

ANNEX A: WITNESS STATEMENT

Witness Name: Bradley Sutherland

Exhibits: BS/01-BS/06

Dated: 01 August 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF BRADLEY SUTHERLAND

I, Bradley Sutherland, will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. I am a Director of MB Outdoors Ltd T/A Tactical Archery UK
2. This witness statement is made to assist the Southport Inquiry (the "Inquiry") with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 21 July 2025.

BACKGROUND

3. My name is Bradley Sutherland, and I was a Director of MB Outdoors T/A Tactical Archery UK at the time when the perpetrator contacted my company (May 2022). I was also still a director of this company at the time when the attack happened in July 2024, and I currently still maintain this position. The company currently has two Directors: myself and Mark Chance.
4. AR first contacted us on 03/05/2022 at 13:35pm with a general enquiry asking about what packaging we use when sending out online orders [BS/01 – TAC000003]. AR told us he

would prefer the packaging to be plain so nobody can see what is inside the box. The email address he contacted us from was a.megalaria7@yahoo.com. It was a relatively small exchange of communication; AR sent us 3 emails in total. Each email from AR was related to the product packaging. Please note that at the time of the emails, we were using an email ticketing software which was set to an American Timezone. This means that there is a 4 hour time difference between the time on the screenshot and the actual time that AR contacted us. In the first of the emails between AR and ourselves, the time says 13:35pm (US time) when in fact it was 9:35am (UK time). This time difference applies to each email.

5. Our customer service representative Harry Chance then replied, informing AR that the packaging we use is grey mailing bags [BS/02 – TAC000004]. We ignored AR's request to send him a photo of the packaging.
6. AR then asked if the crossbow packaging says 'Tactical Archery' on it or features any other branding [BS/03 – TAC000005].
7. Harry Chance then replied explaining that the packaging is just plain grey mailing bags for smaller items or if the items are larger then we would use black parcel wrap. This is the same for every package we send out [BS/04 – TAC000006].
8. AR then emailed for a final time, asking the same question as before regarding if any branding is featured on the packaging [BS/05 – TAC000007].
9. Harry Chance then replied stating that the items come in grey packaging bags so the item inside is disclosed. Harry Chance made a typo in this email as it was meant to say 'is not disclosed' [BS/06 – TAC000008].
10. AR did not place any orders with us, and no archery equipment was delivered to him.
11. Harry Chance is our customer service representative. His primary role in our company is to be the first point of contact for new and existing customers. Whether this is by email or phone. He answers any questions new potential customers may have and also assists existing customers if they have an issue with the product or have any other query regarding their order.

12. Harry Chance has been given training on how to use and follow our age verification process, as well as spotting underage person(s) trying to purchase an age-restricted product from us. If Harry Chance suspects an email to be suspicious, he will raise this with a member of senior management. However, when it comes to processing online orders, the age verification process is my responsibility and the other Director, Mark Chance's responsibility.
13. On the actual product packaging (not the outer packaging in which we mail the products), there are many prominent warnings informing the customer that the product is not a toy and can cause harm or potentially death.
14. Harry Chance did not suspect that AR was a child seeking to buy a crossbow, as the question regarding packaging was not unusual. We do get adult potential customers asking this same question for several reasons, such as purchasing age-restricted product(s) for a family member as a gift (such as a birthday present) or just having general privacy concerns.
15. At the time, if an unusual question was asked, Harry Chance would then refer the email to a senior member of the team, such as myself, and we would then turn away the customer and inform them of the law.
16. At the time in May 2022 when AR contacted us, our age verification process was as follows:
 - Customers must be over the age of 21 to purchase age-restricted products from us, such as crossbows.
 - As responsible retailers, we ensure all of our customers are age verified before orders are processed.
 - Our primary method of age verification was using a government-approved age verification solution, which checks the details provided by the customer against numerous different databases, returning us a pass or fail. The government-approved age verification solution which we used was called AgeChecked (AgeChecked Ltd); a company which is PAS1296 certified. <https://www.agechecked.com/>
 - If this check fails, as some people are not registered in certain databases such as the electoral roll, then we will manually ask the customer to provide a valid photographic ID, such as a driver's license or passport.

- If age verification cannot be verified, then the order is cancelled and refunded in full.

17. Our current age verification system has been updated since then to include more security checks. Our current age verification process is as follows:

- Customers must be 18 years of age or older to use our website and purchase from us.
- As a responsible retailer, we take the safety and security of the general public very seriously. Products such as crossbows will require age verification before they are sent out to the customer.
- After a customer places an order, they must follow our age verification process, which is emailed to them after a purchase is made.
- Customers must create and upload a valid form of photographic ID to their account, such as a driver's license or passport.
- After the customer has provided their photographic ID, it is then manually checked by 3 people in our company to ensure that the customer is over the age of 18 and that it matches the details provided to us.
- We will then check our fraud software against the order, which gives us information about the payment method the customer has used, allowing us to determine whether this is a legitimate purchase (for example, confirming whether the card they used is registered to them).
- We will then conduct our own background checks. This includes checking if any previous orders from the potential customer have been cancelled before or if they have been denied a purchase via email. For example if a customer has previously ordered with an invalid ID in which they were declined.
- If all of the steps above have been successfully checked and verified, the order is then processed and dispatched using an age-tracked courier service, meaning that the customer must also provide a valid form of photographic ID to the delivery driver at the point of delivery.
- If a valid form of photographic ID cannot be provided to the delivery driver, then the package(s) will be returned to us and the order will be cancelled.
- If any of the steps above fail, then the order is not processed and the order will be cancelled and refunded.

- We use plain grey mailing bags and boxes to ship our packages. A shipping label is stuck onto the package informing the delivery driver that they must check the photographic ID of the recipient.
- We also stick another label onto the packaging with a large "18+" logo and the warning text: "MUST ONLY BE DELIVERED TO AN ADULT".

18. Harry Chance did not raise any concerns about this potential customer or report these exchanges to senior management, as he believed this was quite a normal question to be asked and had no reason to suspect this customer was underage, given the limited details provided by the customer. At the time, we did not believe Harry Chance or Tactical Archery UK should have reported this email to the police/authorities; however, if the customer did place an order, our age verification process would have picked up on this, and then it would have been reported.
19. Although the images of the archery equipment provided in documents MERP000970 and MERP001464 look similar to some of the products we sell, I do not believe we sold or currently sell those items.
20. My company Tactical Archery UK, was not aware of the potential significance of the contact it had with AR through a.megalaria7@yahoo.com and was very shocked to receive the Rule 9 request. Upon receiving the Rule 9 request, we reviewed the interaction with AR and also checked to see if any orders had been sent to him. No orders were sent to AR, and upon reviewing the communication with him, we do believe our company policies were complied with.
21. On reflection of the events that happened and the communication with AR, I do not believe that we should have reported this as a concern. The emails sent to us by AR did not give us any reason to believe this person was underage or looking to commit a crime. As stated previously, this is quite a normal question we get asked, so no suspicion was raised.
22. If AR tried to place an order with us, our age verification system would have prevented the order from being processed, and if AR was found to be underage, then it would have been reported.

23. With the benefit of hindsight and a wider understanding of the events, we will be looking at introducing additional safety and security measures to help identify potentially dangerous customers, such as asking for details before proceeding with the conversation.
24. At the time of the attack in 2024, we already had an improved age verification system in process. Instead of using government-approved age verification software, every customer must provide a form of photographic ID that is manually checked and approved by 3 people.
25. We now also send every order using an age-tracked service, meaning that the customer will have to provide a form of photographic ID to the delivery driver at the point of delivery. On the outer packaging, a large warning label is also displayed that reads "18+ ONLY. MUST ONLY BE DELIVERED TO AN ADULT".
26. As long as retailers follow the law in regards to age verification, I believe that the current system is effective enough in terms of preventing underage children from purchasing age-restricted products. Our age verification process is very robust, and customers have to go through multiple steps of providing their identification to verify their age.
27. I think more attention needs to be raised about who is receiving these products. To the best of my knowledge, most attacks in recent years have been carried out by people over the age of 18.
28. Of course, data protection and privacy concerns would be involved, but being able to access some sort of database or use some sort of software that gives us a background check on a person would make an effective difference when deciding whether to process an order or not.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings many 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: 15th August 2025

ANNEX B: EXHIBIT INDEX

Index to the Witness Statement of Bradley Sutherland

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
BS/01	TAC000003	First email contact from AR asking about what our packaging looked like and if we could take a photograph of it.
BS/02	TAC000004	Harry Chance replying to AR's first email
BS/03	TAC000005	AR's second email asking if our packaging featured any branding
BS/04	TAC000006	Harry Chance replying to AR's second email
BS/05	TAC000007	AR's third email asking if our packaging featured any branding
BS/06	TAC000008	Harry Chance replying to AR's second email