



# SUFFOLK CONSTABULARY

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Senior Coroner  
Plymouth, Torbay and South Devon

[REDACTED]  
Chief Constable

28<sup>th</sup> April 2023

Dear Sir

I write to you in order to provide a response, on behalf of Suffolk Constabulary, to the Preventing Future Deaths report issued under Regulation 28 of the Coroner (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

The Firearms Licensing Unit (FLU) for Suffolk Constabulary is part of the Joint Protective Services Command; a collaborated command between Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies under Section 22 of the Police Act 1996.

The Preventing Further Deaths (FPD) report contained two issues for police forces to consider. The first being the training of firearms licensing decision makers and the second, the review of the return of weapons after a review of suitability. I will address both of these issues.

## Training

The two forces recognise the need to ensure that those with delegated responsibility from the Chief Constables should be appropriately trained in the application of the Home Office *Guidance on Firearms Licensing Law* (Nov 22) and the *Revised Statutory Guidance for Chief officers of Police* (Feb 23).

The FLU has commissioned an external provider, Mowbray partners, through Durham Constabulary to provide training to all FLU Enquiry officers and Licensing officers over the next 12 months, with training commencing in May 23. In addition, we are currently exploring training for those staff who undertake administrative role within the FLU.

## Review

I have carefully considered the requirement to carry out a full review of all certificates that have been seized, refused, revoked or surrendered and then subsequently approved over the last five years. I know that my Head of Protective Services Command has engaged with the office of the National Police Chiefs Council lead for Firearms Licensing in respect of the PFD.

Suffolk Constabulary absolutely acknowledge the seriousness of the issues raised.

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A review of all cases, under the criteria within the PFD, for the five-year period, indicates just short of eight hundred that would be considered for review. All of these cases have been reviewed by those with designated decision-making responsibility in line with the guidance and regulations that would have been in place at the time. There is a significant resource commitment that would be required to review all eight hundred cases and I am conscious this may require resources being diverted away from the current FLU business demand.

In order to ensure that our focus is on the areas that may present the greatest risk Norfolk and Suffolk Constabularies will carry out a review in line with the strategy articulated below. This approach would see a significant and meaningful sample of cases being reviewed. If issues of concern are identified, then this will trigger a wider review of cases.

Where certificates are either refused or revoked then access to a firearm can only be achieved through the submission of a further application. This would then require consideration of the application in full as with any other first-time application.

Where firearms are seized as a result of an incident, event or due to information received by police then decisions are taken by those with delegated responsibility as to whether to return the firearm to the certificate holder or to revoke the certificate.

In Autumn 2021 a review of cases between the date parameters of August 2020 and August 2021 was undertaken at the request of the then Home Secretary. The cases reviewed were those in which firearms were seized and returned, but where the certificate was not revoked, and all refused, revoked, and surrendered certificates.

295 cases were identified of which eighty-five were found to be relevant for the purposes of the review. Of these four cases were referred to Superintendent rank with responsibility for Firearms licensing. One certificate was revoked.

Under this review:

1. Those cases that relate to a certificate issued **before April 19** will be subject to a full renewal review against the current guidance and regulations within the next 12 months as part of the 5-year renewal cycle. As this will allow a timely approach to review, we do not propose to review these ahead of that process, this will allow us to focus on those cases that are not due a renewal review.
2. Those case between **April 2019 and August 2020** will be reviewed.
3. Those case between **August 2020 and August 2021** are those already reviewed as articulated above. We will review 30% of these again to understand whether application of the current regulations and guidance would result in different decision making. If this review highlights any concerns, we will conduct a wider review of cases.
4. For those case between **August 2021 to Feb 2022**, these would have been reviewed having benefited from the learning and approach of the Home Office requested review and therefore benefit from this learning and so we would expect robust decision making has taken place. We will again dip-sample 30% of cases. If this review highlights any concerns, we will conduct a wider review of cases.
5. For cases dating between **February 2022 and April 2023**, these have been reviewed against the relevant guidance in place at the time. An escalated decision-making process has been in place for tis period and all cases where a n incident or intelligence has led to the removal of firearms has been considered by the Superintendent with responsibility for Firearms licensing. Whilst we remain confident in this approach and the high standard of


decision making our intention is to review 30% of all these cases. If this review highlights any concerns, we will conduct a wider review of cases.

I have also considered those cases where certificates have been revoked leading to the removal of firearms but where the certificate holder makes a subsequent application within 12 months. This review will look to ensure that the decision making was based on the current circumstances and not on the basis that the holder was previously granted a certificate.

I trust that the following approach provides you the reassurance that Suffolk Constabulary take full cognisance of the importance of the PFD and that we are committed to undertake a review and identify and address any issues.

Yours sincerely,



  
**Chief Constable**