Temporary Arrangements and Longer-Term Options

Section 7 permits

Section 7 of the Firearms Act 1968 allows the police to issue a temporary permit authorising possession of firearms, shotguns or ammunition in circumstances where issuing a certificate is not necessary or appropriate. Following a death, a permit may be considered to allow a suitable relative, executor or other appropriate person to possess the firearms temporarily while arrangements are made. However, the grant of a permit is not automatic. Before issuing a permit, the police must assess the individual circumstances, including the suitability of the proposed recipient and any public safety considerations, and may decide that a permit is not appropriate in every case.

Before any permit is granted, the police will assess the suitability of the proposed recipient and consider any public safety concerns. This assessment may include checks to ensure that temporary possession of the firearms or ammunition can be authorised safely and lawfully.

Other temporary arrangements

A Registered Firearms Dealer can hold the items for storage, valuation or sale. Ask about storage, commission and transport charges before agreeing terms.

Another certificate holder may be able to hold the items if their certificate, authority and security arrangements cover them. Section 1 firearms must be specifically authorised before transfer.

The police may take items into care where necessary. Record what has been taken and obtain a receipt or property reference.

Longer-term choices

Once the firearms and ammunition are held safely and lawfully, the personal representatives can act in accordance with the will and the administration of the estate. Available choices may include:

Keeping them by an intended beneficiary who obtains the certificate and authority required for the particular items.

Selling them through a Registered Firearms Dealer, a suitably authorised auctioneer or a lawful private transfer.

Transferring or gifting them to a person, club or museum that is lawfully authorised to receive them.

Deactivating them through a competent gunsmith and the required Proof House certification process.

Surrendering them to the police after arrangements have been agreed.

Destroying them through an authorised route, where that is the informed decision of the estate.

Useful details

Police force	
Firearms licensing	*Telephone and email*
Registered dealer	*Name and contact details*
Certificate details	*Certificate numbers and expiry dates*

Further advice

If you require guidance following a bereavement involving firearms or shotguns, contact **your local police firearms licensing department** or **a Registered Firearms Dealer**. Further information is available through the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) and the Home Office firearms licensing guidance.

British Shooting Sports Council
Website: www.bssc.org.uk

Useful links

Home Office Guide on Firearms Licensing Law
https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/firearms-law-guidance-to-the-police-2012/guide-on-firearms-licensing-law-accessible-version

GOV.UK Tell Us Once guidance
https://www.gov.uk/after-a-death/organisations-you-need-to-contact-and-tell-us-once

If you are struggling following a bereavement, support may be available through bereavement charities, your GP, NHS services or other local support organisations.

> **KEY MESSAGE**
> You do not need to deal with everything immediately. The priority is to ensure any firearms, shotguns and ammunition remain secure and that the police firearms licensing department is contacted promptly so that lawful and proportionate arrangements can be made.

Produced jointly by the British Shooting Sports Council and the National Police Chiefs' Council. Applies to England and Wales and gives general information, not legal advice. Current at November 2026.

The BSSC and the NPCC are committed to providing information that is accessible and inclusive. If you require this information in another language, large print, or another format, please contact your local firearms licensing department



NPCC
National Police Chiefs' Council

The British Shooting Sports Council

Chairman: Mark Garnier OBE MP | Secretary: Jeremy Hinde

Firearms and Shotguns After Bereavement

A guide for families, executors and personal representatives

Produced jointly by the British Shooting Sports Council (BSSC) and the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC)

A Message of Reassurance

Losing a family member or loved one is a difficult and emotional time. If the person who has died possessed firearms, shotguns or ammunition, there are legal responsibilities which must be addressed. However, there is usually no need to make immediate decisions about their long-term future.

The most important step is to ensure that any firearms, shotguns and ammunition remain secure and that the police firearms licensing department is informed as soon as reasonably practicable. Early contact allows appropriate advice and arrangements to be made while the estate is administered. This approach is consistent with the principles of public safety and lawful possession that underpin the UK firearms licensing system.

Ownership and possession

Ownership and possession are not the same thing. Firearms may form part of the estate and ownership may pass under the will or the rules of intestacy, but lawful possession remains subject to firearms legislation. A family member, executor or beneficiary does not automatically gain the legal authority to possess firearms.

What to do first

If you know, or believe, that the deceased possessed firearms, shotguns or ammunition:

1. **Contact the firearms licensing team.** Tell them that the certificate holder has died. Give the deceased's name and address, any known certificate numbers, details of the firearms, shotguns and ammunition located, and your own contact details and relationship to the deceased. Mention any concerns about security, access, vulnerability or unknown items.
2. **Leave everything secure.** Do not unnecessarily handle, unload, remove or transport guns or ammunition. Do not take them to a police station unless the police have agreed how this should be done.
3. **Do not give anyone access without authority.** A relative, executor or beneficiary does not automatically have authority to possess the guns simply because they are named in a will or are dealing with the estate.
4. **Find the relevant paperwork.** Look for the firearm or shotgun certificate, the will, any written instructions, dealer details, valuations and a list of the guns. Do not publish photographs, serial numbers or security information.
5. **Ask about a temporary arrangement.** The police may authorise temporary possession, or the guns can be placed with a Registered Firearms Dealer or another person who is lawfully authorised to possess them.

In most circumstances, the police will work with the family, executor or personal representative to identify the most appropriate and proportionate arrangements.

TELL US ONCE

The Government's Tell Us Once service helps notify a range of public bodies following a death. However, it does not currently notify police firearms licensing departments. If the deceased possessed firearms, shotguns or ammunition, contact the firearms licensing team separately.

IF THERE IS AN IMMEDIATE RISK

Call 999 if firearms, shotguns or ammunition cannot be located, have been left unsecured, are being handled unsafely, or may be accessed by unauthorised persons, or if there is any other immediate risk to public safety. For non-emergency enquiries, contact the relevant police firearms licensing department.

The estate retains ownership

Firearms placed temporarily with the police or a dealer remain property of the estate unless they are lawfully sold, transferred, gifted, deactivated or destroyed. Police custody does not, by itself, authorise destruction.

Some firearms, accessories and ammunition have substantial financial or historic value. The Home Office guidance says that undue pressure should not be used to force destruction and that sufficient opportunity should be allowed for valuation and disposal through a dealer where an item may be valuable. Where appropriate, obtain an independent valuation and discuss the available options with a Registered Firearms Dealer or suitably qualified specialist.

Security, Transport and Unusual Items

Cabinet keys and access

Do not force a cabinet or safe merely to identify its contents. Tell the firearms licensing team if keys or access codes cannot be found. Agree a lawful plan before a locksmith or any other person gains access. Keep keys, codes and security details private.

Transport

Do not assume that an executor, relative or courier may carry firearms or ammunition. Ask the police or a Registered Firearms Dealer who may collect or transport them and what documents are required. Never send firearms or controlled ammunition through an ordinary parcel service.

Items requiring particular care

A gun that is not listed on a certificate should not be handled. Contact the police promptly and explain where it is.

A handgun or other potentially prohibited weapon is subject to additional legal controls and may require immediate police care and specialist authority. Do not attempt to move it; contact the firearms licensing team promptly for advice.

An antique firearm may be exempt only if it meets the legal definition and is possessed as a curiosity or ornament. Do not rely on age or appearance alone.

A deactivated firearm should have the appropriate proof mark and certificate. Older or defectively deactivated items may be subject to restrictions.

Air weapons are treated differently across Great Britain. In England and Wales many low-powered air weapons do not require a certificate, but age, possession and public-place restrictions still apply. Seek advice before transferring, disposing of or gifting any air weapon.

Explosives and reloading propellants may be subject to separate certificates and storage rules. Do not handle unidentified powders, primers, military ordnance or suspected explosives. Tell the police exactly what has been found.

Keep a written record

Record the make, model, calibre or chambering and serial number of each item if that information can be taken safely from existing paperwork. Keep copies of correspondence, permits, receipts, valuations and transfer or disposal records with the estate papers.

Personal safety and privacy

Limit knowledge of the location of the firearms and do not discuss the collection or the deceased person's address on social media. If the property will be empty, tell the firearms licensing team so that security can be considered promptly.

Planning Ahead for Certificate Holders

A short written record can spare your family uncertainty and help them preserve the value of your collection. Keep it with your will or other estate papers and tell your executor where it is. Review it after any material change. Advance planning can reduce uncertainty and help ensure your firearms are dealt with safely, lawfully and in accordance with your wishes.

Information to leave

- ☐ Your police force, certificate numbers and the firearms licensing team's contact details.
- ☐ A list of firearms and shotguns with make, model, calibre or chambering and serial number.
- ☐ A list of controlled ammunition, significant accessories and items stored elsewhere.
- ☐ Approximate values, recent valuations, purchase records and details of any historic significance.
- ☐ Your preferred Registered Firearms Dealer, auctioneer, club or adviser, including contact details.
- ☐ Your wishes for sale, transfer, gift, deactivation or destruction, reflected correctly in your will.
- ☐ The names of intended beneficiaries and whether they already hold the necessary certificate and authority.

Security information

Do not put cabinet keys, access codes or detailed security arrangements in a document that could be found by an unauthorised person. Agree a secure way for your executor to obtain access after your death. Discuss any proposed arrangement with the firearms licensing team and the person who will carry it out.