Witness Name: Timothy Jacques

Exhibits: TJ/01 – TJ/12

Dated: 07/08/2026

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY JACQUES

I, TIMOTHY JACQUES, will say as follows:

Introductory matters

1. I am the Independent Prevent Commissioner (the "IPC") having been appointed as such in April 2026; the post was previously held, on an interim basis, by Lord David Anderson KC.

2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 10th July 2026.

3. The role of the IPC was announced by the then-Home Secretary in December 2024 to provide consistent oversight, increase effectiveness and develop insight into the Prevent system over the longer term.

4. I have 37 years prior experience as a police officer including 6 years within Counter Terrorism Policing Headquarters, finishing in February 2024 as a Deputy Assistant Commissioner in the role of Senior National Coordinator for Prevent and Pursue. I am also the Chief Executive Officer of Vault Youth Zone, Preston, a youth work charity that provides "universal" access to a wide range of activities in sports, arts, performance and enterprise to young people aged 8-19 (or up to 25 for those with additional needs). Whilst the charity is relatively new, we already have almost 2,500 young members who take advantage of our new and purpose built £12m youth

facility. It is part of a wider national network of similar charities known as "Onside Youth Zones".

5. Throughout my policing career I have, amongst other things, variously chaired or co-chaired, The Lancashire Criminal Justice Board, The Lancashire Reducing Reoffending Board, The Lancashire Multi-agency public protection arrangements ("MAPPA") Board and through my charity role I have voluntarily chaired or co-chaired a city-wide Multi-Agency Safeguarding Panel (MASP), renamed and reconstituted in 2025 to become a Young Futures Partnership Prevention Panel whose purpose according to government communications is "*there to make sure young people get the help they need, before getting caught up in criminal activity…..to proactively identify and refer vulnerable teenagers – who may currently be falling through the net – to a range of different support services much earlier*" (I exhibit the Government's communications on Young Futures Hubs as **TJ/01 - IPC000002**).

6. I understand the Terms of Reference for Phase 2 of the Inquiry will focus on: (i) the adequacy of arrangements in England and Wales for managing the risk from Violence Fixated Individuals ("VFIs"); (ii) the role of the internet and social media in influencing and enabling VFIs to prepare and carry out violent attacks; (iii) the effectiveness of current laws and systems for identifying, monitoring and disrupting the activities of VFIs online and reducing the harm caused by online spaces which promote extreme violence; and (iv) the effectiveness of policies, regulation and criminal enforcement in relation to the sale and possession of offensive weapons and articles with a point or blade.

7. There is, therefore, a relationship between the remit of my office and Phase 2 of this Inquiry in that both will touch upon the effectiveness of the Prevent system, and the question of whether Prevent does, or indeed should, adequately accommodate VFIs.

Identification of VFIs

8. I am aware of the terms Violence Fixated Individuals, Violence Fascinated Individuals and Non-ideological Extreme Violence ("NIEV") which in my view are used interchangeably and without clear and commonly agreed definitions. I believe the wider counterterrorism community and those beyond it are yet to reach a settled view on their utility in identifying and managing risk. This is compounded by the use of separate and potentially overlapping definitions within the Prevent Case

Management Tracking system ("PCMT") and therefore the publicly published Prevent statistics.

9. For the purpose of this statement, I will use the term VFI broadly for the range of individuals referred into Prevent based on a concern linked to their interest in potentially serious violence without a clear ideological driver indicating they are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism.

10. The horrendous attacks leading to this Inquiry brought the phenomenon of VFIs to wider public attention, but it is not a new challenge. For several years now Channel Panels and the wider Counter Terrorism (CT) system have been managing complex and challenging cases which present with a blend of ideological drivers and none. The findings of this Inquiry so far have found that an individual can simultaneously be vulnerable to exploitation or radicalisation requiring support, whilst presenting a risk of harm to others. Within the gang-crime and County Lines space, practitioners have also been balancing this conceptual challenge for years, typically children who are recognised as having been exploited and require safeguarding approaches.

11. Within the PCMT, launched in May 2024, the new category of "*Fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks - where no other ideology*" ("FEVMCA") was introduced. This is defined as an individual that "*does not appear to have an ideology but seems to have an interest in* ***committing*** *extreme or mass violence, which makes them a concern for Prevent. This could include those interested in school massacres but also where violence is targeted at other settings or individuals and is not based on a specific ideological motivation*". I exhibit the "User guide to: Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales" as **TJ/02 - IPC000003** I have emphasised the word "committing" within the above definition as from my conversations with some Counter Terrorism Policing practitioners at least, this appears to be the defining factor as to whether someone without an ideology is deemed suitable for Prevent/Channel consideration.

12. This category, introduced prior to the Southport attack, evidences the recognition of a growing problem that sits outside of the legal framework for Prevent and more specifically Channel, including Section 36 (3) of the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 ("CTSA 2015") which states "*a chief officer of police or local authority may refer an individual to a* (Channel*) panel only if there are reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism"* and the

Channel Duty Guidance which states *"Cases should not be adopted into Channel where no such terrorism concerns exist" (section 2 para 23).* I shall return to this issue later.

13. Within the November 2025 release of Channel data, which I exhibit as **TJ/03 - IPC000004** it can be seen how potentially difficult it is for practitioners to recognise VFIs as a distinct group if they are not presenting with clear terrorism related vulnerabilities. This is due to:
    a. The use of categories which overlap significantly; and
    b. The requirement placed upon practitioners to decide relating to ideological or non-ideological drivers based on limited information. The presence and extent of any such drivers may only become clear when more information is obtained, for example through an individual's participation in a Channel intervention.

14. On the first point regarding overlapping categories, the passage below is extracted from the official Channel statistics released in November 2025, exhibited already as **TJ/03 - IPC000004**

    In the year ending the 31st of March 2025, of the 8,769 referrals to Prevent where the type of concern is specified, 56% (4,917) were for individuals with no identified ideology (type of concern categories: 'no ideology – other susceptibility to radicalisation identified' and 'no ideology identified'), which accounted for the largest proportion of referrals. When examined separately, 'no ideology identified' accounted for 34% of referrals (3,009 of 8,769), with only 4% (132) adopted as a Channel case, while 'no ideology – other susceptibility to radicalisation identified' made up 22% of referrals (1,908 of 8,769), with 10% (198) adopted … Five per cent (469) of referrals were due to concerns regarding 'Fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks (where no other ideology)'. The 'Fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks' category recorded a large increase in referrals in the latest quarter (January to March 2025), rising by 240% compared with the previous quarter (from 82 to 279). Other types of concern, such as ERW and IE, also saw increases of 61% and 14% respectively in the last quarter, though these were less pronounced than the rise observed in the 'Fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks' category … There were 424 referrals (5%) related to 'multiple ideologies (with no dominant ideology)' and 66 referrals (1%) linked to 'InCel Extremism'. A further 175 referrals (2%) were recorded under 'other' types of concern.

15. On my second point relating to making an early decision, for cases which present as having a fascination with extreme violence or committing mass casualty attacks and may also demonstrate at least an interest in a defined terrorist ideology (i.e. Extreme Right Wing Terrorism or Islamist Extremist Terrorism etc) or a mixture of ideologies, it appears to be a less than straightforward process to decide how these cases should be appropriately categorised given the use of the phrase "*where no other ideology*" in the FEVMCA category.

16. At the onset of a referral, it may be difficult to precisely determine whether the individual is presenting as a VFI including whether that includes a fascination with committing a mass casualty attack, or as someone engaging with a terrorist ideology, or as someone with a mixture of many different ideological and non-ideological motivations.

17. There have been cases within Channel where individuals changed their ideological adherence during the lifespan of their Channel intervention, i.e. initially presenting as being susceptible to being drawn into Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism, only to then demonstrate an interest in or susceptibility to an Islamist ideology and there are cases in wider CT investigations where an individual who has a clear terrorist ideology has been prosecuted for possession of terrorist material relating to a completely separate terrorist ideology.

18. It is therefore possible that a referral is categorised as being related to a terrorist ideology masking the presence of a fascination with extreme violence due to what may be a superficial or fleeting interest in a particular terrorist ideology. The problem of which category to choose is further complicated by the inclusion of the additional PCMT categories of "*no ideology – other susceptibility to radicalisation identified*", "*no ideology identified*" and "*Multiple ideologies (with no dominant ideology)*", all of which could potentially be applied interchangeably based upon an individual's interpretation of the presenting circumstances.

19. This creates three fundamental concerns. The first being that practitioners may feel that the framework within which they are required to make complex and difficult decisions is not as helpful and supportive as it could be. The second being that this could impede the ability of the CT system to adequately analyse and understand the data to address the extent and trajectory of the problem. And lastly, even if neither of the above were true the publication of such data in the annual Prevent statistics does

not aid full public understanding and external scrutiny, a critical element to securing and maintaining public confidence in and support for the Prevent system.

20. The manifestation of any or all of these concerns could therefore affect the ability of the system to identify and appropriately support those in need of interventions and thereby reduce the overall risk to society.

Risk assessment of VFIs

21. The primary tool used by Prevent practitioners to assess the extent to which identified individuals are vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism is the Prevent Assessment Framework ("PAF"), introduced in late 2024. The work to develop the PAF was commissioned to draw on the best available evidence and research to make the critical decisions required within the Prevent system and Channel process. Whilst I have recently attended and observed a one-day training course delivered to Prevent professionals on the use and application of PAF, there will be much better qualified people than I able to fully describe the PAF, the principles upon which it is based and its utility in relation to VFIs. From prior knowledge (not from this training), I understand the methodology behind the PAF is drawn from evidence and research relating to the use of Structured Professional Judgements and psychological clinical case formulations. A critical outstanding question is whether the PAF is best placed to fully understand and assess the risk relating to VFIs given the system within which it is deployed and the purpose behind its creation is explicitly for those with a vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism. I am reassured that the PAF has at least the ability to cope with a VFI referral, and I believe it's an improvement from the previous assessment tool. Whether it is as effective as it needs to be for the issues under consideration remains an unresolved question.

22. The PAF is applied and reconsidered at various points throughout an individual's interaction with Prevent. As previously stated, no provision is made under the CTSA 2015, nor in any other guidance, to assess risk in relation to VFIs differently to other ideologies. The drafting of the CTSA 2015 took place many years before the current considerations around VFIs arose.

23. Prevents risk thresholds are ideologically agnostic. Critical points at which risk is assessed, and the associated thresholds, include (but are not limited to):

    a. **Initial referral:**

i. Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the CTSA 2015 sets out the "Specified Authorities" which are subject to the Prevent duty and must, under s.26 of the CTSA, ***"have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism."***.

ii. However, a referral can be made to Prevent by anyone who is concerned that they, or someone they know, is susceptible to radicalisation or might be at risk of becoming involved in terrorism or supporting terrorism. **There is no definition of 'concern' in the CTSA 2015; there is no 'threshold' as such**.

iii. The Prevent Duty Guidance 2023, which I exhibit as **TJ/04 - CTPHQ000012** sets out guidance (paragraphs 39 – 51) for frontline professionals regarding when it may be appropriate to refer someone to Prevent, but ultimately what constitutes a concern is an individual judgment to be made at the point of referral, by the referrer.

b. **Deconfliction:** The Counter Terrorism Policing (CTP) Fixed Intelligence Management Unit ("FIMU") conducts a deconfliction exercise against a range of police records. This is called the RADO (Receive, Assess, Decide, Outcomes) process and deconflicts whether the referral should be brought to the attention of CT Investigators (i.e. for Pursue relevance) or whether it is appropriate to progress to the next stage of consideration within the Prevent system.

c. **Prevent Gateway Assessment:** Once a referral has been assessed by FIMU and has been deemed unsuitable for Pursue, it will undergo a Prevent gateway assessment. This is the initial screening/triage process conducted by counterterrorism case officers ("CTCOs") and approved by Supervisors. At this stage, **the relevant threshold is whether the CTCO and countersigning Supervisor reasonably suspect (at least) or believe (at most) that there is Prevent relevance.**

d. **Information gathering:** If the threshold of 'reasonably suspect' is met, the case progresses to information-gathering. Once that is complete, the CTCO and their supervisor decide whether the case is suitable for Channel. Section 36 of the CTSA 2015 provides that **a referral to Channel may be made only if there are *"reasonable grounds to believe that an individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism*".**

e. **Susceptibility Assessment:** prior to a case going to a Channel Panel, the CTCO must complete a "Susceptibility Assessment" which identifies the factors relevant to an individual's susceptibility to being drawn into terrorism. **Note that the relevant test differs in the Prevent Guidance and the CTSA 2015, which risks inconsistency of application. Prevent Guidance sets out that the relevant test is of *susceptibility* to being drawn into terrorism, whereas the section 36 test in the CTSA 2015 is whether that individual is *vulnerable* to being drawn into terrorism.** This difference in language may cause different practitioners to capture different types of risk or protective factors and even if that were not the case, it is in my view an unnecessary and unhelpful anomaly.

f. **Exiting the Channel Panel:** An individual leaves the Channel process (after completion of a Closure Susceptibility Assessment) **when the Panel deems that the terrorism risk has sufficiently reduced to warrant exit, or if increased risk warrants an escalation to police, or if consent to Channel support has not been obtained.**

g. **Reviewing Channel Cases:** All cases which have been adopted by a Channel panel must, as a minimum, be reviewed by the panel at least 6 months and 12 months from the point of case closure. At the point of closure, it is the responsibility of the Channel case officer to accurately record the closure on the case management database to ensure review triggers are flagged at the appropriate time. This review process must be undertaken for all Prevent referrals that are adopted by the panel, including Channel cases that are adopted but are subsequently referred elsewhere or offered support under Channel.

24. For Channel cases where consent has not been obtained or is withdrawn during the delivery of an intervention, the police may, based upon their assessment of risk, adopt the case into a Police-Led Partnership ("PLP"). PLPs cover the management of people, groups or institutions that are not suitable for Channel, but which have identified Prevent relevant issues requiring support or mitigation. PLPs are led by police but working in partnership with other agencies and employ many of the same type of approaches used within the multi-agency processes of Channel.

25. The thresholds detailed within Prevent (Channel) are all couched in terms of terrorism and plainly were not designed to capture non-terrorism VFI cases. As we have seen in the case of AR, and what goes to the heart of the issues the Inquiry is grappling with, is whether it is right that Prevent's thresholds remain designed to capture terrorist risk, whether they should be broadened to include other types of serious harm, and what the intended and unintended consequences of such a change might be. The Home Office published a Prevent Thresholds Review in May 2025, which I exhibit as **TJ/05 - IPC000005**, in which they concluded "*The evidence considered suggests that existing Prevent thresholds are appropriate in addressing current and future threats but are applied inconsistently*". I suggest that Prevent thresholds and their adequacy for VFI cases would benefit from further consideration under the Government's recently constituted NIEV task force.

Tools for risk assessment

26. In considering whether the PAF, an adaptation of it, or some other form of assessment, judgement or formulation would be fit to use in relation to VFIs either within Prevent or across multiple safeguarding or risk management processes we should reflect upon the backdrop of an increasingly diverse and specialised network of multi-agency risk management structures, each with their own statutory duties and developed assessment frameworks.

27. Frontline practitioners are managing risk across a range of social harms including but not limited to CT, County Lines criminality, domestic violence and sexual offenders, each with their own specialist arrangements. As was highlighted in Phase 1 of the Inquiry, this has led to a series of "hand-offs" within what is an increasingly crowded pitch of risk management structures which include MAPPA, Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences ("MARAC"), Channel, Multi-Agency-Safeguarding Hubs ("MASH"), Serious Youth Violence Panels, Partnership Prevention Panels etc.

28. Rather than creating another bespoke tool which is focused solely on the VFI phenomenon, perhaps now is an opportunity to promote more effective connectivity across the systems of risk / vulnerability management at the local government level.

29. I believe an initial triage assessment which (1) supports decision makers in identifying the most appropriate structure to which an individual should be directed, (2) supports the tracking and transfer / parallel management of cases between the

various structures and (3) maintains oversight, governance and accountability across the system would focus energies on connecting the various structures already in place ensuring practitioners have systems and processes that are fit for purpose in considering a range of social harms.

30. In Chapter 5 of Lessons for Prevent, which I exhibit as **TJ/06 - HOM000079** my predecessor Lord Anderson considers "The Future Shape of Prevent". I commend that work and hope to see serious consideration of its proposals through the Government's NIEV taskforce.

Prevent criteria

31. Prevent has largely become a hostage to fortune because it is relatively well resourced compared with other comparable multi-agency risk management processes. That said, many within the Prevent system have cited workload volumes as an increasing source of pressure and the most recent Prevent statistics released in August 2026, which I exhibit at **TJ/07 - IPC000006**, evidence a 39% increase in overall Prevent referrals. At the initial referral stage relating to anyone who may be considered a VFI it is entirely appropriate that Prevent should at least be engaged in the initial assessment, using the PAF, given the information could indicate a vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism.

32. Prevent (and Channel) sit within the UK's Counter Terrorism Strategy and it is ultimately a matter of either law, policy or practice to determine whether once a VFI is assessed to not present with terrorism-related vulnerabilities whether it is appropriate for them to remain in Channel or be signposted to and managed under another multi-agency risk management process. An example of an alternative potential process being MAPPA arrangements, for Potentially Dangerous Persons. This is a non-statutory expansion of the MAPPA provisions developed as gaps in the arrangements to manage risk and prevent offences that would cause serious harm were identified. The College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for Potentially Dangerous Persons, first published in 2017 and most recently amended in 2026, and which I exhibit as **TJ/08 - IPC000007**, already includes the example of these provisions being used for "*a person suspected, but not convicted of terrorism or extremism-related activity*". VFI cases or at least a subset of them, if they meet the various thresholds following a PAF assessment are currently remaining in Channel and the appropriateness of this should be included in any consideration of other available options.

33. In Lord Anderson's "Lessons for Prevent", exhibited above as TJ/06, he highlighted the significant consent challenges being experienced within Channel with only 52% of those deemed suitable for adoption by a Channel panel consenting to engage with the process. Does it therefore make sense to expand the scope of Prevent into other harmful behaviours such as VFI when there is an increasing reluctance to engage with a process that sits within counter terrorism?

34. The Channel process is contingent upon gaining the consent of the individual to participate in an intervention. This is a strength in providing assurance to individuals that they are taking part in a pre-criminal intervention process to prevent them from being drawn into terrorism and will be managed with a safeguarding rather than investigative lens. However, it is also a significant limitation in that where an individual does not consent (or if they are under 18, their parents do not consent), Channel is no longer a viable means of delivering an intervention. In these circumstances, CTP can, based upon the assessment of the risks and susceptibilities presented, decide to bring the individual into a PLP multi-agency arrangement.

35. Outside of the consent issue, the Channel duty guidance which I exhibit as **TJ/09 - IPC000008** also states at paragraph 79 "*if there is an escalation of risk, where deemed appropriate, the police may transfer a case from Channel to police led partnership management or escalate it into Pursue*".

36. The PLP arrangements do not sit on a statutory basis and are not underpinned by policy. Rather, the arrangements have evolved organically to put in place a backstop for individuals who may present with significant susceptibilities, but who do not consent to Channel. From a risk management perspective further thought is required to develop clear guidelines for PLP arrangements to ensure they are transparent, accountable and supportive of effective decision making.

37. There are various decision points along the Channel process where practitioners may decide, based upon further information gathered, that the individual is NOT at risk / susceptible to being drawn into terrorism. This can include:
    a. During the information gathering / gateway assessment / Section 36 decision stage;
    b. At the first Channel Panel, upon being presented the referral by the CTCO; and/or

c. At any further Channel Panel, based upon feedback from an Intervention Provider and/or other representatives of statutory services delivering interventions.

38. At these points there is a concern that in the absence of viable alternative risk management processes to which the individual can be signposted, that they will continue to be managed within Channel, a CT process. This raises questions about the proportionality of keeping individuals within a CT process where all the mechanisms and tools currently used within this process conclude that the individual should be managed elsewhere. Decision making should be risk-based rather than resource-based and although Channel (within Prevent) is being utilised as a means of managing these individuals currently, questions would need to be asked about the medium to long term resourcing implications, particularly as Channel Panels have seen an increase in volume and complexity without a commensurate increase in resources.

39. This is most keenly felt within Local Authorities who chair Channel Panels (see Section 37(2) CTSA 2015). While CT Policing is funded to support CTCOs in a full-time capacity to support all parts of the Channel process, local authorities do not receive funding for full-time posts and the individuals taking on the chairing of Channel Panels do so while balancing multiple other responsibilities. It is here that the increasing volume and complexity of Channel cases (including VFIs) are presenting the most significant risks in terms of capacity and capability.

Management of VFIs by Prevent

40. A key challenge for Prevent is that it was designed to identify individuals who are at risk of radicalisation into terrorism, not as a general violence prevention mechanism. The PAF is purposefully directed towards susceptibilities and protective factors relevant to terrorism. Its applicability to cases not presenting in this way is yet to be determined.

41. There are many risks factors which could be associated with serious violence such as social isolation, mental health issues, trauma and neurodivergence. These are not specific to terrorism which could mean Prevent practitioners struggle to determine whether factors indicate vulnerability to radicalisation or a risk better managed through other pathways. As Prevent interacts with individuals in the "pre-criminal space", practitioners are called upon to make decisions based upon incomplete

information, particularly at the initial referral and gateway assessment stages of the process. It is a significant challenge to make empirically based decisions with often scarce information.

42. Prevent offers multi agency processes for managing radicalisation risk but as stated there is no equivalent national mechanism focussed on individuals who demonstrate similar behaviours without a terrorist ideology.

43. There are significant challenges in determining whether the individual falls within the remit of Prevent and which interventions will be appropriate. Without clear ideology, practitioners will find it difficult to make clear risk assessments. Prevent is intended to address radicalisation risk rather than violence in general.

44. One of the most significant and unique attributes of the Channel process is the availability of Home Office funded Intervention Providers (IP), many of whom have engaged deeply with the ideological aspects of terrorist recruitment.

Adequacy of Prevent and Channel to manage VFIs

45. One of the central recommendations from Lord Anderson within the "Lessons for Prevent" report was that "*Prevent should remain open to individuals falling within the existing category of "fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks*". I support that recommendation, as at least a holding position, as there is presently an absence of any other clearly defined and understood alternative. The most significant challenges of this approach following an evidence-based assessment that the individual does not present terrorism concerns, are as follows:
    a. The legislation and guidance underpinning Channel are explicit in setting out the process's purpose is to counter terrorism. This is also particularly relevant in the context of the thresholds set out for the process and the legal basis upon which information sharing takes place;
    b. The PAF was designed based upon the available research into the specific susceptibility and protective factors which are relevant to individuals who may be drawn into terrorism;
    c. Resourcing within CT policing and local government has been based upon terrorism risk across the country. It is unclear if / how the levels of VFI individuals being managed within Channel will impact upon future resourcing decisions;

d. The prevalence and role of ideology is an important factor to understand in terrorism cases and for many years this has been built into the interventions offered within Channel. To move away from this to accommodate VFI cases in the medium to long term risks diluting the unique offering within Channel in becoming a broader violence reduction process.
e. The categorisations currently used within the PCMT do not provide an effective basis for understanding the relationship between ideological and non-ideological factors within the Channel caseload.

46. These above factors should be specifically addressed were VFI more broadly or FEVMCA (as defined) to remain within Prevent for the longer term.

47. As VFIs have been evident within the Channel caseload for several years and I am aware that the Home Office is undertaking work to diversify the IP network to ensure the "offer" of interventions is responsive to the evolving nature of the risks being managed within Channel.

48. Training is another important consideration when reflecting on the adequacy of Prevent and Channel to manage VFIs, and this would also be an area which needs further development if the responsibility for managing VFIs were to remain within the Prevent system.

Multi Agency Arrangements

49. I do not believe there is sufficient clarity about which agency or person holds or should hold the primary responsibility for managing VFIs. Because there is no commonly understood or agreed definition across agencies for VFIs and there are multiple perspectives of what a VFI may be. Furthermore, in accommodating VFIs within Prevent (Channel) there is a risk that counter terrorism becomes the lens through which this cohort is perceived rather than a broader safeguarding and risk management lens. I am aware that HMICFRS are in the late stages of concluding a report on safeguarding in CT Policing, which I suggest would be of interest to the Inquiry.

50. An option to resolve the lack of clarity regarding ownership of VFI management would be to introduce a named individual allocated as the case management lead. Some considerations for that proposed function include:

a. Such a role could represent increased accountability and ownership of cases moving through the risk management process at a local level;
b. Though, increased accountability and ownership could also be achieved through allocating ownership to a specific body / structure;
c. It will be important that a balance is struck between discharging statutory obligations and proactively advocating for the individual, particularly in situations where the application of thresholds is prescriptive (often because of limited resources) and difficult to navigate;
d. Given the volumes of individuals (both adults and children) being managed within safeguarding processes at a local level, would the proposed model be feasible without a significant uplift in funding?
e. Consideration would need to be given to how many cases one "duty holder" could reasonably be responsible for;
f. How resilient would a "duty holder" model be when considering staff absence due to annual leave, sickness, training etc?

51. Given the maturity, nature and reach of the MAPPA process I believe further consideration could be given to adapting that process to accommodate VFI cases or a subset of them with clear protocols for transferring cases into or out of Channel dependent on whether a risk of radicalisation is identified. The question of resourcing would need to be considered as it would with any other proposal.

52. I do not believe it is necessary or helpful to create an additional separate multi-agency structure or process to manage VFIs in isolation. Indeed, this approach would perpetuate the problem of separate systems developed in isolation, lacking connectivity and clear pathways between them. As per Lord Anderson's Chapter 5 deliberations in "Lessons for Prevent" there is merit in considering risk management and safeguarding processes in the round to address the operational gaps identified, including the extent to which MAPPA could be part of the solution.

53. In any such review it should be noted that while there are statutory arrangements around safeguarding more generally, the MASH structure does not sit on a statutory footing. It is not underpinned by a national policy and there is wide variation as to how it is delivered across the country. It should be noted that while many local authorities operate a MASH structure, it is not universal and where they are present there are questions about the consistency of its application.

54. If the MASH structure were expanded to incorporate a "clearing" function which included Prevent assessments, this would require a statutory basis to ensure resources are allocated and to secure a consistency in its application across the country.

Information sharing arrangements

55. Information sharing within the Channel process sits on a statutory basis by virtue of the CTSA 2015. As VFIs are being managed within Channel, information sharing in support of assessment and case management is carried out using the existing information sharing provisions.

56. However, there should be further consideration of the continued use of the information sharing provisions of the CTSA 2015 regarding individuals who have been assessed using the Prevent Assessment Framework NOT to pose a risk around their radicalisation to terrorism and yet continue to be managed within Channel. We should reflect upon the necessity, proportionality and legal basis for information sharing in these circumstances.

Online harms

57. The online environment can play a significant role in the development and escalation of risk associated with VFIs. Online activity alone is rarely a sole cause of violent behaviour however it can act as a facilitator by reinforcing grievances against groups or communities and normalise violence and it can be the place where an individual can further develop their own grievance by engaging with others who share similar views.

58. Online platforms provide individuals with continuous access to content related to their interests or violent fantasies. Algorithms ensure repeated exposure to graphic material which can reinforce existing fixations, in turn normalising and desensitising the individual. Niche online communities provide validation and can contribute to an individual who may feel isolated. Online platforms allow anonymity which provides an individual with confidence to roam the internet freely. They can access material and engage openly creating multiple accounts and participate on different platforms. The online environment can facilitate attack planning and capability development through easy access to information of previous incidents alongside data and information on locations.

59. Most individuals who consume concerning online material do not progress to violence however it can be a factor in accelerating individuals already on a pathway to violence. The indicators of this pathway include:
    a. Increasing intense fixation on a person or grievance;
    b. Repeated engagement with pro violence communities;
    c. Promoting violence through posts, messages, manifestos and threats;
    d. Evidence of attack planning and surveillance; and/or
    e. Research on previous attackers and mass casualty events.

60. In Lessons for Prevent (see Paras 6.3-6.18) it is highlighted that "*while the guidance counsels "limiting the use of permissive online environments" and requires education settings in particular to assess the risks of online radicalisation, the model for Prevent referrals remains resolutely based on real-world contacts*". Given the evolving nature of risks within the online space, Recommendation 4 was made as follows:

    "All feasible and rights-compliant avenues should be explored as a matter of priority to enable evidence of online activity to be more effectively used:

    - *To gauge risk factors, assess risk, identify clusters and escalation and activate and manage responses;*
    - *To assist in the identification of potential subjects for Prevent; and*
    - *To evaluate and address the risk factors attaching to individuals referred to Prevent."*

61. I would like to see further development of how individuals susceptible to being drawn into terrorism could be identified through their engagement in online activities and effectively moved into supportive interventions through the Channel process. Prevent practitioners and policy makers should be innovating in this area to ensure these risks are identified sooner, and they should be supported in doing so.

62. In the context of Prevent, there is a reticence for the police to fully exploit the existence of readily available online material relating to a referred individual to make an accurate assessment of their vulnerability to being drawn into terrorism. When a referral is made and CTCOs are conducting their information gathering in support of the Gateway Assessment for Channel, it makes sense for them to conduct enquiries to identify the individual's online footprint. However, police practitioners are concerned that carrying out multiple viewings of an individual's publicly accessible social media accounts could constitute "monitoring", necessitating authorisation

under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA 2000). In practice this has a self-imposed "chilling effect" on the police's ability to carry these checks as a necessary limb of their assessment on an individual's vulnerability for the purposes of Section 36(3) of the CTSA 2015, i.e. in determining whether there are "*reasonable grounds to believe that the individual is vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism*".

63. There is very little guidance available for officers to determine the parameters of "monitoring" for the purposes of detecting online behaviours and there have been self-developed and self-imposed rules brought into play, like the "rule of three" simplistically interpreted as if the police look more than three times at a publicly available profile it constitutes monitoring and therefore needs legal authority.

64. Members of the public find it hard to understand that information they can readily and repeatedly access online, without the need to resort to any specialist skills or software, is not being accessed by the police to assess and mitigate risk including by way of supportive interventions. I believe the creation of well-considered guidance to supplement RIPA 2000 on this issue would provide widespread clarity for all concerned parties.

65. It should be noted that Channel and MAPPA are multi-agency arrangements that do not create powers to restrict or monitor access to the internet. However, individuals can be managed within these arrangements while also being subject to other legal provisions which provide these powers, such as: Sexual Harm Prevention Orders ("SHPOs") under the Sexual Offences Act 2003; Criminal Behaviour Orders ("CBOs") under the Anti-social Behaviour; Crime and Policing Act 2014, Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures ("TPIMs") under the TPIM Act 2011; Licence conditions for offenders released from prison; and through Child Protection and Family Court Orders.

66. I would be supportive of further exploration and adaptation of existing Child Protection and Family Court Orders to provide restrictions and powers to monitor access to the internet in cases of VFIs which take place under the auspices of the Children Act 1989. This approach benefits from the scope and threshold for these powers sitting within the existing risk assessment frameworks used in the Family Court which can be subject to representation and challenge rather than being the sole preserve of the police.

67. Strengthening these powers or creating new legislation which caters specifically for VFIs would not in my view have an impact on Prevent as these legal powers already exist in other areas such as sexual offences and counter terrorism and individuals subject to them could also be managed within Channel/MAPPA or indeed any other multi-agency arrangement.

68. It is also important to re-emphasise the voluntary nature of an individual's participation in the Channel process. If legal powers to restrict and monitor access to the internet were added to the existing legal basis for Prevent (and Channel) i.e. the CTSA 2015 there is a risk that this could be perceived that a person consenting to Channel involvement is also consenting to having their internet access restricted and or monitored. My concern would be that such a conflation may lead to further reductions in consent rates.

69. In terms of possible recommendations for legislation relating to VFIs, consideration could be given to new legislation akin to Section 38B of the Terrorism Act 2000 which makes it an offence for a person to fail to disclose information which he either knows or believes might help prevent another person carrying out an act of terrorism or might help in bringing a terrorist to justice in the UK. This would need to rightly focus on a threshold of offending deemed to have a commensurate impact with Terrorism offending.

70. The 2023 Prevent Duty Guidance places significant emphasis on "reducing permissive environments" as part of Prevent's objective to tackle the ideological causes of terrorism. A "permissive environment" is not simply a place where extremist views exist. Rather, it is an environment, network, institution, venue, online space or community setting where radicalisers can operate with limited challenge and where extremist narratives linked to terrorism are able to spread, gain legitimacy or influence susceptible individuals.

71. The Prevent guidance expressly discusses challenging extremist narratives linked to terrorism and reducing environments in which radicalising ideologies can flourish. By contrast, the Online Safety Act does not define "extremist ideology" or "violent ideology", and the original "legal but harmful" provisions were removed during passage of the legislation. Rather, it concentrates on illegal content, child safety and platform accountability.

72. From a Prevent perspective, there remains a challenge around lawful extremist propaganda, violence glorifying content that does not meet a criminal threshold, ideological ecosystems that normalise hatred or violence and social media recommendation systems that amplify such material.

73. Given the emphasis on "permissive environments" within Prevent, there appears to be disparity between what can and should be done in the "real world" and what can and should be done in the online environment. Whilst I understand the complex and significant challenges which exist in tackling online harm, I would welcome further exploration of this issue.

Reform and future development

74. The principal change resulting from the Lessons for Prevent report is that Prevent has become more willing to retain and assess referrals involving fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks, even where no clear ideology is apparent. It is worth noting that the Home Secretary has accepted all the recommendations made in that report, and I exhibit the Home Secretary's letter on this point as **TJ/10 - ILT000112** As I set out in my response to the Home Secretary, exhibited as **TJ/11 - IPC000009**, while I welcome the Government's decision to accept the report's recommendations and the substantial programme of work already underway to strengthen activity under the Prevent strand of the UK's CONTEST Strategy, the challenge now will be implementation of those recommendations if we are to achieve meaningful reform.

75. Changes include stronger assurance requirements, mandatory progression of such referrals through the Police Gateway Assessment, increased emphasis on referral quality, and clearer messaging that a discernible ideology is not always necessary for engagement. However, VFIs remain an operational rather than statutory category, there is still no universally agreed definition of a VFI, and no separate VFI risk-assessment framework currently exists.

76. I note that within the Independent Review of Prevent exhibited as **TJ/12 - ILT000104**, William Shawcross argued that Prevent must understand and address ideologies that lead to terrorism, whereas within Lessons for Prevent, Lord Anderson argued that Prevent should also remain capable of assessing individuals who present with a fascination with extreme violence or mass casualty attacks before any clear ideology has emerged.

77. I take the view that in VFI cases, Prevent staff should at least be a part of any initial assessment, potentially in conjunction with or as part of a wider triage function, because at that stage it is difficult to determine whether something is terrorism related or not, particularly given the similarities in the types of offences carried out by VFI and terrorist offenders. I also strongly believe that in terms of encouraging referrals and given the complexities of determining the precise nature of any risk or vulnerability in an initial stage, we should not expect the referrer to choose between separate referral routes. This should apply equally to a potentially seasoned professional as much as it should to an inexperienced member of the public with a genuine concern.

78. Channel practitioners follow a process of information sharing and assessment, which is underpinned by legislation and guidance honed by more than a decade of operational practice.

79. Within the Lessons for Prevent report Lord Anderson recommended exploring whether Prevent should be connected to a broader violence-prevention and safeguarding framework and suggested a Cabinet Office task force for this purpose.

80. In response to the Southport Inquiry Phase 1 report, the Home Secretary stated that she had established a Home Office taskforce to coordinate implementation of the Southport Inquiry recommendations and develop a new approach to managing violence-fixated individuals.

81. This is significantly different to a Cabinet Office task force. I have met with the Home Office NIEV task force, who are currently framing their terms of reference and also with Cabinet Office officials. Given Lord Anderson's intention was for this task force to promote further connectivity between Prevent and the wider safeguarding system, which in large part sits outside the Home Office's remit, it remains to be seen whether the task force is adequately configured and receives the appropriate support from other government departments to serve this purpose.

82. In terms of change and reform to Prevent flowing from the publication of this Inquiry's Phase 1 report, it is too early to provide a full assessment given that report was published in April. However, the reforms introduced since the Southport attack have substantially addressed several of the failings found in Prevent's handling of AR,

particularly through stronger handling of fascination-with-extreme-violence referrals, clearer policy on cases where ideology is unclear, enhanced quality assurance, and improvements to assessment processes, particularly the use of the PAF.

83. These reforms do not yet fully resolve the more fundamental issues highlighted by the case: the absence of a settled definition of VFIs, uncertainty about the boundary between terrorism risk and serious violence risk, the lack of a mature alternative pathway for non-terrorism violence cases, and the question of whether Prevent should remain a counter-terrorism programme or form part of a broader violence-prevention system.

84. The principal Inquiry recommendation which advocates for "a single agency, structure or designated lead with responsibility for coordinating assessment, information sharing and intervention for children and young people who present a high risk of serious harm" is the subject of considerable attention and there is a substantial overlap between this recommendation and one of the principal findings of the Lessons for Prevent review (Chapter 5) relating to the idea of a "big front door". This sets out that Government should develop a coherent violence-prevention and safeguarding infrastructure capable of identifying, assessing and managing high-risk individuals, including violence-fixated individuals, across organisational boundaries. The focus is less on which agency initially receives a referral and more on ensuring continuity of risk ownership, information sharing and intervention as individuals move through multiple services.

85. In terms of the assurance and monitoring arrangements for Prevent, these have improved materially since Southport, particularly through stronger scrutiny of fascination with extreme violence referrals, enhanced assessment processes and additional quality assurance.

86. However, I do not consider these improvements sufficient to provide complete assurance regarding the identification and management of violence-fascinated individuals. Key issues remain unresolved, including the absence of a consistent VFI definition, the lack of understanding as to how the PAF should be applied in these cases, continuing uncertainty around ownership of risk across agencies, and the absence of a fully mature system for monitoring outcomes if cases move beyond Channel into wider safeguarding structures. There is still uncertainty as to what the

process looks like for these cases exiting Channel and whether there is clearly and commonly understood pathways for risk escalation.

87. The Southport Inquiry Phase 1 report referenced MAPPA as an example of an existing statutory framework for multi-agency risk management. Certain MAPPA principles are highly relevant such as named risk ownership, statutory cooperation duties (similar to Channel), structured multi-agency review and clear accountability. There are also promising practices emanating from Violence Reduction Unit ("VRU") approaches which already exist across the UK, including hospital-based youth workers, custody-based diversion schemes, and multidisciplinary intervention models. Approaches to VFI could benefit from clinically informed assessments, public-health approaches to violence and upstream intervention before criminal justice thresholds are crossed.

Improvements

88. Fundamental changes would require changes to either legislation, policy or practice guidance, or a combination of all three, and to summarise my input to this Inquiry there are several recommendations I would propose for consideration. These include:
    a. **Establish a "Big Front Door" model for high-risk individuals**: Introduction of a formal approach to initial triaging, which mandates a consistent structure akin to the MASH across all local authorities through which individuals will enter, be allocated a named agency / responsible officer and will maintain oversight of how individuals are case managed. A nationally consistent triage and allocation mechanism would ensure that individuals presenting with serious violence concerns are directed to the most appropriate risk-management structure from the outset. The model should support initial triage, allocate a lead agency and responsible officer, facilitate transfer between processes where necessary and maintain oversight as cases move between Channel, MAPPA, MASH, Youth Justice, social care and other safeguarding arrangements;
    b. **Clarify Prevent's role in relation to the above processes and the extent to which it should retain responsibility for VFIs or a defined subset of VFIs**: Should Prevent be a part of this initial triage, be a pre-cursor to it or run consciously in parallel with it. One of the most difficult policy questions remains whether Prevent should continue to accept referrals where there is no apparent ideology. My view is that new legislation is not required at this

initial stage. However, government should issue clear statutory guidance regarding the relationship between Prevent and non-ideological extreme violence. I believe Prevent should continue to assess or be involved in the assessment of VFI referrals at the earliest possible stage, because motivation is often unknown or difficult to accurately determine. Where terrorism concerns are excluded, cases or a subset of cases should ordinarily move into alternative arrangements rather than remaining indefinitely within a counter-terrorism process;

c. **Place any "Big Front Door" structure on a statutory footing:** If the MASH model or a similar arrangement is used as a national entry point for VFI cases, it should be supported by legislation and national policy to ensure consistency and adequate resourcing;
d. **Introduce clear ownership of VFI cases:** A statutory duty requiring a named agency and potentially a named responsible officer to own management of a high-risk VFI case once defined thresholds are met. This would allow for more effective ownership and tracking of individuals who have progressed through any initial triage process ("big front door") and are potentially subject to a myriad of multi-agency risk management processes. Such an establishment of ownership would mitigate against the culture of "hand offs" highlighted by the Inquiry Phase 1 report;
e. **Develop a settled definition of VFIs/NIEV:** Government should establish a consistent operational definition of Violence-Fixated (or fascinated) Individuals and/or Non-Ideological Extreme Violence. A definition would not solve the problem on its own, but it would improve public understanding, the consistency of referrals, performance monitoring, operational guidance, oversight and inspection, and data collection;
f. **Strengthen alternative pathways beyond Channel:** There is a lack of mature alternative pathways once a determination has been made that a person is not vulnerable to being drawn into terrorism. Government should therefore develop clear arrangements for onward case management, provide guidance for Police-Led Partnerships (PLPs), not only for police but also partners, and ensure that VFI cases can transition to other risk-management structures where appropriate;
g. **Consider expansion of MAPPA:** Consideration should be given to adapting or expanding MAPPA to accommodate VFI cases where CT Policing assesses that terrorism concerns are absent. MAPPA's existing strengths, including statutory cooperation duties, structured review mechanisms, clear

accountability and established governance may provide a more sustainable solution than creating any new structure;

h. **Improve guidance relating to online monitoring:** A very meaningful improvement could be made in online monitoring and risk assessment through the creation of guidance to supplement RIPA 2000 to support officers in carrying out social media monitoring for referrals made to Channel, which includes VFI cases. Practitioners require greater clarity regarding what constitutes "monitoring" online behaviour, what enquiries can be undertaken using publicly available information, and when formal authorisation (as set out within RIPA) is required;

i. **Strengthen the legislative approach to addressing "permissive environments"**: I would welcome further exploration of the linkages between the Prevent duty and the Online Safety Act. An effective balance needs to be struck between legitimate freedom of speech considerations and the highly concerning availability of online content which falls below the threshold of "illegal". The disparities of thresholds and expectations between the real world and the online world should be examined;

j. **Expand use of existing civil powers to manage internet-related risks:** Government should explore adapting existing Child Protection and Family Court Orders under the Children Act 1989 to permit restrictions and monitoring of internet access in appropriate VFI cases. This would provide safeguards through existing judicial processes rather than changing the nature of Channel as a safeguarding process;

k. **Improve connectivity between Prevent and wider safeguarding systems**: There remains weak connectivity between Counter Terrorism Policing and wider safeguarding structures. Government should therefore strengthen information sharing, referral pathways, case-transfer arrangements and governance across agencies. This reflects both the Southport Inquiry findings and the "Big Front Door" concept emerging from Lessons for Prevent;

l. **Review Channel thresholds for VFI cases:** The current thresholds are framed almost entirely in terrorism terms and were not originally designed for non-terrorist VFI cases. Government should therefore review whether terrorism-focused thresholds remain appropriate, whether wider serious-harm thresholds should be considered, and ultimately the consequences of broadening Prevent criteria;

m. **Strengthen oversight and outcome monitoring**: Current assurance arrangements have improved but are not considered sufficient for VFI

management. Future oversight should include the monitoring of post-Channel outcomes, visibility of onward referrals, clearer accountability for risk escalation and performance measures relating specifically to VFI cases; and

n. **Invest in training and specialist capability:** There is an over-reliance on generic e-learning in Prevent broadly and an absence of VFI-specific capability development. Training should be more practitioner-led, incorporate local threat profiles (CTLP), address VFI identification and management, and strengthen understanding of online harms and the complex nature of composite ideologies and motivators for violence.

Other matters

89. Finally, it is worth noting that the role of the Independent Prevent Commissioner is not currently founded on a statutory basis. I share Lord Anderson's view that the investigations of the IPC have the potential to be more penetrating and yield more meaningful results should the IPC have statutory powers to compel assistance, where necessary. This is all the more important given that investigations will not be confined to the CT community, where there is a relatively strong culture of compliance with requests from the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation, but will also extend to the wide array of other government departments and local and specified authorities with a statutory responsibility for the delivery of Prevent. I will therefore continue to urge Ministers to place the role of the IPC and its oversight and scrutiny functions on a statutory footing at the earliest legislative opportunity.

Statement of truth

90. 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: 07/08/2026

ANNEX A: LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit no.	Inquiry reference	Document description
TJ/01	IPC000002	Government's communications on Young Futures Hubs
TJ/02	IPC000003	User guide to: Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, England and Wales
TJ/03	IPC000004	Official Channel statistics released in November 2025
TJ/04	CTPHQ000012	Prevent Duty Guidance 2023
TJ/05	IPC000005	Prevent Thresholds Review, May 2025
TJ/06	HOM000079	Lord Anderson, "Lessons for Prevent" report
TJ/07	IPC000006	Prevent statistics released in August 2026
TJ/08	IPC000007	College of Policing Authorised Professional Practice for Potentially Dangerous Persons
TJ/09	IPC000008	Channel duty guidance
TJ/10	ILT000112	Home Secretary, letter on the "Lessons for Prevent" report
TJ/11	IPC000009	IPC response to Home Secretary "Lessons for Prevent" letter
TJ/12	ILT000104	William Shawcross, "Independent Review of Prevent"