

PSED Snapshot Tool

Title/Summary of decision:

Crime and Policing Bill: stricter age verification for the sale and delivery of knives, and mandatory reporting of bulk sales of knives.

Stricter, two-step, verification system

The Government is introducing a two-step age verification measure for online sales of knives by amending the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (CJA 1988) in relation to “bladed articles”¹ and the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 (OWA 2019) in relation to delivery of “bladed products”. This document uses the generic terms ‘knife’ or ‘knives’ for simplicity.

Section 141A of the CJA 1988 already makes it an offence to sell bladed articles to a person under 18. The maximum penalty for a breach of s141A (selling to a person under 18) is 6 months’ imprisonment and a fine. The Government is including provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill to increase the maximum penalty to 2 years’ imprisonment.

The “two-step” age verification system will be as follows:

Step 1- at the point of sale. The legislation will strengthen the minimum requirements for age verification for online sales of knives. i) This must include an official identity document of the person making the purchase. This could be a UK or foreign passport or UK driving licence. The legislation provides a regulation-making power to enable the Secretary of State to prescribe further identity

¹ Bladed articles are those to which section 141A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 applies and include any knife, knife blade, razor blade, axe, or other article with a blade or sharp point and which is made or adapted to use for causing injury to a person. Non-locking folding pocketknives which have a cutting edge no longer than 3” and disposable razor cartridges are specifically exempted from the measures in section 141A.

documents. The buyer's identity document must be accompanied by a current photograph of the buyer making the purchase at the time of sale. This will act as a "liveness check" to provide evidence that the identity document used belongs to the buyer.

Step 2 – at the point of delivery. ii) The courier must ensure that the person receiving the package at a residential address is the same person who bought the bladed article. Businesses are exempt from the measure. The courier must check the age and identity of the recipient (who must also be the buyer) by checking their official identity document. The delivery person must not hand the package to anyone but the buyer (where the buyer is an individual). It will be a new offence to hand it over to a person who is not the buyer.

Mandatory reporting of bulk purchases of knives

The *Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales*² recommended the mandatory reporting of bulk sales of knives to enable the police to tackle "grey market" re-selling. The report described how those intending to re-sell knives on the grey market first buy them in bulk, often from legitimate retailers, and then sell them through social media and peer networks without age verification checks being conducted, while also potentially breaching rules on the advertising of knives in the Knives Act 1997. To implement the recommendation in the review, the Bill sets out circumstances in which a sale must be reported to the police.

A reportable sale of knives occurs where the seller, sells:

² [Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales \(accessible\) - GOV.UK](#)

- (a) six or more bladed articles, none of which form a qualifying set of bladed articles (such as kitchen knives)³;
- (b) two or more qualifying sets of bladed articles;
- (c) one or more qualifying sets of bladed articles and five or more bladed articles that do not form a qualifying set.

The sale is reportable if it occurs in a single transaction, or in two or more transactions within a 30-day period to the same person or the same residential premises.

A “qualifying set” means three or more knives packaged together for sale as a single item, where each bladed article is a different size or shape from the others.

Cutlery knives (other than steak knives with sharp points) will be exempt from the requirement. Pen knives with blades not exceeding three inches and razor blades are already exempt from rules restricting the sale of bladed articles and will be exempt from these measures.

The sale of a qualifying set will not have to be reported to the police by the seller. However, two sets of knives sold in the same transaction would have to be reported, as would one set of knives and the purchase of five individual knives in one transaction.

Secondary legislation will enable the Secretary of State to specify the details that sellers will have to provide, how reports are made, and when they are made.

The provisions do not apply to business-to-business sales.

³ A “bladed article” means an article to which section 141A CJA 1988 applies

General observations

Two-stage verification might negatively affect those who do not possess the relevant photographic identification documents to enable them to buy a knife online and this could disproportionately affect people who do not possess either a driving licence or a passport. There is no information available about the percentage of people who hold either a passport or a driving licence. However, data from the National Travel Survey states that 74% of all adults hold a full driving licence while 29% of all people aged 17-20 hold a full driving licence. Seventy-six per cent of 60-69-year-olds had a full driving licence and 73% of all people aged 70 and above have a driving licence. Data from the 2021 Census reveals that 20.8% of people aged 65+ do not hold any passport. This compares with a figure of 13.5% of the population who do not have a passport (UK or otherwise) according to the 2021 Census. This implies that there is a possible risk that the measures might disproportionately impact negatively on young people 17-20 and older people aged 65 and over.

The Home Office is aware of the list of identification documents which are acceptable for people who do not have a passport or driving licence to enable them to vote in local and general elections.

The voting process includes other safeguards which are not suitable for online knife sales. For example, when voting in person, a voter's identification will be cross-checked against the electoral register and they can only vote at their designated polling station. When voting by post or proxy, they must provide a copy of their signature and NI number.

The bill provides regulation-making powers so that the Home Secretary can prescribe further acceptable identity documents in the future.

These provisions do not prevent those without the necessary identity documents from purchasing a knife but may make it more difficult for them to buy a knife online. However, there is nothing to prevent such

persons from visiting a shop in person and purchasing a knife (with proof of age which does not need to be from the prescribed list). The requirement for delivery persons (including those operating collection services) to hand a package containing a knife to the buyer might also affect those with disabilities who are not physically able to answer the door to receive the delivery. There is nothing to prevent another from ordering a knife online and receiving it on the person's behalf or helping them to either answer their door or visit a shop in person to make a purchase.

We have not identified other groups sharing a protected characteristics that may be disproportionately affected by the age verification measure.

Reporting bulk sales of knives

The proposal to impose a duty on sellers to report remote sales of knives, etc in bulk (in England and Wales) imposes an obligation on remote sellers of knives to report bulk sales to the police. Specifically, sellers must report any "reportable sales" as defined in new section 141D (3) to (5) of the Criminal Justice Act 1998 (as inserted by the clause). This seeks to address risks, including as outlined in the NPCC's *Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales* (31 January 2025), unscrupulous people buying large numbers of knives online and then re-selling them without detection, where they could be used to threaten people or used in acts of violence³.

These provisions may engage a buyer's Article 8 rights – the right to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence - as they require a seller to provide the police with a buyer's personal details where their purchase triggers the reporting requirements proposed in the draft legislation, even where this behaviour may not be linked to criminality (for example, a private landlord equipping kitchens for more than one house or flat or a person buying several sets of knives as presents). As such this measure has the potential to affect all those in categories with protected characteristics. However, the Government is

satisfied that this requirement, which only applies to online sales meeting specific criteria, is a proportionate means of reducing knife crime (the legitimate aim of the prevention of disorder or crime and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others). As such, this clause is compatible with Article 8.

It is possible that the subsequent use of the information by the police may also engage Article 8, for example where data is retained on the Police National Computer, if those whose purchases are reported are subsequently visited by the police as part of investigations arising from the report or if information is disclosed on an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check⁴. The Department is satisfied that there are sufficient safeguards to ensure that any such action is the least intrusive method of police investigation, contact, or disclosure for their proportionate aims.

The police, as a public authority, must comply with the ECHR (under section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998) as well as the Data Protection Act 1998. The College of Policing Management of Police Information (“MOPI”) guidance provides a way for balancing proportionality and necessity in respect of police retention and use of information⁵. The statutory test for disclosure of information on an Enhanced Criminal Record Certificate (ECRC), contained in section 113B (4) of the Police Act 1997, and accompanying statutory disclosure guidance, provide safeguards against improper disclosure⁶. In respect of police investigative actions, in line with their duty under section 6 of the HRA 1998 the police will need to carefully consider the most proportionate means of achieving contact (where contact is deemed necessary), for example seeking to avoid contacting persons at their place of work, or study, or in a manner likely to alert a third party.

The Home Office will work closely with the police to ensure that safeguards are in place to ensure follow up policing actions, which should only be undertaken if corroborating evidence supports them, are no more than are necessary and proportionate to reducing knife crime. As such, the clause is compatible with Article 8.

The Home Office has read the available evidence and are satisfied that this demonstrates compliance, where relevant, with Section 149 of the Equality Act and that due regard has been made to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination; advance equality of opportunity; and foster good relations.

The snapshot grid summarises our understanding of the effect on those sharing a protected characteristic. Where only one of the measures has an indirect effect on one of the protected characteristics (no direct effects have been identified), the specific measure – which only related to the two-step age verifications measure – has been specified. Otherwise, where an entry states, “No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures”, this should be read as applying to measures related to both the age verification and reportable sales provisions in the Crime and Policing Bill.

	Eliminate unlawful discrimination (Direct and Indirect)	Advance equality of opportunity (Access)	Foster good relations (Stakeholders)
Age	<p>Age verification</p> <p>Stricter two-step age verification measures may have an indirect effect on those without a passport or driving licence. This may be more likely to affect the elderly and the young.</p> <p>Data from the National Travel Survey (Department for Transport statistics) confirms that 29% of all people aged 17-20 had a full driving licence, 76% of 60-69-year-olds had a full driving licence and 73% of all people aged 70 and above have a driving licence. This is in comparison with 74% of all adults who have a full driving licence.</p> <p>(Further details are available in Spreadsheet NTS0201 on Driving licence holding and vehicle availability - GOV.UK)</p> <p>In relation to passports, latest data, from the 2021 Census reveals that 20.8% of people aged 65+ do not hold any passport. This compares with a figure of 13.5% of the population who do not have a passport (UK or</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>Two-stage age verification measures: This might improve access to education or training for those under 18 who might otherwise jeopardize their life chances by committing knife crime.</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>The measure will likely benefit those under the age of 18 so more robust age verification measures will likely help reduce further the risk of those under 18 being able to buy knives therefore reducing the likelihood of such knives being used to harm others under the age of 18.</p>

	<p>otherwise) according to the 2021 Census.</p> <p>There remains flexibility in the system by the provision of a regulation making power in the Bill to enable the Secretary of State to prescribe further identity documents. This will enable the Government to specify additional forms of identity checks.</p> <p>The effect of this measure on those without a suitable identification method - to the extent that it is not mitigated - is expected to be a proportionate means to reduce knife crime on health, safety and welfare grounds owing to the risk as without these measures criminals would be able to receive knives without having to provide proof of their identity. The approach is further justified by its contribution to the Government's aim of halving knife crime in a decade.</p>		
<p>Disability</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>There is potentially indirect discrimination as the policy will prohibit a third party from taking delivery of a knife on behalf of a disabled person</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>There is a risk that the measure might alienate those disabled people who owing to their disability might not be able to receive knives by online</p>

	<p>who is unable to take delivery (where a person's disability prevents them from receiving the knife directly) even if that third party could prove that they are 18 or over themselves. As a mitigating measure, the purchase and delivery could be made by a third party on their behalf, or the buyer could arrange for a person to be present when the package is delivered to help them answer the door.</p> <p>The effect of this measure on those unable to answer the door owing to a disability - to the extent that it is not mitigated - is expected to be objectively justified on health, safety and welfare grounds owing to the risk without these measures of criminals being able to receive knives without having to provide proof of their identity.</p>		<p>delivery through measures in the Bill which would prevent the delivery of the knife to another adult recipient who could then pass that knife to him or her.</p>
<p>Gender Reassignment</p>	<p>There is no discrimination, direct or indirect on gender reassignment that has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the measures.</p>
<p>Pregnancy and Maternity</p>	<p>There is no discrimination, direct or indirect has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the new measures.</p>

<p>Race</p>	<p>There is no discrimination, direct or indirect has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the new measures.</p>
<p>Religion or Belief</p>	<p>There is no discrimination, direct or indirect has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the new measures.</p>
<p>Sex</p>	<p>Age verification</p> <p>Data from the National Travel Survey (Department for Transport statistics) reveals that 70% of women have a full driving licence in comparison with 80% of men having a full driving licence.</p> <p>There is no corresponding detail available for passports.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the new measures.</p>
<p>Sexual Orientation</p>	<p>There is no discrimination, direct or indirect has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>No effect on the equality of opportunity has been identified from any of the measures.</p>	<p>There is no known effect on fostering relations that has been identified from any of the new measures.</p>

Marriage or Civil Partnership	There is no discrimination, direct or indirect has been identified from any of the measures.	Does Not Apply	Does Not Apply
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