

Providing Medical Information for Firearm Certificate Application Guidance

In partnership with Durham Constabulary and after consultation with Durham County Council following the publication of a Domestic Homicide Review, County Durham & Darlington LMC has agreed to pilot a new process for providing medical information about applicants for firearms certificates. You will be aware of the challenges that have faced GPs with the current process and the pilot hopes to address these difficulties. The essential change in the process is that all applicants will submit their completed application to their GP. The GP will then confirm/correct/amplify the applicant's medical history and gain consent from the applicant to share information with the licensing authority. A fee can be charged for this work and will be payable by the applicant directly to the GP. Once this process is complete the GP will then post the entire application to the licensing authority.

A flow chart and template form is attached that illustrate the process.

GPs are free to set their own fee for this work and a useful guide on calculating an appropriate amount can be found on the BMA website (<http://bma.org.uk/-/media/Files/Excel/feesreadyreckoner.xls>) but as this is a service that can only be provided by the patient's registered GP the LMC suggests that a fee of £25.00 (plus VAT where applicable) is an appropriate level.

The template defines the essential factual information that should be provided and should you wish there is scope for adding additional factual information:

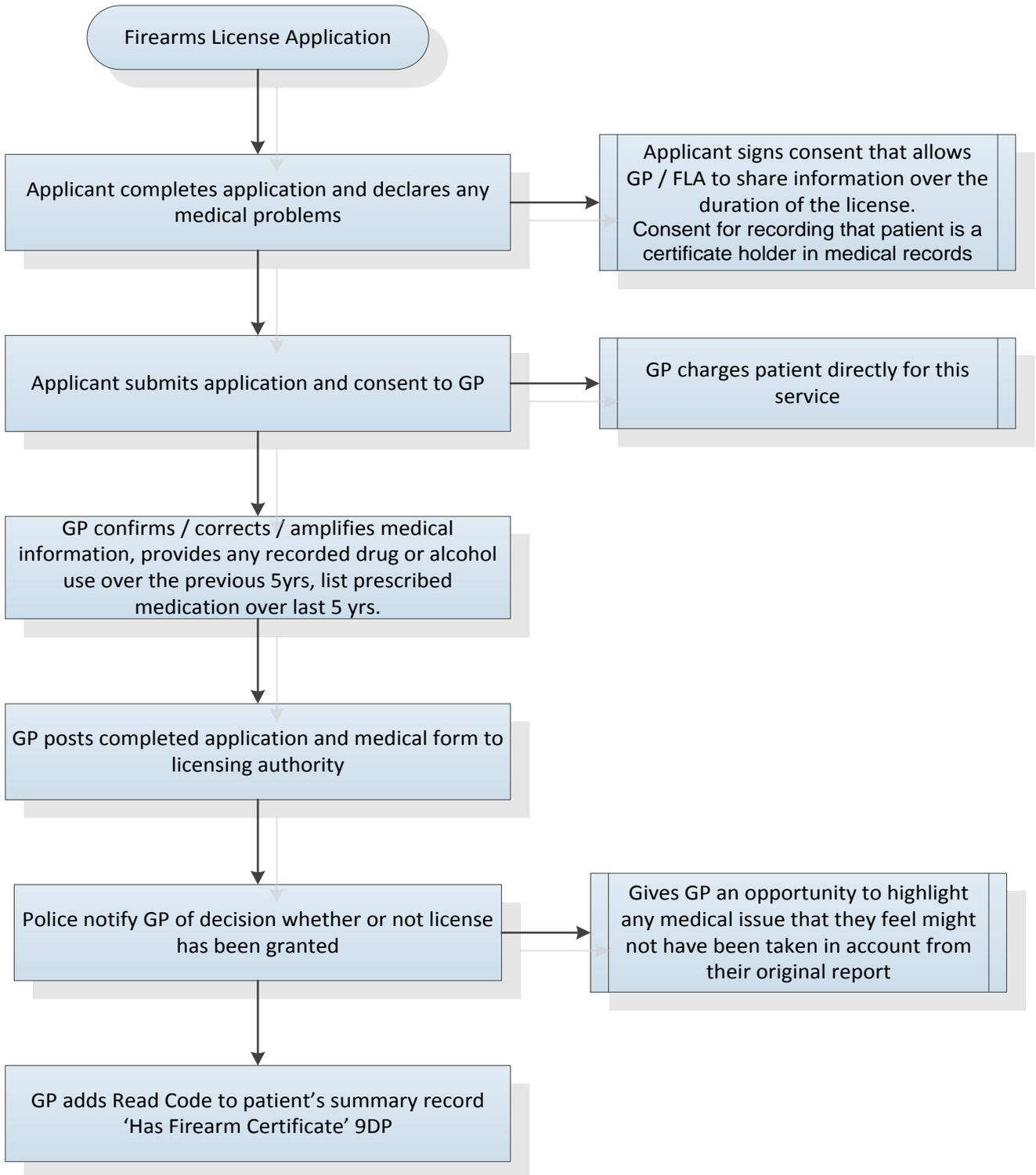
- Clarification / amplification of any health problems declared on application
- Matters of particular interest include:
 - Psychiatric or psychological conditions which might affect behaviour or beliefs in regard to firearms
 - neurological conditions such as epilepsy or other forms of loss of consciousness or those that affect control of movement and physical manipulation such as multiple sclerosis, abnormal movements or peripheral neuropathy
 - muscular-skeletal or rheumatological conditions that might affect safe handling of firearms
 - any history of substance misuse including alcohol
 - any history of domestic violence.
- For conditions that might have an impact on physical or mental ability to handle firearms, the applicant's functional ability
- Any other matter that the GP considers relevant.

GPs are not required to offer a personal opinion upon the applicant's suitability to possess firearms or shotguns and will not be asked to do so. However it is open for a GP to make such a comment if they so desire.

If the licensing authority grant a firearms licence then they will notify the patient's GP and the GP will have an opportunity to raise any concerns about the decision with the authority.

The LMC view is that GPs should add a note to the patient's summary as it likely that that somewhere in the records there will be copies of the medical report and licencing decision. Should the patient develop a physical, psychological or social problem that might impact on their suitability to have a firearm then it would be important that the GP is able to quickly and easily identify that the patient is a certificate holder so that the licencing authority can be notified.

Pilot Process for Obtaining Medical Information for Firearms License Applications



Providing Medical Information for Firearm Certificate Application Additional Notes

Concerns about a certificate holder by Health Professionals or indeed family /friends of certificate holders can be fed in via a number of methods:

- Crime stoppers (**0800 555 111** - this line is not 24hrs.),
- Directly into Durham Constabulary via the **101** Police number,
- Directly to the Firearms Licensing Unit at Police HQ; (FirearmsLicensing@durham.pnn.police.uk;
Tel: **101 – 661 2850**)

Health Professionals can make contact with the **Central Referral Unit (CRU)** in Police HQ, Aykley Heads. The CRU is a multi-agency team staffed by professionals from Social Care and Police officers with expertise in Domestic Abuse Investigation and Safeguarding.

Relatives of a Certificate Holder can report matters and remain anonymous. Naturally the expectation would be that a Health Care Professional would be prepared to give their details.

Durham Constabulary Firearms Licensing staff and officers are trained in the handling of sensitive information and understand issues of confidentiality and information governance.

All information acquired on Firearms Licensing Matters is stored on secure Computer's with specific records accessible by a small number of Constabulary Staff. All medical related information on Individual certificate records is stored in a secure room accessible only by licensing staff.

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) of the 2012 murders in Horden, led to some scrutiny of Healthcare and GP involvement in the Atherton Case. One of the actions out of the Domestic Homicide Review Action Plan is to improve information sharing processes between agencies. This was further reinforced by the Coroner at inquest and in his subsequent Rule 43 letter which was addressed to the GMC and BMA as well as the Home Office and Durham Constabulary.

Providing Medical Information for Firearm Certificate Application Durham Constabulary Guidance for Applicants

Constabulary Address & crest

Dear Sir / Madam,

As a Current Firearms and / or Shotgun Certificate(s) holder due for renewal, or a new applicant for a Firearms and / or Shotgun certificate(s) please read the following carefully

In partnership with Durham Constabulary the Local Medical Council (LMC) which oversees the General Practitioners (GP's) for County Durham and Darlington has agreed to pilot a new process for providing relevant medical information about applicants for the renewal and / or grant of Firearms and shotgun certificate(s).

This approach has been necessary after a comprehensive Firearms Licensing Review undertaken by Durham Constabulary during 2012 found a significant number of certificate holders who had either deliberately or mistakenly withheld relevant medical information which had a direct bearing on their suitability to remain or become a Firearms and / or Shotgun certificate holder.

Having a medical issue is not an automatic bar to being a certificate holder, indeed there are a number of examples where the Constabulary has worked with and continues to work with individuals and their GP's to allow them to remain a certificate holder.

In support of this pilot, all applicants are requested to submit a copy of the front page of their completed Firearms and / or shotgun application form to their GP, along with the attached medical consent form. The original documents with the appropriate fee and photographs (for their Certificate application) are to be forwarded to Durham Constabulary Firearms Licensing at the address provided.

The GP will then check and confirm or correct the applicant's relevant medical history disclosed on their application form(s) and send it directly to the force Firearms Licensing Department. This may also involve the GP forwarding a more detailed report covering relevant medical information to the Firearms Licensing Department.

A fee can be charged for this work and will be payable by the applicant directly to their GP.

The pilots begins on the 1st August 2013 for all new applicants for a Firearms and / or Shotgun certificate(s) and for those certificate holders whose certificate(s) are due to expire from October 2013, renewal application packs will be forwarded from the end of July 2013 containing this information and the Medical Consent Form.

Process:

1. Fully Complete Firearms Form 101 and / or 103 (National Firearms Licence and Shotgun application forms)
2. Photocopy the front page of Firearms Form 101 and / or 103
3. Sign medical consent form (contained within the National Form or print off the same from the Durham Constabulary Website – Firearms Licensing Section)
4. Submit the copied front page of Firearms Form 101 and / or 102 to your registered GP surgery with the signed consent form
5. Forward the original Firearms Form 101 and / or 103 with your photographs and fee to Durham Constabulary Firearms licensing.

If you require further assistance please contact number 101 and ask for the 'Firearms Licensing Department'.

Medical Attendants Report

Surgery Address

Surgery Tel No

It is important that the signing GP checks the report for any errors and removes any references to third parties before sending to the Firearms Licensing Authority

Patient Details

Name

Date of Birth

Address

Registration Details

How long have you been the medical attendant?

How far do your records go back?

Please give details of any missing periods in the medical record

Medical History

Last years consultations on system – edited to remove references to third parties

Past Medical History

Referrals

Habits and Family History

Alcohol

Drug Use

Additional Details

Medication History

Additional Information

(E.g. is there any information in your report that Durham Constabulary should not release to the patient because this would cause serious physical or mental harm to the patient or another person?)

GP Declarations

I confirm that I have checked this report and updated any information as required from the manual records and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the information contained in the report is complete and up-to-date

Date of Report

Signed

Name of Doctor Signing Report

Qualifications of Dr Signing Report

Applicant Declaration and Consent

This section **MUST** be filled in and must **NOT** be altered in any way.

Please read the following important information carefully then sign to confirm the statements below.

1. I authorise my Doctor(s) and Specialist(s) to release reports/medical information about my condition relevant to my fitness to hold a firearms license to Durham Constabulary both as part of this application process and **at any time** whilst I hold a firearms licence. Such information may include details about my physical, social and psychological circumstances, including drug and alcohol use.
2. I authorise Durham Constabulary to disclose any relevant information as may be necessary to the investigation of my fitness to hold a firearms license to my Doctor.
3. I authorise Durham Constabulary to inform my Doctor of the outcome of my application
4. I declare that I have checked the details I have given on the enclosed firearms license application and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, they are correct.
5. If granted a licence I authorise my GP to record this in my medical notes.
6. I understand that it is a criminal offence if I make a false declaration to obtain a firearms licence and can lead to prosecution.

Name

Signature

Date

I would like to view the report before it is sent Yes No