



National Firearms and Explosives Licensing

Firearm Certificate Holders – Health and Wellbeing

Police Scotland's priority is to ensure public safety, operate a firearms licensing process that delivers a quality service to certificate holders across our diverse communities in Scotland and keep people safe. Our firearms community currently includes almost 51,000 firearm and shotgun certificate holders and around 22,000 air weapon certificate holders. We work very closely with our key partners and colleagues in the Scottish Government, Home Office and shooting organisations to create a shooting environment that is safe, compliant with firearms legislation and does not disadvantage our certificate holders.

An important benefit of partnership working is that together we are committed to safeguarding the welfare of certificate holders by being alert to and identifying any concerns early. You will be aware that GPs now share information with us confidentially, regarding any medical concerns they may have regarding their patients who hold firearms, and this helps to keep certificate holders and others safe. Police and shooting organisations rely on honest, responsible certificate holders to inform police if they are diagnosed with or treated for any relevant medical condition. This forms part of the declaration signed by applicants when they apply for a firearm or shotgun licence.

Part of our ongoing prevention work is safeguarding the health and wellbeing of our certificate holders, by intervening early where there are any concerns. Unfortunately we often find out about problems that they are experiencing in their lives when it is too late, and sometimes following tragic circumstances. We need communities to inform the police of any concerns that they have about their own or other certificate holders' welfare, even if this is a situation that may affect someone's ability to safely possess guns at that time. These are often temporary situations and can be as a result of a marriage breakdown, employment challenges, bereavement, physical or mental illness, alcohol or substance misuse, farming issues, financial difficulties or anything else at all that may have a negative impact on a person's wellbeing.

Police Scotland are working in partnership with all of our key partners across the shooting organisations as we realise that certificate holders and their families and friends may be reluctant to speak to police and raise concerns, for fear of having their guns removed. Together we want to reassure the shooting community that any action taken will follow engagement with your GP, if a medical concern is identified, and discussion with the certificate holder and will be proportionate, based on risk and take cognisance of all the circumstances.

We are already frequently contacted by responsible certificate holders and their families with concerns about their loved ones and people regularly volunteer to relinquish their firearms until such time as any issue has resolved itself or we have received an assurance from their GP that they are not a danger to themselves or others. Police Scotland encourage this proactive responsible approach and appreciate that we could be dealing with working farmers for example whose livelihoods may be affected so we will endeavour to return firearms as soon as possible. We will also consider other measures such as enhanced security, remote storage or temporarily sharing guns with other certificate holders.

If you have any health concerns regarding yourself as a certificate holder or someone else who holds or has applied for a firearm, shotgun or air weapon certificate, please call your GP, NHS 24 or 999 in an emergency, as appropriate.

If you are a member of a shooting organisation then you may wish to contact them to discuss any concerns or you can call Police Scotland on 101 or report a concern anonymously to Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.