

Witness Name: RICKY MCAULAY

Exhibits: RM/01-RM/15

Dated: 04 SEPTEMBER 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF RICKY MCAULAY

I, RICKY MCAULAY will say as follows: -

Introduction

1. I am the UK Operations Director of the Royal Mail Group Ltd ('**Royal Mail**'). I have worked in the Company for 38 years in a variety of senior leadership roles having started my career as a postal cadet and postman in the southside of Glasgow. I have spent most of my career leading operational teams, starting out managing local Delivery Depots before progressing to Area Manager, Regional Director and more recently UK Operations Director. I am currently responsible for the day to day running of Royal Mail's network operations.
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the '**Inquiry**') with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 13 August 2025.
3. At the outset, Royal Mail extends its deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their lives in the tragic Southport attack perpetrated by AR on 29 July 2024, and our thoughts remain with the survivors.

Background

4. It is understood that a machete was purchased by AR from www.knifewarehouse.co.uk and delivered to AR's known home address in October 2023. This was found alongside other weapons by Merseyside Police at AR's home after the attack.
5. It is understood that AR, who at the time was under the age of 18, ordered the machete online using a pseudonym email address (a.megalaria7@yahoo.com) false details and false identification. The purchase was made via the company's website on 3 October 2023, in the name of Olakunle [DPA], addressed to 10 Old School Close, Banks, PR9 8SB, AR's home address. It is understood that AR was required to submit identification for age verification purposes to www.knifewarehouse.co.uk in order to complete the transaction. AR submitted a scan of a driving licence in the name of Olakunle [DPA] DOB [DPA] 1961, to Knife Warehouse.
6. Knife Warehouse have provided the police with a copy of the driving license that AR used to verify his age, in the name of [DPA] Olakunle [DPA] (police exhibit JW02 – MERP000392). They have also provided a copy of a screenshot of a delivery confirmation from Royal Mail dated 6 October 2023, with a tracking number (PU003367519GB), a signature with the typed name of OLAKUNLE and confirmation that age was verified and the item delivered at 15:12 (police exhibit JW03 – MERP000339). AR's pseudonym email address received an automatically generated notification of delivery from no-reply@royalmail.com on 6 October 2023.
7. Royal Mail can confirm that after an interrogation of the Royal Mail's systems a Royal Mail delivery driver delivered a parcel containing the machete purchased from www.knifewarehouse.co.uk to 10 Old School Close, Banks, PR9 8SB on 6 October 2023, and that that parcel required Age Verification.
8. By way of background on the Age Verification product offered by the Royal Mail, Royal Mail launched their Age Verification ('AV') product as a pilot in October 2019 and then rolled out nationally in September - November 2020 to meet an impending legal requirement under the revised Offensive Weapons Act 2019 ('OWA') to ensure that, as a delivery company, we could deliver bladed items to an individual at an address who is aged 18 years old or over if we chose to do so. This legal requirement under the OWA came into force in April 2022.

9. Royal Mail charge an additional fee on top of the delivery price to cover the doorstep verification process which uses the Challenge 25 framework on handheld Personal Digital Assistant devices ('PDAs'). Royal Mail deliver around 8.5 billion items every year. AV services are a very small percentage of overall parcels volume.

Delivery Of Item Number PU003367519GB

10. The Royal Mail uses a number of different systems for the storage of delivery data, which were used to ascertain details of the delivery on 6 October 2023.
 - a. Redland Information Systems ('RedlandIS') is the name of the supplier who provides the tracked reporting portal. The tracked reporting portal receives and manages scanning data from barcode readers (including PDAs) linked to the Royal Mail network. Data from the RedlandIS platform, exhibit RM/01 - **RMG000002**, shows that the item, with tracking number/ barcode number PU003367519GB, was 'Delivered over 25 with Signature' at 15:12 via the Tracked 48 hour delivery service, out of the Southport Delivery Office.
 - b. Google Cloud Platform Event Processing System ('EPS') is the central data warehouse that provides reporting and analytics capability across the organisation. It is also known as also known as the Royal Mail's enterprise data warehouse. The data captured via the delivery driver's PDA system on the EPS exhibit RM/02 - **RMG000008**, shows that the delivery driver was Timothy D Freer.
 - c. The Age Verification Year of Birth entry on the EPS shows 'null.' Year of Birth data is only retained on the EPS for 13 months, hence the 'null' result. However, Royal Mail was able to recover the data for Year of Birth via Accenture, exhibit RM/03 - **RMG000009**. Accenture is the partner that we use to develop and manage our enterprise data warehouse. This shows that the Year of Birth entered by the delivery driver was 1975.
 - d. Photos taken by delivery drivers on their PDAs are stored by a company called Mosaic. The retention period for 'Domestic Signature' photos, which included AV products, is 12 months. A request was made by Royal Mail to retrieve the photo, but the attempt was unsuccessful and the photo deleted, as confirmed by Mosaic.
 - e. The recipient's name was recorded as OLAKUNLE (RM/02 - **RMG000008**).

11. Mr. Timothy David Freer, the delivery driver (Date of Birth: DPA), commenced employment with Royal Mail on 28 May 2012 and is based at the Southport Delivery Office. He was interviewed on 26 August 2025 by a representative of the Royal Mail Legal and Compliance Team in relation to a delivery made to 10 Old School Close, Banks, PR9 8SB. During the interview, Mr. Freer confirmed the following:

- a. He had sole access to the PDA and was the driver responsible for the delivery on 6 October 2023.
- b. He was familiar with the address in question but had no personal acquaintance with any of its occupants.
- c. He recognised an image of AR from subsequent press coverage and was certain he had never delivered a parcel directly to AR.
- d. He recalled making a delivery to the address on one occasion, but could not confirm whether the item was subject to Age Verification requirements.
- e. He further recalled that, on the occasion in question, the door was answered by a Black, middle-aged male, younger than himself, of slight build, with short-cropped hair, who came outside to receive the delivery.
- f. When asked whether he knew or had previously met DPA Olakunle, Mr. Freer stated he did not recognise the name. However, if that individual was AR's father, then he believed it was him to whom the delivery was made.

12. At the time of the delivery, the AV process was set out in the Royal Mail Operations Standards Standard Operating Procedure ('SOP') D22.2 v19, dated September 2023, titled 'Deliver Barcoded Items (For Delivery Staff)', exhibit RM/04 - RMG000010. As a Tracked 48 delivery product, this was the relevant SOP for the driver to use for the www.knifewarehouse.co.uk parcel. SOPs are accessible to drivers. It should be noted that delivery does not need to be made to the person named on the parcel. A 'customer' is the person to whom the parcel is delivered, not the named person on the parcel. According to the SOP at the time, on arrival at an address where a customer was present to receive the parcel, the first stage of the process was that the parcel barcode was to be scanned using the driver's PDA. This then generated prompts for the driver to follow as set out below:

- a. As explained in Step 2 of the SOP, an age or ID verification symbol would appear next to the item number on the PDA screen if the item requires it, as well as a dot if a signature is required.

- b. Step 6 sets out the process for AV products, stating that Verification Screens would appear before the Customer's name was to be entered on the PDA, as soon as the item barcode is scanned. The driver had to confirm first that they were delivering to a customer at the address under 'DELIVERY LOCATION' (as opposed to delivering to a neighbour's house or leaving the parcel in a safe place, which were not available options for AV products).
 - c. Then they were prompted to enter the Year of Birth ('YOB') via the screen key pad, and press 'confirm'. The PDA would calculate the customer's approximate age based on the YOB the driver typed in. If this means the customer's given age was over 25, the driver would then have been asked to confirm whether the customer looked over 25.
 - d. If the customer appeared over 25 the driver would have selected 'YES'. The PDA would then have progressed to the capture photo instructions screen, and the driver prompted to take a photo of the parcel as it is delivered. A photograph of the person to whom the parcel is delivered is not captured for data protection reasons.
 - e. Once the photo was taken, the driver would have been directed to ask the customer for their name, which needed to be typed in in the space provided on the PDA using the keypad. Once this was displayed on the screen, the driver would be prompted to ask the customer to sign within a box on the PDA screen, and the item would be handed over to the customer.
 - f. If the customer appeared under 25, the driver would have selected 'NO' and have been prompted to ask to see valid ID to confirm the customer was over 18. If the ID confirmed the customer was over 18, then the delivery could be completed.
 - g. If the ID shows an incorrect YOB was given by the customer, that the customer was under 18, or no ID given at all, then the delivery could not be completed and the item not handed to the customer, and a P739 form handed to the customer.
13. During the delivery of PU003367519GB on 6 October 2023, recovered data from Accenture shows that the YOB entered by the delivery driver was 1975. The driver then verified that the customer looked over 25, and proceeded to take a photo, which is confirmed in the Accenture data, RM/03 - RMG000009. As explained above, this photo is not retained.

14. Royal Mail believes that the AV process was carried out by Mr. Freer in accordance with step 6 of the SOP, as set out above. As stated in interview, Mr. Freer believed the customer to be 'middle-aged'. The PDA would have calculated that the customer was approximately 48 years old, and therefore Royal Mail believe it was reasonable for Mr. Freer to have confirmed that he appeared older than 25. That confirmation completed the AV process.
15. Regarding AV related training, records show that Mr. Freer carried out an Age Verification training workshop on 19 September 2019, and an Age Verification Refresher online learning on 1 July 2021. 'Work Time Listening and Learning' ('WTLL') training updates regarding AV are regularly disseminated amongst delivery staff (RM/05 - **RMG000011**, RM/06 - **RMG000012**, RM/07 - **RMG000013**). Posters reminding delivery drivers were displayed and continue to be displayed prominently in Royal Mail delivery offices. Examples are exhibited (RM/08 - **RMG000014**, RM/09 - **RMG000015**, RM/10 - **RMG000003**). Royal Mail believes that the AV aspect of the training was followed by Mr Freer for the delivery of the parcel on 6 October 2023.
16. Records show that Mr. Freer has delivered 371 AV process deliveries between 29/08/23 and 26/08/2025 (RM/11 - **RMG000004**). A copy of Mr. Freer's disciplinary record shows one entry in his 13 years tenure at the Royal Mail, related to a Road Traffic Incident in March 2025 (RM/12 - **RMG000005**). He has never faced disciplinary action regarding the AV process.
17. Royal Mail has carried out open-source research on AR's father, who is reported in the press to be named Alphonse Rudakubana. Photos (for example RM/13 - **RMG000006**) purporting to show Alphonse Rudakubana accord with Mr. Freer's description of the customer he delivered the item to. Additionally, a Companies House search (RM/14 - **RMG000007**) for Alphonse Rudakubana for a dissolved company registered to 10 Old School Close, Banks, Southport, Lancashire, United Kingdom, PR9 8SB shows a date of birth as **DPA** 1975. Again, this accords with the YOB given by the customer who Mr. Freer delivered to at 10 Old School Close on 6 October 2023. It is not unreasonable to assume that Mr. Freer delivered the parcel to AR's father, who gave his YOB as 1975. Though it cannot be conclusively shown who the parcel was delivered to due to the passage of time since the delivery, Royal Mail believe that the available evidence suggests that the parcel was not delivered to AR or anyone who looked under the age of 25.

18. The EPS and Accenture data shows that Recipient Name has been typed in as OLAKUNLE by the delivery driver (RM/02 - **RMG000008** and RM/03 - **RMG000009**). Mr Freer explained in interview that when he delivers a parcel that requires a signature, he populates the name on the parcel into the PDA before handing over the PDA screen to be signed. This is not the correct procedure as set out in step 4 of the SOP which requires the *recipient's* name to be recorded. This is a breach of an internal SOP (although not an AV failure) designed to show who signed for the parcel upon delivery. To date, no disciplinary action, advice or re-training has been taken by Royal Mail in relation to this driver in relation to this delivery, or any other AV product delivery.
19. The driving licence provided by AR to www.knifewarehouse.co.uk in the name of **DPA** Olakunle was used to purchase the item from the seller. There is no record that it was seen by the delivery driver. There was no requirement for the driver to inspect any ID once it was confirmed that the customer appeared over 25. Moreover, there is currently no legal requirement for the driver to check that the ID used to purchase the item was the same person receiving the item nor is there any requirement to check that the signature given by the customer on the PDA is the same as that on the ID given to the seller. The law requires that a bladed item be delivered into the hands of a person aged 18 or over. The records indicate that the legal requirements were met.
20. The Inquiry has requested that the Royal Mail check systems for any other deliveries made by Royal Mail to 10 or 8 Old School Close, Banks between 1 January 2019 and 30 July 2024 that should have been age verified. No data has been found on Royal Mail's systems for any other age verified product delivery to: AR, **DPA** Olukunle (other than the delivery referred to above - PU003367519GB), anyone using the email accounts a.megalania7@yahoo.com, a.hyendon@gmail.com or **DPA**, the user of telephone 07428362306 or Alice **DPA**, understood to be another alias used by AR. A signed-for delivery was made to Alphonse Rudakubana, using email address **DPA**, to 10 Old School Close, Banks, on 22 July 2024, but this was not an age verified product. Mr. Freer did not make this delivery.

Reflection on Events

21. The machete delivered to AR's address was very likely delivered to AR's father, and not AR himself. No changes to process or procedure have been made directly as a result of becoming aware that a weapon in AR's possession was delivered by the Royal Mail as we do not believe there was a failure of AV. Nevertheless, as an organisation Royal Mail takes AV very seriously and are continually making improvements to the process and policies. We recognise the truly tragic consequences of knife crime, and in order to help manage the risk, we have made numerous changes and improvements to our AV process and policies since the introduction of the service in 2020, some of which go beyond the requirements of the OWA. Some of the key product and policy changes we have implemented to date are set out below:

- a. We introduced a mystery shopper process August 2021 for the AV product including a requirement for Operations to undertake an annual refresher training. Our mystery shopping is undertaken by an external supplier called Serve Legal who measure our compliance to the product specification. This involves monthly audits with results analysed and shared with Operational colleagues in a timely manner to target low compliance areas. In September 2024, we increased the number of mystery shopper audits to 600 per quarter from 150.
- b. In August 2023, the PDA process to force capture of YOB for every AV delivery was implemented (as was used by the delivery driver on 6 October 2023). Additionally, reporting was implemented to show where delivery drivers were inputting the same YOB multiple times to identify potential incorrect inputs.
- c. In January and May 2024, Royal Mail announced a revision to its bladed items policy including prohibition of specific types of bladed items being carried in the post and delivered to any person (regardless of age or dependant on sale), including machetes, hunting knives and swords. Prohibited items identified in the course of post are removed and destroyed. This went beyond the requirements of the OWA.
- d. Also in September 2024, we introduced a hard-hitting AV video (RM/15 - **RMG000018**) and supporting WTLT to frontline staff to demonstrate consequences of not following the SOP (RM/06 - **RMG000012**).
- e. Improvements to the PDA screen prompts for the AV process were introduced in February 2025 (RM/09 - **RMG000015**).

22. We continue to engage with the Home Secretary, who announced a rapid review into the online sale and delivery of knives in November 2024. In January 2025, the government announced the Policing and Crime Bill which would:

- a. Require buyers to submit a copy of photo ID and a proof of address at the point of purchase when ordering bladed items online.
- b. Require delivery operators to check ID at the point of delivery. This must be the same person who made the purchase.
- c. Make it illegal to leave a package containing a bladed weapon on a doorstep when no one is in.

23. Royal Mail is committed to do what it can to help prevent bladed items falling into the hands of persons under 18.

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:

Dated: 4th September 2025