



Firearms Act 1968

1968 CHAPTER 27

PART I

PROVISIONS AS TO POSSESSION, HANDLING AND DISTRIBUTION OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION; PREVENTION OF CRIME AND MEASURES TO PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY

General restrictions on possession and handling of firearms and ammunition

1 Requirement of firearm certificate.

- (1) Subject to any exemption under this Act, it is an offence for a person—
 - (a) to have in his possession, or to purchase or acquire, a firearm to which this section applies without holding a firearm certificate in force at the time, or otherwise than as authorised by such a certificate;
 - (b) to have in his possession, or to purchase or acquire, any ammunition to which this section applies without holding a firearm certificate in force at the time, or otherwise than as authorised by such a certificate, or in quantities in excess of those so authorised.
- (2) It is an offence for a person to fail to comply with a condition subject to which a firearm certificate is held by him.
- (3) This section applies to every firearm except—
 - [^{F1}(a) a shot gun within the meaning of this Act, that is to say a smooth-bore gun (not being an air gun) which—
 - (i) has a barrel not less than 24 inches in length and does not have any barrel with a bore exceeding 2 inches in diameter;
 - (ii) either has no magazine or has a non-detachable magazine incapable of holding more than two cartridges; and
 - (iii) is not a revolver gun; and]
 - (b) an air weapon (that is to say, an air rifle, air gun or air pistol not of a type declared by rules made by the Secretary of State under section 53 of this Act to be specially dangerous).

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Firearms Act 1968, Part I is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 06 August 2023. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

[^{F2}(3A) A gun which has been adapted to have such a magazine as is mentioned in subsection (3)(a)(ii) above shall not be regarded as falling within that provision unless the magazine bears a mark approved by the Secretary of State for denoting that fact and that mark has been made, and the adaptation has been certified in writing as having been carried out in a manner approved by him, either by one of the two companies mentioned in section 58(1) of this Act or by such other person as may be approved by him for that purpose.]

- (4) This section applies to any ammunition for a firearm, except the following articles, namely:—
- (a) cartridges containing five or more shot, none of which exceeds .36 inch in diameter;
 - (b) ammunition for an air gun, air rifle or air pistol; and
 - (c) blank cartridges not more than one inch in diameter measured immediately in front of the rim or cannellure of the base of the cartridge.

Textual Amendments

- F1** S. 1(3)(a) substituted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), s. 2(2)
F2 S. 1(3A) inserted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), s. 2(3)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1** S. 1(1)(a) excluded (E. W.) (17.12.2003) by [The Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 \(Commencement No. 1 and Transitional Provisions\) Order 2003 \(S.I. 2003/3300\)](#), art. 5(2)

2 Requirement of certificate for possession of shot guns.

- (1) Subject to any exemption under this Act, it is an offence for a person to have in his possession, or to purchase or acquire, a shot gun without holding a certificate under this Act authorising him to possess shot guns.
- (2) It is an offence for a person to fail to comply with a condition subject to which a shot gun certificate is held by him.

3 Business and other transactions with firearms and ammunition.

- (1) A person commits an offence if, by way of trade or business, he—
 - (a) manufactures, sells, transfers, repairs, tests or proves any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, or a shot gun; or
 - (b) exposes for sale or transfer, or has in his possession for sale, transfer, repair, test or proof any such firearm or ammunition, or a shot gun,
 without being registered under this Act as a firearms dealer.
- (2) It is an offence for a person to sell or transfer to any other person in the United Kingdom, other than a registered firearms dealer, any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, or a shot gun, unless that other produces a firearm certificate authorising him to purchase or acquire it or, as the case may be, his shot gun certificate, or shows that he is by virtue of this Act entitled to purchase or acquire it without holding a certificate.

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- (3) It is an offence for a person to undertake the repair, test or proof of a firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, or of a shot gun, for any other person in the United Kingdom other than a registered firearms dealer as such, unless that other produces or causes to be produced a firearm certificate authorising him to have possession of the firearm or ammunition or, as the case may be, his shot gun certificate, or shows that he is by virtue of this Act entitled to have possession of it without holding a certificate.
- (4) Subsections (1) to (3) above have effect subject to any exemption under subsequent provisions of this Part of this Act.
- (5) A person commits an offence if, with a view to purchasing or acquiring, or procuring the repair, test or proof of, any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, or a shot gun, he produces a false certificate or a certificate in which any false entry has been made, or personates a person to whom a certificate has been granted, or [^{F3}knowingly or recklessly makes a statement false in any material particular].
- (6) It is an offence for a pawnbroker to take in pawn any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, or a shot gun.

Textual Amendments

- F3** Words in s. 3(5) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), **Sch. 2 para. 2(1)**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**

4 Conversion of weapons.

- (1) Subject to this section, it is an offence to shorten the barrel of a shot gun to a length less than 24 inches.
- (2) It is not an offence under subsection (1) above for a registered firearms dealer to shorten the barrel of a shot gun for the sole purpose of replacing a defective part of the barrel so as to produce a barrel not less than 24 inches in length.
- (3) It is an offence for a person other than a registered firearms dealer to convert into a firearm anything which, though having the appearance of being a firearm, is so constructed as to be incapable of discharging any missile through its barrel.
- (4) A person who commits an offence under section 1 of this Act by having in his possession, or purchasing or acquiring, a shotgun which has been shortened contrary to subsection (1) above or a firearm which has been [^{F4}converted as mentioned in subsection (3) above] (whether by a registered firearms dealer or not), without holding a firearm certificate authorising him to have it in his possession, or to purchase or acquire it, shall be treated for the purposes of provisions of this Act relating to the punishment of offences as committing that offence in an aggravated form.

Textual Amendments

- F4** Words substituted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1)**. s. 23(1)

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Prohibition of certain weapons and control of arms traffic

5 Weapons subject to general prohibition.

(1) A person commits an offence if, without the authority of the Defence Council [^{F5}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)], he has in his possession, or purchases or acquires, or manufactures, sells or transfers—

[^{F6}(a) any firearm which is so designed or adapted that two or more missiles can be successively discharged without repeated pressure on the trigger;

(ab) any self-loading or pump-action [^{F7}rifled gun] other than one which is chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges;

[^{F8}(aba) any firearm which either has a barrel less than 30 centimetres in length or is less than 60 centimetres in length overall, other than an air weapon, ^{F9} . . . a muzzle-loading gun or a firearm designed as signalling apparatus;]

(ac) any self-loading or pump-action smooth-bore gun which is not [^{F10}an air weapon or] chambered for .22 rim-fire cartridges and either has a barrel less than 24 inches in length or ^{F11} . . . is less than 40 inches in length overall;

(ad) any smooth-bore revolver gun other than one which is chambered for 9mm. rim-fire cartridges or [^{F12}a muzzle-loading gun];

(ae) any rocket launcher, or any mortar, for projecting a stabilised missile, other than a launcher or mortar designed for line-throwing or pyrotechnic purposes or as signalling apparatus;]

(b) any weapon of whatever description designed or adapted for the discharge of any noxious liquid, gas or other thing; and

[^{F13}(c) any cartridge with a bullet designed to explode on or immediately before impact, any ammunition containing or designed or adapted to contain any such noxious thing as is mentioned in paragraph (b) above and, if capable of being used with a firearm of any description, any grenade, bomb (or other like missile), or rocket or shell designed to explode as aforesaid.]

[^{F14}(1A) Subject to section 5A of this Act, a person commits an offence if, without the authority of the Secretary of State [^{F5}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)], he has in his possession, or purchases or acquires, or sells or transfers—

(a) any firearm which is disguised as another object;

(b) any rocket or ammunition not falling within paragraph (c) of subsection (1) of this section which consists in or incorporates a missile designed to explode on or immediately before impact and is for military use;

(c) any launcher or other projecting apparatus not falling within paragraph (ae) of that subsection which is designed to be used with any rocket or ammunition falling within paragraph (b) above or with ammunition which would fall within that paragraph but for its being ammunition falling within paragraph (c) of that subsection;

(d) any ammunition for military use which consists in or incorporates a missile designed so that a substance contained in the missile will ignite on or immediately before impact;

(e) any ammunition for military use which consists in or incorporates a missile designed, on account of its having a jacket and hard-core, to penetrate armour plating, armour screening or body armour;

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- [^{F15}(f) any ammunition which incorporates a missile designed or adapted to expand on impact;]
- (g) anything which is designed to be projected as a missile from any weapon and is designed to be, or has been, incorporated in—
- (i) any ammunition falling within any of the preceding paragraphs; or
 - (ii) any ammunition which would fall within any of those paragraphs but for its being specified in subsection (1) of this section.]
- (2) The weapons and ammunition specified in [^{F16}subsections (1) and (1A) of this section (including, in the case of ammunition, any missiles falling within subsection (1A)(g) of this section)]are referred to in this Act as “prohibited weapons” and “prohibited ammunition” respectively.
- (3) An authority given to a person by the Defence Council [^{F5} or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)]under this section shall be in writing and be subject to conditions specified therein.
- (4) The conditions of the authority shall include such as the Defence Council [^{F5}or, where the authority is given by them (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)], having regard to the circumstances of each particular case, think fit to impose for the purpose of securing that the prohibited weapon or ammunition to which the authority relates will not endanger the public safety or the peace.
- (5) It is an offence for a person to whom an authority is given under this section to fail to comply with any condition of the authority.
- (6) The Defence Council may at any time, if they think fit, revoke an authority given to a person under this section by notice in writing requiring him to deliver up the authority to such person as may be specified in the notice within twenty-one days from the date of the notice; and it is an offence for him to fail to comply with that requirement.
- [^{F17}(7) For the purposes of this section and section 5A of this Act—
- (a) any rocket or ammunition which is designed to be capable of being used with a military weapon shall be taken to be for military use;
 - (b) references to a missile designed so that a substance contained in the missile will ignite on or immediately before impact include references to any missile containing a substance that ignites on exposure to air; and
 - (c) references to a missile’s expanding on impact include references to its deforming in any predictable manner on or immediately after impact.]
- [^{F18}(8) For the purposes of subsection (1)(aba) and (ac) above, any detachable, folding, retractable or other movable butt-stock shall be disregarded in measuring the length of any firearm.
- [^{F18}(9) Any reference in this section to a muzzle-loading gun is a reference to a gun which is designed to be loaded at the muzzle end of the barrel or chamber with a loose charge and a separate ball (or other missile).]

Textual Amendments

F5 Words in s. 5(1)(1A)(3)(4) inserted (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 6(1), **Sch. 5 para. 3(2)**; S.I. 1998/3178, **art. 3**

F6 S. 5(1)(a)–(ae) substituted for s. 5(1)(a) by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 1(2)**

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- F7** Word in s. 5(1)(ab) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(3); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I** (with art. 5)
- F8** S. 5(1)(aba) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(2); S.I. 1997/1536, **art. 2**
- F9** Words in s. 5(1)(aba) repealed (1.2.1998) by 1997 c. 64, ss. 1, 2(7), **Sch.**; S.I. 1997/3114, art. 4, **Sch. Pt. II** (with art. 5)
- F10** Words in s. 5(1)(ac) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(4); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F11** Words in s. 5(1)(ac) repealed (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(2), **Sch. 3**; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F12** Words in s. 5(1)(ad) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(5); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F13** S. 5(1)(c) substituted by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 1(3)
- F14** S. 5(1A) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(1)**
- F15** S. 5(1A)(f) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 9; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- F16** Words in s. 5(2) substituted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(2)**
- F17** S. 5(7) inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, **reg. 3(3)**
- F18** S. 5(8)(9) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(6); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C2** S. 5 transfer of certain functions (S.) (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 2, **Sch. 1**; S.I. 1998/3178, **art. 3**
- C3** S. 5: transfer of certain functions (1.11.1968) by S.I.1968/1200, **art. 2**
- C4** S. 5 amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 1(7); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- C5** Power to amend s. 5(1) conferred by **Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988** (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 1(4)
- C6** S. 5(1)(aba) amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, ss. 1(8), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7(1)(3); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**
- S. 5(1)(aba)(b)(c) amended (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, ss. 1(8), 8; S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3, **Sch. Pt. I**

[^{F19}5A Exemptions from requirement of authority under s.5.

- (1) Subject to subsection (2) below, the authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for any person to have in his possession, or to purchase, acquire, sell or transfer, any prohibited weapon or ammunition if he is authorised by a certificate under this Act to possess, purchase or acquire that weapon or ammunition subject to a condition that he does so only for the purpose of its being kept or exhibited as part of a collection.
- (2) No sale or transfer may be made under subsection (1) above except to a person who—
- (a) produces the authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] under section 5 of this Act for his purchase or acquisition; or
 - (b) shows that he is, under this section or a licence under the Schedule to the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (museums etc.), entitled to make the purchase or acquisition without the authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)].
- (3) The authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for any person to have in his possession, or to purchase or acquire, any prohibited weapon or ammunition if his possession, purchase or acquisition is exclusively in connection with the carrying on of activities in respect of which—
- (a) that person; or

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- (b) the person on whose behalf he has possession, or makes the purchase or acquisition,
- is recognised, for the purposes of the law of another member State relating to firearms, as a collector of firearms or a body concerned in the cultural or historical aspects of weapons.
- (4) The authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for any person to have in his possession, or to purchase or acquire [^{F21}, or to sell or transfer,], any expanding ammunition or the missile for any such ammunition if—
- [he is authorised by a firearm certificate or visitor’s firearm permit to possess,
- ^{F22}(a) or purchase or acquire, any expanding ammunition; and
- (b) the certificate or permit is subject to a condition restricting the use of any expanding ammunition to use in connection with any one or more of the following, namely—
- (i) the lawful shooting of deer;
 - (ii) the shooting of vermin or, in the course of carrying on activities in connection with the management of any estate, other wildlife;
 - (iii) the humane killing of animals;
 - (iv) the shooting of animals for the protection of other animals or humans.]

(5) The authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for any person to have in his possession any expanding ammunition or the missile for any such ammunition if—

 - (a) he is entitled, under section 10 of this Act, to have a slaughtering instrument and the ammunition for it in his possession; and
 - (b) the ammunition or missile in question is designed to be capable of being used with a slaughtering instrument.

(6) The authority of the Secretary of State [^{F23}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for the sale or transfer of any expanding ammunition or the missile for any such ammunition to any person who produces a certificate by virtue of which he is authorised under subsection (4) above to purchase or acquire it without the authority of the Secretary of State [^{F23}or, in the case of an authority which they may give (by virtue of provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998), the Scottish Ministers].

[The authority of the Secretary of State [^{F20}or the Scottish Ministers (by virtue of

^{F24}(7) provision made under section 63 of the Scotland Act 1998)] shall not be required by virtue of subsection (1A) of section 5 of this Act for a person carrying on the business of a firearms dealer, or any servant of his, to have in his possession, or to purchase, acquire, sell or transfer, any expanding ammunition or the missile for any such ammunition in the ordinary course of that business.]

(8) In this section—

 - (a) references to expanding ammunition are references to any ammunition which ^{F25} . . . incorporates a missile which is designed to expand on impact; and

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- (b) references to the missile for any such ammunition are references to anything which, in relation to any such ammunition, falls within section 5(1A)(g) of this Act.]

Textual Amendments

- F19** S. 5A inserted (1.1.1993) by S.I. 1992/2823, reg. 3(4)
F20 Words in s. 5A(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)(7) inserted (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 6(1), Sch. 5 para. 3(3)(a); S.I. 1998/3178, art. 3
F21 Words in s. 5A(4) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 10(2)(a); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), Sch. Pt. I
F22 S. 5A(4)(a)(b) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 10(2)(b); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), Sch. Pt. I
F23 Words in s. 5A(6) inserted (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 6(1), Sch. 5 para. 3(3)(b)(i)(ii); S.I. 1998/3178, art. 3
F24 S. 5A(7) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 10(7); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), Sch. Pt. I
F25 Words in s. 5A(8) repealed (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 10(8); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), Sch. Pt. I

6 Power to prohibit movement of arms and ammunition.

- (1) The Secretary of State may by order prohibit the removal of firearms or ammunition—
- (a) from one place to another in Great Britain; or
 - [^{F26}(b) from Great Britain to Northern Ireland; or]
 - (c) for export from Great Britain,

unless the removal is authorised by the chief officer of police for the area from which they are to be removed, and unless such other conditions as may be specified in the order are complied with.

- [^{F27}(1A) The Secretary of State may by order prohibit the removal of firearms or ammunition from Great Britain to Northern Ireland unless—

- (a) the removal is authorised by the chief officer of police for the area from which they are to be removed and by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary; and
- (b) such conditions as may be specified in the order or imposed by the chief officer of police or the Chief Constable are complied with.]

- (2) An order under this section may apply—

- (a) either generally to all such removals, or to removals from and to particular localities specified in the order; and
- (b) either to all firearms and ammunition or to firearms and ammunition of such classes and descriptions as may be so specified; and
- (c) either to all modes of conveyance or to such modes of conveyance as may be so specified;

but no such order shall prohibit the holder of a firearm certificate from carrying with him any firearm or ammunition authorised by the certificate to be so carried.

- (3) It is an offence to contravene any provision of—

- (a) an order made under this section; or
- (b) an order made under section 9 of the ^{M1}Firearms Act 1920 (the former enactment corresponding to section 18 of the ^{M2}Firearms Act 1937 and this section); or

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- (c) any corresponding Northern Irish order, that is to say an order made under the said section 9 as extending to Northern Ireland or under any enactment of the Parliament of Northern Ireland repealing and re-enacting that section, prohibiting the removal of firearms or ammunition from Northern Ireland to Great Britain.
- (4) An order under this section shall be made by statutory instrument and may be varied or revoked by a subsequent order made thereunder by the Secretary of State.

Textual Amendments

F26 S. 6(1)(b) (which is superseded by a new subsection (1A)) repealed (2.4.1991) by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), s. [20\(2\)\(3\)](#)

F27 S. 6(1A) inserted (2.4.1991) by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), s. [20\(2\)](#)

Marginal Citations

M1 1920 c. 43.

M2 1937 c. 12.

Special exemptions from sections 1 to 5

7 Police permit.

- (1) A person who has obtained from the chief officer of police for the area in which he resides a permit for the purpose in the prescribed form may, without holding a certificate under this Act, have in his possession a firearm and ammunition in accordance with the terms of the permit.
- (2) It is an offence for a person [^{F28}knowingly or recklessly to make a statement false in any material particular] for the purpose of procuring, whether for himself or for another person, the grant of a permit under this section.

Textual Amendments

F28 Words in s. 7(2) substituted (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 52\(1\)](#), [Sch. 2 para. 2\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3\(b\)](#), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

8 Authorised dealing with firearms.

- (1) A person carrying on the business of a firearms dealer and registered as such under this Act, or a servant of such a person may, without holding a certificate, have in his possession, or purchase or acquire, a firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of that business.

[^{F29}(1A) Subsection (1) above applies to the possession, purchase or acquisition of a firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of the business of a firearms dealer notwithstanding that the firearm or ammunition is in the possession of, or purchased or acquired by, the dealer or his servant at a place which is not a place of business of the dealer or which he has not registered as a place of business under section 33 or 37 of this Act.]

- (2) It is not an offence under section 3(2) of this Act for a person—

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- (a) to part with the possession of any firearm or ammunition, otherwise than in pursuance of a contract of sale or hire or by way of gift or loan, to a person who shows that he is by virtue of this Act entitled to have possession of the firearm or ammunition without holding a certificate; or
- (b) to return to another person a shot gun which he has lawfully undertaken to repair, test or prove for the other.

Textual Amendments

F29 S. 8(1A) inserted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 42(1); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**

9 Carriers, auctioneers, etc.

- (1) A person carrying on the business of an auctioneer, carrier or warehouseman, or a servant of such a person, may, without holding a certificate, have in his possession a firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of that business.
- (2) It is not an offence under section 3(1) of this Act for an auctioneer to sell by auction, expose for sale by auction or have in his possession for sale by auction a firearm or ammunition without being registered as a firearms dealer, if he has obtained from the chief officer of police for the area in which the auction is held a permit for that purpose in the prescribed form and complies with the terms of the permit.
- (3) It is an offence for a person [^{F30}knowingly or recklessly to make a statement false in any material particular] for the purpose of procuring, either for himself or for another person, the grant of a permit under subsection (2) of this section.
- (4) It is not an offence under section 3(2) of this Act for a carrier or warehouseman, or a servant of a carrier or warehouseman, to deliver any firearm or ammunition in the ordinary course of his business or employment as such.

Textual Amendments

F30 Words in s. 9(3) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), **Sch. 2**, para. 2(2); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), **Sch. Pt. I**

10 Slaughter of animals.

- (1) A person licensed under [^{F31}the Welfare of Animals (Slaughter or Killing) Regulations 1995 to slaughter horses, cattle, sheep, swine or goats] may, without holding a certificate, have in his possession a slaughtering instrument and ammunition therefor in any slaughterhouse or knacker's yard in which he is employed.
- (2) The proprietor of a slaughterhouse or knacker's yard or a person appointed by him to take charge of slaughtering instruments and ammunition therefor for the purpose of storing them in safe custody at that slaughterhouse or knacker's yard may, without holding a certificate, have in his possession a slaughtering instrument or ammunition therefor for that purpose.

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation: Firearms Act 1968, Part I is up to date with all changes known to be in force on or before 06 August 2023. There are changes that may be brought into force at a future date. Changes that have been made appear in the content and are referenced with annotations. (See end of Document for details)

Textual Amendments

F31 Words in s. 10(1) substituted (1.4.1995) by S.I. 1995/731, reg. 28(2), Sch. 14 para. 1

11 Sports, athletics and other approved activities.

- (1) A person carrying a firearm or ammunition belonging to another person holding a certificate under this Act may, without himself holding such a certificate, have in his possession that firearm or ammunition under instructions from, and for the use of, that other person for sporting purposes only.
- (2) A person may, without holding a certificate, have a firearm in his possession at an athletic meeting for the purpose of starting races at that meeting.
- ^{F32}(3)
- (4) A person conducting or carrying on a miniature rifle range (whether for a rifle club or otherwise) or shooting gallery at which no firearms are used other than air weapons or miniature rifles not exceeding .23 inch calibre may, without holding a certificate, have in his possession, or purchase or acquire, such miniature rifles and ammunition suitable therefor; and any person may, without holding a certificate, use any such rifle and ammunition at such a range or gallery.
- (5) A person may, without holding a shot gun certificate, borrow a shot gun from the occupier of private premises and use it on those premises in the occupier's presence.
- (6) A person may, without holding a shot gun certificate, use a shot gun at a time and place approved for shooting at artificial targets by the chief officer of police for the area in which that place is situated.

Textual Amendments

F32 S. 11(3) repealed (1.4.1997) by 1996 c. 46, s. 35(2), Sch. 7 Pt. III; S.I. 1997/304, art. 2, Sch. 1

12 Theatre and cinema.

- (1) A person taking part in a theatrical performance or a rehearsal thereof, or in the production of a cinematograph film, may, without holding a certificate, have a firearm in his possession during and for the purpose of the performance, rehearsal or production.
- (2) Where the Defence Council is satisfied, on the application of a person in charge of a theatrical performance, a rehearsal of such a performance or the production of a cinematograph film, that [^{F33}a prohibited weapon] is required for the purpose of the performance, rehearsal or production, [he] may under section 5 of this Act, if [he thinks] fit, not only authorise that person to have possession of [^{F33}the weapon] but also authorise such other persons as he may select to have possession of it while taking part in the performance, rehearsal or production.

Textual Amendments

F33 Words substituted by Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988 (c. 45, SIF 51:1), s. 23(2)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.
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Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C7 S. 12(2): transfer of certain functions (S.) (1.7.1999) by S.I. 1999/1750, art. 2, Sch. 1; S.I. 1998/3178, art. 3
- C8 S. 12(2): transfer of functions by S.I. 1968/1200, art. 2

13 Equipment for ships and aircraft.

- (1) A person may, without holding a certificate,—
 - (a) have in his possession a firearm or ammunition on board a ship, or a signalling apparatus or ammunition therefor on board an aircraft or at an aerodrome, as part of the equipment of the ship, aircraft or aerodrome;
 - (b) remove a signalling apparatus or ammunition therefor, being part of the equipment of an aircraft, from one aircraft to another at an aerodrome, or from or to an aircraft at an aerodrome to or from a place appointed for the storage thereof in safe custody at that aerodrome, and keep any such apparatus or ammunition at such a place; and
 - (c) if he has obtained from [^{F34}a constable] a permit for the purpose in the prescribed form, remove a firearm from or to a ship, or a signalling apparatus from or to an aircraft or aerodrome, to or from such place and for such purpose as may be specified in the permit.
- (2) It is an offence for a person [^{F35}knowingly or recklessly to make a statement false in any material particular] for the purpose of procuring, either for himself or for another person, the grant of a permit under subsection (1)(c) of this section.

Textual Amendments

- F34 Words substituted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\), s. 23\(3\)](#)
- F35 Words in s. 13(2) substituted (1.7.1997) by 1997 c. 5, s. 52(1), [Sch. 2\(2\)](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

14 ^{F36}

Textual Amendments

- F36 S. 14 repealed by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\), s. 23\(7\)](#)

15 Holder of Northern Irish certificate.

Section 2(1) of this Act does not apply to a person holding a firearm certificate issued in Northern Ireland authorising him to possess a shot gun.

Prevention of crime and preservation of public safety

16 Possession of firearm with intent to injure.

It is an offence for a person to have in his possession any firearm or ammunition with intent by means thereof to endanger life [^{F37}or cause serious injury to property], or to

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enable another person by means thereof to endanger life [^{F37}or cause serious injury to property], whether any injury [^{F37}to person or property] has been caused or not.

Textual Amendments

F37 Words repealed by (E.W.) [Criminal Damage Act 1971 \(c. 48\)](#), [Sch. Pt.I](#)

[^{F38}16A Possession of firearm with intent to cause fear of violence.

It is an offence for a person to have in his possession any firearm or imitation firearm with intent—

- (a) by means thereof to cause, or
- (b) to enable another person by means thereof to cause,

any person to believe that unlawful violence will be used against him or another person.]

Textual Amendments

F38 [S. 16A](#) inserted (21.9.1994) by [1994 c. 31, ss. 1\(1\), 4\(2\)](#) (with [s. 4\(3\)](#))

17 Use of firearm to resist arrest.

- (1) It is an offence for a person to make or attempt to make any use whatsoever of a firearm or imitation firearm with intent to resist or prevent the lawful arrest or detention of himself or another person.
- (2) If a person, at the time of his committing or being arrested for an offence specified in Schedule 1 to this Act, has in his possession a firearm or imitation firearm, he shall be guilty of an offence under this subsection unless he shows that he had it in his possession for a lawful object.
- (3) ^{F39}
- (4) For purposes of this section, the definition of “firearm” in section 57(1) of this Act shall apply without paragraphs (b) and (c) of that subsection, and “imitation firearm” shall be construed accordingly.
- (5) In the application of this section to Scotland, a reference to Schedule 2 to this Act shall be substituted for the reference in subsection (2) to Schedule 1 . . . ^{F40}

Textual Amendments

F39 [S. 17\(3\)](#) repealed by [Theft Act 1968 \(c. 60\)](#), [Sch. 3 Pt. III](#)

F40 Words repealed by [Theft Act 1968 \(c. 60\)](#), [Sch. 3 Pt. III](#)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

C9 [S. 17\(2\)](#) applied (E.W.)(31.10.1991) by [Criminal Justice Act 1991 \(c. 53, SIF 39:1\)](#), [s.90\(2\)](#); [S.I. 1991/2208, art. 2\(4\)](#), [Sch.3](#).

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

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18 Carrying firearm with criminal intent.

- (1) It is an offence for a person to have with him a firearm or imitation firearm with intent to commit an indictable offence, or to resist arrest or prevent the arrest of another, in either case while he has the firearm or imitation firearm with him.
- (2) In proceedings for an offence under this section proof that the accused had a firearm or imitation firearm with him and intended to commit an offence, or to resist or prevent arrest, is evidence that he intended to have it with him while doing so.
- (3) In the application of this section to Scotland, for the reference to an indictable offence there shall be substituted a reference to any offence specified in paragraphs 1 to 18 of Schedule 2 to this Act.

19 Carrying firearm in a public place.

A person commits an offence if, without lawful authority or reasonable excuse (the proof whereof lies on him) he has with him in a public place a loaded shot gun or loaded air weapon, or any other firearm (whether loaded or not) together with ammunition suitable for use in that firearm.

20 Trespassing with firearm.

- (1) A person commits an offence if, while he has a firearm [^{F42}or imitation firearm] with him, he enters or is in any building or part of a building as a trespasser and without reasonable excuse (the proof whereof lies on him).
- (2) A person commits an offence if, while he has a firearm [^{F42}or imitation firearm] with him, he enters or is on any land as a trespasser and without reasonable excuse (the proof whereof lies on him).
- (3) In subsection (2) of this section the expression “land” includes land covered with water.

Textual Amendments

F42 Words in s. 20 inserted (21.9.1994) by 1994 c. 31, ss. 2(1), 4(2) (with s. 4(3))

21 Possession of firearms by persons previously convicted of crime.

- (1) A person who has been sentenced [^{F43}to custody for life or] to preventive detention, or to imprisonment or to corrective training for a term of three years or more [^{F43}or to youth custody [^{F44}or detention in a young offender institution] for such a term], or who has been sentenced to be detained for such a term in a young offenders institution in Scotland, shall not at any time have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.
- (2) A person who has been sentenced . . . ^{F45} to imprisonment for a term of three months or more but less than three years [^{F46}or to youth custody [^{F47}or detention in a young offender institution] for such a term], or who has been sentenced to be detained for such a term in a detention centre or in a young offenders institution in Scotland [^{F48}or who has been subject to a secure training order [^{F49}or a detention and training order]],

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shall not at any time before the expiration of the period of five years from the date of his release have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.

[^{F50}(2A) For the purposes of subsection (2) above, “the date of his release” means—

- (a) in the case of a person sentenced to imprisonment with an order under section 47(1) of the Criminal Law Act 1977 (prison sentence partly served and partly suspended), the date on which he completes service of so much of the sentence as was by that order required to be served in prison;
- (b) in the case of a person who has been subject to a secure training order—
 - (i) the date on which he is released from detention under the order;
 - (ii) the date on which he is released from detention ordered under section 4 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994; or
 - (iii) the date halfway through the total period specified by the court in making the order,

whichever is the later.]

[^{F51}(c) in the case of a person who has been subject to a detention and training order—

- (i) the date on which he is released from detention under the order;
- (ii) the date on which he is released from detention ordered under section 77 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998; or
- (iii) the date of the half-way point of the term of the order,

whichever is the later.]

(3) A person who—

- (a) is the holder of a licence issued under section 53 of the ^{M3}Children and Young Persons Act 1933 or section 57 of the ^{M4}Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 1937 (which sections provide for the detention of children and young persons convicted of serious crime, but enable them to be discharged on licence by the Secretary of State); or
- (b) is subject to a recognizance to keep the peace or to be of good behaviour, a condition of which is that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm, or is subject to a probation order containing a requirement that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm; or
- (c) has, in Scotland, been ordained to find caution a condition of which is that he shall not possess, use or carry a firearm;

shall not, at any time during which he holds the licence or is so subject or has been so ordained, have a firearm or ammunition in his possession.

[^{F52}(3A) Where by section 19 of the Firearms Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, or by any other enactment for the time being in force in Northern Ireland and corresponding to this section, a person is prohibited in Northern Ireland from having a firearm or ammunition in his possession, he shall also be so prohibited in Great Britain at any time when to have it in his possession in Northern Ireland would be a contravention of the said section 19 or corresponding enactment];

(4) It is an offence for a person to contravene any of the foregoing provisions of this section.

(5) It is an offence for a person to sell or transfer a firearm or ammunition to, or to repair, test or prove a firearm or ammunition for, a person whom he knows or has reasonable ground for believing to be prohibited by this section from having a firearm or ammunition in his possession.

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- (6) A person prohibited under subsection (1), (2) [^{F53}(3) or (3A)] of this section from having in his possession a firearm or ammunition may apply to [^{F54}the Crown Court] or, in Scotland, in accordance with Act of Sederunt to the sheriff for a removal of the prohibition; and if the application is granted that prohibition shall not then apply to him.
- (7) Schedule 3 to this Act shall have effect with respect to the courts with jurisdiction to entertain an application under this section and to the procedure appertaining thereto.

Textual Amendments

- F43** Words inserted by [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 77, **Sch. 14 para. 24(a)**
- F44** Words inserted (E.W.) by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), ss. 123(6), Sch. 8 paras. 6, **16**
- F45** Words repealed by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), ss. 123(6), 170(2), Sch. 8 para. 16, **Sch. 16**
- F46** Words inserted by [Criminal Justice Act 1982 \(c. 48, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 77, **Sch. 14 para. 24(b)**
- F47** Words inserted (E.W.) by [Criminal Justice Act 1988 \(c. 33, SIF 39:1\)](#), s. 123(6), Sch. 8 paras. 6, **16**
- F48** Words in s. 21(2) inserted (1.3.1998) by 1994 c. 33, s. 168(2), **Sch. 10 para. 24(2)(a)**; S.I. 1998/277, **art. 3(2)**
- F49** Words in s. 21(2) inserted (1.4.2000) by 1998 c. 37, s. 119, **Sch. 8 para. 14(1)**; S.I. 1999/3426, **art. 3(b)**
- F50** S. 21(2A) substituted (1.3.1998) by 1994 c. 33, s. 168(2), **Sch. 10 para. 24(2)(b)**; S.I. 1998/277, **art. 3(2)**
- F51** S. 21(2A)(c) inserted (1.4.2000) by 1998 c. 37, s. 119, **Sch. 8 para. 14(2)**; S.I. 1999/3426, **art. 3(b)**
- F52** S. 21(3A) inserted by [Criminal Justice Act 1972 \(c. 71\)](#), ss. 29, 66(7)(a)
- F53** Words substituted by [Criminal Justice Act 1972 \(c. 71\)](#), ss. 29, 66(7)(a)
- F54** Words substituted by [Courts Act 1971 \(c. 23\)](#), s. 56(2), **Sch. 9 Pt. II**

Marginal Citations

- M3** 1933 c. 12.
M4 1937 c. 37.

PROSPECTIVE

[^{F55}21A Firing an air weapon beyond premises

- (1) A person commits an offence if—
- (a) he has with him an air weapon on any premises; and
 - (b) he uses it for firing a missile beyond those premises.

- [A person commits an offence if the person—
- ^{F56}(1A) (a) is supervising the use and possession of an air weapon on private premises by a person under the age of 18, and
- (b) allows the supervised person to fire any missile beyond those premises.]

- (2) In proceedings against a person for an offence under this section it shall be a defence for him to show that the only premises into or across which the missile was fired were premises the occupier of which had consented to the firing of the missile (whether specifically or by way of a general consent).]

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

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Textual Amendments

- F55** S. 21A inserted (1.10.2007) by [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 \(c. 38\)](#), [ss. 34\(2\)](#), [66\(2\)](#); [S.I. 2007/2180](#), [art. 3\(d\)](#)
- F56** S. 21A(1A) inserted (S.) (31.12.2016) by [Air Weapons and Licensing \(Scotland\) Act 2015 \(asp 10\)](#), [s. 88\(2\)](#), [sch. 2 para. 1\(3\)](#); [S.S.I. 2016/130](#), [art. 3\(c\)](#)

22 Acquisition and possession of firearms by minors.

- (1) It is an offence for a person under the age of seventeen to purchase or hire any firearm or ammunition.

[^{F57}(1A) Where a person under the age of eighteen is entitled, as the holder of a certificate under this Act, to have a firearm in his possession, it is an offence for that person to use that firearm for a purpose not authorised by the European weapons directive.]

- (2) It is an offence for a person under the age of fourteen to have in his possession any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies, except in circumstances where under section 11(1), (3) or (4) of this Act [^{F58}or section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988] he is entitled to have possession of it without holding a firearm certificate.

- (3) It is an offence for a person under the age of fifteen to have with him an assembled shot gun except while under the supervision of a person of or over the age of twenty-one, or while the shot gun is so covered with a securely fastened gun cover that it cannot be fired.

- (4) Subject to section 23 below, it is an offence for a person under the age of fourteen to have with him an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon.

- (5) Subject to section 23 below, it is an offence for a person under the age of seventeen to have an air weapon with him in a public place, except an air gun or air rifle which is so covered with a securely fastened gun cover that it cannot be fired.

Textual Amendments

- F57** S. 22(1A) inserted (1.1.1993) by [S.I. 1992/2823](#), [reg. 4\(1\)](#)
- F58** S. 22(2): Words inserted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), [s. 23\(4\)](#) [Editorial Note: the amending section provides that the insertion is to be made after the words "of this Act". Those words appear twice in s. 22(2), but the sense of the subsection as amended seems to require that the insertion should be made after the second occurrence of those words.]

23 Exceptions from s. 22(4) and (5).

- (1) It is not an offence under section 22(4) of this Act for a person to have with him an air weapon or ammunition while he is under the supervision of a person of or over the age of twenty-one; but where a person has with him an air weapon on any premises in circumstances where he would be prohibited from having it with him but for this subsection, it is an offence—

- (a) for him to use it for firing any missile beyond those premises; or
- (b) for the person under whose supervision he is to allow him so to use it.

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- (2) It is not an offence under section 22(4) or (5) of this Act for a person to have with him an air weapon or ammunition at a time when—
- (a) being a member of a rifle club or miniature rifle club for the time being approved by the Secretary of State for the purposes of this section or [^{F59}section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988], he is engaged as such a member ^{F60} . . . in connection with [^{F61}target shooting]; or
 - (b) he is using the weapon or ammunition at a shooting gallery where the only firearms used are either air weapons or miniature rifles not exceeding .23 inch calibre.

Textual Amendments

F59 Words substituted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), [s. 23\(4\)](#)

F60 Words in [s. 23\(2\)\(a\)](#) repealed (1.7.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 52\(2\)](#), [Sch. 3](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(b), [Sch. Pt. I](#)

F61 Words in [s. 23\(2\)](#) substituted (1.10.1997) by [1997 c. 5, s. 52\(1\)](#), [Sch. 2 para. 3](#); S.I. 1997/1535, art. 3(c), [Sch. Pt. II](#)

24 Supplying firearms to minors.

- (1) It is an offence to sell or let on hire any firearm or ammunition to a person under the age of seventeen.
- (2) It is an offence—
 - (a) to make a gift of or lend any firearm or ammunition to which section 1 of this Act applies to a person under the age of fourteen; or
 - (b) to part with the possession of any such firearm or ammunition to a person under that age, except in circumstances where that person is entitled under section 11(1), (3) or (4) of this Act [^{F62}or section 15 of the Firearms (Amendment) Act 1988] to have possession thereof without holding a firearm certificate.
- (3) It is an offence to make a gift of a shot gun or ammunition for a shot gun to a person under the age of fifteen.
- (4) It is an offence—
 - (a) to make a gift of an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon to a person under the age of fourteen; or
 - (b) to part with the possession of an air weapon or ammunition for an air weapon to a person under that age except where by virtue of section 23 of this Act the person is not prohibited from having it with him.
- (5) In proceedings for an offence under any provision of this section it is a defence to prove that the person charged with the offence believed the other person to be of or over the age mentioned in that provision and had reasonable ground for the belief.

Textual Amendments

F62 Words inserted by [Firearms \(Amendment\) Act 1988 \(c. 45, SIF 51:1\)](#), [s. 23\(4\)](#)

Status: Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

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PROSPECTIVE

[^{F63}24A Supplying imitation firearms to minors

- (1) It is an offence for a person under the age of eighteen to purchase an imitation firearm.
- (2) It is an offence to sell an imitation firearm to a person under the age of eighteen.
- (3) In proceedings for an offence under subsection (2) it is a defence to show that the person charged with the offence—
 - (a) believed the other person to be aged eighteen or over; and
 - (b) had reasonable ground for that belief.
- (4) For the purposes of this section a person shall be taken to have shown the matters specified in subsection (3) if—
 - (a) sufficient evidence of those matters is adduced to raise an issue with respect to them; and
 - (b) the contrary is not proved beyond a reasonable doubt.]

Textual Amendments

F63 S. 24A inserted (1.10.2007) by [Violent Crime Reduction Act 2006 \(c. 38\)](#), **ss. 40(1)**, 66(2); S.I. 2007/2180, **art. 3(i)**

25 Supplying firearm to person drunk or insane.

It is an offence for a person to sell or transfer any firearm or ammunition to, or to repair, prove or test any firearm or ammunition for, another person whom he knows or has reasonable cause for believing to be drunk or of unsound mind.

Status:

Point in time view as at 01/04/2000. This version of this part contains provisions that are prospective.

Changes to legislation:

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