

Witness Name: MARK WINSTANLEY

Exhibits: MW/24

Dated: 11 November 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

SECOND WITNESS STATEMENT OF MARK WINSTANLEY

I, **MARK WINSTANLEY**, will say as follows: -

Introductory Matters

1. I am Assistant Chief Constable Mark Winstanley and this is my second statement to the Southport Inquiry.
2. On 8 October 2025, I gave my oral evidence to the Inquiry, having provided my first witness statement on 26 August 2025. Having taken the time to reflect on my oral evidence, there were several points that I feel I did not deal with adequately. I was invited to file further evidence and am grateful for this opportunity to provide clarity on certain aspects of my first witness statement and my oral evidence.

Violence Reduction Network

3. Within my oral evidence on 8 October 2025 (Tr 8 Oct P12 L8-11), I was asked why the age range for the Violence Reduction Network ("VRN") Divert programme (now termed the "Champions" programme) was initially set up with a minimum age of 18 years old but from April 2021 covered those from 10 years old. I said that I did not know the answer but would try to find out (Tr 8 Oct P12 L12-14).
4. I can now confirm that the Lancashire VRN was established in 2019, at which point it was referred to as the Violence Reduction Unit ("VRU"). Lancashire was one of eighteen police forces to whom the Home Office allocated funds from the Serious Violence Fund to establish a VRU. The intention was that these units would bring local partners together to

tackle violent crime in their area by understanding root causes and providing a coordinated response.

5. The Lancashire VRU set up a programme named Divert in January 2020. I have set out the purpose of that programme within my first witness statement in paragraphs 52 to 54. However, to provide clarity and answer the specific question posed to me (Tr 8 Oct P12 L8-11) as to why the age range for referrals was initially set at 18 to 25 years old, I can now confirm that Lancashire Constabulary adopted the programme that had been devised and implemented by the Metropolitan Police Service. The parameters of that programme were young adults aged between 18 and 25 years old who were detained in police custody and were not in education, training, or employment.
6. In 2021, the Home Office introduced a "Teachable Moments Programme" which provided additional funding and enabled police forces to consider extending the age range for entry onto the Divert programme to 10 - 25 years old, also removing the restriction that applied the programme only to persons in custody. Lancashire Constabulary welcomed these amendments and the opportunity that this additional funding provided, particularly given that the COVID pandemic had resulted in mentors being unable to work within custody offices and therefore had to transfer their services into the community. As stated at paragraph 53 of my first witness statement, the Divert Programme extended its age range to 10 - 25-year-olds from April 2021.

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub

7. Within the witness statement of Detective Inspector Kelly, at paragraphs 179 and 205 (LANC000395_0042 & 0048), she made clear that Lancashire Constabulary MASH does not receive feedback from other agencies after vulnerable child (or adult) referrals are shared with them. At paragraph 207 of her statement, Detective Inspector Kelly explains that once police have shared information, they do not know what steps, if any, have been taken by other agencies as a result of the information being shared by Lancashire Constabulary.
8. Within my oral evidence (Tr 8 Oct P22 L5 - P28 L2), Mr Moss KC asked me several questions relevant to this point, particularly in respect of my views on the efficiency and effectiveness of the MASH as a mechanism for proper multi-agency intervention. Upon reflection, and having read the transcript of my evidence, it is apparent to me that I was not entirely clear on the question being asked of me in this area and thus I did not answer it as clearly as I would have wished, for which I apologise. I believe that I conflated the

specific question in relation to the information sharing function of the MASH with the wider responsibilities of Lancashire Constabulary and other agencies in working together once information has been shared. Having now reflected on the questions posed by Mr Moss KC, I would wish to put on record my agreement that the fact that there is no mechanism by which Lancashire Constabulary receives feedback from other agencies once a referral has been made to MASH represents a clear deficiency in the system. The absence of a multi-agency information sharing system is undoubtedly a contributory factor towards this, and I will deal with this later in the statement.

9. I agree with the assertion by Mr Moss KC (Tr 8 Oct P27 L5-13) that the fact that there is no feedback process into Lancashire Constabulary as to what actions other agencies have undertaken does not assist police officers responding to incidents. Officers would not and do not know the difficulty other agencies are encountering in engaging with that person or family. It follows that this does not assist with a full indication of threat, risk, and harm.
10. Mr Moss KC asked me the question (Tr 8 Oct P24 L6-9) whether it caused me concern around the efficiency and effectiveness of the MASH as a mechanism for proper multi-agency intervention, given that no strategy discussions took place in relation to AR after January 2020. I tried to articulate within my oral evidence that whilst the MASH is responsible for sharing information, it is not responsible for convening or attending strategy meetings as this responsibility sits with Children's Social Care within the local authority (Tr 8 Oct P23 L25 – P24 L5). Attendance at strategy meetings is from the operational arms of the relevant agencies, not staff within the MASH, and I explained that the issue I had identified was not the efficiency and effectiveness of the MASH itself, but how the different operational arms of relevant agencies, including policing, had worked together and shared information following the referrals from the MASH (Tr 8 Oct P24 L10-17).
11. Therefore to be clear about my answer to Mr Moss KC's specific question, whilst the fact that there were no strategy discussions after January 2020 does not cause me concern about the efficiency and effectiveness of the MASH as a mechanism for multi-agency intervention, I do agree that regardless of which arm of policing was, or could have been involved in the multi-agency working in respect of AR, the overall system, of which MASH is a central part, was not effective in ensuring that the right services were provided by the right agencies.

Record Keeping

12. In my first witness statement, at paragraphs 166, 188 and 225, I accepted that the recording of information received by Lancashire Constabulary on certain occasions should have been better.
13. As I was providing my oral evidence to the Inquiry, further examples were put to me that I had not previously been aware of. It became increasingly apparent to me that a wider issue existed in relation to the quality of record keeping by Lancashire Constabulary officers following their interactions with, or about, AR. These were clear deficiencies which, on reflection, I did not accept in my oral evidence as unequivocally as I should have done. I wish to take this opportunity to place on record my agreement with the Inquiry that the information recorded by Lancashire Constabulary personnel was sometimes inadequate, and that this would have hindered those officers dealing with AR on later dates.
14. The specific examples that I would refer to in the interests of improving police practice are as follows:
 - (1) A failure by PC McNamee to record information on the specific risk posed to DPA DPA and the exact details of the risk AR posed to others on the vulnerable child investigation (LANC000041). This included the fact that PC McNamee did not record that AR was “pretty certain” he would use the knife;
 - (2) A failure by PC McNamee to record details of his email exchange with Alphonse R on 28 October 2019. This includes the fact that PC McNamee had changed his opinion on whether AR showed remorse and that his parents appeared to downplay or mitigate why he carried the knife and made the threats he did (LANC000069);
 - (3) A failure by PC McNamee and PC Harrison to record details of the Acorns Schools’ concerns around AR’s activities at school sent in by email on 3 and 4 December 2019 (LANC000059, LANC000060, LANC000061, LANC000097, LANC000098). This was included in my first witness statement at paragraph 166;
 - (4) The failure by PC Harrison, PS Bramhall, and the MASH to record details of the incident that occurred at the Range High School on 11 December 2019 and their subsequent involvement with AR and other agencies. This was included in my first witness statement at paragraph 188;
 - (5) The failure of the Police Control Room Operator who spoke with AR’s father on 30 November 2021 to record accurate details of their conversation with him, including the fact that the family feared AR. This was included in my first witness statement at paragraph 225.

15. I wish to acknowledge that the questions posed and observations made by Mr Moss KC in relation to this issue of record keeping (Tr 8 Oct P37 L21, Tr 8 Oct P38 L6, Tr 8 Oct P38 L12-25, Tr 8 Oct P47 L18-23, Tr 8 Oct P50 L13-14, Tr 8 Oct P54 L6-9, Tr 8 Oct P63 L10-13) were all valid in that it was evident that relevant information that would have assisted subsequent officers in assessing the level of risk that AR posed was not recorded on Lancashire Constabulary systems. As Mr Moss KC pointed out (Tr 8 Oct P40 L19-25), the result of this poor record keeping was that PC Fairclough was not fully informed of the risk AR posed when he dealt with him on 17 March 2022.
16. I accept that all relevant information relevant to AR's risk should have been recorded in a place accessible to all officers and staff and that would have better informed officers who were subsequently tasked with dealing with incidents involving AR.
17. I also accept Mr Moss KC's observation (Tr 8 Oct P87 L16-22), that there was no "overview" thinking from Lancashire Constabulary or assessment of the fact that other agencies' interventions were not working, given that police had attended calls to AR's address on four occasions over a six-month period. I agree that Lancashire Constabulary should have been more involved in the management of AR's case. However, I would guard against any suggestion that the fact that other agencies interventions were not working would bring about a position whereby Lancashire Constabulary should have assumed lead responsibility. On reflection I think that this is more indicative of the fact that the principle of having a lead professional that the multi-agency safeguarding model is predicated on has not been effective in the management of AR's case, particularly when there were other agencies who were working with AR and his family during the relevant time period. Policing cannot reasonably be expected to hold an overview responsibility of all cases similar to AR's as this would extend beyond the natural and appropriate remit of policing, when there are other agencies within the safeguarding system who are better equipped to hold that lead responsibility and draw other agencies together where required.
18. I have given this important issue considerable thought following my oral evidence at the Inquiry to try to understand the potential reasons behind it. I recognise that the demands placed upon our response officers are significant, with the volume and complexity of incidents they are expected to deal with having increased exponentially over recent years. It is important that they work as efficiently as possible to maintain high levels of performance in relation to the handling of calls for service from the public. This should not,

however, compromise the quality of record keeping regardless of how honourable their intentions may be.

19. In my experience, the quality of record keeping does generally tend to be better in incidents that are known or suspected to be “critical” in nature from the outset. However, when officers are dealing with an incident which on initial presentation may appear to be routine in nature (as was the case with some of the AR incidents attended to by Lancashire Constabulary) it is inevitably less likely that the officers will include every detailed nuance in their record keeping. Herein lies the problem, namely that the future importance of such an incident may not be appreciated at the time and indeed may not even be reasonably foreseeable as an issue that is likely to recur or escalate. And yet, the absence of accurate and detailed / nuanced records in these incidents can significantly hinder the overall assessment of risk by subsequent officers and staff when dealing with future incidents involving the same subject. I think policing must tackle this issue in training and culture to enable all officers, of whatever rank or role, to increasingly understand that complete and nuanced records are, though sometimes time-consuming, “mission-critical” for policing to better understand and manage risk.
20. I also recognise that not all police officers are naturally adept record keepers, or skilled in their ability to foresee risk. Both interrelated issues are addressed in police training, but my experience at this Inquiry has brought home to me that more emphasis needs to be placed upon the skill of record-keeping and assessment of risk. Lancashire Constabulary is currently assessing how to upskill our officers and staff and reaffirm the importance of quality and detailed record keeping.

Focus on AR's needs

21. Within my oral evidence (Tr 8 Oct P36 L23 – P37 L2), I was asked, “Would it be unfair to suggest that the fact no specific action was taken in relation to AR's intended victim [being one of AR's fellow pupils DPA], in terms of liaising with the victim's family, to ensure that they were put in the picture is symptomatic of the focus being on AR's needs and his safeguarding, and actions taken in relation to him, and not enough focus on the risk that he posed to others”. I indicated at the time that I was not sure.
22. Having now had time to reflect, whilst I do not necessarily agree that it was symptomatic of the focus being on AR's needs, I accept that more should have been done to manage the risk AR posed to his intended victim and that certainly should have extended to ensuring that the intended victim and his family were made aware of the risk from AR.

23. I would rationalise my assertion that this this omission was not “symptomatic” by reference to the fact that Lancashire Constabulary did take several immediate steps to manage the risk that AR posed to this intended victim. This included ensuring that his school was aware of the risk, at the earliest possible opportunity, and by several different methods including:
- (1) Submitting an Op Encompass referral to Lancashire County Council on the evening of 7 October 2019 so that the information could be passed on to Range High School (LANC000126);
 - (2) Submitting an online contact form directly to the Range High School on the evening of 7 October 2019 (LANC000018);
 - (3) Contacting the school early in the morning of 8 October 2019 to ensure that they had received the online contact form submitted the previous evening (LANC000041).
24. This action was taken so that the school could take steps to prevent or mitigate the risk of an attack from AR. PC McNamee stated that he was aware that the school knew about the bullying allegation and he recommended to the Range High School that AR should be searched on his attendance and spoken to about his disclosure the following morning. He also confirmed with AR’s mother that she had removed the knife from AR and locked all knives away in the house.
25. I agree that more should have been done to inform AR’s intended victim and family of the risk on this occasion. I should also make it clear that I accept that taken as a whole, it is evident that interactions with AR by both Lancashire Constabulary and other agencies who were involved with him were primarily focussed on his wellbeing and development as opposed to the risk he may pose to others. I would, however, respectfully suggest that the actions taken by Lancashire Constabulary on this specific occasion do not themselves support the argument that the focus was solely on AR’s needs and not enough focus on the needs of others.

Quality Assurance of Vulnerable Child Investigation (LANC000066)

26. In my first witness statement, at paragraph 153, I accepted that an area of learning for Lancashire Constabulary was around the fact that PC McNamee had not taken sufficient steps to ensure that Merseyside Police had recorded details of the 7 October 2019 incident on their systems.

27. During my oral evidence (Tr 8 Oct P34 L18-25), Mr Moss KC asked me the question whether it went beyond a failure of PC McNamee and instead extended to the Investigation Management Unit ("IMU") not quality assuring the investigation before it was closed.
28. When answering the question (Tr 8 Oct P35 L8-10), I explained that the failure may partly have been due to prevailing issues following the recent implementation of a new computer system, but that there was also fault within the IMU and with PC McNamee's Sergeant. Having now given this further consideration, I should have answered the question more directly, for which I apologise. I wish to clarify that I accept that the failure to inform Merseyside Police of the incident extended beyond PC McNamee. It extended to the IMU and to PC McNamee's Sergeant, PS 4274 Hadi, for not adequately quality assuring the investigation and ensuring the action raised to inform Merseyside Police had been completed prior to the investigation being closed.
29. To address this failure, I will ensure within the next month that communication and advice is provided to all IMU staff reminding them of the need to ensure that all actions have been completed before investigations are closed on Connect. I will provide the Inquiry with details of that communication when it has been completed. Investigations closed by all IMU operators are already the subject of dip sampling by supervision monthly. Individual feedback will be provided to PS Hadi (who has since transferred to another police force) through his supervision.

Decision not to arrest AR on 17 March 2022

30. In my first witness statement, at paragraphs 248 to 259, I dealt with the decision made by PC Fairclough not to arrest AR on 17 March 2022 following AR being found on a bus with a knife. In particular, at paragraph 249, I said that "the actions PC Fairclough took fell within the range of reasonable options available to him".
31. Mr Moss KC understandably challenged me during my oral evidence in relation to my comment that PC Fairclough's actions fell within the range of reasonable options available to him (Tr 8 Oct P69 L22 - P74 L25). On reflection, my answers in relation to this were insufficiently clear about my position, for which I apologise. My position is clear that I would have arrested AR at the point he was found in possession of the knife on the bus. However, I can understand why PC Fairclough made the decision at that time not to arrest AR but instead to take him home to his parents. Up to this point, I think PC Fairclough's response

was within the range of reasonable options. However, when AR subsequently made the comments on the journey home that he had the knife as he wanted to stab someone, and that he had thought about making poison, he should have been arrested then; and the decision at that point to continue to take him home and not arrest him was, in my view, wrong and no longer fell within the range of reasonable options.

32. I think that when making my first statement (especially my comment about the “range of reasonable options”), and during my oral evidence, I was trying to put myself in PC Fairclough’s shoes, to try to understand why he had come to the decision not to arrest AR and to take him home to his parents.

33. I do also think that it remains important to contextualise the unenviable position that PC Fairclough and PC Rhodes were in when considering whether to arrest AR. By this I mean the clear direction that was being provided to policing from authoritative stakeholders in relation to the importance of seeking to avoid the criminalisation of children and vulnerable people, and the consequential messaging within Lancashire Constabulary that custody should be seen as a place of last resort for children. This is epitomised in the words of Sir Tom Winsor (then HMICFRS Chief Inspector) in his report “The welfare of vulnerable people in police custody” in March 2015 in which he said:

“In some cases, people may be both offenders and in need of care. Vulnerability can be a trigger for crime or it can make people more likely to be victims of crime. The task that we ask of our police officers in making the distinction between the need for care and the requirements of justice is therefore both highly complex, and crucial if we are to ensure that vulnerable adults and children in our society do not become criminalised for want of a more appropriate response. The bricks and mortar of the custody suite and the police cell do not, and cannot make this distinction. As a result, some of the most vulnerable in our society may be subject to the same physical conditions and treatment as some of the most harmful.”

34. Taking all of the above into account, I wish to place on record my agreement with the position that Mr Moss KC asked me to consider (Tr 8 Oct P74 L20-24); namely that I can understand how an officer who has had training emphasising custody as a last resort for children could have fallen into making the mistake that PC Fairclough made.

35. Having reflected carefully on this, along with a similar issue that the Inquiry has brought to the fore in relation to an apparent over-reliance by officers of their assessment of a

suspect's mental health or neurodiversity when considering whether to arrest, I do think that the balance between risk and not criminalising children needs to be re-addressed and probably re-balanced. The police service could do with better guidance in this respect, noting the highly complex issues that Sir Tom identified in his 2015 report. I do need to emphasise that the position of Lancashire Constabulary is not, and never has been, that children or individuals experiencing mental health issues should not be arrested or prosecuted.

36. We expect our officers to deal with the circumstances of each incident individually, drawing on their training, and using their discretion and professional judgement. But I would accept the proposition that perhaps police officers (I suspect way beyond Lancashire Constabulary) have started to exceed their function by judging whether someone with claimed mental health or neurodiverse issues has capacity. Police officers are not qualified in this respect, and they plainly should not be opining on capacity since such questions are for the CPS (with or without expert medical advice) and / or the Courts to adjudicate upon.
37. Within my first witness statement, at paragraph 267, I set out that Lancashire Constabulary had already identified this as an issue and had taken some steps to remind officers of their responsibilities in this area.
38. The process of giving evidence to the Inquiry, and reviewing that evidence, has highlighted to me the need to re-address this balance and to ensure that our officers are clear about our expectations. This is something that we will address through our internal communications and training that is provided to officers in respect of children in custody and mental health.

Management of Risk Posed by AR

39. In my first witness statement at paragraphs 317 to 328, I set out how I believed that Lancashire Constabulary had dealt with the risk that AR posed. I accept that I did so by reference to each individual incident, considering the actions taken by Lancashire Constabulary and whether they adequately considered the risk AR posed to others. In adopting this approach, I recognise that I did not specifically consider any escalating risk or, as importantly, the totality of risk that AR may have posed when further incidents were reported, in other words, the cumulative build-up of risk.

40. My objective of setting it out in this incident-based way was to try to help the Inquiry by fulfilling the requirements of the Rule 9 notice dated 16 July 2025 which listed each individual incident and asked for comment on each. I was keen to assist the Inquiry by ensuring that the requirements of the Rule 9 notice were strictly fulfilled and that my response was submitted in a timely manner. In doing so I now recognise that I had omitted to provide any assessment or commentary on the totality of the risk posed by AR, for which I take full responsibility. This was not an intentional omission.
41. I accepted within my oral evidence that my statement failed to cover the ongoing assessment of the totality of the risk posed by AR and the need for this information to be shared across agencies (Tr 8 Oct P99 L10-21). I agree with the proposition of Mr Moss KC (Tr 8 Oct P99 L10-15) and wish to make it clear that I do not believe that the totality of the risk posed by AR was adequately considered by Lancashire Constabulary either individually or as part of the multi-agency involvement with AR. This undoubtedly represents a significant area of learning for Lancashire Constabulary and is something we will be seeking to improve upon.
42. Managing risk posed by dangerous people, whether children or adults, is a considerable issue for policing. There are no easy answers, but this Inquiry has helped focus the minds of the senior leadership at Lancashire Constabulary to consider how to adopt a more sophisticated approach to the assessment and supervision of risk, both as individual events occur, but also in their totality over time. I am sure that constructive proposals on this difficult topic from the Chair would be welcomed by policing.

Multi-Agency Information Sharing System

43. During my oral evidence to the Inquiry (Tr 8 Oct P85 L9-15), I referred to challenges that police and other agencies involved in safeguarding have experienced in commissioning a single information sharing system across all agencies. Plainly, such a system would be highly desirable. Mr Moss KC went on to describe the prison escort process whereby there is a shared form dealing with the risk from the prisoner as an example of how agencies can work together in this respect (Tr 8 Oct P85 L16-23). At the conclusion of my oral evidence, I was invited by the Chair to provide a short summary on the steps that have been taken to establish a multi-agency information sharing system, and what difficulties have been encountered in replicating something as exists between the prison service and the police (Tr 8 Oct P118 L4-17).

44. I must say at this stage that whilst the Prisoner Escort Record (“PER”) form is an effective way of two agencies sharing information between each other to identify and manage risk for a specific purpose (when an individual is being transferred between establishments), it is not based on any shared Information Technology (“IT”) system and is reliant on each agency manually adding information onto a form which is then physically handed to the other agency for transfer of the detainee. This is a very different concept than that I was trying to describe in my evidence, namely a fully integrated information sharing system onto which multiple agencies are able to input their data and view the data that other agencies have input. It is this concept on which I now focus my attention.
45. Lancashire MASH was created in 2013, and an internal Lancashire Constabulary review was undertaken the following year. During that review it was recognised that the fact that each partner agency utilised different IT platforms hindered efficient and effective working practices. It was recommended that consideration be given to scoping options to develop an integrated multi-agency IT platform. However, it was also recognised that this was a decision that could not be taken by Lancashire Constabulary alone and would require partnership commitment. Furthermore, challenges existed in relation to both data protection issues and the likely costs of developing and maintaining such a system at a time when all public services were going through a period of significant austerity.
46. Work was subsequently undertaken with partners to scope the feasibility of developing a platform in which all agencies can share information, with the focus being on the potential of using the Lancashire County Council’s (“LCC”) Liquid Logic system. This is the system also known as the Early Help Module used by LCC Children’s Services which Lancashire Constabulary MASH staff have “read only” access to. Despite significant efforts being undertaken across all agencies, ultimately this could not be progressed to implementation. The most significant barriers to this were the number of different IT systems used across the various agencies and commissioned services and their incompatibility with a single IT system, together with the associated information security and data protection concerns (particularly for Health in relation to the sharing of patient data).
47. To put this in context, Health alone worked on eight different systems, and this is compounded by Lancashire being covered by three different local authority areas with each using a different social care computer system; then there are individual and different IT systems used by Police, Education, Youth Justice Services along with other non-statutory partners. These challenges are not unique to Lancashire and have been experienced nationally, and I will touch on them further later within this statement.

48. In 2022, the Lancashire Violence Reduction Network (“VRN”) engaged with the Home Office and Capita to explore the possibility of developing a Multi-Agency Data Sharing System (“MADS”). The Capita White Paper *“Breaking down barriers: Implementing effective multi-agency data sharing”* sets out the case for change and the need for a MADS that has security and accessibility at its core. I exhibit this paper as **MW/24 – LANC000434**.
49. The project was originally funded by the Home Office and phase one of the project involved developing a system which allowed data from Lancashire Constabulary to be shared with the LCC Family Support Hub. That work continues and phase two of the project, which is currently ongoing, is seeking to expand the system to other agencies who hold data on individuals with known risk factors of serious violence. It is intended to pilot this work as a use case (by which I mean the developing, testing and refining this computer system) in multi-agency Prevention Panels to test the proof of concept, then consideration can be given as to its potential effectiveness for wider deployment. Whilst this is positive progress, and to the best of my knowledge Lancashire Constabulary is one of only three police forces nationally who are engaged in this work, it should be noted that there are significant challenges in relation to concerns about the sharing, security and control of information that remain to be overcome. It is a huge undertaking that will require long term commitment of both resource, infrastructure, and finance across multiple agencies if it is to succeed, and the fact that there is no legal framework requiring agencies to share information is undoubtedly a barrier to this.
50. I have described some of the challenges and barriers that we have experienced in Lancashire. Multi-agency data sharing platforms have been discussed nationally across partnerships over many years with progress starting and stalling, following a similar cycle to the issues we have encountered in Lancashire. In preparing this second statement I have sought views from senior responsible officers in Lancashire Constabulary holding portfolios for ICT, Data Protection, Corporate Services and Safeguarding, and I have engaged with the National Police Chiefs’ Council Coordination Committees for Digital Data and Technology, Crime, Prevention, Criminal Justice and Counter Terrorism.
51. Without rehearsing the entirety of these responses, there are some clear themes that are apparent across policing in relation to challenges that have been and continue to be experienced in developing a multi-agency information sharing system. I summarise these as follows:

- (1) **System design and integration** - Referring to my earlier point about the sheer volume of different systems across agencies that would require integrating into a single system, one of the prevailing challenges is seeking consensus as to which agency/agencies own, develop, and maintain the data sharing platform. This is exacerbated by the absence of national coordination for the procurement and design of a suitable IT system, together with concerns relating to data sharing and controllership.
- (2) **Data Sharing and Controllership** – Whilst data sharing and Data Protection legislation should not be a barrier to this work, it often becomes one, frequently due to the low-risk appetite of the agencies involved and, in some cases, privacy taking primacy. This is particularly prevalent with Health bodies who will tend to view their obligations around patient confidentiality as taking primacy over information sharing. Agencies also have concerns around fear of oversharing and any associated impact on public trust and confidence. Furthermore, there is no nationally agreed common or consistent arrangement for data sharing between agencies, and agreements tend to be developed on a local basis.
- (3) **Legislation** - Policing recognises that legislation, including the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 (“PCSCA”), the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA”) and the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (“CDA”) allows for the lawful sharing of information. However, whilst the PCSCA creates a legal duty to share data on risk and protective factors to prevent individuals becoming involved in serious violence (as either a perpetrator or a victim), it only allows for the sharing of personal data and not patient data. This is a significant challenge when trying to incorporate Health data into a multi-agency IT platform. There is currently no regulatory framework placing the sharing of information on a statutory footing. A more explicit legal obligation by way of legislation or statutory Code requiring specified agencies to share personal level data would be helpful to overcome these barriers.
- (4) **Cyber Security** - The integration of police systems with external agency platforms raises concerns about vulnerability to cyber-attack. This is a legitimate concern and is something that has been experienced both in Lancashire and across the country. Police systems are generally more secure than some partner agencies, particularly because some of their systems are fed by third party non-statutory organisations. There is a concern that linking police systems with less secure systems could expose sensitive law enforcement data. Whilst policing recognises that technological solutions

are possible, cybersecurity is a real and developing threat that must be at the forefront of any multi-agency system design.

- (5) **Data Quality** – The ability to identify and safeguard individuals is reliant upon accurate data that has either a URN or confirmed match criteria. A challenge with multiple source systems is that they have different data capture standards and formats, which can often lead to missing, inaccurate or incomplete data. This impacts the match criteria and ability to pull information into a “golden nominal.” There are some positive steps being taken under the Children, Wellbeing and Schools Bill in this respect with the creation of a Single Unique Identifier for children (likely an NHS Number) and the creation of a legal basis to share information, but careful consideration will need to be given to how this system would overcome the challenges of interfacing with existing and future multi-agency IT systems.
 - (6) **Funding and sustainability** – Funding remains a prevailing and indeed pressing issue for policing and all public services, and the development, implementation and maintenance of a multi-agency information sharing system would be costly. There is currently no national funding available to develop and upkeep a national system and it is likely that such a system would take time to develop. There is also the absence of an overarching authority across statutory partners to commission such a piece of work. Changes in strategic leadership, political drivers, and frequently changing priorities impact on the ability to build, govern, and sustain this approach.
52. In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to reassure the Chair that Lancashire Constabulary is committed to continuing to work with our partners and progress this critical piece of work. The benefits of having an effective multi-agency information sharing system are clear and the will is there. However, it is equally clear that the current locality-based approach is restricting progress. Both technically and legally, a national system that joins MASH partners and shares information is possible, but realistically this would take time to bring to fruition if commissioned, and would require national coordination, central government funding, and an overarching legislative mandate across all statutory partners. Lancashire Constabulary would welcome any recommendations that support this vital area of work.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed: **Signature**

Dated: 11th November 2025