

WITNESS STATEMENT

(CJ Act 1967, s.9; MC Act 1980, ss.5A(3) (a) and 5B; Criminal Procedure Rules 2005, Rule 27.1)

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Statement of: Alphonse RUDAKUBANA

Age if under 18: Over 18 (if over 18 insert 'over 18') Occupation: Taxi Driver

This statement (consisting of FIVE page(s) each signed by me) is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it, anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Signature: **Signature**

Date 31/07/2024

Tick if witness evidence is visually recorded (supply witness details on rear)

I am the above named person and I live at the address I have provided to Merseyside Police.

I am the father of Axel RUDAKUBANA, the 17-year-old boy that killed the children in HART STREET, SOUTHPORT on the 29th of July 2024. I am making this statement to provide background information on my son to assist the investigation in understanding his mental condition and motivations for this terrible act.

I was born in Rwanda and in 2002 I claimed asylum the UK. I met my now wife Laetitia MUZAYIRE in the UK, but she is also from Rwanda. We had our first child Dion in 2004 and Axel was born in 2006.

Laetitia and I **DPA**
DPA

DPA my wife and I both started looking for work **DPA**
DPA and we moved our family to Southport **DPA**

The upbringing of our two children has been challenging as both children have issues. Dion is **DPA** he is now wheelchair bound. Despite his physical disability **DPA** Dion is excelling himself at university studying mathematics.

Axel is **DPA** autistic, although his diagnosis wasn't made till he was in secondary school in the midst of being bullied. I will expand on Axel's experiences in school later in the statement.

We do not have any other family in the UK.

We used to be Catholics but now we are with a Charismatic Church in Southport called **DPA** **DPA** We attend church most Sundays and we took our sons although Axel has been reluctant since the first year of high school and in the last year has not been at all. Dion no longer attends our local church as he is away at university. We are active in the Charismatic community locally but Axel is not.

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When we moved to Southport Axel attended Holy Family Primary School for one term before joining his brother in St. Patricks Catholic Primary school. He had a good education here and was very happy. He had lots of friends and was popular with other students and teachers. He had friends who invited him to their birthday parties, camping holidays and who cared about him as a person. [DPA] was the name of his best friend and it was [DPA] who he went on a short camping holiday with. I don't know what it was, but after this camping holiday the friendship seem to sour a bit and they stopped playing together soon after.

There was also another friend called [DPA] a boy of [DPA] [DPA] was not such a close friend as he went to dance school and spent a lot of his free time dancing. Axel was not interested in dance.

There was also another boy in primary school called [DPA] who was not a particularly close friend [DPA] was very good at sports and danced Ballet.

After primary education Axel attended RANGE High School. He was the only pupil from his Primary School to go to RANGE. He went here because his older brother also attended here to accommodate his wheelchair.

Axel was a bright student with excellent grades and he had a good first year (year7) with lots of friends and invites to birthday parties etc.

During the second year (year8) he started getting bullied by a boy named [DPA] [DPA] was physically bigger and studied martial arts. The bullying was physical as well as psychological with [DPA] picking Axel up and slamming him down during one incident.

The teachers were approached over the incidents and failed to do anything with one PE teacher telling me that it was just boys being boys. The teachers knew about the bullying and didn't do anything about it. I sent emails about this to follow up on the face-to-face conversation, but still nothing was done.

Axel began acting out and getting in trouble, earning many detentions both over lunchtime and after school. Sometimes his bully would also be in the afterschool detention so Axel would be made to wait even longer at the end so the bully could clear school grounds.

When we enquired about the misbehaviour we were given examples by the school. Axel explained to us that in a boisterous class were everyone was making noise and messing around, he would be singled out for detention despite just doing the same things as everyone else.

The bullying from the boy named [DPA] continued into the third year (year9) and throughout the bullying period Axel lost his friends and gradually dropped his hobbies and interests one by one. He was a talented tennis player, hockey player, gymnast, musician and Fortnite gamer but as he lost his social contacts he began to stop these activities.

Axel's grades went from excellent to very poor during his time at RANGE.

Axel was expelled from RANGE following the first knife incident detailed below.

Next Axel was sent to ACORNS, which is a facility for children with challenging behaviour. I would describes it being like a prison. The staff recorded everything and supplied a written report

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Continuation of statement of Alphonse RUDAKUBANA

on the week's behaviour every Friday.

I think I still have these reports somewhere and if I can find them the police can have them.

The reports read in a sensational fashion – I couldn't believe what I was reading. When I spoke to Axel he admitted the behaviour but also gave the context that the report was missing. I felt that the people writing the report were criminalising Axel with selective reporting and they were not being fair. Axel lost the will to continue going to ACORNS.

Axel was next placed into PRESSFIELD SCHOOL but didn't attend very often. He had disengaged with the education system.

Until recently, Axel has not left our house for a whole year.

Axel has had no romantic relationships that we know about.

Axel lost all the friendships at RANGE through the bullying incidents. He never made any friends at ACORN or PRESSFIELD.

Axel is a very intelligent boy. He self-studies history and other subjects researching them deeply and obtaining very detailed knowledge on the things he is interested in.

Axel is very serious about his appearance and image. He likes to look good, being well groomed and well dressed. Axel feels deep and serious insult if his appearance is criticised or mocked.

Axel has a diagnosis of Autism and anxiety.

I suspect further neurological issues as yet undiagnosed. From my own research I think Axel has ADD – I have been through the NHS seeking help and assessments but I have only so far been given paperwork to complete which I have done and this seems to support my suspicions. The NHS closed Axel's case as they cannot continue with assessments without supporting evidence from the school and as he was not attending school, this cannot be obtained.

Axel has an irrational fear of spiders and mosquitos and has anxiety about going outside – if he goes out he likes to wear a Covid mask.

Sefton CAMHS have given a fair bit of help to my family. They have put us in touch with a psychotherapist and psychologist – Dr Molyneux, but Axel only attended a couple of session before refusing to attend and further.

They have also put us in touch with a nutritionist whose name I cannot recall but who was a great help to us as a family and to Axel who responded positively to the help and advice given. Axel was very skinny and bony before this intervention and afterwards he started to put on weight, count his calories and measure himself. He is doing very well and starting to look good.

We have also been in touch with EARLY HELP. This council agency placed Axel in a youth group. Axel didn't engage and stopped attending after two visits.

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We private paid for a counsellor through PARENTING 2000. I do not recall the name of the counsellor but this was really helping Axel, I noticed marked improvements.

The 1st Knife incident took place while Axel was still a student at RANGE, during the hight of the bullying from [DPA] and while he was receiving counselling from the PARENTING 2000.

Axel took a knife in his bag to school with him for about a week.

Axel himself called Childline and told them about the bullying, that he had a knife and was thinking of using it. Childline raised the alarm and the police were involved. Axel got suspended.

The 2nd Knife incident occurred in December 2019 when Axel had got into a fight at ACORNS the day prior and was staying home on this day. We left to take Dion to school and when we came back home Axel was gone. He had taken a knife from the kitchen and went to RANGE High School looking for [DPA]. Police were called, Axel was arrested and charged. The court handed down a non-custodial sentence with a lot of stipulations, like community service and engagement with probation. Axel complied with all conditions imposed.

Axel spends his day-to-day in the living room of our house. He is very dismissive of anyone who tries to speak to him if by speaking to him it interrupts the videos he is watching. He has a temper and at the slightest thing he would throw dishes or cups to the floor in rage.

Axel would sleep either in his bedroom or in the living room on the couch. His sleeping patterns are erratic with him snoozing at different times of the day and staying awake all night.

Axel does not have an income. Any money he has comes from me or his mother as pocket money or as gifts for birthdays or Christmas. He has a bank account with Lloyds and when we give him money we put it directly into his bank.

I do not know what exactly he spends his money on but I do know he makes a lot of online purchases. There has been a lot of Amazon boxes in his bedroom which I have recently helped him clear out.

Axel must have his own Amazon account for these purchases. I have an Amazon account and these purchases have not taken place on that.

On one occasion a parcel arrived at our address, I think it was from Amazon, the address label displayed our address but a name I didn't recognise; a British sounding name. I was asked to sign for it as it was knives but I hesitated. Axel wanted me to just sign for it and give it to him. I signed for it but did not let Axel have it. I took it and hid it on top of my wardrobe. As far as I'm aware Axel has never found this parcel to this day.

At one stage Axel threatened me with a knife and demanded I give him this parcel. I was lying in bed and Axel came in telling me I should give him this parcel and he was holding a kitchen knife in his hand. I felt scared and confused, I wasn't sure at first if he was joking but I soon realised he was serious.

I tricked him and said that the parcel was hidden downstairs and he should come with me to find it but when he was out of my bedroom I closed the door on him and locked him out. He seemed to accept this without any fight or attempt to force my door open and seemed to just go back to what he was doing before and forget about the knives. He never asked for them again.

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Continuation of statement of Alphonse RUDAKUBANA

On Monday 22nd July 2024 Axel, wearing his green hoody, asked me about when RANGE High School break up for the summer. I looked on my phone and saw that this day was their last and I remember making a comment to the effect of “they’ll all be going off to university now” and Axel replied with words to the effect of “well I won’t be will I?” This was around 9am.

Around 10am I asked Axel if I could tidy the boxes his bedroom and to my surprise he accepted. I began clearing boxes from his room, which were numerous Amazon delivery boxes some of which were empty. I noticed in his room he had Chemicals which he called ‘alcohol’ and he had a bow and arrow set. I do not know how he got these items, I assume they must have been delivered.

Around 12pm – 12:30pm this I realised that Axel had called a taxi and I knew he was planning to go to RANGE. I called the taxi company but they wouldn’t confirm whether a taxi had been booked to my address or not. As I watched a taxi from ONE CALL TAXIS arrived and Axel got in the back with his rucksack. I went out and pleaded with the taxi driver not to take him and eventually the driver agreed and told Axel to get out of his taxi. I paid the Driver £5.

Axel went into the house and locked me out and was pacing around, going between rooms. I suspected the rucksack had weapons, likely a knife. I didn’t go in the house and I stayed outside for a couple of hours.

In the lead up to the incident on HART STREET I didn’t notice any significant changes in Axel. There was no particular mood changes, behavioural changes, no new phrases/saying or chants being uttered. He was not socialising with anyone new, or changing his routine in any noticeable way.

The only thing I can think of is that Axel had been giving me the silent treatment for about 2 months. He would not talk to me under any circumstances and if he wanted something he would write his request on his tablet computer and show it for me to read.

The night before the incident however, Axel broke the silence and come to speak to me for about an hour or so about the videos he was watching on YouTube and Twitch. This was a normal and mundane conversation and it was as though he had forgotten all about the silent treatment he was punishing me with.

On the day of the terrible incident, 29th of July, I notice Axel leaving the house wearing his green hoody again. He did not have his rucksack with him and had not called a taxi that I knew about. I also knew that at this stage RANGE had long broken up for the summer holidays so there was little chance he was going there. My wife and I figured he was just going out for a walk. Very shortly after this I got a message through in my church WhatsApp group informing me that something horrible had just occurred nearby and I felt then that Axel my be involved. Soon we heard helicopters overhead and police were at our door.

I am prepared to attend court if I am required to do so.

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