

# Minutes

## **NPCC FELWG, MEETING HOSTED BY SUFFOLK POLICE. THURSDAY 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2017.**

**Security classification:** Not Protectively Marked  
**Disclosable under FOIA 2000:** Partial  
**Author:** DURHAM CONSTABULARY  
**Force/organisation:** NPCC  
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**Business Area:** FIREARMS  
**Portfolio:** FIREARMS AND EXPLOSIVES LICENSING WORKING GROUP  
**Attachments @ paragraphs:** None

### 1. **ATTENDANCE**

#### 1.1 Present

ACC Dave Orford, Durham Constabulary, Chair  
T.Chief Inspector Neal Bickford, Durham Constabulary  
Graham Widdecombe, Home Office  
Dave Coutts, North Yorkshire Police  
Bridget Hodgson, Northamptonshire Police  
Nicola Murphy, PSNI  
Mark Groothuis, Op. Endeavour  
Martin Parker, NaBIS  
Mike Cox, Avon and Somerset Constabulary  
Paul Gregory, Surrey Police  
Steve White, Police Scotland  
Audrey Marsh, Police Scotland  
Carol Auld, Police Scotland  
Dave Flynn, HMICS  
Richard Kennett, Suffolk Constabulary  
Joe Cooke, Devon and Cornwall Police  
Fiona Smith, West Yorkshire Police  
Darren Miller, Hampshire Police  
Steve Millington, West Mercia Police  
Janet Jones, Merseyside Police  
Bernie Turner, Met Police  
Rob Lock, Sussex Police



## Apologies

### 1.2 **Welcome**

ACC Orford welcomed everyone to Suffolk Police and thanked Richard Kennett for hosting the meeting.

### 1.3 **Apologies**

Roger Arditti, Met Police.  
Helen Rees Dyfed Powys Police  
Chris Lynn, NCA

## 2. **Action Log**

### **201 amendments; GW to expedite change to 201 to include 'have ever' in relation to relevant medical questions. –**

GW advised the terminology for the wording had been broadly accepted, and in addition to the issue of wet signatures was with HO lawyers with a view to Statutory Instrument change. – GW anticipates completion before end of financial year. – ONGOING.

**Medical screening letter** – Covered in main agenda.

**PND** – DC still awaiting updates in relation to capacity to conduct bulk scheduled searches on PND – ONGOING. On a similar theme, issues have arisen in relation to who owns the data on NFLMS; MG outlined the HO stance that they own the data, and despite the police changing and managing the data, if police want to do bulk searches, primacy is the prerogative of the HO. GW advises Dennis Wilmer is following this issue up from the HO side to ensure a workable solution. GW / DW to give clarity on ownership and use of data. DM volunteered to lead from a police position.

**ACRO forms** – DM advises no change in stance from US. In relation to FNO checks ACRO forms are on the POLKA website, with 84% compliance. – 6 positive responses from ACRO which highlights the importance of the checks. DM further advises that Germany now comply with ACRO checks. MG of the belief that there is a lack of understanding in relation to ACRO. **ACTION – Dave Orford to write a Chief's Net letter to all forces advising of importance of the same and requiring compliance. – Tasked to DM to pen the letter.** DM advises that this service is currently being done pro-bono given the few numbers involved.

**\*\*THIS SECTION IS RESTRICTED – not to be shared outside policing – highlights vulnerability\*\***

**IT solutions – all forces to update DM in relation to private sector engagement;**  
Action complete – DM has details of the same.

**Certificate extensions;** Covered in main agenda by DM.

**Open conditions on grant;** not complete due to extenuating circumstances – DC to keep ownership of this task. ONGOING.

**Security standards;** Initial comments have been provided via West Yorkshire police, though this needs to be woven in to the narrative and shared with NaBIS in relation to the prevent strategy meeting.

**Strategy document –** Covered in main agenda

**FEO CPD –** Covered in main agenda

#### 4. **Medical Arrangements**

DO began by opening the floor to get a pen picture of how arrangements are working within the various regions.

DC- Significant change in response; - more responses are being received from GP's advising where departments ought to take a closer look at people- this is not what was initially agreed, but demonstrates that GP's in DC's area do take the matter seriously, this observation, however, is far from 100%

RL; In Sussex the position is deteriorating, and a significant number of GP's are advising that they are refusing to engage in any way with anything to do with firearms licensing, for payment or otherwise – RL has escalated this matter to LMC's, but so far this has been ineffective, however, in line with DC's observations, he has examples of doctors using their conscience and contacting him direct on occasion – issue remains one of uniformity, or lack of.

PG; Position is patchy throughout the region.

BT; Similar position to PG – no uniformity in response, though the Met can cite examples of direct contact from GP's where concern exists.

BH; Lincolnshire have had a number suicides by shooting, and force' position may change to a policy of requiring a medical screening letter – this has not been adopted yet as it is being considered by legal.

JJ; Efforts have been made with GP's to engage- the position throughout the region is mixed.

FS; No change

MC; Wiltshire and Devon are trying to drive this, perhaps because of the Wiltshire coroners view. Elsewhere the position is mixed.

DO asked about feedback in relation to enduring markers – DC advises some surgeries citing poor systems as a reason for not adding enduring markers.

MG reminded the group he maintains the register of suicide / homicide by licensed firearm – he has about 4 examples of recent suicides whereby surgeries have refused to cooperate an individual has gone on to kill themselves. **ACTION; MG to share data with NB**

SM states some forces have an online portal to help facilitate GP's in highlighting concerns. Fees are being requested by GP's as a matter of routine in his area.

RK; Position is getting worse – fees are being required as a matter of routine.

Position in Scotland remains strong. AM states requesting bespoke factual data is easier to obtain than opinion papers which has helped.

DO gave update to HO position – Nick Hunt is policy lead – HO position is that there is unlikely to be any change in primary legislation or statutory instruments, however, they wish to continue to work with policing, and require an updated regional picture – HO have given a list of requirements.

**DO gave action to all regional reps – NOTE TWO WEEK WINDOW** – specific questions around compliance, fees, enduring markers, and examples – DO acknowledges difficulties in obtaining accurate data, but please provide all context. DO has also pushed back to the HO that the enduring marker is a key objective for FELWG. DO also explains that CC Gareth Wilson is negotiating with BMA in relation to fees issues across the piste.

GW emphasised that the prospect of legislative change was very unlikely, and highlighted that the HO were to begin further negotiations with the BMA / GMC and shooting organisations.

RK made the point that the onus should lie with the applicant to provide a screening letter, however, GW advises this may require legislative change.

## **5 Fees / Home Office Update**

GW gave update in relation to fees – Section 5 – Preliminary meeting with shooting organisations to discuss S5 fees, and differentiate fee depending on size of dealers.

Fees for certificates – proposal to ministers is that there should not be an increase in fees this year. DO has spoken to NPCC colleagues – there is reducing tolerance from many Chief's in relation to the total cost to policing of licensing provision versus what is recouped from the fees. DO was clear he did not want to waste police time to attend multiple working groups if there was no ministerial appetite for full cost recovery, as anything other than this figure would be arbitrary. As such DO requests the fee is either not touched, is inflation linked, or there is full cost recovery – the emphasis being on full – everything that it costs policing to provide the licensing function. Clearly the police position is that we would want full recovery, though this is now a matter for the Home Office.

DO has no problem in mobilising staff to provide robust accurate data, but this must be predicated on an appetite to recover costs in full, not a bench mark to begin a negotiation / auction scenario, which has what has happened in the past.

DC made the observation about statutory guidance, and that if Chief Officers were to follow that guidance, it would require significant investment, which may cause tensions between Chief Officers and the Home Officers. DO acknowledged this, and also added that PCC's may well have strong views on this matter.

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GW gave further updates from the HO; HO have commissioned work through 'Britain thinks' to give insight in to vulnerabilities – practitioners have been interviewed on the same.

Europe- Brexit; HO are after feedback in relation to EFP and WEIS.

Position amongst licensing managers is that they are happy to lose this provision, and it does not add value. GW acknowledges this, though contends it might be of value to shooters. DO summarises that FELWG position is that it is not something we would fight for.

WEIS – MG contends it is a system that is used on exceptionally rare occasions. In summary, FELWG concur again it is something we would not fight for.

## 6 National Strategy – Heat Map

NB gave update in relation to returns received benchmarking forces against national strategy and highlighted the key findings;

- Most forces appeared to be quite open in acknowledging their areas that need improvement
- In relation to key objective of keeping public safe, most forces felt they were in a good position – the biggest issue cited by all was the lack of consistency with medical screening.
- A big area of concern linked to the efficiency objectives concerned NFLMS, and the lack of online payment options.
- Few forces had a meaningful IAG / scrutiny group.
- **RESTRICTED \_ HIGHLIGHTS VULNERABILITY**

DO thanked all the regions for their support in completing this piece of work, and explained how it will help inform the FELWG priorities. Further, DO went on to explain how key points from the National Firearms threat desk has been incorporated in to the FELWG strategy as there is clear overlap.

**The strategy self-assessment will be an ongoing requirement prior to each FELWG. ACTION – ALL REGIONAL REPS TO COMPILE AND RETURN AN UPDATED VERSION IN JANUARY NOTING EXCEPTION CHANGES – REMINDER – NARRATIVE NEEDS TO BE PROVIDED AND NO GAPS PLEASE!**

## 7. FEO course / College of Policing

JC gave full update in relation to work with CoP in relation to new occupational standards for FEO's. There is consensus that the new standards need to be delivered on a modular basis, and the outcomes have been agreed and signed off.

JC is to arrange a meeting with Frank Pike from CoP, and NB on how to progress this and incorporate in to learning standards.

DO clarified that CoP should give a set of standards that are of a minimum level required to practice – if individual forces want to insist the FEO's have an Investigative accreditation, that is a matter for them. DO maintains that standards are the lowest common denominator, and forces can deviate, but it is a matter for them to justify if they do, referring to national policing curriculum.

**ACTION; Forces to send FEO role profiles to JC.  
JC to arrange meeting between CoP and NB/FP**

DC acknowledges the work of JC as being valid, and adds that when we get to the standards required for admin staff, and latterly managers, that the only thing that needs to change is the depth and context – the content is sound.

SM recognises this work might be beneficial as it may change the demographic of an FEO and allow greater entry opportunities and diversity.

RK acknowledges the importance of moving to a modular course, and is pleased that it is no longer viewed as a role that can be fulfilled by a five day course.

JC requested feedback from the regions in relation to the CPD event held at Ryton;  
**ACTION FOR NEXT FELWG\_ ALL REGIONS TO PROVIDE REQUESTS TO JC FOR FUTURE CONTENT. JC TO HAVE DRAFT AGENDA FOR JANUARY FELWG**

## 8. NFLMS update

DM; National user group recently held – Bernie Turner volunteered to represent Metropolitan police on the same group. DM had done initial work on prioritising changes, and a budget was available. Priorities were fixing the GUCCI link, and changes to the system to facilitate contract extensions. There is a further workshop in Bristol next month where all the relevant stakeholders will be in attendance, inc digital public contact and HO ICT.

GW asked for clarity of extended certificates, and when a solution might be attained – DM of the opinion that this can be done prior to April.

## 9. NaBIS & Op. Endeavour

**\*\*\*RESTRICTED- NOT TO BE SHARED OUTSIDE POLICING HIGHLIGHTS  
VULNERABILITIES \*\*\*\*\***

## 10. Explosives

SW gave explosive update focusing on nuances around acquire and keep licenses. RK has had issues with small re-enactors who have little understanding of legislation, and the requirements for certificates on where they are doing the re-enactments.

**ACTION – SW to re-circulate detailed guidance on POLEX**

SW touched on the requirement of regulation 36, and the requirement to hold records. MG cited various operations of where this has not been fulfilled.

**SW requests HSE representatives from each force be identified. ACTION – SW to circulate to NB – all forces to return identified individuals to SW.**

#### 11 **BH – SYSTEM FOR DEALERS TO CHECK IF GUN IS LOST / STOLEN**

BH Highlights need for RFD's to check provenance of guns. All agree that this would be a good product to have. MG of opinion that NLEDS may fill this gap, but there is no quick solution. Guntrader gets monthly updates, but this is limited to GTA (Gun Trade Association) who get monthly updates but this is limited to dealers who are members.

**ACTION; DO acknowledges the merit of the argument; request this be logged by DM in NFLMS user group to look at potential solutions.**

#### 12 **Air weapons**

**\*\*RESTRICTED – DO NOT CIRCULATE– could identify individual and family not yet spoken to by Home Office\*\***

#### 13 **AOB**

GW advises S5 applications are now online.

SM updates on Cyclops system and a small user group he has formed on the same- SM to write to DO advising formal endorsement of same- emphasis on promotion of licensing interests, rather than the commercial.

Question was raised about expanding ammunition – there was consensus in the room that the guidance from MP on the same was largely accepted.

#### 14 **Date & Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to be held at Merseyside Police HQ, on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

**VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO HOST MAY 2018 FELWG – NORTH EAST OR SCOTLAND?**