

Witness Name: Michelle O'Brien

Exhibits: MO/01

Dated: 02 October 2025

THE SOUTHPORT INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF MICHELLE ELIZABETH O'BRIEN

I, Michelle Elizabeth O'Brien, will say as follows: -

Introduction and Background

- 1) Inevitable started in 1998, primarily in a bricks and mortar store in Bournemouth and then to online sales through various marketplaces and platforms since 2003. We sell a variety of novelty gifts and party goods. There is no corporate structure as I am a sole trader.
- 2) I have 2 staff and contract others for web design and graphic design services.
- 3) I order stock, add listings, deal with suppliers, customer queries, couriers and all parts of running the business.
- 4) I have been in the retail industry since 1996 and have been selling online since 2003. I have a BA (Hons) Degree in eCommunications. I owned and ran a bricks and mortar store in Bournemouth from 1998 to 2003.
- 5) Inevitable sells a variety of novelty goods online via Amazon and eBay and our own website. We sell novelty gifts and party goods. We sell Low hazard fireworks, such as ice fountains, party poppers, Christmas crackers, sparklers and smoke grenades/generators – used for celebrations and special effects. We do not sell low hazard fireworks on our own website or eBay.

The sale of smoke grenades

- 6) On the Amazon Platform all sales come through via seller central. We import the order details into another program, and they are dispatched via courier services. We do not have access to customer data, payment details etc. as these are Amazon customers and not ours. We are only allowed contact with Amazon customers via the Amazon seller central platform. They have very strict policy rules. All we see is the items ordered and the delivery address.

- 7) All details of any orders placed;

Order Number 204-1610713-5171538 received by us on 8th January 2023 at 19:24 – notification sent to us via email and visible in our seller central Amazon account. This order was completed and as far as we're aware there were no other orders from this customer. I exhibit the order confirmation as **MO/01** - **INEV000002**

- 8) The nature and specification of the items ordered;

10.1 Pack of 4 Ring Pull Smoke Grenade for Special Effects, Paintball, Weddings and Photoshoot. These are low hazard smoke generators which omit a plume of coloured smoke after pulling the ring pull. The smoke can last up to approx. 60 seconds. Safety warnings and instructions are provided on the listing and also on the product packaging.

- 9) There were no communications with AR, the order was sent out with many others that day.

- 10) Listings on Amazon state the following: *"Age verification required on delivery: This product is not for sale to people under the age of 18. To confirm the recipient is over 18 years, valid photographic ID with a date of birth may be required upon delivery. The driver will input your year of birth into their device and may then require an ID check to complete the age verification process. The driver will not be able to access your information once the delivery is complete"*.

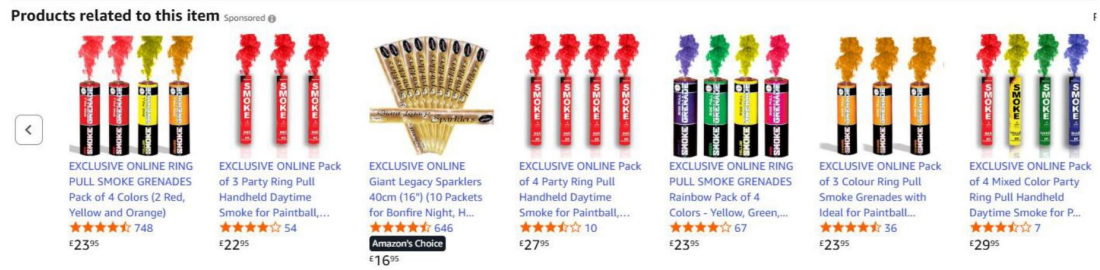
- 11) How, in January 2023, Inevitable UK ensured that the smoke grenades were not sold to those under 18?

11.1 In January 2023 we assumed that the buyer was over 18 due to having been able to use an account on Amazon.co.uk. You have to be 18 years or older to open an Amazon account. Parents can set up child accounts, which are added to their own account however they then bear responsibility for the account. This should cover protections before an order could be placed, and protections when the item is delivered;

- 12) Amazon.co.uk have very strict policy rules, and listings are often checked for compliance. Amazon.co.uk check all customer details when opening an account and verify these details with identification and or bank details. All listings that are adult products clearly show that they are not to be sold to anyone under the age of 18. If a child account is set up on an adult account, the adult can limit the child's purchases and visible items on the platform.

- 13) Was there an age restriction warning on the listing of the smoke grenades in January 2023? If so, please exhibit that warning;

13.1 Yes, the listing was created back in 2020 and there has always been an age restriction warning on the listing.



Product description

Product description

Each ring pull smoke grenade produces a thick smoke plume for a duration 60 seconds. Simple to use, just pull the ring out of the side of the product (as per instruction) and brightly coloured smoke will instantly start to flow. Great multiple use, including: Paintballing, Airsoft, Weddings, Photo-shoots, Theater & Special Effects. Pack of 4 smokes. 8 different smoke colours in various mixed colour packs. 5 meters spectator distance (e.g. ignite 5 meters away from Gloves and eye protection must be worn. Non toxic - do not contain sulphur. Minimum age limit for purchase 18 years of age.

Legal Disclaimer

Minimum age limit for purchase 18 years of age.

Customers who bought this item also bought



14) We assume Amazon.co.uk verified the customers age as we do not have access to customer information. Amazon customers are their customers and not ours and we only have access to the order details and delivery addresses. Communication can only take place via Amazon Seller Central platform and it is against Amazon rules to contact buyers outside of their platform.

15) Were the items sent via age verified delivery? If so, please include full details of what companies were used; what instructions / requirements were given to the contracted delivery company to ensure age verification was properly conducted and what auditing and oversight of compliance was carried out by you to ensure that the delivery company met these requirements. If not, please explain why not.

15.1 No, the items were not sent via age verification delivery. In 2023 this was not readily available from most couriers. This item cannot be sent using Royal Mail. We assumed the Amazon buyer was over 18 years of age or had permission from an adult to use their account, so this was not necessary.

Age Verification

16) We are fully aware of age restrictions for some of our products and all listings have these details clearly shown on all listings. Amazon remove listings that do not comply with rules and regulations. Our suppliers often provide all information and testing certification etc.

17) You are not able to open an Amazon account unless you are at least 18 years of age so this has never been an issue for our business. We assumed Amazon take this responsibility and makes all necessary checks through their own age verification system.

18) The products were not sent via Age verification delivery due to us assuming that the buyer was over 18 years old. If this is something that needs to be enforced, it is possible to request this from the couriers.

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.

Signed: A rectangular box with a dashed border, containing the word "Signature" in a large, bold, black font.

Dated: 02/10/2025

ANNEX B: EXHIBIT INDEX TEMPLATE

Index to the Witness

Exhibit No.	Inquiry reference No.	Document description
MO/01	INEV000002	Order Confirmation