



UK Campaign To Change The Law Governing Crossbows

#ShanesLaw



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Couple Shane Gilmer and Laura Sugden were attacked by their neighbour with a crossbow on 12th January 2018 in Southburn, East Riding of Yorkshire. Shane tragically died from his injuries but Laura and her unborn child survived.

To honour his memory, Laura, with the support of her legal team at Ison Harrison Solicitors and Barrister Eleanor Fry, is campaigning to change the law governing crossbows.

Foreword



“Shane was murdered in the most cruel and terrifying way imaginable. It is unbelievable that the sale and ownership of such a lethal, medieval weapon remains unregulated in our modern society.

There are no laws in place to help prevent crossbows from falling into the hands of twisted and dangerous individuals like Tony Lawrence.

Shane was a loving partner and a wonderful dad and step-dad; he is missed every day by me and the rest of his family. It was clear from his final words how much he loved us all and I hope he knew how much we all loved him.

This lethal weapon has

been forgotten about in the government’s strategy on tackling gun and knife crime. That’s why, in loving memory of Shane, and to honour our beautiful daughter that he never got to meet, I am calling for legislation governing crossbows to be brought in line with firearms laws.”

Laura Sugden,

Partner of Shane Gilmer



“The laws that govern the use of crossbows in the UK are woefully inadequate. In recent years there have been several high-profile murders, but still lethal crossbows are readily available

to purchase for as little as £150. They are powerful and life-endangering weapons that ought to require the same checks and licences as gun owners.

The Crossbows Act 1987 simply makes it an offence for crossbows to be bought by or sold to those under the age of 18. In contrast, the Firearms Act 1968 requires those wishing to possess a firearm or ammunition to be assessed by the police,

and also restricts ownership in certain circumstances. These checks mean that members of the public are protected from potential misuse. Yet we do not know how many crossbows there are in circulation in the UK or in what circumstances they are held. Something must be done to help stop such horrific attacks and deaths.”

Gemma Vine,

Inquest Solicitor, Ison Harrison

Shane's murder



Shane (30) and Laura (27) lived next door to Anthony [Tony] Lawrence (55) in a semi-detached property in Southburn, nr Driffield, East Riding of Yorkshire. The couple had been together for 2 years and shared their home with Laura's daughter from a previous relationship.

On the night of the attack, Tony accessed the couple's property via the adjoining roof space. He had carefully removed bricks on the run up to the attack and had also used a listening device to eavesdrop on their conversations, probably throughout the preceding year.

Shane was fatally injured by a crossbow bolt that struck his arm, pinning it to his side. Laura was shot in the head, before being physically attacked with an arrow that Tony pushed into her neck.

Emergency services were not able to commence lifesaving treatment on Shane until approximately 45 minutes after being shot. This was due to the length of time it took to arrive at the scene and then concerns that Tony could have been in

the immediate area putting the emergency services at risk due to the range that a crossbow can fire at.

An inquest into Shane's death took place at Hull Coroners Court 12th-16th April 2021. During the attack both Laura and Shane managed to call the emergency services and the inquest jury were read a transcript of the distressing 999 calls made by the couple. They included messages which Shane asked to be passed on to Laura and his family as he lay dying from his injuries.

Following the attack Tony Lawrence fled the scene and was subsequently found dead in a camper van on 14th January 2018. (As of 21st April 2021, the inquest into his death has not yet taken place.)

On the 16th April 2021, the inquest Jury returned a conclusion of 'unlawful killing'. Professor Paul Marks, HM Senior Coroner said that he would be making a prevention of future deaths report, to raise concerns about the danger of crossbows which are currently unregulated.

Crossbow attacks



Crossbows are silent, lethal weapons. They have a similar effective range to a shotgun but offer the accuracy of a rifle. They are inexpensive and incredibly easy to obtain. The intention of this campaign is to seek further regulation of the purchase/acquisition/possession and use of crossbows and associated crossbow bolts.

The sad truth is that we have no idea how many crossbows are in circulation in the UK.

History of Crossbow Incidents in the UK

	When	Victim's name (if known)		Where
1.	21 Feb 21		Seriously injured	London
2.	14 Sept 20		Seriously injured	London
3.	27 April 20		Minor injuries	Bryncethin, South Wales
4.	15 April 20		Seriously injured	Coalisland, Northern Ireland
5.	20 Feb 20	Waseem Ramzan	Died from injuries	West Midlands
6.	20 Feb 20	Khuzaimah Douglas,	Died from injuries	West Midlands
7.	12 July 19	Man in his 20s	Seriously injured	Thatcham, Berkshire
8.	16 May 19	Shaun Reynolds	Seriously injured	West Lothian, Scotland
9.	6 May 19	Lee Atkins	Died from injuries	Bootle, Merseyside
10.	30 April 19	2 year old girl	Seriously injured	Walton, Liverpool
11.	19 April 19	Gerald Corrigan	Died from injuries	North Wales
12.	12 Nov 18	Devi Unmathal-legadoo	Died from injuries, unborn baby delivered by C section survived	Ilford, East London
13.	3 Aug 18	Rich Holmes	Died from injuries, throat lacerated	Devon

	When	Victim's name (if known)		Where
14.	3 Aug 18	Woman in 40s	Crossbow wound to her leg	Devon
15.	10 July 18	Dr Gary Griffith	Seriously injured	Watford
16.	12 Jan 18	Shane Gilmer	Died from injuries	Southburn, East Riding
17.	12 Jan 18	Laura Sugden	Survived	Southburn, East Riding
18.	24 Oct 17	Sgt Stuart Morrison	Minor injuries	Blantyre, Scotland
19.	24 Sept 17	Gordon Diduca,	Died from injuries	Dundee
20.	11 Sept 16	Archibald Climson	Seriously injured	Glasgow
21.	16 July 16	Leo Michaels	Seriously injured	Devon
22.	5 Feb 15		Minor head injury	Carnforth, Lancashire
23.	Oct 14	Sion Davies	Died from injuries	Wrexham
24.	25 Oct 14	Roy Hanson	Died from injuries	Cornwall
25.	1 July 14		Survived	Preston, Lancashire
26.	21 May 14		Minor injuries	South Belfast
27.	2 Jan 14		minor injuries	Liverpool
28.	7 July 13		Seriously injured	Grimsby, North East Lincolnshire
29.	23 June 13	Darrell Farnham	Died from injuries	Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire
30.	29 May 13	Surinder	Survived	Leeds
31.	2 Oct 12	42 year old man	minor injuries	Armagh, Northern Ireland
32.	19 Oct 10	15 year old boy	minor injuries	Cornwall
33.	2009/2010	Suzanne Blamires	Died	Bradford
34.	2009/2010	Shelley Armitage	Died	Bradford
35.	2009/2010	Susan Rushworth	Died	Bradford
36.	12 Sept 06	Thomas McGlinchey	Suffered a punctured lung	Dumbarton, Scotland
37.	24 Sept 05	Kenny Beal	Survived	County Durham
38.	6 July 05	Alan Eva	Died	Somerset
39.	4 March 05	Geoffrey Maguire	Injured	Selby, Yorkshire
40.	25 Sept 04	Jimmy Hewett	Died	New Addington, South London
41.	26 March 04	Wayne Phillips	Died	Dartford
42.	3 June 03	Charles Cawley	Died	Rochdale

In addition to this, there are another 43 cases involving incidents where a crossbow has been used to threaten someone or used in a crime but thankfully no one was injured or lost their lives.

Statement of intent to change the law governing crossbows

New crossbow legislation should seek to ensure that legitimate ownership and use of crossbows is protected (for example, in the sporting world) but that safeguards are in place to reduce the likelihood of such lethal weapons being possessed by those with no legitimate reason to own or use them or those whose possession of a lethal weapon would likely give rise to concerns for public safety or the peace.

It is suggested that legislation in respect of crossbows could be passed which is broadly in line with those governing the purchase/ acquisition/possession and use of firearms/shotguns, in that a certificate should be obtained, on assessment by the police of various criteria to ensure insofar as is possible that the purpose of such possession/use is legitimate and that steps will be taken to ensure safe handling and storage.

For example, at present those who wish to obtain a certificate to possess a shotgun or firearm must

demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Chief Constable that they:

- Have a good reason to own a shotgun / firearm
- Are of sound mind and physically able to handle a firearm
- Can possess a shotgun / firearm without danger to public safety or the peace
- Do not associate with persons who are of intemperate habits
- Have adequate security arrangements to prevent so far as possible their firearms ending up in the hands of criminals

Current legislation prevents people who have been sentenced to certain terms of imprisonment from possessing a firearm; we see no reason why this should not at the very least be replicated for crossbows.

Moreover, it may be that further research and debate identifies an association between the possession of crossbows and offending which

does not meet the current criteria for prohibiting possession based on past sentences alone, but which nonetheless merits consideration for an additional mandatory or discretionary prohibition.

It is envisaged that there will nonetheless be types of crossbows or bolts which have been designed or adapted in such a way as to maximise their lethal effect for which there is unlikely to be a legitimate sporting purpose and that any such weapons or crossbow bolts should be subject to a general prohibition in England and Wales (hopefully, throughout the UK) in much the same way as any shortened (sawn off) shotgun or over-powered rifle.

Similarly, we invite parliament to require those selling crossbows and associated crossbow bolts in England and Wales (ideally within the UK) to register as crossbow dealers and to maintain a register of all transactions they enter into in order to facilitate onward regulation and certification.

Ison Harrison's Head of Regulatory Law, Ian Anderson, strongly believes it's time for change...



"A total of 725,000 people in the UK own firearms. A rigorous process is rightly followed when a person applies for a licence and on renewal. If concerns arise at any time, armed police can seize the weapons and revoke the licence. Records of who

owns guns and where they are kept are meticulous. Nobody can buy, sell, or transfer a gun without informing the police and anyone convicted of serious crime is prohibited from owning a firearm for life.

The above is in stark contrast to the law around crossbows. Crossbows are not regulated like firearms. Any adult can buy, sell, transfer or receive a crossbow. It can be kept anywhere the owner likes. Used legitimately it can kill deer at a range of 80 yards. The dangers are blindingly obvious.

As a regulatory solicitor who deals daily with firearms and shotgun licensing it is my view that the law in relation to the ownership and certification of firearms could be readily adapted and applied to crossbows, either by bringing them into the scope of existing legislation or by drafting a new set of regulations. Any legitimate crossbow owner would have nothing to fear from such regulation and I am an advocate for a change in the law and believe it is long overdue."

How can you help?

Without a change to the law, crossbows will continue to be readily available and accessible to anyone over the age of 18. There is a concerning rise in cases where people have either been seriously injured or killed by a crossbow and without this weapon being regulated in line with firearms we fear that the numbers of deaths and serious injuries will continue to rise further.

Sign the petition

By signing Laura's Parliamentary Petition, you can help her achieve the 100,000 signatures needed to trigger a parliamentary debate on the proposed law change.

[Sign The Petition](#) 

Write to your local MP

The change that we are campaigning for won't happen without pressure being placed on the government to take action. You can help by writing to your MP, drawing this issue to their attention and asking for their support to this campaign. A copy of a sample letter you can send can be found in the appendix to this document.

Join the conversation on social media

Show your support by following and contributing towards the campaign via Twitter and Facebook using **#ShanesLaw** **#ChangeCrossbowLaws**.

Appendix

The Rt Hon [insert the name of your local MP] MP
House of Commons
London

Dear [insert the name of your MP] MP

Re: UK Campaign to change the law governing crossbows #ShanesLaw

I am writing to draw your attention to a campaign calling for a change to crossbow laws and to ask for your support in pushing for reform.

The law currently allows anyone over the age of 18 to buy or own a crossbow, irrespective of what they want to use it for, their mental state, or previous criminal convictions. I believe that legislation in respect of crossbows should be in line with those governing the purchase/acquisition/possession and use of firearms/shotguns.

Crossbows are silent, lethal weapons. They have a similar effective range to a shotgun but offer the accuracy of a rifle. They are inexpensive and incredibly easy to obtain.

There is a concerning rise in cases where people have either been seriously injured or killed by a crossbow and without this weapon being regulated in line with firearms, I fear that the numbers of deaths and serious injuries will continue to rise further.

I respectfully ask that you back a campaign being led by Laura Sugden. She and her partner, Shane Gilmer were attacked by their neighbour with a crossbow on 12th January 2018 in Southburn, East Riding of Yorkshire. Shane tragically died from his injuries, but Laura and her unborn child survived.

You will find a link to the campaign report [here](#).

At Shanes inquest on 16th April 2021, the Jury returned a conclusion of 'unlawful killing'. Professor Paul Marks, HM Senior Coroner, said that he would be making a 'prevention of future deaths report', to raise concerns about the danger of crossbows which are currently unregulated.

I have signed the [Parliamentary Petition](#) set up by Laura asking for a crossbow laws to be reformed in the hope that it receives the 100,000 signatures needed to trigger a parliamentary debate. However, this action alone may not be enough, and I urge you to raise the matter in parliament and push for reform. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I hope you can help.

Yours sincerely
[insert your name]
[insert your full address]