

# A word of advice

**Laura Saunbury** shares the benefits of the CPSA members' free legal advice helpline.

Your annual subscription for membership of the CPSA represents excellent value for money and provides a wide range of member benefits. As the Association's honorary solicitor and shotgun licensing advisor, I have been asked to highlight one of those member benefits, namely the free legal advice helpline.

The majority of enquiries we receive are requests for advice in relation to revocation or non-renewal of certificates and the associated seizure by police of a member's guns. However, we can and do provide advice in relation to many other legal issues, including for example, the medical information which is now required from every certificate holder's GP on grant or renewal, visitors' shotgun permits, the extent to which non-certificate holders can participate in shooting activities, and when a member dies what steps the family should take to deal with their guns appropriately.

Members seeking to access the legal advice helpline should initially contact CPSA headquarters and speak to one of the staff there, even if you believe you need to speak directly to a solicitor. This enables the Association to build up a picture and monitor where there are recurring themes or problems, and whether it is on a national scale or confined to certain police force areas. If your enquiry is routine and straightforward, it may be that the CPSA

staff will be able to assist you.

However, if they consider you need legal advice from a solicitor, they will send us a brief outline of the issue together with your contact details. You will then be contacted shortly afterwards by either me or my assistant Gary Smith to discuss your situation.

Members are asked to bear in mind that the legal advice helpline cannot provide you with unlimited or regular free advice and does not extend to us drafting documents for you.

My position as honorary solicitor and shotgun licensing advisor is, as the title suggests, an unpaid post. Consequently, my firm is not paid by the Association to provide legal advice to members and therefore we can generally only provide up to 20 minutes free advice by telephone or email.

On many occasions we can give practical advice within this timeframe which either

answers member queries or enables you to go on and resolve issues yourself. However, inevitably some situations are more complex, and some require the ongoing help of a solicitor. If you wish us to continue advising or representing you after you have received your entitlement of free advice, in many instances we will be happy to take on your case, although we would then be obliged to discuss our fees for providing our services.

Where we consider the nature of your legal problem falls outside the areas of our expertise, we will endeavour to signpost you in the right direction to where you can obtain further specialist advice.

“If you need legal advice always make the CPSA your first port of call...”

If you wish to maximise the benefit you gain from your free advice entitlement, it always helps if you can provide the CPSA or us with a written summary by email or letter of the nature of the problem together with copies of any relevant documents, such as correspondence from your licensing department. It can save a lot of time if we already know the background before we telephone you.

## CPSA LEGAL EXPENSES INSURANCE POLICY

For full members of the Association who have had their shotgun certificate revoked by the police or not renewed, you may be entitled to have your legal costs in connection with an appeal against that decision covered by the CPSA legal expenses insurance policy.

However, it should be noted that cover is not automatic. It depends on the particular circumstances and our assessment of how likely your appeal is to be successful. The CPSA insurers will not fund a member's legal costs where it is considered that your prospects of success are less than 50 percent. The insurance policy is designed to assist those members who already have a certificate and from whom the police then decide to remove it. Cover therefore does not extend to appeals against the refusal to grant a certificate, even if you have had one before at some time in the past.



**Laura Saunbury** is a consultant solicitor with a leading London law firm and has recently commenced her 10th year as the Association's Honorary Solicitor and shotgun licensing advisor.

