

**IN THE MATTERS OF THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005**

**RE THE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

---

**WITNESS STATEMENT OF CHIEF CONSTABLE MICHELLE SKEER**

---

I Michelle Skeer, Chief Constable of Cumbria Constabulary, will say as follows:-

1. I am Chief Constable Michelle Skeer currently serving with Cumbria Constabulary. I am the current NPCC Lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders and I make this statement in that capacity in response to a request by the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (the Inquiry) on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2019.
2. I have been a serving Police Officer for nearly 29 years and have performed a number of roles. I joined Cumbria Constabulary in February 1990. I performed a variety of uniform operational roles before moving into the Criminal Investigation Department. Within the Criminal Investigation Department, I have held roles at every rank and led on both public protection and serious crime operations. In 2007 I was appointed Director of Professional Standards for the Constabulary. Following successful completion of the National Strategic Command Course in 2009, I applied for and was appointed to the position of Assistant Chief Constable in Cumbria, taking responsibility for all operational policing matters. In or around July 2011, whilst Assistant Chief Constable at Cumbria, I assumed the role of Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders, when the previous portfolio holder Chief Constable Paul West of



West Mercia Police retired. During 2014, ACPO was replaced by the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) I then became the NPCC Lead for the Management of Sexual Offenders and Violent Offenders. In October 2014 I was appointed to the position of Deputy Chief Constable in Cumbria. In April 2018 I was appointed to the position of Chief Constable of Cumbria Constabulary.

3. Police Sergeant 1025 Gillian Cherry is my Staff Officer and submitted a statement to the Inquiry dated 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018 in response to a Rule 9 Request dated 25<sup>th</sup> April 2018. I have reviewed that statement and adopt its contents as part of my evidence to the Inquiry. A further Rule 9 Request was made of the NPCC by the Inquiry on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018, by way of a letter addressed to Mr Richard Fewkes. Police Sergeant 1025 Gillian Cherry responded to this request on my behalf by way of letter dated 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018. I have reviewed that letter and adopt its content as part of my evidence to the Inquiry.
4. Prior to preparing this statement I have had the benefit of reviewing some of the statements which have already been submitted to the Inquiry. Having read these statements, I have the following observations to make in addition to the statement of Police Sergeant Gillian Cherry.
5. Whilst Sexual Harm Prevention Orders and Sexual Risk Orders are civil orders, the standard of proof applied to the acts or behaviour relied upon to justify the application for the order is the criminal standard of proof. The judgement of the House of Lords in the case of R. (on the application of McCann – v – Manchester Crown Court [2002] means that a court must apply the criminal standard and therefore be sure that the individual subject of the application has carried out the relevant acts before making an order. If the court is satisfied that the individual subject of the application has carried out the relevant acts, then the next stage for the court to determine is whether an order is necessary to protect the public from sexual harm. This stage does not require the court to be sure to the criminal standard. This part of the decision making process is an exercise of judgement or evaluation by the court. Therefore, any conditions that are to be imposed by the court, must be necessary and proportionate to protect the public or any members of the public from sexual harm from the individual. Such orders should not infringe the Human Rights Act. A Police Force would not be able to apply for conditions or prohibitions when there was no evidence to support the need for such conditions or



prohibitions, this would be particularly relevant when considering the issue placing restrictions on foreign travel.

6. These civil orders are an efficient and effective way of trying to manage offenders and prospective offenders. However, it is important to recognise that these orders are preventative orders and are not to be seen as punitive. Further, they are not the only options open to Police Forces in trying to manage such offenders. They are one of a number of options open to Law Enforcement Agencies in managing sexual offenders.
7. Within some of the statements, there is mention of ViSOR. From recollection, I believe that ViSOR was introduced in or around 1997 to assist in management of sexual offenders. ViSOR is a multi-agency shared database predominantly used by the Police Service, the Prison Service and the Probation Service. It was predominantly brought in as a case management system to assist those agencies in managing sexual offenders. Whilst it remains an efficient and effective IT system for the purpose for which it was introduced, it is a system that, by current day standards, has its limitations. As it was designed as a case management system, it was not necessarily created to be a statistical retrieval system. This has presented some difficulty in responding to the Rule 9 Requests made by the Inquiry. Whilst it is possible to perform some limited searches to extract some general higher level data, there are limitations concerning retrieving more specific information about individual records. If the level of information requested by the Inquiry is information which may be required in the future, then one may need to look at what new systems are available or how ViSOR can be developed to meet any changes in demand.

I believe that the facts stated within this statement are true.

Signe

**DPA**

Date

21/1/19.....



