

## Offensive Weapons Bill Clause 15

### Executive summary:

- Restricting the delivery of bladed articles to residential properties unfairly hinders legitimate purchases for all kinds of purchases, particularly given that many specialist bladed tools (eg chef's knives) are not readily available at local high-street shops.
- Restricting online sales of bladed articles will hurt legitimate businesses, such as outdoor stores and kitchenware companies, who depend on sales of these products outside of their local areas.
- Restricting online sales of bladed articles will not make it more difficult for criminals to access knives as weapons, given that sharp objects are in every kitchen, and that criminals can continue to walk into any shop and buy or steal a knife if they want one.

### Introduction

1. I am a normal citizen of the UK. I am submitting this document to share my views on this issue because I regularly buy bladed tools from websites for delivery to my residential address, and as such have experience in these matters and will be affected by the proposed changes to the Offensive Weapons Bill.

### Comments

2. My views pertain specifically to the new restrictions on deliveries of bladed articles to residential properties. I have three main arguments.
3. **Limiting online sales causes significant inconvenience to the majority of citizens.** I, like nearly everyone I know, buy and use bladed articles as tools for legitimate purposes, as people have done throughout history: to open packaging, to prepare food, for craft projects, for gardening, and so on. The bill provides exemption for "sporting" and "re-enactment" purposes but I believe these are too narrow to cover most purposes.
4. I believe it is damaging and unnecessary to legislate on the assumption that knives, multitools and other bladed tools are weapons, when in fact in modern society their use as weapons is a vanishingly small share of total use. We all use knives in our kitchens and workplaces every day; it should not be treated as a restricted act to purchase something that is a daily essential for both adults and children.
5. In the UK, ecommerce accounts for around 18% of retail sales revenue (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/285978/e-commerce-share-of-retail-sales-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>) and that number is growing. In speciality categories (ie products for which there isn't a "shop on every high street"), the percentage of revenue transacted online will be even higher. Many types of bladed articles — pocket knives and multitools, for example — fall into this category. I live in Reading and I can't think of anywhere in my town where I would be able to buy anything more unusual than a Victorinox Swiss Army Knife. Because buying speciality products online is so common, denying consumers the right to buy them online for delivery to their residential address is today a significant limitation and should not be taken lightly.

6. **Many bladed articles are specialist objects that can only economically be sold online.** It's not just consumers that will suffer. Bladed articles, such as pocket knives and chef's knives, are often high-value or even artistic objects made by many different manufacturers around the world in small numbers, from exotic materials, much like premium wristwatches or jewellery. For instance, the UK-legal knife below is made from "timascus" and costs £999. Similarly high-end or specialist products are available in all kinds of bladed product categories, including £1,000+ kitchen knives (which may be ordered to residential addresses by hobbyist cooks), fishing multitools, etc.



7. The only way for legitimate UK consumers to have access to this full range of UK-legal knives is via the internet — it is impractical for local “brick and mortar” stores to stock a sufficiently wide range, and have a sufficiently large market of buyers within driving distance (outside of London, perhaps). As stated above, ecommerce is becoming the default way of purchasing products for many people and in many retail segments. Restricting ecommerce sales of bladed weapons will have a massive financial impact on many specialty retailers, including kitchenware stores, outdoor stores, etc, potentially creating job losses.

8. **Criminals looking to use a bladed tool as a weapon will be largely unaffected by this restriction.**  
They do not care about the artistry or materials of the knife they purchase or its specialist functions. They can continue to walk into any supermarket and walk out with any kitchen knife that will serve their purposes. Underage criminals can take a bread knife from their kitchen at home, or steal one from a shop, without being deterred by age verification in-store. In fact, ordering online introduces a delay and provides for a degree of traceability; ordering a bladed tool for delivery to their home prior to committing a violent crime makes no sense — it is much easier, faster and less risky to buy one anonymously from a shop.
9. In summary, the proposed legislation is designed to help police tackle an increase in knife crime. I see no evidence that restricting the delivery of bladed articles to residential addresses will in any way reduce knife crime when every kitchen, utility cupboard and garden shed in the land already, unavoidably, contains multiple bladed objects that can be used for harm, and when any teenager can steal a knife from any hardware store or supermarket. The only effects of this legislation will be to make it harder for law-abiding citizens to purchase bladed objects for legal use, and to threaten the viability of businesses that sell bladed objects via the internet.
10. Alternative measures could include stronger enforcement of age verification online

*July 2018*