

Firearms licensing guidance updates

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Updated guidance following our public consultation

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We've published updated guidance on firearms licensing – which is the process of controlling access to firearms, including shotguns, to keep the public safe. The update is the first in several steps we're taking to support improvements in this area of policing.

Members of the public can lawfully keep and use firearms, providing they apply for and obtain a licence to do so.

Firearms licensing teams in forces are responsible for deciding who is suitable to keep a firearm without danger to public safety.

Who the guidance is for

Authorised professional practice (APP) is the official source of professional practice for policing. Our [Firearms licensing APP](#) provides guidance for:

- chief constables who have overall responsibility (in law) for firearms licensing decisions in their force
- officers and staff who work in firearms licensing teams – including strategic leads, firearms licensing managers, firearms enquiry officers and administrative staff
- frontline officers and staff who engage with licence holders during their day-to-day duties

Why it's needed

Police firearms licensing plays a crucial part in keeping the public safe. We're working closely with the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) to support forces to prevent tragic incidents involving licence holders.

Our updated APP provides guidance on checks that should be carried out when assessing applications to own firearms. It supports forces to adhere to the Home Office's updated statutory

guidance. It also addresses recommendations following the inquest into the Plymouth shootings.

About the updates

We have used evidence-based practice to update this guidance, with the aim of providing a fair, transparent and consistent service to the public.

The updates include:

- information on roles and responsibilities of those within policing who work on firearms licensing
- a framework to help all staff to contribute to the suitability assessment process when deciding whether to grant, refuse or revoke a firearms licence, or whether to return a firearm and certificate following their seizure
- the processes that should be followed
- practical information on effective planning, resourcing and running of firearms licensing teams

Future initiatives

In June 2023, the policing minister announced that the government would be providing £500,000 for the College of Policing and the NPCC to establish a new national training programme that will become mandatory for police firearms enquiry officers.

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) will also be conducting a thematic inspection in 2024/2025, looking at forces' planning and procedures related to firearms licensing.

- [Read the Firearms licensing APP](#)

Related resources

- [Response to consultation – Firearms licensing APP \(pdf\) 88.88 KB](#)

Tags

Firearms