



Inspecting policing
in the public interest

Making the Connections

**A thematic inspection of police force compliance with the
Memorandum of Understanding between the National
Ballistics Intelligence Service and Police Forces**

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Executive summary

1. Introduction

- 1.1. In early 2013, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out an inspection of police force compliance with the *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies¹ of England and Wales²* ('the MOU').
- 1.2. The inspection comprised fieldwork in ten forces. This summary details the main overarching findings and recommendations.

2. Background

The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS)

- 2.1. NABIS is the national centre for forensic science, intelligence and knowledge which deals with the illegal use, supply and manufacture of firearms and ammunition. It provides a dedicated forensic service to link crime scenes through the microscopic examination of ballistic items.³ NABIS also manages the database on which forces register the details of any ballistic items recovered. These data are used to provide strategic intelligence to forces and other stakeholders on the criminal use of firearms.
- 2.2. At the time of inspection, NABIS was an ACPO-governed organisation, funded by police forces and operational since 2008. However, the governance arrangements may change with the introduction of the National Crime Agency (NCA) later in 2013.

The Memorandum of Understanding

- 2.3. The MOU⁴ originated from a recognition that NABIS's effectiveness as a national service is dependent on police forces sharing information and associated intelligence on the ballistic items they recover. In extreme cases, failure to do so could hinder or prevent the arrest of offenders who then go on to commit other serious crimes, including those involving firearms, thereby endangering life. It was signed on behalf of all forces by the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) on 4 July 2011, and for NABIS by the ACPO Senior Responsible Officer for NABIS.

¹ Those mentioned in the MOU are British Transport Police (BTP), the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) and UK military. This inspection has only looked at how Home Office-funded police forces comply with the MOU.

² *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales*, Association of Chief Police Officers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the National Ballistics Intelligence Service, July 2011. Subsequently referred to as the MOU.

³ A 'ballistic item' is a physical item or exhibit suitable for submission to a NABIS forensic hub and includes firearms or suspected firearms, fired bullets, fired cartridge cases, ammunition and component parts of firearms and/or ammunition (NPIA *Practice Advice*, 2008).

⁴ Available from the ACPO website

(<http://www.acpo.police.uk/documents/crime/2011/201107CBANABISMou2.2.pdf>).

- 2.4. The MOU therefore places an obligation on police forces to ensure that all relevant ballistics items are registered within set timescales. It also requires forces to register and submit appropriate ballistic items for examination; to ensure the database is updated with relevant information and intelligence; and to put measures in place to ensure compliance with the MOU.

3. The inspection

- 3.1. The commission for this inspection originated in a discussion between HMIC and ACPO in early 2012.⁵ The inspection was then listed in HMIC's business plan for 2012/13,⁶ which was approved by the Home Secretary.⁷
- 3.2. HMIC inspected ten forces between 21 January and 28 February 2013: Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Merseyside Police, Northumbria Police, Nottinghamshire Police, South Wales Police, Staffordshire Police, Suffolk Constabulary, Surrey Police, and West Yorkshire Police. They were chosen to form the inspection sample because they represent a range of:
- force sizes;
 - rural and urban environments;
 - rates of gun crime; and
 - levels of engagement with NABIS (e.g. number of incidents recorded and items submitted).
- 3.3. We looked at their governance and management structures; how they manage ballistic items; their use of the NABIS database; and their handling of intelligence products from NABIS.
- 3.4. This inspection methodology was established using the fora of HMIC's Reference and Tactical Advisory Groups, which include representatives from ACPO, the Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and other stakeholders.

4. Governance, management and quality assurance

- 4.1. The MOU requires every force to have a designated ACPO lead and an Operational Single Point of Contact (OSPoc). The OSPoc has day-to-day responsibility for managing the force's NABIS processes.⁸
- 4.2. We found that all inspected forces had a designated ACPO officer. Nine forces also had an OSPoc (seven of whom had the seniority to enable them to manage the NABIS process in their forces).
- 4.3. Eight forces had nominated individuals who were responsible for creating database entries. These were referred to as the NABIS System Administrator or NABIS Co-ordinator, and their substantive roles tended to either be as firearms specialists (e.g.

⁵ Full terms of reference are attached at Appendix A.

⁶ HMIC (2012) *HMIC Business Plan 2012/13*. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

⁷ In accordance with the Police Act 1996, Schedule 4A, paragraph 2.

⁸ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales*, paragraphs 2.1.1 to 2.2.1.

the force armourer or a firearms licensing officer) or involve working in intelligence (e.g. an analyst).

- 4.4. We found that the five forces who had firearms-related criminality as a strategic priority actively considered NABIS as an integral part of their processes. Conversely, we found that the other inspected forces had not fully integrated NABIS processes into their working practices.
- 4.5. None of the inspected forces had implemented quality assurance mechanisms to monitor their end-to-end NABIS process (from recovery of ballistic items, to their submission to NABIS) and therefore did not know how well they were performing in relation to their NABIS responsibilities. Furthermore, the Effectiveness Management Information (EMI)⁹ report produced by NABIS did not contain data on force compliance with the MOU's quality and timeliness requirements.

5. Identifying ballistic items in force possession

- 5.1. The MOU requires forces to submit certain crime-related ballistic items they recover to a NABIS hub for examination. In order to achieve this, forces first need to be aware of the ballistic items entering their possession.
- 5.2. All the inspected forces had a process to handle the recovery of ballistic items. In six forces, the staff who were most likely to handle ballistic items (such as property officers or front counter staff) had received briefings on the force's NABIS processes. This helped to ensure the early identification and management of ballistic items.
- 5.3. Two of the inspected forces had recently conducted audits of their NABIS processes, which revealed ballistic items in their possession that had not previously been considered for NABIS submission. It is therefore possible that other forces are not aware of all the ballistic items they hold, and consequently that forensic opportunities are being missed.

6. Managing ballistic items in force

- 6.1. The MOU requires all forces to consider all crime-related ballistic items against the criteria for both registering on the NABIS database and for submitting items to NABIS. In order to comply with this, all forces need to recover and record these items effectively.
- 6.2. All ten forces provided HMIC with copies of their policies or procedures for the recovery of ballistic items. However, only three inspected forces had comprehensive end-to-end processes for the recovery, recording and management of ballistic items, against which performance could be measured.
- 6.3. Better management of ballistic items was demonstrated by forces which took the proactive approach of requiring their NABIS System Administrators to search force IT systems routinely, or to receive automatic alerts when ballistic items were recovered. In forces where the NABIS System Administrator was not immediately

⁹ Effectiveness Management Information report is a report produced by NABIS for police forces providing quantitative information about the NABIS database records made by the force.

made aware of new ballistic items, there were delays in the creation of NABIS database entries.

7. Recording information on the NABIS database

What type of incident/item should be recorded?

- 7.1. The MOU requires forces to create entries on the NABIS database in accordance with the *NABIS Database User Guide*. Appendix C of the MOU contains a broad definition of which ballistic items need to be registered.¹⁰
- 7.2. We found that Appendix C of the MOU was interpreted differently by different forces. In particular, it could be read as requiring forces to include any ballistic item on the database, not just those from crime-related incidents. This ambiguity has led to inconsistency among forces. For example:
- one force with a low incidence of firearms-enabled crime created 405 incidents on the NABIS database in 2011/12, while a force with a similar level of firearms-enabled crime only created four; and
 - four inspected forces did not apply the criteria set out in Appendix C of the MOU, instead only registering ballistic items which met the more specific criteria of Appendix D of the MOU.¹¹

This suggests that these forces were not registering everything they should on the database.

Entering information on the NABIS database

- 7.3. Information needs to be recorded on the NABIS database for each firearms-related incident where items are recovered which meet the criteria outlined in Appendix C of the MOU, with data organised under six tab headings.¹² All ten forces complied with the requirement to register information on how the ballistic item came into police possession for each incident. However, some forces did not use the other tabs (such as those labelled 'intelligence' and 'incident crime group'). We also found that none of the inspected forces was completing all the sections of each NABIS database tab, which is in contravention of the *NABIS Database User Guide*.
- 7.4. We found that forces were primarily using the NABIS database to register the recovery of ballistic items, rather than to record operational intelligence. In the 2011/12 financial year, 16 forces in England and Wales contributed a total of 207 intelligence entries on the intelligence tab (from a total of 4,776 NABIS incident entries); the remaining 27 did not contribute any. Of the ten inspected forces, four created a total of 103 intelligence tab entries, while the other six did not create any. Three of the inspected forces considered that updating intelligence on the NABIS database was an unnecessary duplication of the entries they made on force systems; and furthermore, when NABIS linked ballistic items between crime scenes,

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*

¹¹ See Appendix C of this report.

¹² The six tabs are labelled incident; incident person; incident crime group; ballistic items; intelligence; and event. See Appendix D for more information on these tabs.

they stated that they liaised with the other force(s) concerned. They did not see that NABIS had a role in the operational investigation thereafter.

Timeliness targets for the creation of database entries

- 7.5. The MOU sets timeliness targets for the creation of NABIS database entries. The inspected forces created 1,317 ballistic incident records on the database during 2011/12.¹³ Of those that required recording within seven days of the incident occurring, 30 percent were late. Similarly, 26 percent of incidents that should have been recorded on the database within 28 days were not recorded on time.¹⁴ We also found that NABIS was not informing forces about their performance against these timeliness targets, and that forces were not proactively checking and managing compliance.

8. Submitting ballistic items to NABIS for examination

- 8.1. Appendix D of the MOU outlines those ballistic items which should be submitted to NABIS because they may provide the opportunity to link firearms crimes through microscopic examination. Examples include guns or cartridges recovered from crime scenes.
- 8.2. Although Appendix D is more detailed than Appendix C, it is again open to interpretation, and we found inconsistency in what forces submit.

9. Guidance on the use of NABIS

- 9.1. NABIS provides guidance to forces through the MOU, the *NABIS Database Quick Guide*¹⁵ and the *NPIA/NABIS/ACPO Practice Advice on NABIS*.¹⁶
- 9.2. We found these documents were contradictory in places and that forces interpreted them differently. This led to inconsistencies in what forces entered on the database and submitted to NABIS.

Recommendation 1

ACPO should ensure the MOU provides clarity about the service NABIS should provide as well as the responsibility that forces have in complying with it.

10. Using intelligence from NABIS

- 10.1. At the time of inspection, NABIS was producing a range of intelligence products that linked ballistic items (including, for example, items recovered from the scenes of firearms-related crimes). NABIS also provided strategic intelligence related to

¹³ Data excludes those incidents created by other agencies for the force and those that should not have been registered on the database.

¹⁴ These target dates were agreed in consultation with forces when NABIS was established, and have no scientific or evidential value.

¹⁵ *NABIS Database Quick Guide*, National Ballistics Intelligence Service. 2008. Unpublished

¹⁶ *Practice Advice on the National Ballistic Intelligence Service*, National Police Improvement Agency, ACPO and NABIS, 2008, Unpublished; RESTRICTED.

firearms (e.g. use by criminals, and the availability of weapons). The inspected forces valued these products. However, only seven inspected forces could evidence a robust process which ensured material generated by NABIS was given the appropriate consideration within the force. These seven include the five with a more integrated approach to firearms-related issues, see para. 4.4 above.

11. Conclusions and next steps

- 11.1. Inspected forces recognised the value of NABIS as the only national service to link firearms-related criminality through ballistic examination, and to provide intelligence products that can identify emerging firearms-related threats.
- 11.2. However, guidance needs to be clear about NABIS's role and what information forces should record on the database. It is essential that the guidance is reviewed and the new guidance instructs forces to record only such information that NABIS requires to fulfil its role, thus minimising the burden on the police and avoiding duplication of effort.
- 11.3. In order to ensure that all appropriate ballistic items are recorded on the database and submitted to NABIS, forces need to have robust end-to-end processes for the identification, local recording and overall management of ballistic items.
- 11.4. As a result of this inspection, HMIC considers that the following measures are necessary to make sure NABIS is effective in assisting forces to fight crime:
 - Forces should explicitly include NABIS within a strategic approach to firearms-related criminality. NABIS strategic intelligence and forensic information about linked incidents should be used alongside local intelligence, including any intelligence available from the management of lawfully held weapons.
 - Force OSPoCs should be managers who can ensure intelligence and investigative links are being made. Based on the experience of this inspection, it is better if the management of forces' NABIS processes rests in their intelligence or dedicated firearms crime investigation departments.
 - Through robust quality assurance mechanisms, forces should regularly monitor the end-to-end NABIS process to ensure compliance with the MOU. This should include managerial oversight and accountability for compliance.
 - Force systems and processes must be sufficiently robust to ensure that any ballistic item coming into police possession (irrespective of the point of entry) is considered against the MOU. There need to be sufficient measures (e.g. automated alerts or daily review of force systems) to ensure that ballistic items are not overlooked.
 - Forces should limit the number of staff who can input data onto the NABIS database, as this reduces the number of people that need to be trained and would give greater consistency in the quality of submissions.
 - Forces should exploit, through their systems and processes, forensic opportunities from the recovery of ballistic items. This may provide evidence or intelligence leads for those investigating firearms criminality.

Recommendation 2

In order to maximise the effectiveness of NABIS, all forces should ensure their systems and processes are in line with these measures.

Part 1 – The inspection

12. Background

The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS)¹⁷

- 12.1. NABIS is tasked with gathering and disseminating to the police service and partner agencies intelligence on the criminal use of firearms. It has been operational since 2008, and is funded by an ACPO subscription arrangement (for the 43 Home Office-funded forces of England and Wales), and by the Association of Chief Police Officers for Scotland. NABIS has a national function, but is hosted by West Midlands Police.
- 12.2. NABIS was created to perform three main functions:
- **Forensics:** provision of a dedicated forensic service to link crime scenes through the microscopic examination of ballistic items. This work is carried out at four regional hubs: Birmingham, Manchester, London and Glasgow;¹⁸
 - **Intelligence:** the NABIS Intelligence Cell gathers information about people, objects, locations and events linked to gun crime incidents and ballistic items. This information is analysed and shared with forces by way of intelligence reports; and
 - **Knowledge and Communications:** this element of the service provides support to NABIS centrally, as well as to police forces and law enforcement agencies. This includes providing the secretariat function to the ACPO Criminal Use of Firearms business area.

The Memorandum of Understanding

- 12.3. The MOU¹⁹ originated from a recognition that NABIS's effectiveness as a national service is dependent on police forces sharing information and associated intelligence on the ballistic items they recover. In extreme cases, failure to do so could hinder or prevent the arrest of offenders who then go on to commit other and more serious crimes, including those involving firearms, thereby endangering life.
- 12.4. The MOU therefore places an obligation on police forces to ensure that all relevant ballistic items are registered in a timely and quality manner, and (where appropriate) are submitted to NABIS as soon as practicable after they have been recovered. It also aims to ensure that police forces put initial information onto the NABIS database before sending the ballistic items to one of the NABIS hubs.
- 12.5. The MoU came into effect on 4 July 2011, when it was signed for all forces by the ACPO leads for Violence and Public Protection, and for the Criminal Use of Firearms; and for NABIS by the ACPO Senior Responsible Officer for NABIS.

¹⁷ Information in this section is summarised from text on the NABIS website (www.nabis.police.uk).

¹⁸ The hubs in London (servicing the Metropolitan and City of London Police) and Glasgow (servicing the Scottish Police Service) are operated by the forces themselves rather than NABIS. However, these two hubs contribute ballistic intelligence to the NABIS database.

¹⁹ Available from the ACPO website (www.acpo.police.uk).

12.6. In summary, the MOU:

- defines the operating framework and minimum standards for force use of NABIS services, including details of the roles they need to designate within force to work with NABIS, the submission of ballistic items and the handling of intelligence and database entries; and
- specifies the level of service forces can expect from NABIS, including in relation to the provision of management information (termed 'Effectiveness Management Information') concerning how forces and agencies perform against the MOU.

12.7. Two other documents also contain guidance on how forces and agencies should work with NABIS:

- *Practice Advice on The National Ballistic Intelligence Service*, which was issued by the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) in 2008;²⁰ and
- *Database Quick Guide*, which was produced by NABIS in 2008 and provides operators with guidance on completing database entries.

However, NABIS acknowledges that these documents are out of date, and refers to the MOU as the most up-to-date and relevant guidance.

13. HMIC's inspection Commission

13.1. The commission for this piece of work originated in a discussion between HMIC and ACPO in early 2012.²¹ The inspection was then listed in HMIC's business plan for 2012/13,²² which was approved by the Home Secretary.²³

²⁰ NPIA guidance is intended to shape local guidance (as implemented by Chief Constables) and so there is an expectation that the 'spirit' of local policies complies with any NPIA guidance or practice advice.

²¹ Full terms of reference are attached at Appendix A.

²² HMIC (2012) *HMIC Business Plan 2012/13*. Available from www.hmic.gov.uk

²³ In accordance with the Police Act 1996, Schedule 4A, paragraph 2.

Scope

- 13.2. This inspection focused on compliance by Home Office-funded police forces with section 2 of the MOU, which specifies each force's responsibilities in relation to:
- designating an ACPO lead and Operational Single Point of Contact (OSPoC) who is responsible for ensuring compliance with the MOU;
 - ensuring relevant ballistic items (as defined in Appendix C of the MOU) are registered on the NABIS database within a set timeframe;
 - ensuring relevant ballistic items (as defined in Appendix D of the MOU) are submitted for forensic examination within a set timeframe;
 - ensuring NABIS database entries are completed in line with the User Guide; and
 - ensuring the force takes appropriate action in response to NABIS intelligence.
- 13.3. We comment on compliance with other parts of the MOU where it is relevant to force performance.

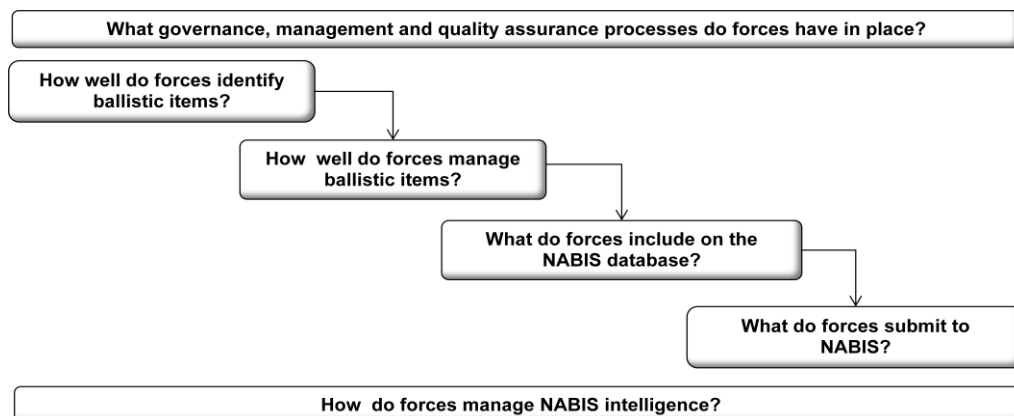
Methodology

- 13.4. The inspection methodology was established using the fora of HMIC's Reference and Tactical Advisory Groups, which include representatives from ACPO, the Home Office, the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners, and other stakeholders.
- 13.5. HMIC inspected ten forces between 21 January and 28 February 2013: Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Merseyside Police, Northumbria Police, Nottinghamshire Police, South Wales Police, Staffordshire Police, Suffolk Constabulary, Surrey Police, and West Yorkshire Police. They were chosen to form the inspection sample because they represent a range of:
- force sizes;
 - rural and urban environments;
 - rates of gun crime; and
 - levels of engagement with NABIS (e.g. number of incidents recorded and items submitted).
- 13.6. HMIC analysed data on these forces' use of the NABIS database for 2011/12 (which was the most recent full-year dataset). Data from April 2012 to December 2012 were also examined to identify any new developments in performance trends.
- 13.7. A fieldwork visit was then conducted in each force, during which we interviewed the ACPO lead for NABIS; the OSPoC; the intelligence lead for NABIS; the system administrator for the NABIS database; a senior investigating officer from the force's major inquiry team; and personnel who manage ballistic items within the force.
- 13.8. We also conducted interviews with staff at the NABIS Central and Northern Hubs (Birmingham and Manchester respectively).

Part 2 – Inspection findings

14. Introduction

- 14.1. HMIC reviewed force compliance with section 2 of the MOU by inspecting against six questions:



The evidence gathered for each of these questions is summarised below.

15. Governance, management and quality assurance processes

Governance

- 15.1. The MOU requires forces to appoint a named ACPO officer as the lead for NABIS within the force. All ten inspected forces complied with this. The lead role of the ACPO officer was known and recognised by virtually all interviewees across all the forces.
- 15.2. However, we found that the level of engagement and oversight exercised by the ACPO officer varied across the forces. The level of firearms-related criminality in the area (and therefore the strategic importance of this to the force) appeared to influence the priority forces gave to complying with the MOU. For example, in forces where firearms-related criminality was a key strategic issue, ACPO officers demonstrated both personal knowledge of and routine engagement in NABIS matters. In those inspected forces where firearms-related criminality was a lower priority, the ACPO officers only considered NABIS on an 'exception reporting' basis.
- 15.3. We found that the five most proactive inspected forces were those that had a concerted or joined-up approach to firearms matters, in which NABIS information was discussed in weekly or monthly meetings together with other firearms-related information such as incidents, seizures or recoveries. In two other inspected forces, NABIS formed part of their quarterly firearms meetings. In the three remaining inspected forces, it was not actively considered as part of routine oversight and review.

This inspection found a more effective force contribution to NABIS was achieved where it was considered within a strategic approach to firearms-related criminality: for example, where NABIS strategic intelligence

and forensic information about linked incidents was used alongside local intelligence.

Management

- 15.4. Nine of the inspected forces complied with the MOU's requirement to have a named and designated OSPoC. The remaining inspected force acknowledged that it had not complied with the MOU for more than 18 months, but had now nominated a person to take on the role as part of a force improvement plan.
- 15.5. In five of the inspected forces, the OSPoCs were based in the intelligence or dedicated firearms investigation departments, while the remaining four were in the forensic science or firearms departments. We found that the location of the OSPoC in the organisation reflected the force's strategic emphasis on NABIS connected factors. In two inspected forces, the OSPoC functions were undertaken by people who operate the NABIS database, rather than those with managerial responsibility for the end-to-end process.
- 15.6. All inspected forces had lead individuals responsible for inputting data onto the NABIS database, who were generally referred to as either the force NABIS System Administrator or NABIS Co-ordinator. We found them to be committed and experienced staff, relied upon by forces to manage their NABIS processes. Only five inspected forces had resilience plans to cover these roles. The other five forces were unable to fulfil their NABIS responsibilities during periods when their NABIS System Administrators were absent.
- 15.7. Seven inspected forces had created Local Clearing Houses²⁴ (LCHs), which received and reviewed all ballistic items suitable for inclusion on the NABIS database. They were generally located in forces' armouries or forensic science accommodation. The provision of an LCH is recommended in the NPIA/NABIS/ACPO *Practice Advice*.

We found a more effective contribution to NABIS is achieved where forces have appointed managers as their OSPoCs who can ensure intelligence and investigative links are being made using NABIS. Based on the experience of this inspection, it is better if management of force NABIS processes rests in their intelligence or dedicated firearms crime investigation departments.

²⁴ A Local Clearing House is 'a function within a force or serving a number of forces which reviews all ballistic items to ensure complete [NABIS] registry entries and full submission of relevant ballistic items to NABIS forensic hubs' (NPIA *Practice Advice on the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS)*, 2008, Unpublished, RESTRICTED).

Quality assurance

- 15.8. None of the inspected forces demonstrated robust internal processes (for example, dip sampling) that quality assured the data they entered on the NABIS database. Therefore, none of the inspected forces could ensure NABIS database entries met the requirements of the MOU or NPIA/NABIS/ACPO *Practice Guide*. Forces put their trust in the individuals inputting data and managers did not have access to the information they required to monitor the end-to-end NABIS process effectively. Furthermore, NABIS did not provide forces with any regular data on the quality or timeliness of their NABIS database entries, instead only providing individual force feedback when asked, or when discussing a specific entry. The NABIS database was not configured to allow managers in any force the opportunity to obtain performance data (such as on the timeliness of entries and submissions).
- 15.9. The only regular performance feedback provided by NABIS to forces was the EMI. This contained quantitative data on force use of NABIS (including, for example, the number of items submitted in a set time period), and NABIS's performance in meeting the MOU (such as how quickly reports were produced or ballistic items collected from forces). It did not include comparative performance data or any qualitative information.
- 15.10. We found that the inspected forces were reviewing the EMI. However, there was a common view among inspected forces that it did not provide them with the performance information required to manage their NABIS processes effectively.
- 15.11. NABIS recognised the EMI needs to change: in November 2012, it sought the views of all forces on the content, format and use of the EMI. However, only one reply was received.

We found that a lack of process monitoring contributed to forces failing to comply with requirements of the MOU.

16. Identifying ballistic items in force possession

- 16.1. Ballistic items enter police possession in a number of ways. For example, they can be found and handed in by a member of the public; surrendered by a firearms licence holder; or recovered from a crime scene. The key issue for compliance with the MOU is that forces have systems and processes in place to ensure that all ballistic items recovered are properly considered for NABIS. If they meet the criteria set out in Appendix C of the MOU, then they need to be registered on the database in a timely fashion.
- 16.2. All the inspected forces required an authorised firearms officer (AFO) to attend the scene of recovery of a firearm to confirm that the weapon was safe to handle. This provided the first opportunity to identify a firearm that may be suitable for NABIS. In six inspected forces, AFOs were briefed on the need to examine firearms and ammunition so they could make the initial determination on which incidents should be considered for inclusion on the NABIS database. In a further three inspected forces, AFOs were trained to create incident records on the NABIS database themselves. The final inspected force was in the process of training its AFOs for this purpose.

- 16.3. The NABIS System Administrators in four of the inspected forces proactively conducted daily searches of all relevant force systems (including command and control, crime and property systems), using key word searches to identify any incidents relating to gun crime or firearms. They were then able to ensure that such incidents were progressed appropriately. Conversely, the remaining inspected forces lacked such proactive systems and assumed their systems and processes were sufficiently robust to ensure that ballistic items entering their force were assessed for inclusion on the NABIS database.
- 16.4. Overall we found that nine of the inspected forces had some kind of 'double-check' measure in place to ensure, as far as possible, that recovered ballistic items were considered for NABIS. For example:
- two inspected forces' NABIS System Administrators collected ballistic items from the property store in person and transported them to the LCH, so they could be entered onto the database in a timely manner; and
 - in six inspected forces, no ballistic items could be disposed of without the personal approval of the NABIS System Administrator (or Armourer). This ensured that, even if late in the process, these items were considered against the NABIS criteria.
- 16.5. There was consensus among interviewees that limiting the number of staff who had the authority to create entries on the NABIS database led to better consistency in the quality of the information recorded. This approach was also seen to benefit NABIS as it reduced the number of staff that had to be trained. It also allowed NABIS to resolve issues about the quality of entries quickly.

Based on this inspection, HMIC considers a more effective contribution to NABIS would be achieved if force systems and processes were sufficiently robust to ensure that any ballistic item coming into police possession (irrespective of the point of entry) is considered against the NABIS MOU for inclusion. There need to be sufficient measures (e.g. automated flags or daily review of force systems) to ensure that ballistic items are not overlooked.

Limiting the number of staff who can input data onto the NABIS database reduces the number of people that need to be trained. It also assists in consistency of decision making and the quality of the database entries and submissions.

17. Managing ballistic items in force

- 17.1. Every inspected force provided us with their local procedure, policy or guidance for handling ballistic items, although some of these documents simply referred readers to the NPIA guidance and the MOU. Every inspected force's NABIS guidance had been made available to staff through the intranet.
- 17.2. We found, however, that most of these policies only dealt with the recovery of firearms up to the point of delivery to a property store. Only three inspected forces had an 'end-to-end' process that also described the roles and responsibilities of those staff engaged in registering and submitting ballistic items to NABIS. Where these existed, they did however provide an easy-to-follow understanding of the force's NABIS processes.
- 17.3. We found examples of good practice in those inspected forces that had a more proactive approach to NABIS. These included providing briefings on the force's NABIS processes and how to recognise ballistic items. The briefings were provided to staff who may come into contact with ballistic items, such as firearms officers, property officers, crime investigators and intelligence officers.

18. Entering information on the NABIS database

- 18.1. The NABIS database is a national system designed to manage and record information, including the recovery and examination of ballistic items. Information is grouped under six tabs,²⁵ where information should be recorded for each firearms-related incident meeting the criteria specified in Appendix C of the MOU.
- 18.2. All ten forces complied with the requirement to register information on how the ballistic item came into police possession for each incident. However, some forces were not using other tabs (such as the intelligence and crime group tabs), and none of the inspected forces was completing all relevant sections of each NABIS database tab.
- 18.3. The ten inspected forces created records relating to 1,317 ballistic incidents on the database in the 2011/12 financial year.²⁶ In relation to these 1,317 entries, the inspected forces registered 2,463 individual ballistic items.
- 18.4. Inconsistent use of the NABIS database was clearly evidenced by forces' use of the intelligence tab, which varied widely. During 2011/12, just four inspected forces created intelligence entries on the NABIS database in relation to their incidents. Nationally, the forces in England and Wales only created 207 intelligence reports on the NABIS database during that year. Sixteen of the 43 forces created all these entries, while the majority of forces (27) did not record any. There was clearly a lack of understanding and compliance with the expectations of the MOU in respect of adding intelligence to the database.
- 18.5. Four of the inspected forces specifically commented that making NABIS database intelligence entries represented a duplication of effort, given that they already input the same intelligence into their force systems. Furthermore, they commented that

²⁵ These tabs are outlined in Annex D of this report.

²⁶ Data used in this report excludes those incidents created for a force by another organisation and those incidents that should not have been recorded on the database.

intelligence placed into the NABIS database required updating during a case's lifecycle. Two inspected forces suggested that NABIS's access to the Police National Database (PND) should remove the need for any intelligence/information to be entered on the NABIS database. Interviews with NABIS however revealed that development work into how best to establish and operate the interface between the NABIS database and other IT systems remains incomplete.

- 18.6. Senior investigating officers (SIOs) interviewed in the inspected forces acknowledged the significant benefits NABIS had provided them by linking crime scenes through the forensic examination of submitted ballistic items. However, the SIOs stated that they only required NABIS to provide basic information about the linked incident (such as when and where the firearm or ballistic item had been used), and the name of the SIO leading the linked investigation. This information then gave them the opportunity to contact the SIO on the linked investigation, who could provide further information and intelligence about the incident and further lines of enquiry. This, therefore, obviated the requirement for forces to put detailed information and intelligence into the NABIS database.
- 18.7. Interviews with NABIS staff revealed a lack of consensus on whether forces should enter detailed information and intelligence on the database. Some emphasised the potential benefit of this, whilst others suggested it was not required. This material issue should be considered as part of the update of the MOU and NABIS guidance. Based on this inspection HMIC considers that forces should only be required to put information and intelligence into the database that is necessary to fulfil NABIS's role.
- 18.8. Appendix C of the MOU details the ballistic items that should and should not be included on the NABIS database. In summary, any firearm²⁷ or ammunition, recovered by police that is believed to be concerned in crime should be included. Air weapons (unless used in crime), imitation weapons and imitation ammunition should not be entered on the database. We found that the inspected forces' NABIS System Administrators used the MOU and force guidance as far as practicable, and applied professional judgment where there was scope for interpretation.
- 18.9. Appendix C of the MOU allows forces flexibility on which ballistic item recoveries would necessitate the creation of an incident record on the NABIS database. Forces may enter 'Any non-crime firearm or ammunition that enters police possession.'²⁸ In effect, this means that forces may include any ballistic firearm or ammunition they wish.
- 18.10. The consequences of this ambiguous guidance were demonstrated by the different number of incidents recorded by two forces on the database during 2011/12. Both were rural forces with low levels of firearms-related criminality: but the first created 405 entries during this period, while the other only created four. This disparity had

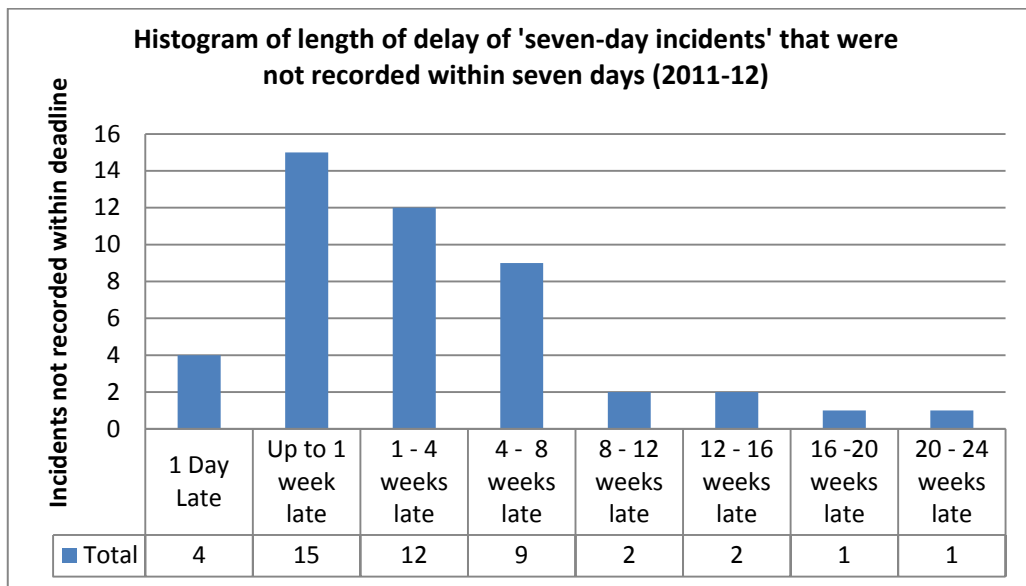
²⁷ A firearm is defined in section 57, Firearms Act 1968, as "a lethal barrelled weapon of any description from which any shot, bullet or other missile can be discharged and [including] any prohibited weapon, whether ... a lethal weapon or ... not; ... any component part of ... a lethal or prohibited weapon; and any accessory ... designed or adapted to diminish the noise or flash caused by firing the weapon [i.e. a silencer]."

²⁸ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales, Appendix C.*

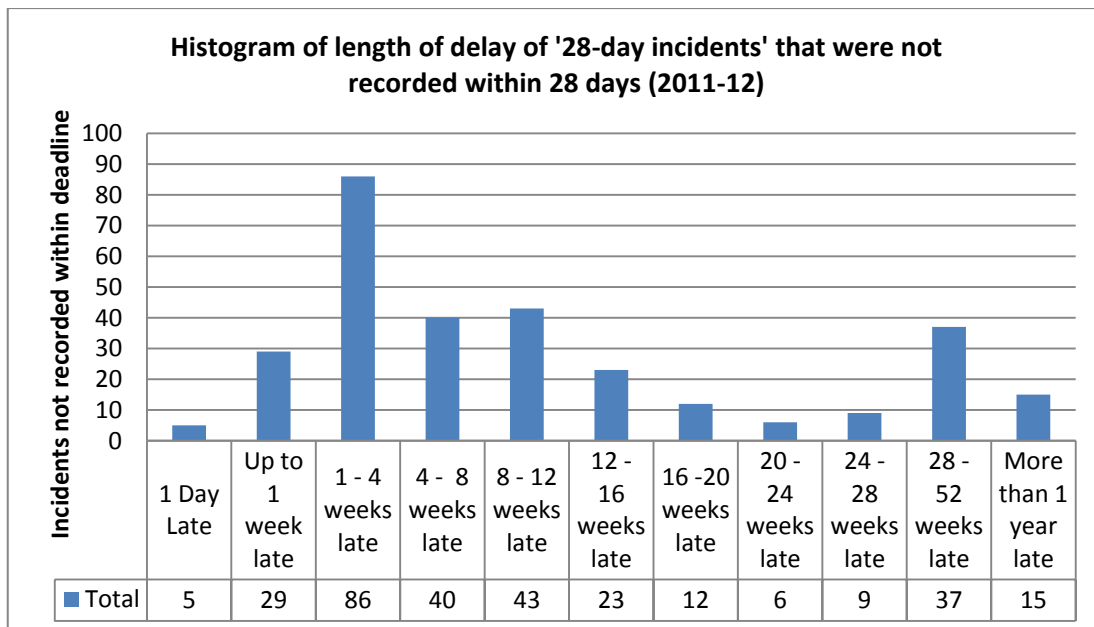
many causes, but was in large part due to the fact that the first force's policy mandated the recording of all surrenders of licensed firearms on the database, whilst the second force did not believe that such incidents should be recorded on the system.

- 18.11. In 2011/12, two inspected forces did not record any incidents relating to the surrender of ballistic items; whilst the remaining eight forces registered 543 (42 percent of the total of 1,317 incidents created by all forces). Interviews with inspected forces' OSPoCs and NABIS System Administrators revealed a lack of certainty about which incidents they should record on the NABIS database. In the absence of very clear guidance, a number stated that they rely on their own professional judgment to decide which incidents should be recorded.
- 18.12. The MOU includes timeliness targets for the creation of entries on the NABIS database. These act as proxy targets for the timely submission of appropriate items to NABIS. There was no evidential or intelligence case for these timescales (which were agreed when NABIS was first established), although they accord with those used routinely in relation to forces' submissions of items for forensic analysis by Forensic Service Providers (FSPs). The MOU is clear that forces should submit ballistic items as soon as possible. Upon delivery to a NABIS hub, NABIS can conduct microscopic examination within hours of receipt, if the case requires that level of priority (for example, if it relates to a shooting where serious or fatal injury has occurred). Providing a target for timeliness of delivery can encourage forces to assess their performance against the standard:
- within seven days – all shooting incidents where cartridge cases or bullets are recovered from the crime scene; and
 - within 28 days – all other submissions, including non-crime items.²⁹
- 18.13. During 2011/12, the inspected forces put 153 incidents into the database which should have been recorded within seven days of the incident. Of these, 46 were registered late, with an average (mean) delay of 26 days. The least timely incident was recorded on the database 142 days late.

²⁹ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales.*



18.14. The inspected forces input details of a further 1,164 incidents during 2011/12 which required recording on the database within 28 days of the incident. Of these, 305 (26 percent) were recorded more than 28 days after the incident. The average (mean) delay across these incidents was 97 days, with one being recorded 572 days late.



18.15. Reasons given by forces for these delays included:

- property store delays in notifying the System Administrator about ballistic items;
- communications breakdowns between departments, resulting in certain ballistic items not being considered for NABIS inclusion at all until 'found' in a property store;
- the time taken to complete the MG21³⁰ (which has to accompany the ballistic item); and

³⁰ The MG21 is the nationally recognised 'Submission of Work for Forensic Examination' form which accompanies any item or exhibit submitted to a forensic service provider for examination. It, for example, describes the exhibit, summarises the circumstances of recovery, includes force references, and specifies the officer in the case.

- a lack of trained operators to enter the data on NABIS.

The majority of these can be described as systemic faults in force systems, which could be resolved by more robust processes and intrusive managerial oversight (see paragraph 15.8 above).

- 18.16. The MOU does not require Tasers, stun guns or CS/pepper sprays to be recorded on the database, although NABIS considers it good practice to include them (and uses the information to conduct an assessment of the national availability of such items). However, NABIS has not issued a request to all forces to include these weapons routinely on the database: and this has led to inconsistent recording. Only seven of the inspected forces included Tasers or stun guns on the database since 2011, and five included CS/pepper sprays.
- 18.17. The MOU does not require forces to register the details of lost or stolen firearms on the database. The focus is on recovered ballistic items rather than those that are missing. The *NABIS Database Quick Guide* makes two references to lost or stolen firearms but, apart from the inclusion of 'lost/stolen' as a category on the 'ballistic items' tab, there is no explicit direction to forces as to what information is required. We found interviewees were unclear about the need to register these firearms, hence, in 2011/12, six inspected forces did not register any stolen firearms while the remaining four registered 13 between them.
- 18.18. Three principal documents provide guidance or direction for forces in connection with NABIS: the MOU, the NPIA/NABIS/ACPO *Practice Advice*, and the *NABIS Database Quick Guide*. The *Practice Advice* and *NABIS Database Quick Guide* have not been reviewed in five years, and neither was well known within the inspected forces.
- 18.19. There are inconsistencies and ambiguities within these documents that need to be resolved. For example, the *NABIS Database Quick Guide* says forces should register "All firearms (as defined in the Firearms Act 1968) coming into police possession, including all licensed surrendered firearms (excludes Air Weapons)".³¹ However, Appendix C of the MOU says: "All firearms (as defined in the Firearms Act 1968) coming into police possession, including all licensed surrendered firearms (excludes air weapons) *believed to have been used in crime*"³² and then continues to advise that forces may include "Any non-crime-related firearm or ammunition that enters police possession."³³
- 18.20. We found that existing guidance to forces needs to be reviewed to remove ambiguity and increase consistency of practice. NABIS staff acknowledged the need to bring all three documents up to date.

³¹ *NABIS Database Quick Guide*, National Ballistics Intelligence Service, page 23.

³² *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales*, Appendix C.

³³ *ibid.*

Recommendation 1

ACPO should ensure the MOU provides clarity about the service NABIS should provide as well as the responsibility that forces have in complying with it.

19. Submitting ballistic items to NABIS for examination

- 19.1. Appendix D of the MOU specifies the ballistic items that forces should submit to NABIS.³⁴ The list includes those items that can potentially be linked to other ballistic material used in other firearm-related crimes. Appendix D provides a more precise definition of ballistic items that should be submitted for examination than that in Appendix C of the MOU. Every inspected force demonstrated that it applied the criteria in Appendix D as a minimum when assessing ballistic items for NABIS submission, although some forces also applied local criteria.
- 19.2. We found that Appendix D is open to interpretation. For example, the first type of item it cites as requiring NABIS submission is “any firearm where recovery is suspicious”.³⁵ We found an example where two people within the same force had applied this criterion differently. This resulted in the retrospective submission of seven additional items that had originally been deemed not suitable for submission. We also found that staff working in NABIS had different interpretations as to what should be submitted. This has led to mixed messages going to forces. One force provided an example of this, stating that it had been encouraged by the NABIS central hub to submit ballistic items because the circumstances of recovery were “suspicious”, only for the local NABIS hub to reject this submission as it felt there was no value to the ballistic examination.
- 19.3. Interviewees commented that some of the terminology used in Appendix D requires the reader to have a specialist understanding of firearms. For example, “pressure bearing components of any un-certificated firearm” and “barrel, revolver cylinder, receiver”³⁶ are both included in the list of items that should be submitted.
- 19.4. In six of the inspected forces, the force armourer or a firearms specialist (who may have also been the NABIS System Administrator) decided which items were submitted to NABIS. Given the complexities of firearms legislation and of the NABIS submission criteria, we consider specialist firearms knowledge to be a valuable skill for the person responsible for making the submission decision. It was also evident that these individuals had developed good relationships with their NABIS hub and readily sought further advice in the case of doubt.
- 19.5. We found that forces had conflicting priorities when investigating firearms-related crimes. SIOs in all inspected forces agreed that NABIS was a consideration in their forensic strategy when dealing with such crimes. However, they were also clear that the need to have ballistic items forensically examined by an FSP (in order to gather

³⁴ Appendix D of the MOU is reproduced below, see Appendix C.

³⁵ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales*, Appendix D.

³⁶ *ibid.*

DNA and other forensic evidence) took priority over the additional lines of enquiry that NABIS could provide. This was particularly evident in cases where gun-enabled crimes resulted in fatal or serious injury. Forces' submission of items to external FSPs leads to delays in submitting them to NABIS. It would be beneficial if both forensic and ballistic examination took place simultaneously; but NABIS is neither structured nor equipped to provide the complete forensic service.

- 19.6. We found the inspected force that created the most incident records on the NABIS database ensured its NABIS processes ran in parallel with FSP examinations. It achieved this by creating skeleton NABIS database entries for items subject to FSP submission and, where appropriate, utilised 'fast-time' arrangements to accelerate the subsequent NABIS submission.
- 19.7. Interviewees highlighted the value of treating ballistic items as potential forensic exhibits. A number of forces outlined this in their policy documents. In one force, for example, AFOs were comprehensively briefed on the potential forensic opportunities that would accrue if ballistic items were handled properly from the outset.

Based on this inspection, we consider forces could make a more effective contribution to detecting firearms-related criminality if their systems and processes properly consider forensic and ballistic opportunities from the recovery of ballistic items. This may provide evidential or intelligence leads for those investigating firearms criminality.

20. Using intelligence from NABIS

- 20.1. NABIS produces a range of strategic intelligence products for all forces. These include:
- strategic assessments of firearms-related criminality (e.g. trends in the use of firearms);
 - quarterly regional reports (e.g. details on new and recovered inferred weapons³⁷); and
 - problem profiles (e.g. a recent report on the prevalence of a particular type of pistol among criminal gangs).

³⁷ 'Inferred Weapons' are created on the NABIS Database to illustrate the presence of a firearm which has been identified from recovered ballistic materials (e.g. projectiles or cartridge cases) but where the firearm is yet to be recovered.

- 20.2. For individual forces (or a number of forces where there are linked crimes), NABIS has produced more detailed intelligence reports, including:
- summaries of weapons used in the force area but which have not yet been recovered (called ‘inferred weapons’);
 - analytical charts demonstrating the link between crimes involving the same weapon or ballistic items that link forces; and
 - reports of ballistic examination of individual weapons.
- 20.3. Interviewees held NABIS’s strategic and force-specific intelligence products in high regard. This was particularly evident in those inspected forces which record a high incidence of firearms-related criminality. SIOs valued the microscopic examination of weapons and ammunition against exhibits from other crimes and comparison with the national database. Where this links ballistic items to other offences, either within the force or in another force area, this may provide further lines of enquiry.
- 20.4. In seven of the inspected forces, an officer of inspector rank or above was responsible for deciding how intelligence reports received from NABIS would be used (this is a recommendation in the MOU). The remaining inspected forces did not have a process for ensuring that material generated by NABIS was given appropriate consideration.
- 20.5. Even in forces with a low incidence of firearms-related criminality, it is important that due regard is given to the intelligence provided by NABIS. We found awareness of the potential risk from unlawfully held firearms was higher in those inspected forces with a strategic approach to firearms-related criminality. Forces, therefore, need to consider NABIS intelligence reports alongside other force intelligence and priorities within a structured approach.

Part 3 – Conclusion and next steps

21. Conclusion

- 21.1. Inspected forces recognised the value of NABIS's services in linking firearms-related criminality through ballistic examination, and providing intelligence products that identify emerging firearms-related threats. However, guidance needs to be clear about NABIS's role, and on what information and intelligence forces should record on the database. It is essential that the new guidance instructs forces to record only such information and intelligence that NABIS requires to discharge its role, thus minimising the burden on forces and avoiding duplication of effort.
- 21.2. In order to ensure that all appropriate ballistic items are recorded on the database and submitted to NABIS, forces require robust end-to-end processes for the identification, local recording and overall management of ballistic items.

22. Next Steps

- 22.1. As a result of this inspection, HMIC considers that the following measures are necessary to make sure NABIS is effective in assisting forces to fight crime:
- Forces should explicitly include NABIS within a strategic approach to firearms-related criminality. NABIS strategic intelligence and forensic information about linked incidents should be used alongside local intelligence including any intelligence available from the management of lawfully held weapons.
 - Force OSPoCs should be managers who can ensure intelligence and investigative links are being made. Based on the experience of this inspection, it is better if the management of forces' NABIS processes rests in their intelligence or dedicated firearms crime investigation departments.
 - Through robust quality assurance mechanisms, forces should regularly monitor the end-to-end NABIS process to ensure compliance with the MOU. This should include managerial oversight and accountability for compliance.
 - Force systems and processes must be sufficiently robust to ensure that any ballistic item coming into police possession (irrespective of the point of entry) is considered against the MOU. There need to be sufficient measures (e.g. automated alerts or daily review of force systems) to ensure that ballistic items are not overlooked.

- Forces should limit the number of staff who can enter data into the NABIS database, as this reduces the number of people that need to be trained and will provide greater consistency in the quality of submissions.
- Forces should exploit, through their systems and processes, forensic opportunities from the recovery of ballistic items. This may provide evidence or intelligence leads for those investigating firearms criminality.

Recommendation 2

In order to maximise the effectiveness of NABIS, all forces should ensure their systems and processes are in line with these measures.

Appendix A – Terms of Reference for the NABIS Inspection

To assess police forces' compliance with their responsibilities to ensure that all relevant ballistic items and related intelligence is being submitted to NABIS Forensic Services as soon as practicable after recovery and, in particular:

- to identify whether there is an officer of ACPO rank responsible for ensuring compliance with the NABIS MOU and how the process works operationally;
- to identify whether there is an Operational Single Point of Contact (OSPoC), responsible for ensuring that all day-to-day activity in relation to NABIS is carried out in accordance with the NABIS MOU and how the process works operationally;
- to examine the operational process in existence and determine whether it ensures that crime-related ballistic material coming into force possession and fitting the NABIS criteria is being entered onto the database in a timely and accurate manner and appropriate material is being submitted;
- to assess the force entries on the NABIS database; and
- to assess compliance with timeliness criteria:
 - seven days – all shooting incidents (within previous seven calendar days) where cartridge cases or bullets are recovered from the crime scene; and
 - 28 days – all other submissions, including non-crime items.

Appendix B – NABIS database registry criteria³⁸

Ballistic items that **must** be included on the database registry:

- All firearms (as defined in the Firearms Act 1968) coming into police possession, including all licensed surrendered firearms (excludes air weapons) believed to have been used in crime;
- All guns/imitation firearms, etc that would not normally be placed on the database and which have been used in serious crime, or there is intelligence to suggest that they have been used in serious crime e.g. 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;
- All blank cartridge firing weapons believed to have been used in crime;
- All de-activated weapons believed to have been used in crime; and
- Any items from the lists below, but which have been modified in a way that could possibly change their classification.

Ballistic items that **may** be included on the database registry:

- Any non-crime-related firearm or ammunition that enters police possession.

Ballistic Items that **should not** be recorded on the database registry:

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

³⁸ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales, Appendix C.*

Appendix C – NABIS submission criteria³⁹

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:

- any firearm where the recovery is suspicious;
- any firearm that is suspected of having been used in crime;
- any firearm that has been 'shortened', e.g. sawn-off shotgun;
- any bullet-firing handgun;
- any selective-fire or fully automatic weapon such as sub-machine guns, assault rifles;
- pressure bearing components of any un-certificated firearm (excluding air weapons and shotguns), e.g. barrel, revolver cylinder, receiver;
- any disguised firearm;
- any un-certificated centre-fire 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, air gun or de-activated 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 which is potentially subject to the Firearms (Dangerous Air Weapons) Rules 1969 as amended, or 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 centre-fire cartridge case recovered, unless the area is a recognised firing range;
- any fired bullet or bullet fragment found at the scene of a crime or in suspicious circumstances;
- any shotgun cartridge cases recovered in urban areas;
- any firearm, ammunition or related components flagged as being of interest by the submitting force's Intelligence Bureau.

³⁹ *Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies of England and Wales, Appendix D.*

Appendix D – Summary of database tabs

Incident

The incident tab explains the details of the incident – including the date, location, local reference numbers, operation names, and details of the 'officer in the case'. It allows forces to record information about any gun related incident that has resulted in the recovery of ballistic items (for example, gun, cartridge case and whole rounds).

It is also used to register stolen or lost firearms/ammunition and the recording of incidents in which no ballistic item was recovered, but the incident resulted in injuries or damage and the presence of a firearm can therefore be corroborated.

Incident person

The incident person tab records details of a person connected to the incident, such as suspects, known offenders, victims (actual or intended) or witnesses. Fields on this tab include surname, alias, address, date of birth and a summary of their involvement.

Incident crime group

The crime group tab records information about the involvement of a crime group (or gang) in a firearms incident. This could include the type of group, their territory and the nature of offences that they commit. Information on this tab allows forces to link crime groups to specific incidents.

Ballistic items

There are five types of ballistic items that forces can select under this tab: gun, cartridge case, projectile, whole round or other (e.g. silencers or component parts). Other users at NABIS or other Forensic Service Providers will also update this part of the system where ballistic items are sent for examination.

The set of tabs to be completed will differ depending upon the type of item selected. Some standard tabs appear for every ballistic item i.e. recovery, links, modifications, images and creation reason (i.e. recovered, lost, stolen or inferred).

The reason for creation will dictate whether the movements tab appears and whether users are presented with an examinations or versions sub-tab.

The movements tab is used by some forces to record when a ballistic item is sent to an external party such as NABIS.

The examinations and versions tabs validate the record and publish it to the search pool.

The other tabs can be filled in dependant on the expertise of the user and the information available in relation to that item. These tabs include:

- ID Numbers – serial numbers or military numbers;
- modifications – any changes/conversions/deactivations to firearms or ammunition;
- gun/ammunition/cartridge case/projectile/whole round/other – which of these tabs appear depends on the type of ballistic item that they select and they contain information such as manufacturer and brand;

- recovery – allows forces to detail any points of interest around the recovery of an item e.g. location; and
- images – allows forces to attach a low resolution image to demonstrate where an item is of interest, for example due to its type or modification.

Intelligence

The intelligence tab should be added where intelligence is available which can be linked to an incident or other entry on the database. Forces should not put generic firearms intelligence onto the database that cannot be linked to database entries.

Event

Forces are able to create an event and link this to either an incident or intelligence (e.g. where a firearms incidents occurs at a music concert). This information can be analysed by NABIS to identify cultural and demographic trends based on the people attending such events and help to inform police responses to such events in the future. This element is not currently included in the MOU as a requirement but is covered in training.

Appendix E – Glossary of terms

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ACPO lead	Officer of ACPO rank within each force (or equivalent in other agencies) responsible for ensuring compliance with the NABIS MOU
ACPOS	Association of Chief Police Officers for Scotland
AFO	Authorised Firearms Officer
Ballistic item	A physical item or exhibit suitable for submission to NABIS forensic hub and includes firearms or suspected firearms, fired bullets, fired cartridge cases, ammunition and component parts of firearms and/or ammunition
CS	2-chlorobenzalmalononitrile gas, used as an incapacitant
EMI	Effectiveness Management Information report. Report produced by NABIS for police forces providing quantitative information about the NABIS database records made by the force.
FSP	Forensic Service Provider
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
LCH	Local Clearing House. A place within forces where all ballistic items suitable for submission to NABIS or for inclusion on the database are reviewed and retained.
MOU	<i>Memorandum of Understanding between the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and the Police Forces and Partner Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs) of England and Wales</i>
NABIS	National Ballistic Intelligence Service
NCA	National Crime Agency
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency
OSPoc	Operational Single Point of Contact. An individual responsible for ensuring that all day-to-day activity in relation to NABIS is carried out in accordance with the MOU
PND	Police National Database
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer