

Knives, blades and axes

age restricted sales

Trading Standards information

www.southwark.gov.uk

1. Introduction

It is illegal to sell knives and certain other bladed or sharply pointed items, to anyone under 18. This Service enforces the law prohibiting the sales of certain age-restricted products. We do this by using underage volunteers to attempt test purchases at shops. We also provide advice and education to businesses, parents and children.

2. Main legal requirements

The sale of any of the following articles to any child under 18 is illegal;

- *knife, knife blade or razor blade,*
- *any axe,*
- *any other article which has a blade or which is sharply pointed **and** which is made or adapted for causing injury to persons*

All types of knives are covered including kitchen knives, cutlery and utility knives.

3. Are there any exceptions to the law?

Yes, there are 2 exceptions to the age restriction;

- folding pocket knives if the cutting edge of the blade is not greater than 3 inches (76 millimetres) in length.
- razor blades permanently enclosed in a cartridge or housing where less than 2 millimetres of any blade is exposed (for example disposable razors or replacement razor cartridge heads).



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4. Who does the law apply to?

The law applies to any person or trader who sells knives etc. Both the sales person and the business owner could be prosecuted for any illegal sales. It does not matter if it was believed that the purchase was being made on behalf of an adult or if the person looked like they were over 18.

5. What can I do to avoid underage sales?

Please refer to our leaflet entitled *Age restricted sales – best practice guidance*. This recommends you adopt a 'Challenge 25' policy so that if any customers who appear to be below a certain age, i.e 25, attempt to buy knives, they are always asked to show suitable proof of age so that you actually verify that they are old enough to be served. Make sure all your sales staff read and understand our guidance.

We also recommend you display age warning stickers near the relevant products and at the point of sale. Use our staff reminder stickers on your tills too. They are all available free of charge.



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6. What are the penalties if I sell to underage purchasers?

Underage sale of knives, knife blades, razor blades, axes etc is prohibited by the Criminal Justice Act 1988 (offensive weapons) as amended by the Offensive Weapons Act 1996 and Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006. On conviction in the Magistrates' Court a fine or up to 6 months imprisonment can be imposed or both.

7. Other controls on knives

Some types of knives cannot be sold to anyone, however old they are:

- **Flick knives** - knives where the blade is hidden inside the handle and shoots out when a button is pressed. These are also called switchblades or automatic knives
- **Butterfly knives** - knives where the blade is hidden inside a handle that splits in two around it, like wings. The handles swing around the blade to open or close it
- **Disguised knives** - knives where the blade is hidden inside something like a belt buckle or fake mobile phone

The marketing of a knife in a way which suggests it is suitable for combat or otherwise encourages violent behavior using the knife as a weapon is also prohibited.

8. Further information

If you require further assistance on these requirements, or would like additional information leaflets or any warning notices / reminder stickers, please contact us at the address given.

Please note we also run a Knife Charter for retailers scheme to promote responsible retailing of knives. Please contact us for further details.



PLEASE NOTE: Only the Courts can interpret legislation with authority and information may be revised without notice. (Ref: Knives 06/2016)