

Access to Offensive Weapons and Bladed Articles

The online sale of knives: vulnerabilities in the supply chain, the grey market, and the policing response

Commander Stephen Clayman

NPCC National Lead for Knife Crime · Director National Knife Crime Centre
16 September 2026



Scope of this presentation

What I cover

- The sale, purchase, delivery and importation of pointed and bladed articles
- The legal framework for both legal-to-own and prohibited items
- The national policing response and what remains outstanding

What sits outside my NPCC portfolio

- Crossbows, bows and archery equipment - though there is direct read-across, covered later.
- Explicit policy on violence fixated individuals, which is being coordinated separately within the NPCC. However, the principles of preventing access to weapons will of course cater for those that fall into this category in broad terms, particularly those under 18.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

This NPCC knife crime portfolio deals with knife-enabled crime, which is what policing and society are tackling daily. Apart from a possession offence, a knife is an accessory and an aggravating factor to another criminal act. Throughout, I refer to the independent end-to-end review of online knife sales simply as “the Review”, and the National Knife Crime Centre as the “Centre” or “NKCC”. The perpetrator of the Southport attack will be referred to as “AR”.

Content Warning: Please note that slides 15, 16 & 20 contain images of knives

Context: The independent end-to-end review of online knife sales

Terms of reference

- How knives are sold online and delivered in England and Wales, by UK companies and by importers based overseas
- The processes followed from the point of sale through to delivery or supply
- How law enforcement applies the law in this area
- The effectiveness of measures used by UK sellers, overseas sellers and delivery companies to prevent sales to under-18s and of prohibited weapons
- What gaps and deficiencies exist across sellers, marketplaces, couriers, enforcement and legislation
- What examples of best practice exist
- What law enforcement can do to improve enforcement

Further reading:

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

How the evidence was gathered

- Surveys of law enforcement, CPS, Border Force, couriers, retailers and the voluntary sector, October 2024 to January 2025
- Consultations with marketplaces, social media and search companies, senior UKBF, National Trading Standards and Ofcom
- Quantitative analysis of ONS, MoJ and Trading Standards data

The catalyst

Campaigning by Pooja Kanda, whose son Ronan was murdered in June 2022 with weapons bought online and collected without verification; the Southport attack of 29 July 2024; and NPCC Knife Crime Portfolio discovery work with forces on retailers lawfully selling knives in the hundreds to single buyers and the growing threat of the 'grey market'.

The review was commissioned by the Home Secretary at that time.

The three questions I have been asked to address here

1

Drawing on the Clayman Review and wider policing experience, what are the main vulnerabilities in the sale, purchase, delivery and importation of weapons and bladed articles, including knives, machetes, crossbows, archery equipment and other readily accessible weapons?

Slides 5 to 13

2

What does the Clayman Review reveal about the grey market in weapons, including bulk purchasing, online resale, social media sales and peer networks, and what challenges does this create for age verification, suspicious purchase reporting, enforcement and public protection?

Slides 14 to 23

3

As NPCC Knife Crime Lead and lead for the National Knife Crime Centre, how is policing seeking to improve national coordination, intelligence-sharing, disruption of online sellers and partnership working with industry, and what lessons are relevant to managing wider weapons access risks?

Slides 24 to 32

A short annex sets out where each of the Review's recommendations now stands.

QUESTION 1

Drawing on the Clayman Review and wider policing experience, what are the main vulnerabilities in the sale, purchase, delivery and importation of weapons and bladed articles, including knives, machetes, crossbows, archery equipment and other readily accessible weapons?

An unregulated retail sector: anyone can sell a knife, anywhere

Age verification that could be bypassed at point of sale and delivery

Importation identified as the widest and fastest-growing risk

The starting point: knife retailing is not a regulated sector

Unlike firearms or alcohol, knives can be sold by anyone, anywhere, provided the seller stays within the Criminal Justice Act 1988, the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 and the Knives Act 1997.

Retailers

Registered businesses with their own platforms, systems and records. Most UK retailers seek to comply; they are also the group most able to respond to a lawful request for information.

Peer-to-peer sellers

The grey market: activity that may be legal or illegal, typically reselling through social media and messaging platforms, with anonymity, no accountability and no age checks for buyers at all.

THE CONSEQUENCE

The line between the two is thin and often blurred. A seller who is removed from one platform can return under another account within hours. Because there is no current registration requirement, there is no offence of unauthorised selling - so the only route to enforcement is to prove a substantive offence against an individual sale, listing or consignment. Social media and tech responsiveness to these grey market varies due to complexity of existing legislation and their interpretation of it.

Vulnerability 1: the point of sale

1

No prescribed standard

Section 141A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988 turns on whether a sale to a person under 18 was 'likely'. The term is not defined, and no UK standard for age verification exists.

2

Age, not identity

Retailers have not had to establish who the buyer is. Best practice identified by the Review was buyer verification - confirming age and identity through prescribed documents before the sale is agreed.

3

Easily bypassed

False identification; a child using a parent's account with payment details already stored; accounts with a previously verified transaction. Test purchasing could not easily reach these routes in an online environment.

4

Marketing at the margins

Mystery boxes, low-cost add-ons and product framing that associates blades with combat, status or intimidation - assessed under legislation written in 1997.

Vulnerability 2: delivery and collection

What the law required

- Under the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 packages containing a bladed article must be clearly marked
- Age verification at the point of delivery, with a defence for the seller who took all reasonable precautions
- No delivery to lockers or automated pick-up points

What the Review found in practice

- Deliveries to lockers and to residential premises without a check
- Couriers unable to evidence that age checks were being carried out at all
- Reliance on retailer declarations and, in the couriers' own word, on trust

THE UNDERLYING GAP

Couriers are not a regulated sector either: an individual can start a courier service with no systems in place. PIN-on-delivery exists for high-value goods but is not widely used for knives. Nothing joined the verified buyer to the person who received the bladed item - and the grey market simply avoids compliant age verification and shipping altogether, using unmarked parcels, lockers and hand-to-hand supply.

Vulnerability 3: importation

1

Fragmented responsibility

Overseas seller, fulfilment centres, freight handler, postal operator, courier and local subcontractor. Responsibility for checking the item, the age and the identity of the purchaser becomes unclear, especially in complex delivery chains.

2

Deliberate mis-declaration

Some overseas suppliers conceal goods in the way they describe them to avoid detection and any import duty. Some even advertise that they will mis-declare items to mislead customs - an example appears at page 48 of the Review.

3

Volume beyond scanning

Border Force cannot scan every parcel; it operates a control strategy setting priority levels, where drugs remain a priority. Legal-to-own knives are allowed onward with the address notified to the local force; prohibited items are referred for action.

4

An unclear audit trail

Overseas sites, including those who present as UK domains sit outside UK jurisdiction will remain so with any UK regulatory and record-keeping expectations, making it harder to disrupt, identify the true seller and secure evidence.

Force responses back to Border Force following a referral have been mixed. In future, all notifications will also reach the National Knife Crime Centre, which will monitor and build a threat assessment.

Read-across to other weapons

Crossbows and bows

Whilst outside the knife crime portfolio, future legislation mirrors the Review's recommendations, with two-step age and identity verification on sale and delivery. The Home Office will consult further on a wider ban and licensing for existing owners.

The pointed tip kitchen knife

The portfolio supports the Let's Be Blunt campaign launched by Leanne Lucas, on the dangers of the pointed tip kitchen knife and the case for rounded tips. The campaign has support across several forces and Violence Reduction Units.

Other dangerous but legal items

The Review concentrated on packaging and labelling of bladed items, not wider legal but potentially dangerous goods. No scoping has taken place on how reporting duties might extend to them.

The general lesson though is that measures designed for bladed articles have already transferred to crossbows. Where an item is lawful to own but capable of lethal use, the same levers apply - who may sell it, how the buyer is verified, how it is delivered, how it enters the country and how it is monitored

Where these vulnerabilities meet the Inquiry's concerns

AR contacted retailers to ask about discreet packaging, delivery to a collection point and age verification. That behaviour would not currently be subject to any mandatory assessment or reporting by a retailer, and it would not be captured by the forthcoming mandatory bulk sales reporting requirement - unless a retailer chose to make a voluntary referral to police.

What the law will now catch under the Crime and Policing Act 2026

- More robust identification and age of the buyer, at purchase **and** at the door to confirm they are the same person
- Purchases of six or more bladed articles from one retailer, in one transaction or over 30 days will be reported to police
- Illegal marketing content removal, through Content Removal Notices

What it will still miss

- Suspicious purchasing behaviour that falls below the bulk threshold
- A single knife bought with intent, by a person of interest to no one
- Anything bought outside the regulated retail chain
- The sale of legal knives through an online platform

What benefits does future retailer licensing or registration bring?

A significant recommendation arising out of the review was to ensure that retailers, whether online or fixed premises, should be registered or licensed to sell knives. It will bring responsible retailing agreements under a mandatory framework.

What conditions could be included

- Mandatory reporting of suspicious or bulk purchases.
- Details of buyer to be recorded, retained and made available to UK law enforcement upon request.
- All marketing material to display clear age verification livery.
- Registrants will agree to Police and Trading Standards inspection and test purchasing.
- New criminal offences of selling, offering to sell and marketing knives without registration (triable either way)
- Unregistered selling of knives is treated more seriously than possession offences.
- Retailers will be prohibited from the sale of 'mystery boxes' 'mystery knives' and 'reduced priced add-ons'.
- Registered retailer must not be a prohibited person (to be defined).
- People and premises will be subject to checks for appropriateness to store and sell knives.
- Extends to any business selling relevant bladed items

Progress update and next steps

- Government public consultation took place between December 2025 and February 2026.
- Await publication of consultation response
- Conduct further retailer feedback if required
- Establish who will undertake licensing management
- Establish legislative timelines and associated guidance
- Ensure that enforcement is a joint policing and trading standards responsibility

Question 1 in summary: Closing the gap

Point of failure	Why it exists	What is being done to close the gap
Entry to the market	No registration or licence is required to sell knives	Future legislation and licensing of retailers. Public consultation completed and awaits publication and legislative development
Point of sale	No prescribed standard; age assumed rather than identity proved	In law - Crime and Policing Act 2026. Await enactment date
Delivery and collection	Unregulated couriers; buyer and recipient never linked	In law - Crime and Policing Act 2026. Await enactment date
Resale	No accountability once an item leaves the regulated chain	Licensing and enforcement – awaits legislative development
Importation	Mis-declaration, volume, fragmented responsibility, offshore sellers	Import licensing – public consultation complete and awaits legislative development

Two of the five are now addressed in statute and await enactment dates. The remaining three depend on the licensing and importation decisions that follow the Government's consultation and legislative timetable.

QUESTION 2

What does the Clayman Review reveal about the grey market in weapons, including bulk purchasing, online resale, social media sales and peer networks, and what challenges does this create for age verification, suspicious purchase reporting, enforcement and public protection?

Bulk purchase, online resale and peer networks

Legislation written in 1997 applied to a 2026 digital marketplace

What mandatory reporting will and will not see

Content warning: knife images on next two slides

The anatomy of the grey market

A

Acquire

Knives bought lawfully in bulk from UK retailers - in some cases in the hundreds - or imported directly from overseas manufacturers, often prohibited and mis-declared.

B

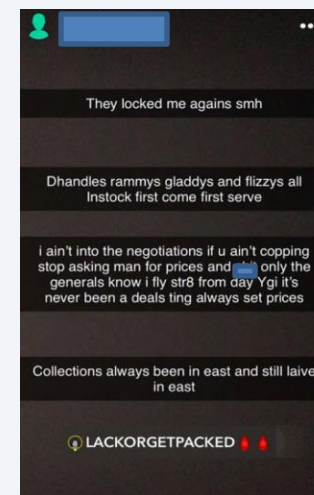
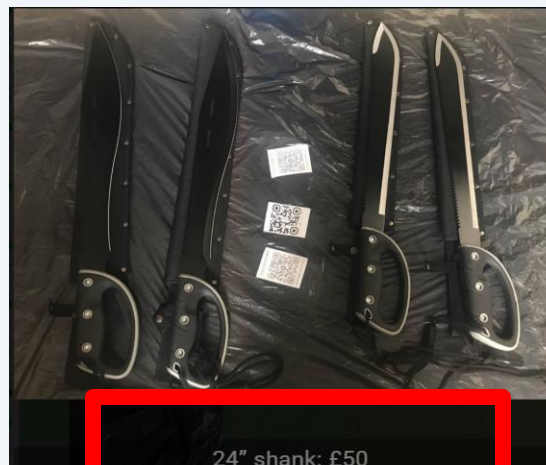
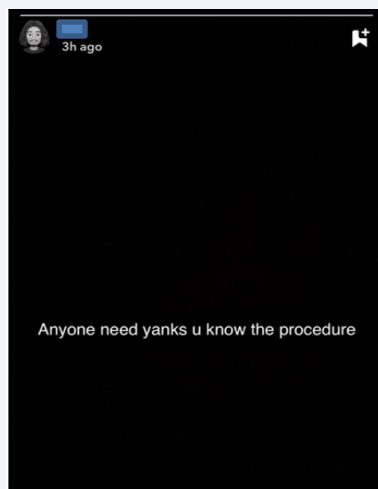
Advertise

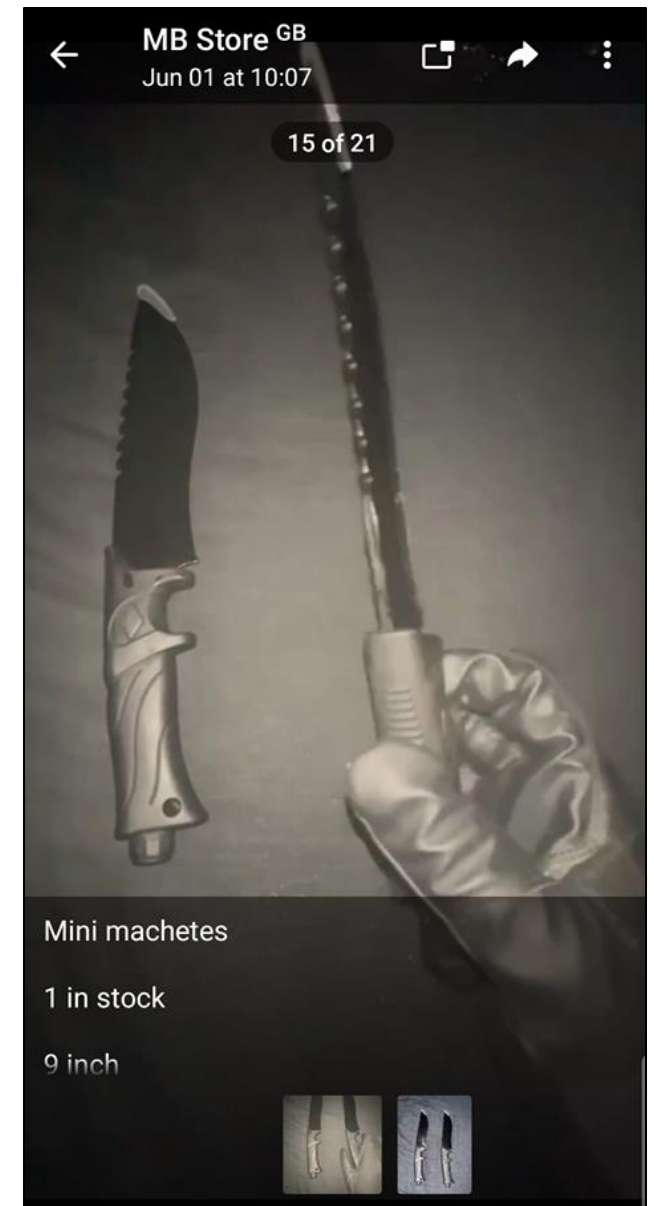
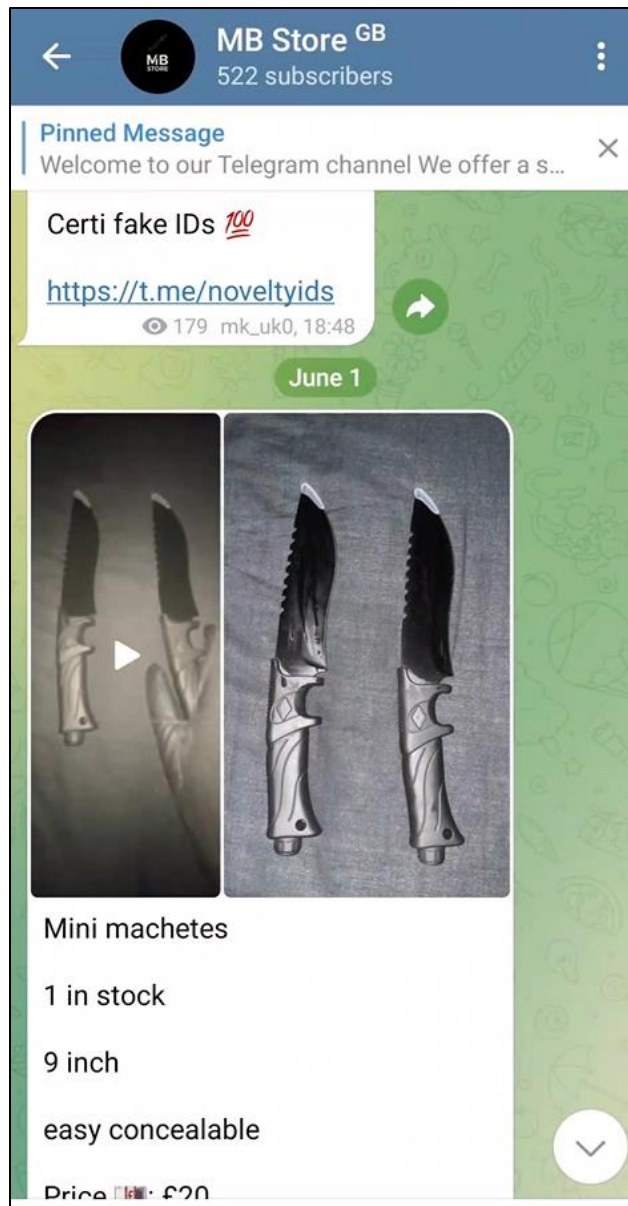
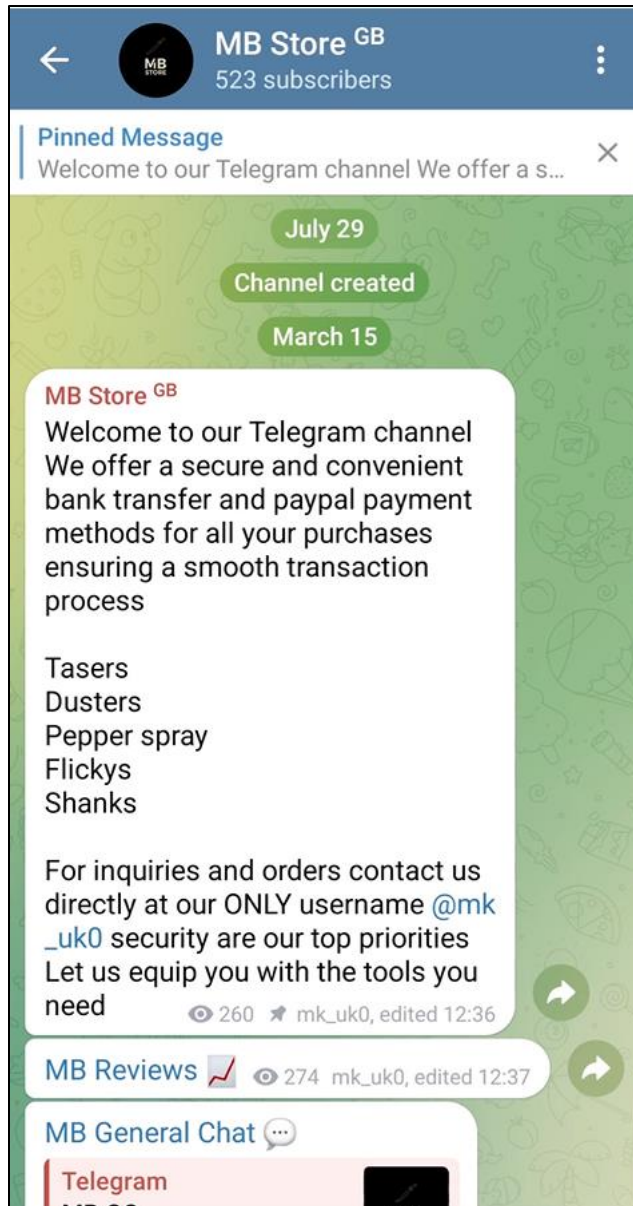
Listed through social media, marketplaces and encrypted messaging. Sellers rarely label themselves as retailers, using language that only hints at sales activity.

C

Distribute

Sold hand to hand, by unmarked post or via lockers. No age verification, no records, no purchaser footprint and no accountability.





Why the grey market is difficult to police

The seller

- Sellers operate anonymously, through temporary or multiple accounts, and move between platforms
- Advertising happens by direct message and in closed groups, out of sight of any moderation
- No retained customer records, no paper chain and no consistent purchaser footprint
- Attribution of an account to an individual is slow; material is deleted or renamed quickly

The evidence

- Platform data often requires formal international process before it can be obtained
- A single investigation may involve websites, profiles, messaging apps, payment records, delivery tracking, device downloads and platform returns
- Marketplaces may ban knife sales, but terms such as 'cosplay' or 'tool' disguise the listing
- Algorithms can place this content in front of children who never sought it
- No mandatory requirement for platforms to report activity to police

By contrast, legitimate retailers retain customer details and respond to lawful requests. The more tightly the regulated market is controlled, the greater the incentive to move outside it - which is why regulation and enforcement must advance together.

Bulk sales reporting: what it will and will not see

The measure

- A reportable sale is six or more bladed articles that are not a set, in one transaction or over 30 days
- In the Crime and Policing Act 2026, with enactment from April 2027
- The reporting platform is being developed, and the data will be received and analysed by the National Knife Crime Centre (NKCC)
- Referrals meeting a suspicious purchasing criterion will be passed to forces to assess for any further action

The limitation

- Mandatory reporting of suspicious buying behaviour was not included, and is likely to be tied to future licensing requirements
- The Review had envisaged one package in which bulk and suspicious reporting were joined
- Once offenders understand the threshold, it is likely that purchasing behaviour will adapt to sit beneath it, or use international retailers/suppliers
- It applies to UK-based retailers only

What is suspicious buying behaviour?

Could be making enquiries about type of packing, specific types of weapons, discreet delivery options, attempted use of fake ID, regularly buying below the bulk sales criteria or combining these different factors.

INTERIM PROPOSITION

Build a voluntary suspicious-sales behaviour route into the bulk reporting platform from the outset. With some guidance, it gives responsible retailers an opportunity to do the right thing now, rather than waiting for legislation. Smaller retailers who know their customer are well placed to spot it; larger ones will need better detection technology and warning indicators. Some have indicated they would amend data privacy policies to allow it, but some may not.

The Knives Act 1997 in a digital marketplace

Why it still matters

- The only offence available for unlawful knife marketing
- It is an either-way offence, so it opens better investigative opportunities, search powers and warrants
- The NKCC is using it more when referring grey market sellers to forces

Why it struggles

- Drafted for catalogues and print advertising: Facebook launched in 2004, the iPhone in 2007
- Little case law - R v STC Limited [2021] EWCA Crim 1237 noted the Act had 'lain largely unnoticed'
- Underused by officers and CPS guidance needs updating with some prosecutors not aware of it, which adds to its lack of use

THE INTERPRETATION PROBLEM

Words such as 'tactical', 'survival', 'combat', 'EDC', 'military-style' or 'professional' describe legitimate design features across outdoor, military surplus, security and emergency services retail - and may also convey associations with violence or status. My position is not necessarily that such terms should automatically be unlawful. It is that the framework gives investigators and prosecutors almost no help in deciding where legitimate product description ends and unlawful marketing begins, particularly with grey market activity. Ultimately though that decision may be one for a jury to decide if it reaches that stage.

Content warning: knife images on next slide

KNIVES ACT - THE MARKETING OFFENCE



★★★★★

NIETO CETRERIA HUNTING FIXED
BLADE/SHEATH KNIFE

£82.99



★★★★★

NIETO COMBAT TACTICAL KNIFE –
OLIVE WOOD

£52.99

ON BACKORDER



★★★★★

COLD STEEL KUKRI MACHETE

£29.99



★★★★★

COLD STEEL BOWIE SPIKE (4" BLADE)

£49.99

What that looks like in practice

Referrals from the Inquiry

Nine clear-web sites were referred by the Inquiry to the NPCC and assessed by the Centre. Three sit outside the UK and are therefore out of jurisdiction. All six remaining sites have been referred to forces - five to consider Knives Act offences and, in some cases, offering to supply an offensive weapon; one relates solely to the sale of an offensive weapon.

A jury's view, July 2026

An established shop of more than 50 years, a registered firearms dealer of good character, faced 18 Knives Act marketing offences.

The jury acquitted on all counts, on the basis that there was no intention to market the weapons as combat knives.

What it tells us

Even where a case crosses the threshold to charge, it may not convict. The offences are not well known to officers, and many prosecutors have limited experience of the legislation.

WHAT I AM ASKING FOR

Clearer national guidance on how wording, imagery, branding and context should be assessed together; updated prosecutorial guidance; and consideration of whether the Knives Act 1997 itself needs a refresh for the digital age.

Discoverability: search, algorithms and content

A simple test

At the launch of the NKCC in April 2026, we searched the phrase 'flick knife UK' on the internet. The results demonstrated availability. Flick knives have been banned in this country since 1953.

The question I will put to tech providers

A clear-web search for child sexual imagery should return nothing. What, then, can be done to restrict what knife searches return - particularly for items that are prohibited to buy here?

Content removal in practice

- The social media platforms the NKCC deals with generally do remove content within 48 hours when advised
- Some communications platforms have little history of cooperation short of the gravest cases
- Global content policies and human assessment can be slow to remove at source

Lumen: finding it at scale

- An open-web tool in final procurement, surfacing potentially non-compliant knife sales for human review
- Clear web only - no social media, no dark web, no image analysis at present
- However, initial testing across several sites returned over 9,000 webpages requiring review

Question 2 in summary: the challenge the grey market creates

Challenge	Why the grey market causes it	What is being done to close the gap
Age verification	No check of any kind occurs in a peer-to-peer sale	Licensing - offence of unlicensed selling. Awaits legislative development
Suspicious purchase reporting	Bulk buying is lawful today; behaviour below the threshold stays invisible	Future licensing condition; voluntary interim route option
Enforcement	Anonymity, deleted material, offshore platforms, 1997 legislation	Guidance, capability, Knives Act refresh
Public protection	Weapons reach children and violent individuals outside any regulated chain	National coordination - the NKCC launch

The single most powerful measure would be registration or licensing: it creates an offence of selling knives without a licence, which for the first time makes any sale by an unregistered seller unlawful in itself.

QUESTION 3

As NPCC Knife Crime Lead and lead for the National Knife Crime Centre, how is policing seeking to improve national coordination, intelligence-sharing, disruption of online sellers and partnership working with industry, and what lessons are relevant to managing wider weapons access risks?

A national function that did not exist two years ago

Early operational results are impressive, including seizures at the border

Capability, guidance and what still needs to happen

The National Knife Crime Centre (NKCC)

WHY IT EXISTS

The Review found the 'system' fragmented across retailers, marketplaces, platforms, couriers, Border Force, Trading Standards, policing and the criminal justice system. The Centre is the direct response to that recommendation.

HOW IT WAS BUILT

A proof of concept ran from July 2025 to March 2026 with some of the larger forces and their social media investigation teams. The Centre launched on 2 April 2026, funded by the Home Office and operated by policing, with a three-year funding commitment.

WHAT IT IS

A small team of around fifteen officers and staff seconded (and hosted) into the NPCC infrastructure. Signaled in the police reform White Paper as forming part of the future National Police Service infrastructure.

WHAT IT IS NOT

Not an end-to-end investigative function, and it cannot task forces.

It identifies illicit sellers, builds an intelligence/evidence case, refers to the relevant force, supports them, collates outcomes and will build future national threat assessment.

Early results: the proof of concept from July 2025 to March 2026

136

grey market sellers identified

170

social media accounts closed, 84
of them overseas

41

referrals to police forces

34

arrests - 20 charged, 5
discontinued, 9 under
investigation

~2,600

knives and other weapons seized through operations referred and
supported

165

intelligence logs completed and shared with forces

Charges include Knives Act offences, offering to supply offensive weapons, wider weapons offences, drugs offences and other matters. Convictions reflect those crime types; other cases await trial.

Operation Obex 1: a single overseas retailer

What happened

In May 2026, the Centre identified a European retailer selling both legal-to-own and prohibited knives into the UK. With Europol's assistance the Centre engaged the retailer, who was unaware of UK prohibitions and has since responsibly decided to stop selling all knives into the UK market.

~2,800

bladed items sold into the UK, March 2025 to March 2026

911

of those estimated to be prohibited items

~303

unique UK customers, across 38 forces including Police Scotland (42 individuals)

OUTCOMES AND FOLLOW-UP

Enforcement focused on individuals who purchased prohibited knives in multiple numbers, with some suspected of grey market selling. All identifiable purchasers have been recorded on the Police National Database so that they appear in any future intelligence assessment. To date the operation has produced 31 arrests, at least **512** weapons recovered and 12 people charged, including with the importation of prohibited weapons.

Operation Obex 2: a manufacturing and distribution network

What happened

Intelligence in June 2026 on one London-based individual revealed a network of overseas suppliers in South and East Asia manufacturing legal-to-own and prohibited weapons for him to distribute through his own grey market networks. Many of those identified were known men of violence.

~43

intelligence referrals made to forces for operational assessment

630

weapons located: 291 prohibited, 123 legal-to-own; 216 await classification

\$696,725

value of 377kg comparable consignments imported March to June 2026 (*see caveat below*)

METHOD AND CAVEAT

Suppliers deliberately mis-declared products to disguise their contents, reduce import duty and defeat prohibition. The Centre has worked with Border Force to increase targeted interception against these specific suppliers. The consignment figures are drawn from searches for similar descriptions, so it cannot be said conclusively that all were knives - though recent opened packages have confirmed the presence of knives. Both operations remain live and are described here at a high level only for that reason.

Partnership: industry, platforms and wider law enforcement

1

Retailers

Working with the Home Office on delivery of the bulk sales reporting tool, on developing licensing and importation legislative change. Seeking a voluntary suspicious-sales route in the interim .

2

Platforms and search

Content removed within 48 hours by the platforms we deal with; Content Removal Notices and fines against named executives to come into law.
Raising the issue of algorithmic delivery of knife content, and search returns for prohibited items to children and young adults.

3

Border Force and NCA

All Border Force notifications to forces will also route to the Centre, which will monitor, look for national trends and build a threat assessment.

Early work with the NCA and Europol on cooperation from manufacturers and disruption of illegal imports.

4

CPS and the courts

Seeking updated prosecutorial guidance on the Knives Act 1997 and building better working knowledge on this a wider knife legislation - recent experience suggests limited familiarity with weapons legislation leads to cases not being supported at charge.

The Review's conclusion holds: this can only be addressed as a whole system approach. Policing cannot close these gaps alone, and neither can any single regulator or retailer.

Capability: making the most of the law we already have

- 1 Project Aluma**

Coordinated by NPCC, a growing national network of knife-identification practitioners, with facilitators in 14 forces as of June 2026, delivered through a train-the-trainer model. It now extends to Border Force and the CPS.
- 2 Knife recognition AI**

Being developed with Police AI with the intent that an officer photographs a knife in situ and the tool identifies the type, proposes whether it may be prohibited or legal-to-own, and the legislative options open to them in a public or private setting. Prototype trials in two forces in late 2026.
- 3 Detection technology**

Field development of current knife-detection technology with the Home Office, from fixed arches to hand-held devices, due to conclude towards the end of 2026.

Aluma facilitators are volunteers doing this alongside their substantive roles, so national capability rests on a small number of committed individuals. Consideration as to how this can be mainstreamed is underway but may need sustained investment.

What still needs to happen

Licensing

Progress the consultation response and establish legislative timelines. Licensing creates the offence of unlicensed selling and should cover online and offline sales alike and is a significant step forwards.

Suspicious activity reporting

Make it a mandatory condition of a license. In the interim, build a voluntary route into the bulk sales platform and encourage retailers to participate.

Importation

Import licensing, clearer restrictions, standardised entry routes, improved Border Force and policing data sharing, and a workable basis for disrupting some overseas retailers.

The Knives Act 1997

A refresh for the digital age, with potential legislative change and updated CPS guidance on language, imagery, branding and context.

Data

Complete the work with the Home Office on knife type recording, so that we have a better idea of what knives are being used and where.

The National Knife Crime Centre

Access to data, analytic tooling and sustainable resourcing if it is to absorb bulk sales reporting, content removal and to ultimately grow with demand.

The timelines for legislative change are not conducive to managing short-term risk. In the meantime, much of that risk continues to fall to policing.

Lessons for managing wider weapons access risks

Regulate entry, not just conduct

The most powerful single measure is to make it an offence to sell a relevant product without authority to do so.

Verify identity, not age

Any control that assumes age rather than aligning with proving identity will be defeated by a borrowed account, a stored payment card or a false document.

Follow the item to the door

Regulation that must not stop at the checkout, but includes the last mile to the courier. Buyer and recipient will soon be linked.

Assume displacement offshore

Domestic regulation without equivalent import controls moves the risk rather than reducing it.

Build national oversight early

Sellers do not respect force boundaries. Without a national point of coordination there is no threat assessment, no consistency and no single conversation with industry.

Sustain the analysis

A reporting duty creates data, and data without analytic capability creates only delay.

Some of these principles have already transferred once, from bladed articles to crossbows. They are not specific to knives.

Annex: where the Review's recommendations now stand

Recommendation	Position	Status
Data recording	In development with the Home Office; not all force crime-recording systems can yet capture relevant knife categories	In progress
Age verification	Replaced by buyer verification in the Crime and Policing Act 2026; commencement date and guidance awaited	In law – awaits enactment and guidance
Couriers	Labelling and identity checks at delivery and collection, in the same Act; enactment to be confirmed	In law – awaits enactment and guidance
Social media and platforms	Content Removal Notices and a named responsible executive, in the same Act; enactment to be confirmed	In law – awaits enactment and guidance
Mandatory bulk sales reporting	In the Act with enactment from April 2027; platform being procured and managed by the NKCC	In law – awaits enactment, guidance and reporting platform
Knife retailer registration	Public consultation ran 16 December 2025 to 24 February 2026; Government response awaited	Consulted – awaits legislative timetable
Prohibited persons	Tied to licensing; initial focus on the suitability of a proposed licensee	Requires development
Importation	Import licensing and levy review consulted alongside licensing; cross-agency work under way	Consulted – awaits legislative timetable
National coordination	Delivered - the National Knife Crime Centre launched on 2 April 2026	Delivered

Government supported all Review recommendations. Two were drafted immediately into what became the Crime and Policing Act 2026.

IN CLOSING

Where this leaves us

Regulation

Delivering the remaining recommendations is key to properly regulating the UK knife retail market, managing importation and reducing risk - not only from grey market sellers but across wider retailing.

Legislation

Provisions such as the Knives Act 1997 need a refresh for the digital age, along with the introduction of retailer licensing which is a significant step to managing future risk. However, legislative timelines are slow, and in the meantime the risk falls to policing and other agencies.

Coordination

The Centre gives national coordination that did not exist two years ago, but it is small and needs sustainable resourcing, data management, and technical capability, looking forward to where it sits in future police reform.

"These elements are part of what must be a multi-faceted approach. The most critical remains understanding why an individual decides to acquire a knife and carry it in the first place."

Commander Stephen Clayman · NPCC National Lead for Knife Crime

Sources

Independent end-to-end review of online knife sales

NPCC Knife Crime Strategy, 4-P plan 2024–2026

Witness statement of Stephen Clayman to the Southport Inquiry

Dated 5 August 2026, responding to NPCC Rule 9 Request, Topic 4

Crime and Policing Act 2026

Age and identity verification, bulk sales reporting, content removal, seizure powers and sentencing

Licensing for knife sales: public consultation

Home Office, 16 December 2025 to 24 February 2026; response awaited

R v STC Limited [2021] EWCA Crim 1237

Court of Appeal on marketing offences under the Knives Act 1997