

Surrey Police – Update on progress against HMIC Recommendations Firearms Licensing

	Recommendations/Areas for Improvement	Accepted (Yes/No)	Progress Against Recommendation	HMIC Report Targeting the risk reference
	Firearms Licensing Inspection March 2015			
1	<p>Recommendation 1 Within three months, all chief constables should assess how well the governance of firearms licensing in his or her force meets the standards set out in Authorised Professional Practice. Chief constables of forces where the governance standards are not being complied with should put in place immediately the correct arrangements and procedures in order to meet the standards in full.</p>	Yes	<p>Sussex and Surrey are two of the four forces recognised at the time of the inspection as having effective arrangements in place. However we continue to examine our processes and procedures with the Authorised Professional Practice and they continue to be good for both forces. Our arrangements will be self-inspected again in January 2016 as part of a further review of Firearms licensing in Sussex and Surrey.</p>	Page 22 Para 3.9
2	<p>Recommendation 2 Within six months, all chief constables should establish arrangements for the effective monitoring and audit of their firearms licensing procedures, as required by the Authorised Professional Practice.</p> <p>HMIC comment Seven of the 11 forces inspected had sent staff on these FOE courses, Surrey and Sussex were included.</p>	Yes	<p>Sussex and Surrey already had in place cross dip sample of each other's work on a quarterly basis reporting the findings to the respective Firearms Licensing Manager for any necessary action as suggested in para 3.16 of the full report.</p> <p>The measurable performance indicator in respect of the percentage of certificates granted prior to expiry is monitored at the monthly Management meeting and both forces are consistently performing in excess of comparable sized constabularies. Surrey in particular has made month on month improvements since the staffing levels of Firearms Enquiry Officers (FEOs) was addressed and the shortage filled. Authorised Professional Practice and Home Office guidance is being applied in both Forces; our audit and self-inspection regime is in place.</p> <p>Further attention is needed to review training and Continuous Professional Development. Surrey and Sussex were noted as having sent staff to the previously non accredited Dorset Course. Surrey has and continues to send managers and FEOs to the twice annual Explosives Inspectors Course run by West Yorkshire. This has become more significant since the significant change in legislation and Surrey has the</p>	Page 23 Para 3.14

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			only manager who has attended this revised course and he is able to give guidance to both forces.	
3	<p>Recommendation 4 Within three months, all chief constables should assess the demand placed on their firearms licensing department and ensure it has the capacity to meet this demand and provide an efficient and effective service at all times.</p> <p>HMIC comment Seven of the 11 forces which they inspected told them that they had backlogs of work in their firearms licensing departments.</p>	Yes	<p>Both Forces are performing well against Management Set Guidelines. Now Surrey has returned to full staffing levels of FEOs we have identified a potential lack of capacity to deal with the files generated by the higher numbers of FEOs and we are in danger of a shift in the previous backlog from FEOs to the Admin office. Surrey has begun the recruitment process for a Administration Officer to cover the currently shared admin tasks to allow the Firearms Administration Officers to deal with the more skilled office work. This additional role will be funded by the additional income generated by the increase in renewals which was a direct result of the change in certificates from 3 to 5 years.</p> <p>This capacity continues to be monitored at the monthly Management meeting; demand, capacity and capability are discussed and action taken accordingly. Particularly sickness and known absences (e.g. maternity leave) are discussed and any required cover put in place.</p> <p>We are in year one of a three year significant increase in demand due to the cycle of renewals and both teams are currently working at full capacity dealing with high volumes</p> <p>At the time of inspection Surrey had backlogs due to Op Caccini, these have now cleared. Op Caccini was a review of certificate holders who had previous domestic violence issues following the murders committed by Mr Lowe in Surrey. Surrey also suffered with the removal of three members of staff from Firearms Licensing who were directly concerned in the Lowe review by the Independent Police Complaints Commission.</p>	Page 28 Para 4.20
4	Recommendation 8	Yes	'Total Expired' records are those where the holder's certificate has	Page 42

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	Immediately, all chief constables should satisfy themselves that all appropriate action is being taken by their force with regard to 'total expired' licensing records.		expired but the holder is still shown in possession of weapons. These are monitored on a weekly basis in Surrey by the Administration officers. Contact is made with the holder and either Temporary Permits issued or the holder required to lodge the guns with another certificate holder or a Registered Firearms Dealer. The overview is then discussed as a standing agenda item at the monthly Management meeting utilising a spreadsheet which documents each holder and details the arrangements in place for each.	Para 4.86
5	Recommendation 9 Within three months, all chief constables should ensure that their arrangements in respect of the use of temporary permits are in accordance with the Home Office guidance; that temporary permits are properly recorded without delay on the National Firearms Licensing Management System; and that effective systems exist to ensure certificate holders are not permitted, at any time, to remain in unlawful possession of a firearm.	Yes	When Surrey was experiencing the staffing shortages following the suspension of staff after the Lowe murders we issued a significant number of Temporary Permits to holders who were expiring in possession of firearms but who had applied for the renewal in good time. This has been significantly reduced in Surrey now the unit is fully staffed and the FEOs can cover the workload. This is reflected in the comment above for recommendation 4 and is monitored monthly for both Forces.	Page 45 Para 4.96
6	Recommendation 10 Immediately, all chief constables should ensure that effective arrangements are in place for the day-to-day management of Police National Computer error notifications on the National Firearms Licensing Management System, ensuring that the notification requirements are dealt with and that the National Firearms Licensing Management System record is successfully transferred to the Police National Computer. HMIC comment	Yes	Surrey receives notification of PNC errors weekly from the Data Bureau internally and these are dealt with by the Firearms Admin Officers in the office. Any PNC errors that are encountered on a daily basis are addressed at the time and any errors that Surrey staff are unable to correct are forwarded to the Home Office on a quarterly basis.	Page 46 Para 4.103

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	HMIC were concerned to find that 3 of the 11 forces which they visited did not have an adequate process to deal with these notifications, Sussex and Surrey are not one of the 3 forces.			
7	<p>Recommendation 12</p> <p>Within six months, all chief constables should either satisfy him or herself that they have completed, or complete, a retrospective review of the certificate holders' continued suitability to have access to or possession of firearms in the case of section 1 firearms and shotgun certificates issued before the Home Office guidance was updated in relation to the on-going monitoring of the activity of a certificate holder or associates. This review should extend to all such activity which may give rise to concern for public safety.</p>	Yes	<p>In Sussex and Surrey a review is conducted where it comes to notice that a licence holders fitness or suitability to hold a licence is brought into question. In Surrey we receive a daily report in respect of certificate holders coming to notice on the Intelligence system NICHE. We also receive a report on a weekly basis in respect of Surrey certificate holders being arrested nationally from the Police National Computer (PNC). We additionally receive a twice annual notification of any nominal coming to notice by the Organised Crime Group who is a current certificate holder. Following Op Caccini a review was undertaken of certificate holders previously involved in Domestic abuse incidents in both Forces.</p> <p>All restoration of firearms following seizure of certificates and firearms by officers with delegated authority are now made by Supt Operations Command or above.</p>	Page 58 Para 5.40
8	<p>Recommendation 13</p> <p>Within three months, all chief constables should ensure that systems designed to identify, prior to police attendance, whether a reported incident involves or is at the address of a firearm certificate holder are in place and are always applied by staff dispatching officers to incidents; and that officers understand the risk assessment which they should be undertaking in such circumstances, and their power, when appropriate, to seize firearms and firearm certificates.</p>	Yes	<p>In Surrey checks to see if an address or nominal coming to notice via an ICAD are not completed automatically. There is a list of call types that are routinely submitted for checks to see if the address or nominal have certificates and these are notably violent crimes, domestic incidents, neighbour disputes. Due to the type of software used by Surrey control room an automated system is not feasible. However following a review into a domestic murder/suicide by a certificate holder (Postlethwaite) one of their recommendations mirrors the HMIC recommendation and this will be a further discussion topic within Surrey.</p>	Page 60 Para 5.46

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	<p><u>HMIC comment</u> In the 11 forces which we inspected, we found that 7 forces had introduced processes which meant that every incident which related to the name or address of a firearm certificate holder was automatically flagged. This ensured that attending officers were informed of the possible involvement of a firearm, and further enquiries through the National Firearms Licensing Management System were prompted. This is good practice which should be considered by all forces (Sussex Police is one of the 7). However, in the other four forces which we inspected, the system in place was less effective and it was not being applied on every occasion (Surrey is one of the 4).</p>		<p>Further work is required and on-going with Contact centres in both Forces. The Firearms Licensing Manager now provides training to all new control room staff in the use of the National Firearms Licensing Management System (NFLMS) and is the gatekeeper for all staff's access to NFLMS.</p>	
9	<p><u>Recommendation 16</u> Within three months, all chief constables should ensure that their current arrangements for public engagement with regard to firearms licensing are practical, proportionate and well known. They need to enable the force to understand the experience of service users and other interested groups. Thereafter, all chief constables should introduce effective systems to consider the results of public engagement to inform the efficiency and effectiveness of their licensing arrangements.</p> <p><u>HMIC Comments</u> Of the 11 forces which we inspected, 6 attended local game fairs where they had the opportunity to interact with certificate holders. (Sussex and Surrey)</p>	Yes	<p>This is an area for improvement for both Forces and is being addressed as part of the review in January 2016.</p>	<p>Page 66 Para 6.10</p>

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	Five had engaged with the firearms community by attending local gun clubs (Sussex only) and, in five forces, open days had been undertaken which allowed the public to engage with firearms.			