

# Press release: Home Office announces plans for Offensive Weapons Bill to tackle serious violence

The government will also make it a criminal offence to possess corrosive substances in a public place and publicly consult on extending stop and search powers to enable the police to search for and seize acid from people carrying it in public without good reason.

The new Offensive Weapons Bill, which will be brought forward within weeks, would also make it illegal to possess certain offensive weapons like zombie knives and knuckle-dusters in private.

The commitment of new legislation will form part of the government's Serious Violence Strategy, which will be launched tomorrow.

It will mark a major shift in the government's response to knife crime and gun crime and strike a balance between prevention and robust law enforcement.

Other measures which the Home Office intends to bring forward within weeks include:

- Stopping knives being sent to residential addresses after they are bought online;
- Changing the legal definition for threatening with an offensive weapon to make prosecutions easier;
- Banning the possession of a knife on a further education premises;
- Banning rapid firing rifles, and certain powerful firearms and bump stocks, which increase a rifles' rate of fire;
- Updating the definition of a flick knife to reflect changing weapon designs.

Home Secretary Amber Rudd said:

This government has always stood for law and order and to tackle violent crime effectively, robust legislation and powerful law enforcement must be in place.

That's why we will introduce a new Offensive Weapons Bill that includes a new offence of possessing acid in public without good reason, prevents sales of acids to under 18s and stops knives being sent to people's homes when bought online.

I see no good reason why any young person should be carrying a

corrosive substance in the street, so I am also announcing that we will consult on extending stop and search powers to include acid. Stop and search is a vital policing tool and officers will always have the government's full support to use these powers properly.

The legislation will include a minimum custodial sentence for those convicted of a second or subsequent offence of possession of a corrosive substance in a public place.

The new offence of possessing certain offensive weapons in private would ensure that in future where the police find a zombie knife, for example, in someone's home they can arrest and charge the owner with this proposed offence and remove the offensive weapon from the owner.

The Home Office has also added sulphuric acid to the list of regulated explosives precursors that come under the Poisons Act 1972. This will mean that members of the public will require a licence to acquire, possess and use the substance.

The Serious Violence Strategy will set out the importance of pursuing those who commit serious violent crime through effective law enforcement and ensuring that the criminal justice system is effective and responsive, especially for victims.

It will also examine how social media usage can drive violent crime and focus on building on the progress and relationships made with social media providers and the police to identify where we can take further preventative action relevant to tackling serious violence.

When the strategy is launched tomorrow, the Home Secretary is expected to call on social media companies to do more to tackle gang material hosted on their sites and to make an explicit reference to not allowing violent gang material including music and video on their platforms.

The Home Secretary is also due to host a round-table for civic leaders, including the Metropolitan Police Commissioner and Mayor of London, charities and organisations which campaign against serious violence ahead of the launch.