is unlikely it would have had any meaning or utility if provided in printed hardcopy. It would, in Ms Hodson’s own words, have appeared “just as a list of gobbledygook”.⁶⁴

60. The Inquiry can be satisfied the internet browsing history was not provided in either of the multi-agency strategy meetings.

61. Fourth, it is not just that there is an absence from the contemporaneous records, there is in fact strong positive evidence that the internet browsing history was not provided to Prevent:

- a. On 10th December 2019 Officer B made a record of having spoken with Ms Lewis about the very issue: “I have recontacted [sic] Jan as we do not have any details of the internet search history or what he was looking at Jan will be contacting the

⁶² Joanne Hodson (23rd October, 181:16-21). The suggestion that a printed document was physically handed over in the meeting is not mentioned in either of Ms Hodson’s statements.

⁶³ DC Paula Murphy W/S, §33 [MERP007786_0010].

⁶⁴ Joanne Hodson (23rd October, 181:14-15).

school IT provider to obtain this information if this is still available.”⁶⁵ Had Ms Lewis in fact sent the internet browsing history a matter of days before she would have remembered doing so at the time (23rd October, 58:11-14). She would not have said, as recorded by Officer B, that she would contact the IT provided to obtain the information if it was still available.

- b. Shortly afterwards, Officer B completed parts of the JAT Research Document [CTPNW000146] in which he noted:

“The school have not provided the URL or details of the internet history of Axel — (they have been spoken to on 10/12/2019 and are making enquiries with their internet provider if they can obtain this information).”

- c. On CPOMS there is an entry dated 18th November 2019 in which it is recorded [LCC001346_0071]:

“Dad returned call a few minutes later, informing SE that AR said he had only copied behaviour of another student, and that he had clicked on a hyperlink to a news story. Mrs Martindale was present during the telephone conversation and said that she would need a few days to get a copy of AR’s browser history. SE then informed dad that she would get back to him once this information was available.”

This entry appears to have been “edited” by Ms Lewis at 09:11 on 5th December 2019. CTPNW is unaware of any record that anyone at Acorns School provided the internet browsing history to AR’s father.

62. Fifth, DC Paula Murphy’s evidence (both in her statement and oral evidence) is that despite the Merseyside Police criminal investigators requesting a copy of the internet browsing history, this was never provided.⁶⁶ Had the document been provided to Prevent, it is inconceivable that a responsible organisation such as Acorns School would have failed to provide it to criminal investigators.
63. For the foregoing reasons, the Inquiry should conclude that the school internet browsing history was not provided to Prevent. That was despite requests for it: Officer B had spoken with Ms Lewis and had asked for sight of it, although the suggestion then was that the data may not have been available and enquiries were to be made. PC Thompson had attended at least one multi-agency meeting where the browsing history had been raised (as noted by PC Thompson in her daybook). Further, Merseyside Police had requested the internet browsing history (see DC Murphy’s evidence): PC Thompson was aware of this.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ LANC000175_0066.

⁶⁶ DC Paula Murphy W/S, §33 [MERP007786_0010] and 6th October, 67:16-68:18.

⁶⁷ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 76:13-22).

64. Officer B was asked whether he should have awaited receipt of the internet browsing history before submitting the referral to the JAT for assessment. He explained:⁶⁸
- “I would have had to balance risk and threat, which was on the Prevent referral form. So, at the time, I had made the decision to send it on to the JAT.
- Q. In other words, you don’t want to sit and wait for somebody else to see how long it takes them to get something. You have got to balance what that extra information might bring with the need to move at pace, to use a horrible cliché, on dealing with the risks on the referral?
- A. That’s correct, because it could take a number of days or even longer.”
65. That is an entirely fair position: there is clearly an imperative to refer a potential terrorism concern to the JAT as soon as practicable so that they can conduct their assessment. Equally, it is important that a referral made to Prevent is not delayed by a FIMU which would inevitably delay any assessment by Prevent.
66. PC Thompson was asked about the school internet browsing history. She accepted that based on the description provided of “gory and very unpleasant degloving injuries” and “repeated searching for glue guns”, this “raises the level of concern significantly”.⁶⁹ Based on CTP’s description of what the browsing history showed, she would have referred AR to Channel. PC Thompson accepted that she or the FIMU should have obtained the school internet browsing history before closing the referral.⁷⁰ DCS Kenwright agreed that it would have been useful to have seen the school internet browsing history before the referral was closed and ideally should have chased for it, although noted that DC Murphy of Merseyside Police was also seeking that data.⁷¹

AR’s digital devices

67. The Inquiry has also explored with PC Thompson whether she should have awaited the outcome of the analysis of AR’s digital devices conducted by Merseyside Police.
68. Both PC Thompson and Officer B had specifically asked to be informed if anything of relevance was found by Merseyside Police. On 12th December 2019 Officer B sent an email to DC Murphy’s supervisor, DS Chris Smith [MERP002566_0004]. Officer B informed DS Smith that AR is the subject of a Prevent referral and asked:

“please can you update me with the outcome, and pass my details to the OIC in relation to the computer/mobile seizures.”

⁶⁸ Officer B (8th October, 148:1-15).

⁶⁹ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 76:25-78:6).

⁷⁰ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 78:18-25 & 106:25-107:7).

⁷¹ DCS Sarah Kenwright (13th October, 136:13-24).

69. The minutes of the multi-agency meeting of 17th December 2019 record that at that time Merseyside Police believed the analysis of AR’s digital devices “could take up to 3 months”.⁷² PC Thompson was aware of this.⁷³
70. She has explained that her understanding was that Merseyside Police were to examine the devices and would inform her if anything of concern was found.⁷⁴ That is consistent with PC Thompson’s Action Result Document following the multi-agency strategy meeting on 6th January 2020 [CTPNW000134]:
- “The investigation in relation to the recent assault is still ongoing with Merseyside Police and awaiting a CPS decision. The devices are being examined, the school internet history is also being looked at by Merseyside Police, they will update accordingly with any concerns found.”
71. Merseyside Police did not inform PC Thompson, Prevent or CTPNW more generally of anything of concern having been found. DC Murphy has explained this is because “we had nothing to provide to them”.⁷⁵ It is now known that Merseyside Police searched for *inter alia* the terms ‘beheading’ and ‘shooting’ across the devices seized without identifying anything responsive to those terms [MERP008359_0115].
72. It is important to recall that at the material time PC Thompson was not an investigator: Merseyside Police had possession of AR’s digital devices (seized pursuant to their powers) and were in the process of reviewing them.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, as DCS Kenwright has accepted, there was the possibility for further liaison and information sharing.⁷⁷
73. Whilst the FIMU and Prevent could have awaited receipt of AR’s school internet browsing history and Merseyside Police’s download and analysis of AR’s seized electronic devices, this would have delayed decisions which needed to be taken and would have sat uncomfortably with the relevant policies at the time. For example, under the ‘*Prevent Case Management by CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors*’ (August 2020) [CTPHQ000117], there was an expectation that Prevent Gateway Assessments were completed within 5 working days of receipt from the FIMU:

“The PGAs must be completed within 5 working days of receipt from a FIMU, following deconfliction, or as close to 5 working days as is reasonably practicable within the unique circumstances of the Case. CTCOs and CTCO Supervisors

⁷² LANC000004_0004.

⁷³ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 62:17-20).

⁷⁴ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §§38 & 44 [CTPNW000180_0009 & 0010].

⁷⁵ DC Paula Murphy W/S, §55 [MERP007786_0014-0015].

⁷⁶ See also DS James Neale W/S, §111 [CTPNW000166_0028] for his observations about Prevent’s powers.

⁷⁷ DCS Sarah Kenwright W/S, §8.29 [CTPNW000169_0042] and 13th October, 138:14-140:9.

should be aware of Cases that have exceeded this 5 working day period and update them accordingly.”⁷⁸

74. CTCO supervisors are instructed to “Supervise DIFs completed for PGAs, ensuring they are completed within 5 working days of receipt from FIMU.”⁷⁹

75. In Dovetail sites (emphasis original):

“Cases assessed as potentially suitable for Channel must be referred to the Local Authority LACC **within 5 working days** of receiving a de-conflicted referral after the FIMU assessment, or as close to this as is reasonably practicable.”⁸⁰

76. In non-Dovetail sites, after the PGA decision has been made, “CTCOs will manage PCM cases on the PCMT throughout the Information Gathering process with Partners (after the PGA phase), until such a time as they are ready to make a S.36 Decision, although this must be **no more than 20 days** following FIMU de-confliction and assessment.”⁸¹ *The Counter-Terrorism Case Officer Guide: ‘One-Stop-Shop’ for CTCOs & CTCO Supervisors* (August 2020) explains that after FIMU de-confliction, a s.36 decision “**must** be made for a referral within 20 working days”, describing this as “**MANDATORY MAX 20 Working Days from Suitability Date**” (emphasis original) [CTPHQ000034_0045].

77. The August 2020 version of the ‘One-Stop-Shop’ document explained [CTPHQ000034_0071-0072] (emphasis original):

“(1) THE PGA PHASE IS NOT COMPLETE UNTIL THE DECISION IS APPROVED BY A CTCO SUPERVISOR.

...

(b) CAUTION: if it is likely that you will not be able to address the case for several days after forwarding it into the information gathering phase, and you have not investigated every section of the DIF, there is a danger that some risks may be present, imminent and unaddressed in the meantime.”

78. The caution was significantly strengthened within the December 2020 iteration of the ‘One-Stop-Shop’ document [CTPHQ000115_0071] (emphasis added):

“(c) CAUTION: if it is likely that you will not be able to address the case for several days after forwarding it into the information gathering phase, and you have not investigated every section of the DIF, there is a danger that some risks may be present, imminent and unaddressed in the meantime. If Subjects go on to harm themselves or others, or commit any terrorism related offences that might have been picked up on had the CTCO completed a fully detailed PGA, this is a failure of duty and responsibility rests squarely with the CTCO and the approving Supervisor. In any event, no boxes on the DIF form may be left blank for a PGA, so an explanation is still required as to why a box is being “missed”, even when the

⁷⁸ CTPHQ000117_0021.

⁷⁹ CTPHQ000117_0013.

⁸⁰ CTPHQ000117_0026.

⁸¹ CTPHQ000117_0026-0027 (emphasis original).

decision is to keep the case in PCM and forward straight into non-Dovetail information gathering.”

79. Given the foregoing, it was right for PC Thompson and DS Neale to take their decisions about referral to Dovetail / Channel without sight of the browsing history etc (because of the need for expedition and certainty). However, either the referral should not have been closed until the results of the searches were known or this should have been identified at the point of conducting the 6 months review. An expectation that referrals be kept open until all possible lines of enquiry have been exhausted is not consistent with the current guidance and would raise significant challenges to the effective and efficient operation of Prevent. As it was, AR’s vulnerabilities were clearly identified by PC Thompson and that information was shared at least with Lancashire County Council.⁸²
80. PC Thompson was clear that agencies could re-refer AR. As she explains in her statement (at §39) [CTPNW000180_0009]:

“When the referral was closed, it was on the basis that matters would be looked at again if any further information was referred in. The fact that the case was closed does not mean that is an end to it, if circumstances changed the case could be reopened.”

The Vulnerability Support Hub

81. AR’s mental health and possible Autism Spectrum Disorder had been identified at an early stage. PC Thompson has explained that she had intended to refer AR’s case to the Vulnerability Support Hub (“VSH”).⁸³ She explained the support which the VSH could offer.⁸⁴
82. PS Thompson accepted that the records appear to show that she overlooked contacting the VSH. That, she accepted, was an error but not a significant one given the other involvement AR had with mental health professionals at the time.⁸⁵

Professional curiosity and consideration of disguised compliance

83. It is expected that CTCOs – like all police officers – should be professionally curious and be aware of the possibility of disguised compliance. PC Thompson is an experienced police officer who had a background in working with children, children with mental health

⁸² LANC000175_0168-0170.

⁸³ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §31 [CTPNW000180_0008].

⁸⁴ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 73:20-74:5). At §2.15 of her statement [CTPNW000169_0007], DCS Kenwright explains the support which the VSH may have been able to provide.

⁸⁵ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 85:5-88:21).

diagnoses and troubled families.⁸⁶ She felt confident in her role and had daily discussions with other officers about her cases.⁸⁷ As was apparent from when she gave evidence, she is a thoughtful, careful and reflective police officer. Her notes indicate a diligent approach. By background, training and character it might reasonably be concluded that PC Thompson is highly suited to working in Prevent.

84. PC Thompson exhibited professional curiosity and, in some instances, went beyond what the policies prescribed:
- a. From an early point she was in contact with Merseyside Police and Lancashire Police. In respect of the latter, the Inquiry has explored PC Thompson's email to PC Paul Harrison of Lancashire Police [LANC000109]. In that email (sent at 07:07 on 17th December 2019), PC Thompson wrote that she would be attending the strategy meeting later that morning and that AR "will be coming to Prevent". She has explained that she meant she would be conducting an assessment as to whether Prevent would consider referring AR to Channel, but accepted that her language was open to misinterpretation.⁸⁸ In any event, it would have been apparent from the meeting a matter of hours later that PC Thompson had not in fact decided that AR was to be referred for adoption by Dovetail/Channel: the minutes of the meeting record PC Thompson saying "she will be completing an assessment regarding [AR] and considering if a referral to [the] channel programme would be appropriate for him."⁸⁹ As such, the Inquiry should reject PS Andrew Bramhall's contention that "Prevent owned the case", "Prevent who had over-arching responsibility for [AR]" and variations on that theme.⁹⁰
 - b. On 17th December 2019 and 6th January 2020 PC Thompson attended the multi-agency strategy meetings.
 - c. PC Thompson visited AR's home and met with him and his father.⁹¹ She conducted this visit with another CTCO, PC Christopher Lawrence.

⁸⁶ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 3:9-4:18).

⁸⁷ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 11:3-12:16).

⁸⁸ PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 59:5-61:2).

⁸⁹ LANC000004_0006. Under "Agreed actions" it was noted "Prevent team to commence initial assessment" [LANC000004_0007].

⁹⁰ PS Andrew Bramhall W/S, §§26, 28, 29, 32, 34 and 38 [LANC000004]. This was explored with PS Bramhall when he gave evidence (6th October, 42:17-45:8). This was also explored with ACC Mark Winstanley (8th October, 51:7-54:10). In short, the contention that Prevent had "over-arching responsibility for [AR]" only makes sense if one chooses to ignore the information provided during the multi-agency strategy meeting.

⁹¹ PC Carmen Thompson W/S, §§33-41 [CTPNW000180].

- d. As detailed above, PC Thompson did take steps to obtain the school internet browsing history and the results of the analysis of AR's digital devices.
 - e. PC Thompson did make contact with Ms Lewis as the person making the referral. Following the second referral, PC Thompson made contact with Ms Lewis to discuss the referral [LCC001526_0003]. The concerns expressed by Maggie Allred in her email [LCC001526_0002] were not shared with PC Thompson.⁹²
85. Additionally, it is important to recall that a CTCO is not an investigator: Prevent has a specific remit. Not being investigators, CTCOs do not have available to them the powers which an investigating officer may have (where a criminal offence is suspected to have been committed etc), and therefore her actions must be understood in context. However, as PC Thompson accepted there were further steps she could and should have taken (see above).
86. The possibility of disguised compliance was known by PC Thompson. She visited AR's home with an experienced colleague. She spoke with AR's father and at that stage there was no indication from any other agencies that he was not a fit and proper person. In hindsight, there were further elements of AR's accounts which should have increased the level of concern that he was not being honest when he spoke with PC Thompson and her colleague in January 2020. These were explored with PC Thompson in her evidence. In judging PC Thompson it would be fair to note that these issues had not been identified by the three reviews following the Southport attack.

Whether the threshold to refer was met

87. The CTCO concluded that there were not reasonable grounds to suspect that AR was vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Those decisions were subjective decisions taken in good faith by an experienced CTCO applying a threshold which necessarily required a judgement to be made on the information reasonably available. Those decisions were scrutinised by two different supervisors who agreed with the decision to close the referrals and not refer onwards to Dovetail/Channel.
88. As set out above, PC Thompson, DS Neale and PS Treharne were aware of the substance of the joint letter and applied that when making their decisions, which are recorded within the Prevent Case Management Trackers [CTPNW000122, CTPNW000124 and

⁹² PC Carmen Thompson (9th October, 118:19-119:1).

CTPNW000125]. PC Thompson summarises her rationale at §§71-73 of her statement [CTPNW000180_0016].

89. Whilst acknowledging that further steps should have been taken by PC Thompson before the decision to close the referrals was made (as discussed above), CTPNW does not consider on information presented that at the time of the referrals there were reasonable grounds to suspect that AR was vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.⁹³
90. As explained above, the policies and guidance were clear that CTCOs and CTCO supervisors were directed to consider whether the subject of a referral had an ‘obsession’ or ‘fascination’ with mass-casualty attacks or school massacres. Had the school internet browsing history have been obtained, it would need to have been analysed. Officer B and Officer A explain that this would not have been straightforward (Officer B (8th October, 146:18-147:9); Officer B’s second statement, §27 [CTPNW000419_0007]; and Officer A’s second statement, §§45-50 [CTPNW000417_0011-0013]). Had the search history been analysed it would have shown that AR had accessed one article on the Daily Mail website about a school shooting which had happened the day before in Santa Clarita, California. It was one of the leading (if not the leading) news stories of the day. With that additional context, CTPNW does not consider there was evidence that it can be said that at that stage AR was “obsessed” or “fascinated” with mass-casualty attacks or school massacres.
91. It is noted that AR was searching for and may have accessed degloving injuries and glue guns. The former is particularly concerning, but it is far from unusual amongst the cohort of individuals who are referred to Prevent and who are not adopted by Channel panels. Nor is it unusual for individuals to complain of bullying or have grievances against those whom they accuse of bullying. This is not to minimise AR’s conduct which was plainly criminal by December 2019, however this is the context in which Prevent referrals must be considered.
92. Emphasis has been placed by others (see, for example, §3.17 of Lord Anderson’s report [CTPNW000114_0065]) on PC Blundell’s observation in the JAT Research Document [CTPNW000146_0003-0004] that “consideration now that there is a Local Authority MASH led intervention following arrest and previous history at both schools that preference would be for continuance and recommend Dovetail team and Channel Panel are sighted with regards safe-guarding and AR vulnerabilities going forward”. This was

⁹³ DCS Sarah Kenwright (13th October, 165:7-166:4).

recorded under the 'JAT Outcome' of "PREVENT/ Local Authority MASH". PC Blundell has explained his assessment and the wording used:

"43. ... in my view the fact that AR was looking at school shootings did not mean he possessed a CT/DE ideology or an obsession with violence that would meet the relevant threshold. Having reviewed the papers, my assessment was that he was a troubled 13-year-old with clear vulnerabilities. As a result of those concerns, I recommended a Prevent referral for them to conduct a full assessment of the matter and make their own decision on the next steps.

46. I did not intend to instruct Prevent to make a referral to Channel or Dovetail, as this is not within my role. When writing outcomes, I would often make considerations for the reporting officer to develop further, in this case that Dovetail and Channel be sighted.

47. Having reflected on my assessment, I am not sure if this was how Prevent operated and whether there was in fact a process in place for Channel and Dovetail to be 'sighted' without a full referral taking place. I was aware that there was a threshold for a Prevent to make a full referral to Channel, but did not know the detail of those thresholds as this would have been a matter for Prevent. I accept I should have written more within my outcome rationale to set out the detail of my discussion and the matters we had considered, and to ensure the recommendations were clear for anyone reviewing in the future. In the external reviews that have been undertaken on AR's case, this seems to have been construed as a direct instruction for Prevent which would never have been part of my thinking. In hindsight, if I could review my wording it would have been better to say "For consideration" that Dovetail and Channel are sighted on this document."⁹⁴

93. See also PC Blundell's oral evidence (8th October, 192:21-201:11). In short, PC Blundell was seeking to expedite matters outside of the normal processes. What he had hoped to achieve was that Prevent would share the information in the referral with other agencies:

"Q. Thank you. Just in terms of the idea that Dovetail or Channel would be sighted on something, did that mean that they would take on the referral and take it forward?

A. No, it is so they were made aware -- at that time, knowingly that they were aware of the incidents that had occurred at both Range and Acorns, I knew that the police had been to a MASH, a safeguarding meeting. I was not aware at that time if they were sighted on this information and I recommended that they were sighted on this information."⁹⁵

94. PC Blundell's assessment was conducted on 13th December 2019 (a Friday): PC Thompson attended the multi-agency strategy meeting with the various agencies PC Blundell identified the following Wednesday. At that meeting she did what PC Blundell had in mind by sharing the information contained within the Prevent referral.

⁹⁴ PC Philip Blundell W/S, §§46-47 [CTPNW000171_0013].

⁹⁵ PC Philip Blundell (8th October, 199:5-15).

D. THE SECOND AND THIRD PREVENT REFERRALS

95. The second and third referrals were opportunities to reconsider AR's vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism or otherwise radicalised. As evidenced within the PCMTs, those vulnerabilities were considered.
96. The Inquiry has explored whether the subsequent referrals were considered holistically. As to that, the following points are made. Most significantly, the same CTCO considered all three referrals. The second and third referrals were considered by the same CTCO supervisor. Hence, there was continuity and knowledge across the referrals. As documented within the PCMTs there was not only an awareness of the earlier referrals but they were expressly referred to.⁹⁶ Although AR's name was subsequently misspelled this made no difference to the treatment of the referrals.
97. Whilst CTPNW accepts that repeat referrals should be looked at holistically, that does not mean that earlier referrals can or should be reinvestigated, including whether all possible actions from earlier referrals were in fact completed. Based on the systems in place at the time, that would have been unrealistic and impractical. Those systems have now been changed so that actions must either be completed before a PCMT is closed or an explanation recorded as to why they have not.⁹⁷

E. WHAT MAY HAVE HAPPENED IF AR HAD BEEN REFERRED TO DOVETAIL / CHANNEL

98. It was said by one witness that she was shocked that the first Prevent referral did not get referred to Channel "because I think, to try and nip something in the bud, so to speak, I think possibly would have prevented a lot of what happened."⁹⁸ As noted at paragraph 10 above, the Inquiry should guard against assuming that Prevent was the panacea to AR's case.
99. Had AR been referred to Dovetail/Channel it is far from clear that this would have resulted in him receiving intervention support.
100. First, AR would need to have been adopted by Dovetail/Channel. The Inquiry has received a statement from Sakthi Karunanithi, Director of Public Health employed by Lancashire

⁹⁶ CTPNW000124; CTPNW000125; and see PS Rachael Treharne W/S, §§81-82 [CTPNW000177_0020-0021]

⁹⁷ DAC Victoria Evans W/S, §54 [CTPHQ000006_0013] and 14th October, 95:25-97:21.

⁹⁸ Janet Lewis (23rd October, 74:12-14).

County Council [LCC001928]. The Inquiry did not to call Dr Karunanithi. Dr Karunanithi states:

“Had the referrals been sent to the Dovetail Channel team, it is my expectation, they would have passed the Section 36 consideration and progressed through to the Channel panel.”⁹⁹

101. It is, with respect, difficult to understand the basis for Dr Karunanithi’s conclusion that if any or all of the three referrals had been referred to Dovetail they would have passed the s.36 test:

- a. First, it is unclear from Dr Karunanithi’s statement the extent of his involvement with Dovetail/Channel or Prevent during the material time (at §3 of his statement he explains he has been “the director corporately responsible for Prevent since October 2024”).
- b. Second, he had no personal involvement with AR or his family (§4 of his statement).
- c. Third, “LCC has access to limited data regarding Prevent referrals in the pan-Lancashire area for the last four years” (§36 of his statement).
- d. Fourth, it is unclear from his statement what material Dr Karunanithi considered in formulating his conclusion that the s.36 threshold would have been met for all three referrals. In that context it is noted that he was unable to comment on the reasons why AR was not referred to Dovetail/Channel “as this is a matter for the police” (§49 of his statement).
- e. Fifth, Dr Karunanithi’s conclusion that all three of AR’s referrals would have been accepted is at odds with the statistics. As noted by Lord Anderson: in the year when AR was first referred, only 4% of Prevent referrals in England and Wales with mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies (127 out of 3,203) were adopted into Channel. Although the North West region saw the highest number of mixed, unclear and unstable ideologies cases adopted into Channel, the proportion was still only 7% [CTPNW000114_0079].

102. Overall, therefore, the Inquiry should approach Dr Karunanithi’s confident assertion with some caution.

103. Second, AR and / or his parents would have needed to consent to take part in Dovetail/Channel. The Inquiry has heard much evidence which would strongly suggest

⁹⁹ Sakthi Karunanithi W/S, §49 [LCC001928_0013]. This conclusion was put to Cathryn Ellsmore of the Home Office (13th October, 57:12-18).

that consent may not have been provided, but even if consent had been achieved, it would have been short-lived or sporadic. Most relevantly, the Inquiry has seen the efforts by AR's father to manipulate agencies and to avoid sharing information amongst themselves: in a WhatsApp message from around early November 2020 Alphonse R objected to the sharing of information with the Youth Offending Team (a body which might be thought to have some parallels with Prevent / Channel).¹⁰⁰

104. Alphonse R regarded the reporting from the Acorns School as "malicious".¹⁰¹ He was asked:

"Do you think you -- did you think you did just dismiss the Prevent referrals as being inappropriate action being taken by the school that you wanted to undermine?"

A. I didn't agree with the first referral. I didn't -- if I was asked to support it, I would have disagreed. The second referral, I would have said okay, you got him now, I would have supported it because I think it's inappropriate. He has all the time to come home and access the computers. I don't know why he goes and break the school rules.

The third one, I would have challenged it but my input was not required and I think the fact that they didn't take it any further, it was a proof that I was right because I had no role to play in influencing in any way what that Prevent, which it was an abstract concept for me --"¹⁰²

105. Third, AR would have needed to engage with an intervention provider or providers. The Inquiry has received evidence from those who attempted to engage with AR in a variety of different contexts. DCS Kenwright has also explained that at the time the intervention providers available who might have been able to support someone with a fixation on violence was more limited than those with an identified ideology:

"I just don't know if there was the breadth of intervention providers that we have available to us now. So they were very ideology based, traditional ideology based at the relevant time.

Q. But this is right, isn't it, that would there have been the availability of mentoring at that time?

A. I would have to double check but I think the mentoring was more around like intervention provision, and that being about very much around sort of religious ideologies and giving an alternative, more moderate view to individuals, who were potentially interpreting religion in a certain way.

¹⁰⁰ He wrote: "I don't get why the YOT in charge of punishing [AR] has anything to do with your assessment report. We don't want them in this matter please. They should not know more than they need to see out their enforcement work..." [LCC002302_0036-0037].

¹⁰¹ Alphonse R (5th November, 181:11-13).

¹⁰² Alphonse R (5th November, 181:22-182:13).

I think we have got a much better breadth of intervention providers now that would assist CTCOs with both the sort of school massacre ideologies and the violent fixation elements that we see in the case work.”¹⁰³

106. Bearing in mind the foregoing, it would be speculative to conclude that even if AR had been referred to Dovetail/Channel, this would have resulted in meaningful engagement by him. In this context, CTPNW does repeat that the multi-agency arrangements which would have been in place under Dovetail/Channel either were (at the time of the first referral) or should have been (at the later stages) in place.

F. EVENTS FOLLOWING THE THIRD PREVENT REFERRAL

107. The Inquiry has explored various events which post-dated the closure of third Prevent referral, but which were not re-referred to Prevent (or otherwise made known to CTPNW). Most obviously, CTPNW was not informed of (and therefore not aware of until after 29th July 2024):

- a. AR’s comments in October 2021 to a Family Support Worker (and as recorded on Lancashire County Council’s Case Notes) about the Taliban (amongst other matters).
- b. AR having made comments in January 2022 about the Holocaust, the death of Princess Diana, water poisonings or saying that sometimes violence was necessary.
- c. AR having been found by Lancashire Police officers in March 2022 having been reported missing and found with a knife on a bus and having made comments about wanting to stab people and having made, or wanting to make, poison.¹⁰⁴
- d. AR’s use and threat of use of violence within his home.

108. It is now known that AR had purchased or attempted to purchase various items including knives and other weapons. This was not reported to CTPNW.

109. Similarly, it is now known that AR used his personal computers to access graphic and extreme material (as summarised at §§70-72 of DCI Jason Pye’s first statement [MERP007551_0019-0022]). As DCI Pye confirmed in evidence, these materials all post-dated the closure of the third Prevent referral (24th September, 25:22-26:6).

¹⁰³ DCS Sarah Kenwright (13th October, 172:16-173:19).

¹⁰⁴ DCS Kenwright was asked about what steps might have been taken if the March 2022 incident had been the subject of a referral to Prevent (13th October, 179:17-180:9).

110. Prior to 29th July 2024, the handling of repeat Prevent referrals had been the subject of review which had resulted in specific policy guidance (see DCS Sarah Kenwright’s statement, paragraphs 8.40-8.44 [CTPNW000169_0046-0047] and PS Rachael Treharne’s statement, paragraph 94 [CTPNW000177_0024]).
111. The Inquiry has heard evidence from various witnesses about the apparent reliance which they placed on either the fact that a Prevent referral had been made or the outcomes of those referrals.¹⁰⁵ Some have gone so far as to say that they took reassurance as to broad risks posed by AR as a result of decisions by Prevent to not refer AR to Dovetail/Channel. This was apparently the case even though they had limited information, at best second-hand, as to what Prevent had considered or decided.
112. Whilst, noting the lack of contemporaneous documentation which records that this was in fact an operative factor in the individuals’ decisions, it is of significant concern to CTPNW that inappropriate weight may have been placed on these decisions. In some instances, the assessment made by Prevent (and which was shared with Lancashire County Council) was materially misstated (i.e. that there was “no risk”).¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the outcome of the first referral expressly identified AR’s vulnerability and the need for support by other agencies. In any event, it is plainly dangerous for individuals or organisations to rely upon an assessment made, potentially years earlier, without seeking further input or guidance from Prevent. This evidence has brought into focus the need for greater clarity on what Prevent is assessing and that this is better communicated nationally through clearer guidance.
113. There has also been evidence about the absence of a Prevent ‘flag’ or ‘marker’ on the Police National Computer. In 2023 / 2024 CTPHQ published a ‘*Prevent PNC Marker policy*’ [CTPHQ000019], however this applies to individuals “being managed within Prevent” and where a positive s.36 decision has been made. Hence, even under this policy a flag or marker would not be added simply because an individual had been referred to Prevent.
114. As to AR’s parents, the Inquiry should not hesitate in finding that they fundamentally failed in their duties as parents and members of society to take reasonable and sufficient steps to alert the authorities to the obvious (to them) risks posed by their son. The Inquiry has

¹⁰⁵ See, for example: Dr Anthony Molyneux (20th October, 24:11-15, 31:12-34:11 & 78:17-79:17); Dr Lakshmi Ramasubramanian (20th October, 106:2-110:18); and Anna Jameson (28th October, 90:9-13).

¹⁰⁶ The notes of a ‘Team around the Family’ meeting on 19th May 2020 record Anna Croll erroneously reporting that there was no role for Prevent “deemed as no risk” [LCC001018]. Sarah Callon was asked about this but could not say where her colleague got this information (27th October, 212:9-213:2). This is materially different to the information provided by PC Thompson and was documented within the Lancashire County Council’s Case Notes [LCC002301_0014].

heard that Prevent referrals can and are made by the family and friends of those who may be vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism etc. It is of some concern that the latest data (released on the final day of evidence) shows a decrease in the number of referrals by the community and from friends and family, whereas the general trend is for significantly higher referrals.¹⁰⁷

G. RECOMMENDATIONS

115. CTPNW continues to work with CTPHQ and the Home Office to better improve Prevent. CTPNW will seek to assist the Inquiry in Phase 2 of its important work. However, at this stage the Inquiry may wish to consider the following recommendations.
116. First, the need for a new scheme to deal with the increasing numbers of violence fixated individuals where their vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism is less obvious. CTPNW's experience, reflected in the most recent data nationally,¹⁰⁸ is that the number of such referrals has increased significantly. In part this reflects the ease with which individuals are now able to access violent and gory imagery on the internet. Such interests do not necessarily mean they are likely to go on to become terrorists, and yet the risk needs to be managed. As the Inquiry has heard, youth diversion orders would not have dealt with the risk presented by AR. What has been loaded onto Prevent has waxed and waned (see, for example, the views of Sir William Shawcross and response to his report). The Inquiry should take this opportunity to suggest a bold approach to dealing with individuals fixated by violence but who are not vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.
117. Second, there is plainly a need for a better understanding generally, but perhaps most particularly amongst healthcare authorities, as to the proper weight to be attached to a decision by Prevent following consideration of a referral by them.
118. Third, this is an opportunity to look to reduce the number of policies which are of potential relevance when considering a Prevent referral.

24th November 2025

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/individuals-referred-to-prevent-to-march-2025/individuals-referred-to-and-supported-through-the-prevent-programme-april-2024-to-march-2025>

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*