Let's all work together

Whether you are a certificate holder or a family member, friend or work colleague of a certificate holder, it is important that you know that you can make a difference in helping to keep everyone safe. Simply talking to someone who is experiencing mental health challenges, or opening up about your own mental health, can be of huge benefit.

All organisations recognise the reservations of certificate holders speaking out about poor mental health, but it is important that everyone involved in firearms licensing works together to dispel concerns about how such matters are handled and trust each other to do the right thing.

If you or someone you know is experiencing poor mental health, there are a number of organisations who can provide help, advice and support.

Where can I turn for help?

Below are the contact details for organisations able to help or signpost you in the right direction:

Police Firearms Licensing Teams can be contacted on **101** for help and advice on all firearms licensing matters.

NHS
t: 111 or 999 in an emergency

Samaritans
t: 116 123
e: jo@samaritans.org

CALM
t: 0800 58 58 58

Rethink Mental Illness
t: 0808 801 0525

Clic – free online community
w: clic-uk.org

SHOUT
Text 'SHOUT' to 85258

CALL (Wales)
t: 0808 132 737

BASC
t: 01244 573 000

Gamekeepers' Welfare Trust
t: 0300 123 3088

RABI
t: 0800 188 4444

This leaflet was developed by mental health charity Change Mental Health: **www.changemh.org**

Front cover photo credited to Graham Downing

Firearms and Mental Health

Awareness and Support

NPCC
National Police Chiefs' Council

Introduction

This leaflet explains the support available to you, and the responsibilities you have, if you are struggling with your mental health. If you're a firearms certificate holder, you may be worried about saying you are not feeling OK. Every concern is handled in a supportive and understanding way. Don't be afraid to seek help – it is the right thing to do for you, your family, friends and community.

It's more common than you think

1 in 4 people are likely to experience low mood, poor mental health or distress in their lifetime. Talking openly about how you feel is the most important step to take in dealing with these thoughts. It is essential that members of the shooting community have a positive and open relationship with people close to them, including support organisations and networks when it comes to their own mental health.

Mental health can affect anyone. It is important to talk this through and seek the help you need. If you are struggling with your mental health, see your GP as soon as possible. Shooting bodies and various other charities can provide additional support.

Alternatively, talking therapies, or psychological therapies, are effective and confidential treatments delivered by professionals and practitioners. They can help if you're struggling with feelings of depression, worry, anxiety, PTSD, and other conditions. In England and Wales, you can refer yourself to talking therapies or your GP can refer you to the right support for you.

Your responsibility

It is important to inform the police if, following the issue of a certificate, you are diagnosed or treated for a relevant medical condition as described in the Home Office Firearms Licensing Statutory Guidance while the certificate remains valid. This is the right thing to do to ensure that everyone is kept safe.

The Role of Police Firearms Licensing Teams

Everyone involved in firearms licensing recognises that guns can be an essential part of employment and social pursuits. If the police have to examine and assess any concerns regarding a certificate holder, they will treat each case individually, sympathetically and proportionately. The priority for Police Firearms Licensing Teams is to ensure public safety, but this does not mean that every case of poor mental health will result in the loss of certificates.

It may be the case that the police assess that the most appropriate option to maximise safety is to temporarily take control of an individual's firearms. This gives the individual support, time and space whilst the police assess any risk to the certificate holder, the people around them and the wider public. The police will gather information, which may include speaking with family and/or friends, referees, employers and shooting organisations. The police may write or speak to the person's GP to confirm any medical diagnosis, how any illness impacts on their life and how they are coping. This will allow the police to make an informed decision on the certificate holder's ongoing suitability.

Once the police have considered all the circumstances and concluded their assessment, they may decide to:

- Return the guns to the certificate holder, if appropriate to do so;
- Come to an arrangement where the guns are stored remotely;
- Apply conditions to a firearms certificate;
- Suggest that the certificate holder surrenders their certificates and then reapply when their health has improved;
- Revoke the certificates, if appropriate, and if necessary to ensure public safety.