

Retailers guide to storing, displaying and selling knives.

Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent



STAFFORDSHIRE
POLICE



Staffordshire
County Council



City of
Stoke-on-Trent



Violence
Reduction
Alliance
Stoke-on-Trent
and Staffordshire

Introduction

This guide aims to help retailers who sell knives and other bladed items comply with the law and play their part in reducing the harm caused to our communities by knife crime. It offers practical guidance that will help you manage your business to prevent the theft and illegal sales of knives.

It is true the majority of knives purchased from a shop are not used in crime - but some are. Some are bought or stolen to be used as a weapon. This guide suggests ways you can store and sell knives responsibly and minimise the chances of your business supplying an item that will be used in this way.

A question before we start.... Does your business **NEED** to sell knives?

Some business do, of course. If you sell hardware or kitchenware, you may need to.

However, if you don't have a clear business need to sell them, or your profit from these sales is less than the costs of the additional training and other precautions needed before you can sell knives safely, then **please stop selling them.**

If you don't sell knives, you cannot break the law by making an underage sale or risk feeling guilty if a knife sold by you was used to injure someone.

Storing knives safely

Responsible retailers will ensure that knives are stored and displayed safely in their shops. This means preventing customers from accessing knives without the assistance of a member of staff.

Doing this can prevent knives being stolen and can make it much easier to prevent staff from mistakenly selling to someone who is underage.

This can be achieved by:

- ✓ Keeping the knives in a locked display cabinet
- ✓ Displaying knives behind the counter, out of reach of customers
- ✓ Keeping them entirely out of sight – under the counter or in a store room (you could use pictures or signs to advertise the fact that knives are available)
- ✓ Using shelf-hanger locks, so that knives can be displayed but not taken off their hanger without assistance from staff. If this option is used, it is advisable to display the knives where they can be seen from the counter
- ✓ Only selling knives contained in tamperproof packaging which cannot be opened without using another tool – these are the only knives that should be openly displayed, even where shelf hanger locks are used
- ✓ Security tags can be added to packaging as an additional deterrent. These can alert staff if a knife is stolen
- ✓ Remember, if knives are not on open display, they cannot be stolen and used as a weapon inside or outside the shop

Selling knives safely

Before selling a knife or bladed item, staff must take steps to ensure that it is appropriate to sell the item. It is against the law to sell to anyone who is under 18, but businesses should also never sell if they have concerns about how the buyer may use the item. **Remember – the law is on your side: businesses do not have to sell goods to anyone if they don't want to.**

Avoiding underage sales

The best way to avoid underage sales is to train and monitor your staff to ensure that they follow a process called

ASSESS-CHALLENGE-CHECK

ASSESS the age of all customers buying knives (or any other age restricted goods)

CHALLENGE anyone the seller thinks is under 25 for proof of age -a rule known as 'Challenge 25'

CHECK the ID offered, carefully, to ensure the customer is over 18

Training staff in **ASSESS-CHALLENGE-CHECK** effectively is much more than telling them what to do – you have to explain why each step is important and how to do it. Giving instructions to staff is not enough on its own – you have to know that they are able to follow them and monitor to ensure they do.



ASSESS

Assessing age is something that most people are not as good at as they think they are – particularly when assessing females or people of different ethnicities to their own.

The best method of assessing age is to look closely at the face of the person.

Staff must ask themselves the question: "Do I think the customer is under 25?"

Selling knives safely



CHALLENGE

Challenge 25 is necessary to give the seller a large margin of error which will ensure they do not sell to underage customers. You should insist your staff use this rule to overcome the difficulty of assessing age -and to allow for the fact that many staff will still cut corners and not ask everyone they think is under 25.

Don't underestimate how hard some employees will find it to challenge effectively – especially if they are not confident or fear a bad reaction.

Practice with them and monitor how they do it.

Make it easy for staff to challenge by displaying an 'Under 25?' poster at the counter that they can refer the customer to as they ask for proof of age – it makes it easier if staff can show they are required to ask by law.

Ensure your staff know they should **never ask a customer's age** -the answer cannot be relied upon. They should **only ever ask for their ID**.

Sellers who get it wrong may be reluctant to ask for ID as well – and if they do the customer may think they are being disbelieved and take offence.



CHECK

Checking ID is a step many sellers fail to do properly – they are often satisfied with ID being shown from several feet away.

Always **ask the customer to hand you their ID**, so you can take your time checking it – if they refuse to, don't make the sale. Make sure that it is valid ID – a 'PASS' card, a passport or driving licence, with a photograph and date of birth. Check it is the same person and not, for instance, an older brother or sister; and that the customer is over 18.

Ensure the ID is not fake – staff should be made aware of common fakes and typical faults to look for with fake ID.

Images of common fakes can be found with an internet search.

Training and training records

Staff must be trained before they are allowed to serve customers. Methods that can be used to train staff to avoid underage sales can vary, but it is unlikely that verbal training will be sufficient on its own.

The following can also be used:

- ✓ **Supervision** – You could watch a member of staff closely as they serve customers until you are satisfied they are following the ASSESS-CHALLENGE-CHECK process properly.
- ✓ **Training animations** – It is highly recommended that you require staff to watch the training animations that can be found at www.nbcc.police.uk/knifeguidance Watching these can be an effective way to understand key messages.
- ✓ **Written summary** – It is important that you give the trainee something in writing – such as a training checklist – which they sign to say that they have read and understood the training. This protects the business if the trainee makes an underage sale.
- ✓ **Send them on an external training course**

Staff should receive **refresher training** a few weeks after they have first been trained and then periodically – maybe every six months – until they leave your employment. Refresher training reinforces the key messages of the training and allows you to satisfy yourself that staff have remembered and understood them.

Training records should be kept for each member of staff, detailing the initial training and the refresher training received. It should detail the person giving the training, how and when it was given and be signed by the trainee. You can download training forms at www.nbcc.police.uk/knifeguidance

Reminders do not need to be recorded on the training record, but should be given daily: the more you mention the need to avoid underage sales, the more important it will seem to staff.

You can remind staff by:

- keeping and checking refusals records (if your business keeps them)
- giving feedback to staff you have seen serve a young customer
- using till prompts if you have an electronic till
- displaying posters where the knives are kept and adding warning stickers to the knife packaging

Refusals records

Keeping a record of refusals to sell is good practice, especially if young customers regularly attempt to purchase knives or other age-restricted goods. Refusals can be recorded in any format, but the date and time, the reason for refusal and the person refusing should be entered. Many Trading Standards teams will be able to supply a book for you to record refusals in.

You can also ask staff to record every time they CHALLENGE a customer for ID. This can be a good idea for new employees, or for those who don't appear to make many refusals, at least until you are comfortable that they are getting it right.

Important advice about CCTV

A professionally installed CCTV system with wide angle high definition cameras and a zoom facility, enhances security for your staff and stock. It can be integrated with personal alarms and panic buttons to provide additional security should you or your staff ever feel threatened.

- Place cameras where they cannot be tampered with and where the view is unobstructed – think carefully about the best places for them
- There should be a camera focussed on any entrances and exits, to capture clear facial images of anyone entering or leaving, around vulnerable or attractive stock and around the till so customers and transactions can be clearly seen. Any headwear which obstructs a clear view of the face for CCTV purposes – the customer should be asked to either remove or adjust the item, ie baseball cap lowered
- Check the images recorded are clear – you may need to renew your system or clean the lenses
- Keep the hard-drive locked away or out of sight – it is useless if offenders can steal this to avoid being identified
- Remember to back-up your data regularly
- Ensure anyone left in charge of the shop knows how to use the system and how to download footage, as any delay could hinder an investigation

For specialist advice on CCTV systems contact:

The National Security Inspectorate (www.nsi.org.uk) and the Security System and Alarms Board (SSAIB) (www.ssaib.org) for reputable CCTV suppliers. Advice on buying equipment is available at: [https://tinyurl.com CCTVbuyerstoolkit](https://tinyurl.com/CCTVbuyerstoolkit)

New sentencing guidelines for underage sale of knives published

15 February 2023

The Sentencing Council has published two new guidelines for sentencing retailers convicted of selling knives to children. The guidelines will come into effect on 1 April 2023.

The two guidelines – one for sentencing organisations and one for sentencing individuals – will apply to retailers who fail to ensure that adequate safeguards are in place to prevent the sale of knives to under 18s either in store or online.

The Council has made a number of changes, following consultation, including amending culpability factors to reflect the different safeguarding measures that may be appropriate in different retailing situations. We have also introduced some revised guidance on the relevance of previous convictions for organisations because the draft guidance related only to individual offenders.

The two guidelines cover just one offence of selling knives etc to persons under the age of 18 contrary to s.141A of the Criminal Justice Act 1988; it carries a maximum of six months' imprisonment for individual offenders or, in the case of organisations, an unlimited fine, and can be dealt with only in magistrates' courts. The offence is prosecuted by Trading Standards departments within local authorities.

The new guideline for individuals provides for a range of non-custodial sentences, from discharge to high-level community order. The guideline for organisations provides for a range of fines from £500 to £1 million, with fines linked to turnover to make penalties proportionate to the size of organisation.

The guidelines will ensure the courts take a consistent approach to sentencing this offence. The Council does not expect sentences to change overall for most offenders but, for large organisations, sentences may be higher under the new guidelines.

More information and the Council's response to the consultation are available on its website - www.sentencingcouncil.org.uk

Sentencing
Council

Sharing information and intelligence about criminal activity

Sharing information about crime or suspicious behaviour with other businesses and the police can help protect your business and keep your community safe.

Joining a business partnership can help you to reduce shoplifting and anti-social behaviour, as well as theft from your customers. There are many business partnership schemes across Staffordshire already sharing information, intelligence and good ideas.

To find out about Business Crime Reduction Partnerships and get up-to-date crime prevention advice visit:

www.staffordshire.police.uk/cp/crime-prevention

Further information on Secured by Design and accredited security products can be found at:

www.securedbydesign.com
www.soldsecure.com

How do I report a crime and contact the police?

In an emergency phone 999

You should use this number if:

- it feels like the situation could get heated or violent a crime is in progress
- someone is in immediate danger
- you need help right away

Speak slowly and tell the operator:

- your name, name of the business and address including the full postcode
- if anyone is at immediate risk
- if the suspect is still on scene. If not, where are they?
- if violence has been used or threatened
- if any weapons have been seen or threatened. If so, describe the type of weapon
- about any injuries
- your phone number so that the police can call you back

If you want to tell us something or report an incident that is not an emergency, you can call **101** or use the 'Report' section on our website: www.staffordshire.police.uk

A live chat function is also available on our website. The service offers a quick, easy and direct way of reporting problems that aren't urgent.

If you want to stay anonymous you can contact Crimestoppers:

CrimeStoppers.

0800 555 111

100% anonymous. Always.

www.crimestoppers-uk.org