Farnham Dene Medical Practice

Firearms Licensing Policy

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1 Introduction

1.1 Policy statement

The purpose of this document is to outline the support this organisation may be asked to give to determine the suitability of an individual to be issued with a firearm or shotgun certificate. As detailed in the Firearms Licencing: Statutory Guidance for Chief Officers of Policy, it is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain information about their medical suitability and this must be done using the medical proforma that is included as part of the firearms application.

1.2 Status

In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, we have considered how provisions within this policy might impact on different groups and individuals. This document and any procedures contained within it are non-contractual, which means they may be modified or withdrawn at any time. They apply to all employees and contractors working for the organisation.

2 Policy

2.1 Application process

Applicants must use one of the following forms when applying for a firearm or shotgun licence:

- Form 201 (Application for Grant or Renewal of Certificate)
- Form 201V (Application to Vary a Firearm Certificate)

2.2 Responding to police requests

The BMA firearms licensing process guidance explains that it is important that this organisation responds to the initial police letter within 21 days. If the requested medical information is not provided, the police will inform the applicant that the application cannot be progressed in the absence of the required information. Note, the police may contact this organisation directly to request the missing medical information.

2.3 Age considerations

It is the practice policy not to complete firearms certificate forms for children/young adults under the age of 18.

2.4 Conscientious objection

GPs at this organisation are not obliged contractually or otherwise to undertake this work.

When a GP cites conscientious objection because of religious or ethical beliefs, they must inform the police. GPs should take reasonable steps to notify their patients of their conscientious objection in advance and the BMA encourages doctors to place a clear statement on their website and on notices within the organisation.

The BMA indicates that conscientious objectors do not need to arrange for the alternative provision of a report. However, when access to a firearm is a professional requirement, they encourage doctors to assist applicants to find a colleague who is a GMC-registered doctor to assist.

2.5 Professional capability

If the GP feels that they are unable to complete this request as it seeks an opinion on matters falling outside their medical expertise, namely the assessment of behavioural and personality disorders, they will confirm this in writing.

2.6 Fees

As this is additional work and not a contractual obligation, this organisation is entitled to charge the applicant a reasonable fee. On receiving any letter from the police, current BMA advice is the following and this is dependent on the organisation's professional and/or ethical position:

- I am content to complete this report for which I shall charge a fee to the applicant. You will receive the report once I have received payment of this fee from the applicant. Until such time as you receive my report, you should assume that the applicant has declined to provide this fee.

- I am content to provide a summary limited to medical facts and compiled from the records for a fee which I shall charge to the applicant. You will receive the report upon my receipt of this fee from the applicant. Until such time as you receive my report, you should assume that the applicant has declined to provide this fee.

- I am content to fill out the requested report and will charge no fee. The report is enclosed/will follow at my earliest convenience.

Should any payment not be received, then the report may be withheld until the fee has been paid. If this results in any delay then, within the 21-day time frame, the police must be informed stating that the reason for the delay is that payment is awaited from the applicant.

2.7 Coding and flagging patient records

When a patient applies for, or is granted, a firearms licence adding the appropriate SNOMED code to the patient's medical record will create a Digital Firearms Marker. The marker will automatically trigger an alert if a condition that is listed in the firearms trigger reference set is added to that patient's record, or when the marker is added to the record and the patient already has one of the conditions.

The following are other commonly used SNOMED CT codes:

Title	SNOMED CT ID
Has shotgun certificate	812091000000109
No longer has firearms certificate	1033721000000109
No longer has shotgun certificate	1033741000000102
Shotgun application certificate	184755000

Shotgun application certificate – not paid	184756004
Shotgun application certificate – fee paid	184757008

2.8 Mental health considerations

The BMA provides guidance in relation to mental health considerations when considering firearms certificate applications.

2.9 Monitoring patients with firearms certificates

The Firearms licensing guidance explains that there is no legal or contractual requirement for GPs to monitor or assess a patient who currently holds a firearms certificate but they should encourage patients to notify the police if they become aware that relevant aspects of a certificate holder's circumstances have changed which means the police should review the firearms certificate.

When there is a reasonable belief that an individual holding a firearms certificate may represent a danger to themselves or others, doctors should ask them to give up their certificate. If the applicant refuses, a doctor should inform the police authority's firearms licensing department as a matter of urgency. If there is any doubt regarding this decision, the GP should contact the BMA or their medical defence union.

2.10 Revoked or expired firearms certificate

If a firearms certificate is revoked or expires, the police will notify the organisation within one month of the revoking or expiry. The patient's GP is to update the individual's health record and remove the firearms marker.