

News story: Home Secretary to consult on new laws on offensive weapons

Measures to ban the sale of acids to under-18s, prevent children purchasing knives online and restrict access to dangerous firearms will be among a series of legislative changes to be included in a public consultation on offensive weapons, the Home Secretary has announced.

The plans, unveiled by Amber Rudd, underline the government's determination to stamp out serious violent crime, and follow a recent rise in police-recorded knife and firearms offences, and an apparent increase in acid attacks.

Among the measures on which the government will consult are a new offence of possession of a corrosive substance in public and restricting online sales of knives so they cannot be delivered to a private residential address and must be collected at a place where age ID can be checked.

Amber Rudd also revealed plans for a new Serious Violence strategy for improving public safety and preventing violent offending, which will be published in early 2018.

The new offence of possession of a corrosive substance in public without a good or lawful reason will place the onus on the individual caught in possession to explain why they were carrying it, rather than on the police to prove that it was intended for use as a weapon. The Poisons Act will also be reviewed with a view to including sulphuric acid on the list of restricted substances.

The Home Office will consult on legislative proposals to restrict the online sale of knives so they cannot be delivered to a private residential address and must instead be collected at a place where age ID can be checked.

Other measures included in the consultation include:

- amendments to threatening with a knife or offensive weapon offence to lower the standard of proof for prosecutors
- moving two firearms (.50 calibre and certain rapid firing rifles) from the general licensing arrangements to the stricter provisions of section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968
- updating the current legislation on the definition of flick knives