



Home Office

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Minister of State for Police and
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Rt Hon Dame Karen Bradley MP
The Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

20 December 2024

Dear Karen,

Consultation outcome - age verification and remote sales of alcohol and next steps.

Between 24 January 2024 and 30 March 2024, the previous Government ran a consultation on whether digital identities and other age assurance technology, such as age estimation, should be allowed to play a role in determining whether someone is old enough to purchase alcohol. Digital identities are technology that enable people to verify information about themselves, such as their age or identity, for example via app-based products. Age estimation technology allows retailers to check people's age, for example by scanning their face to determine whether they are over the age of 18.

The consultation also considered age verification in the context of remote sales when alcohol is not purchased face-to-face. Since the Act came into effect in 2005, the way in which people purchase alcohol has changed, with sales increasingly being made online, as well as in many other settings which do not initially involve face-to-face contact - for example supermarket self-checkout tills and self-scanners, and table service at restaurants. Whilst age checks are currently required at the point of sale, they are not required at the point of delivery; this consultation therefore also looked at whether age checks at the point of delivery should be introduced.

The consultation looked at the impact these potential changes would have on the four objectives of the Licensing Act 2003 (the prevention of crime and disorder; the protection of children from harm; public safety; and the prevention of public nuisance).

Results of the consultation and next steps

Digital Identities

The outcome of the consultation demonstrated strong support (72%) to amend the Licensing Act to allow the use of digital identification for age verification purposes for the sale of alcohol. The Home Office's intention is to take this forward next year once the Data (Use and Access) Bill receives Royal Assent. The Data Bill, which has recently been introduced, will put the current UK digital identity and attributes trust framework on a statutory footing and will provide for a public register of certified services on GOV.UK, and for those services to be issued a trust mark. This will make it easy for users and businesses to see whether a service meets robust government standards.

Other Age Assurance Technology

Only 56% of respondents to the consultation were in favour of allowing the use of other age assurance technology, such as age estimation technology as proof of age in the sale of alcohol. Consultation responses raised concerns around the accuracy of the technology and the impact this would have on protected groups, as well as implications for privacy. Currently there are no standards for age estimation technology; therefore, we do not intend to allow the use of age estimation technology as part of the age verification process for alcohol sales at this time.

Remote Sales

The consultation demonstrated mixed views relating to whether the Licensing Act effectively addresses issues relating to age verification when alcohol is sold solely via online sites. Some of those that disagreed with amending the Licensing Act raised concerns about the negative impact that introducing further checks would have on different delivery models (e.g. models that rely on the ability to leave goods in a safe place for the customer to collect). Currently, we do not intend to make any changes to the Licensing Act 2003 relating to the regulation of online sales. We intend to continue work to understand the issue, where the existing regime may fall short, and consider the options available to us to remedy any such weaknesses in the future.

I attach a copy of the Government response to the consultation. I will also arrange for both a copy of this letter and the response to the consultation to be placed in the Libraries of both Houses and published on Gov.UK.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Diana Johnson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Minister of State for Police and Crime Prevention**