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Britain Reviews Alcohol Rules for Rapid Delivery Services

Ministers are examining whether online sales and quick home delivery are outpacing licensing and age-check safeguards.

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The British government said on Sunday that it is reviewing how existing alcohol licensing rules apply to rapid delivery services, as ministers examine whether the growth of online alcohol sales is affecting public health and safety.

In a written answer to Parliament, Sarah Jones, a Home Office minister, said the government recognizes that consumer buying habits have changed in recent years, with a notable rise in alcohol purchases made through online platforms and rapid

delivery services. She said the Department of Health and Social Care and the Home Office are looking at how current licensing rules apply to those services and are monitoring emerging evidence on their impact on people’s health.

Jones did not announce any immediate changes to licensing or age-verification rules. But she said the government would act where necessary to protect public safety.

The response came after Peter Prinsley, a Labour lawmaker representing Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket, asked what assessment the government had made of the potential impact of rapid alcohol delivery services on alcohol dependency and alcohol-related harm, and whether it planned to review existing licensing and age-verification regulations for such services.

Jones said she would soon hold a roundtable with the minister for public health and prevention to discuss possible solutions with health care professionals and experts in the field.

The Licensing Act 2003 currently regulates the sale and supply of alcohol in Britain. The government’s review comes as rapid delivery apps and online retailers have expanded their role in alcohol sales, raising questions among public health advocates about access, age checks and the ease with which people can obtain alcohol at home within minutes.

The issue has drawn attention because fast delivery can make it harder for retailers to spot risky purchasing patterns and for authorities to enforce age verification consistently. Public health officials have also warned that easier access could worsen drinking problems for people already struggling with dependency.

Jones’s statement did not set out a timetable for any policy changes, but it confirmed that ministers are actively examining whether current rules are keeping pace with the way alcohol is now sold and delivered across the country.