

# Southport Inquiry

Witness Name: Christopher Ashworth

Exhibits: CA/01 – CA/06

Dated: 18 August 2025

## THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

---

### WITNESS STATEMENT OF CHRISTOPHER ASHWORTH

---

I, **CHRISTOPHER ASHWORTH**, will say as follows: -

#### **INTRODUCTION**

1. I am the Chief Customer Officer of Evri Limited previously called Hermes Parcelnet Limited (“Evri”). I am responsible for technology strategy and innovation at Evri and the development of the customer facing products that Evri provides through its services. I am also responsible for customer service at Evri. I have worked at Evri for 9 years.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the “**Inquiry**”) with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 4 August 2025.

#### **BACKGROUND**

3. Evri provides parcel logistics and final mile delivery services to consumers and businesses that are predominantly based in the UK, although we have invested in the ability to carry out parcel deliveries internationally with the origin country again being predominantly the UK. Evri also provides customs clearance services to facilitate the

# Southport Inquiry

movements of parcels into and out of the UK and has a fulfilment business that is targeted at UK SMEs and larger corporates.

4. Evri's services are business-to-consumer and consumer-to-consumer parcel delivery. We provide delivery services to more than 700 retailers that sell goods online, including the majority of the UK's top 100 retailers. We also provide parcel delivery services to consumers and micro business who buy domestic and international parcel delivery services directly through our websites and consumer app or indirectly through online marketplaces Evri typically delivers to over 12 million different customers per week and delivered over 800m parcel in the year to 1 March 2025.
5. Evri is a private limited company incorporated in England and Wales in 1999 as an independent parcel delivery business having previously been largely dedicated to the delivery of goods of its then owner who sold clothing through mail order catalogues and websites. Evri acquired a customs clearance company registered in the Republic of Ireland earlier this year and this company (with its single English subsidiary) and a Dutch company that was incorporated by Evri in 2023 are its only trading subsidiaries.
6. Following receipt of the Inquiry's request for a witness statement dated 4 August 2025 (the "Request") I initiated an investigation and an information gathering exercise by senior managers in Evri to be able to respond to the questions asked in the terms of the Request. My witness statement is given on the basis of the information I have received from that exercise and from my knowledge of the business I do not believe that there is any other information held in Evri or by its employees that is relevant to the Request.

## **FACTUAL NARRATIVE OF INVOLVEMENT**

7. My role at Evri has always included a responsibility for the development of the products and services Evri provides to its customers and clients. It has always been clear to me that the sale and delivery of bladed items is age restricted and would therefore require Evri to develop an age verification product on parcel delivery. We have always taken the view that Evri should not offer this product because the delivery of bladed items, or any other items or substances covered by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 is not an area of the delivery market that Evri serves. This fact is well known by online retailers and is made clear in our interactions with prospective and current clients and

# Southport Inquiry

is clear in the terms of our contracts with our corporate clients and consumer facing website and its terms and conditions.

8. The Request included a copy of a shipment confirmation for an order placed by AR under the name **DPA** Olakunle with AGEO Wholesale Ltd on or around 15 October 2023 with the order reference #100004317 that I exhibit as **CA/01 – EVRI000006**. This shipment confirmation states that the order will be shipped by “Parcelhub – Evri – Whistle PacketPOD” with a tracking number H001EA0123404828. I can confirm that the alphanumeric configuration of the barcode is consistent with that used by Evri and that the description of the shipper is consistent with a reference to a small parcel (being a Packet) being delivered by Evri on behalf of its client Whistl UK Limited (“Whistl”) with proof of delivery (being POD). Reference to “Parcelhub” is reference to a group company of Whistl that Whistl uses in connection with its contract with Evri. Evri provides proof of delivery by a photo of the parcel being delivered and a delivered track point that is accompanied by a map showing the geolocation of the delivery. Delivery photos should not contain any personal information of the recipient, such as their face.
9. For the Inquiries understanding, Evri did not work with or have any knowledge that the parcel originated from Huntingandknives.co.uk. Our contract for the provision of delivery services is with Whistl, who provide us with the information we need to provide delivery services which does not include specific parcel contents.
10. Evri has provided parcel delivery services to Whistl for over 10 years. In the period shortly before the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 came into force, Whistl asked whether Evri had developed “a different set of services” (we would call this a product) to deliver bladed items in compliance with this new law. We responded that we had not. This shows that Whistl knew that our services were not appropriate for the delivery of bladed items and that we would not be changing these services. This is evidenced by the email exchange between managers of both companies I exhibit as **Exhibit CA/02 – EVRI000003**.
11. Evri currently provides services to Whistl under a contract with the commencement date 1 February 2023 (the “Contract”). The Contract was sent to Whistl’s Director of Commercial Operations on 7 February 2023, and was subject to commercial negotiation and agreement, but was not signed. I exhibit a copy of the contract as **Exhibit CA/03 – EVRI000004** and I exhibit a copy of the email sending it as **Exhibit CA/04 – EVRI000005**.

# Southport Inquiry

12. The Contract is on Evri's standard terms as they were in 2023. All contracts Evri has with its business clients and consumer customers includes a description of the categories of goods contained in the parcels that are given to Evri for delivery. This is contained in Section C of Part 2 of the Contract which deals with operational requirements and states that the goods contained in the parcels from Whistl will be "general goods". This description is purposefully not category-specific given the nature of Whistl's business as I describe in paragraph 14 below. The description of the goods clients typically provide to Evri are generic such as "clothing", "footwear", and "cosmetics" and where Evri contracts with retailers directly it will satisfy itself that these descriptions are accurate by visiting clients' warehouses and looking at the websites that are being serviced. For UK delivery services retailers provide the information that is required to deliver those services, which does not include parcel contents. As the parcels are sealed, it is not physically possible for parcel delivery companies to physically check parcel contents as they pass through their networks. Part 3 of the Contract deals with Evri's requirements regarding parcels handed to it by Whistle. Clause 4.9 of Part 3 of the Contract includes a promise from Whistle that the goods contained within any parcel it gives to Evri will not contain any product with a blade or any product or corrosive substance as defined by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019. I set out a copy of the clause below for ease of reference:

"4.9 The Client warrants that the goods contained in any Parcel shall not contain

4.9.1 any product with a blade which is capable of causing a serious injury to a person which involves the cutting of that person's skin; or

4.9.2 any corrosive product or corrosive substance as defined by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019

and the Client shall indemnify and hold harmless Hermes from any damage, claim, loss, liability or expense it incurs as a consequence of any breach of this clause 4.9 by the Client."

The Contract defines the "Client" as Whistl and "Hermes" as "Hermes Parcelnet Limited". Hermes Parcelnet Limited changed its name to Evri Limited on 15 May 2024.

13. Evri's current standard client terms contains the following clause:

"3.21. The Client warrants and undertakes that the goods contained in any Parcel shall not contain:

# Southport Inquiry

- a) any product with a blade; or
- b) any corrosive product or corrosive substance as defined by the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 or any other Applicable Law,

and the Client shall indemnify and hold harmless Evri from any damage, claim, loss, liability or expense it incurs as a consequence of any breach of this Clause 3.21 by the Client.”

Evri does not have a contract with any third party under which it agrees to deliver bladed items and Evri’s consumer facing website is set up so that consumers cannot place orders for Evri parcel delivery services where they state that the contents of the parcel are a knife or blade. I believe it is well known in the market that Evri’s network is not one that can be used to deliver knives or bladed items.

14. Whistl offers fulfilment and parcel carrier management services to its clients and does not have a parcel delivery network of its own. Instead Whistl subcontracts delivery to Evri and other parcel logistics and final mile delivery businesses, such as Royal Mail. Where we are aware of specific clients of Whistl that Whistl uses Evri for to carry out subcontracted delivery services, because we are asked to deliver significant parcel volumes for those clients, we will create a “Child ID” for that Whistl client which is tied to Whistl’s “Parent ID”. We have over 300 Child IDs for Whistl and we have carried out a search of all of Child ID’s that are tied to Whistl’s Parent ID and I can confirm that we do not have a Child ID for AGEO Wholesale Ltd (or similar) and we do not have Child ID for Huntingandknives (or similar). Evri therefore did not have any way in which it could know that it was delivering items for these businesses because they are presented to it as simply being Whistl parcels with a Whistl label.
15. Following receipt of the Request we carried out a search of the barcode referred to in exhibit CA/01 – **EVRI000006** (being H001EA0123404828) and any tracking information linked to it, and there is no record linked to this barcode held in our system.
16. Based on the information in the shipping confirmation I have exhibited, I believe that Evri carried out the delivery of order #100004317 but all reference to the barcode and the records associated with it have been deleted in line with Evri’s Data Protection Policy that I exhibit as CA/05 – **EVRI000008** and which make it clear that personal data must not be held longer than is needed and retention of personal data must comply with Evri’s Data Retention Framework (para 6.2). I exhibit an extract of Evri’s

# Southport Inquiry

Data Retention Policy that governs Evri's Data Retention Framework relating to customer and parcel recipient information as CA/06 – EVRI000007, this states that data provided to us about customers from clients (such as Whistl) should be retained for 13 months from the date of receipt and that tracking records including geo-location should be retained for 13 months from the date of the final update.

## **REFLECTION ON EVENTS**

17. Neither myself or anyone else in Evri knew, or could have known, that Evri had delivered anything that could have been connected to awful actions carried out by AR prior to receiving the Request so that we could have retained all information we held about the delivery to support any investigation or any future public inquiry.
18. From my knowledge of Evri's business and its operations generally and specifically in respect of Whistl, and from the investigation I ordered, I am certain that neither Evri or any of its people could have known that it delivered order reference #100004317 for AGEO Wholesale Limited and what the item was that was being delivered.
19. The Request asks whether I have any recommendations for improvements that could be made that would be practicable and make a difference to prevent delivery companies delivering knives to children. I do not feel I am able to make any recommendation because Evri is not part of the supply chain for bladed items. Nevertheless, I would say that the law rightly puts the onus on retailers to make arrangements for the delivery of bladed items they sell online in a way that ensures that they are not sold to a person under the age of 18 or handed to a person under 18 when delivered. The delivery that is the subject of my witness statement shows that there are practical difficulties with this approach, and I would suggest that these difficulties are such that it may be right for the law to prevent the sale of these items online or in any other way at distance.

# Southport Inquiry

## Statement of Truth

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

Signed:

**Signature**

Dated: 18 August 2024

# Southport Inquiry

## Index to the Witness Statement of Christopher Ashworth

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
1	CA/01 – EVRI000006	Copy of shipping confirmation for Order #100004317
2	CA/02 – EVRI000003	Email correspondence between Whistle and Evri re Offensive Weapons Act 2019
3	CA/03 – EVRI000004	Copy of contract between Evri and Whistl
4	CA/04 – EVRI000005	Copy of email from Evri to Whistl attaching the contract between Evri and Whistl.
5	CA/05 – EVRI000008	Evri Data Protection Policy
6	CA/06 – EVRI000007	Extract of Evri Data Retention Policy