

News story

‘Ronan’s Law’ to see toughest crackdown yet on knife sales online

Retailers will need to report suspicious and bulk purchases of knives on their platforms to police, with tougher sentences for selling knives to under 18s.

From: **[Home Office \(/government/organisations/home-office\)](/government/organisations/home-office)** and **[The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP \(/government/people/yvette-cooper\)](/government/people/yvette-cooper)**

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Image: Getty Images

Stricter rules for online retailers selling knives will be introduced by the government, along with tougher penalties for failing to enforce them, as we pursue every avenue to protect young people from knife crime.

Following tragedies where the unlicensed sale of these weapons online has led to young people being killed, retailers will be required to report any bulk or suspicious-looking purchases of knives on their platforms to police to prevent illegal resales happening across social media accounts.

Underlining our commitment to stop these weapons from reaching young people, we will increase the sentence for selling weapons to under 18s from 6 months to up to 2 years prison time, which could apply to an individual who has processed the sale or a CEO of the company.

This increased penalty will also apply to the sale or supply of prohibited offensive weapons such as recently banned zombie-style knives, following police evidence outlined by Commander Stephen Clayman, the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for knife crime, where he identified a discrepancy in current legislation which means there is more leniency for illegally selling weapons than possessing one.

And in recognition of the broad array of knives - legal or banned - that are involved in knife attacks, a new offence of possessing an offensive weapon with intent for violence will be introduced in the Crime and Policing Bill which will come with a prison sentence of up to 4 years in prison. This means that no matter if the weapon in possession is legal or not, if there is intent to cause violence, it is a crime.

The government will also explore through a consultation later this year whether a registration scheme should be put in place for all online retailers selling knives so that only responsible sellers are able to sell knives. This follows the government's recent announcement that we will significantly strengthen ID checks on the sale and delivery of knives to keep our streets safe as part of the Plan for Change.

Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper said:

"It is horrifying how easy it is for young people to get hold of knives online even though children's lives are being lost, and families and communities are left devastated as a result.

"Not enough has been done to tackle the online market over recent years which is why we made it an urgent priority in our manifesto and the measures today will be underpinned by investment for a new dedicated police unit to go after those who are breaking the law and putting children and teenagers lives at risk.

"We are honouring our commitment to introduce Ronan's Law in memory of Ronan Kanda who was tragically killed in 2022. I am so grateful to the Kanda family for their endless perseverance in ensuring governments take the right actions to protect young people from further tragedy.

"This government has set an ambitious mission for the country to halve knife crime over the next decade and we will pursue every possible avenue to save young lives."

Last autumn, the Home Secretary commissioned Commander Clayman to conduct an end-to-end review into the sale of knives online. The review,

being published today, exposed lethal loopholes in the sale of knives online which are allowing dangerous weapons to end up in the wrong hands.

The review highlighted the lack of minimum standards for age verification and delivery checks. That is why the government has announced that a stringent two-step system will be mandated for all retailers selling knives online.

National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Knife Crime, Commander Stephen Clayman said:

“A key focus in our fight to tackle knife crime and improve the safety of our communities is limiting the accessibility of knives wherever possible, restricting their availability and the routes to purchase. All too often in policing, we are dealing with the horrific consequences of knife crime and seeing how it devastates individuals and families.

“The evidence in the end-to-end review clearly demonstrates just how easy it is for anyone to purchase a knife online, often avoiding any age verification at all, or where it is in place, exploiting vulnerabilities, especially with delivery.

“We welcome the government’s commitment in working with policing and partners to tackle knife crime and these new measures will significantly enhance our response to this.”

Today’s new measures will collectively be known as ‘Ronan’s Law’ in honour of Ronan Kanda who was tragically killed in 2022 in a case of mistaken identity near his home in Wolverhampton aged 16.

Ronan’s killers, who were also teenagers, illegally bought lethal weapons online and collected them from the Post Office on the day of the attack, with no age or identity verification taking place. It was later revealed that one of Ronan’s teenage killers had bought more than 20 knives online, including by using his mother’s ID. Today’s measures to close lethal loopholes in the online sale of knives deliver on a manifesto commitment to introduce Ronan’s Law and are the result of tireless campaigning by Ronan’s mother Pooja and sister Nikita to restrict young people’s access to weapons online and to protect other families from the same heartbreak.

Mother of Ronan and campaigner, Pooja Kanda said:

“In 2022, I lost my son, Ronan, to knife crime and mistaken identity. In 2023, we sat in the courtroom where we were shown a Ninja sword and 25+ bladed articles. Looking at them, I knew my son didn’t stand a chance. Without proper ID checks, the online sale of these bladed articles played a crucial role in this tragedy. How was this allowed? A 16-year-old managed to get these weapons online and sold these weapons to other people. I knew we could not go on like this, and our fight for

what was right had begun. Proper ID checks by sellers, as well as postal and delivery services, played a crucial role.

“We welcome the government’s plans to tackle the online sale of these weapons. Retailers, social media, and sellers need to take on more responsibilities. We welcome the proposal of a registration scheme, where the government will continue to implement stricter measures on the online sale of bladed articles. We have so much work to tackle knife crime; this is a much-needed beginning.

“This part of Ronan’s law will provide much-needed barriers against knife crime. I wish this was done years ago, and my son would be with me today.”

Patrick Green, CEO of Ben Kinsella Trust said:

“I am pleased to see that the government is listening to frontline organisations and is tightening the legislation needed to eliminate the supply of dangerous and intimidating weapons.

“These new laws, particularly the focus on reporting suspicious purchases and stronger age verification, will compel retailers to take responsibility for their actions. It has been our stated position that a licencing system for retailers is only way to ensure that specialised knives are only sold to those with legitimate and lawful need.

“A licensing system will ensure that only reputable retailers who comply with the law and prioritise public safety will be able to sell knives.”

In the spring, the Home Office intends to launch a consultation into a registration scheme for retailers in order to sell knives online.

The government has an ambitious mission to halve knife crime over the next decade and tackling the online space is a core part of that plan. We have already announced that we will introduce significant fines in the region of £10,000 for tech executives who fail to remove illegal knife crime content from their platforms and a mandatory two-step verification system for all retailers selling knives online. This will require customers to submit photo ID at the point of sale and again at the point of delivery. In addition, delivery companies will only be able to deliver a bladed article to the same person who purchased it.

Since coming into government, ministers have acted with urgency to ban zombie-style knives and machetes, accelerate a ban on ninja swords and address the online market in order to keep weapons off the streets and out of the wrong hands. The government is also steadfast in its commitment to making prevention a central part of its knife crime action plan through the new Young Futures Programme, which will identify young people at risk of

being drawn into violent crime and provide the interventions necessary to steer them in the right direction.

Graham Wynn, Assistant Director of Regulatory Affairs at the British Retail Consortium, said:

“Retailers take their responsibilities seriously and are fully committed to playing their part in making sure knives don’t make their way into the wrong hands. We look forward to considering the full details of the new proposal and welcome the commitment from the Home Office to meet retailers on this vital issue to ensure the safe sale of knives.”

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