

SI0316

Personal Protection Weapons

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The Police Service of Northern Ireland will utilise this criteria when considering applications for the issue of a firearm certificate for a Personal Protection Weapon.

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1. Introduction

The Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Firearms and Explosives Branch (FEB) will, on behalf of the Chief Constable, consider applications to possess a firearm for personal protection purposes in accordance with the [Firearms \(NI\) Order 2004](#).

Under [Article 5 of the Firearms \(NI\) Order 2004](#) the Chief Constable **may** grant a firearm certificate (FAC) if satisfied that an applicant can be permitted to have a firearm or ammunition in his possession without danger to public safety or to the peace. The Chief Constable **shall not** grant a firearm certificate unless he is satisfied the applicant:

- Is fit to be entrusted with a firearm [Article 5.2(a)]; and
- Has a good reason to possess a PPW and ammunition [Article 5.2(b)].

2. Fitness to be entrusted with a firearm

The current Northern Ireland Office Guidance on Northern Ireland Firearms Controls will form the basis to determine a

person's fitness to possess a PPW. The guidelines are available at [Northern Ireland Office Guidance on Northern Ireland Firearms Controls](#). Notwithstanding the guidance each application for a PPW will be considered on its individual merits.

Possession of a firearm for personal protection purposes places a great responsibility on the holder. Any person who has been granted an FAC to possess a PPW will be expected to conduct their daily affairs in such a way that their own personal security and the security of the firearm is not jeopardised.

3. Public safety

The [Firearms \(NI\) Order 2004](#) places a responsibility on the Chief Constable to be satisfied that an individual may be granted an FAC without endangering public safety.

There is a responsibility on the holder of a PPW not to endanger public safety. This includes the holder's personal behaviour when in possession of the PPW. In addition security of the weapon is paramount. The Chief Constable is entitled to take into account any inappropriate behaviour, or neglect in respect of security

and to consider revocation of the FAC on the grounds of endangering public safety and the peace and/or the holder demonstrates that they are not fit to be entrusted with a firearm.

4. Good reason

Under [Article 2 ECHR](#) the state has a positive duty to protect life. This places a positive obligation on the Chief Constable to take all reasonable measures to obviate the risk to an individual's life where the police know, or ought to know, that there is a real and immediate risk. This obligation is underscored by [Section 32 Police \(NI\) Act 2000](#) and Article 1 of the [PSNI Code of Ethics 2008](#).

In determining 'Good Reason' for possession of a firearm for personal protection purposes the Chief Constable must be satisfied that there is a real and immediate risk to the applicant and that the possession of a firearm is a reasonable, proportionate and necessary measure to protect the life of the applicant.

In the context of an application for a firearm for personal protection purposes the applicant is required by the Firearms (NI)

Order 2004 to have 'good reason' for such possession. Whilst in most applications a verifiable real and immediate risk may be established by specialised police reports it may not be as obvious in others.

In cases where a real and immediate risk is not verifiable by a specialised police report or is otherwise obvious, consideration must be given to all the known circumstances, bearing in mind the general duty of police to protect life by taking appropriate measures to address the risk.

For the purposes of this Policy an applicant for a PPW will be deemed to have 'good reason' if it is established that:

- There is a specific threat against the individual which creates a real and immediate risk verified by a specialised police report; **or**
- In exceptional circumstances, a verifiable level of risk is established by other information; **and**
- The possession of a firearm is a reasonable, proportionate and necessary measure to protect the life of the applicant.

5. Specific Threat

A specific threat is defined as:

- A recent verifiable life threatening attack has been made on the applicant's life and this level of threat remains; **or**
- A verifiable personal threat to the life of the applicant has been made, which can be substantiated by a specialised police report or, in exceptional circumstances, in the absence of a specialised police report, other verifiable information or circumstances.

In establishing that a real and immediate risk exists FEB must consider all circumstances and all the information available to them. In exceptional circumstances the grant of an FAC for a PPW may be appropriate even though a real and immediate risk cannot be confirmed by specialised police reports but it can be verified by other means.

6. Firearms and Ammunition for Personal Protection

Purposes

Approval will only be given for the acquisition of a handgun (self-loading pistol or revolver) up to 9mm/.38 calibre.

In accordance with the current European Directive on the control of the acquisition and possession of weapons, ammunition that is designed to expand upon impact will not be approved for use in PPW's.

Firearm certificates for PPWs will only authorise the initial purchase of ammunition (up to 50 rounds depending on type of firearm and capacity). No additional purchases will be permitted without the authority of the Chief Constable.

Additional ammunition will only be authorised when the Chief Constable is satisfied that it is required for training purposes or target practice on approved ranges. Under these circumstances the Chief Constable will authorise the purchase of a specified quantity of ammunition. Such ammunition will be conditional upon it being expended within two calendar months of authorisation. Applicants may

make up to three such applications in any 12-month period.

7. Further Grants and Reviews of FACs for a PPW

The Firearms (NI) Order 2004 does not permit automatic renewals of existing FACs and requires FAC holders to apply for a further grant. Further grant or, variation applications during the lifetime of a certificate may cause a review of PPW holding under the terms of this policy.

If the holder of a FAC for a PPW comes to the attention of police during the lifetime of a certificate, or if the circumstances that gave rise to the initial grant of the FAC significantly change then this may cause a review of PPW holding under this policy or the Firearms (NI) Order 2004.

Appendix A Contact Us

Service Instruction Author

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