



Gun Trade Association

Formal response: Home Office Consultation on Licensing Knife Sales

The Gun Trade Association (GTA) has significant concerns about the Home Office consultation on licensing knife retailers and importers. It objects to the use of leading questions in the online consultation. It has serious reservations about the proposed introduction of a knife licensing scheme.

1. Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs)

The proposed licensing scheme for RFDs is unnecessary and disproportionate. RFDs already operate under strict police oversight, including compliance with existing legislation and, in many cases, additional record-keeping and photographic ID requirements. Adding another licensing layer would create costly bureaucracy without improving public safety, while unfairly burdening law-abiding businesses that already meet and often exceed current standards.

2. Police

The Government's plan to have 38 police firearms licensing authorities administer an additional licensing regime risks overwhelming capacity and causing systemic failure. These departments are already under strain, struggling to meet current demand and maintain service standards. With a potential merger of Sections 1 and 2 and the possible inclusion of knives, the challenge will only grow. As current police interventions have proven effective in tackling knife crime, the Government should focus on sustaining and expanding these measures rather than introducing broad, resource-heavy licensing regimes with limited impact, ultimately compromising public safety.

3. Knife Crime Data and Proposed Controls

The consultation's simplistic distinction between domestic knives and all others is fundamentally flawed. Knives serve diverse, legitimate purposes for trades people, religious practitioners, and outdoor enthusiasts. Treating them as a single category ignores these practical uses. ONS data for the year ending March 2024 shows that kitchen knives alone accounted for 44% of all knife-related homicides. This exposes a critical flaw in the proposed licensing scheme; the knife type most frequently used in fatal incidents being excluded from both the consultation and proposed controls.

4. Recommendations

The GTA urges the Home Office to:

- **Re-evaluate the evidence base** for licensing knife retailers, importers and specifically Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs) to ensure measures are proportionate and evidence-driven.
- **Align policy interventions** with the actual root causes and drivers of knife crime, rather than perceived or symbolic political actions.
- **Design a regulatory framework** that is practical, enforceable, and deliverable within current policing capacity and resources.
- **Prioritise investment** in police-led interventions that have a proven track record of reducing violence and improving community safety.



My colleagues and I are happy to respond in greater detail should any clarifications be required.

Yours faithfully

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Chairman, Gun Trade Association