

Witness Name: Heidi Victoria Liddle

Exhibits: None

Dated: 12th August 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

[FIRST] WITNESS STATEMENT OF HEIDI VICTORIA LIDDLE

I, Heidi Victoria Liddle, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. I am a qualified Teaching Assistant at Churchtown Primary School in Southport and a qualified dance teacher under the International Dance Teachers' Association (IDTA).
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "**Inquiry**") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 17th July 2025.

BACKGROUND

3. I qualified as an IDTA dance teacher in 2004 and have over 21 years' experience teaching dance to children in a number of settings. I have been a Teaching Assistant since 2013. I hold several further qualifications allowing me to carry out both roles; Licentiate Ballet, Licentiate Modern Jazz, Licentiate Theatre Craft, Associate Tap, Full Associate Freestyle, CACHE Level 3 Diploma in Childcare and Education. In addition to this I have training in First Aid, Moving and Handling, Safeguarding and Epi Pen.

4. I love working with children and teaching dance has always been my passion. Since the attack, I have been unable to return to either role. I have attempted to return to a school setting prior to my current maternity leave but due to the mental impact of the attack, this was not possible and I am not sure that I will ever be able to return.

Factual Narrative of Involvement

5. I had previously worked with Leanne Lucas at Churchtown Primary School and we became close friends. After Leanne's departure from the school, we remained close and kept in touch, often supporting one another's careers.
6. Leanne approached me and asked if I would like to collaborate with her during one of her yoga sessions to incorporate a dance workshop. Leanne regularly used the Hart Space for her Enlighten Yoga workshops. I understand that she had booked the space through Jennifer Butler Scholes who leased the Hart Space and had booked out further opportunities to use the space over the summer holidays. I agreed and thought it would be a good opportunity to bring both skill sets together to provide the children with an opportunity to express themselves in various ways, learn something new and be creative.
7. The workshop was advertised by Leanne Lucas on social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram which was then shared on my personal social media accounts. Bookings were made via Leanne's Enlighten online booking system which could be accessed via Instagram where consent forms were also completed. Some parents wished to pay on the day, meaning that they had completed the paperwork when they arrived. Leanne took charge of bookings on the day to ensure everything was up to date as she had a record of who had previously booked online.
8. As the workshop was organised through Enlighten and Leanne had held similar sessions previously, I was not involved in creating risk assessments. To my knowledge the risk assessments Leanne had in place were made to comply with the Hart Space policies. I took part in the workshop as a guest teacher and so I was working within the guidance of the policies in place through Enlighten and Hart Space, including the risk assessments for both companies.

9. Prior to the workshop I met and spoke with Leanne regularly. We discussed risk assessments, safeguarding, child protection and evacuation procedures. My only involvement with the risk assessment was running through what was included within it, including ensuring that appropriate clothing and footwear were worn as the session now included dance. We also discussed timings, resources, health and safety, permission forms and attendee numbers. I believe that Leanne contacted parents to inform them of the procedures of the workshop such as appropriate clothing and drop off/collection details.
10. There was no requirement for parents to stay or leave during the workshop, any parent who wished to stay and watch their child during the session would have been welcome to do so.

Security Arrangements

11. The Enlighten register was stored electronically and a printout was available on the day as it was updated once the remaining consent forms had been completed. The register included information such as whether each child had permission to have their photograph taken so Leanne and I used this before the workshop to review the children attending and their needs.
12. The Hart Space was a well-known community space used by many organisations to run classes for children, parents and babies, including Enlighten. I was familiar with the space in a personal capacity as I had attended various baby and toddler classes there. I knew from my previous visits to Hart Space where the emergency exit for both studios was located but I was not involved in planning emergency routes or carrying out any assessment of them.
13. The workshop took place across the two floors of Hart Space, and the group was split into two. The children were dropped off at the top floor studio where the register was taken, then Leanne walked one half of the children downstairs to take part in yoga with her whilst I stayed in the studio and did dance with the other half of the children. Half way through, Leanne walked the children back upstairs and the groups swapped. At the end of the session, the two groups came together upstairs and the group began the bracelet making session, it was at this point that the attack took place. When moving

between floors, Leanne was required to walk the children outside the building due to where the entrance to the ground floor studio was positioned.

14. During the workshop the door to the ground floor entrance was locked when it was not in use so that it was not accessible to the public. The entrance leading to the first floor of Hart Space was not locked as this is accessible to other businesses that use the premises such as Calculus Legal Costs Holdings. To my knowledge, another reason that the entrance to the first floor studio was unlocked was that this was the only access out of Hart Space to the fire assembly point in the event of a fire. The doors between the first floor Hart Space studio and the landing were closed but not locked as the toilets are located on the landing outside the studio, these doors would have been the only fire escape out of the upstairs studio.
15. When deciding whether to lock doors, I followed the procedures within the Hart Space risk assessment, it was my understanding at the time that the Hart Space policy was to keep any fire doors unlocked for access. I believe the decision to keep the doors to the first floor and the first-floor studio unlocked was reasonable with the knowledge I had at the time. The building is located away from the main road, I had visited before so I felt confident that someone would need to know where the building was to visit it. I could never have foreseen that the horrific events of the day would unfold, I truly believed I lived in a safe community and would never have imagined that this could happen.
16. I believe that the security measures in place prior to the workshop would have been appropriate with the knowledge I had at the time. I know now following the attack that there was CCTV outside the building, however I do not recall whether I knew this at the time. Both Leanne and I had our mobile phones present with access to the register of emergency contact numbers. The security to enter the building was extensive when the building was not in use, there was one set of keys which opened a cupboard to access a second set of keys.
17. Leanne and I had decided to limit the number of children attending to 25. We had initially used our experience within a classroom setting to use a ratio of 1 adult per 15 children, but upon reflection we believed this was too high, so we capped the number at 25 taking part. The older sibling of one of the children attending was keen to help with the workshop, Leanne discussed this with the mother and allowed her to come and assist

with the event and take photographs, this is how 26 children came to be present on the day. I had no involvement in this arrangement and do not have any further details about how this came about. There was a waiting list for the event, but we decided to keep the cap in place. We hoped that if the event was successful, we may be able to hold another with the children on the waiting list.

Reflections on Events

18. I believe that the guidance and resources available were adequate in organising the event, nothing could have prepared us for such a heinous attack taking place. The attack took place within minutes; there was no time to question anything other than trying to get as many children out as I possibly could. If I felt that I needed to prepare for an event of this kind, I would never have helped with planning the workshop.
19. For the age group attending, all procedures were appropriate, and I followed the procedures that were set out within the Enlighten and Hart Space risk assessments. For a different age group, I may have considered additional procedures such as rules in relation to personal belongings or mobile phones for older children or a lower adult to child ratio for younger children.
20. I would not have helped organise the event if I thought for a second, an attack would take place or that the studio itself was an unsafe place. The perpetrator of this attack and the fact that he was not detained a long time ago is the issue and we have all been failed as a result.
21. There are a small number of recommendations I could think of for small-scale community events in future, such as ring doorbells, two door security systems, reassessing the policy on locking fire doors or security personnel on the door. However ultimately the preparation of a small workshop did not cause this and any increased security for future events will only be as a result of this attack. My overriding recommendation would be to ensure that those who have been flagged by numerous services as being a threat to the safety of the public are incarcerated.
22. Following the attack, someone has suggested the idea of a quality assurance scheme for small scale community activities, this would be a third party that would ensure that

the event is fit for purpose and it meets all requirements. I think this may be a good idea, however I do not have enough knowledge of how this would work in practice to provide an in depth recommendation.

23. As a result of this brutal attack, the public have been misinformed at times; resulting in online hate, harassment and blame. This entire situation has been traumatic enough and the added abuse has only exacerbated the situation further, adding to the mental trauma for myself and my family. The attack has changed my whole life, I live in constant fear, experience flashbacks and hold onto so much guilt. I do not know what the future holds for me in terms of work, mental health or the ability to live a new 'normal' life.
24. The timing of the deadline for this statement and its proximity to the first anniversary has made it too difficult for me to address my account of what happened on that day this at this time. When I feel able to review my account, it may be the case that I recall greater details of the events and I would like the opportunity to provide these at a later date.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed: H.V.Liddle

Dated: 12.08.2025