



Firearms Licensing Independent Advisory Group

Melton 2 Police Station, Wyke Way, Melton HU14 3BQ

Thursday 25 September 2025 – 7pm to 9pm

Meeting Minutes

Attendees

ACC Andy Walker (Chair)

Officers in attendance: Insp Ben Frere, Supt Sharon Philpott, Chief Inspector Tim Harrison, PC Laura Minns. Dep Police and Crime Commissioner Leo Hammond.

Police Staff in attendance: Jayne Collins, Amanda Kemp, Melissa Wilson, Vicky Noble, Richard Hales, Martin Hellewell, Nick Pearce, Matthew Ainley

Plus 40 members of the public.

1. Welcome and Introductions

ACC Andy Walker welcomed attendees to the inaugural meeting of the Humberside Police Firearms Licensing IAG. He acknowledged that the current firearms licensing service provided by Humberside Police is not acceptable and expressed gratitude to all attendees for participating in the conversation.

Inspector Ben Frere introduced himself as the lead for Firearms Licensing and explained the rationale for establishing the IAG: to ensure the voices of the public are heard and considered in shaping the service.

2. Update on Firearms Licensing Performance

Inspector Frere provided an overview of current performance:

- The department comprises 10 staff members: 5 administrative and 5 firearms enquiry officers (FEOs).
- Emphasised the importance of thorough checks before issuing licences, using the analogy: “Would you be happy to give everyone in this room a gun based on what you know about them now?”

- Current outstanding figures:
- 642 grant applications
- 948 renewal applications
- 14 incident reviews
- 129 temporary firearm permits
- 295 temporary shotgun permits
- Explained that if a renewal application is submitted late (after expiry), the applicant will not be eligible for a temporary permit.
- Average processing times:
- Grants: 12–15 months (acknowledged as unacceptable)
- Renewals: 5–6 months
- Variations: 20 days

3. Update on Statutory Guidance

Key changes and requirements:

- Shotgun applications now require two referees, aligning with firearm applications.
- Both referees must be spoken to.
- If referees differ from previous applications, the reasons will be explored.
- Partners must be interviewed, with increased focus on Domestic Abuse (DA).
- Medical assessments now include treatment beyond GP records.
- Any indication of DA will trigger a suitability review.
- All individuals residing at the applicant's address will be subject to checks.

4. Roles and Responsibilities of External Stakeholders

- Thanks were extended to external agencies in attendance.
- Attendees were encouraged to act as the eyes and ears of the community. Concerns about individuals holding firearms should be reported to the police.
- Clubs were asked to submit new member details individually rather than in bulk to avoid overwhelming the licensing team.
- Special thanks were given to Andy's Man Club for attending. A heartfelt appeal was made to encourage openness and honesty, referencing tragic cases where individuals—primarily men—have taken their own lives using firearms.

5. Incident-Related Review Case Studies

Case 1 – Mental Health Self-Declaration

- Applicant spoke to their GP and voluntarily lodged their firearms.
- GP notified the police and confirmed improvement in the applicant's mental health.
- Firearms were returned following professional confirmation.
- Emphasised the importance of honesty and engagement.

Case 2 – Controlled Substance Allegation

- Applicant complied with a drug test request.
- Results showed no use of controlled substances for three months.
- Licence was granted.

Case 3 – Controlled Substance Allegation

- Intelligence received regarding cocaine use.
- Firearms seized promptly (Saturday report, Monday seizure).
- Applicant cancelled the drug test request.

Case 4 – Neighbour Dispute

- Reports received from both parties; no criminal charges.
- Decision made on the balance of probability.
- Certificate holder received a warning; further reports led to firearm removal.

Case 5 – Domestic Abuse

- Both male and female applicants had recent/historic DA concerns.
- Both applications were rejected.

Further Questions and Discussion

Q: Can applicants receive formal acknowledgement that their documents have been received by the licensing team?

A: If you have a reference number, please take this as confirmation that your application has been received. Phone lines have been diverted to an answer machine — while staff are answering calls, they are not able to process applications. If further information is needed, the team will contact the applicant directly. Improvements to the software are being explored to help speed up processes.

Q: If someone applies for club membership following reports of a domestic dispute, is there a five-year or lifetime ban in place?

A: It is the club's decision whether to accept an applicant. The licensing team may provide some information but cannot disclose everything due to GDPR. Clubs are encouraged to use their judgement.

Q: What is Humberside Police's position on prosecutions relating to possession of firearms after a certificate has expired?

A: Humberside Police will not allow certificates to expire if an application has been submitted prior to the expiry date. However, if a licence is allowed to lapse, the application cannot be expedited. The team will always try to assist where possible.

Q: Will the recent changes mean more enquiries and longer processing times?

A: Yes, additional enquiries will be required. However, some changes are expected to streamline processes, so the overall impact on time should be minimal.

Q: Why can't GPs send the required information directly to the licensing team?

A: They can, but it is at the GP's discretion. Inspector Frere emphasised the importance of obtaining 10 years of medical records.

Q: Does taking pain medication affect an application?

A: No, it does not.

Comment: Drifffield Gun Club expressed thanks to the licensing team for their support.

Q: Are GPs duty-bound to report stress?

A: Yes, but assessments are made practically. For example, stress due to work or parenting is considered in context. Often, a phone call can clarify the situation.

Q: You've encouraged us to talk to you, but said you've switched to an answerphone system?

A: Please leave a message or send an email — the team will respond.

Q: If temporary resources were provided, could the team catch up with the backlog?

A: Yes, additional resources would help, but staff would require training.

Q: Have the increased fees been ring-fenced for the licensing team?

A: No — the current fees do not cover the cost of the team in its current format. However, avenues are being explored to increase the team, and both ACC Andy Walker and Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner Leo Hammond expressed the desire to do so.

Q: Certificates are now posted rather than delivered — is this a risk?

A: Yes, but the risk is considered very low and acceptable.

Q: Are there practices from other forces that could improve efficiency?

A: There is no standardised software or process across forces, except for the certificate production system. A national software is in development. Humberside Police regularly liaises with other forces to identify best practices.

Q: What are the most common issues with applications?

A:

- Missing GP reports
- Discrepancies in declared firearms
- Referees not meeting criteria (e.g., being a family member)

Q: Should members be encouraged to submit renewals earlier?

A: Yes — renewal notices are sent 16 weeks in advance. Applicants are urged to act promptly.

Q: Is the five-year licence period statutory?

A: Yes, it is mandated The Firearms Act 1968.

Q: Is there a timeframe for clearing the backlog?

A: This depends on securing additional resources. The current aim is to catch up by Summer.

Q: Can the variation process be simplified, such as a one-for-one swap?

A: No — this is restricted by law.

Q: Could a checklist be provided to applicants to clarify requirements?

A: This is a suggestion the team will explore further.

Q: West Yorkshire has a login system — could Humberside implement something similar?

A: Yes — this is being explored alongside other system improvements.