

Debate Pack

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By Sally Lipscombe,
Lulu Meade,
Maria Lalic
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General debate on knife crime

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1 Background

1.1 Criminal law and sentencing

Criminal offences

There are a range of criminal offences covering the possession, sale and supply of knives and other offensive weapons. The main categories of offence are:

- possessing a knife or other offensive weapon in public or on school or further education premises
- possessing certain types of prohibited offensive weapons in private¹
- using a knife or other offensive weapon to threaten another person in public, in private, or on school or further education premises
- various offences relating to the sale, importation, manufacture and delivery of knives and other offensive weapons

Overarching guidance on the relevant legislation and the approach to charging and prosecuting knife crime is set out in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) document [Offensive Weapons, Knife Crime Practical Guidance](#).

A more detailed offence-specific breakdown of the criminal law on knife crime is set out in the CPS legal guidance [Offensive Weapons, Knives, Bladed and Pointed Articles](#).

The Commons Library briefing paper [Knife crime statistics](#) analyses police recorded crime data, sentencing statistics and NHS hospital data.

A general overview of sentencing practice for knife crime offences involving possession in public/on education premises or making threats is set out in the Sentencing Council guidance [Knives and offensive weapons](#).

Mandatory minimum sentences

In some cases a conviction for a knife crime offence can result in a mandatory minimum custodial sentence, which requires the court to sentence the offender to a term in prison unless there are exceptional circumstances.² The

¹ This offence applies to the list of prohibited offensive weapons set out in the schedule to the [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(Offensive Weapons\) Order 1988](#)

² Mandatory minimum custodial sentences are relatively unusual – more commonly the law will specify a maximum sentence and it will be for the court to use its discretion to sentence offenders within this maximum

courts must impose a custodial sentence of at least six months in the following circumstances:

1. where an offender aged 16 or over is convicted of any of the possession offences involving having a bladed article or offensive weapon in a public place or on school premises, and they have one or more previous convictions for such an offence (or for an offence using a bladed article or offensive weapon to threaten another person in a public place or on school premises)³
2. where an offender aged 16 or over is convicted of either of the offences of using a bladed article or offensive weapon to threaten another person in public or on school premises⁴

Knife crime prevention orders

In January 2019 the Government announced that it planned to legislate for new '[knife crime prevention orders](#)' (KCPOs). KCPOs were subsequently introduced by [Part 2 of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019](#).⁵

KCPOs are court orders that can be imposed on any individual aged 12 or over in the following circumstances:

1. **on conviction:** the individual has been convicted of an offence involving violence or the use or possession (by them or any other person) of a bladed article⁶
2. **otherwise than on conviction:** the police can apply to court for a KCPO on the basis that the individual had a bladed article with them in public or on school/further education premises on at least two occasions in the previous two years (no criminal conviction is required but the court must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that this condition is met)

A KCPO requires the individual to do, or to refrain from doing, anything specified in the order. It is a criminal offence to breach a KCPO. Examples of positive requirements might include attending school, taking part in restorative justice activities, participating in structured educational or rehabilitative programmes, or receiving support, counselling or youth mentoring services. Examples of prohibitions might include a curfew or a requirement not to associate with specified individuals.

³ [Sentencing Act 2020, section 315](#)

⁴ [Sentencing Act 2020, section 312](#)

⁵ See pages 61-64 of the Commons Library research briefing on the [Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19 \(HC Bill 232\)](#) for full background and reaction to the proposals

⁶ sections 19-20 of the Offensive Weapons Act 2019

The Government has issued [practitioner and framework guidance](#) to support authorities in their use of KCPOs. In the practitioner guidance, the Government sets out the following aims of KCPOs:

These new preventative civil orders will be an additional tool that the police will be able to use to work with young people and others to help steer them away from knife crime and serious violence by using positive requirements to address factors in their lives that may increase the chances of offending, alongside measures to prohibit certain activities to help prevent future offending.

KCPOs will help to divert those who may be carrying knives, or who are at greatest risk of being drawn into serious violence, away from being involved in knife crime. They will also help to prevent others who have been involved in knife crime from further offending when used following a conviction.⁷

However, stakeholders have expressed some concern about various aspects of KCPOs, including the prospect of children being prosecuted for breach of a KCPO (particularly where that KCPO has been imposed otherwise than on conviction), the need for a sensitive approach to enforcement, and the requirement for sufficient resourcing to support positive requirements such as mentoring or counselling.⁸

KCPOs were launched on a [pilot basis in the Metropolitan Police Service area](#) in July 2021.⁹ The pilot was due to conclude at the end of March 2023, and will be evaluated before the Government decides whether to roll them out further.¹⁰ The outcome of the evaluation has not yet been published.

Serious violence reduction orders

In 2022 the Government legislated for new serious violence reduction orders (SVROs), a court order that can be imposed on people aged 18 or over who have been convicted of a crime where a bladed article or offensive weapon is thought to have been used in the commission of the offence, or the offender or a person involved in the offence is thought to have had a bladed article or offensive weapon with them (whether or not it was used).¹¹

SVROs are effectively a new stop and search power, as the legislation gives police officers the power to stop and search those who have been issued with an SVRO for the purpose of ascertaining whether the person has a bladed article or offensive weapon with them. This stop and search power is available

⁷ Home Office, [Practitioners' guidance](#), July 2021

⁸ See the Youth Justice Legal Centre, [Knife Crime Prevention Orders and Children](#) (undated) for a summary of some of these concerns

⁹ Home Office, [Knife Crime Prevention Orders begin in London](#), 7 July 2021

¹⁰ [PQ 92129](#), 29 November 2022. Under s31 of the 2019 Act the Government must lay a report on the operation of the pilot before Parliament before it can commence KCPOs across the whole of England and Wales.

¹¹ [Sections 342A-342L of the Sentencing Act 2020](#) (as inserted by [sections 165-166 of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#))

regardless of whether the police have reasonable grounds to suspect the individual is carrying a knife or offensive weapon at the time and without having to get pre-authorisation from a senior officer to conduct a suspicion-less search.¹²

Breach of an SVRO, including intentionally obstructing the police in exercising their stop and search power, is a criminal offence punishable by a sentence of up to two years' imprisonment, an unlimited fine, or both.

The provisions that introduced SVROs were controversial as they went through Parliament, as there is no other modern-day search power that allows the police to stop and search an individual without having either reasonable grounds or authorisation from a senior officer to do so.¹³ It is also the only search power that permits officers to stop and search individuals on the basis of a previous conviction.¹⁴ These factors have prompted concerns about what SVROs might mean for public trust in policing (in particular the impact of the provisions on Black people).¹⁵

The Home Office has issued [statutory guidance](#) to support prosecutors and police in identifying eligible SVRO cases, applying to court for an SVRO, and exercising the associated stop and search powers. [PACE Code A](#), statutory guidance on the exercise of stop and search powers issued under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), has also been updated to include guidance on the exercise of SVRO stop and search powers.¹⁶

There is a statutory requirement for SVROs to be piloted before national roll-out, and the Secretary of State must lay a report before Parliament of the outcome of the pilot. In May 2022, the Government confirmed it would be piloting SVROs in Merseyside, Thames Valley, Sussex and West Midlands police forces before a decision is made on roll-out across England and Wales.¹⁷

Although SVROs can only be applied for and issued in pilot areas, officers from any police force in England and Wales (including British Transport Police) may exercise the associated stop and search powers granted by an

¹² [s342E, Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#)

¹³ The Commons Library briefing [Police powers: stop and search](#) sets out further background on the importance of 'reasonable grounds' in existing stop and search powers

¹⁴ Section 2.1 of [Library Briefing Paper 9159 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Parts 10 and 11 – Management and rehabilitation of offenders](#) and sections 2.9 and 4.6 of [Library Briefing Paper 9273 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Progress of the Bill](#) set out full details of the debate and concerns raised as SVROs were being introduced

¹⁵ See for example the Commons Library Insight [New stop and search power: Serious Violence Reduction Orders](#), 16 September 2020 and the Institute of Race Relations, [The Police Bill, SVROs and guilt by association](#), 20 May 2021

¹⁶ See [Annex G to PACE Code A](#)

¹⁷ Home Office, [Serious Violence Reduction Orders: Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 factsheet](#), 17 May 2022, section 2

SVRO, and breach of an SVRO can be committed and prosecuted anywhere in England and Wales.

The pilot commenced in April 2023 and will continue for two years before being evaluated.¹⁸ The evaluation will include analysis of data broken down by protected characteristics such as age, sex, and ethnicity, to examine whether there is any disproportionate impact on these groups.¹⁹

The 2023 Home Office consultation

In April 2023, policing minister Chris Philp announced a Home Office consultation on a range of legislative proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime.²⁰ The consultation ran from April to June 2023.²¹

The Government's response to the consultation was published on 30 August 2023.²² In its response, the Government said it planned to proceed with the following measures:

1. banning certain types of machetes and large knives “that seem to be designed to look menacing with no practical purpose”²³
2. introducing a new police power to seize, retain and destroy lawfully held bladed articles in private premises if the police are in the property lawfully and have reasonable grounds to suspect the article will be used in crime
3. increasing the maximum penalty for the offences of importation, manufacture, sale and general supply of prohibited and dangerous weapons and the sale of knives to persons under 18 years old from six months to two years
4. introducing a new offence of possession of a bladed article with the intention to endanger life or cause fear of violence

¹⁸ The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(Commencement No. 6 and Piloting, Transitional and Saving Provisions\) Regulations 2023](#)

¹⁹ DEP2023-0527, [Letter dated 31/03/2023 from Lord Sharpe of Epsom to all Peers regarding the Serious Violence Reduction Orders \(SVRO\) pilot; terms of reference for the independent evaluation as committed during the passage of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts \(PCSC\) Act](#)

²⁰ [HCWS722](#), 18 April 2023

²¹ Home Office, [Consultation on new knife legislation proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime](#), April 2023

²² Home Office, [Consultation on new knife legislation proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime: Government response](#), 30 August 2023

²³ This would be done by adding such items to the list of prohibited offensive weapons set out in the schedule to the [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(Offensive Weapons\) Order 1988](#)

The Government has now introduced these measures in the [Criminal Justice Bill 2023-24](#), which is currently in committee stage in the Commons. Sections 2.3 and 3.2 of the Library's [briefing on the Bill](#) provide further details.²⁴

1.2

Tackling knife crime

The Serious Violence Strategy

In April 2018 the Government published a [Serious Violence Strategy](#), which it described as looking at “the root causes of the problem and how to support young people to lead productive lives away from violence” as well as at law enforcement.

The Strategy set out a range of initiatives including:

- an [Early Intervention Youth Fund](#) (projects that made successful bids are listed on [gov.uk](#))
- a new [National County Lines Co-ordination Centre](#)
- further rounds of the [anti-knife crime Community Fund](#)
- supporting anti-knife crime charity [Redthread](#) to expand and pilot its [Youth Violence Intervention Programme](#) outside London
- establishing a new [Serious Violence Taskforce](#)²⁵
- legislating to introduce new restrictions on the possession and sale of knives, offensive weapons and corrosive substances²⁶

Many stakeholders praised the Strategy for emphasising early intervention. However, others expressed concerns that there would not be enough funding to support the Strategy's ambitions.²⁷

The Government [described the Strategy](#) as taking a “public health approach” to serious violence:

²⁴ Commons Library

²⁵ The taskforce last met in June 2019 and was subsequently discontinued, with a new cross-government Crime and Justice Task Force taking on responsibility for crime reduction, including a focus on serious violence: see [PQ 36697](#), 6 September 2021

²⁶ Since enacted as the [Offensive Weapons Act 2019](#) – see the Commons Library research briefing on the [Offensive Weapons Bill 2017-19 \(HC Bill 232\)](#) for full background

²⁷ Background to the Strategy and an overview of immediate stakeholder reaction to it is set out in [Commons Library Debate Pack 2018-0124](#), which was produced to support a general debate in the Chamber on 22 May 2018: see [HC Deb 22 May 2018 c738](#)

The strategy represents a step change in the way we think and respond to serious violence. Our approach is not solely focused on law enforcement, very important as that is, but depends also on multi-partnership working and a ‘public health’ approach across a number of sectors such as education, health, social services, housing, youth services, victim services and others.²⁸

In 2019, Public Health England published [supporting guidance and principles](#) on taking a public health approach, for use by local agencies in England such as police and crime commissioners, public health departments and community safety partnerships.²⁹

After the Strategy was published the Home Affairs Committee launched an [inquiry into serious violence](#). In its final report, published in July 2019, the Committee described the Strategy as a “[completely inadequate response](#)” to the problem of serious violence.³⁰ It called for stronger national and local leadership, major investment in youth services and policing, urgent action to tackle county lines, dedicated police officers for schools in areas with above average risk of youth violence, and action to tackle school exclusions and part-time attendance.

The Government’s response was published in November 2019.³¹ The response highlighted a range of measures, including plans to recruit an additional 20,000 police officers, a new [National Policing Board](#) to focus on the strategic direction of policing, implementing the Offensive Weapons Act 2019, funding a new [Youth Investment Fund](#) to deliver youth facilities and services, and legislating for a new statutory duty for public sector bodies to work together to prevent and reduce serious violence.

The Youth Endowment Fund

At the Conservative Party Conference in October 2018, the then Home Secretary announced a number of further measures aimed at building on the measures set out in the Strategy. These included launching a £200 million endowment fund to be delivered over 10 years and aimed at 10-14 year olds at risk of starting a life of crime and violence.³²

The [Youth Endowment Fund](#) (YEF) was established in March 2019 as an independent charitable trust managed by [Impetus](#) (a private equity firm that specialises in funding charities). The YEF published its [10-year strategy](#) in October 2020. The strategy sets out its ambition to “Fund good work, “Find what works” and “Work for change”.

²⁸ [HL9766](#), 6 August 2018

²⁹ Public Health England, [A whole-system multi-agency approach to serious violence prevention A resource for local system leaders in England](#), 2019

³⁰ Home Affairs Committee, [Serious youth violence](#) (PDF), HC 1016, 31 July 2019, p3

³¹ Home Affairs Committee, Government Response House of Commons Home Affairs Committee: Serious Youth Violence – Sixteenth Report of Session 2017-2019, 5 November 2019

³² Home Office, [Home Secretary announces new measures to tackle serious violence](#), 2 October 2018

The YEF has since published a number of [evidence reviews and research reports](#) and [evaluations of specific intervention projects](#). It has also published two ‘[evidence and gap maps](#)’, which are extensive repositories of evidence and academic literature:

- the [programmes](#) evidence and gap map looks at specific interventions such as mentoring, sports programmes or therapies, and how effective they are at reducing violence. This map includes international interventions as well as UK-based ones. A [summary report](#) (PDF) and [technical report](#) (PDF) provide detailed analysis of the map’s findings.
- the [systems](#) evidence and gap map looks at policies and practices for systems of services and support in fields such as education, health, social care or community support. This map is limited to systems available in the UK and Ireland. A [summary report](#) (PDF) and [technical report](#) (PDF) provide detailed analysis of the map’s findings.

The YEF has used the findings of its evidence and gap maps to produce its own toolkit, which summarises the available evidence on various types of intervention and is intended to enable police forces, local authorities, youth charities, school leaders and others who work with young people to make evidence-based decisions about how best to keep children safe from violence. Details are available on the YEF website:

- [YEF Toolkit – What works to prevent youth violence](#)
- [YEF Toolkit](#)

The YEF is also funding a range of projects, which it will then evaluate. Further details are available on the [YEF funded projects](#) page of the YEF website.

Violence Reduction Units

In his [March 2019 spring statement](#), the then Chancellor announced £100 million to fund new Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) and additional police overtime targeted specifically on knife crime.³³ Further VRU funding was allocated in December 2019.³⁴

VRUs bring together police, local government, health and education professionals, community groups and other stakeholders to provide a multi-agency response to serious violence. VRUs identify local drivers of serious violence and then agree necessary actions to tackle these, using a whole system ‘public health’ approach to dealing with serious violence. The

³³ Home Office, [£100 million funding for police to tackle violent crime](#), March 2019 and [Police granted funding boost for action on serious violence](#), May 2019

³⁴ Home Office, [Additional £35 million for Violence Reduction Units](#), 29 December 2019

Government has described VRUs as “a substantial and exciting system change in the field of violence”.³⁵

Detailed analysis of the work of VRUs is available on the Gov.uk website: see [Collection: Violence Reduction Unit](#). The Home Office has also commissioned several evaluations of the VRUs it has funded:

1. [Violence Reduction Unit evaluation, 2019 to 2020](#), August 2020
2. [Violence reduction unit year ending March 2021 evaluation report](#), April 2022
3. [Violence Reduction Units, year ending March 2022 evaluation report](#), January 2023

These assess VRUs against three outcomes: (1) a reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object; (2) a reduction in knife-enabled serious violence; and (3) a reduction in all non-domestic homicides.³⁶

In 2023, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services published the results of an [inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence](#). The Inspectorate concluded that there was “some early evidence that points to VRUs reducing violent crime”, but that the Government’s initial approach to funding (which was on an annual basis) had created difficulties as VRUs couldn’t make long term plans with certainty.³⁷ It noted that in 2022 the Home Office had awarded VRUs a three-year funding grant, which provided some additional certainty. The Inspectorate also noted a lack of consistency in how VRUs allocated resources to reducing violence, and recommended that the Home Office should “define processes for VRUs to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions”.³⁸ It also called for better communication and training.

A statutory serious violence duty

[Chapter 1 of Part 2](#) of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 introduced a new duty for local public authorities to “collaborate and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence”.³⁹ The statutory duty commenced in January 2023.

This duty applies to certain specified authorities for a “local government area”. The full list of authorities that are subject to the duty is set out in

³⁵ Home Office, [Violence Reduction Unit Interim Guidance](#) (PDF), March 2020, p4

³⁶ Home Office, [Violence Reduction Unit evaluation, 2019 to 2020](#) (PDF), August 2020, p10

³⁷ HMICFRS, [An inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence](#) (PDF), 2023, p1

³⁸ As above

³⁹ See section 2 of the [Library Briefing Paper 9163 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Part 2. Prevention, investigation and prosecution of crime](#) for background

[Schedule 1](#) of the 2022 Act. This includes local authorities, police forces, youth offending teams, Local Health Boards, and fire and rescue authorities.

The Home Office has produced [statutory guidance on the Serious Violence Duty](#) which explains the duty and the obligations it places on relevant authorities in more detail and how to comply with it. This explains that the duty:

... requires specified authorities for a local government area to work together and plan to prevent and reduce serious violence, including identifying the kinds of serious violence that occur in the area, the causes of that violence (so far as it is possible to do so), and to prepare and implement a strategy for preventing, and reducing serious violence in the area. The Duty also requires the specified authorities to consult educational, prison and youth custody authorities for the area in the preparation of their strategy.⁴⁰

The [Prevention and Reduction of Serious Violence \(Strategies etc.\) Regulations 2022](#) set out further requirements for the preparation and publication of local strategies.

Offensive weapons homicide reviews

The [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) also introduced offensive weapons homicide reviews.⁴¹ These require police, local authorities and health bodies in England and Wales to review the circumstances of “qualifying homicides”. These are homicides where:

- the victim was aged 18 or over
- the events surrounding their death involved, or were likely to have involved, the use of an offensive weapon

The Home Office has issued [statutory guidance](#) to support relevant agencies involved in conducting reviews. This sets out the aim of the process:

The purpose of these reviews is to ensure that when a qualifying homicide takes place, local partners identify the lessons to be learnt from the death, to consider whether any action should be taken as a result, and to share the outcome. The intention is that these new reviews will improve the national and local understanding of what causes homicide and serious violence, better equipping services to prevent weapons-enabled homicides and, in so doing, save lives.⁴²

In April 2023, the reviews were launched on a pilot basis in certain areas of London (the London Boroughs of Barnet, Brent, Harrow, Lambeth and

⁴⁰ Home Office, [Serious Violence Duty - Statutory Guidance](#) (PDF), December 2022, p8

⁴¹ Sections 24-36. See section 3 of the [Library Briefing Paper 9163 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Part 2. Prevention, investigation and prosecution of crime](#) for background

⁴² Home Office, [Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews Statutory Guidance](#) (PDF), March 2023

Southwark), the West Midlands (the areas of Birmingham and Coventry City Council), and Wales (the police force area of South Wales).⁴³

The pilot will be evaluated to ensure offensive weapon homicide reviews meet the needs, expectations, and ways of working of all those involved. A report on the operation of the pilot must be laid before Parliament before a decision is taken on further implementation of the reviews across England and Wales.

⁴³ [The Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(Offensive Weapons Homicide Reviews\) Regulations 2022](#) and the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 \(Commencement No. 1\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2023](#)

2 Parliamentary material

2.1 Early day motion

[Knife crime reduction](#)

That this House notes that knife crime continues to devastate lives, with offences involving ... a knife or sharp instrument being 50,434 in 2021-2022 compared with the decade low of 28,298 in 2013 ... and Metropolitan are the three Police Force Areas with the highest volumes of knife-enabled crime in England

17 Apr 2023 | Early day motions | Open | House of Commons | 1043 (session 2022-23)

Primary sponsor: Long Bailey, Rebecca

2.2 Debates

[Criminal Justice Bill](#) - HC Deb 14 Mar 2023 - 741 cc725-794

[Knife Crime: West Midlands](#) - HC Deb 14 Mar 2023 - 729 cc251-262WH

[Crime and Neighbourhood Policing](#) - HC Deb 31 Jan 2023 - 727 cc221-270

[Violent Crime, Gang Activity and Burglaries](#) - HL Deb 20 Oct 2022 - 824 cc1205-9

[Tackling Knife Crime](#) - HC Deb 20 Jul 2021 - 699 cc319-343WH

2.3 Statement

[Legislative proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other knives in crime](#)

18 Apr 2023 | Written statements | House of Commons | HCWS722

2.4

Parliamentary question

Offensive Weapons: Sales

Asked by: Hayes, Helen

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the sale of (a) knives and (b) other illegal weapons on online shopping apps.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Organisations who sell knives to those aged under 18 face a range of fines from £500 to £1 million.

The government keeps knife crime legislation under continual review and has taken action in a number of areas.

The Criminal Justice Bill includes new measures for tackling knife crime, including increasing the maximum penalty for selling specified weapons or for selling any knives to under 18s to 2 years.

This measure will bring the offence within the remit of PACE powers, which is key to the police's ability to investigate some of the more serious offences, for example, those who sell knives privately to under 18s, or those who sell prohibited weapons through social media or personal messaging applications.

The Criminal Justice Bill will strengthen measures which we took in the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 around age verification for online sales, including stopping knives being sent to residential addresses after they are bought online, unless the seller has arrangements in place with the delivery company to ensure that the product would not be delivered into the hands of a person under 18.

Further controls have been introduced through the Online Safety Act 2023 which sets out a series of priority offences which includes the sale of weapons. Companies will need to proactively mitigate the risk that their services are used for illegal activity or to share this illegal content, to design their services to mitigate the risk of this occurring and to remove any content that does appear as soon as they are made aware of it.

Ofcom published the first draft codes of practice on illegal content for consultation on 9 November 2023. Government expects these to be finalised in late 2024. These codes of practice will set out the steps companies can take to fulfil the duties for illegal content. In scope services will either need to follow these codes, or show their approach is equally effective.

On 30 August 2023 the Government response to our consultation on new knife legislation was published confirming that the Government will seek to legislate to ban certain types of large knives and machetes. The ban on zombie style machetes and knives will be implemented by secondary legislation when parliamentary time allows.

04 Dec 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 4213

Date tabled: 28 Nov 2023 | **Date for answer:** 04 Dec 2023 | **Date answered:** 04 Dec 2023

[Artificial Intelligence: Crime Prevention](#)

Asked by: Jenkyns, Dame Andrea

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, whether her Department plans to use artificial intelligence to help (a) predict and (b) prevent violent attacks involving (i) machetes and (ii) zombie knives.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The Home Office is working across government and with operational partners to develop our understanding of the threats and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence. The Home Office has already convened and will be convening further meetings to identify the best opportunities to use artificial intelligence to prevent and detect crime of various types. The use of artificial intelligence to predict and prevent serious violence is an operational matter for Chief Constables.

Knife crime is below its pre-pandemic level and the Home Office is investing over £110m to tackle serious violence in 2023/24. This includes:

- Violence Reduction Units and hotspot policing in the 20 areas worst affected by serious violence;
- A Serious Violence Duty which legally requires specified agencies to work together to reduce serious violence locally;
- Piloting Serious Violence Reduction Orders to give the police the power to stop and search adults already convicted of knife or offensive weapons offences; and
- The Homicide Prevention Fund to help national policing organisations and local forces trial new initiatives and approaches.

We are also banning certain types of large knives (such as zombie style knives and machetes), giving the police more powers to seize dangerous weapons, creating a new offence of possession of a bladed weapon with an intent to harm, and increasing sentences for those who import, manufacture or sell dangerous weapons to under 18s.

25 Sep 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 199759

Date tabled: 15 Sep 2023 | **Date for answer:** 19 Sep 2023 | **Date answered:** 25 Sep 2023

[Knives: Sentencing](#)

Asked by: Timms, Sir Stephen

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what recent assessment she has made of the potential impact of increasing the maximum penalty for carrying a knife to more than four years' imprisonment on trends in the level of knife crime.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

The maximum penalty for being in possession of a knife in public is 4 years imprisonment. In year ending March 2023, the average custodial sentence lengths for knife possession and threatening offences are the highest they have been in the last 10 years, 7.5 months and 14.8 months respectively. Sentencing is a matter for our independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose, courts must consider the circumstances of the case in line with any relevant sentencing guidelines issued by the independent Sentencing Council.

However, in recognition of the seriousness of offences related to knives, the law provides for minimum custodial sentences for repeat knife possession and offences that involve threatening with a weapon. Measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act which came into force in 2022 strengthened existing legislation to make sure that the courts always impose at least the minimum term unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Whilst the government is not currently considering increasing the maximum penalty of 4 years imprisonment, the government continues to strengthen knife legislation.

On 30 August, the government published its response to the consultation on new legislative proposals to tackle knife crime. We will introduce a ban on certain types of large knives that seem to appeal to those who want to use these items as weapons, for instance zombie style knives or machetes. We will also give the police more powers to seize dangerous weapons, create a new offence of possession of a bladed weapon with an intent to harm, and increase sentences for those who import, manufacture or sell dangerous weapons to under 18s.

The full government response can be found here: [Government response to consultation on proposals to tackle the use of machetes and other bladed articles in crime. \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

The measures detailed in the government response will be brought forward when parliamentary time allows, and we will continue to keep our knife legislation under review.

20 Sep 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 198982

Date tabled: 12 Sep 2023 | **Date for answer:** 14 Sep 2023 | **Date answered:** 20 Sep 2023

[Knife Crime](#)

Asked by: Mr French

I welcome the news that the Government are seeking to close the legal loopholes around the sale of so-called zombie knives, but does my right hon.

Friend agree that stop and search and the like are powerful tools for the police to get knives off the street and to save lives? Will he also look closely at scan and search to help to detect such weapons?

Answered by: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Department

My hon. Friend is quite right that we are looking to tighten the law. The Offensive Weapons Act 2019 contains a loophole, essentially, which means zombie knives without threatening writing on the blade are not illegal. We are going to close that loophole. I agree with him that stop and search is a vital tactic to keep our streets safe when used, of course, respectfully. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner tells me that about 400 knives are taken off the streets every month using stop and search in London alone, so it is an important power. I also agree with my hon. Friend's second point. The use of scanning technology has the huge potential to enable officers to scan people for knives at a distance

without having to physically stop them and search them manually. The technology is not ready to deploy just yet, but I hope it will be in the relatively near future.

18 Sep 2023 | Oral questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | 737 c1092

Date answered: 18 Sep 2023

[Knives: Crime](#)

Asked by: Dhesi, Mr Tanmanjeet Singh

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps she plans to take to tackle illegal online advertisement of knives intended to encourage (a) combat and (b) violent behaviour.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Under measures in the Knives Act 1997 it is an offence to market a knife in a way which indicates, or suggests, that it is suitable for combat, or is otherwise likely to encourage violent behaviour involving the use of the knife as a weapon. A person found guilty of this offence on indictment can face up to 2 years imprisonment or a fine or both.

We are also introducing the Online Safety Bill which is currently in its final stages in Parliament. The legislation will achieve Royal Assent this Autumn and Ofcom's powers will commence shortly after.

For the first time in the UK, tech companies are going to be accountable to an independent regulator to keep their users, particularly children, safe. They will need to remove and limit the spread of illegal content. This means less illegal content online and when it does appear it will be removed quicker.

Schedule 7 of the Bill sets out a series of priority offences which includes the sale of weapons online, including sales from online marketplaces. Companies will need to take particularly robust action to prevent the proliferation of this content online and ensure that their services are not used for offending. This means companies will need to proactively mitigate the risk that their services are

used for illegal activity including removing any content that does appear as soon as they are made aware of it.

In addition, as part of DCMS' Online Advertising Programme, the government will introduce a new and targeted regulatory framework for paid-for online advertising, which will focus on tackling illegal advertising and increasing the protection of children and young people from adverts for products and services that are illegal to sell.

DCMS will be issuing a consultation on the details of the proposed regulation in due course and have convened a ministerially-led industry taskforce to drive forward non-legislative action meanwhile.

11 Sep 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 197852

Date tabled: 05 Sep 2023 | **Date for answer:** 11 Sep 2023 | **Date answered:** 11 Sep 2023

[Knives: Crime](#)

Asked by: Everitt, Ben

To ask the Secretary of State for Justice, what recent assessment he has made of the potential merits of increasing sentences for (a) knife possession offences and (b) other offences involving a knife.

Answering member: Edward Argar | **Department:** Ministry of Justice

Sentencing is a matter for our independent courts. When deciding what sentence to impose, courts must consider the circumstances of the case in line with any relevant sentencing guidelines issued by the independent Sentencing Council.

In recognition of the seriousness of offences related to knives, the law provides for minimum custodial sentences for repeat knife possession and offences that involve threatening with a weapon. Measures in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act which came into force in 2022 strengthened existing legislation to make sure that the courts always impose at least the minimum term unless there are exceptional circumstances.

On 18 April the Government launched a 7-week consultation on proposed legislation to tackle knife crime and particularly the use of certain types of large knives and machetes in crime. The proposals provide a multifaceted and focused approach, which we believe will target criminals whilst still allowing the general public to pursue their employment and pastimes with minimal disruption. The consultation may be viewed at:
www.gov.uk/government/consultations/machetes-and-other-bladed-articles-proposed-legislation.

30 May 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 185995

Date tabled: 19 May 2023 | **Date for answer:** 23 May 2023 | **Date answered:** 30 May 2023

Knife Crime

Asked by: Rebecca Long Bailey (Salford and Eccles) (Lab)

What steps her Department is taking to tackle knife crime.

Answered by: The Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire (Chris Philp) |

Department: Home Department

Tackling knife crime is a priority. That is why, since 2019, we have not only spent £340 million on diverting young people into alternative activity via the violence reduction units, but had targeted Grip hotspot policing in areas where knife crime is particularly prevalent. That has led to a 19% reduction over the last three years in hospital admissions with a bladed weapon injury, and since 2010, according to the crime survey for England and Wales, violence is down by 38%.

20 Mar 2023 | Oral questions - Lead | Answered | House of Commons | 904173 | 730 cc15-6

Date tabled: 14 Mar 2023 | **Date for answer:** 20 Mar 2023 | **Date answered:** 20 Mar 2023

Knives: Crime

Asked by: Hunt, Tom

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps her Department is taking with Cabinet colleagues to help educate young people about knife crime.

Answering member: Nick Gibb | **Department:** Department for Education

The Department works across Government to support all young people to lead happy, healthy and safe lives, and to foster respect for others.

The statutory guidance on relationships, sex and health education contains content that can help address the underlying causes of gun and knife crime. This includes references to situations that often lead young people to carry weapons, such as criminal exploitation through involvement in gangs and county lines drugs operations. The guidance is available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education>.

Gun and knife crime can also be taught as part of a school's wider curriculum. Schools can choose to include lessons on weapons awareness and gangs as part of their personal, social, health and economic education or citizenship curriculum.

The Department works across Government on wider initiatives to prevent serious violence. As part of the cross Government Beating Crime Plan, the Department has worked with other government departments to make over £45 million available to fund specialist support in mainstream and alternative provision schools in the areas where serious violence like knife crime most affects young people.

One cross government project that the Department is implementing is the Alternative Provision Specialist Taskforces (APST). This places multidisciplinary taskforces of specialists, including speech and language therapists, youth workers, family support workers, and mental health workers in schools in 22 areas where serious violence is most prevalent. The Department works closely with cross Government partners, including the Youth Justice Board and NHS England to deliver the APST programme, including the placement of their frontline specialists in schools.

The Department continues to work with other departments and stakeholders on curriculum content and will be reviewing the statutory guidance this year, looking at areas of the guidance that need to be strengthened.

09 Feb 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 138003

Date tabled: 01 Feb 2023 | **Date for answer:** 03 Feb 2023 | **Date answered:** 09 Feb 2023

[Knives: Crime](#)

Asked by: Hunt, Tom

To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department, what steps her Department is taking to support the police with preventing knife crime.

Answering member: Chris Philp | **Department:** Home Office

Tackling knife crime is a priority and the Government is determined to crack down on the scourge of violence devastating our communities.

The Government is supporting the police every step of the way in this effort, including through the recruitment of 20,000 additional officers and increased police funding.

The Government is proposing a total police funding settlement of up to £17.2 billion in 2023/24, an increase of up to £287 million when compared to 2022/23. Assuming full take up of precept flexibility, overall police funding available to PCCs will increase by up to £523 million (3.6% in cash terms) next year.

Suffolk Police's funding will be up to £157.0m in 2023/24, an increase of up to £6.1m when compared to 2022/23.

15,343 additional uplift officers have been recruited in England and Wales through the Police Uplift Programme, 77% of the target of 20,000 additional officers by March 2023, as at 30 September 2022. Suffolk Constabulary has recruited 128 additional uplift officers against a total three-year allocation of 179 officers, as at 30 September 2022.

The Government has made £130m available this financial year (22/23) to tackle serious violence, including murder and knife crime. This includes:

- £64m for Violence Reduction Units (VRUs) which bring together local partners to tackle the drivers of violence in their area. VRUs are delivering a range of early intervention and prevention programmes to divert people away from a life of crime. They have reached over 260,000 vulnerable young people in their second year alone.

- Our £30m 'Grip' programme operates in these same 20 areas as VRUs and is helping to drive down violence by using a highly data-driven process to identify violence hotspots – often to individual street level – and target operational activity in those areas. In 2020, a 90 day trial of this approach in Southend resulted in an overall fall in violence in the hotspots of around 30% over the period of the trial.

The combination of these two programmes has prevented an estimated 49,000 violent offences in their first two years of activity.

The Government is also supporting the work of the police with new legislation. Knife Crime Prevention Orders have been requested by the police to help steer those most at risk away from serious violence. They are being piloted by the Metropolitan Police in London before they are rolled out more widely.

Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs) were introduced in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and will give the police powers to take a more proactive approach and make it easier to target those already convicted of knife and offensive weapon offences, giving them the automatic right to search these offenders. SVROs will be piloted in the Sussex, West Midlands, Merseyside and Thames Valley Police areas before a decision is made on national rollout.

The Government also continues to encourage police forces to undertake a series of coordinated national weeks of action to tackle knife crime under Operation Sceptre. The operation includes targeted stop and searches, weapon sweeps of hotspot areas, surrender of knives, including through amnesty bins, test purchases of knives from retailers, and educational events. The latest phase of the operation took place between 14 to 20 November 2022. Officers seized 653 knives, and 6380 were either surrendered or seized during sweeps.

26 Jan 2023 | Written questions | Answered | House of Commons | 126821

Date tabled: 18 Jan 2023 | **Date for answer:** 20 Jan 2023 | **Date answered:** 26 Jan 2023

[Knife Crime and Serious Violence](#)

Asked by: James Gray (North Wiltshire) (Con)

Deterrence is more important than almost anything else, and the Minister knows well of the tragic case in my constituency of Ellie Gould, who was murdered by a knife-wielding boyfriend. People there are rightly of the view that we must find ways of improving and increasing the sentences for knife murder if we can. So what discussions has he had with his colleagues in the Ministry of Justice, who are currently looking at guidelines for sentencing? When can we expect the results of that consultation to come out?

Answered by: Tom Pursglove | **Department:** Home Department

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his question. We do have Ministers who are joint between the Home Office and the MOJ, which means that we have been able to look at some of these issues in the round. What I hope can give him some reassurance is the fact that, through serious violence reduction orders, which we are introducing through the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022, we are seeing a greater likelihood of people being caught, of being before the court and of receiving a custodial sentence. I think the whole House can welcome that.

05 Sep 2022 | Oral questions - Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons
| 719 c4

Date answered: 05 Sep 2022

Engagements

Asked by: Ben Everitt

Last week, we launched a new approach to combating knife crime in Milton Keynes, which means increased use of stop and search, tougher charging and custody, tougher sentencing, faster youth diversion

and more work with parents and communities. Does the Prime Minister agree that if someone carries a knife in Milton Keynes, they should expect to end up behind bars?

Answered by: The Prime Minister | **Department:** Prime Minister

I thank my hon. Friend for what he is doing to campaign for tougher sentences and against knife crime in Milton Keynes. As a result of what the Conservatives have done, adults who are convicted of certain offences involving a knife, including threatening with a knife or a second offence of possession, face a minimum sentence of six months' imprisonment—and guess who voted against tougher sentences for knife crime?

06 Jul 2022 | Prime Minister's questions - 1st Supplementary | Answered | House of Commons | 717 c862

Date answered: 06 Jul 2022

3 Media

3.1 Press releases

[Illegal weapons for sale on fast-growing online marketplace Temu, Which? reveals](#)

Which?

17 November 2023

[The Serious Violence Duty Commences on 31st January](#)

London Councils

27 January 2023

[Liberty Responds to Priti Patel Lifting Restrictions On Stop And Search](#)

Liberty

16 May 2022

[Calls for a commission on knife crime in the black community](#)

London Assembly

10 February 2022

3.2 Articles and blogs

['We need societal change': Sadiq Khan talks to South London Press on battling knife crime in the capital](#)

South London Press

11 December 2023

[Google profiting from sale of zombie knives in UK despite claims of ban](#)

Guardian

09 December 2023

[Knife crime: Haverhill mum petitions for mandatory jail sentences](#)

BBC

22 November 2023

[Sussex anti-knife crime scheme shortlisted for award](#)

BBC

20 November 2023

[Tackling knife crime through simulation](#)

BBC

20 November 2023

[Reading football scheme aims to tackle knife crime](#)

BBC

13 November 2023

[New stop and search scheme for England and Wales will not cut violence, thinktank suggests](#)

Guardian

13 November 2023

[Just announced: Labour will launch Young Futures programme to tackle knife crime](#)

Labour

10 October 2023

[Labour will set up 'young futures' youth programme to tackle knife crime](#)

Guardian

09 October 2023

[Ministers urged to scrap knife-crime 'ASBOs' after Black men and boys disproportionately hit](#)

Independent

08 October 2023

[The Times view on the action needed in the wake of Elianne Andam's death: Defeating Knife Crime](#)

Times

29 September 2023

[Police urged to use stop and search to save more lives](#)

Home Office

20 June 2023

[Stop and search: Suella Braverman urges forces to 'ramp up' measure](#)

BBC

19 June 2023

[Almost 10,000 knives taken off the streets](#)

NPCC

26 May 2023

['This is a crisis': London reeling from three killings in eight hours](#)

Guardian

12 May 2023

['Menacing' zombie knives and machetes face ban](#)

Times

18 April 2023

[New court order SVRO to be trialed on knife crime offenders](#)

St. Helens Star

13 April 2023

[Knife crime soars in home counties as drug rings spread](#)

Times

15 February 2023

[Number of police recorded knife or sharp instrument offences in London from 2015/16 to 2022/23](#)

Statista

28 September 2023

[New Ministry of Justice Report on Knife Crime and Offensive Weapon Sentencing Statistics](#)

Youth Justice Legal Centre

02 August 2023

[Does stop and search actually reduce crime, as Braverman vows to ramp up use](#)

iNews

19 June 2023

[We know how to stop knife crime, so why don't we do it?](#)

Youth Endowment Fund

30 May 2023

[Serious Violence Reduction Orders \(Pilot Scheme 2023\)](#)

THB Solicitors

25 May 2023

[Operation Sceptre: Hampshire Constabulary joins national campaign](#)

BBC News

16 May 2023

[Knife crime on rise due to 'teenagers made vulnerable by pandemic'](#)

Independent

09 February 2023

[Efforts to tackle serious violence and homicide stepped up](#)

Home Office

16 December 2022

[A step in the wrong direction? New NPCC Guidelines on the cautioning and charging of Knife Crime](#)

Youth Justice Legal Centre

12 December 2022

[The UK government wants to crack down on knife crime – research can tell us why young people start carrying weapons](#)

The Conversation

17 May 2022

[Priti Patel lifts restrictions on police stop and search powers](#)

Guardian

16 May 2022

[Words are like weapons](#)

StopWatch

16 May 2022

[Response – problem solving to tackle knife crime](#)

College of Policing

19 November 2021

4

Further reading

[Policy paper: Criminal Justice Bill: Knife crime](#), Ministry of Justice, et al., 01 December 2023 [Updated]

[Consultation on tougher sentences for knife and domestic killers](#), Ministry of Justice, 27 November 2023

[New bill gives police more powers to take zero-tolerance approach to crime](#), Home Office, 14 November 2023

[Is knife crime at record highs?](#), Youth Endowment Fund, 2 November 2023

[Against Serious Violence Reduction Orders: discriminatory, harmful and counterproductive](#), Runnymede Trust, November 2023

[Serious Violence Duty](#), Home Office, 22 July 2023

[SVROs: Everything you need to know](#), StopWatch, 6 April 2023

[Serious violence reduction orders \(SVROs\)](#), Home Office, 30 March 2023

[An inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence](https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/inspection-of-how-well-the-police-tackle-serious-youth-violence/)<https://hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/publications/inspection-of-how-well-the-police-tackle-serious-youth-violence/>, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, 8 March 2023

Bullock, K., Agar, I., Ashby, M. et al. [Police practitioner views on the challenges of analysing and responding to knife crime](#), Crime Science, 2 February 2023

[Violence Reduction Units, year ending March 2022 evaluation report](#), Home Office, 2 February 2023

[Knife crime statistics](#), House of Commons Library, 11 January 2023

[Police powers: stop and search](#), House of Commons Library, 20 July 2022

[Promising approaches to knife crime: an exploratory study](#), Research & Analysis Bulletin 2022/03, HM Inspectorate of Probation, May 2022

Jennifer Hendry, 'The Usual Suspects': Knife Crime Prevention Orders and the 'Difficult' Regulatory Subject, *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 62, Issue 2, March 2022, Pages 378–395, <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjc/azab063>

Matt Hopkins & Keith Floyd, [How prepared are we for the serious violence duty?](#), Crime Prevention and Community Safety volume 24, pages 358–368 (2022)

[New toolkit to reduce knife crime](#), College of Policing, 19 November 2021

[Tackling Knife Crime](#), House of Commons Library, 16 July 2021

[The Police Bill, SVROs and guilt by association](#), Institute of Race Relations, 20 May 2021

[Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill: Parts 10 and 11 – Management and rehabilitation of offenders](#), House of Commons Library, 12 March 2021

[New stop and search power: Serious Violence Reduction Orders](#), House of Commons Library, 16 September 2020

[Serious violence and knife crime: Law enforcement and early intervention](#), House of Commons Library, 14 January, 2020

[How is the Government implementing a 'public health approach' to serious violence?](#), House of Commons Library, 22 July 2019

[What Are Serious Violence Reduction Orders?](#), Liberty

[The Serious Violence Reduction Order: Submissions relating to the application of the order](#), CSJ

[Violence including knife crime](#), Scottish Government

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