



# Hoarders

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## Document information

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This revised advice has been produced and approved by the NABIS and the National Criminal Use of Firearms Group. It has been approved by NCOCC and VPP portfolio lead. The operational implementation of all guidance and strategy will require operational choices to be made at local level in order to achieve the appropriate police response and this document should be used in conjunction with other existing Authorised Professional Practice (APP) produced by the College of Policing. It will be updated and re-published as necessary.

Any queries relating to this document should be directed to either the author detailed above or the Head of Knowledge and Communications at NABIS on 0121 626 7114

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## 1. Hoarders of guns

### Key points

- **There are three types of gun hoarder**
  - **the over-collector**
  - **the random**
  - **the criminal.**
- **All gun hoarders pose an increased risk of guns falling into criminal hands.**
- **Where hoarders are identified, the local Counter Terrorism Unit must be notified to determine if it is likely to be a terrorism-related incident.**
- **A forensic firearms expert should always be considered.**
- **Advice should be sought from NABIS at an early stage.**
- **Hoarding scenes present a danger to all those who enter and must be dealt with carefully and methodically.**
- **Where officers encounter certificate holders living in conditions that suggest they are a general hoarder, a review of their guns and licence should be undertaken.**
- **Shooting clubs may be able to identify known/suspected hoarders.**

While there is little research into gun hoarders, experience of forces across the UK provides a useful snapshot of the types of gun hoarders and the associated risks. Gun hoarders pose a significant risk to themselves and neighbours. There is an increased risk of firearms falling into criminal hands.

There are generally three types of gun hoarder:

- the over-collector
- the random
- the criminal.

**Over-collectors** tend to be legitimate certificate holders both in respect of firearms. They tend to have close links to shooting clubs. Many have been found to have an interest in making their own ammunition. This type of hoarder tends to collect weapons in excess of that allowed by the conditions of their certificate, including prohibited weapons. Such hoarders may have no intention of using any of the illegally held weapons for criminal purposes. It may be, however, that within close-knit shooting clubs and the like, knowledge

of their hoard leaves them vulnerable to exploitation/robbery/burglary as criminals try to access these guns.

Over-collectors are usually only identified when police are called in respect of other situations, such as neighbour disputes and domestic incidents, whereupon addresses are searched, or disclosures are made by family members, friends, etc.

**Random hoarders** may or may not be licensed firearms holders. They tend to be hoarders of just about anything. These hoarders pose a risk to anyone entering their home as guns, ammunition, air rifles, crossbows, imitation firearms may be found in any place throughout their home, even buried or hidden by other hoarded items. As with general hoarding, the reason for hoarding guns is likely to be unclear.

This type of hoarder presents a risk as often the guns will be accessible to anyone who has access to the house with permission or otherwise.

Where police encounter random hoarders through the normal course of their duty, they should establish if the person is a certificate holder and, if so, consider asking for a review while also seeking to check the safety and numbers of any weapons held.

**Criminal hoarders** hoard weapons purely for criminal use by themselves or others. They are unlikely to be certificate holders. Such a hoarder may be linked to serious organised crime or even terrorism.

Whenever officers identify a criminal hoarder, they must immediately treat the scene as a serious crime scene. Such scenes will almost certainly warrant calling out a forensic firearms expert. Early consideration must be given to notifying the relevant counter terrorism unit who will quickly establish if it is likely to be a terrorism-related matter. In these cases, they will take primacy for the investigation and progress in accordance with their own practices and policy.

For non-terrorism-related criminal hoarders, the SIO should consider calling NABIS for more specialist advice and support.

### **Black powder and explosives**

A feature of some hoarders is that, in addition to guns and ammunition, the hoarder may have black powder or other explosive material. In the cases of explosives and ordnance, support must be obtained from the army Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Team.

It is important that a detailed record is made of any items of explosive or ordinance, its legal status, and if known, its capability. Such questions should be asked of the EOD and forensic firearms expert ahead of any destruction or controlled explosion that may have to take place that will destroy the evidence.

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