

# [News story: Retailers and academics join government effort to tackle acid attacks](#)

This is part of a series of voluntary commitments proposed by the government.

Today the government has published the details of the voluntary commitments, as well as a list of those retailers who have already signed.

Waitrose, B&Q, Morrisons, Wickes, Co-op, Screwfix and Tesco are among the major brands to sign the voluntary commitments on the responsible sale of corrosive substances. The British Independent Retailers Association will this month be encouraging all its members to sign up.

The publication comes as the University of Leicester launches a major research project, commissioned by the Home Office, into the motivations of offenders who carry and use acid in violent attacks.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Victoria Atkins, said:

Acid attacks have a devastating impact on their victims, leaving both emotional and physical scars. I'm pleased that so many of the UK's major retailers are joining our fight to combat this scourge and signalling they are committed to selling acids responsibly.

This is the next step of our [acid attacks action plan](#) that has already seen us consult on new laws to restrict young people's access to acids.

It is also vital we gain an insight into the motivations and behaviours of those who carry out these unspeakable attacks, which is why we have commissioned a major piece of research that will help us understand more about this crime.

The [voluntary commitments](#) will see the retailers:

- agree not to sell products to those under 18 that contain potentially harmful levels of acid or corrosive substances – including applying Challenge 21/25 policies when asking for age identification, staff supported by till alerts, supervision and inclusion of these products in age restricted sales training.
- agree that equivalent age restriction measures are applied to products sold online.

- Agree to comply with the Poisons Act and promote awareness to staff and what this means for the sale of products which contain levels of acid and other corrosive substances which are either regulated or reportable under the Act.

The voluntary agreement has been introduced now to ensure immediate action is taken by retailers on a voluntary basis, in advance of new legislation including the ban on sales to those under 18 being brought before Parliament and put into effect. We welcome the support and action being taken by retailers now to restrict access.

National Police Chiefs' Council lead for Corrosive Attacks, Assistant Chief Constable Rachel Kearton said:

The use of acid to commit acts of violence is particularly abhorrent – perpetrators aim to leave their victims with horrific and life-changing injuries.

Tackling the scourge of acid attacks requires a coordinated approach across a number of different organisations and sectors. I commend all those major retailers and independent stores which are now taking steps to help prevent acid attacks from taking place.

The majority of us find it hard to believe that anyone would choose to throw acid over another person. This new research project will enable us to improve our understanding of why offenders are motivated to use acid as a weapon and assist us in stopping attacks in the future.

The academic research being undertaken at the University of Leicester will see criminologists examine the motivations and decision-making processes behind carrying and using acid as a weapon, the characteristics of offenders and their relationships with their victims, as well as how the substances are purchased and transported.

Professor Teela Sanders from the University of Leicester's Department of Criminology said:

This project taps into the expert skills of researchers at the University of Leicester with case file analysis and interviews with serious violent offenders in prisons. This most needed research on this phenomenon will produce important recommendations for government to take forward.

The steps announced today form part of the Acid Attack Action Plan announced by the Home Secretary in July 2017. The Home Office also recently concluded its consultation on proposals to ban the sale of products containing the most harmful corrosive substances to under 18s, make it an offence to possess a corrosive substance in a

public place without good reason and introduce minimum custodial sentences for those repeatedly caught carrying acid without good reason.

National President of British Independent Retailers Association (BIRA), Vin Vara said:

BIRA represents thousands of hardware stores across Britain.

As specialist retailers we want to make sure that our customers get the expert support and advice they need to ensure the responsible sale of any of our products.

We take our duty to supply and sell these substances very seriously and we are happy to back the government's commitment to address and limit the sale of them.