

# Southport Inquiry

## GUIDANCE NOTE ON COMMEMORATIVE AND IMPACT EVIDENCE HEARINGS

### Introduction

1. The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to those who wish to contribute to and participate in the commemorative and impact evidence hearings. The hearings will commemorate the children who were killed in the attack and will hear from those who were, or whose children were, victims and survivors of it and who have had their lives, and the lives of their children, changed forever.
2. The Inquiry is acutely aware that for those concerned, the process of engaging with the Inquiry to provide this information, will be a distressing and difficult experience. We know that recounting the thoughts and emotions of loss and injury and trauma will be very upsetting. This is a deeply personal and sensitive process, and it is entirely voluntary. We also know that some individuals and families will not be ready to speak about the impact of what happened. The Inquiry respects these intensely personal decisions. It is vital that no family member, survivor or other witness feels that they must participate in this process; it is a matter for each person whether and, if so, how they wish to be involved in this phase of the Inquiry. No one is required to share their experience if they do not wish to do so, and no one will be required to give evidence. The Chair and his legal team will assist potential witnesses to discuss how and if they wish to participate in the hearings and accommodate their wishes as far as possible.
3. The hearings will be the first substantive evidence heard by the Inquiry. They have two key purposes. First to commemorate those children who died and to explain who each girl who died was in life, to recognise their individuality and allow family members to set out the impact of their death. This is known as 'pen portrait' evidence. Second to hear the personal impact statements of those whose children were injured whether physically or psychologically, or from those who were injured themselves in the attack. The Chair considers it important to ensure that the Inquiry starts by hearing this evidence from all those who wish to give it. It will be a key starting point in framing the Inquiry's investigation into whether the attack could have been prevented. It will allow the Chair, his team, Core Participants and the wider public to understand the devastating effect of the attack in Southport and to ensure that the Inquiry has the experience of the victims and survivors at the heart of everything that follows.

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4. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the First Minded To note, which sets out the Chair's provisional views on:
  - a. Anonymity and ciphering for the victims (paragraph 12);
  - b. The approach to details of the extent of injuries inflicted (paragraph 13);
  - c. The suggested approach to this phase of the evidence in terms of being open to the public, with live-streaming to Core Participants, but without broadcasting (paragraph 22).

## **Pen portrait evidence from the bereaved families**

5. This part of the guidance sets out how a bereaved family can provide a pen portrait to the Inquiry.
6. As far as possible, the Inquiry will help each family to present their pen portrait in the style and format to best represent the child who is being commemorated. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Witness statement. As far as possible, there should be one statement on behalf of each child who died. The statement may be provided by multiple authors, and it would be helpful if you could explain who has contributed to the statement. A template statement that families can use to create their statement is appended to this guidance.
  - b. Video-recorded statement. If a family wishes to prepare a video for their pen portrait evidence, they may do so. A family member may, for example, wish to pre-record the reading of a written statement and have this played during the commemorative hearings. A video could also include interviews with one or more family members. It could also include video material of the deceased, e.g. from previous family recordings. There is no expectation or requirement that video presentations should be professionally created and if a family indicates the intention to produce a video, technical support will be provided by the Inquiry if the family requires it. It is a matter for each family to determine how they wish to provide their evidence. Recordings on mobile phones or tablets, for example, would be entirely appropriate and could then be converted by the Inquiry into a format that can be presented at the hearings.
  - c. An audio presentation. If family members wish to pre-record an audio-recorded reading of a written statement and have this played at the Inquiry hearing they may do so. The guidance set out above in terms of creating a presentation also applies here.

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- d. A slide presentation. Family members may also wish to prepare a series of slides, for example showing pictures of their daughter, as a standalone presentation about them or alongside the reading of a written statement.
  - e. Presentation of a photograph of their daughter. Family members may wish to show a photograph of their daughter while the pen portrait evidence about them is given. This photograph will be available to be viewed on screens in the hearing room.
  - f. If a family member wishes to share with the Inquiry a copy of any previous written statement, video or audio recording that they have made about their daughter then they may do so.
  - g. If it is too distressing to read, the Chair can consider it being read either by a recognised legal representative or by Counsel to the Inquiry.
7. The content and length of personal impact evidence will be a matter for each individual or family, but the Inquiry would encourage presentations of around 30 minutes in length. This timing is only intended as a guide to assist and is not prescriptive. No one is required to provide a pen portrait if they do not wish to do so. It is recognised that this will be highly personal and individual evidence.
8. The pen portrait evidence should not overlap with evidence about any preventability issues that will be given to the Inquiry in due course. It should not include any comments or seek to apportion blame in relation to any treatment provided on the day of the attack or organisations that individuals may consider to be responsible for failing to prevent the attack whether on the day or previously. These are very important issues that will be explored in evidence later in the Inquiry, but they are not the subject of this part of the Phase 1 evidence.
9. The Inquiry could hear pen portrait evidence from those who felt ready to present it in the week of 7 July 2025. For those that do not feel they would be ready by that date but do want to participate, the hearings will begin on 8 September 2025.
10. For those that would feel ready for the week of the 7 July, the Chair requests that family members, or their legal representatives provide to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 27 June 2025:
  - a. The proposed pen portrait evidence that they wish to provide in relation to their daughter and the proposed format e.g. written statement, video presentation etc.
  - b. Confirmation of who, as far as is known, will be providing the statement or contributing to a video or audio presentation, and their contact details.

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- c. If applicable, the need for multiple pen portrait presentations for a child and, briefly, the reasons for this.
  - d. Having regard to the First Minded to Note, confirmation of whether they seek any reporting restrictions or other special measures in relation to the giving of this evidence. See also the arrangements for disclosure, below.
11. Should any of the above subsequently change, the Solicitor to the Inquiry should be informed as soon as possible. This will assist with planning the arrangements for the hearings.
12. For those that do not feel ready to participate in hearings in July, the hearings will begin on 8 September 2025. The Chair requests that the information set out above is provided to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 22 August 2025.
13. If, at any point, any family needs further time to prepare their pen portrait evidence beyond this date this should be raised with the Solicitor to the Inquiry as soon as possible. Every effort will be made to accommodate reasonable requests for further time.
14. As set out above, there is no requirement or expectation that a bereaved family should provide a pen portrait. No reasons or explanation will be sought if a family chooses not to provide that evidence.

## **Personal impact statements from surviving victims**

15. For those victims who survived the attack, the Chair invites a personal impact statement to set out what they or their daughter experienced and how that has affected them/their family. A personal impact statement can cover any matters that a person wishes to share about their experience, but it should not provide views on any preventability issues, including any perceived failures by any individuals or organisations to prevent the attack, whether on the day or previously. Again, these are very important issues that will be explored in evidence later in the Inquiry, but they are not the subject of this part of the Phase 1 evidence.
16. Personal impact statements can be given in the style and format to best suit the family or individual who wishes to give the evidence. This may include, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Witness statement. As far as possible, there should be one statement on behalf of each adult victim or child victim who was injured (this means injured physically or psychologically). The statement may be provided by

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multiple authors and it would be helpful if you could explain who has contributed to the statement. A template statement that can be used to create their statement is appended to this guidance.

- b. Video-recorded statement. If a witness or family wishes to prepare a video for their evidence, they may do so. You may wish to pre-record the reading of a written statement and have this played during the hearings. A video could also include interviews with one or more family members. There is no expectation or requirement that video presentations should be professionally created and there is an indication of the intention to produce a video, technical support will be provided by the Inquiry if the family requires it. It is a matter for each family to determine how they wish to provide their evidence. Recordings on mobile phones or tablets, for example, would be entirely appropriate and could then be converted by the Inquiry into a format that can be presented at the hearings.
  - c. An audio presentation. If you wish to pre-record an audio-recorded reading of a written statement and have this played at the Inquiry, this can be done. The guidance set out above in terms of creating a presentation also applies here.
  - d. If an individual or family member wishes to share with the Inquiry a copy of any previous written statement, video or audio recording that they have made about the impact of the attack then they may do so.
  - e. If it is too distressing to read a statement yourself, the Chair can consider it being read either by a recognised legal representative or by Counsel to the Inquiry.
17. The content and length of personal impact evidence will be a matter for each individual or family, but the Inquiry would encourage presentations of around 30 minutes in length. This timing is only intended as a guide to assist and is not prescriptive. No one is required to provide a statement if they do not wish to do so. It is recognised that this will be highly personal and individual evidence.

## Timing and Next Steps

18. The Inquiry could hear pen portrait and personal impact statements from those who felt ready to present it in the week of 7 July 2025. For those that do not feel they would be ready by that date, but do want to participate, the hearings will begin on 8 September 2025.
19. For those that would feel ready for the week of the 7 July, the Chair requests that they, or their legal representatives, provide the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 27 June 2025 with:

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- a. The proposed evidence that they wish to provide e.g. written statement, video presentation etc.
  - b. Confirmation as to who, as far as is known, will be providing the statement or contributing to a video or audio presentation, and their contact details.
  - c. If applicable, the need for multiple presentations for a family and, briefly, the reasons for this.
  - d. Having regard to the First Minded to Note, confirmation as to whether they seek any reporting restrictions or other special measures in relation to the giving of this evidence. See also the arrangements for disclosure, below.
20. Should any of the above subsequently change, the Solicitor to the Inquiry should be informed as soon as possible. This will assist with planning the arrangements for the hearings.
  21. For those that do not feel ready to participate in hearings in July, the hearings will begin on 8 September 2025. The Chair requests that the information set out above is provided to the Solicitor to the Inquiry by 22 August 2025.
  22. Following the receipt of the personal impact statements and pen portrait evidence the Inquiry will review them and will circulate a draft timetable to indicate which families and/or individuals will be asked to provide their personal impact statements at the commemorative and impact evidence hearings and when (day and time).
  23. At least a week before the commemorative and impact evidence hearings a final timetable will be circulated to all Core Participants.
  24. In advance of the commemorative and impact evidence hearings, arrangements will be made for all bereaved family members and witnesses who wish to do so to attend the hearing venue in Liverpool, with their legal representatives (for those represented), prior to giving evidence/attending for the hearings. The Chair requests that any family member or witness wishing to take up the offer of an advance visit should indicate their wish to do so when submitting their evidence so that arrangements can be made.
  25. The evidence will be heard following the Chair's opening statement, and the observance of a minute's silence to remember the impact of these events on all the victims.
  26. If a family or witness wishes to submit a personal impact statement but does not wish to give oral evidence, then they can indicate that to the Inquiry and it shall not preclude anyone from providing their written account to the Inquiry.

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## **Disclosure of pen portrait and personal impact statements**

27. **Before the hearings:** Subject to any specific application to the contrary, the Inquiry will make pen portrait evidence and personal impact statements available to the Phase 1 Core Participants subject to the usual confidentiality undertakings.
28. **After the hearings:** Subject to any specific application to the contrary, the Inquiry will publish a transcript of the evidence on its website. However, redactions will be applied to cover any information that might tend to identify the children concerned, and any additional material subject to reporting restrictions. Because of the potential for redactions to have to be made, the publication of these transcripts may take longer than on other days of the Inquiry's hearings.
29. Beyond the transcript of the evidence, redacted as appropriate, having regard to the deeply personal nature of the commemorative and personal impact statements, and the need to protect anonymity, the Inquiry will not automatically publish video or audio footage provided as part of this evidence on its website (as it will generally do for other evidence referred to during the hearings). Provided that it does not undermine anonymity, the Inquiry will be open to including such material on a case-by-case basis depending upon the views of the victim/their family.
30. **Phase 1 report stage.** Details of the pen portrait and personal impact statement evidence may be included in the Inquiry's report (without undermining anonymity), unless the Chair receives an indication that this is against the wishes of those providing the statements

## **Support available during the hearings.**

31. This phase of the Inquiry is likely to be difficult and distressing for families and others affected. Support, counselling and medical services will be available throughout the hearings. Details of these services will be confirmed as soon as possible.

**Southport Inquiry**  
**11 June 2025.**