

WITNESS STATEMENT

CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3)(a) and 5B; Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, Rule 27.1

Statement of **Insp Nicholas Thatcher** URN:Age if under 18 **Over 18** (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: **Police Inspector**

This statement (consisting of: 12 pages each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated anything in it which I know to be false, or do not believe to be true.

Signature:

Date:

8/10/18

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded ☐ (supply witness details on rear)

This statement is further to my statement dated 27th June 2017. I have been informed that I might be asked to give evidence to the Grenfell Tower Public Inquiry and have been given the opportunity to add to my previous statement and expand on certain issues.

Prior to writing this statement, I have now viewed my body worn video (BWV) from the night of the fire, for the first time since that night. Although the footage is a good aide memoir of what happened, it obviously does not convey what it felt like to be there, what it smelt like and what it sounded like. Sounds like a 'pop' on the BWV were like explosions as the building materials burnt, and then each explosion was followed by burning materials falling. The BWV feels like a 2D representation of what it was like to be there on the night.

My additional comments below are grouped under headings according to topic, rather than necessarily in chronological order.

Role of the police

The role of the police when responding to a major incident such as the Grenfell Tower Fire is set out in the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles and the Joint Doctrine Framework published in 2016. I understand these have been exhibited by Commander Neil Jerome, who is providing an overview statement for the MPS to the Inquiry. The MPS objectives at Grenfell were:

- Preserve life and prevent further loss of life

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The preservation of life was not limited to those people inside the tower. A fundamental part of the role of the police at the Grenfell Tower fire was to ensure the safety of members of the public and emergency service personnel in the immediate vicinity of the tower. Those in the immediate vicinity included the people gathering on the streets surrounding the tower, the residential blocks immediately next to it, motorists using the A40 and anybody passing the tower through Latimer Road tube station.

The best way police could help those within the building was to provide a safe working environment for our colleagues in the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and the London Ambulance Service (LAS). This was accomplished through the instigation and policing of cordons to keep the public back from the fire and away from our colleagues. Injured people who escaped the tower but required LAS transport to hospital for treatment, required police officers to maintain a clear route for LAS to use to leave the scene. Police officers evacuated two adjacent buildings of residents following LFB advice that the risk to those buildings had increased (see below). Officers wearing flameproof uniforms and protective equipment escorted LFB staff with riot shields as they entered the building (see below).

- Prevent escalation of the incident as a whole

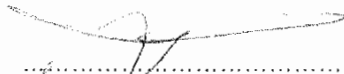
Escalation most obviously refers to the risk of the fire spreading to other adjacent buildings on the Lancaster West Estate and the associated risk of death or serious injury to the public and emergency service personnel. In a wider context, escalation also included the possibility of public disorder as police enforced the safety cordons. Police also managed the risk to motorists on the A40 and tube trains on the Hammersmith and City Line.

- Secure, protect and preserve the scene

Grenfell Tower was treated as a crime scene due to the loss of life and scale of damage and circumstances as a whole. The public safety cordons also acted as crime scene cordons.

- Investigate offences

It was clear from the earliest stage that the fire was to be the subject of an investigation. However the criminal investigation gave way to the overriding priority to save life and limb. The area could not be dealt with as a crime scene until public safety had been dealt with. In the circumstances of this incident, I made a decision that other offending behaviour should not be dealt with. I deal with this in more detail later in this statement.

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- Assist with coordination and communication between responding agencies.

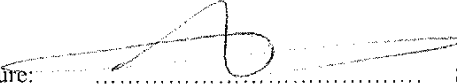
Both myself and Supt Warnett attended the hourly command meetings from which the emergency services response was coordinated and areas of responsibility were set. Police communications were managed by the MPS Command and Control Centre (MetCC). In the early stages the local Kensington police radio channel was used. Initially I made contact with LFB command and confirmed my understanding of their needs. I then set about commanding the police resources to help the LFB. As the incident developed, I took part in the Tactical Command meetings (TCMs) to ensure a shared understanding of the situation and the needs and responsibilities of all the other first responders. As a result of these meetings I was set tasks that needed to be completed to allow the other first responders to perform their core roles. These meetings also allowed Superintendent Warnett and I to understand what we needed to assist with exactly and how we would need to manage our resources at the scene accordingly. Throughout the incident, Superintendent Warnett requested whatever resources were needed at a particular time through MetCC and once those resources had arrived at the scene, we would allocate them to the relevant task.

Command

I was nominated as the police Silver commander by Supt Warnett who acted as Gold during the initial stages of the fire. I took direction around the ultimate strategic goal of the operation from Gold and deployed resources he sourced accordingly to deliver that goal at the scene. I was required to make and implement rapid, effective decisions to save life and mitigate the risks.

As the incident grew a special operations room (SOR) was opened at Lambeth, which had its own command structure. Best practice is for a Gold commander to be remote from the scene of an incident so that they can take a strategic overview, and at about 3am Supt Warnett did suggest he should go to the SOR but we could not have managed without a Gold during the time it would have taken for him to travel there, so he stayed. We knew that there would be a replacement command structure put in place in due course. I became aware that Commander Neil Jerome was going to take over as Gold from the SOR. From watching my BWV I was reminded of a conversation where we thought he might come to the scene but he remained in SOR in accordance with best practice. This conversation took place at 02.56 hours.

Police cordons


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The common requirement throughout the night was the need for a sterile area in which the LAS/LFB could work. As stated above this required the instigation and policing of cordons to keep the public a safe distance from the fire. This is far more difficult to achieve than it is to request. When policing large-scale events, cordon points are identified, staffed and put in place well before any significant crowd arrives. Often barriers or vehicles are used to limit the need for staff. At such events the mood and intent of the crowd can be anticipated and contingency plans put in place. Grenfell Tower was not like this. The crowd arrived before the police did. During the initial hour there were no more than 20 officers, arriving piecemeal to start the cordon process. I knew the area so I made the decision about where the cordons should be. Cordons are most usually made up of lines of officers. They can be absolute (i.e. no one allowed through) or a filter cordon, where people are allowed in and/or out at certain points or on agreed criteria. Various techniques are taught to police officers about how to form and maintain a cordon. On this night, due to the initial low numbers of police at the scene, and the general circumstances, the cordons were much more informal and officers just did the best they could to prevent people getting to the tower. Sometimes we use police vehicles to make up part of a cordon but on this night it was neither possible nor safe to get vehicles that close. We would also not have been able to get them back out for subsequent shifts.

Throughout the night the crowd were exhibiting the whole range of human emotions from despair to rage and this made it almost impossible to deal with them as a whole entity as each individual had a different need and so needed to be treated accordingly. Officers started by placing themselves between the public and the danger and moved forward away from the base of the tower encouraging the crowd to move backwards through verbal commands and minimal force (pushing). The cordon can be thought of as a ripple movement, the ripple expands as it progresses out from the point of origin. There comes a point that there are insufficient officers, the gaps between officers increase, progress cannot be made. The cordon has to be held at that point until more officers arrive or the crowd leaves of its own accord. Police are able to use natural junctions to reduce the number of officers required to hold a cordon.

For example, once the crowd who were initially standing on the grass area immediately under the tower (below the east face of the tower) were moved back in to residential streets such as Avondale Park Rd the length of the cordon reduced from about 60 meters to just the width of the road. At Grenfell Tower the crowds grew and grew and grew. People in the tower were using mobile telephones, calling friends and family, as were local residents and motorists. The tower was visible for miles. Then the media reported the events. There was a race between police putting in and holding effective cordons and the arrival at the scene of overwhelming numbers of distressed members of the public

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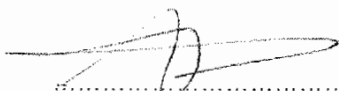
who wanted access to the tower. Officers did use their discretion to allow some individuals who were bereaved to come through and find a private area to sit and grieve.

Keeping order

There is no specific offence of breaching a general police cordon. There are a number of offences people who do breach cordons may commit. Offences such as obstruction of a constable in the execution of his duty, assault and Public Order Act offences. At Grenfell Tower I directed that officers should show restraint and not make arrests. I did this because each arrest would have run the risk of antagonising the huge crowds. I believe any use of force would have sparked large scale public disorder which we could not have coped with. Each arrest would have taken at least two constables away from the cordons to deal with the custody process, making tasks more difficult. Ultimately, the decision to make or not make an arrest sits with the individual officer. I have heard accounts of officers absorbing physical and verbal abuse but I am pleased that no arrests were made on the night.

The geography of the site also made maintaining a sterile area very difficult. There were many footpaths and small stairways that were easy to miss in the dark under the burning tower. This meant that it was easy for a local resident to circumvent the cordon lines to gain entry to the area where the emergency services were working. Once officers had pushed the pedestrian crowd back up the roads they were intent on the challenging job of holding the front line. As the vast majority of the buildings in the area were residential it was easy for residents of buildings behind the front line to come out of their front or back doors and make their way towards the base of the tower. Throughout the night officers were removing the public from the sterile working area.

As I have stated there were people desperate to go in to the tower. There were others who wanted to help so badly they searched fire engines for useful equipment they thought they could use to help. At one stage as officers carried long shields forward to use as cover for fire fighters some members of the public ran forward grabbed shields and ran to the tower. The public had several dangerous plans for how they could help. One man wanted to take ladders from a fire engine up to the balcony area of Barandon Walk. His plan was to use the ladder to smash through the window of one of the flats in the adjacent tower and use it as a ladder for people to cross. Another man wanted to drive a nearby crane to the base of the tower, extend the arm, smash a window and again provide a ladder for people to escape. Had either of these men managed to attempt their plans they would have endangered themselves, other members of the public, fire fighters and rescue work would have been hampered. I had been in Grenfell Tower before the fire, I have walked up the stairwell, I know how narrow it is. I have also been in smoke

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filled burning buildings and know what a hostile environment that is without protective equipment. I had seen the fire fighters being managed in to the building. I am certain that had even one committed person broken through to the tower then a stampede and chaos would have followed and more lives would have been lost.

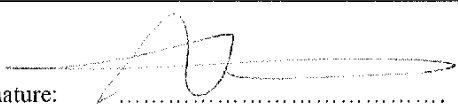
I was able to monitor how the cordons were coping through a combination of first-hand experience as I walked the site and by listening to the radio. I did consider opening a second channel for commands but decided that it was more beneficial to keep all traffic in one place so that all officers had an accurate picture of events. This allowed cordons to support each other or volunteer for tasks without my involvement. At times this was frustrating as it resulted in delays in passing a message, these delays were for only seconds, the benefit of us all knowing what was happening far outweighed the short delays.

The cordons we put in place in the first instance on the night were still in place four days later, which to me indicated that they were in the correct, most appropriate locations. In my first statement I mentioned sending DC Ben McCarthy to get large laminated maps for us to use at the scene. These show the location of the cordons. I took two photos of the maps before I left the scene and I exhibit these as NT/1.

Resources

Gold was primarily responsible for requesting resources. They are requested from what is known as Met Grip. Met Grip is a function that has developed from the learning after the urban disorder in 2011. It is about being aware of what is going on within the relevant Metropolitan Police area and ensuring that resources are in the right place to deploy. The function of Chief Inspector Met Grip is a key one for the MPS. CI Met Grip chairs conference calls every day at 11am, 4pm and 9pm with all the operational leads, about 15 – 20 in total. They deal with real time tasking and co-ordination. The operational leads from around the Met explain all the critical incidents that have happened, or are expected to happen, and CI Met Grip works out where to have resources available.

On the night resources were originally requested from Met Grip at Hendon but this moved then to the SOR. Resources turned up in tranches during the night. Officers came from all over London. The most difficult period was the first hour, when we struggled to implement cordons with the low numbers of officers available. This was the most dangerous period for us at the scene. As police numbers increased the incident became more manageable. The mood of the crowd also changed. As dawn approached there was a general spirit of co-operation rather than aggression. Officers started to task members of the local community. I included in my first statement how some local youths assisted

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by getting hold of large quantities of bottled water for the firefighters to drink. There were other examples of how everyone started to pull together to help.


From the first hour onwards, police units began to arrive to help. Sometimes a lone 2 officer unit right through to complete Police Support Units of 1 Insp, 3 sergeants and 18 constables. I was fortunate that as problems arose colleagues arrived in sufficient numbers to deal appropriately. The new shift of officers were due on from 7am but officers became aware of what was happening and were coming in early and so they started coming to the scene. Essentially this became a full force mobilisation situation, and it delivered enough resources.

Evacuation of flats in Barandon Walk facing the tower

At about 02.20 hours, I together with colleagues had just completed the clearance of members of the public who were viewing the fire from the balcony area of Barandon Walk. This was a wide footpath running adjacent to the South face of Grenfell Tower, one floor above ground level. It overlooked the LFB entry point to the tower and had no hard cover. This was a very dangerous place to be. I set officers at entry points to prevent the public returning. As I was leaving I was advised by Supt Warnett that LFB (watch officer Ash) had requested the evacuation of the Barandon Walk flats that immediately faced the tower. Essentially this was where I had just been. This was because debris from the tower was now falling towards the flats. The information was accurate and timely. It was obvious that this would seriously endanger life. The main priority for police was to save life.

I had officers with enhanced public order training available (Territorial Support Group serials U233, U234, U235) at the scene. Police have a power of entry under section 17 PACE to save life and limb to enter flats that would not open the doors. There might be various reasons why people would not want the police to enter, or might not be able to answer their doors. They might not want to leave their homes. However my priority was to get people out in order to keep them safe, and make sure they did not end up having to be rescued by firefighters. TSG and divisional officers have the ability to use enforcers to force entry. We also had firearms officers at the scene, who have more sophisticated method of entry equipment, although in fact they were not deployed to use this as it happened on the night.

Throughout the night we faced the same problem when carrying out evacuations and so every flat in Barandon Walk and Treadgold House eventually had to be checked to ensure everyone had left. I did not believe that anybody in those circumstances would decide to stay in the block once they knew the situation, so at that time I did not have a

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discussion about what to do if a resident wanted to stay. They all left and were directed to Clarendon Road. LFB were monitoring the risk the fire presented to other buildings throughout the night. I was confident that I would be informed of any further need for police action through the communication channels and MetCC.

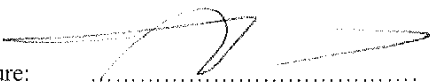
I was glad that the Academy was one of the buildings close to the tower as it had no one in it, so no one was at risk. It also had facilities and spaces that could be used if required.

Use of Leisure centre as a mortuary

It was clear that there was going to be a large loss of life and that bodies would be recovered from the tower. Supt Warnett wanted forensic tents to be used to cover the dead in the first instance. I believe we had five of these at the scene and that this would not be enough. Other than the LFB command unit we did not have a command centre for the police or ambulance service at the scene. I had requested that the RBKC open up a building for us but that had not happened. I had been asked by colleagues and LFB where we were taking bodies a number of times. It was apparent that the sports centre would solve both problems. I have explained in my first statement how it came to be that officers forced entry. No one has suggested to me that that was the wrong thing to do. The building allowed us to preserve the dignity of the dead, have a single point where bodies could be taken completely out of view and direct sunlight. It also allowed forensic work to be completed.

Use of long shields to cover LFB

At about 03.00 hours I heard over the radio that LFB had requested long shields from the police to use as cover as they transitioned in to and out of the building. From the BWV I can see that this request was broadcast over the radio at about 03.02 hours and I instructed an officer at the scene to call anyone not at the incident and get them to bring shields. The intention was initially for the LFB to use the shields themselves and not for police officers to assist. This changed to a request for police officers to handle the shields. This request was not made directly to myself. I do remember a conversation about the level of protective equipment the officers should wear. It was decided that they should wear everything. Prior to deployment the LFB gave a safety briefing. The priority remained to save life, officers with enhanced training and specialist protective equipment were immediately available. Entry to the inner cordon was being managed by LFB safety officers. They had assessed the risk level and made the request (as described in the first TCM). No use of police powers was required. The risk to officers was mitigated and not to do so would result in injury or death to residents or fire fighters. The LFB safety officers would monitor the risk throughout the deployment and act

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accordingly. They had already prevented under-equipped officers from going too close to the tower. The officers deployed without question.

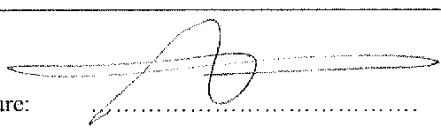
All police officers are designated as level 1, 2 or 3 in terms of public order policing. This refers to the amount of training they have received to undertake this type of duties. Level 3 are officers who have received basic public order training, and are generally based on boroughs. Level 2 are generally borough based officers who have received further public order training. Level 1 are TSG officers, who receive regular public order training. The equipment that officers carry is in part determined by their public order level, and their day to day duties. Some of the level 2 aid serials are equipped with long shields. Some of the TSG (level 1 trained) also arrived with long shields that were used for this function.

Evacuation of Treadgold House and the remainder of Barandon Walk

At about 04.01 hours the LFB requested via MetCC that police evacuate Barandon Walk completely due to concerns over those buildings catching fire from debris falling on to them. There was still the concern about the building collapsing. We had also seen thermal images of hot debris blowing towards Treadgold House which was also full of people. From the BWV this appears at 04.02 hours. The decision was made to evacuate both buildings using the same reasoning as before. The activity was carried out by appropriately trained and equipped officers who were briefed beforehand.

The decision to station PC Jacobs with LFB command

The early stages of the fire were hectic. I did not know of any formal shared communication channels that were operational in those first hours. I did tell LFB commanders which AIRWAVE channel we were using. During the brief time I was in the LFB command unit it was obvious that their radio channels were very busy. The police channels were busy with officers trying to pass messages to LFB. This could be done via MetCC passing electronic messages to the LFB control room, this would however take time. I decided to post PC Jacobs with the LFB to act as a conduit in real time, to speed up the process and reduce ambiguity. PC Jacobs was only a few weeks in the job and I was trying to keep her away from the front line (i.e. the more challenging cordons). I expected her to be required to receive LFB requests for police assistance and pass them on and vice versa. In fact this became a more significant role because of the way in which the incident developed. When that became apparent, she was joined by a more experienced officer, PC Neave. They passed on information about persons trapped from the information received by MetCC and officers on the cordons.

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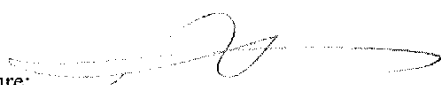
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I also put officers in to work with the LAS in a similar role, PCs 157BS Ian McGowan and 224BS Helen Blake-Anderson, although there was less for those officers to undertake. I expected them to respond to requests from the LAS, and pass on requests from the MPS to the LAS.

The change in stay put advice

I have viewed the BWV recording of my actions on the night and I have read my initial statement provided soon after the events. I am now aware that the message about the change in stay put advice had been received from the LFB by MetCC at 03.08 hours, before it was transmitted out across the radio by MetCC to all police officers at 03.10 hours. I do not now have a positive recollection of hearing the MetCC message. I did not acknowledge receipt as I would have in normal circumstances. I usually acknowledge receipt of a message by saying 'received' or 'thank you received'. This may be because I needed to deal with two members of the public at that time who were going towards the LFB command vehicle. However I can see from the BWV that I did place the radio right next to my ear as the operator was talking and I do not remember a feeling of surprise when at the 03.20 hours TCM the LFB lead explained the reasons behind the decision. I therefore think it is likely that I did hear the message. I was not tasked to pass on the message. I would not have felt the need to do so given that the message had been transmitted over the main radio channel to all police officers. Thinking about it now, I believe I did hear the message and that the meeting confirmed what I had already heard from MetCC by the correct communication channel. There was only one police radio channel that all officers were listening to.

The TCM finished at 03.33 hours and immediately on stepping from the command unit I was called upon to deal with decisions around the evacuation of buildings, providing long shields to support LFB and the public providing respite centres. In my initial statement I thought that I had been asked about the 'stay put advice' (i.e. as a result of a radio transmission from an officer asking MetCC whether we were still telling people to stay in their flats). But on watching the BWV I am clear that at no time was I asked about the guidance. At about 03.53 hours I got the impression that not all the officers had heard or understood the message about the change in stay put advice. I got that impression from hearing a rapid series of radio transmissions detailing the location of trapped residents, which made me believe that the 03.10 hours communication was not necessarily being acted on. That is because I would have expected confirmation from the officers that the self-evacuation message had been passed on. I therefore believed that action was needed to reinforce the message. I said "shall we tell them?" referring to us giving a direct order to the cordons, so they could pass it on to others as necessary. Mr Warnett therefore relayed a message over the radio at 03.55 hours, following a confirmation conversation

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with the LFB command. His message sought to make sure that all officers understood the change of advice from LFB. His broadcast would also have been heard by MetCC. Even after this detailed direction there were still queries from officers about the advice as the night went on.

I remember those fifteen or twenty minutes after the conclusion of 03.20 TCM as horrific. We carried out actions in that short period of time that would normally take hours to accomplish.

Police Helicopters

I was not responsible for the deployment of the helicopters from the National Police Air Service (NPAS). I could hear NPAS on the radio channel but they were not directing requests to me personally. Radio transmissions are heard by everyone on that channel. If I could hear NPAS making requests that were not answered by someone else, then I would step in and respond. Two or three times they asked whether we were getting the down link footage (known to officers as 'heli tele'). However when I went down to the LFB command unit at Bomore Road (where Mr Roe was) the answer was that they were not getting the down link, which response I passed back to the helicopter operator. That was on the radio channel being received by MetCC, so they would also be aware that the down load was not being received by the LFB command unit.

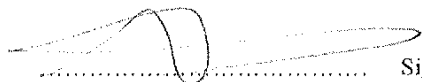
There are some hand held devices which receive the footage and I remember Supt Warnett had one at one point. I recall him remarking that hot debris was being blown towards the A40 and other buildings. This was the point at which the LFB asked the police to evacuate Barandon Walk and Treadgold House. The hand held devices are not generally available and I think they might have been sent to the scene by Met Grip.

Liaison with other agencies

In my previous statement I explained that I ensured that the local council, RBKC were aware of the incident. The LALO that I refer to was Nick Leyton, the local authority liaison officer. He was the only RBKC representative present at the TCMs. However he would have the knowledge and ability to call up whatever other resources were needed. I brought him over to talk to Michael Perkins, a member of the public referred to in my first statement, who had the keys to a hall that could be used as a care centre.

I was aware from the TCMs that the LFB had been trying to get plans of the tower from the council and that they needed up to date information about who the residents of the tower were, and how many residents there were. I believe that they liaised with Nick Leyton about this.

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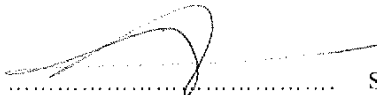


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At the time of the fire I was aware that the TMO managed the building and was responsible for the estate. I understood the relationship between the TMO and the council. Day to day any local authority housing or infrastructure issues go through the local authority duty officer, who is able to provide the relevant contact information.

I had no involvement in getting the utilities (e.g. gas) turned off, although I was informed that the electricity substation was underneath the block. <=

Signature:  Signature witnessed by:

Witness contact details

Home address:

Postcode:

Home telephone number Work telephone number

Mobile/pager number Email address:

Preferred means of contact:

Male / Female (delete as applicable) Date and place of birth:

Former name: Ethnicity Code (16+1): Religion/belief:

Dates of witness non-availability**Witness care**

- a) Is the witness willing and likely to attend court? **No.** If 'No', include reason(s) on **MG6**.
- b) What can be done to ensure attendance?
- c) Does the witness require a Special Measures Assessment as a vulnerable or intimidated witness?
No. If 'Yes' submit **MG2** with file.
- d) Does the witness have any specific care needs? **No.** If 'Yes' what are they? (Disability, healthcare, childcare, transport, language difficulties, visually impaired, restricted mobility or other concerns?)

Witness Consent (for witness completion)

- | | | | |
|--|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) The criminal justice process and Victim Personal Statement scheme (victims only) has been explained to me | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| b) I have been given the Victim Personal Statement leaflet | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| c) I have been given the leaflet 'Giving a witness statement to police — what happens next?' | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| d) I consent to police having access to my medical record(s) in relation to this matter:
(obtained in accordance with local practice) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| e) I consent to my medical record in relation to this matter being disclosed to the defence: | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | N/A <input type="checkbox"/> |
| f) I consent to the statement being disclosed for the purposes of civil proceedings e.g. child care proceedings, CICA | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> | |
| g) The information recorded above will be disclosed to the Witness Service so they can offer help and support, unless you ask them not to. Tick this box to <u>decline</u> their services: | | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Signature of witness: Print name:

Signature of parent/guardian/appropriate adult: Print name:

Address and telephone number if different from above:

Statement taken by (print name): **Sam Saunders 841ZT** Station: **Sutton**

Time and place statement taken: