



Sound Moderators & Flash Suppressors

Compiled Source Documents

Full text of BSSC, Home Office and College of Policing guidance, together with legal reference

This report reproduces, in full, the source documents currently in circulation on the deregulation of sound moderators and flash suppressors following commencement of section 44 and Schedule 5 of the Crime and Policing Act 2026:

- Section 1 — BSSC Advice: the Council's Guidance on the Acquisition and Possession of Sound Moderators (as amended post meeting held with Home Office 10 Jul 2026), and the 7 July 2026 Trade Briefing (pages 2 – 4)
- Section 2 — Home Office Advice: the Q&A circulated by Bernard Lane, Firearms and Weapons Policy Unit (pages 5 – 7)
- Section 3 — College of Policing Advice: Terry France's briefing to Firearms Licensing Managers, 10 July 2026 (pages 8 – 14)
- Section 4 — Legal Reference: consolidated text of Crime and Policing Act 2026, s.44 and Schedule 5 (pages 15 – 18)

Compiled 11 July 2026 for BSSC use.



1. BSSC Advice (first published 2 July 2026, and amended 10 Jul)

1.1 Guidance on the Acquisition and Possession of Sound Moderators

Following the commencement of the relevant provisions of the Crime and Policing Act 2026, sound moderators and flash hidens are no longer firearms within the legislation.

All references to moderator within this document also includes flash hidens.

Following the commencement of the relevant provisions of the Crime and Policing Act 2026, sound moderators are no longer treated as firearms in their own right, will not need to be listed on a certificate and do not need to be entered on NFLMS.

The legal position now:

Where a sound moderator is intended to be used with a Section 1 firearm it is an offence to be in possession of such an item unless the owner holds a current firearm or shotgun certificate.

A person who may lawfully possess a Section 1 firearm may also acquire and possess a sound moderator intended to be fitted to that firearm, without any separate authority or certification.

Interpretation

Whether or not an item is a “relevant accessory” should be interpreted objectively, having regard to the circumstances of possession and the lawful purpose(s) for which the moderator is held. It should not be determined solely by the moderator's technical compatibility with other firearms. A moderator capable of fitting multiple firearms does not change legal status merely because it is capable of being used on a firearm of a different class.

The following examples illustrate how the legislation should be applied.

1. Moderators for Section 1 firearms

A person who lawfully possesses a Section 1 rifle may acquire and possess a suitable sound moderator without the need for it to be separately authorised on a firearm certificate.

No variation application is required. No separate authority is required.

2. Existing moderators previously entered on firearm certificates

Many certificate holders already possess moderators that were previously authorised on their firearm certificates. Those moderators remain lawfully possessed and there is no requirement to have them removed from certificates or to apply for replacement authorities.

If a firearm or shotgun certificate is still held - No action is required.

3. Moderators capable of fitting more than one firearm

Some moderators are capable of fitting both firearms requiring a firearm certificate and firearms that do not require one, such as certain air rifles.

The fact that a moderator is physically capable of fitting more than one firearm does not, of itself, determine whether it may be possessed. A person who may lawfully possess that firearm may also lawfully possess a suitable moderator for it.



4. Moderators intended solely for shotguns and non-Section 1 air rifles

A moderator for use only with a shotgun or an air rifle that does not require a firearm certificate may be freely acquired and possessed.

5. Moderators intended for airsoft or paintball devices

Moderators manufactured and intended for use with airsoft or paintball devices may continue to be acquired and possessed without restriction.

6. Moderators fitted to deactivated firearms

A moderator fitted to, or solely for display with, a lawfully deactivated firearm may be possessed without restriction.

7. Deactivated sound moderators

Some sound moderators were previously deactivated because they were themselves treated as firearms.

Since sound moderators are no longer firearms, there is no legal requirement for a moderator to be deactivated.

A previously deactivated moderator may continue to be possessed lawfully.

8. General principle

When considering whether a sound moderator may be lawfully acquired or possessed, the question should be:

“Is this moderator a relevant accessory?”

It becomes so by being an accessory for a Section 1 firearm. If the answer is yes, no separate authority for the moderator or flash hider is required, so long as the owner remains a firearm or shotgun certificate holder.

Suggested note for police forces

When assessing compliance, officers should consider the use of the moderator rather than whether it is technically capable of fitting another firearm. The mere capability of fitting a firearm requiring certification should not, of itself, determine the legal status of the moderator.

A sound moderator or a flash hider is no longer a ‘firearm’ within the meaning of the Firearms Acts. Therefore the provisions relating to sale and storage of such items no longer apply, even if they are for use with a firearm within Section 1.

Sale of sound moderators is no longer regulated as before.

The penalty for unlawful possession of such an accessory is a summary offence carrying a Level 3 Fine.



1.2 BSSC Trade Briefing – 7 July 2026

Sound Moderators – Trade Questions and Answers

The British Shooting Sports Council has sought clarification from the Home Office regarding the practical effect of the recent changes to the law governing sound moderators. The following questions and answers reflect the Home Office's position at the date of publication. Further guidance may be issued by the Home Office in due course.

Q. Can a sound moderator now be sold by mail order and sent directly to the purchaser?

A. Yes.

The Home Office has confirmed that sound moderators are now deregulated and may be purchased and supplied by mail order or other distance-selling methods or through any other standard retail process. Carriage can be by any carrier. The previous requirements applying to the transfer of firearms, such as face-to-face transactions or Registered Firearms Dealer (RFD) to RFD transfers, no longer apply to sound moderators.

Q. Do sound moderators have to be sold by a Registered Firearms Dealer?

A. No.

The Home Office has confirmed that there is nothing in the legislation restricting the sale of sound moderators to Registered Firearms Dealers. While many purchasers may continue to buy moderators from RFDs, other retailers may also sell them.

Q. Must a retailer check that a purchaser holds a firearm certificate before selling a sound moderator?

A. No.

The Home Office has confirmed that the legislation places no legal requirement on a seller to verify that a purchaser holds the appropriate firearm certificate before a sale takes place. The legislation creates an offence of unlawful possession by the individual. It does not create an offence for a retailer selling a sound moderator without first checking certification.

Q. Does this mean anyone may possess a sound moderator?

A. No.

Where a sound moderator is possessed in circumstances requiring a firearm certificate, the individual in possession must be lawfully authorised to possess it, but the onus is on the purchaser/possessor to prove lawful ownership under those limited circumstances. The changes made by the Crime and Policing Act 2026 remove the licensing and transfer controls that previously applied to sound moderators, but they do not remove the offence of unlawful possession where certification is required.

Q. Is further guidance expected?

A. Yes.

The Home Office has indicated that it is willing to continue discussions with the BSSC and the National Police Chiefs' Council to determine whether further guidance would assist the trade and certificate holders.

The BSSC will continue to engage with the Home Office and will circulate any further clarification as it becomes available.

Source: BSSC Trade Briefing, 7 July 2026 — Sound Moderators, Trade Questions and Answers. Guidance remains unchanged post meeting with Home Office 10 July 2026



2. Home Office Advice

Q&A circulated by Bernard Lane, Firearms and Weapons Policy Unit, Home Office, following a meeting with the BSSC, BASC, the College of Policing (NPCC/CoP) and Police Scotland, 10 Jul 2026. Reproduced in full.

Q. Q1. Is it necessary to keep sound moderators in security cabinets if they are covered by extant certificate conditions?

A. No. There is no legal requirement to keep sound moderators in a security cabinet when not in use. A certificate conditions relating specifically to sound moderators no longer apply following the removal of sound moderators from the legal definition of a firearm.

Q. Q2. Should certificate holders return their certificates to the police to have moderators removed from them?

A. No. There is no necessity to do so. Any certificate conditions relating specifically to sound moderators no longer apply following the removal of sound moderators from the legal definition of a firearm. There is no need to remove these from the certificate, however. This can happen if and when the certificate is renewed.

Q. Q3. Do Registered Firearms Dealers still need to enter transactions involving sound moderators into their registers?

A. No. Sound moderators are no longer controlled and there is no requirement in law going forward that the purchase and sale of sound moderators must be through Registered Firearms Dealers. It follows that there is no legal requirement for Registered Firearms Dealers to enter transactions in their registers from the date in which the change in the law took effect (29 June 2026).

Q. Q4. Can a certificate holder buy a sound moderator freely from a Registered Firearms Dealer without an authority on their certificate?

A. Yes. Sound moderators are no longer controlled and there is no requirement in law for there to be an authority on the certificate. Registered Firearms Dealers (or other sellers) are now under no legal obligation to check whether the purchaser holds a valid firearms or shotgun certificate.

Q. Q5. Can a sound moderator be sold by mail order and sent directly to the purchaser?

A. Yes. Sound moderators are no longer controlled and there is no requirement in law for face-to-face/in person purchases.

Q. Q6. Does the seller/RFD need to check that the purchaser has a valid firearms or shotgun certificate?

A. No. Sound moderators are no longer controlled and there is no requirement in law for sellers to check the legal status of the purchaser. The law places the obligation on the purchaser not to possess a sound moderator unless they hold a valid firearms or shotgun certificate.

Q. Q7. Where a sound moderator authority existed on a firearm certificate before commencement of the legislation, does the authority now cease to exist?



Chairman: Mark Garnier OBE MP



Secretary: Jeremy Hinde

A. The authority has no continuing legal status, as sound moderators are no longer subject to licensing controls. There is no harm with it continuing to sit on the certificate until the certificate expires or is renewed. It just has no legal meaning in the meantime.

Q. Q8. Does deregulation of sound moderators create a vacant authority on certificates capable of supporting a future acquisition?

A. No. The authority to possess a sound moderator related solely to the sound moderator(s) lawfully held by the certificate holder. The authority no longer applies, and there is no need for it to be used for the acquisition of any additional sound moderators from this point forward. The authority can be regarded as extinguished with no continuing effect.

Q. Q9. Does a pre-existing sound moderator authority on a certificate constitute an available authority capable of supporting a free one-for-one variation.

A. No. Pre-existing authorities relating to sound moderators relate solely to the historic acquisition and legal possession of the sound moderator. The authority no longer has a basis in law and cannot therefore be used for a free one-to-one variation. There would be no need for a variation relating to the future acquisition of sound moderators as these have been de-regulated in law, and the pre-existing authority cannot be used for any other purpose.

Q. Q10. When enforcing the new possession offence (new section 2A of the Firearms Act 1968 introduced by section 44 of the Crime and Policing Act 2026) do the police need to be satisfied that the holder of a sound moderator has a firearms certificate and intends for it to be used only with a section 1 firearm?

A. The new offence relates only to possession of a sound moderator where the possessor does not have either a valid firearm or shotgun certificate, or where a lawful exemption applies. A firearm or shotgun certificate holder will not be liable to prosecution for possession of a sound moderator. Similarly, possession of a sound moderator for use with an air weapon does not constitute an offence in England and Wales (see Q15 in relation to Scotland). It is recognised that some sound moderators may fit both section 1 firearms and air weapons. In such circumstances, the police will want to establish whether the possessor holds a firearm or shotgun certificate or whether the moderator is for use with an air weapon. Possession of a sound moderator in the absence of a firearm or shotgun certificate or for use with an air weapon may constitute an offence under section 2A of the Firearms Act 1968 (introduced by section 44 of the Crime and Policing Act 2026).

Q. Q11. Why does the law allow for possession of a shotgun certificate as a basis for lawful possession of a sound moderator, given that sound moderators for shotguns are not controlled.

A. There is no intention that lawful shooters should be prosecuted for possession of a sound moderator, as these devices have now been de-regulated. For this reason, possession of either a firearms or shotgun certificate is sufficient to demonstrate legal possession, recognising that those who have been granted a certificate will have satisfied the robust suitability checks required by the Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Police on firearms licensing. The purpose behind the new offence is to criminalise those who intend to use sound moderators with unlawfully held firearms.



Q. Q12. Do immediate changes need to be made to existing certificates that show sound moderator authorities?

A. No. The existing authority no longer has any legal meaning. There is no harm in it remaining on a valid certificate, and it can be removed if and when the current certificate is renewed. In future, no sound moderator authorities should be applied. In the case of applications for variations involving sound moderators submitted prior to the change in the legislation (which took effect on Monday 29 June 2026) these should no longer be processed by police forces, and any fee that has been paid for this purpose can be refunded.

Q. Q13. Should Registered Firearms Dealers continue to record transactions involving stocks of sound moderators prior to commencement of the changes in the law (29 June 2026)?

A. Yes. But there is no corresponding requirement relating to transactions that take place after the date of commencement.

Q. Q14. Should sound moderators be listed on any application for a visitor's permit in order to benefit from the exemption to hold a valid certificate?

A. No. There is no requirement to include sound moderators on any application for a visitor's permit under section 17 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 as sound moderators are no longer subject to licensing controls. Schedule 5 to the Crime and Policing Act 2026 amends the exemptions in the Firearms Act 1968 and the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 to the requirement to hold a firearm or shotgun certificate and specifically states that the holder of a visitor's permit may, without holding a firearm certificate, have in their possession a relevant accessory which, in this case, means a sound moderator.

Q. Q15. Does the de-regulation of sound moderators apply to sound moderators for air weapons in Scotland?

A. No. Air weapons are subject to licensing controls in Scotland through the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015. Section 1(3)(b) of this Act explicitly includes sound moderators in the definition of air weapons in Scotland. This means that sound moderators for firearms are no longer controlled in Scotland but sound moderators for air weapons continue to be subject to licensing controls.

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Source: Bernard Lane, Firearms and Weapons Policy Unit, Crime Directorate, Home Office — Q&A circulated following the multi-agency meeting of 10 July 2026 (BSSC, BASC, College of Policing/NPCC, Police Scotland).



3. Advice to Firearms Licensing Managers (College of Policing)

Email circulated by Terry France, Firearms & Explosive Management SME, College of Policing, to firearms licensing managers nationally on 10 July 2026 (subject: "Sound Moderators - UPDATE"; cc. BSSC, BASC, Home Office FWPU). Reproduced in full below.

Good afternoon,

As you will be aware, the legislative changes relating to sound moderators came into effect on 29 June 2026.

Following a further meeting held this morning between the Home Office Firearms and Weapons Policy Unit, NPCC/CoP representative (Adrian), Police Scotland, BSSC and BASC, additional clarification has now been provided regarding the intended effect of the legislation and its practical implications for firearms licensing departments.

I would also like to thank you for the considerable feedback, challenge and environmental scanning undertaken since the legislation came into force. The issues, questions and potential unintended consequences identified across forces provided a strong operational evidence base, enabling us to articulate the practical impacts and emerging concerns to the Home Office. This collective effort helped shape this morning's discussions and directly influenced the clarifications and agreed national position set out in this email.

During the meeting, Adrian and the shooting groups highlighted the benefits of earlier engagement and ongoing dialogue between the Home Office, policing and key stakeholders when implementing any legislative or guidance change. It was recognised that such engagement supports a shared understanding of legislative intent, allows operational considerations to be explored at an earlier stage and promotes greater consistency of approach across forces, RFDs and certificate holders. The collaborative approach taken this morning has helped secure the additional clarity now provided by the Home Office and should hopefully assist in delivering a more consistent national response moving forward.

The information within this email reflects the position communicated by the Home Office following those discussions and is intended to provide a consistent operational approach for firearms licensing departments pending formal updates to Home Office guidance.

The key principle is straightforward. Sound moderators are no longer treated as firearms for licensing purposes and are therefore no longer subject to the previous certification, authority and transactional controls. The legislative intent is to reduce unnecessary administrative burden on certificate holders, RFDs and firearms licensing departments whilst retaining an offence aimed at those who possess sound moderators in circumstances connected with unlawful firearm possession.

In Short

- Existing moderator entries can remain on certificates until renewal.
- Certificate holders do not need to return certificates for amendment.
- No new sound moderator authorities should be issued.
- Historic authorities do not create vacant authorities.
- Historic authorities cannot support one-for-one variations.
- Sound moderators do not need to be stored in a security cabinet.



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- Existing certificate conditions relating specifically to sound moderators no longer have legal effect.
- RFD transaction recording requirements ceased on 29 June 2026 for new transactions.
- Mail-order and distance sales are permitted.
- Sellers are not required to check certificate status before sale.
- Visitor permits do not need to include sound moderators.
- Holders of either a firearm certificate or shotgun certificate may lawfully possess a sound moderator.
- Enforcement activity should focus on unlawful possession rather than legitimate certificate holders.
- In Scotland, sound moderators for firearms are deregulated, however sound moderators for air weapons remain subject to Scottish licensing controls.

Summary

Question	National Position	Practical Licensing Action
Are sound moderators still licensed?	No. Sound moderators are no longer subject to the previous firearm certification controls.	Do not add moderators to certificates going forward.
Existing moderator authorities on certificates	No longer have any legal effect.	Leave existing entries in place until renewal or replacement.
Certificate recall required?	No.	No requirement to recall or reissue certificates.
Certificate holders required to return certificates?	No.	Allow amendments to occur naturally at renewal.
Remove moderator entries immediately?	No.	Deal with through normal renewal or replacement processes.
Must moderators be stored in security cabinets?	No legal requirement.	Do not impose cabinet-storage requirements for moderators.
Existing moderator security conditions	No longer apply.	Do not enforce historic moderator-specific security conditions.
New applications for moderator authorities	No longer required.	Do not grant or record moderator authorities.
Historic moderator authority creates a vacancy?	No.	Treat historic authorities as extinguished.
One-for-one variation using former moderator authority	Not permitted.	Former moderator authorities cannot support firearm variations.
Moderator variations submitted before 29 June 2026	Should not now be processed.	Consider refunding any fee paid.
RFD transaction recording after 29 June 2026	No longer required.	New moderator sales need not be entered in registers.



Question	National Position	Practical Licensing Action
Pre-29 June 2026 moderator transactions	Must still be recorded.	Historic record keeping requirements remain.
Mail-order sales	Permitted.	No licensing involvement required.
Sale by non-RFDs	Permitted.	No licensing controls apply.
Seller required to check certificates?	No.	Responsibility rests with the person possessing the moderator.
FAC holder possessing a moderator	Lawful.	No enforcement concern.
SGC holder possessing a moderator	Lawful.	No enforcement concern.
Air weapon user possessing moderator for lawful air weapon use	Lawful.	Consider circumstances of possession.
Moderator on a Visitor Permit	No requirement to list.	No licensing action required.
Person with no FAC, SGC or lawful explanation possessing a moderator	May commit an offence.	Assess circumstances and investigate appropriately.

What This Means in Practice

1. Existing Sound Moderator Authorities

Any sound moderator authorities already shown on firearm certificates:

- No longer carry any legal effect.
- Do not need to be removed immediately.
- May remain on certificates until renewal or natural replacement.
- Should not be treated as active authorities.

Practical Approach, forces do not need to:

- Recall certificates.
- Issue replacement certificates.
- Require certificate holders to return certificates.
- Undertake administrative exercises to remove historic sound moderator entries.

The pragmatic approach is to allow certificates to be updated through the normal grant, renewal and replacement process.

2. Storage and Security

The Home Office has confirmed there is no legal requirement for sound moderators to be stored in a security cabinet when not in use. Any certificate condition relating specifically to sound moderators ceased to have effect when sound moderators were removed from the legal definition of a firearm.



Practical Approach, forces should not:

- Require sound moderators to be stored in a cabinet.
- Require additional security solely because a person possesses a moderator.
- Take compliance action based solely on where a sound moderator is stored.

Certificate holders should, however, continue to store all items responsibly and securely as a matter of good practice.

3. Future Authorities

Firearms licensing departments should no longer: Authorise acquisition of sound moderators.

- Record sound moderators on certificates.
- Create moderator entries on grants, renewals or variations.
- Apply conditions specifically relating to sound moderators.

4. Vacant Authorities and One-for-One Variations

The Home Office position is clear that historic moderator authorities:

- Do not create a vacant authority.
- Do not become available acquisition slots.
- Cannot support a one-for-one variation.
- Cannot be used for any other licensing purpose.

Historic moderator authorities should therefore be regarded as extinguished.

5. Applications Submitted Prior to Commencement

Applications for moderator variations submitted before the legislation came into force on 29 June 2026 should no longer be processed. Any fee paid for that purpose may be refunded where appropriate.

6. Registered Firearms Dealers

From 29 June 2026:

- Sound moderators no longer need to be sold through an RFD.
- RFDs are not required to record new sound moderator transactions.
- Sound moderators may be sold by mail order.
- Sound moderators may be sold by non-RFDs.
- Sellers are not required to check whether the purchaser holds a firearm or shotgun certificate.

Transactions involving moderator stock before 29 June 2026 should continue to be recorded in the normal manner.

Understanding the New Possession Offence

One of the areas causing most confusion nationally concerns the new possession offence. The offence is not designed to criminalise lawful shooters or create unnecessary administrative burdens. Its purpose is to target individuals who possess sound moderators in circumstances connected with unlawful firearm possession.



The key point is: The offence is aimed at unlawful possession and criminal misuse, not legitimate certificate holders. Possession of a sound moderator alone does not automatically indicate criminality.

Who Can Lawfully Possess a Sound Moderator?

The Home Office has clarified that lawful possession includes:

- Firearm Certificate Holders — Any person holding a valid firearm certificate.
- Shotgun Certificate Holders — Any person holding a valid shotgun certificate.
- Air Weapon Users — Individuals who possess a sound moderator for use with a lawful air weapon.

Officers should consider the individual facts and circumstances of each case.

When Might an Offence Be Committed?

The offence is most likely to arise where a person:

- Possesses a sound moderator.
- Holds neither a firearm certificate nor shotgun certificate.
- Cannot provide a lawful explanation for possession.
- Cannot demonstrate use with a lawful air weapon.

Dual-Purpose Moderators

The Home Office recognises that some moderators may fit both section 1 firearms and air weapons. In such circumstances officers should consider:

- Whether the individual holds a firearm certificate.
- Whether the individual holds a shotgun certificate.
- Whether the individual possesses a compatible air weapon.
- The overall circumstances of possession.

Possession of a moderator alone should not automatically be viewed as evidence of offending.

Scotland Considerations — Air Weapons and Air Rifle Moderators in Scotland

The Home Office has confirmed that the deregulation of sound moderators applies to firearm moderators in Scotland in the same way as England and Wales. However, air weapon moderators remain subject to separate Scottish legislation.

Accordingly:

- Sound moderators intended for use with firearms are no longer subject to firearms licensing controls in Scotland.
- Sound moderators intended for use with air weapons continue to be subject to licensing controls under the Air Weapons and Licensing (Scotland) Act 2015.

The deregulation introduced on 29 June 2026 does not remove Scottish controls relating to air rifle and other air weapon moderators. Licensing departments should therefore be aware that whilst the position is largely consistent across Great Britain for firearm moderators, a distinction remains for air weapon moderators in Scotland.



Appendix A – FAQs

The below will hopefully answer specific questions I have been asked over the last week or so. I make no apologies that there will be repetition to some of the information articulated above:

Q. Is it necessary to keep sound moderators in a security cabinet?

A. No. There is no legal requirement to store sound moderators in a security cabinet and any certificate condition relating specifically to sound moderators no longer applies.

Q. Should certificate holders return certificates to have moderators removed?

A. No. Existing entries may remain until renewal and have no continuing legal effect.

Q. Do RFDs still need to enter moderator transactions into their register?

A. No, except for transactions taking place before 29 June 2026.

Q. Can a certificate holder buy a moderator without authority shown on a certificate?

A. Yes.

Q. Can sound moderators be sold by mail order?

A. Yes.

Q. Does the seller need to check certificate status?

A. No.

Q. Does a pre-existing moderator authority still have any legal status?

A. No. It may remain printed on the certificate but has no legal effect.

Q. Does deregulation create a vacant authority?

A. No.

Q. Can a historic moderator authority support a one-for-one variation?

A. No.

Q. Do immediate changes need to be made to existing certificates?

A. No. Existing entries can remain until renewal.

Q. Should sound moderators appear on Visitor Permit applications?

A. No. They are no longer subject to licensing controls and do not need to be listed.

Q. Why does possession of a shotgun certificate permit lawful possession of a sound moderator?

A. The intention is to ensure legitimate certificate holders are not criminalised by the new offence.

Q. What is the purpose of the new offence?



Chairman: Mark Garnier OBE MP



Secretary: Jeremy Hinde

A. To target possession connected with unlawfully held firearms rather than lawful shooters.

Q. What about dual-purpose moderators that fit air weapons and firearms?

A. Officers should assess the full circumstances rather than relying solely on possession of the moderator.

In summary, sound moderators are no longer licensed items. Historic authorities have no continuing legal effect, certificates do not need to be recalled, no new authorities should be issued, moderator sales are no longer regulated, and the new possession offence is intended to target unlawful possession rather than legitimate certificate holders. The only significant exception relates to sound moderators for air weapons in Scotland, which remain subject to Scottish licensing controls.

Source: Terry France, Firearms & Explosive Management SME, College of Policing — 'Sound Moderators – UPDATE', circulated 10 July 2026 to firearms licensing managers nationally (cc. BSSC, BASC, Home Office FWPU).



4. Legal Reference

Crime and Policing Act 2026 — Sound Moderators and Flash Suppressors

Consolidated Legislative Reference Document. Royal Assent: 29 April 2026 | Commencement: 29 June 2026.

Background and Purpose

This document consolidates all provisions of the Crime and Policing Act 2026 that relate to sound moderators (also referred to as silencers or suppressors) and flash suppressors (also referred to as flash hiders). These provisions are drawn from Part 2, Chapter 2 (Section 44) and Schedule 5 of the Act.

The central effect of these provisions is to deregulate sound moderators and flash suppressors from individual licensing as ‘firearms’ under the Firearms Act 1968, while introducing a new offence of possessing such items without holding the appropriate firearm or shotgun certificate. This simplifies the administrative regime without removing safeguards.

These provisions came into force on 29 June 2026 by virtue of The Crime and Policing Act 2026 (Commencement No. 1 and Saving Provision) Regulations 2026.

Part 2, Chapter 2 — Section 44

Application of Firearms Acts to Sound Moderators etc

44(1) — Amendment to the Firearms Act 1968

The Firearms Act 1968 is amended as follows.

44(2) — New Section 2A Inserted into the Firearms Act 1968

After section 2 of the Firearms Act 1968, the following new section is inserted:

“2A Possession of a sound moderator or flash suppressor

(1) Subject to any exemption under this Act, it is an offence for a person to have in their possession a relevant accessory unless the person holds a firearm certificate or a shot gun certificate.

(2) ‘Relevant accessory’ means an accessory to a firearm to which section 1 applies which is designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the firearm.”

Key points arising from this new section:

- The offence is summary only.
- A ‘relevant accessory’ covers any device attached to a section 1 firearm that is designed or adapted to reduce noise (sound moderator / suppressor) or flash (flash suppressor / flash hider).
- The holder of either a firearm certificate or a shotgun certificate may possess a relevant accessory — the accessory does not need to be individually entered on the certificate.
- Exemptions provided elsewhere in the Act (see Schedule 5 below) continue to apply.

44(3) — Amendments to Section 57 (Interpretation) of the Firearms Act 1968

In section 57 of the Firearms Act 1968 (interpretation):



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(a) In subsection (1): (i) Paragraph (d) is omitted. [This removes sound moderators and flash suppressors from the definition of ‘firearm’.] (ii) In the words after paragraph (d), the words “, and accessories to,” are omitted.

(b) In subsection (4): (i) After the definition of “registered”, the following is inserted: “‘relevant accessory’ has the meaning given in section 2A;”. (ii) In the definition of “shot gun”, the words from “and any” to the end are omitted.

Effect: Sound moderators and flash suppressors are no longer defined as firearms in their own right. They are reclassified as ‘relevant accessories’, a new defined term linked to section 2A.

44(4) — Amendment to Schedule 6 (Prosecution and Punishment of Offences)

In Schedule 6 to the Firearms Act 1968, after the entry for section 2(2), the following is inserted: ‘Section 2A — Possession of relevant accessory without certificate under this Act — Summary only — A fine of level 3 on the standard scale.’

A level 3 fine on the standard scale is currently set at a maximum of £1,000.

44(5) — Schedule 5

Schedule 5 amends the exemptions in the Firearms Act 1968 and the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 to the requirement to hold a firearm or shot gun certificate, extending those exemptions to relevant accessories. See Schedule 5 below.

Schedule 5 — Sound Moderators etc: Exemptions

Schedule 5 is introduced by section 44(5). It amends the existing statutory exemptions to certificate requirements to ensure they also apply to relevant accessories (i.e. sound moderators and flash suppressors). The schedule operates in two parts: amendments to the Firearms Act 1968 and amendments to the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988.

Part 1 — Amendments to the Firearms Act 1968

Paragraph 1(2) — Section 7 (Police Permit Exemption)

Effect: A person holding a police permit under section 7 may possess a relevant accessory under that permit without also holding a firearm or shotgun certificate.

Paragraph 1(3) — Section 8 (Authorised Dealing)

Effect: Persons authorised to deal in firearms under section 8 (including registered firearms dealers and their servants) may also possess relevant accessories without holding certificates.

Paragraph 1(4) — Section 9 (Exemption for Auctioneers, Carriers and Warehousemen)

Effect: The section 9 exemption for auctioneers, carriers, and warehousemen extends to relevant accessories.

Paragraph 1(5) — Section 11 (Sports, Athletics and Other Activities)

Effect: The section 11 exemptions (e.g. for members of approved rifle clubs, miniature rifle ranges, and similar) extend to relevant accessories.

Paragraph 1(6) — Section 11A (Borrowing Rifles)



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“(7) Where a rifle is borrowed on any premises in reliance on subsection (1), the borrower may, without holding a certificate under this Act, borrow and have in their possession on those premises a relevant accessory for the period for which the rifle is borrowed.”

Effect: When a person borrows a rifle on a range or estate under the existing section 11A exemption, they may also borrow and use a relevant accessory (e.g. a sound moderator) during that same period, without needing their own certificate.

Paragraph 1(7) — Section 12 (Theatre and Cinema)

Effect: The section 12 exemption for theatrical and film use extends to relevant accessories.

Paragraph 1(8) — Section 13 (Police Permits for Ships, Aircraft and Aerodromes)

Effect: Permits issued by the chief of police under section 13 (covering transportation of firearms to and from vessels, aircraft, and aerodromes) extend to relevant accessories.

Part 2 — Amendments to the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988

Paragraph 2(2) — Section 15 (Visitors' Permits)

Effect: The visitor's firearm permit regime extends to relevant accessories.

Paragraph 2(5) — Section 17 (Visitors' Firearm Permits — New Subsection)

“(1ZA) The holder of a visitor's firearm permit may, without holding a firearm certificate, have in their possession a relevant accessory.”

Effect: A visitor to Great Britain holding a visitor's firearm permit may possess a sound moderator or flash suppressor under that permit without requiring their own UK firearm certificate.

Paragraph 2(6) — Section 25(4) (Interpretation)

Effect: The interpretation provisions of the 1988 Act are updated to include relevant accessories where ammunition is referenced.

Paragraph 2(7) — The Schedule (Paragraph 1)

Effect: Sub-paragraphs (2)(a), (3) and (4) of paragraph 1 of the Schedule to the 1988 Act are updated so that references to ‘and ammunition’ become ‘, ammunition and relevant accessories’.

Summary of Key Changes

Provision	Effect
s.44(2) / new s.2A FA1968	Creates a summary-only offence of possessing a relevant accessory (sound moderator or flash suppressor) without holding a valid firearm or shotgun certificate.
s.44(3) / s.57 FA1968	Removes sound moderators and flash suppressors from the definition of ‘firearm’. They are reclassified as ‘relevant accessories’ — no longer requiring individual entry on a certificate.
s.44(4) / Sch.6 FA1968	Sets the penalty for the new s.2A offence: summary conviction, level 3 fine (max £1,000).



Chairman: Mark Garnier OBE MP | Secretary: Jeremy Hinde

Provision	Effect
Sch.5, para 1 — ss.7, 8, 9, 11, 11A, 12, 13 FA1968	Extends existing firearms certificate exemptions (police permits, authorised dealers, auctioneers/carriers, sports/athletics, rifle-borrowing, theatre/film, vessel/aircraft permits) to cover relevant accessories.
Sch.5, para 2 — ss.15, 16A, 16B, 17, 25 FA(A)1988	Extends visitors’ permit exemptions and interpretation provisions in the 1988 Act to relevant accessories. Visitors holding a visitor’s firearm permit may possess relevant accessories.

Commencement

Section 44 and Schedule 5 were brought into force on 29 June 2026 by:

The Crime and Policing Act 2026 (Commencement No. 1 and Saving Provision) Regulations 2026 (SI 2026/689), regulation 2(1)(f) and (z8).

Note: These provisions were prospective at Royal Assent (29 April 2026) and required commencement regulations before taking legal effect.

Geographical Extent

Section 44 and Schedule 5 apply to England, Wales and Scotland (E+W+S). They do not extend to Northern Ireland, where separate firearms legislation applies.

Sources: *Crime and Policing Act 2026* (c. 20), ss. 44 and Sch. 5 — [legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk) | *Home Office Circular 004/2026* | *SI 2026/689*.