

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

*(Criminal Procedure Rules, Rule 16.2,
Criminal Justice Act 1967, s. 9)*

STATEMENT OF: **MRS LAURA ANNE SANDERS**

Age of Witness: **Over 18**

(If over 18 enter "over 18")

Occupation of Witness: **SENIOR TRADING STANDARDS OFFICER**

This statement (consisting of 3 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.


Dated the 2nd day of June 2023

Signed 

I am employed as a Senior Trading Standards Officer with West Sussex County Council Trading Standards Service.

On the 24th May 2023, I participated in an Underage sales test purchase day, with three colleagues, Ms Elaine LUCAS (Senior Trading Standards Officer), Miss Natasha ALI (Trainee Trading Standards Officer) and Peter LEGGETT (Trainee Enforcement Officer). A volunteer who is a 17-year-old female participated in the Underage sales test purchase day, under the instruction and supervision of WSCC Trading Standards. The purpose of this operation is to make sure that that West Sussex businesses are compliant with the procedures set out for age restricted products to children under the age of 18.

Prior to visiting the businesses, we met with the volunteer at our offices in Horsham, where we briefed her and took photographs of her appearance that day. The volunteer is assigned a unique code "NZA1" to protect her identity.



At approximately 1510 hours, I entered Aji and Akash Ltd t/a Express Supermarket 68-70 Newland Road, Worthing, BN11 1JX. A few seconds after I entered, I observed the volunteer enter the store. I browsed around the shop acting as a normal customer but made sure I could see the volunteer. I watched her look at various items around the premise and then I witnessed her pick up a bottle of alcohol and go up to the till.

I observed the seller, a male, Asian, bald and approximately in his 50s scan the bottle and advise the volunteer the price of the bottle, a WKD Blue. The seller did not ask for ID or ask the volunteer her age. I then observed the volunteer leave the store. I then purchased some cookies before leaving the premise at 1515. I returned to the operational vehicle where I placed the bottle of WKD blue into an evidence bag and completed the information on the bag. I gave the bottle, the reference ES/24/5/23/1 and sealed the evidence bag with the Seal Number MC00111837.

I identify as evidence the bottle of WKD the volunteer purchased reference ES/24/5/23/1.

At approximately 15:50, I returned to Aji and Akash Ltd t/a Express Supermarket 68-70 Newland Road, Worthing, BN11 1JX with my colleague Ms LUCAS. I introduced us both to the male working behind the till counter and explained the reason for the visit. I advised that he had just sold alcohol to our Underage Volunteer and advised him that I would need to ask him some questions in relation to the incident.

The seller was a [REDACTED] and at approximately 1555 I cautioned [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] confirmed he understood the caution.

I proceeded to ask [REDACTED] a series of questions in relation to the incident and [REDACTED] confirmed his date of birth, his address and contact details to me which I noted in my pocket notebook. [REDACTED] advised me that he had been working at the store for approximately 2 years and that he works 7 hour shifts, 3 [REDACTED]

days a week. [REDACTED] confirmed he understood what an age restricted product was and that the till rings loudly when he scans any product into the till that is age restricted. [REDACTED] showed me the till prompt and the message the till displays and the noise. I remembered the same noise sounded when the volunteer purchased the bottle of WKD blue. [REDACTED] advised that he believed the child to be 19 or 20 years of age. I then asked if they operate a 'Think 25' policy where he advised that there are posters in the shop but that he was not sure what it is and that he just asks anyone he believes to be under the age of 18.

[REDACTED] advised me that he had training approximately 6 or 7 months ago and that it was verbal training and that he had no written training provided. [REDACTED] went onto explain that he also runs a café and that this is not his normal trade. I asked [REDACTED] if they had a refusals log and at first, he was not sure what I meant but we were then shown a book where the last entry was 23rd May 2023. The seller then showed us a few entries that he had completed himself. Using my work mobile phone, I took photographs of the Refusal Book. I identify as evidence a print out of photographs I took as Item LAS/ES/1, LAS/ES/2, LAS/ES/3 and LAS/ES/4.

[REDACTED] also confirmed that they do have CCTV in the store but that he does not know how to work it.

Ms LUCAS and I left the store at 16:10 where we then returned to the office. I placed the bottle of WKD blue into the evidence room.

On the 25th May 2023, I received a missed telephone call from a mobile number. I therefore rang the mobile number back and Mr Bala ARUMUGAN answered the call. Mr ARUMUGAN advised me that he was the owner of the store and that he was aware of the incident the previous day. Mr ARUMUGAN provided me with his contact details and advised me that an officer would be in contact once the case had been allocated to an officer to investigate.

[REDACTED]