

TWO-STEP VERIFICATION & THE FIGHT AGAINST KNIFE CRIME

An In-depth Look at Legislative Updates for 2025, Real-Life Tragedies, and Media Influence

Knife crime remains a pressing issue across the UK, with rising numbers of young people becoming both perpetrators and victims.

In response, the Government is introducing stricter regulations on knife sales, including a two-step age verification system to prevent underage access to knives. This document explores the legislative changes, the tragic real-life incidents fueling these reforms, and the role of businesses, particularly retailers, in ensuring compliance.

Through this collaboration between government, retail, and communities, we can take vital steps towards reducing knife crime and safeguarding young people.

Empowering businesses to operate with confidence.





SERVE LEGAL'S AGE VERIFICATION INSIGHTS

KEY INSIGHTS AND STRATEGIES FOR COMPLIANT KNIFE SALE AND DELIVERY

MEET TWO OF OUR SUCCESS STORIES!

Within a span of two years, one of our nationwide retailer clients experienced an increase in knife compliance from 83% to 89%. Through our comprehensive auditing and consultancy services, we helped identify areas for improvement and implement effective measures to ensure compliance with knife sales regulations.

Client Manager, Ali, comments: *'Keen to focus on knives following changes to the Offensive Weapons Act, this client has pushed compliance standards ever higher in a challenging retail landscape. Through their partnership with Serve Legal, they are committed to improvement in this area and continue to do great work in ensuring that restricted items are not falling into the hands of minors.'*



POLICE

In just three months of a trial programme, one of our nationwide craft store clients saw a notable 10% increase in compliance with bladed articles regulations.

Client Manager, Ella, said: *'It is great to see a huge improvement in compliance after just a 3 month trial of working with Serve Legal. This retailer has identified their key risk areas and worked hard to reduce them. Together we have been very impressed with their results and as a result they are now on a full programme with us, continuing to ensure their Challenge 25 policy is adhered to across their wide range of age restricted products.'*

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Over the last decade, knife crime in England and Wales has risen sharply, with a **staggering 54% increase in serious offences** since 2016. As both perpetrators and victims of knife crime skew alarmingly young, urgent action has become a national imperative.

The Government's response, led by the launch of a **Coalition to Tackle Knife Crime** in September 2024, aims to address this growing crisis. This initiative is part of a broader strategy, including tougher restrictions on knife sales, heightened compliance measures for online retailers, and a renewed focus on safeguarding young people.

In the face of the growing epidemic of knife crime, Netflix's new British four-part series **Adolescence** is sparking essential conversations across the UK about youth violence and its devastating impact. The series is a poignant exploration of the harsh realities behind knife crime, particularly among young men, and the underlying societal factors contributing to such tragedies.

With the government bringing in dual age verification for online knife sales, and campaigners such as Idris Elba joining the Government's coalition to uproot the issues causing knife crime, it is a **nationwide conversation**. Adolescence plays a key role in contributing to this dialogue.



Stephen Graham, actor and writer of Adolescence, revealed that the inspiration behind the show stemmed from the alarming rise in youth stabbings, particularly incidents where young men are attacking young women.

Notable cases include:

- 15-year-old Elianne Andam, fatally stabbed by 17-year-old Hassan Sentamu in London in September 2024.
- 15-year-old Holly Newton, who was killed by a 17-year-old boy in January 2023.
- 16-year-old Nicholas Prosper, who shot and stabbed multiple family members, including his mother and sister.
- The murder of three girls by Axel Rudakubana in Southport in July 2024, which also involved the attempted murder of 10 others.
- In March 2025, a 15-year-old boy stabbed in a violent attack in Birmingham, by a group of youths.

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INSIGHTS FROM AGE VERIFICATION COMPLIANCE LEADER, SERVE LEGAL

At Serve Legal, the UK's leader in age-verification testing, we have been working to improve compliance across retail sectors for nearly two decades.

In 2024, Serve Legal conducted trial audits with 13 companies, revealing that only **60%** of transactions challenged 18- or 19-year-old auditors for ID, when buying a knife.

Serve Legal's 2024 data highlights the **tangible benefits** of investing in compliance testing, with our clients achieving an average of **90% compliance rate** for ID checks during knife sales—a 3% improvement from 2023.

It is clear that investment in **compliance checks makes a difference.**



Retailers who partner with Serve Legal demonstrate their commitment to due diligence and accountability, setting a standard for responsible practices. By investing in these checks, businesses not only meet legal obligations but also build trust with their communities, reinforcing their role in preventing underage access to knives.

Tackling knife crime requires collaboration between the Government, retailers, delivery providers, law enforcement, and communities.

Retailers must embrace robust compliance practices and invest in tools to ensure safe transactions.

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STRICTER MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO KNIFE CRIME

The Government's proposed measures, fast-tracked after the fatal knife attack in Southport in 2024, aim to make it significantly harder for minors to purchase knives. The Crime and Policing Bill, set to be introduced in Parliament this spring, means online retailers will require two forms of identification, such as a passport and a live video verification, from buyers.

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer emphasised the importance of these measures, noting the shocking ease with which young people can currently access knives and bladed articles.

"Time and again, as a child, the Southport murderer carried knives. Time and again, he showed clear intent to use them. And yet tragically, he was still able to order the murder weapon off the internet without any checks or barriers. A two-click killer. This cannot continue."



While these measures represent a significant step forward, **challenges remain.**

Once the knife sale has been authorised and has left the retailer's warehouse, the courier becomes **responsible** for completing a compliant transaction. To ensure knives do not end up in the wrong hands, it is critical that doorstep transactions include thorough ID checks.

The Crime and Policing Bill, expected this spring, will require buyers to present photo ID when **purchasing** a knife and **again** upon delivery. Companies will also be mandated to ensure that bladed articles are **delivered only to the purchaser.**

It will also become **illegal** to leave packages containing potentially deadly weapons unattended on doorsteps. While these amendments are crucial for community safety, they will place additional pressure on retailers to ensure their couriers comply with these new regulations.

This is a **critical time** for retailers to assess their current practices, hold couriers accountable, and invest in reliable solutions to meet these evolving requirements. Ensuring alignment between retailers, delivery services, and compliance testing initiatives is a critical step in addressing the broader knife crime crisis.

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A COMMITMENT TO SAFETY, TRUST AND COMPLIANCE

At Serve Legal, we are committed to supporting the mission of creating a safer society.

While our focus on age verification compliance and assisting retailers with their policies may not solve the issue entirely, we hope that our work places a piece of the puzzle back in the right place. We are eager to play our part in addressing this challenge by supporting retailers with compliance practices.

Tackling knife crime requires a multifaceted approach that involves everyone. From government legislation to societal awareness and media, every part of the puzzle must come together. By improving compliance, focusing on education, and addressing the root causes, we can make strides toward a safer, knife-free future.

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