



Forensic Science Regulator

Regulator's Notification: No. 04-2025

Issue

The reporting of potentially readily convertible top venting blank firing handguns

Background

The status of top-venting blank firers that may be readily convertible into firearms has become a topic of debate within the firearms community, following recent amnesties relating to such items of Turkish and Italian manufacture.

A recent meeting of the Regulator's Firearms Specialist Group highlighted that there is currently no official guidance on how the examination and assessment of convertibility should be undertaken, beyond the wording of the Firearms Act 1982.

In addition, it was noted that there is debate within the firearms community regarding how the classification of readily convertible top-venting blank firers, in an unconverted state, should be reported, given the current lack of appellate case law relating to the applicability of Section 5(1) (aba) of the Firearms act 1968 (as amended) to such items.

The Firearms Specialist group has recommended that the Regulator considers the creation of a Forensic Science Activity for the assessment of convertibility, as well as providing additional guidance as to how the classification of such items should be reported.

Changes

Following the recommendation of the Firearms Specialist Group, the Regulator is considering the inclusion of the assessment of convertibility as a Forensic Science Activity (FSA) in a future version of the Code of Practice.

In the interim, the Regulator issues the following guidelines for practitioners examining and reporting on imitation firearms which may be readily convertible into firearms: -

1. When issuing reports relating to blank firers considered by the practitioner to be readily convertible, the report should state that currently there is no case

law or guidance, regarding what constitutes readily convertible within the terms of the Firearms Act 1982.

2. In the absence of case law, the report should only state that a court may decide that the item is readily convertible into a firearm based on the tests conducted and described.
3. In expressing an opinion as to whether an item is readily convertible, a report should make clear all steps that the practitioner took to achieve conversion, including the time, tools, extra parts, and any skills which might be considered specialist.
4. The report should state that if the court accepts that the item is readily convertible, it would be at least subject to Section 1 of the Firearms Act 1968. Where an item falls within the relevant dimensions, the report should state that it may also constitute a 'Prohibited Weapon' as defined in Section 5(1) (aba) of the same Act, however, in the absence of appellate case law, it is for the court to determine whether this part of the act applies.
5. The statutory defence given in Section 1(5) of the Firearms Act 1982 must be quoted verbatim in any report.

Process and Date of Implementation

With immediate effect from the date of this Regulatory Notice



Dr Marc Bailey
December 2025