



# The role of NABIS

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## Document information

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<b>Review date:</b>	November 2017
<b>Version:</b>	1.0

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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## **Role of NABIS**

The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) delivers fast-time forensic intelligence as well as tactical and strategic intelligence to tackle all aspects of firearms-related criminality within the UK.

NABIS provides:

- a database (registry) of recovered firearms and ammunition used in crime or which enter police possession through any means. This database provides strategic and tactical intelligence which helps to guide law enforcement activity
- a ballistics comparison capability to link crimes and incidents within 24 to 48 hours in urgent cases
- an intelligence cell tasked with developing, understanding and disseminating strategic and tactical intelligence to police forces and law enforcement agencies (LEAs)
- A knowledge and communications team who develop liaison opportunities between NABIS and its partners as well as delivering national communications and media strategies.

NABIS works with the police forces of England, Wales and Scotland as well as British Transport Police (BTP), Ministry of Defence Police (MODP), MI5, the National Crime Agency (NCA), the UK Border Force (BF) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

There are four regional NABIS forensic hubs which operate within four host forces or organisations:

- Greater Manchester Police (GMP)
- West Midlands Police (WMP)
- Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)
- Police Scotland via the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services based in Glasgow.

The four NABIS hubs are staffed by forensic firearms experts who have experience and expertise in the examination of firearms and ballistic items and who, alongside the NABIS intelligence cell and central team, can piece together the movement and life of a gun and how it affects the criminal use of firearms throughout the UK.

NABIS delivers a national database for all recovered firearms and ballistic material such as complete rounds of ammunition, shell cases and projectiles. The database links those ballistics items to tactical intelligence recorded by the police forces and other UK LEAs.

NABIS regional facilities have been created to test fire, analyse and link firearms and materials to other incidents across the UK. These facilities provide fast-time information on the submitted items as well as limited evidential products around evidential classification of items submitted to NABIS. For further details on the specific evidential products supplied by NABIS, contact NABIS direct as these products may be subject to change.

Evidential standard information and materials are delivered by both NABIS and external forensic service providers (FSPs). This allows a firewall between the intelligence services that NABIS provides and the primary evidential services that FSPs provide. This has been created to ensure that evidential and intelligence turnaround times by NABIS for forces are kept to a minimum. This allows SIOs to access quick-time intelligence essential for an investigation. The facilities use the latest equipment and are at the forefront of firearms forensic technology.

Critical to the service are the latest generation IBIS comparators, capable of carrying out the automated linking of bullets and cartridge cases to both crime scenes and recovered weapons.

IBIS technology is located at each of the four hub and links in with the NABIS database, thereby providing police forces with the world's first integrated firearms intelligence capability.

The NABIS intelligence cell is tasked with developing, understanding and disseminating the strategic and tactical intelligence associated with the information within the NABIS database as well as other intelligence sources.

The effectiveness of NABIS as a national service is dependent on police forces and agencies sharing their information in relation to ballistic material and associated intelligence. In order to define the requirements needed to ensure maximum effectiveness within the NABIS system of work, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) exists between NABIS and the police forces of England, Scotland and Wales as well as with other UK law enforcement agencies.

The MoU places an obligation on police forces and law enforcement partners to ensure that all relevant ballistic material is submitted to NABIS as soon as practicable after it has been recovered, along with making timely, quality focused entries on the NABIS database. The MoU also provides a clear understanding of the level of service that stakeholders can expect from NABIS.

The failure or delay in using NABIS could limit the effectiveness of local and national investigations into the criminal use of firearms and possible gun crime linkages could remain unknown and unexplored.

The MoU between forces, agencies and NABIS goes a long way to ensuring that the commitment required by all parties is documented, measurable and consistent.

The NABIS database provides a confidential national IT system providing the following functionality:

- It identifies and tracks recovered ballistic items from the moment of recovery through examination processes to the eventual moment of their destruction.
- The NABIS database records details of recovered items in sufficient detail to enable enquiries relating to firearms incidents to be researched more effectively, identifying potentially related incidents.
- It links intelligence relating to incidents or recovered ballistic items to enable the linking of those entities to people, other incidents or objects, crime groups and events in a manner able to improve the effective investigation of firearms-related incidents across the country.
- It records details of ballistic item recoveries in sufficient detail to facilitate operational and strategic analysis of the information with the aim of informing local, regional and national strategic assessments of the criminal use of firearms.
- The NABIS database is able to provide information on people, objects, locations or events that are linked to incidents of gun crime. This intelligence is crucial in helping investigators to understand the significance of linked incidents. On a strategic basis, the intelligence is providing a context to the extent of illegal possession, supply and use of firearms and directing proactive work upstream.

NABIS will only succeed if all police forces and law enforcement agencies take every opportunity to submit every single item of recovered ballistic material that fits the NABIS

submission criteria to their local NABIS hub and ensure that the associated intelligence is entered on the database.

Forces need to ensure that all information is shared and recorded accurately and in detail on the NABIS database and that intelligence is updated to fully maximise the intelligence opportunities. Scheduled audits of the database are carried out by the NABIS business system administrator. Any identified issues are fed back to forces via their point of contact.

The NABIS database is sited alongside other national information assets such as the Police National Database (PND), Violent and Sex Offender Register (ViSOR) and National Firearms Licensing Management System (NFLMS). The database is based on the design of ViSOR and uses the same infrastructure mechanisms for housing confidential information.

Access to the database is tightly controlled with users having access only to areas of information that are relevant to their role.

The following is a list of ballistic items that police forces must record on the NABIS database registry.

### **NABIS database registry criteria**

NB. Not all items added as a registry item require submission to NABIS. Some items, such as stun guns, would be recorded on the registry for accounting purposes, but would not be required to be submitted to NABIS as NABIS do not examine these items. This does not include items that are held by police temporarily or for safekeeping; such as firearms licensing issues, probate, etc.

### **Ballistic items that MUST be recorded on the NABIS database:**

- All firearms (as defined in section 57(1) Firearms Act 1968) coming into police possession.
- All licensed firearms believed to have been used in crime.
- All firearms and imitation firearms, including blank cartridges and deactivated firearms, that have been used in crime, or where there is intelligence to suggest that they have been used in crime (eg, a soft air gun used in an armed robbery)
- All ammunition where possession is subject to control under either Section 1 or Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968 except where lawfully held.
- Any licensed firearms reported lost or stolen.

- All surrendered firearms that match the NABIS submission criteria.
- All electronic stun guns, including incapacitants and noxious sprays subject to Section 5 of the Firearms Act 1968.

**Ballistic items that must NOT be recorded on the NABIS database registry** (except where used or suspected of being used in crime: eg, an airsoft or air weapon not normally accepted for registration on the NABIS database but where it has been used in crime, either as an imitation firearm used in an armed robbery or a prohibited person in possession of an air weapon).

- All airsoft guns
- All airgun ammunition
- All blank ammunition
- All dummy cartridges/ammunition
- All non-firing imitation firearms with the exception of deactivated firearms
- All toys, eg, cap firing guns, water pistols, etc.
- All air weapons classed as firearms but not subject to the Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969.
- All shotgun ammunition.

**Items that must be submitted to NABIS** (the NABIS submission criteria)

Staff recovering ballistic items, whether from an incident, seizure, find or surrender, should ensure they follow their force procedure for submission to their local clearing house (LCH).

Each force LCH should submit the following ballistic items to the NABIS forensic hub for examination:

**Items that police must submit to NABIS:**

- Any firearm that is suspected of having been used in crime.
- Any firearm that has been shortened, eg, sawn-off shotgun.
- Any selective-fire or fully automatic weapon such as sub-machine guns, assault rifles.

- Any bullet-firing handgun with the exception of pre-1945 revolvers unless there is intelligence to indicate that they have been used in crime — seek NABIS advice if in doubt.
- Pressure-bearing components of any firearm (excluding air weapons and shotguns) suspected of having been used in crime, eg, barrel, revolver cylinder, receiver.
- Any disguised firearm.
- Any unlicensed centrefire weapon that has been fitted with a sound moderator, or where the barrel has been threaded to accept a sound moderator.
- Any replica/imitation firearm, blank-firing gun, airgun or deactivated firearm that appears to have been modified to discharge a projectile(s).
- Any blank-firing weapon where there is specific intelligence of it having been discharged when used in crime, and where a cartridge case or projectile was recovered from the crime scene.
- Any air weapon where there is specific intelligence of it having been discharged when used in crime, and where a projectile was recovered from that crime scene.
- Any metallic centrefire cartridge case recovered, unless the area is a recognised firing range.
- Any fired bullet, bullet fragment, wadding or shot found at the scene of a crime.
- Any unfired cartridge (whole round) found at the scene of a crime.
- Any shotgun cartridge cases recovered in an urban area and where a firearm is suspected of having been unlawfully discharged.
- Any firearm, ammunition or related components flagged as being of interest by the submitting force's intelligence bureau.