

Date: 11/11/2025
Our ref: 01/FOI/25/015733/W

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST REFERENCE NO: 01/FOI/25/015733/W

I write in connection with your request for information dated 27/10/2025, received by Greater Manchester Police (GMP) for the following information:

REQUEST 1:

What would you like to know?: Please provide the current versions, and the versions in force on 1 Apr 2023 and 1 Aug 2025, of any policies/SOPs/guidance used by GMP Firearms & Explosives Licensing for:

- * assessing grant/refusal of FAC, SGC and coterminous applications;***
- * handling historic or unsubstantiated domestic abuse allegations (incl. any approach to contacting current/former partners);***
- * handling medical information (use of GP proformas/third-party providers; reconciling conflicting GP vs private reports; when supplementary evidence is requested; treatment of historic/resolved conditions);***
- * use of conditions/mitigations as an alternative to refusal;***
- * reconsideration (administrative review without court appeal) and re-application after refusal (incl. any minimum waiting period and criteria for departing from it);***
- * any customer service/communications standard for responding to public enquiries to FELU;***
- * any records retention schedule relevant to firearms licensing files and domestic-abuse-related records that did not result in arrest/charge/caution (e.g., MoPI schedules or local retention rules).***

Also provide:

- * the referee certification form(s) currently issued/accepted for SGC/FAC and any associated guidance;***
- * the name of the case management system used for firearms licensing (e.g., NFLMS or successor) and any local user guidance/manuals held.***

Timeframe for documents: provide the current versions and those in force on 1 Apr 2023 and 1 Aug 2025.

If any of the above are already published, please provide the precise URLs. If parts exceed the cost limit, please advise/assist to refine and disclose the remainder.

REQUEST 2:

What would you like to know?: Please provide recorded information held by GMP Firearms & Explosives Licensing concerning implementation of the Home Office Statutory Guidance (2023 and 2025 revisions):

* Internal instructions/briefings/bulletins issued to FELU staff about applying the guidance, including treatment of (a) unsubstantiated historic allegations and (b) historic/resolved medical issues;

* Any mandatory training adopted for FEOs/licensing staff since 1 Apr 2023 (course outlines, slide decks or syllabi if held);

* Any internal audits, reviews or quality-assurance reports on firearms licensing decision-making consistency conducted since 1 Jan 2023 (titles/dates/executive summaries or reports held);

* Any Equality Impact Assessment or similar assessment undertaken by GMP related to changes in firearms licensing after the 2023/2025 guidance updates (a copy, or title/date if withheld).

Timeframe: 1 Jan 2023 to the date of your response.

If items are published, please provide URLs. If cost limit may be exceeded, please advise/assist to refine and disclose what can be provided.

REQUEST 3:

What would you like to know?: Please provide the following annual statistics for FAC, SGC and cotermious applications, by financial year 2019/20, 2020/21, 2021/22, 2022/23, 2023/24, 2024/25, and year-to-date 2025/26 if available:

1. Numbers received, granted, refused, withdrawn (by type).
 2. Of the refusals, counts where the primary recorded reason was: (a) domestic abuse/violence (incl. unsubstantiated allegation), (b) medical/mental health (please separate historic/resolved vs current/ongoing if recorded), (c) security/storage, (d) other (list top three categories used).
 3. Numbers of re-applications after refusal and their outcomes (granted/refused), broken down by the same reason categories in (2) if recorded.
 4. Numbers of appeals lodged and outcomes (granted/upheld/withdrawn), with median time from refusal to appeal outcome.
 5. Average/median processing time (valid application > decision) for: FAC grants, SGC grants, cotermious grants, and renewals (FAC/SGC/cotermious). Please also provide the current average you report publicly, if different.
 6. Numbers of conditional grants (i.e., conditions/mitigations applied instead of refusal), if recorded.
- Please supply data in Excel/CSV where possible. If any figures are not held in the requested breakdowns, provide the nearest equivalent and state the limitation. If the request risks exceeding the cost limit, please advise/assist to refine.**

Applicants second request (merged with this)

Please provide the recorded information set out below regarding Greater Manchester Police (GMP) Firearms & Explosives Licensing.

Timeframe: 1 January 2019 to the date of your response (or the most recent full year available, as specified below).

If any of the requested items are already published, please discharge this request by providing the precise URLs to the exact documents/pages.

A. Policies, SOPs, guidance, templates (current versions; plus the versions in force on 1 April 2023 and 1 August 2025)

1. The current policy/SOP for assessing grant/refusal of:

firearm certificates (FAC),

shotgun certificates (SGC), and

coterminous applications.

Please also provide the versions that were in force on 1 April 2023 and 1 August 2025 (to reflect the Home Office statutory guidance updates).

2. Any policy/SOP/guidance on handling historic or unsubstantiated domestic abuse allegations in licensing decisions (including how weight is applied and any requirement/approach to interviewing current/former partners).

3. Any policy/SOP/guidance on medical information for licensing decisions, including:

Use of GP proformas and third-party providers (e.g., MedCert),

Reconciling conflicting GP vs private reports,

When supplementary medical evidence is requested,

Treatment of historic/resolved mental-health incidents.

4. Any current internal checklists, risk matrices, decision templates, or panel terms of reference used by the Firearms Licensing Unit (FELU), including any “most serious factors / other serious factors” documents adopted from or aligned to the Home Office Statutory Guidance.

5. Any current guidance on the use of conditions (or mitigations) as an alternative to refusal, plus any standard list of conditions routinely considered.

6. Any current customer service / communication standard or internal target for responding to public enquiries/emails to FELU.

7. Any retention schedule applicable to firearms licensing records and to domestic-abuse-related records that did not result in arrest/charge/caution (e.g., MoPI schedules; local retention rules).

8. The referee certification form(s) and associated guidance currently issued/accepted by GMP for SGC and FAC applications (reflecting the rules post-2025 where applicable).

9. The current system used for firearms licensing case management (e.g., NFLMS or successor) and any local user guidance or manuals used by GMP staff.

B. Processes for reconsideration / re-application

10. Any policy, SOP, or written guidance on reconsideration of a refused application (i.e., without a court appeal): criteria, evidential requirements, and process.

11. Any policy or written guidance on re-application after refusal, including any minimum waiting period, and whether and how that period may be reduced or extended.

C. Training & assurance

12. Any documentation evidencing mandatory training for Firearms Enquiry Officers / Licensing staff adopted in response to the Home Office Statutory Guidance (2023/2025); include course outlines or training slide decks if held.

13. Any internal audits, reviews, or quality assurance reports about GMP firearms licensing decision-making consistency (last 3 years).

D. Statistics (please provide annually by financial year 2019/20 to 2024/25, and year-to-date 2025/26 if available)

14. Numbers of applications received, granted, refused, withdrawn for:

FAC,

SGC, and

coterminous applications.

15. Of the refusals above, the number where the primary recorded reason was:

a) Domestic abuse/violence (including unsubstantiated allegation),

b) Medical/mental health concerns (please separate historic/resolved vs current/ongoing where recorded),

c) Security/storage concerns,

d) Other (please list the top three categories used internally).

16. The number of re-applications after refusal and the number subsequently granted, broken down by the same categories in 15(a)–(d), if recorded.

17. The number of appeals lodged against refusals, and outcomes (granted/upheld/withdrawn), plus median time from refusal to appeal outcome.

18. The average/median processing time (from valid application to decision) for:

FAC grants,

SGC grants,

Coterminous grants,

Renewals (FAC, SGC, coterminous),

for each year in scope; also provide the current average reported to the public if different.

19. The number of conditional grants (i.e., cases where conditions/mitigations were applied as an alternative to refusal), if recorded.

E. Implementation of Home Office Statutory Guidance (2023/2025)

20. Any recorded internal instructions, bulletins or briefings issued to FELU staff about implementing the Home Office Statutory Guidance (2023 and 2025), including how to treat:

unsubstantiated historic allegations, and

historic/resolved medical conditions.

21. Any Equality Impact Assessment or similar assessment undertaken by GMP regarding changes to firearms licensing following the 2023/2025 guidance and 2025 rules changes (e.g., referees for SGC).

F. Clarifications/format

Where information is held in spreadsheets, please provide the original .xlsx or .csv files.

Where an item does not exist, please confirm “information not held.”

Where you consider a part of the request likely to exceed the cost limit, please provide advice and assistance under s.16 FOIA to help me refine it, and disclose the remainder that can be supplied within the limit.

If you rely on any exemption, please identify the specific statutory exemption(s) and supply the associated public interest test reasoning where applicable.

Result of Searches

Following receipt of your request searches were conducted within Greater Manchester Police (GMP) to locate the requested information and I can confirm some of the information requested is held by GMP.

However, GMP does not hold the information that you have requested in an easily retrievable format.

GMP can advise questions 2, 3, 15 and 16 under request 2 would not be able to be completed without carrying out a substantial review manually of hundreds of files and applications to be able to provide a response.

Reviews needed to be carried out would be:

- examinations of every specific refusal and the collection of files from Deep store, and the reviewing of paper files.(Q2 and 15)
- a review of every RED application (Q3 and 16)

These reviews would consist of several hundred checks needing to be completed and as such this request would far exceed the permitted 18hrs in which we have to respond. This does not consider the further time required to locate the remainder of this request which would only add to the constraints.

If one part of the request engages a Section 12 response, the whole request will engage a Section 12 response. The reason being is locating, retrieving and extracting any further information would only add to the already exceeded time obligations and so no other searches have been completed at this stage.

Therefore, as per **Section 12(1)** of the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the cost of providing you with the information is above the amount to which we are legally required to respond i.e. the cost of locating and retrieving the information exceeds the ‘appropriate level’ as stated in the Freedom of Information (Fees and Appropriate Limit) Regulations 2004.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, this letter acts as a Refusal Notice.

GMP is obligated, pursuant to section 16(1) of the Act to provide you with advice and assistance on refining your request to bring compliance within the fees limit. In order for the force to attempt to keep this within the fees limit, the information you are requesting will need revising with a considerably reduced request for less information, along with a reduced timeframe for your request. With any request that requires a manual review there is always a chance of a request being refused under S12 due to the enormity of work that is usually needed to provide the data, therefore the resulting response

cannot be guaranteed at this point as it will be dependent upon the number of records that fall within the scope of any new request, as they would still have to be manually assessed.

Should you wish to refine and resubmit your request in line with the advice above please respond to freedomofinformation@gmp.police.uk.