

To: Office of Police and Crime Commissioner – Performance Meeting

Date: 29th June 2017

By: Chief Inspector Kundert.

Title: Firearms Licensing and Explosive Unit

Purpose of Report/Issue:

1. Update on IPCC recommendations made following the John Lowe case, progress and lessons learned.
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Introduction

Following the murders of Christine and Lucy Lee by John Lowe in February 2014 Surrey Police referred the case to the IPCC and at the same time two Police Forces - Hampshire and North Yorkshire - carried out separate reviews of the Surrey Police's firearms Licensing Unit. The Force investigation was carried out under Operation Caccini and a Gold Group was convened which has been closely scrutinising all aspects of the ongoing operation and liaising with the IPCC.

During the following two years further reviews of the firearms licensing unit were completed including an internal review and a national review by the HMIC, each one identified recommendations. In February 2016 the IPCC published their own report into the investigation of the incident and made a number of recommendations.

In total 53 recommendations were made by these reviews and investigations, albeit a significant number were duplications in terms of similar themes and actions, and all were incorporated into an overall action plan which is overseen by an Assistant Chief Constable. The central themes of these recommendations focused on the intelligence processes and assessments used by firearms licensing staff, domestic abuse training and awareness of other risks by staff, historic reviews of previous firearms licensing decisions, firearms licensing information available to officers deployed to incidents, force policies on the seizure of firearms, delegated firearms authorities, firearms

licensing training for staff and subsequent CPD and peer reviews of decisions by firearm licensing managers.

Almost immediately after the tragic incident in 2014 issues were identified and actions completed by Surrey Police in terms of improving the firearms licensing processes and improving the capacity and capability of the team. Furthermore, additional staff were employed into the unit and leadership supervisory resilience increased and strengthened, together with new governance arrangements.

The response to each review and their respective recommendations has been an ongoing process throughout the last three years. Monthly performance meetings being introduced to ensure recommendations are satisfactorily completed, a Chief Inspector added to the command structure to enhance support, development of the team and provide day to day resilience. A continuous focus on the development of strong links between the firearms licensing team and many other internal police departments, including Intelligence, Specialist Crime, and Force Communications Department. This has contributed to the evolution from a “silo” culture of the team to a more open holistic approach.

In relation to our processes the National Decision Making Model (NDM) has been integrated into each and every one, and all staff have received training into this model. Further training has been delivered in terms of the use of Niche, other intelligence systems including PND, Domestic Abuse and the completion of threat assessments.

The professionalisation of the managers and deputy managers’ roles has been a priority, and further training provided to the new staff appointed to these roles. Additionally our new managers have been encouraged to work with other Force licensing teams, relevant external partners/organisations and our Surrey manager sits on the national firearms licensing working group.

In March 2017 Surrey Police reported back to the IPCC progress on recommendations from its investigation and the IPCC have recently written back to the Force acknowledging that all its recommendations have been satisfactorily addressed.

In conclusion significant improvements have been made to the firearms licensing systems and processes, skills, decision making, knowledge and professionalism of the staff within the team. The focus on improving the work of the firearms licensing unit has not diminished throughout this period and ongoing work continues, for example a Detective Inspector from Specialist Investigations is delivering further domestic abuse training to the team during June 2017.

The action plan remains a live document, monitored monthly at a performance meeting chaired by a Superintendent in operations Command which provides scrutiny, governance and a continued focus on continuous improvement. All of the 53 original actions have been addressed satisfactorily.

The Firearms and Explosives Licensing Unit has as one would expect, been subject of intense scrutiny for three years. New leadership, supported by systems and processes that have been extensively reviewed, internally and externally together with improved training and support to staff has delivered significant improvements.

Recommendation(s)/Future Activity:

A post implementation review was planned for June 2017, however it is now assessed that improvements made following recommendations from the IPCC, HMIC, 2 peer Force reviews and our own internal reviews have delivered tangible change. It would be disproportionate and potentially detrimental to the new Firearms licensing team to be subject to yet another review 3 years after sustained scrutiny leading to demonstrable continuous improvement following the tragic events of February 2014. Performance continues to be monitored and developed at a monthly meeting.

Background Papers: N/A

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