



Home Office

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson
DBE MP
Minister of State for Policing, Fire
and Crime Prevention
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF
www.gov.uk/home-office

Rt Hon Chris Philp MP
Shadow Home Secretary
Chair of the APPG on Shooting and Conservation
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

DECS Reference: MIN/1268791/25

7 March 2025

Dear Chris & Co-Signatories,

Thank you for your letter of 30 January to the Home Secretary about the recent increase in firearms licensing fees. I am replying as the Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention and I am sorry for the delay.

The statutory instrument we laid before Parliament on 15 January increased the fees charged by police forces to provide full-cost recovery for firearms licensing applications, in line with this Government's manifesto commitment. The increased fees came into effect on 5 February. This increase was essential for both public safety and police efficiency so that the required service improvements can be made.

The need for an increase in fees was one of the most important recommendations made by the Senior Coroner in his Preventing Future Death reports following the inquests into the deaths in the Plymouth shootings. As you will know from your time as Policing Minister in the previous Government, the fees had not been increased since 2015 and they had fallen considerably below the cost of the service provided. I know you had commenced a review of the fees but this had not been acted upon and no final decisions had been taken before the General Election was called, and it fell to this Government to rectify the position.

Owing to the length of time since the fees were last increased, and the more rigorous checks on the suitability of applicants and certificate holders on public safety grounds that police forces are now required to make, full cost recovery has meant average increases of 133%. While these percentage increases are large, the actual fees charged remain relatively modest. For example, the most common fee category is renewal of a shotgun certificate, which will increase from £49 every five years to £126. This is far below the cost of, for example, a TV licence or a salmon fishing licence, which remain considerably more expensive over a five-year period.

The new fees are based on data produced by a data collection exercise in January 2023 involving 31 police forces including Police Scotland, which was shared with the Firearms Fees Working Group chaired by the Home Office. That Group included representatives from the main representative shooting organisations and the Countryside Alliance. The

Group met in 2022 and 2023 and the shooting representative groups were able to make representations on the proposed fees and data collection exercise. The fees are based on the average cost to forces, updated to reflect inflation and recent pay awards, and include the cost of training for firearms licensing staff.

I recognise that different forces will have different costs but when calculating a single fee for an application the fairest way is to use the average of those costs. Data from the police forces with the longest licence processing times was not included in this calculation, although the most inefficient forces did not take part in the 2023 exercise. The Government did not undertake a public consultation on increasing firearms licensing fees since it was a commitment in the Government's manifesto. As well as supporting public safety, the increased fees will support police forces to provide an improved service to firearms applicants through better resourced and trained licensing teams.

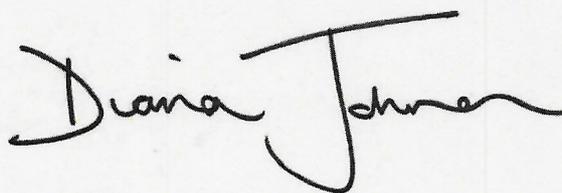
The National Police Chiefs' Council lead on Firearms Licensing is developing a new performance framework for firearms licensing teams, which will be published in order to provide greater transparency on application turnaround times. This will include for the first time a performance target for forces to complete applications for the grant or renewal of firearm and shotgun certificates within four months, unless there are concerns about the suitability of the applicant.

In order to ensure that the intended service improvements are achieved, I have written to all Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables to make clear that the income from increased fees must be used to ensure their firearms licensing teams are properly resourced and trained for this purpose. His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services will be undertaking a thematic inspection of police forces' arrangements in respect of firearms licensing later in 2025, which will provide an opportunity to check how forces are progressing on these fronts.

The Home Office will conduct more regular reviews of firearms licensing fees in the future. We are exploring increasing the fees annually in line with inflation, to ensure they keep pace with police costs in between three-yearly comprehensive reviews. I regret that I will not be able to join you at the APPG meeting on 11 March, but I would like to meet with you and the Group soon to discuss firearms licensing issues. If you would like to contact my office at [REDACTED] they will be able to arrange a convenient date for us to meet.

I would be grateful if you could share this response with your fellow co-signatories.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Diana Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D' and 'J'.

Rt Hon Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
Minister of State for Policing, Fire and Crime Prevention