



Annual Report

2020-21

"To advance our position as an International Centre of Excellence for forensic ballistics and intelligence to tackle the Criminal Use of Firearms"

NABIS Vision, 2020

Every gun tells a different story... and NABIS is the key to unlocking those stories

Foreword



Welcome to the latest NABIS annual review as we reflect on an extraordinary year for everyone. I am proud to say during the Covid pandemic the team at NABIS has continued to dedicate their expertise to tackling gun crime in a very flexible and professional manner, despite the pressures of much of their work lives being moved away from the

office and placed online. Of course, not all roles can work from home and we maintained an excellent service at our forensic hubs with Covid secure measures to keep staff safe.

Our international work and training continued despite restrictions on travel abroad. We liaised with Western Balkans partners and others to share best practice and work together to prevent the illicit importation of firearms across our borders.

We also had to consider the possible effects of Brexit on our business this year and NABIS continues to play an important role in European work and firearms debates and, although we no longer chair the European Firearms Experts group, we still take an active role.

Closer to home we played an integral part in assisting the Home Office review and subsequent changes around antique firearms legislation, which became law in 2021. This will make it harder for criminals to exploit loopholes.

Gun crime did not stop during the pandemic and police continued to make arrests and seize weapons. The number of exhibits our ballistics experts have examined items has increased from 2,206 in 2020/21 to 2,420 submissions in 2021/22.

We have worked alongside law enforcement to achieve some fantastic results at court this year with gun crime offenders being brought to justice.

During this very busy time we also launched the new NABIS five-year strategy with a pledge to deliver quality expertise into the future and show we are the best at what we do.

To keep up to date with our fantastic work to stay on top of gun crime and respond to emerging threats and trends, please visit our informative new website nabis.police.uk which launched in Spring 2021 or follow us on Twitter @NABIS_UK

I hope you enjoy this year's annual review and would welcome feedback on the document. Please email your comments to nabis@west-midlands.police.uk

Jo Clews
Detective Chief Superintendent
Head of NABIS

A message from Deputy Chief Constable Helen McMillan, NPCC Lead for Criminal Use of Firearms



This is the 14th year of the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) and much work has been done to continue to tackle gun crime, despite the backdrop of the challenges brought to policing by Covid-19. Gun crime has not stopped due to the pandemic, and NABIS has continued to offer police forces the same ballistics and forensics services they have come to expect from NABIS.

NABIS was a key player in the UK's biggest ever law enforcement operation when Operation Venetic, a coordinated effort between the National Crime Agency (NCA) and the police, took down a bespoke, encrypted, global communications service used exclusively by criminals. EncroChat was one of the largest providers of encrypted communications and offered a secure mobile phone instant messaging service. 746 suspects were arrested as part of the investigation, with 77 firearms, including an AK47 assault rifle, sub machine guns, handguns, four grenades, and over 1,800 rounds of ammunition seized.

NABIS plays a vital part in the International fight against the Criminal Use of Firearms, and will continue to support law enforcement agencies.

A message from Assistant Chief Constable Jayne Meir, NABIS Senior Responsible Officer



ACC Meir became NABIS SRO last year. She chairs the NABIS Governance Board which meets twice a year and is the link between the host force (WMP) and NABIS. She ensures NABIS meets the demand to assist forces with their firearms offences, and deliver its vision:

'To advance our position as an International Centre of Excellence for forensic ballistics and intelligence to tackle the Criminal Use of Firearms.'

ACC Meir said: "I am proud of the team's achievements keeping firearms off the streets and the public safe. NABIS are committed to meeting the demand from the changing firearms threat, carrying out the vital work with law enforcement partners, such as the NCA and Border Force, to identify the few individuals who actively import, store, and supply illegal firearms, and to understand the people involved in illegally converting or adapting them."

National Picture

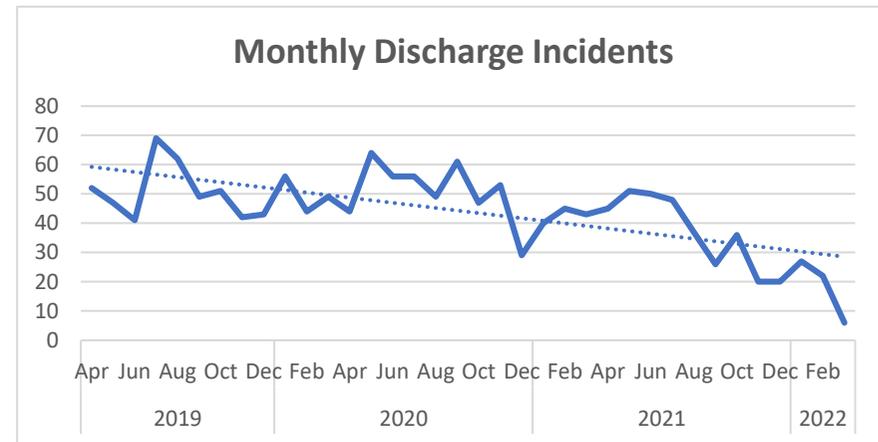
In the UK the criminal use of firearms continues to account for a very small proportion of the overall crime rate, however we know that **the harm caused can be devastating to families**. Firearms are often used to protect the business interests of organised criminals, to settle disputes, or guard other commodities, such as illicit drugs.

In the 2021/22 fiscal year:

- The rate of discharges has **fallen and it could be at the lowest we've seen since 2015**.
- **46 percent** (173) of discharges caused damage to property, similar to previous years, which makes us believe that firearms are used to cause fear and intimidation.
- **34 percent** of firearms discharges resulted in an injury, 8 percent (32) of these were fatalities, similar to previous years.

The national criminal firearms discharge rates appear to be falling. The pandemic and subsequent national lockdowns are thought to be responsible for the very low number of recorded discharges and so we expect to see numbers rising as the pandemic

restrictions ease across the world.



Change in Legislation for Antique Firearms

Last year the government changed the law to introduce a legal definition of antique firearms. The changes are aimed at protecting the public by making it harder for criminals to get their hands on these types of weapons. To date, the introduction of the legislation has not yet impacted on the number of criminal antique firearms recoveries.

DID YOU KNOW? There has been a sharp rise in the number of antique guns being seized from crime scenes in recent years. In 2007 there were four recoveries, which grew to 97 in 2016 and remain at high levels with 69 recovered in 2019. Since 2007, six fatalities have been linked to antique firearms. This last year NABIS worked closely with the Home Office/Government to create new legislation introduced in 2021, which closes Loopholes exploited by criminals, who use antique firearms in violent crime. Seven ammunition types will be removed from the definition of 'antique' (obsolete calibre) firearm, making up to 26,000 guns illegal to own without a firearms licence.



Examples of how NABIS helped two police forces.

Officers were called in April 2020 to reports a man had been shot through his kitchen window. Following an extensive investigation, including analysis from NABIS, five people were linked to the crime, arrested and charged. One was also found to be linked to a firearm recovered some months earlier. They denied their involvement; however, they were all found guilty following a trial, and sentenced to a total of more than 60 years in prison.

Police intelligence suggested a man had imported blank-firing pistols manufactured in Turkey and Italy, from a Spanish website. They can be sold legally on the Continent but are illegal to sell and possess in the UK. A search of his property revealed six handguns, including some which he had converted to fire live rounds in his shed workshop, plus 23 adapted 9mm blank rounds retro-fitted with ball bearings or lead shots. Police also found lengths of steel



Example of a modified Retay G17 with a replacement barrel and painted slide

tubing, a 5kg bag of lead shot. There were also damaged books which he had used as targets to test-fire the weapons.

In interview he said “he converted the pistols as a personal technical challenge and had no intention to sell viable firearms to criminals”.



But he went on to admit four counts of possessing prohibited weapons, two of possessing banned ammunition, and possessing a sawn-off shotgun which was also found. The firearms and ammunitions that were found were examined by NABIS. He was jailed for two-and-a-half years. Police did not consider this was a sufficient sentence for someone who had imported banned guns into the country and was trying to convert them into live-firing

handguns. Officers initiated an approach to the Court of Appeal and judges agreed it was too lenient and ordered his sentence be doubled to five years.

Intelligence Gathered

NABIS continues to **develop products in conjunction with the NCA and Border Force** identifying **national trends** and increasing the **understanding of complex threats**, enabling forces and national agencies to operationally impact on these threats

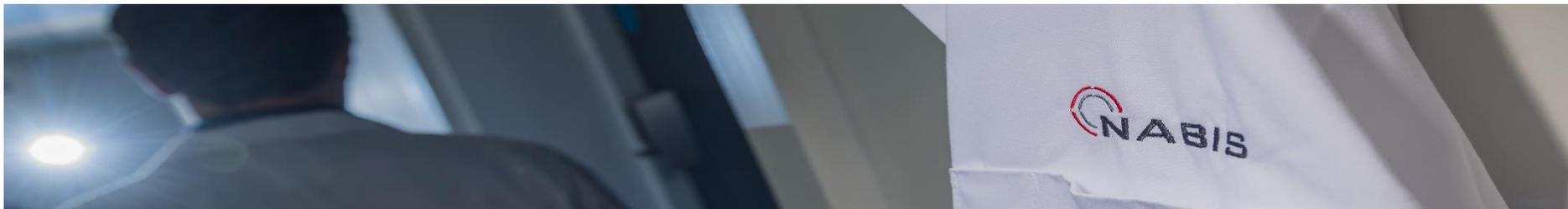
3D Printed Firearms and component parts:

There have been a small number of recent recoveries of firearms that have been printed. Either whole or their component parts (such as frames) have been printed and used with genuine firearm parts to act as a composite weapon. NABIS continue to monitor this development

Converted firearms continue to be a major threat in terms of availability and use in the UK.

Converted Blank firing Skorpion Sub Machine Guns:

The Czech Small Arms (CSA) Skorpion model VZ61 is originally manufactured as a 9mm PAK blank firer however they are being illegally converted to fire 9mm Short / .380 Auto Calibre by way of fitting a replacement barrel. These can be fired in semi or fully automatic modes.



Media Activity

Covid restrictions continued to impact the ability of NABIS to support filming with our teams, however BLAST films were able to film the second series of the BBC **'Forensics – the Real CSI'** in our **Birmingham based Forensic Ballistics hub**. The latest series features cases from West Midlands Police, and BLAST were keen



to find out more about ballistics and what we do to assist forces.

The Technical Lead for forensics has once again been filmed by **Red Sauce** for a documentary series **'Task Force'** which will feature NABISs involvement with **Operation Billboard** along with another episode for **Operation Pageant** with Northampton Police. There is not yet a broadcast date for this series.

Why do we spend time with TV companies... well these programmes bring NABIS to life and raise public awareness of the part the team has in tackling the criminal use of firearms to help keep the UK communities safe

NPCC National Firearms Surrender – May 2022

The NPCC National Firearms Surrender took place in May, coordinated by NABIS and delivered by UK Forces and relevant agencies. Whilst it is the opportunity for the public to surrender firearms, ammunition and component parts, the focus was on recent legislation changes as well a tailored, more targeted approach to legacy items such as war trophies and inherited firearms.



NABIS on the International Stage

European collaboration via **Europol** and **Interpol** is an essential NABIS function, as many of the **firearms that impact upon the UK** are moved through Europe with some originating from the Western Balkans region. Intelligence sharing and coordination of law enforcement activity across Europe is important for the prevention of harm through firearm discharges in every part of the UK.

NABIS have been involved in the **European Multidisciplinary Platform Against Criminal Threats (EMPACT)** since its beginning in 2014, **leading on two specific actions** approved by the EU Commission for 2020 relating to the **creation of National Firearms Focal Points and the sharing of Ballistic Data between countries.**

The European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI) is the scientific body that makes all strategic decisions regarding forensic science in Europe. NABIS takes part in ENFSI proficiency tests and attends its annual conference.

NABIS is an active member of a number of European groups such as the European Firearms Supply Operations Group (EFSOG) and the European Firearms Expert Group (EFE) which brings together UK law enforcement with their European equivalents for operational and intelligence sharing purposes

NABIS has been supporting the Forensic and Intelligence policing functions across six Western Balkans countries for a number of years and continues to do so



Financial Summary

How are we funded?

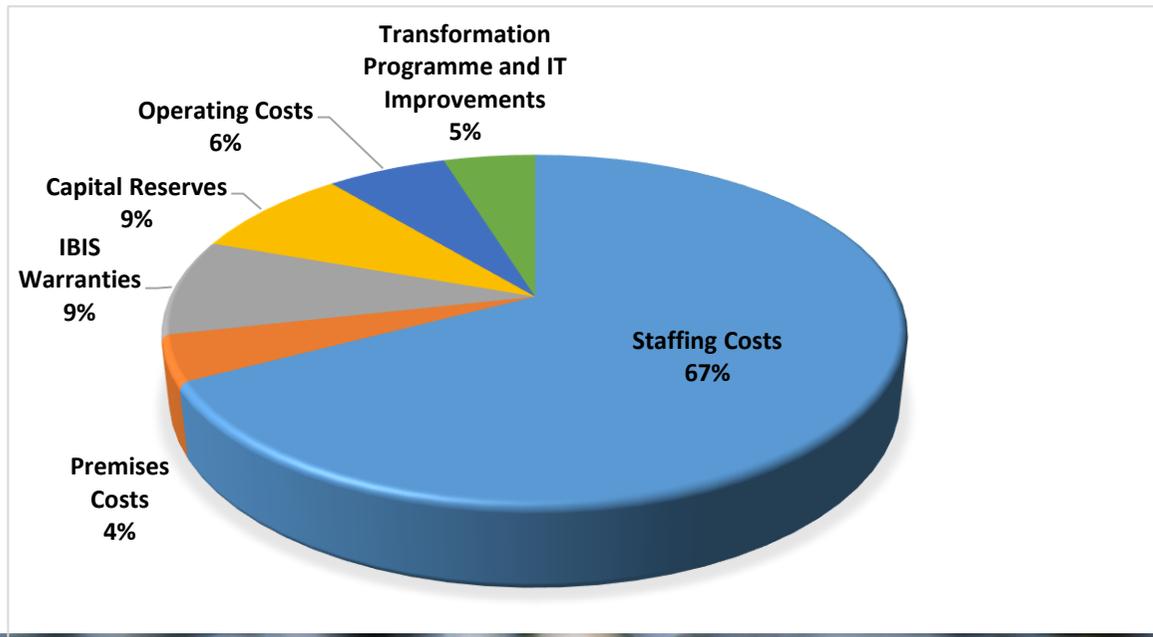
Funding for NABIS comes from the **National Police Chiefs' Council**, made up of all the Chief Constables of 43 forces in England and Wales. Additional funds come from the National Crime Agency, Police Service Northern Ireland and Scottish Police Authority. This

money pays for the forensic Ballistics and Intelligence services provided by NABIS to UK policing.

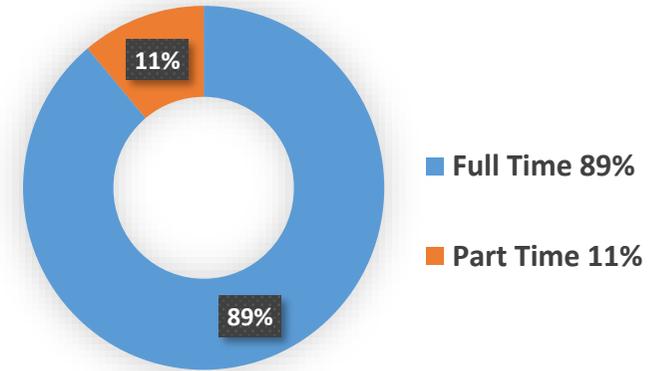
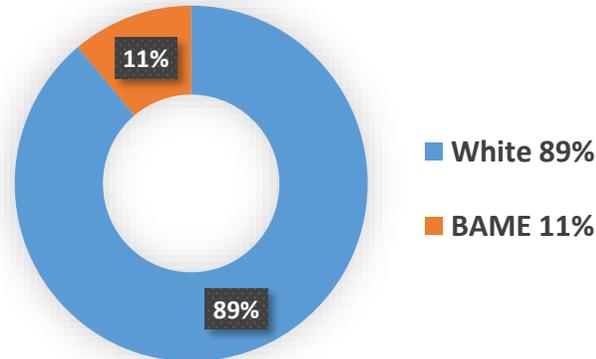
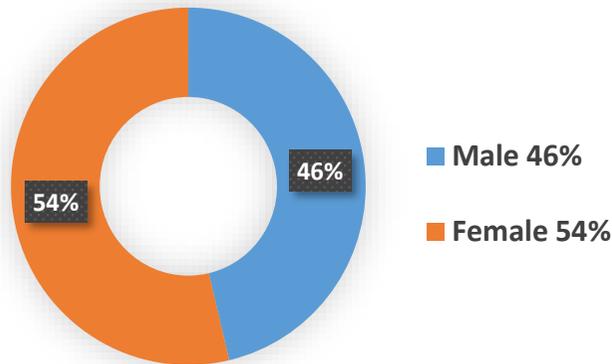
In addition to this funding, the Home Office supports some of our work with the Western Balkans.

How do we spend our budget?

Staffing **continues to represent our highest costs** but People are our **greatest asset** and the expertise held across NABIS reflects the investment in this valuable service



HEAD COUNT 54



OUR PEOPLE MATTER

At NABIS we care about the teams' mental health and recognise the impact that Covid has had on wellbeing, so six team members attended a Mental Health First Aid at work course to help them feel confident to spot the signs of poor mental health in colleagues and the community and offer practical help and support.

OUR PEOPLE MATTER

Over the last year NABIS Staff have held a bake sale for Mind, joined in with Christmas Jumper day for Save the Children, completed sponsored walks for Cancer Research and held a dress down day for Comic Relief.

Our Forensic staff work hard at our NABIS Hubs, and they were finding their work clothes were getting oily and ruined. They raised this at the staff forum. After a survey of all NABIS staff it was clear the Hub Staff needed a uniform. We have recently agreed to provide them with trousers, NABIS branded polo shirts and a fleece to wear along with new branded lab coats. We hope to supply the uniform later in the year.