

# Southport Public Inquiry

## Decision on the Applications for a Restriction Order and Special Measures on behalf of AR's parents

### Introduction

1. This is my Ruling on the applications for a restriction order and special measures for the parents of AR, Alphonse R and Laetitia M, ('the parents') when giving evidence to the Inquiry.
2. The following orders are sought by way of special measures by their legal representatives:
  - i) During the applicants' live video evidence only the Inquiry Chair, Counsel to the Inquiry, and such other members of the Inquiry team as deemed necessary by the Inquiry Chair, will be able to view the faces of the applicants, for the purposes of assessing their evidence.
  - ii) Core participants, their legal representatives, the press and/or members of the public attending the hearing room will be able to hear the applicants' oral evidence but will be restricted from viewing their current images.
  - iii) The video/audio of the oral evidence of the applicants should not be broadcast, disclosed or published.
  - iv) Information that may lead to the identification of the applicants' locations (for example, their educational establishments or places of work prior to the attack) should be restricted from publication (accepting that there may be some relevance in exploring this background with the applicants during their evidence, but requesting that any relevant details are redacted from the published transcript).
3. They also seek a Restriction Order in the following terms:

"This Order prohibits the publishing or broadcasting in any newspaper, magazine, internet website, social media application, sound or television broadcast or cable or satellite programme service or any media broadcast of:

  - Any photographic, video or other image of the applicants;
  - Any voice recording of the applicants;
  - Their current addresses and/or locations;
  - Their educational establishments or workplaces;
  - Any other particular likely or calculated to lead to the identification of the applicants"
4. In addition, they ask that the faces of the parents on any Ring doorbell footage be pixelated before the footage is published on the Inquiry website.

### The Application

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### *The evidence of the parents*

5. The parents have provided the Inquiry with witness statements pursuant to the Rule 9 request dated 11 October 2025 and in accordance with Rule 9 of the Inquiry Rules 2006. Pursuant to Rule 9 (3) of the Inquiry Rules 2006 I have required them to attend to give evidence to the Inquiry.

### *Basis for the application*

6. The legal representatives for the parents have submitted a CLOSED application, supported by a risk assessment conducted by law enforcement and psychological assessment for each of the parents. These assessments provide the basis for establishing that there is an objectively verified risk of death and injury which require measures to prevent the applicants from being identified and/or their whereabouts becoming known through recognition of their faces and voices in their video evidence to the Inquiry, or through any other means.

### **Submissions from Core Participants and Media**

7. The Inquiry's Protocol on Anonymity, Other Special Measures for Witnesses, and Vulnerable Witnesses (the Protocol), makes clear that when special measures are raised based on a risk to safety, if I consider it a clear and obvious case, I may give notice to the Core Participants of my intention to provide special measures (whether anonymity, screening or other special measures), without the process of consulting Core Participants on the application.
8. Given these applications have crossed the high threshold of an Article 2 real and immediate risk, I have decided that this is a case falling within this category of clear and obvious case, and accordingly I do not consider it necessary or appropriate to invite wider submissions.
9. I note in this regard the Terms of Reference for Phase 1 of this Inquiry which require me to make pragmatic choices as to its methods and procedure to deliver within the requisite timeframe.

### **Discussion**

10. In my judgment there is a clear, obvious and sustainable justification for granting special measures and the making of a Restriction Order pursuant to section 19(4)(b) of the Inquiries Act 2005, having regard to the objectively verified risk of death and injury, to prevent the applicants from being identified and/or their whereabouts becoming known through recognition of their faces and voices (which are distinctive) in their video evidence to the Inquiry, or through any other means (such as by contacting former colleagues at their former places of work).

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11. The representatives of law enforcement have identified a continuing and objectively verified threat to the safety of the parents, together with a threat to the maintenance of public order. I accept this assessment is based on reasonable professional assumptions that are, in turn, founded upon objectively verifiable evidence.
12. The threat has two potential sources, namely targeted public disorder caused by a group or groups of individuals or from the actions of one or more lone actors. The extreme events of last summer following AR's attack provide, in my view, the strongest justification for concluding that the family are likely to provide a focus and a catalyst for serious public disorder based upon hostility to the approach that has been adopted historically to immigration into the UK, outrage at the Southport attacks and antipathy towards the family due to their perceived involvement in AR's actions. The riots following 29 July 2024 and other similar events have shown that when there is an appropriate perceived target, very serious public disorder can occur (as well as Southport, there have been incidents in Tamworth and Rotherham, and other incidents involving hotels housing applicants for asylum).
13. There have been sustained attempts to identify the present location of AR's parents, and the family has been the subject of intense scrutiny by a wide range of individuals. This scrutiny has included sustained attempts to identify details of their present circumstances.
14. The correct test is whether, applying the common law and Article 2 of the ECHR, requiring the witness to give evidence without the protective measures that are sought would lead to a materially increased risk to life (see the House of Lords decision *In Re Officer L* [2007] UKHL 36 at [25]). As Lord Carswell observed, if this is the correct conclusion then the tribunal will ordinarily have little difficulty in determining that it would be reasonable in all the circumstances to afford the witnesses an appropriate degree of protection.
15. The assessment, which I accept, is that without the protections sought, the risks are both potentially fatal and possible. There would, therefore, be a material increase in the risk to life if the protections are not granted.
16. There is a slight distinction in the special measures granted for the parents, on the one hand, and AR's brother, on the other. This is considered further in my decision in relation to the application made on behalf of DR.
17. The terms of the order made under s.19 of the Inquiries Act are:

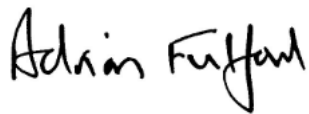
“This Order prohibits the publishing or broadcasting in any newspaper, magazine, internet website, social media application, sound or television broadcast or cable or satellite programme service or any media broadcast of:

  - Any photographic, video or other image of the parents;
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- Their educational establishments or workplaces;
  - Any other particular likely or calculated to lead to the identification of the parents”
18. The additional special measures sought to address the risks to the parents’ safety are granted in the following terms:
- i. The parents will give evidence via a video link from a remote location away from the Inquiry’s hearing venue at Liverpool Town Hall.
  - ii. During the applicants’ live video evidence only the Inquiry Chair, Counsel to the Inquiry, and such other members of the Inquiry team as deemed necessary by the Inquiry Chair, will be able to view the faces of the applicants, for the purposes of assessing their evidence.
  - iii. Core participants, their legal representatives, the press and/or members of the public attending the hearing room will be able to hear the applicants’ oral evidence but will be restricted from viewing their current images.
  - iv. Information that may lead to the identification of the applicants’ locations (for example, their university or places of work prior to the attack) should be restricted from publication and any relevant details will be redacted from the published transcript).

Sir Adrian Fulford

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Adrian Fulford". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

21 October 2025