

Witness Name: Joseph Wheeler

Exhibits: JW/01 to JW/10

Dated: 10<sup>th</sup> August 2025

**THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF JOSEPH WHEELER**

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I, Joseph Wheeler will say as follows: -

**INTRODUCTION**

- 1) I am the managing director of Artemis Web LTD and have been since the company's founding in 2010. I run the day-to-day activities of Knife Warehouse. Knife Warehouse is a trading name of Artemis Web LTD.
- 2) This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 28<sup>th</sup> July 2025.
- 3) Exhibit (MERP001253) contains my previous witness statement made to police dated 04/10/2024. This statement remains accurate.
- 4) To place an order with Knife Warehouse, a customer must follow the standard steps for purchasing most goods online. A product is chosen, added to cart and taken to check out the same process as on any sales website. On checkout a customer must fill out their details, including their chosen payment method, acknowledge the terms and conditions. Then complete payment via the input of card details. The checkout page as well as previous pages make many references to the products being restricted to over 18s only and the terms and conditions that contain further

information must be specifically accepted using a confirmation box.

- 5) At the time of placing an order, the customer is requested to provide a photo or scan of a valid identification document. This option is also presented on the customer's account page. Only once the document/s are checked an order will be processed.
- 6) If the proof of age is not provided at the time of purchase, a follow up email, and an SMS text is sent asking for proof of age. The goods are never shipped until after proof of age has been provided. If this is not provided the user will be refunded and their account blocked.
- 7) In the case of AR, proof of age was uploaded at the time of purchase. Exhibit JW02 (MERP000392).
- 8) Order Number 300490 was placed on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023 @ 3:50 pm. Customer IP: 45.56.198.178, [DPA] Olakunle, 10 Old School Close, Banks, PR9 8SB. This was for a Black Panther Machete, SKU: 669
- 9) Order 300490 was completed, being shipped the following day, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- 10) The item ordered was a Kukri shaped machete. It was entirely black in colour and was 21.61 inches in length with a 16.5-inch blade. The item in question is shown in exhibit JW/01 (MERP000486).
- 11) The only emails sent from Knife Warehouse were a Welcome Email, Shipping Confirmation, Tracking Details and a follow up Review email. All of which are automated and standard, none were replied to by AR:
- 12) On 3 October 2023, at 15:47:11(UTC+0), support@knifewarehouse.co.uk emailed AR at his pseudonym account [a.megalaria7@yahoo.com](mailto:a.megalaria7@yahoo.com) Exhibit JW/08 - [KAW000009]
- 13) On 3 October at 15:50:11(UTC+0) support@knifewarehouse.co.uk emailed AR at his pseudonym account [a.megalaria7@yahoo.com](mailto:a.megalaria7@yahoo.com) Exhibit JW/09 – [KAW000007]

- 14) On 4 October 2023 at 08:50:35(UTC+0), support@knifewarehouse.co.uk emailed AR at his pseudonym account [a.megalaria7@yahoo.com](mailto:a.megalaria7@yahoo.com) Exhibit JW/10 - **KWAW000008**
- 15) This appears to be the only order AR has made. Unless he has used another ID and address to purchase that we are unaware of. We have had no direct communication with AR.
- 16) In July 2023, Knife Warehouse, as it does now, follows all government guidelines and legislation with age verification procedures.
- 17) Any prospective customer is presented with messaging regarding the laws on knife purchases and ownership. They are also presented with terms and conditions of sale which include further information on age verification.
- 18) Proof of age is requested in the form of photo ID. Once this is received and checked, an order is processed. An Age Verified Delivery service is used. This means that anyone that appears under the age of 25 will need to prove with ID (on delivery) that they are an adult. The postman/woman takes down a year of birth and a signature is taken for the delivery.
- 19) Parental controls on search engines block the Knife Warehouse website from under 18's, as do public Wi-Fi connections as standard.
- 20) Regardless of if an order is placed, no order is sent until proof of age has been received. I require the order to be in the system to check the customer details against any identification provided.
- 21) Our policies on Age Verification are displayed in exhibit JW04- **KWAW000002**, on our legal information page shown in exhibit JW07- **KWAW000005** and an age restriction warning is in place twice on the checkout page as shown in exhibit JW05- **KWAW000003**.
- 22) Royal Mail's Age Verified Delivery Service is used for all deliveries of any bladed items. Parcels are clearly marked as 'Contains a bladed item, Delivery to over 18

- only' and are marked as age verified delivery. This shows up on their system when the parcel is scanned and they provide the age verification checks.
- 23) At the time AR placed an order, I did not have pop-ups as it was not required under any law and not deemed necessary, at the time, as it is very clear throughout the website that purchasing a bladed article is only for over 18s without exception.
- 24) There is a detailed Age Verification page, the Delivery Information page also explains the age verified delivery, with more very clear warnings on the checkout page. JW/06 - KWA000004
- 25) As access to the website is already restricted, further popups did not seem appropriate at the time. Commercial routers provided by internet service providers come preconfigured with gating software that prevents access to adult websites of all kinds. They also include a large suite of parental controls that should be configured by any parents with concerns about what their children can access online. ISPs provide significant information on this when you sign up to their services.
- 26) A pop-up has now been implemented on the site that requires a user to acknowledge they are prepared to provide proof of age before an order can be shipped to them, adding to the already present messaging.
- 27) Regarding the image of the machete attached. The machete recovered by the police was not something I sold. The item purchased from us was all black, the one found by the police was part orange.
- 28) The police, via email, at the time asked me to confirm this, this was double checked, and I did not stock the item recovered, so it had to have been purchased from a different retailer or obtained in another way.
- 29) Knife Warehouse followed its own, and governmental guidelines and laws completely and at all times at and around the time of the order and continues to do so. The number one priority is to follow the law exactly. The ID provided appears completely legitimate to any reasonable person.
- 30) The postal worker does not have a copy of the identification provided, that would likely be impossible to implement and is explicitly rejected on grounds of data privacy as part of the advertising around Royal Mail Age Verified delivery on their website.

- 31) I find it unlikely, considering AR's appearance, that the parcel was handed to him in person. Having tested the age verified delivery service many times and those of other knife retailer companies, age has always been checked even though I am very clearly over 18.
- 32) The driving license produced by AR appears to be a legitimate document. I routinely scan the internet, including the prevalent fake identification document manufacturer websites (which are immediately available via Google search) to maintain an understanding of the quality and appearance of fake documents.
- 33) The address on the ID document was different to the order, however many online orders are sent to a different shipping address as people work and are sometimes not at home to accept deliveries. It is also not out of the ordinary for customers to have multiple addresses.
- 34) In 2023 this was acceptable under government guidelines and legislation, the bladed article had to be handed to a person over 18, but it did not require it to be the same person on the shipping address, only that they appeared over 25 years of age or provided valid ID.
- 35) Since then, (Offensive Weapons) (No. 2) Order 2025 which has come into force but doesn't seem to be available on the parliament.uk website appears to further require retailers to prove the person accepting the delivery is the same person that ordered it. To do this, Knife Warehouse is now also asking for proof of address alongside the photo ID provided before any order will be processed, as an extra precaution I also check the electoral register to confirm.
- 36) This means I will only ship with age verified couriers to an address that matches the identity document provided with the purchase.
- 37) All legal requirements and government guidance were followed. With Age Verified Delivery confirmed and signed for in the addressee's name, as seen in Exhibit JW03 (MERP000339)
- 38) Royal Mail does not provide the name or contact details of individual drivers to us as part of the delivery agreement. The name and contact information are unknown to us.

As it was 2 years ago it is unlikely Royal Mail keep a record of this for that length of time.

- 39) Age verified delivery, as required by law simply requires that the item is handed to a person over 18 years of age. They have no way of checking if an identification document provided to us matches the person at the door, only that they are over 18.
- 40) The delivery company verified age at the door, as indicated by the tracking information provided. Indicating the item sold by Knife Warehouse was received by someone over the age of 18. I would suggest this is not a failure of the delivery process but of the parents or adult responsible for the receipt of the delivery.
- 41) Knife Warehouse was not notified by Merseyside police of the nature of the recipient or identity, nor that any crimes had been committed. All I knew was that there was an investigation taking place. Into the name given on the ID provided.
- 42) The first time I have been informed that AR was the subject was when I received this witness statement request. I believe there was a super injunction or gagging order preventing anyone discussing AR at the time.
- 43) I was not informed that a child was involved in any way so there is no way we could have known.
- 44) Knife Warehouse is now only shipping to the proven address from the ID provided. ID is checked before any order is shipped, as always has been the case, proof of address is requested if a passport is provided (without proof of address), with additional electoral register checked to confirm this. Age verified delivery is mandatory, so on delivery nobody under 18 will be handed a knife. I have also implemented a popup (as suggested by the inquiry) on first load of the website.
- 45) I have done spot checks on the shipping process, testing our delivery service and other UK based retailers to see if they are carrying out the correct procedures for delivery of a bladed item.
- 46) This incident is the only time I have become aware of a bladed item allegedly being delivered to someone under 18. I believe it is more likely that this item was delivered to an adult, perhaps the father, a friend or other person over 18.

- 47) About the inquiry terms of reference, and the expectation of candour, I wish to draw attention to the fact that AR was known to the police. Was known to multiple agencies. Was likely known to his parents in relation to his behaviours. I understand AR was on a terror watchlist. I fully expected this would mean his internet history would have been checked and this could have been flagged along with his other purchases and terror related downloads.
- 48) Knife Warehouse does everything it possibly can to prevent age restricted products from falling into the hands of minors.
- 49) This was the most tragic of events, but the availability of knives and the type of knives available online do not have anything to do with this event. The murder weapon was a kitchen knife which is always available to every person in every home. AR is either very mentally ill or evil.
- 50) On reflection and in hindsight, I followed and still follow every letter of the law. While I am continuously trying to improve, I must stress that I comply completely with UK law and just wish the horrendous event never occurred.
- 51) The names of the items mentioned on Knife Warehouse refer to movies and TV shows, very famous ones, with a large following. Cold Steel is a brand name. Rambo is a movie series, and the Walking Dead is a television show.
- 52) As popular media, people naturally want collectables. That is what these items are intended to be. Zombie knives are very carefully defined in legalisation, so they differ by law. The products on Knife Warehouse are not zombie knives. We are extremely careful to make sure none of the items available break the current legislation. As new legislation comes in, there is usually at least a year before it becomes law then an amnesty or surrender scheme, we stop the sale of these items immediately when we have guidance on what is next to be banned.
- 53) Popular culture, television and films are part of our surroundings. It is up to parents to control what their children see until they are old enough to do so on their own. The names of products on Knife Warehouse are extraordinarily unlikely to have had any impact on real world events. Internet service providers provide tools to block websites. All mobile and computing operating systems come with free tools to block websites,

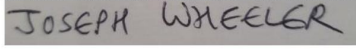
content, applications and screen time limits. If they had been correctly set up, the Knife Warehouse website would not have been accessible in that household.

54) I will always do my very best to prevent underage sales of knives and will strive to find new ways in which to make this as difficult as possible.

**Statement of Truth**

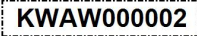
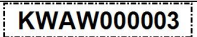
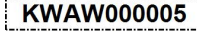
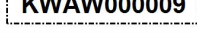
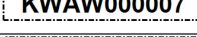

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

**Signature**

Signed: 

Joseph Wheeler

**Index to the Witness Statement of Joseph Wheeler**

<b>Exhibit No.</b>	<b>Inquiry Reference Number</b>	<b>Document Description</b>
1	JW/01 (MERP00486)	Item Purchased Screenshot
2	JW/02 (MERP000392)	ID Provided for Order
3	JW/03 (MERP000399)	Proof of Delivery Signature
4	JW/04 	Site Age Restrictions Page
5	JW/05 	Checkout Age Restriction
6	JW/06 	Delivery Information Page
7	JW/07 	Legal Information Page
8	JW/08 	Order Confirmation
9	JW/09 	Account Creation
10	JW/10 	Shipping Info