



Firearms and Explosives Licensing Service – User Satisfaction 19/20

Police Scotland recognise the importance of understanding the views and priorities of those who use the firearms and explosives licensing service. While our aim is to meet our statutory responsibilities in respect of the legislation, we are also keen to gauge user satisfaction with the firearms and explosives licensing service.

In April 2019, we launched our Firearms and Explosives Licensing User Satisfaction Survey to engage members of the public who use the service. The fieldwork was conducted over 12 months. The survey closed in late-March 2020.

The survey consisted of 12 questions, 10 pre-coded and 2 free-text. The questionnaire was developed with the assistance of the Analysis and Performance Unit, and made available via Police Scotland's Citizen Space platform.

To encourage participation, the survey was communicated to SPOCs, RFDs, the shooting community via the Practitioners Group, and a link was include in our covering letter sent out with new certificates.

What the public said

The survey received 100 responses over the fieldwork period. While it is acknowledged that this is only a small percentage of our certificate holders, the responses were useful in gauging the level of satisfaction with the service, as well as identifying areas where it is perceived improvements can be made.

We received a good spread of response from across Scotland: 38% from the North, 28% from the East, 31% from the West, and around 3% from outside of Scotland.

42% of respondents said they were applying for the renewal of their certification. A strong majority (72%) were satisfied (very satisfied or satisfied) with the overall application process, while around one in ten (12%) said they were dissatisfied (very dissatisfied or dissatisfied).

75% said it was easy to get information, complete the application forms, and contact Police Scotland. Around 65% were satisfied with the speed and efficiency of the service, while around a fifth (19%) said they were not satisfied.

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Most respondents (74%) felt that the officers and staff they dealt with were knowledgeable and professional, while one in ten (10%) were dissatisfied with their interaction with officers and staff.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on how the service could be improved. Answers in very broad terms included:

- Inconsistency in the variations process across the function;
- Poor Police Scotland website;
- Lack of knowledge and experience of FEOs, and that these should be dedicated resources;
- Online application forms and payment would be welcomed; and
- Process can be too slow at times.

We encouraged respondents to provide an additional comments at the end of the survey, which generated a number of rich insights – some positive and others negative – which can be summarised as follows:

Positive

- Dumfries and Galloway (D&G) are lucky to have an efficient firearms licensing department and another said D&G firearms licensing are faultless;
- FEOs in Tayside are both knowledgeable and helpful;
- Inverness's department are very helpful, approachable, and a pleasure to deal with; and
- Edinburgh's firearms licensing team are fantastic - very helpful and professional.

Negative

- Several complaints about the fee for the GP process - there appears to be a perception that this is a matter Police Scotland have some control over;
- Increase the certification period from 5 to 10 years;
- Please reduce waiting times and speed up enquiries;
- Bring back more FEOs; and
- Ensure staff are trained properly.

Message from Supt. Alison Higgins

In very general terms, I am pleased with the response. The issues which have been highlighted are either in the process of being addressed or are matters which we have no control over, i.e. legislation/GP fees.

As a result, I believe the survey is fit for purpose and will be reopened. My intention is to review responses again at the end of March 2021.

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I'm sure you will agree that it is a worthwhile exercise which will help us identify areas for improvement going forward and I would encourage you to raise awareness of the survey with certificate holders during your interactions and encourage participation.