

Impact Assessment

Title: Crime and Policing Bill 2025: Personal Liability for senior executives of online companies

Type of measure: Primary Legislation

Department or agency: Home Office

IA number: HO IA 1009

Type of Impact Assessment: Final

RPC reference number: N/A

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1. Summary of proposal

1. The government, in its manifesto, outlined its plan introduce tough sanctions¹ on senior executives of online companies² who flout the law on online knife sales. This measure provides the police with the power to require online social media, marketplaces, and

¹ Labour Manifesto 2024 - <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf#page=66> (page 66)

² For the purpose of this policy “online companies” means online social media, marketplace, and search services.

search services to take down³ illegal knife and offensive weapon related content. This is content that constitutes:

- a. Where the individual is offering an offensive weapon for sale or hire (under section 141 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988⁴ or section 1 of the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959⁵); and
 - b. Where a knife is being marketed as suitable for combat or is likely to encourage use of the knife as a weapon (sections 1 and 2 of the Knives Act 1997⁶).
 - c. Article 53 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996⁷
2. Upon the identification of content illegally marketing knives or offensive weapons, the police will have the power to issue Content Removal Notices (CRN) to online platforms and a designated UK based executive of that company. These will require companies to take down specified illegal content relating to the sale of knives and other offensive weapons within 48 hours. If the company fails to take down the specified content it will be liable for a Civil Penalty Notice (CPN) of up to £60,000 and the designated executive will be personally liable for a CPN of up to £10,000.
 3. When requested by the police, online service providers with a presence in the UK will be required to designate a UK based senior executive who would be accountable for the taking down of specified illegal content. If the relevant company fails to designate a senior executive, then it will be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000.
 4. Online companies and designated executives will have opportunities to request CRNs be reviewed and to challenge CPNs. These are:
 - a. The opportunity to request that police review whether the service or the content of a CRN is defective in any way and whether content specified for removal is in fact illegal;
 - b. The opportunity for the designated executive to make representations to the police before they are issued with a CPN; and
 - c. The right for the designated executive and the online company to appeal to the County Court when issued with a CRN.

³ "Take down" takes the definition in section 236(1) of the Online Safety Act 2023 – "taking down" (content): any reference to taking down content is to any action that results in content being removed from a user-to-user service or being permanently hidden so users of the service cannot encounter it (and related expressions are to be read accordingly).

⁴ Criminal Justice Act 1988: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1988/33/section/141>

⁵ Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Eliz2/7-8/37/contents>

⁶ Knives Act 1997: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/21/contents>

⁷ Article 53 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1996/3160/article/53>

2. Strategic case for proposed regulation

5. The penalty regime is one of several measures being introduced by the government as part of its 2024 manifesto to deal with knife crime⁸. Together, these measures target the availability of and easy access to illegal weapons and knives that contribute to knife-related crime in the UK⁹.
6. Commander Clayman, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for knife crime, conducted an Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales¹⁰. This showed that one of the biggest problems in addressing knife crime is the 'grey market' of social media platforms being used to advertise knife and other illegal weapons sales. This is the phenomenon of private sellers who buy knives in bulk from legitimate knife sellers and resell them via social media, often to persons under 18 years of age.
7. There is concern that these private sellers are marketing offensive weapons and knives in ways which encourage violence or promotes their suitability for use in violent attacks. Marketing or sale of these weapons is a criminal offence under section 141 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, section 1 of the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959, sections 1 and 2 of the Knives Act 1997 or Article 53 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 (see footnotes 4, 5 and 6 on page 2).
8. Online companies already have a responsibility to take down such illegal content under section 10(4) of the Online Safety Act 2023¹¹. This content needs to be swiftly removed to prevent people, including persons under 18 years of age, from being able to purchase a prohibited offensive weapon or knife.
9. The penalty regime personally holds executives of online companies, that flout the laws regulating the online sale of knives and offensive weapons, to account. Illegal knife and offensive weapons content is frequently not being removed or being removed far too slowly – allowing time for the sellers to benefit from their content being fully accessible. The sanctions will serve as an incentive to ensure content is removed promptly.
10. Alongside sanctions on individual executives, the regime also allows the police to penalise service providers where they have not removed illegal content from the 'grey market' once notified of it within 48 hours of police notification.

What evidence is there to support the problem statement?

⁸ Labour Manifesto 2024 - <https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Labour-Party-manifesto-2024.pdf#page=66> (page 66)

⁹ Crime in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingseptember2024#knife-or-sharp-instrument-offences>

¹⁰ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales>

¹¹ Section 10(4), Online Safety Act <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/section/10>

11. Knife-enabled crime increased by 2% in the year ending (YE) December 2024 (to 54,587 offences), compared with YE December 2023 (53,413 offences). This was 1% lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in YE March 2020 (55,170 offences).
12. Most knife-enabled crimes were assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm (43%) and robbery (43%) offences. Fewer than 1% of knife-enabled crimes were homicide offences (0.4%).
13. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales¹² identified that the online 'grey market' was one of the main avenues through which knives are sold to those aged under 18 years and prohibited weapons are sold to dangerous individuals (see page 5 for more information). The review highlighted that the 'grey market' is largely unregulated, sellers are often not registered as businesses, and frequently their advertisements and marketing break the terms and conditions of the websites hosting them. Sellers often use oblique terms to advertise their products, evading detection by online companies' algorithms designed to flag illegal content. Sales can be conducted over personal message conversations, usually with no identification checks, and the knives and weapons delivered through UK courier network, bypassing any audit trail or identity verification.
14. There is currently no legislation that allows police to enforce the removal of such content. This contributes to the culture of knife carrying amongst young people and crime incidents involving knives more generally.
15. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales found some evidence of the scope of the 'grey market'. It noted that police identified at least fifteen 'grey market' sellers, who it is estimated between them, sold circa 2,000 weapons¹³. These sellers were operating 'effectively under the radar' and made no effort to check who they were selling knives to. The review includes a number of case studies providing examples of 'grey market' sellers who were selling knives to those under the age of 18 years, selling prohibited weapons, and marketing knives in a way which encourages violence. In some cases the sellers were underage themselves and using false identification to procure bulk orders of weapons, which they then sold on to others indiscriminately via their social media profiles.
16. There are some gaps in understanding of the extent of the 'grey market' and its role in supplying knives and prohibited weapons to individuals. This was acknowledged in the Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales, which argued this intelligence gap was due to a lack of capability within law enforcement to gather and analyse information about these types of sellers, and the inability to trace the origin of knives used in the majority of violent incidents. The police were also hampered by the lack of accountability inherent in 'grey market' sales in terms of identifying who is responsible and holding them

¹² Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales, GOV.UK:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf#page=5 (page 5)

¹³ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales, GOV.UK:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf#page=9 (Page 9)

to account for any criminal offences. The government believes that given the substantial challenges with collecting more detailed data on this, to wait for a more comprehensive evidence base before acting would merely cause unnecessary delay during which more lives may be lost.

17. There is anecdotal evidence that social media companies are not doing enough to remove this unlawful knife related content. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales gave an example where a social media company took seven days to remove illegal content when requested by the police¹⁴. It also stated that although social media companies “have the ability to scan and remove posts and accounts, [...]”. This is mainly used for drug sales but there is no evidence of this being used where there is harmful content such as knife display, violence or knife sales.” One barrier to automated flagging of such content is the use of slang and code words to tag social media posts, so they are not picked up by algorithms. The review also recommends further exploration of “Search engines to ensure prohibited articles are not promoted or available to UK customers. When searching to buy or look at knives, search engines can currently return results advertising knives that are prohibited in the UK.” This proposal aims to prevent such instances by enhancing the collaboration between the police and online companies with a dedicated avenue for communication, and by establishing a 48-hour deadline for content removal through the imposition of sanctions.
18. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales also highlighted that action in the UK needs to be considered alongside arrangements restricting the importation of knives. Online research identified over 25 online retailers that appear to be based in China or the USA that suggest they ship knives to the UK. Whilst the UK has strong knife legislation, this is not the case in other parts of the world where the range of legal and readily available knives is much wider. As a result, companies based overseas appear less likely to restrict exports into the UK as they do not know that the knife in question is illegal. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales stated that evidence was found that some overseas retailers intentionally mislabel items to circumvent UK legislation. It gave the example of one retailer advertising that they were deliberately mislabelling some of their products as fruit knives¹⁵ to evade customs regulations. As these companies are based outside of the UK it is not possible to enforce UK knife legislation on them other than through detection at the point of importation.

Why is government action or intervention necessary?

19. Knife crime devastates families and communities across the country. To address this, the Government aims to halve knife crime over the next decade. Tackling the supply of knives online is a key part. This measure focuses on the ‘grey market’ sales of knives online, which is responsible for the unregulated and often unlawful sale of knives and enables

¹⁴ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf#page=72 (Page 72)

¹⁵ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf#page=48 (page 48)

easy access to weapons for young people and those intending to use them to cause harm.

20. Although content unlawfully marketing offensive weapons and knives typically violates online companies' terms of service, such content is often not taken offline quickly enough. In some cases, the police may not have an avenue through which to request and enforce the take down of illegal content.
21. Holding both online companies and their senior UK based executives responsible for taking down this illegal content will motivate its prompt removal. This measure will also encourage closer cooperation between police and online companies to remove content unlawfully marketing knives and offensive weapons. This enhanced collaboration will also enable the streamlining of systems used by police to flag unlawful knife related content.
22. Alongside other measures such as the Online Safety Act 2023 (OSA 2023), this will reduce ease of access to unlawfully marketed offensive weapons and knives. The impact of this will be a reduction in illegal purchases of knives and consequently fewer people carrying knives and a reduction in knife crime.
23. Action is also needed to reduce the accessibility of prohibited weapons being sold on overseas platforms to UK users. This has the direct benefit of both making it harder for individuals to acquire prohibited weapons and also to encourage overseas companies to ensure products they sell to the UK conform with UK regulations.

What gaps or harms would occur if government doesn't intervene?

24. Without this and other government interventions tackling the unlawful online sale of knives and offensive weapons, these dangerous items will continue to be easily accessible to those with malicious intent. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales has identified the harm caused by these 'grey market' sellers who 'bulk buy knives, prohibited or otherwise and sell indiscriminately across their social media accounts and peer networks'¹⁶. The lack of safeguards found in the 'grey market' provides criminals and those aged under 18 years an easy way to buy knives online, with one seller boasting that their knives had been used in the Southport public disorder^{17 18}.
25. Government intervention against the sale of knives to those who are likely to use them in violent attacks is essential to counter knife crime. Inaction will allow this type of crime to continue harming victims and their friends and family both physically and emotionally and is likely to increase in prevalence if not tackled. Knife crime also inflicts costs on the economy and wider society. For example, through costs to health services, the police, and lost economic output.

¹⁶ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales#page=5> (page 5)

¹⁷ Independent Article mentioning knife sellers who boasted knives sold in Southport riots.
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/knife-crime-social-media-stephen-clayman-b2610991.html>

¹⁸ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales>

3. SMART objectives for intervention

26. **Specific:** The proposed measure aims to reduce the availability of illegal knives and offensive weapons content on online platforms by enforcing the quick removal of such content.
27. **Measurable:** The effectiveness of the measure can be measured by tracking the number of take downs of illegal knife and offensive weapons related content and the compliance rate of online platforms. Data can be collected on CRNs issued, response times, and compliance rates to evaluate how well the measure functions.
28. **Achievable:** Sections 10¹⁹ and 27²⁰ of the OSA 2023 place duties on online platforms to have processes in place to take down illegal content. This ensures that platforms can already swiftly and efficiently remove illegal knife-related content, making compliance with the legislation achievable.
29. **Relevant:** The measure directly addresses the issue of illegal knife sales contributing to knife-related crimes. By targeting the online 'grey market' for illegal knife sales, the legislation aims to work with law enforcement agencies to identify and address the sources of these illegal sales on social media and other online platforms.
30. **Time Bound** The Home Office expect this measure, alongside others, to contribute to the halving of knife crime within a decade.

4. Description of proposed intervention options and explanation of the logical change process whereby this achieves SMART objectives

Option 1 – Content Removal Notices enforced with Civil Penalty Notices

31. This will provide the police with the power to require the removal of illegal knife or offensive weapons related content from an online social media, marketplace, or search service. Failure to comply with the notice will result in a CPN for a senior UK based executive who will have been responsible for ensuring the specified content is taken down and a CPN for the online company hosting the specified content.
32. CRN will notify online companies of illegal content that they are hosting. The risk of being issued with a CPN will encourage the relevant executive and company to ensure that the specified content is removed as quickly as possible.
33. This measure complements the already existing legislative framework in place in relation to online safety. The OSA 2023²¹ already requires online companies to have proportionate systems in place to, amongst other content moderation duties, swiftly remove illegal

¹⁹ Section 10, Online Safety Act 2023: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/section/10>

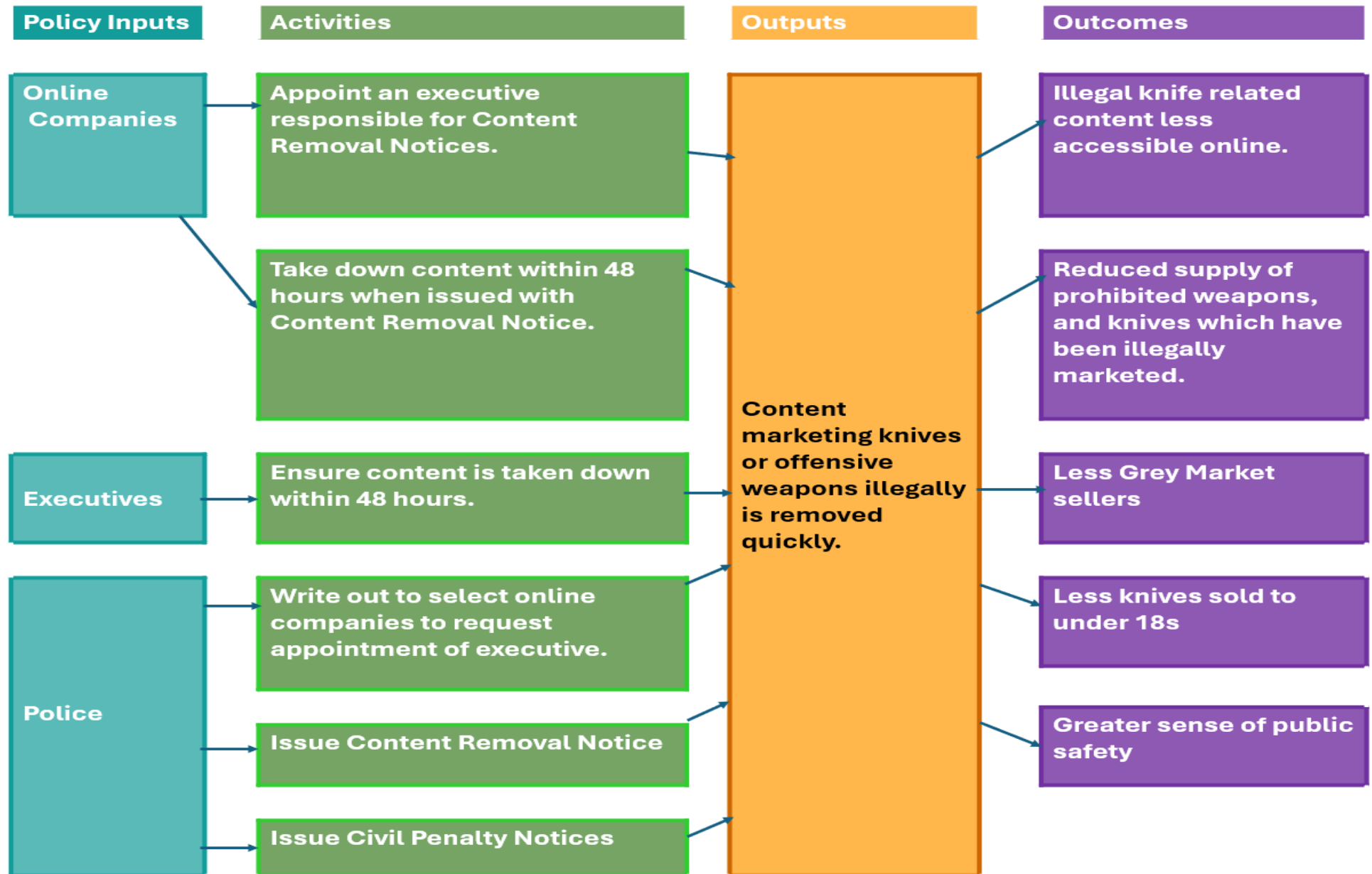
²⁰ Section 27, Online Safety Act 2023: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/section/27>

²¹ Online Safety Act 2023: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/50/contents>

content when they become aware of it. It also requires search services to reduce the risk that users encounter illegal content via their services.

34. Under the OSA 2023, if there is a systemic failure by companies to remove illegal content, companies can be fined up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. The OSA 2023 focuses on systemic issues and the processes that companies use; however, these proposals are designed to promote action by enforcing the swift removal of specific illegal knife-related content.
35. This measure will meet the objectives set out in section 3 of this IA. Giving police the power to require social media platforms, online marketplaces and search services to quickly remove or restrict access to content on or available through their site or service will disrupt the activities of 'grey market' sellers and certain overseas retailers. This will reduce their reach and make it harder for dangerous individuals to acquire prohibited weapons, or those aged under 18 years to purchase knives.
36. The target market for content that markets knives as suitable for violence and advertises prohibited weapons is individuals who want to use a knife for violence or acquire a prohibited weapon. Swifter removal of or restriction of access to this content makes it less likely that these individuals will encounter it. This in turn means it is less likely they will acquire a knife that they plan to use for violence or a prohibited weapon. This should reduce the supply of knives acquired for violence and prohibited weapons, if there are fewer knives bought for violence and prohibited weapons in circulation then this will likely reduce knife crime over time compared to if no action was taken.
37. As 'grey market' sellers often lack rigorous age verification for knife sales, swift take down or restriction of access to their content may also reduce the number of underage knife sales. If the profits of 'grey market' sellers are eroded by the swift removal of their advertising, they may cease their unlawful trading. This will reduce the number of avenues through which those aged under 18 years can buy knives.

Figure 1: Theory of Change



5. Summary of long-list and alternatives

38. Holding the senior executives of online companies who flout the law on the sale of knives to account is a government manifesto commitment.
39. As this measure is a manifesto commitment a long list of policy options was not developed.
40. Non-legislative options are not suitable as there are no means to place liability on senior executives of online companies without a change to legislation.
41. Public consultation²² enabled the initial proposal to be honed and developed in line with responses and evidence submitted by a wide range of stakeholders, including tech companies and associations, police, local government, third sector organisations and interested members of the public.

6. Description of shortlisted policy options carried forward

42. The department shortlisted two options.

Option 0 – ‘Do nothing’

43. The Home Office does not introduce legislation to place personal liability on senior executives of online platforms for the removal of content illegally marketing knives and offensive weapons.
44. This maintains the status quo; there will continue to be no requirement for online companies to take down specific pieces of illegal knife and offensive weapons content when notified of it by the police.

Option 1 – Personal liability measures for senior executives of online companies who fail to comply with Content Removal Notices (Content Removal Notices enforced with Civil Penalty Notices)

45. The public consultation on the proposed measures indicated support amongst members of the public²³. Taking this into account along with the evidence from law enforcement, the government will legislate to create personal liability measures for senior executives of online companies who fail to comply with CRNs.
46. This measure is distinct but complementary to the OSA 2023 and enforces pre-existing knife legislation via the use of a CPN. This will meet the government’s manifesto commitment and help contribute to the government’s mission to halve knife crime in the next decade.

²² Sale of knives: executive sanctions - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sale-of-knives-executive-sanctions>

²³ Section 2 Sale of knives: executive sanctions – GOV.UK <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sale-of-knives-executive-sanctions/outcome/knives-and-offensive-weapons-personal-liability-measures-on-senior-executives-of-online-platforms-or-marketplaces-government-response-accessible>

47. Due to the nature of this measure and the content it has power over, this measure will be used on a much smaller scale, both in terms of the fines levied and the content that companies will need to remove. For example, as a part of the OSA 2023 companies can be fined up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. Whereas as a part of this measure companies will be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000 and the designated executive will be personally liable for a CPN of up to £10,000. **This is the government's preferred option.**

7. Regulatory scorecard for preferred option

Part A: Overall and stakeholder impacts

(1) Overall impacts on total welfare		Directional rating
Description of overall expected impact	<p>This legislation is expected to impact online platforms including search services, enforcement bodies and the UK public.</p> <p>This measure incorporates the requirement for social media platforms to remove prohibited material from the 'grey market' within 48 hours of police notification²⁴.</p> <p>This measure builds upon the OSA 2023 and enforces the pre-existing legislation via the use of a CPNs. This measure will have a much lower scale of penalty for businesses. For example, as a part of the OSA 2023 companies can be fined up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. Whereas as a part of this measure companies will be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000 and the designated executive will be personally liable for a CPN of up to £10,000.</p> <p>This legislation will likely create familiarisation costs for both enforcement agencies and affected technology company staff. Dependent on the level of enforcement, technology companies may need to adjust staffing levels to comply with the requirements for removing illegal knife and prohibited weapon content.</p> <p>The Home Office attempted to gather evidence through both the formal consultation process and meetings with online companies. This engagement did not provide sufficient evidence to develop assumptions for cost benefit analysis.</p> <p>Despite this, the Home Office expect impact and familiarisation to be minimal, as this measure simply builds upon the OSA 2023 which already places a duty on online</p>	Uncertain Based on all impacts (incl. non-monetised)

²⁴ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales>

	<p>companies to have proportionate system in place to, amongst other duties, swiftly remove illegal content when they become aware of it. The criminal justice system may also incur limited costs associated with appeals, but this impact has been minimised through the use of CPNs.</p> <p>If this further encourages the removal or speed of removal of illegal knife and offensive weapon content, there may be potential benefits associated with reductions in knife crime and/or a decrease in public fear of crime.</p> <p>Nonetheless, there is uncertainty surrounding the extent to which the legislation will increase the removal of illegal content and reduce knife-related crime or improve public perceptions of safety. The overall impact of this measure is uncertain.</p>	
<p>Monetised impacts</p>	<p>It is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the costs and benefits. This is due to both data constraints and because the public/open consultation was unable to provide evidence of impact (such as staffing changes).</p> <p>One question within the consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force.</p> <p>21% (11) of the 53 respondents who answered this question anticipated that they would have to make changes to their systems. However, no respondent was able to provide us with details on any additional costs. This means Home Office was not provided with any data or information to assess the impacts of these proposals on companies.²⁵</p> <p>Costs for technology companies will be determined by the extent they currently remove this content and the degree this legislation will motivate such action for those who do not.</p> <p>The costs and benefits the Home Office expect to create are outlined in the non-monetised impacts.</p>	<p>Negative Based on likely £NPSV</p>
<p>Non-monetised impacts</p>	<p>It is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the costs and benefits due to current evidence gaps and because the consultation with the public and online platforms was unable to attain sufficient evidence. Costs are expected to be minimal as this measure only adds an additional deterrent and consequence to existing legislation already in place.</p> <p>The costs and benefits that could be expected are outlined below.</p>	<p>Uncertain Based on all impacts (incl. non-monetised)</p>

²⁵ Knives and offensive weapons: consultation on personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms or marketplaces - Government response:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf (Page 10)

	<p>Familiarisation Costs:</p> <p>The measure may lead to setup costs via familiarisation, as staff from online platforms and enforcement bodies become accustomed to the new CRN process.</p> <p>This should be minimal for the police, who will be accustomed to highlighting the content that needs to be removed and online platform who would be accustomed to remove such content. This is because this measure only adds an additional deterrent and consequence for the OSA Act 2023 already in place. Familiarisation has been difficult to quantify due to an absence of data on how many police and social media staff are currently involved in the removal process.</p> <p>In addition, this process may save time through streamlining cooperation between online platforms and the police, who can more effectively enforce content violations.</p> <p>Staffing Costs:</p> <p>This measure may create ongoing staffing costs for both online platforms and the Police. Online platforms may employ more content moderators to remove harmful content that is more easily flagged by the police.</p> <p>However, it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the staffing costs. This is due to both data constraints and because the public/open consultation was unable to provide evidence of impact (such as staffing changes).</p> <p>One question within the consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force.</p> <p>21% (11) of the 53 respondents who answered this question anticipated that they would have to make changes to their systems. However, no respondent was able to provide us with details on any additional costs. This means Home Office was not provided with any data or information to assess the impacts of these proposals on companies.²⁶</p> <p>Criminal Justice System (CJS) costs:</p> <p>The Home Office anticipates costs associated from potential appeals. However, given the likely income levels of online executives, legal aid costs are not anticipated. While specific court costs for this option are unavailable, a previous Impact Assessment for the OSA 2023 provides a useful reference</p>	
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²⁶ [Knives and offensive weapons: consultation on personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms or marketplaces - Government response](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf (Page 10)

	<p>given the similar nature of the measure. The OSA 2023 was deemed to have a negligible impact, with costs primarily associated with the appeals body. These were estimated at £3,500 per case, with approximately 10 cases expected annually²⁷. Online companies have also suggested high compliance with CRNs within the 48-hour notice. The implications itself – both the 48-hour notice and use of CPNs rather than criminal prosecution should limit criminal justice impacts. As such, CJS costs are expected to be minimal.</p> <p>Public safety Benefits:</p> <p>Knife-enabled crime increased by 2% in the year ending (YE) December 2024 (to 54,587 offences), compared with YE December 2023 (53,413 offences). This was 1% lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in YE March 2020 (55,170 offences).</p> <p>Most knife-enabled crimes were assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm (43%) and robbery (43%) offences. Fewer than 1% of knife-enabled crimes were homicide offences (0.4%).</p> <p>The Home Office anticipate that the measure may contribute to improved public safety through reducing knife related crime. However, due to an absence of sufficient evidence on the current removal of illegal content and the use of the ‘grey market’ for obtaining weapons attaining these weapons, the Home Office are unable to quantify the potential scale of reduction.</p> <p>The proposal could also lead to an increase in public confidence. This benefit will not be monetised due to an absence of evidence on the specific drivers of fear of knife crime, and the extent to which the proposals will affect this.</p>	
<p>Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?</p>	<p>The benefits associated with the legislation are likely to be more concentrated in areas where knife crime is more geographically concentrated, such as the West Midlands and London.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>

²⁷ Online Safety Bill: Impact assessment: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6716222b9242eccc6c849b09/Online_Safety_act_enactment_impact_assessment.pdf#page=92 (page 92)

(2) Expected impacts on businesses

<p>Description of overall business impact</p>	<p>Online platforms may see their costs increase in the form of familiarisation, training, staffing costs and fines for non-compliant companies. However, it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the costs and benefits. This is due to both data constraints and because the public/open consultation was unable to provide evidence of impact (such as staffing changes).</p> <p>One question within the consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force.</p> <p>21% (11) of the 53 respondents who answered this question anticipated that they would have to make changes to their systems. However, no respondent was able to provide us with details on any additional costs. This means Home Office was not provided with any data or information to assess the impacts of these proposals on companies.²⁸</p> <p>Costs for technology companies will be determined by the extent they currently remove this content and the degree this legislation will motivate such action for those who do not. As a part of this measure companies will be liable for a Civil Penalty Notice (CPN) of up to £60,000. This is an important potential impact on businesses directly resulting from this measure. However, online companies have suggested there will be a high level of compliance with CRNs within the 48-hour notice. This should mean that the number of CPNs issued are expected to be minimal.</p>	<p>Uncertain</p>
<p>Monetised impacts</p>	<p>The primary costs for business associated with this measure may include potential changes in staffing for social media companies, training on removal of content, and familiarisation costs. However, it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the monetisable costs. This is because the consultation was unable to provide the Home Office with sufficient evidence on business impacts.</p> <p>One question within the consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force.</p> <p>21% (11) of the 53 respondents who answered this question anticipated that they would have to make changes to their systems. However, no respondent was able to provide details on any additional costs. This meant Home Office was</p>	<p>Neutral Based on likely business £NPV</p>

²⁸ [Knives and offensive weapons: consultation on personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms or marketplaces - Government response](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf (Page 10)

	not provided with any data or information to assess the impacts of these proposals on companies. ²⁹	
Non-monetised impacts	<p>Familiarisation Costs:</p> <p>The shortlisted option will require setup costs via familiarisation, as staff from online platforms become accustomed to the CRN process.</p> <p>Staffing Costs:</p> <p>This measure may create additional staffing costs for both online platforms. Online platforms may employ more content moderators to remove harmful content flagged by the police.</p> <p>Fines for non-compliant companies:</p> <p>Costs for technology companies will be determined by the extent they currently remove this content and the degree this legislation will motivate such action for those who do not. As a part of this measure companies will be liable for a Civil Penalty Notice (CPN) of up to £60,000. This is an important potential impact on businesses directly resulting from this measure. However, online companies have suggested there will be a high level of compliance with CRNs within the 48-hour notice. This should mean that the number of CPNs issued are expected to be minimal.</p>	Negative
Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?	This legislation covers the whole of the United Kingdom. Therefore, there will be no significant or adverse distributional impacts.	Neutral
(3) Expected impacts on households		
Description of overall household impact	<p>There may be benefits associated with reductions in knife crime and public fear of crime, especially as this may improve the speed of removal.</p> <p>However, there is uncertainty surrounding the extent to which the legislation will reduce illegal content and the corresponding impact on knife-related crime/public perceptions of safety.</p>	Uncertain
Monetised impacts	N/A	Neutral Based on likely household £NPV

²⁹ [Knives and offensive weapons: consultation on personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms or marketplaces - Government response](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf (Page 10)

<p>Non-monetised impacts</p>	<p>Increased removal speed and may lead to corresponding effects in access to knives and prohibited weapons by criminals. This would create public safety benefits, both in the form of reduced incidents of serious violence and perception of less illegal and threatening content online.</p> <p>These are not quantified in the appraisal as there is not sufficient evidence available to determine how many knives used in offences are attained online, nor how many of these would have been avoided because of the individual proposal. For example, individuals may attain knives through other means or begin using legal and non-prohibited knives.</p> <p>Despite anecdotal examples, such as the Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales which highlighted an example where a social media company took seven days to remove illegal content when requested by the police³⁰, there is not a wider understanding on how long the average removal takes and therefore whether 48 hours will speed requests up.</p> <p>The legislation may also lead to a reduction in fear of crime, particularly where there are public concerns in relation to specific types of weapons sold online designed to look menacing and/or for use of combat.</p>	<p>Uncertain Based on likelihood of crime prevention</p>
<p>Any significant or adverse distributional impacts?</p>	<p>The benefits associated with the legislation are likely to be more concentrated in areas where knife crime is more geographically concentrated, such as the West Midlands and London³¹.</p>	<p>Uncertain</p>

³⁰ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf#page=72 (page 72)

³¹ ONS police force area data tables (March 2024):
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/policeforceareadatatables>

Part B: Impacts on wider government priorities

Category	Description of impact	Directional rating
<p>Business environment: Does the measure impact on the ease of doing business in the UK?</p>	<p>There is limited risk that this legislation discourages online executives from living in the UK or deters online platforms from setting up and investing within the UK. As stated above this is an adding additional deterrence for the current policy.</p> <p>Moreover, the notification process and 48-hour time period is likely to increase compliance and mitigate potential fears of civil action. The penalties of up to £10,000 and up to £60,000 are minimal when compared with those in the OSA 2023 of up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. Hence, this measure is unlikely to impact the attractiveness of the UK market to online platforms.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>
<p>International Considerations: Does the measure support international trade and investment?</p>	<p>There are not expected to be any international trade impacts of this measure.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>
<p>Natural capital and Decarbonisation: Does the measure support commitments to improve the environment and decarbonise?</p>	<p>There is not expected to be an environmental impact of the legislation.</p>	<p>Neutral</p>

8. Monitoring and evaluation of preferred option

48. This measure contributes to the mission to halve knife crime in a decade. As such it is closely linked to other policy measures and its individual impact directly on the overall objective will be difficult to quantify in terms of independent causality. Evaluation will be focused on usage data for:
 - 1) CRNs
 - 2) Notices of Intent
 - 3) CPNs
49. The police will provide information on the implementation of the content removal process.
50. Police will provide information on the number of CRNs, Notices of Intent and CPNs. This will allow monitoring of tech company compliance and evaluation of whether the penalty levels are sufficient.
51. Police will also provide information on the number of reviews requested and how many were upheld by the reviewing officer. This information, alongside data on how many CPNs were issued following representations made following a Notice of Intent, will be used to monitor whether police are issuing CRNs correctly and on the unlawful knife related content.
52. Police will also be providing qualitative feedback on the effectiveness of the process by highlighting any recurring problems they encounter. The Home Office will also ask tech companies and executives to provide feedback.
53. The Home Office will monitor the impact of the policy through conducting a post-implementation review of this policy four years after its introduction, as this allows sufficient time for police to gather and investigate trends in data. A comparison of pre-legislative and post-legislative information will help the Home Office ascertain whether this measure has achieved its aim of encouraging tech companies to remove illegal knife related content quickly when notified by the police. CRNs are a deterrent and as such don't need to be used to change behaviour. Therefore, success will be measured by whether companies are complying with removal requests from police in a shorter timeframe post legislation than pre-legislation.
54. The post-implementation review will also engage with tech companies to capture any impact this measure has had on their operating costs.

9. Minimising administrative and compliance costs for preferred option

55. In the government's consultation on this policy, information was requested on changes online platforms would have to make to their processes. No information was provided by respondents.
56. Once an online company has designated an executive and reporting route for CRNs they will not need to repeat this task for future notices unless they themselves choose to designate a new executive or change the reporting route.
57. The named executive will also reduce administrative burden for both enforcement agencies and social media company.

58. As companies and executives gain more experience in complying with CRNs they will likely streamline the process.
59. There is no way of reducing these costs further for example by reducing the size of the fine, without undermining policy objectives.

10. Main assumptions / sensitivities and economic / analytical risks

60. One of the main risks is the absence of granular data on the precise origins of knives used in crimes. While the Home Office can track overall trends in knife crime, data does not allow it to pinpoint specific sources of knives, such as online marketplaces or retail outlets. This complicates the evaluation of the effectiveness of this measure individually in terms of contribution to overall knife crime statistics.
61. The public consultation and other direct stakeholder engagement on this measure did not provide the data needed to assess the level of likely cost or benefit to businesses. A cost-benefit analysis has therefore not been completed. An assumption of low cost to businesses for staffing and training has been made, with the cost to them of CPNs dependent entirely on their level of compliance.
62. Due to the prevalence of lawful knife sales in the UK and the variety of means of unlawful acquisition of knives and weapons, the risk remains despite this measure, which is designed to enforce the removal of one specific avenue. Even if content is speedily removed on online platforms, determined offenders could obtain knives and prohibited weapons elsewhere.
63. The realised benefits will depend on the extent to which this measure speeds up removal and how quickly the 'grey market' adapts to replace this as an avenue for sales. For example, the overall level of knife crime could remain the same if knife sales/advertisements of knives are shifted to take place via encrypted end-to-end platforms or private chats instead of being widely broadcasted across online platforms.
64. Nonetheless, this measure is expected to reduce the risk through reducing likelihood of exposure to online content marketing and advertising unlawful knife and weapon sales, which currently goes unenforced.
65. An assumption on police capacity to incorporate this measure has been made through consultation with the NPCC. It is possible that there could be a large number of flagged posts and content that the police teams will need to assess and deal with. The capacity of teams to manage this workload will be assessed and reviewed over time, but it is currently felt that this work will be manageable within the dedicated teams already dealing with illegal online content in this area.

Declaration

Department:

Home Office

Contact details for enquiries:

CrimeandPolicingBillTeam@homeoffice.gov.uk

Minister responsible:

Sarah Jones MP, Minister for Policing and Crime

I have read the Impact Assessment, and I am satisfied that, given the available evidence, it represents a reasonable view of the likely costs, benefits and impact of the leading options.

Signed:



Date:

25 November 2025

Summary: Analysis and evidence

Price base year: 2025/26

PV base year: 2025/26

This table may be reformatted provided the side-by-side comparison of options is retained		0. Business as usual (baseline)	1. Preferred way forward (if not do-minimum)
Costs (£m)	Low	0	0
	High	0	0
	Best	0	0
(Distinguish between setup and ongoing costs, as well as private/public costs)			
Benefits (£m)	Low	0	0
	High	0	0
	Best	0	0
(Distinguish between setup and ongoing benefits, as well as private/public benefits)			
Net present social value (£m)	Low	0	0
	High	0	0
	Best	0	0

	0. Business as usual (baseline)	1. Preferred way forward (if not do-minimum)
Public sector financial costs (with brief description, including ranges)	N/A	The Home Office anticipates costs associated with the issuing of CPN and potential appeals. However, given the likely income levels of senior executives, legal aid costs are not anticipated. While specific court costs for this option are unavailable, a previous Impact Assessment for the OSA 2023 provides a useful reference given the similar nature of the measure. The OSA 2023 was deemed to have a negligible impact, with costs primarily associated with the appeals body. These were estimated at £3,500 per case, with approximately 10 cases expected annually. ³²
Significant un-quantified benefits and costs (description, with scale where possible)	N/A	The Home Office anticipate that the measure may contribute to improved public safety through reducing serious violence. However, due to an absence of sufficient evidence, the Home Office are unable to quantify the exact extent of this reduction.
Key risks (and risk costs, and optimism bias, where relevant)	This risks the government failing to meet its objective of reducing knife crime by 50 per cent in the next decade and its manifesto commitment to hold senior executives personally accountable for flouting the rules around the online sale of knives.	One of the main risks is the absence of granular data on the precise origins of knives used in crimes. While the Home Office can track overall trends in knife crime, data does not allow it to pinpoint specific sources of knives, such as online marketplaces or retail outlets. Due to low response rates from the consultation and limited business engagement, there is a greater likelihood of unforeseen risks.

³² Online Safety Bill: Impact assessment:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6716222b9242eccc6c849b09/Online_Safety_act_enactment_impact_assessment.pdf#page=92 (page 92)

Results of sensitivity analysis	N/A	N/A
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Evidence base

A. Strategic objective and overview

Strategic Objective

66. The personal sanctions regime is a government manifesto commitment to personally hold to account executives of online companies that flout the laws regulating the online sale of knives. The regime will contribute to the government's mission on halving knife crime in a decade.

Background

67. The police have reported that one of the biggest problems in dealing with knife crime is the 'grey market' of private individuals using social media platforms to sell knives. This is the phenomenon of private sellers who buy knives in bulk from legitimate knife sellers and resell them via social media, often to those aged under 18 years.
68. These private sellers are marketing offensive weapons and knives in ways which encourage violence or promotes their suitability for use in violent attacks. These are criminal offences under section 141 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, section 1 of the Restriction of Offensive Weapons Act 1959, sections 1 and 2 of the Knives Act 1997 and Article 53 of the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. (see footnotes 3, 4 and 5 on page 2).
69. Online companies have a responsibility to take down such illegal content. There is a need for the government to take action to give the police the power to order the take down and restriction of specific content posted by 'grey market' sellers. This will disrupt their ability to market their wares, ultimately preventing people, including persons under the age of 18 years, from being able to purchase a prohibited offensive weapon or knife.

Groups Affected

70. **Online companies** – These are online social media, marketplace, and search services. These either host content generated by their users or provide users with search content. Companies with a presence in the UK will be responsible for taking down content specified in CRNs, and they and their executives may receive CPN if they fail to comply with them. If companies do not designate a senior executive responsible for complying with CRNs, then they may be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000. If a companies fail to take down content specified in a CRN, they may be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000.
71. **Executives of online companies** – UK based executives who have been designated as being responsible for complying with Content Removal Notices may be liable for a CPN of up to £10,000.
72. **General public** – Reducing ease of access to illegal weapons and illegally marketed knives will reduce the impact of knife crime, increasing the safety of the public.

Public Consultation

73. A public consultation was held. The consultation ran from 13 November to 11 December 2024 and had 74 responses³³. The main findings from the consultation were:

- Respondents broadly supported the proposal, agreeing with the government's approach to introduce personal liability measures on senior executives, the introduction of CRNs, and the proposed defences for senior executives.
- 32 respondents wanted companies to only be given 24 hours to remove content when served with a CRN. This was the most popular option. The government believes that having a 48-hour period strikes the right balance in giving online companies sufficient time to take down the specified content and still provides a relatively quick removal of the relevant material.
- Several respondents expressed concern about the level and severity of the penalty, which they thought was not an adequate deterrent. Some felt that it should be a criminal rather than civil penalty. The government believes that a civil penalty will act as appropriate encouragement for the timely removal of the content in question, and that the proposed fine amounts are proportionate and in line with similar civil penalties for businesses.
- Several online companies and associations representing their sector had a range of concerns about the measure, including that they were already doing enough to deal with this issue. These companies did not supply data about the extent of the issue on their platforms or their response to it.
- The consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force. No respondent provided details of any additional costs that would be incurred, so it was not possible to use data or information from the consultation to assess the cost impacts of the proposals on companies.

B. Problem under consideration, with business as usual, and rationale for intervention

74. Knife-enabled crime increased by 2% in the year ending (YE) December 2024 (to 54,587 offences), compared with YE December 2023 (53,413 offences). This was 1% lower than pre-coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in YE March 2020 (55,170 offences).

75. Most knife-enabled crimes were assault with injury and assault with intent to cause serious harm (43%) and robbery (43%) offences. Fewer than 1% of knife-enabled crimes were homicide offences (0.4%).

³³ Sale of knives: executive sanctions - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sale-of-knives-executive-sanctions>

76. Between April 2023 and April 2024, there was a three per cent increase in the number of hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object³⁴.
77. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales³⁵ found that although social media companies “have the ability to scan and remove posts and accounts, [...]. This is mainly used for drug sales but there is no evidence of this being used where there is harmful content such as knife display, violence or knife sales.” The review also recommends “Search engines to ensure prohibited articles are not promoted or available to UK customers. When searching to buy or look at knives, search engines can currently return results advertising knives that are prohibited in the UK.”
78. Government action is needed to deal with the unlawful online marketing and sale of knives and offensive weapons. Although content unlawfully marketing offensive weapons and knives typically violates online companies’ terms of service, such content is typically not taken offline quickly enough.
79. The government’s plans to hold senior UK based executives of online companies personally responsible for the take down of this illegal content will encourage its prompt removal.
80. Without this and other government interventions dealing with the issue of online sale of knives and offensive weapons, these dangerous items will continue to be easily accessible to those with malicious intent.
81. Government intervention into the sale of knives to those who are likely to use them in violent attacks is of the foundation in the fight against knife crime. Inaction will allow this type of crime to continue harming victims and their friends and family both physically and emotionally. Knife crime also inflicts costs on the economy and wider society. For example, through costs to health services, the police, and lost economic output.

C. Policy objective

82. The objective of this policy is twofold:
 - a) Enabling police to disrupt the activities of ‘grey market’ sellers by ensuring the swift removal of their marketing material. This should reduce their ability to make illegal sales of knives and prohibited weapons. In turn this should lead to a reduction of the number knives in the hands of dangerous individuals and children, reducing the level of knife crime.
 - b) Enabling police to reduce the ease by which UK users can access and buy prohibited weapons from overseas companies, or knives being marketed illegally by overseas companies. This should lead to a reduction of the number knives in the hands of dangerous individuals and children, reducing the level of knife crime.

³⁴ Crime in England and Wales: Other related tables - Office for National Statistics
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeinenglandandwalesotherrelatedtables> (Table 7)

³⁵ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales (accessible) - GOV.UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales-accessible>

D. Description of options considered

Option 0 – ‘Do nothing’

83. The Home Office does not introduce legislation to place personal liability on senior executives of online platforms and marketplaces for the removal of content illegally marketing knives and offensive weapons.
84. This maintains the status quo; there will continue to be no requirement for online companies to take down specific pieces of illegal knife and offensive weapons content when notified of it by the police.

Option 1 – Personal liability measures for senior executives of online companies who fail to comply with two Content Removal Notices (Content Removal Notices enforced with Civil Penalty Notices)

85. This policy would provide the police with the power to require the removal of illegal knife or offensive weapons related content from an online platform, marketplace, or search service. Failure to comply with the notice will result in a CPN for both the online company and a senior UK based executive who will have been responsible for ensuring the specified content is taken down.
86. Content Removal Notices will notify online companies of illegal content that they are hosting. The risk of being issued with a CPN will encourage both the relevant executive and the company to ensure that the specified content is removed as quickly as possible.
87. This measure enables enforcement of the requirement for social media platforms to remove prohibited material within 48 hours of police notification. It targets ‘grey market’ online sellers, which are referenced within the Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales³⁶ as needing intervention.
88. This measure but is distinct but complementary to the already existing legislative framework in place in relation to online safety. The OSA 2023 requires online platforms and marketplaces to have proportionate systems in place to, amongst other duties, swiftly remove illegal content when they become aware of it. It also requires search services to reduce the risk that users encounter illegal content via their services.
89. The OSA 2023 focuses on systemic issues, and the processes that companies use; these measures are designed to ensure specific illegal knife-related content is swiftly removed. This means there is a significant difference in the level of fines. Under OSA 2023, if there is a systemic failure by online companies to remove illegal content, they can be fined up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue, whichever is greater. Under this measure companies will be liable for a CPN of up to £60,000 and the designated executive will be personally liable for a CPN of up to £10,000. The focus on specific content over systems and smaller fines means that this measure will be used on a much smaller scale, both in terms of the fines levied and the content that companies will need to remove.

³⁶ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales>

E. NPSV: monetised and non-monetised costs and benefits of each shortlist option (including administrative burden)

90. NPSV calculations are not possible due to a lack of sufficient evidence to accurately estimate costs and benefits.
91. The primary costs for business associated with this measure may include potential changes in staffing, training, familiarisation costs and fines for non-compliant companies. The Home Office attempted to gather evidence through both the formal consultation process and meetings with online companies. This engagement, however, did not provide sufficient evidence to develop assumptions for cost benefit analysis. As a result of these unsuccessful attempts, it has been impossible to provide accurate estimates.
92. The CJS may experience costs in terms of appeals for potential cases and if police add additional resource to focus on enforcing the removal of illegal content due to this measure. This is not anticipated to be significant as the work will be absorbed as an extension of existing online content removal capabilities.
93. Over time, public safety benefits are anticipated in the form of reduced incidents of serious violence. However, it is not possible to monetise the benefits due to the uncertainty surrounding to what extent the removal of knife-related content on online platforms will lead to a reduction in knife crime. The Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales³⁷ recommended the requirement for social media platforms to remove prohibited material within 48 hours of police notification due to anecdotal examples of slow removal, believing that this will have a downstream impact on knife crime.

Impact on small and micro-businesses

94. While this measure affects any relevant online platform business, police will likely prioritise content which they believe will be causing or has the potential to cause high levels of harm. There is currently no data available on the level of small and micro businesses within this industry, however the impact on small and micro-businesses is anticipated to be minimal. This is because of the limited outreach they will have when compared to the larger online platform business. They may also be less likely to be used by 'grey market' sellers due to more limited reach for the unlawful content.
95. Any fines incurred by small or micro-businesses through non-removal of content may have a greater impact than on larger businesses which are more easily able to absorb costs.

³⁷ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67b5b2e54a80c6718b55bf76/E2E_Review_-_Online_Knife_Sales_Final_Report_.pdf?page#67 (page 67)

F. Costs and benefits to business calculations

Costs to businesses

96. The preferred way forward will require setup costs via familiarisation, as staff from online platforms become accustomed to the new measure. However, these familiarisation costs are likely to be minimal for the online platforms. This is because this measure only adds an additional time constraint and consequence to statutory requirements within the OSA 2023, rather than creating a new process to be followed or system update requirement.
97. This process has the potential to reduce administrative burden in the longer term through streamlining the content removal process into a more coordinated and collaborative effort between police and online companies.
98. This measure may also create additional staffing costs for online platforms. which may employ additional content moderators to speed up the removal of harmful content. However, it is not possible to provide a reliable estimate for the staffing costs. This is due to both data constraints and because the public/open consultation was unable to provide evidence of impact (such as staffing changes).
99. One question within the consultation asked online platforms or marketplaces whether they anticipated having to make any changes to their processes and systems if this proposal came into force. 21 per cent (11) of the 53 respondents who answered this question anticipated that they would have to make changes to their systems. However, no respondent was able to provide us with details on any additional costs. This means Home Office was not provided with any data or information to assess the impacts of these proposals on companies.³⁸

Benefits to businesses

100. This measure has the potential to benefit UK businesses through improved reputation where the online platforms are seen to be complying with this legislation, increasing public trust in them.

Costs and benefits to households

101. No costs or benefits are expected as a result of this legislation.

Business environment

102. There is a minimal risk of this legislation discouraging executives and online platforms from setting up and investing within the UK, since this measure is simply designed to encourage adherence to existing legislation.
103. The penalties of up to £10,000 and up to £60,000 are minimal when compared with those in the OSA 2023 of up to £18 million or 10 per cent of their qualifying worldwide revenue,

³⁸ Knives and offensive weapons: consultation on personal liability measures on senior executives of online platforms or marketplaces - Government response
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6809fe240324470d6a394f69/Annex+A+_Personal+Liability+Consultation+Response2404.pdf#page=10 (Page 10)

whichever is greater. Hence, this measure is unlikely to impact the attractiveness of the UK market to online platforms.

G. Trade implications

104. No trade implications are expected as a result of this legislation.

H. Environment: Natural capital impact and decarbonisation

105. No environmental impacts are expected as a result of this legislation.

I. Other wider impacts (consider the impacts of your proposals)

106. No wider implications are expected as a result of this legislation.

J. Risks and assumptions

107. One of the main risks is the lack of data on the costs and benefits. As highlighted above, the Home Office attempted to gather evidence through both the formal consultation³⁹ process and meetings with online companies. This engagement did not provide sufficient evidence to develop assumptions for cost benefit analysis.

108. The extent to which benefits are realised will depend on the extent this measure speeds up removal of unlawful content and the speed at which the 'grey market' adapts. For example, the overall level of knife crime could remain the same if unlawful marketing and advertising content takes place via encrypted end-to-end platforms or private chats instead of being widely broadcasted across online platforms.

109. Although the Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales⁴⁰ recommends the requirement for social media platforms to remove prohibited material within 48 hours of police notification, this is largely based on qualitative and anecdotal evidence. There is limited quantitative evidence to suggest that removing this type of content would lead directly to a reduction in knife-related crime. Thus, there is no guarantee that by implementing this measure it will reduce the amount of knife related crime

³⁹ Sale of knives: executive sanctions - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sale-of-knives-executive-sanctions>

⁴⁰ Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales - GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-end-to-end-review-of-online-knife-sales>

Annex

Mandatory specific impact test - Statutory Equalities Duties	Complete
<p>The Home Office completed an Equalities Impact Assessment alongside the impact assessment. This found that there this measure had no direct discriminatory impact, no impact on advancing equality of opportunity and no impact of worsening community relations. It did find that there may be a risk of indirect discrimination against individuals with protected characteristics around race and sex given the general make-up of the Digital sector workforce. This risk was mitigated by checks and balances included within the measure to ensure that this is applied to all senior executives regardless of any protected characteristics. A right to review and appeals process has been built into the measure to ensure proportionality. The reviews would be undertaken by the police but at a senior level at Superintendent level or above.</p> <p>The SRO has agreed these summary findings.</p>	Yes