



12th June 2019

Dear Practices,

IMPENDING CHANGES TO FIREARMS LICENSING MEDICAL PROCESS

Effective from 1st August 2019 Thames Valley Police will be changing the way they process applications for Shotgun Certificates (SGC) and Firearm Certificates (FAC). The LMC has been working closely with the police over the past 9 months to agree a new, standardised medical process which both satisfies the police's requirements for public safety whilst also minimising workload and medicolegal risk upon GPs.

Why is the system changing?

Under the old/current system when the police receive an application for an SGC/FAC, they send a letter to the patient's GP asking whether the applicant has a history of any of a list of diagnoses of concern. A lack of reply from the GP after 21 days results in assumption by the police of no concerning history and consequent grant of the certificate. The police are concerned this system risks important medical history being missed if the GP fails to respond at all. Furthermore, the LMC is concerned that the current system's presumption that a lack of response equates to the absence of any given diagnoses places GPs at unacceptable medicolegal risk. BMA guidance also makes it clear that failing to respond at all to the letter places the GP at professional risk.

What is changing?

Essentially, from 1st August the police will no longer accept any SGC/FAC application unless it is accompanied by a completed standardised proforma which the applicant will ask their GP to complete. Therefore, from the GP's perspective the only change is that the applicant will now be asking them to confirm/deny the presence of any diagnoses of concern rather than the police.

What will the proforma contain?

The proforma has been designed to have tick boxes to confirm the presence of any of the listed diagnoses of concern. There will be a separate section for the GP to write pertinent factual information such as the onset time, symptoms, treatment and any referrals as well as when the patient was last seen with the problem. It should be noted that the form asks for factual information only, GPs should not give an opinion on the fitness of the applicant to possess a firearm – that is a matter for the police to decide.

Fees

The medical process of firearms applications falls outside of core GMS contractual obligations and therefore attracts a private fee. It is not the role of the LMC to prescribe a set fee for such work. However, to assist practices and to improve consistency for applicants the LMC has advised a fee range which we consider commensurate to the level of work done. It should be noted that it is up to practices to set their own fee, and make these clear to patients in advance. Also, practices are free to charge more or less than the advised fee range depending on the workload and complexity of each individual case.

What to do in the meantime

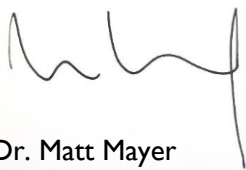
Continue to respond to police letters regarding firearms applications as normal. If you are unsure on how to respond to these letters, guidance can be found at <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/ethics/ethics-a-to-z/firearms> which also provides template letters which can be sent back to the police.

What happens next?

Further guidance will be released in the coming weeks. To assist the LMC in ensuring this guidance is as comprehensive as possible, please send questions to ceo@bbolmc.co.uk and we will draw up an FAQ document.

The police will be sending out their own communications to the public, and the LMC will continue to work closely with them to ensure that by 1st August practices are fully informed on how to engage the new process.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr. Matt Mayer', with a long vertical line extending downwards from the end of the signature.

Dr. Matt Mayer
Chief Executive Officer