

South Yorkshire
Mayoral Combined Authority
11 Broad Street West
Sheffield, S1 2BQ

16 October 2026

To: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services

Dear Chief Inspector,

Response from Kilvinder Vigurs, South Yorkshire's Deputy Mayor, to the HMICFRS report on Firearms licensing: An inspection of firearms licensing across police forces in England and Wales

I welcome the publication. We recognise that effective firearms licensing and strong governance of such licensing is a critical component of public safety. The vast majority of certificate holders are responsible and law-abiding individuals; however, when firearms are misused by someone who has been granted legal access to them, the consequences can be devastating for those directly involved as well as the wider community.

There are five recommendations detailed for local police forces within this report, all of which have been accepted by South Yorkshire Police (SYP). As Deputy Mayor with responsibility for Policing and Crime, this is an area I will continue to monitor through established governance and scrutiny arrangements. This includes further oversight to assess progress against the recommendations, monitor implementation activity, and seek assurance that appropriate standards are being met and sustained.

Recommendation 12: By 31 March 2027, the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council should review the visitors' permit regime to reduce the inherent risks to public safety. As part of this review, they should consider whether visitors' permits should be restricted to applicants from countries with firearms licensing and safety practices similar to those in Great Britain. In the interim, chief constables should make sure that firearms and explosives licensing units assess visitors' permit applications in line with the Guide on firearms licensing law.

I agree with this recommendation. I have been advised that South Yorkshire Police Firearms Licensing receive relatively few visitor permit applications. All visitor applications are subject to the same process, including background checks, as all other firearms applications. The force's current approach is to require vetting information from an applicant's country of origin when considering visitors' permit applications. Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all available information provided by the applicant, their UK sponsor, and the relevant authorities within the country of origin. This includes consideration of any existing firearms certificates, licences or other relevant documentation. Those applications

that are successful are completed in line with the appropriate guidance. In response to this recommendation, South Yorkshire Police will include a review of the licensing practice from the issuing country.

Recommendation 13: - By 1 December 2026, chief constables should:

- **satisfy themselves that their scheme of delegation for firearms licensing is fit for purpose and in line with the firearms licensing authorised professional practice; and**
- **check that decision-making is in accordance with that scheme.**

I agree with this recommendation. I am advised that the force's Scheme of Delegation for firearms licensing has been recently reviewed and updated following internal audit activity. This scheme of delegation is authorised by the Chief Constable. In addition, delegated authority for spontaneous certificate revocations is extended to all Firearms Inquiry Managers (FIMs), Contact and Incident Managers (CIMs) and Tactical Firearms Commanders (TFCs). The circumstances in which this authority can be exercised are set out within Force policy and supporting guidance.

Recommendation 14: By 1 December 2026, chief constables should make sure that they have audit and dip sampling processes in place to review firearms licensing decisions in line with the firearms licensing authorised professional practice.

I agree with this recommendation in principle. Regular auditing or quality assurance processes are essential to ensure effective oversight of local decision-making. South Yorkshire Police has robust audit and dip-sampling arrangements in place, and I have been advised that an internal audit of a large volume of firearms licensing applications has recently been completed. Additional assurance is also being provided through Chief Officer oversight and review, with opportunities for collaborative peer dip sampling with other forces also being explored.

I am currently awaiting these audit findings but will use my governance arrangements to explore any issues arising. I would also welcome any further national guidance or reform to support greater consistency in how dip-sampling is undertaken across forces, helping to ensure that assurance and oversight arrangements are assessed to a common standard.

Recommendation 20: - By 1 December 2026, chief constables should establish or maintain:

- **force-level firearms licensing governance structure that is compliant with the firearms licensing authorised professional practice; and**
- **a qualitative and quantitative performance framework that covers both risk and how quickly firearms and explosives licensing units process applications.**

I agree with this recommendation. Locally, there are established governance arrangements in place for firearms and explosives licensing through existing performance and oversight structures.

- Data relating to firearms and shotgun certificate applications, grants, refusals and revocations is routinely reported through force governance forums, providing regular scrutiny and oversight. These meetings are attended by SYMCA officers, supporting independent challenge and assurance.
- Any incident or suitability concern involving a certificate holder is triaged by Firearms Licensing management and a decision to remove firearms and certificate made at the start of any investigation. The final decision to return or revoke is made by Warrants and Firearms Manager and a Supt in Operations Support Unit.

Performance information demonstrates a positive position in relation to the timeliness of processing applications, with regular monitoring enabling the Force to identify emerging risks, pressures and areas for improvement.

Recommendation 21 - By 1 December 2026, chief constables should make sure they have a documented engagement plan in line with firearms licensing authorised professional practice.

I agree with this recommendation, and I am advised that an engagement plan has already been completed. SYP have established an Independent Firearms Licensing Advisory Group which includes representatives from shooting organisations, registered firearms dealers and shooting clubs. This presents an opportunity to engage with key stakeholders.

Recommendation 23 - With immediate effect, chief constables should satisfy themselves that any firearms and explosives licensing unit practitioners who are responsible for handling and transporting firearms are qualified to handle them safely.

I agree with this recommendation. I am advised that all Firearms licensing staff (with the exception of staff in office-based administration roles) attend an annual refresher with Firearms training for the make safe, transportation and handling of firearms.

Commenting more broadly

While police forces have a vital role in administering firearms licensing and managing identified risks, South Yorkshire continue to process both grant and renewal applications in a timely manner, demonstrating a commitment to both public safety and service delivery. I concur with the finding of the report in that some of the challenges identified do require action beyond the remit of individual chief officers. There remains a strong case for national reform and legislative change to strengthen the overall regulatory framework. For example, greater assurance around the continuous monitoring of medical suitability throughout the lifespan of a certificate would support earlier identification of emerging risks and help ensure licensing decisions remain informed by the most current information available.

We therefore encourage continued consideration of national measures that enhance information sharing, improve consistency of practice, and strengthen safeguards within the firearms licensing system. Such reforms would support forces in discharging their responsibilities effectively while providing the public with greater confidence that appropriate controls are in place to prevent firearms from being held by those who may no longer be suitable to possess them.

Yours sincerely



Kilvinder Vigurs

Deputy Mayor for Policing & Crime