

HOW TO GET AN AUTOMATIC EXTENSION OF YOUR SHOTGUN CERTIFICATE ON RENEWAL

In a welcome return to our regular series of legal articles from the CPSA honorary solicitor, **Laura Saunsbury** begins with this guide to taking the stress out of your certificate renewal.

As I embark on my 14th year of advising and assisting members, there are few signs of delays with certificate renewals improving. If anything, the delays seem to be getting longer in many police force areas. For this reason, it's wise to ensure that you definitely submit your renewal application at least eight weeks before the expiry date shown on your certificate. You will then have the legal right to an automatic extension of your certificate by up to eight weeks if the police cannot process your renewal application in time. To qualify for the extension, make sure you have provided the medical certificate from your doctor and also paid the renewal fee early enough, otherwise your application may be rejected as incomplete or invalid.

Shortly after you submit your application, the police should confirm they have received it and that your certificate will be automatically extended by up to eight weeks. The police may initially send you an email or text to confirm this. However, some police forces are not following this up with a formal letter to confirm the extension of your certificate, despite the fact the Home Office Guidance to the Police on Firearms Licensing indicates this should be done and that changes have been made to the National Firearms Licensing Management System to enable police forces to generate a standard letter for applicants confirming the extension of their certificate (paragraph 11.13).

If your local licensing department seem reluctant to provide such a letter or state they don't have the facility to do it, you may wish to draw their attention to this paragraph of the guidance when repeating this request. You can politely point out that as the guidance provides for such letters to be issued, many firearms dealers may refuse to sell you cartridges or another shotgun after your certificate expiry date if you cannot produce a police letter to prove your certificate has been extended.

Once you have the police letter confirming the extension, this will enable you to continue purchasing ammunition and exercising all the other rights of a certificate holder for eight weeks after the expiry date

shown on your certificate. It will also mean you do not need to lodge your guns with a firearms dealer or on another person's certificate prior to yours expiring, and you can safely continue to keep your guns at home.

If your certificate is not renewed before the expiry date, whenever leaving the house with your guns you should carry a copy of this letter with your certificate as evidence that it is still valid. If the police still haven't been able to process the renewal by the time the extension is coming to an end, ask them to issue you with a temporary permit, which they should do if the delays with your renewal have been caused by them rather than you.

TOP TIPS FOR A HASSLE FREE RENEWAL

Diarise these dates to remind you to take the following steps in the countdown to your certificate expiring –

- 1** 16 weeks ahead – deliver or post to your GP surgery the medical pro forma for completion plus the police explanatory standard letter for your doctor. This is downloadable online from your local police website
- 2** While you are waiting for your GP to supply the signed and stamped medical form, organise your character referee
- 3** 13 weeks before – chase your GP surgery if you haven't received the medical form back
- 4** Ten weeks ahead – plan on submitting your renewal at this point so you still have a couple of weeks to spare in case of any last minute problems
- 5** Five weeks ahead – by now police should have had your renewal application at least three weeks. If they haven't sent you an extension letter yet, email them to request one
- 6** Five weeks after expiry – if police still haven't renewed your certificate yet, email and ask them to confirm they will give you a temporary permit if they are not able to complete your renewal before the eight weeks extension runs out.