

Appendix G: Recommendations



1

Improved data recording across Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice – An evidence based problem solving approached can only be achieved by having the right data available as part of the scanning and analysis process. Only by changes in the national data reporting criteria would the obligation be made for those involved in collecting the information. Key data missing for a fuller understanding of the origin of knives and the use of legislation effective against online knife retailers is –

1. The types of knives used in offences.
2. The number of recorded offences for sales, marketing and prohibited weapon offences.
3. The criminal justice outcomes for sales, marketing and prohibited weapon offences.

2

Buyer Verification & Delivery Process – A recommended example of this may be:

1) “Buyer” to provide verification of their full ID and not simply proof of age. Standard of verification process to be agreed but could include proof of ID (Passport/Driving License) and a financial cross check which might include bank details or a utility bill that relates to themselves and the intended delivery address.

2) “Seller” to confirm with buyer that delivery will only be made to them personally on receipt of ID verification or to a named individual providing the delivery or collection agent with a unique reference to the sale (provided to buyer at point of sale) and with appropriate ID for themselves. Financial cross check to include confirmation that payment method (bank or platform details) is not attributable to a person under 18 years old.

The above offers a more robust method through which we can be assured that the buyers ID is properly verified as well as simply their age. It offers an end to end aspect (unique reference) which guarantees attribution to the verified buyer, even if they cannot be present for collection or delivery. It also ensures that the seller will be able to maintain a proper record of sale which could later be made available for law enforcement purposes, will be able to give proper instruction to the carrier or collection agent and check to ensure that the purchaser is a fit and proper person to do so (not a prohibited person).

3) “Carrier” to ensure that knives are only delivered in accordance with 1 & 2 (above) and that a delivery or collection cannot be completed without doing so. Where a carrier cannot be satisfied that 1 & 2 have been complied with, the delivery should not be completed and the buyer can be notified in due course of the failed delivery. The above will ensure that non-compliance with 1 & 2 will lead to a failed delivery/collection. In the event that a cost or delay is incurred then the buyer or seller will be responsible for failing to comply with the process and liable for any costs incurred which should be made clear at point of sale or might be overcome with a “pseudo deposit” or “failed delivery charge” to protect carriers from potential losses.

Further Exploration

Consultation with couriers and retailers around delivery tracking and verification.



3

Couriers to ensure that all packages containing bladed articles are clearly labelled

– There is currently a requirement for couriers to ensure age verification is carried out on delivery and that the package is labelled to ensure the delivery person can establish this needs to be done. Clearer labelling should ensure greater compliance with procedures of age verification.

Age/Identification verification is to be robustly employed – The report highlights examples where young people were able to obtain knives and carry out acts of violence with them. Couriers should ensure that at points of collection, any age/ID verification is robustly employed.

Further Exploration

UK couriers to agree data sharing agreement with UK Law Enforcement Agencies – This will ensure risk within knife sales and delivery can be identified.

Consider implementation of PIN verification system – This system is currently employed for other deliveries such as high value items and some food deliveries. A PIN system could ensure the person receiving the knife is connected to the person ordering the knife.

Legal review into section 38 and 39 OWA – This will ensure the legislation is as robust as it can be around the restrictions on delivery to residential premises.

4

Provisions for the removal of knife related content on law enforcement notification

– Many platforms engage frequently with law enforcement and provide details of the account holders for certain offences. Improvement is needed in the removal of prohibited activity and data provided to the police where a knife sales investigation is taking place. Recommended provisions may be:

1. The requirement for social media platforms to remove prohibited material within 48 hours of police notification.
2. The details of the account holder to be supplied to law enforcement on removal of the content.
3. Greater awareness for UK LEA to refer and request removal of offending content.

Further Exploration

Local policies for online platforms – Many platform operate under global policies which causes content prohibited in the UK to be available to users. In order to ensure automated and manual systems pick up illegal content in the UK and comply with UK knife legislation, social media, marketplaces and search engines must operate a UK policy and ensure this feeds any detection system operating on content available for UK users. This also includes ensuring search engines do not market prohibited weapons to UK customers.



4

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.

Knife retailer registration (England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland).

Set up a registration scheme for online knife retailers. It may be helpful to further explore increasing the safeguards in place for offline stores in future.

Conditions for the registration may include:

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

5

Creation of a prohibited person – This would work with the licensing or registration of retailers. It could work on application to a court if there is cause due to the involvement or suspected involvement in violent offences. Potential options that could apply –

1. A prohibited person would not be able to apply to be a registered knife seller.
2. The ownership of certain types of knives, or knives believed to be for the purpose of use in violence would be prohibited (an offence would be created)
3. Police may have additional powers in relation to the person or known premises they occupy.
4. A prohibited person should not be able to purchase certain types of knives and it is an offence to purchase knives on behalf of a prohibited person.

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7

Import licensing scheme to prohibit unlicensed importation of knives – This could be possible through changing the Open Goods Import Licence (OGIL) or another importation licensing scheme. This would support a retailer registration scheme by ensuring that sales do not shift abroad and only certain retailers or individuals can ship knives in to the UK. The intention would be for this to be obtained by a retailer, or in the case of collectors/enthusiasts individuals.

Review the knife import tax levy – Currently, many knives fit into a tax bracket that leaves the possibility of importation through bulk imports, however reviewing the tax on knives may prevent this method being used. Bulk imports require few documents and rarely can be adequately investigated to a level that would prevent unlawful knives entering the UK.

Further Exploration

Standardise entry routes into the UK for bladed items – The variety of methods that knives can enter the UK leaves the UK border vulnerable to the importation of prohibited weapons. Knives and bladed articles should only be prohibited to enter through routes that offers enhanced levels of scrutiny at the border.

Training and awareness for UKBF – As with many involved in the process of an online sale, the knowledge and understanding around the difference between a legal and prohibited knives.

Use of cease and desist letters to overseas retailers – For retailers where prohibited weapons are listed for sale and available in the UK. A central body or function could use cease and desist letters in order to stop the sale of these knives into the country.

8

National function to allow for information and greater collaboration amongst key stakeholders – Knife crime and online knife sales are not restricted by borders. Sales in both the legitimate and grey market are shipped across the country and this review has highlighted where action against illegal activity is frustrated by a lack of national coordination. Like County Lines, a national function is required, working in conjunction with existing processes, to coordinate cross force activity. There is also greater collaboration needed with stakeholders. Relationships at force level are difficult to manage, key partners with a role in the prevention of prohibited activity struggle with the volume of contacts required to give an effective response. This could be scoped further from current proof of concept work being developed between the Home Office and NPCC Knife Crime & County Lines portfolios.

Upskilling UK Law Enforcement – There are large disparities in the levels of knowledge across UK law enforcement in the identification, referring and removal of offending content. The types of content that are 'in scope' for removal and the mechanisms relating its referral and removal are not well known amongst wider law enforcement. A consideration would be training and development of officers that are likely to come across 'in scope' content. This requires collaboration with Ofcom.



Upskilling of law enforcement in the detection and investigation of grey market offences – There are a small number of officers trained in the online techniques required to investigate grey market offences. More work needs to be done in law enforcement to increase the capability of officers to identify these sellers.

Review of current information sharing amongst UKBF, Trading Standards and UK law enforcement – Information does not share fluidly between the organisations causing difficulties in the investigation of knife importation and supply. Reviewing information sharing between enforcement agencies will improve targeting and awareness, providing more effective, whole system, pursue led approach. This would also increase the capability to identify and safeguard young people who are involved in the buying or selling of knives.

8

Increase capability to conduct random test purchase operations – Trading standards are currently inhibited by legislation and capacity when test purchasing online. There are limited provisions available for the supply of ID and the use of addresses to conduct a robust test purchase on the sale of a knife online.

Adjusting the sentencing guidelines of offences related to online sales – Offences relating to the marketing, sale, supply and possession of knives and prohibited weapons should all be triable either way. The seriousness of the offence including the potential impact isn't adequately reflected in the current sentencing guidelines and as such, the overall response and the priority given to investigations is diminished.

Work with Ofcom to consider future Online Safety Act code changes – Ofcom directly influence the development of the future stages of the online safety act and there should be further collaborative work between UK Law Enforcement, Ofcom and other partners to ensure that the codes are robust and cover the areas needed.

