



The Gun Trade Association has warned the Home Office knife licensing consultation could increase strain on police firearms licensing departments.

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GTA warns knife licensing scheme risks overstretching police and burdening RFDs

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The Gun Trade Association (GTA) has issued a formal response to the Home Office consultation on licensing knife retailers and importers, warning that the proposals risk creating an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy for legitimate trade while placing further strain on already stretched police firearms licensing departments.

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The consultation, published on 16 December 2025 and open until 24 February 2026, seeks views on proposals to introduce a licensing system for sellers and importers of knives and bladed articles.

In its submission, the GTA said it has “significant concerns” about the consultation itself, objecting to what it described as leading questions within the online format. The association said it has “serious reservations” about the introduction of a knife licensing scheme and questioned whether the approach would deliver meaningful public safety benefits.

The GTA argued that applying the scheme to Registered Firearms Dealers (RFDs) would be disproportionate, stating that RFDs already operate under strict police oversight and comply with existing legislation. It warned that an additional licensing layer would increase costs and administrative burden for law-abiding businesses without clear evidence that it would reduce knife crime.

The association also raised concerns over delivery, stating that placing responsibility on 38 police firearms licensing authorities to administer an additional licensing regime could overwhelm capacity and cause systemic failure. It said firearms licensing departments are already under pressure and that expanding responsibilities, alongside ongoing policy discussions around the potential merger of Sections 1 and 2 licensing, would increase operational risk.

On the evidence base, the GTA criticised what it described as an overly simplistic distinction between domestic knives and other bladed items, warning the approach fails to reflect legitimate use across trades, religious practice and outdoor pursuits. It highlighted Office for National Statistics data for the year ending March 2024 showing kitchen knives accounted for 44% of knife-related homicides, arguing this undermines the consultation’s underlying assumptions because kitchen knives would sit outside the proposed controls.

The GTA urged the Home Office to re-evaluate the evidence supporting retailer and importer licensing, ensure any measures are proportionate and enforceable, and prioritise investment in police-led interventions proven to reduce violence.

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