

## **GUIDANCE NOTES FOR GPs:**

This form has been designed and agreed jointly by the Firearms Licensing Dept of Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire Police the Cambridgeshire Local Medical Committee (LMC) and the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire LMC. The applicant should fill in their personal details and then request their GP complete the rest of the form. **A fee may be charged by the GP prior to completion. GPs should refer to the LMC guidance below**, and the guidance of the British Medical Association which can be found at: <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/ethics/ethics-a-to-z/firearms>

GPs are directed to the **accompanying LMC guidance document** for further information on this medical process.

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Cambs LMC, Beds & Herts LMC and Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire Police have worked together to create this form and a medical process which meets the following criteria:

- Maximises public safety
- Minimises workload upon both the Firearms Licensing Department and GPs
- Provides clarity and consistency to applicants across Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire & Hertfordshire

The applicant should ensure this form is completed prior to submitting an application and the completed form should be return by the GP to the applicant to be submitted with the rest of their application documents.

### **GENERAL GUIDANCE TO GENERAL PRACTITIONERS:**

The British Medical Association (BMA) advice to GPs regarding shotgun and firearm licensing emphasises GPs must engage with the process of licensing. BMA guidance advises GPs to select one of five possible responses, which are:

1. Refusal due to conscientious objection
2. Refusal due to lack of expertise\*
3. Completion of report for a fee
4. Completion of summary for a fee
5. Completion of report/summary for no fee

The purpose of this standardised form is for it to be used where the GP has opted for response 3, 4 or 5. As independent contractors, GPs remain free to select options 1 if they so wish, and remain free to use their own form/letter in place of this one for options 3,4 & 5 where they so wish.

***\*It should be noted that option 2 should not be used in Cambridgeshire, Bedfordshire or Hertfordshire, as this applies to police forces which request a GP opinion rather than a factual statement.***

### **DATA PERIOD:**

- It has been agreed between the LMC's and the Police that for **new grant** certificates, in the interest of public safety, records should be checked **as far back as records in the possession of the GP go**, with paper records checked where present. GPs should also specify the date of the first entry in the records in the box provided. The increased workload for grant applications attracts a consequent higher fee than for renewals (see below).
- For **renewal** applications, Cambs LMC and the Police have agreed records need only be checked as far back as **10 years** before the date the form is signed. GPs are not responsible for any data which is not within their possession, and in such cases, it is up to the Police to decide whether to grant the application.

### **CONSENT:**

As the form is filled in by the GP at the direct request of the patient, and handed to the patient on completion, no written consent is required.

### **FEES:**

BMA guidance makes it clear that providing medical information for shotgun or firearm certificates is not NHS work and falls outside the contractual obligations of GPs. Thus, GPs are entitled to remuneration for this work and may withhold the work until payment is made. **Such a fee must be paid by the applicant.** Your LMC cannot prescribe a set fee for legal reasons. However, we can advise practices on how to calculate their fee based on the guidance of the Professional Fees Committee (PFC) of the BMA. The BMA PFC is currently finalising definitive guidance on all fees including firearms, and these are due to be updated imminently. In the meantime, pending such guidance, we advise practices to set a fee considering the GP time required, administrative burden to the practice, overheads, indemnity and other such costs.

On average the amount of GP time taken for these reports should be approximately 30 mins for a renewal (subsequent application) and 1 hour for a grant (new application). Some cases may take more or less time than this and practices may adjust their fees accordingly. The LMC's reminds practices it is their responsibility to set their own fees and to make patients aware of these fees prior to the work being undertaken.

### **FURTHER REPORTS:**

Occasionally, when required, following the receipt of this form the Police may need to contact other clinicians such as consultants for a specialist opinion. Such reports fall outside the scope of this form and are not the responsibility of the GP to source.

### **FLAGS:**

BMA guidance is currently unclear regarding putting flags on the notes that the shooter holds a Firearm/Shotgun Certificate, but the BMA expresses concerns regarding the imprecise nature of flags, protocols regarding their removal and the ability to monitor diagnoses of concern. Cambs Beds and Herts LMC's are concerned that placing flags on notes may equate to the GP accepting responsibility for active monitoring of the patient, which attracts medicolegal risk and excessive workload. Home Office Guidance to the Police (Firearms Licensing) asks GPs to place a firearm reminder code on the patient's record, however, this guidance has no statutory footing. Therefore, the LMC recommends that **GPs are not required to place such a flag on the patient's record.**

### **RESPONSIBILITY:**

**It remains the ultimate responsibility of the Police to decide on the grant/refusal of any shotgun or firearm certificate. The role of the GP is information provision by way of statement of fact only.**

### **AUDIT:**

In the interests of public safety, the Police reserve the right to check the accuracy of for forms from time to time with the GP who completed it.