



Home Office

Sarah Newton MP
Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and
Vulnerability

2 Marsham Street,
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Steve Baker MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

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Dear Steve,

30 AUG 2017

Thank you for your letter of 1 August to the Home Secretary about attacks on people involving acids or other corrosives. I am replying as the Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability.

The Government is clear that there is no place in our society for these sickening attacks. Attacks on people involving acids or other corrosives are a serious matter that can result in huge distress and life-changing injuries. It is vital that we do all we can to prevent these horrendous attacks from happening in the first place.

The Home Office hosted a joint event with the National Police Chiefs' Council on 4 July which I attended, with medical experts, police officers, retailers and officials from a number of government departments, to discuss this important issue. The meeting shared understanding about the nature of such attacks, action underway, and agreed what further action can be taken to prevent these kinds of attacks.

Following this event, we have announced a cross-government action plan to tackle the use of acid and other corrosives in violent attacks. The action plan is based on four key strands: ensuring effective support for victims and survivors in both the Criminal Justice System and health services; effective policing; ensuring that legislation covering the use of acid and other corrosives in attacks is understood and consistently applied; and working to restrict access to acids and other very harmful products.

The key actions include:

- The Home Office will work with police and the Ministry of Justice to assess whether the powers available to the courts, including sentencing, are sufficient to deal with these serious offences.
- New guidance will also be provided to police officers on preventing attacks, searching potential perpetrators for harmful substances and responding to victims at the scene.
- The Poisons Act 1972 will be reviewed to assess whether it should cover more acids and harmful substances.
- Further work will also take place with retailers, including online traders, to agree voluntary measures to restrict sales of acids and other corrosive substances.
- As part of the key actions, the Crown Prosecution Service has also issued interim guidance to prosecutors on the carrying and use of acid and other corrosives in violent attacks. The guidance covers the appropriate charges and public interest considerations to ensure that these reflect the seriousness of these crimes.

These measures will form part of a wide-ranging review of the law enforcement and criminal justice response to ensure that everyone working in the Criminal Justice System has the powers they need to severely punish those who commit these appalling crimes. We also need to ensure that victims and survivors are at the heart of our response and to ensure that they get the support they need.

I hope that this reassures you about the action the Government is taking to prevent acid and other corrosives being used in attacks. I will be updating MPs in September on the progress we have made with the action plan.

pp. *Susan Williams*

Sarah Newton MP