

Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Panel

21st November 2025

OFFICE OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

Briefing note: Changes to statutory guidance on firearms licensing

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Devon and Cornwall Police's Firearms and Explosives Licensing Unit (FELU) is responsible for ensuring safe and lawful use of firearms across our force area. The department manages firearm licence applications, renewals, and enquiries from members of the public.

1.2 In August 2025, the government amended its statutory guidance for firearms licensing. These changes included strengthening the requirements made of referees, increased consideration of an applicant's history of domestic abuse, dishonesty and integrity, and increased police powers to refuse or revoke certificates.

1.3 This briefing note provides a response to the following three questions:

- i. What is the status of Devon and Cornwall Police's firearms licensing waiting lists?
- ii. What are the new statutory guidelines?
- iii. What are the financial implications of the guidelines? If there is a shortfall, how is this being addressed?

2.0 What is the status of Devon and Cornwall Police's firearms licensing waiting lists?

2.1 The backlog of historic firearms applications has been dealt with.

2.2 In the 12 months to October 2025, a total of 7,679 applications (grants and renewals) were received by the FELU. Of this total, 86% were processed within the national target of 112 days, with the average time taken 71 days.

2.3 There is variation in processing times between grants and renewals. Renewals of pre-existing firearms licenses saw 88% completed in 112 days in the 12 months to August 2025. The granting of new firearms licenses to new applicants saw 55% processed in 112 days in the same timeframe.

3.0 What are the new statutory guidelines?

3.1 The new statutory guidance was published in August 2025 and covers the processes and criteria for assessing suitability to possess firearms (and to be a Registered Firearms Dealer). It is intended to assist Police Chief Officers in carrying out appropriate, proportionate and consistent checks and assessments so as to come to an informed decision.



3.2 The 2025 guidance has 71 changes from the previous 2023 guidance. The new guidance strengthens checks and matters relating to:

- Suitability
- Continuous assessment
- Record keeping
- Duration of certificates and registrations

3.3 The revised Home Office firearms licensing guidance is attached at appendix A.

4.0 What are the financial implications of the guidelines? If there is a shortfall, how is this being addressed?

4.1 At this time the police have identified a small number of direct financial implications including a subscription cost for national mandatory training at £36,000 per annum. The requirements for strengthening the checks and review of applicants will impact the time taken to process licence applications. Given the short period of time since implementation of the new guidance it has not yet been possible to fully assess the impact of these changes.

Briefing note end

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