

Report To:	Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Committee	Date:	18 November 2021
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	P&F/06/21/HS
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Subject:	Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Committee Update Report		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update the Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Committee on current and emerging issues relating to Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Services.
- 1.2 The report includes an update on recent consultations, an update on the Independent Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies in Policing and provides a detailed update from the Scottish Police Authority on current, developing and emerging issues.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 The report provides an opportunity for the Committee to be made aware of national initiatives, reviews, and consultations and, where appropriate, to inform Members of potential future agenda items relating to Police and Fire and Rescue matters.
- 2.2 This report is intended to draw these elements together with a view to informing and shaping future meeting agendas as appropriate and raising awareness of emerging issues.
- 2.3 This report provides updates for the following:
 - Local Police Plan Consultation
 - Body Worn Video (BWV) Consultation
 - National Gaelic Language Plan Consultation
 - Independent Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies in Policing
 - SPA Engagement Strategy
 - SFRS Board

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the Committee notes the current and emerging national issues relating to Police and Fire & Rescue matters.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The development of Local Police Plans for 2020-23 is being jointly progressed by the Scottish Police Authority (SPA), Police Scotland and CoSLA. The first stage consultation was open from 27th June to 13th August 2021 during the period of Committee recess. Officers submitted a response online as detailed in Appendix I. Follow up discussion sessions are planned to build on the feedback received through the survey, and these sessions present a further opportunity for any concerns or issues to be raised and proposed solutions identified, as well as for best practice examples to be identified and shared.
- 4.2 The first survey on Body Worn Video (BWV) was undertaken in February 2021 to inform the introduction of Body Worn Video for armed police officers. More information, including a summary of the feedback received, can be found on Police Scotland's Engagement Hub. The second survey ran from 1st June to 31st August 2021 and Elected Members were invited to submit responses in support of a corporate response. Officers submitted an online response and this is detailed in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 The Police Scotland consultation on their draft Gaelic Language Plan 2021-26 ran from 23rd July to 5th September 2021 and sought comment on the proposed commitments of Police Scotland in support of the National Gaelic Language Plan. Elected Members were invited to submit responses in support of a corporate response and Officers submitted an online response and this is detailed in Appendix 3.

5.0 Independent Advisory Group on Emerging Technologies in Policing

- 5.1 The group was established following the work of the Justice Sub-Committee on Policing in exploring issues relating to the potential introduction of cyber kiosks, facial recognition, body-worn video cameras and remote piloted aircraft systems.
- 5.2 The work of the group is being progressed via four work streams, with each producing separate reports and recommendations: -
- Legal framework and ethical standards
 - Evidence and scientific standards
 - Consultation and community engagement
 - Oversight, scrutiny, and review
- 5.3 Elected Members will be advised of developments as and when the Independent Advisory Group publish the outcome of their research

6.0 The Scottish Police Authority

6.1 SPA Board

The SPA met on the 29th September 2021 and considered several updates. This included –

- 5 Year Financial Plan
- Capital Strategy
- Procurement Strategy
- Forensic Services Strategy
- Gaelic Language Plan
- 26th Conference of the Parties (COP 26)

The next meeting is due to take place on the 24th November 2021.

6.2 SPA Engagement Plan

On 17th September 2021 CoSLA provided details of the SPA Engagement Plan to Police Scrutiny Board Conveners. The Plan sets out how the SPA will engage with Local Authorities across 2021-23 and sets out an engagement structure, introduces regional based meetings and regular strategic discussions with the SPA Chair and CEO, the CoSLA Presidential Team and Community Well Being Spokesperson, CoSLA CEO and Chair of SOLACE to discuss work programmes and related issues. Thematic meetings with local scrutiny conveners will be introduced and will focus on policing issues of significant public interest.

6.2.1 A response was provided by the Convener of the Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee welcoming the engagement structure and regional based meetings and requesting additional information on the fit of the strategic discussions within the overall engagement and reporting structure. Similarly, clarity has been requested on the level of influence local scrutiny conveners will have in setting localised policing issues for the thematic meetings. Communication between the Convener of the Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee, and CoSLA regarding the SPA Engagement Plan is ongoing.

6.3 SPA CoSLA Update

On 28th September 2021 the SPA wrote to all Local Authority Police Scrutiny Conveners with an update from the CoSLA Leaders meeting of 17th August. This update included confirmation that the number of trained officers carrying Taser will increase from 500 to 2000 over the next three years. The SPA are satisfied that the governance and oversight processes surrounding the discharge of Taser in Scotland are significant and robust, with the Police and Investigations Review Commissioner (PIRC) investigating every incident involving police use of a Taser in Scotland. An SPA fact sheet on Taser was provided and a copy is attached at Appendix 4 for information purposes.

6.3.1 The update confirmed that Police Scotland will be equipping its armed police officers with BWV in advance of COP26 in November. This is supported by the SPA and in coming weeks, a Code of Practice will be published and the SPA will see finalised Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessments and Data Protection Impact Assessments. The SPA have also sought assurance around the development of a Children's Rights Impact Assessment for BWV as the national approach develops.

6.3.2 The issue of 101 call handling performance has been discussed at recent SPA meetings. The performance of call handling teams following the implementation of the revised call handling approach through the Contact Assessment Model was noted. However, it was highlighted that there remains a concerning number of 101 non-emergency calls which are being abandoned for reasons which are not entirely clear. Steps are being taken by Police Scotland to enhance understanding of this situation and make any service improvements required to support callers. The Convener of the Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee, had requested further information from the SPA on the issue of call waiting times, responses to increasing call volumes and abandoned calls.

6.3.3 The SPA Chair has provided a written response to the Convener outlining the position of Police Scotland and their actions in respect of call handling and response times. The SPA Chair has given a commitment of continued performance monitoring of Police Scotland's improvement activity in the period ahead.

6.3.4 The SPA has commenced planning with Police Scotland and CoSLA, as well as other key stakeholders, on a project which aims to better understand the link between markedly lower confidence levels in policing in areas of deprivation. This work is in the very early stage of development and will be delivered across the 2022-24 period and the Local Authority Police Scrutiny Conveners will be kept abreast of developments.

6.3.5 The SPA, in partnership with Police Scotland and the Scottish Institute for Policing Research (SIPR) have jointly funded five projects which will support the police to improve engagement with seldom heard communities, communities which are historically under-represented and may be less likely to engage for a variety of reasons, including race, religion, sexuality, disability, and age, as well as communities isolated through geography or economic disadvantage. These five projects will receive a share of £62,000 to support innovation and learning, maintaining and developing our focus on policing in the public interest. They will focus on engagement with young people in deprived communities; engagement with refugees, migrants and those from BAME communities; understanding intersectionality; and the development of practical toolkits which support accountability mechanisms. All projects will be concluded by September 2022.

7.0 **The Scottish Fire & Rescue Service Board**

7.1 The meeting of SFRS Board was held on the 26th August 2021 and considered several updates, including:-

- Annual Procurement Report
- Long Term Strategic Vision
- Combined Risk and Performance Report

The next SFRS Board meeting took place on 28th October 2021.

7.2 Audit & Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) commenced on the 8th of July 2021 and the ARAC was invited to:-

- Note the Overview Dashboard Report
- Scrutinise the Audit Scotland action plan
- Scrutinise the content of the Assessing the Effectiveness of Inspection Activity report

The next meeting was held on the 14th October 2021.

7.3 The Change Committee considered a proposal for the post implementation review report on The New Watch Duty System Phase One & Two on the 5th of August 2021.

The next meeting was held on the 4th of November 2021.

7.4 The People Committee: 9th September 2021 considered reports on:-

- Performance and Risk Report Quarter 4 2020/21
- Workplace Culture3
- Employee Relations
- Leadership and Development
- Independent Audit/Inspection Action Plan
- Partnership Working
- Strategic Risk Register
- Forward Planning

The next meeting is scheduled for the 2nd December 2021.

7.5 The Convener of the Local Police & Fire Scrutiny Committee, has written to Ash Denham MSP, Minister for Community Safety, regarding the implementation of the new fire and smoke alarm standard which will apply to all homes in Scotland from February 2022. In particular, concerns were raised about the financial burden the requirement for new alarms would place on financially vulnerable households. The Convener has asked whether or not additional resources would be allocated to local authority areas and, if so, how much; What research has taken place to identify potential demand and inform the allocation of resources; and, what measures would be put in place to ensure that vulnerable households are supported and the risk of rogue traders is mitigated. An update will be provided to this Committee upon receipt of a response.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

Finance

8.1 There are no financial implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report £000	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact £000	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

8.2 Legal

In respect of section 10 of this report, section 45(5) of the Police & Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 notes; A local commander must provide to the local authority such— (a)reports on the carrying out of police functions in its area (including by reference to any local policing plan in force for the area), (b) statistical information on complaints made about the Police Service in, or the policing of, its area, and (c) other information about the policing of its area, as the local authority may reasonably require.

8.3 Human Resources

There are no Human Resources issues associated with this report.

8.4 Equalities

None at this time, although recognition will be given to the wider and associate equalities agenda.

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO - This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required.

Fairer Scotland Duty

IF this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision –

Has there been an active consideration of how this reports recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES – A written statement showing how this report’s recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage has been completed.
X	NO

Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals
X	NO

8.5 Repopulation

There are no direct repopulation issues associated with this report.

9.0 CONSULTATIONS

9.1 There were no consultations required outwith those noted in the report.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1
- Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Committee Update report (March 2021)
 - Local Police and Fire Scrutiny Committee Update report (May 2021)

Consultation Response – Review of Local Police Plans

Theme	Question	Answer format
Setting local priorities, objectives and agreeing the Plan	<p>1. Does Police Scotland share the findings and information used to determine local priorities and objectives for policing with you / your Local Authority?</p> <p>Yes</p>	Yes / No / not sure
	<p>2. How effectively do Police Scotland engage with you on changing local priorities?</p>	Scale 1-5 (not at all to very)
	<p>4. with supporting info provided in respect of our decision to give a 4 rather than a 5</p> <p>3. Are there any further comments you would like to make on setting local priorities?</p>	Open text
	<p>Police Scotland are an integral partner of our Community Safety Partnership and this allows an understanding at Officer level of changing local priorities and the CSP structure facilitates upward reporting of such changes to the Inverclyde Alliance, relevant Committee and Scrutiny Board. It is important that the decision making process for setting local priorities is supported by a strong evidential basis which facilitates monitoring and reporting.</p>	Open text
	<p>4. Please provide detail of any additional activities you feel Police Scotland could take to enhance how Local Authorities are engaged and involved in the priority setting process, and in the development of the overall LPP content?</p>	Open text
	<p>Through nomination to the Police & Fire Scrutiny Board many Elected Members have a high level of engagement and involvement in the monitoring process. There is scope for increasing engagement and involvement in the priority setting process through a full Council Member briefing and this could be supported by Officers through prior discussion and development of evidence based priorities.</p>	
	<p>5. What would be most supportive in enabling Local Authorities to give their feedback and input in to the priority setting process?</p>	Open text
	<p>At Officer level, engagement and briefings through existing structures, such as the Community Safety Partnership, provides an opportunity for feedback and input into the processes for setting priorities. Direct engagement with Elected Members in a forum/briefing model would allow for open discussion on relevant aspect of local policing and could enhance awareness and understanding of the priority setting process.</p>	

Consultation Response – Review of Local Police Plans

Theme	Question	Answer format
	<p>Direct engagement with Elected Members in a forum/briefing model would allow for open discussion on relevant aspect of local policing and could enhance awareness and understanding of the priority setting process.</p> <p>6. How can Local Authorities support Police Scotland with this e.g. dedicated planning and community engagement officers to help gather and coordinate feedback?</p>	Open text
	<p>Local Authorities can provide support for Senior Officers in engaging with all areas of the LA and can offer access to community engagement via existing structures and engagement processes.</p> <p>7. How does the local authority / CPP provide evidence to Police Scotland to inform the development of LPPs?</p>	Open text
	<p>Evidence is provided on the basis of current LA priorities, which themselves are evidenced from a mixture of data and community engagement</p> <p>8. In what ways can this be enhanced going forward? For example, in providing feedback to Police Scotland, adjusting timescales for reviewing and developing Plans, providing intelligence and evidence obtained by the Local Authority or Community Planning Partnership?</p>	Open text
	<p>Direct engagement with Senior Officers and Elected Members with appropriate timescales and assessment procedures for considering intelligence and evidence could enhance the development of LPPs.</p> <p>9. In your view, could the process to develop the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) in your area be enhanced to more effectively embed the role of policing?</p>	Yes / No / not sure
Wider integration of the LPP and performance measurement	<p>Policing is an integral element of the LOIP, making a significant contribution to the outputs of the LOIP. Greater embedding of Policing within the LOIP process would increase visibility in the CPP process and increase the two-way exchange of information with communities.</p> <p>10. In your view, could the process to develop key local strategies and plans (such as the community safety strategy) in your area be enhanced to more effectively embed the role of policing?</p>	‘if yes, how?’
		Yes/No / not sure

Consultation Response – Review of Local Police Plans

Theme	Question	Answer format
	<p>Yes. Perhaps even more so than the LOIP, Policing is an integral element of the Community Safety Strategy, which is the key strategy area for identification and delivery of prioritised areas of work. Enhanced embedding of the role of policing could increase the action based approach to community safety work.</p>	'if yes, how?'
	<p>11. How effectively do Police Scotland demonstrate the benefit of access to national services to local communities?</p>	Scale 1-5 (not at all to very)
	<p>3. A score of 3 was given as there is scope for improvement and a potential overreliance on social media</p>	
	<p>12. How effectively do Police Scotland engage at local level in the review of LPPs</p>	Scale 1-5 (not at all to very)
	<p>3. A score of 3 was given as direct community engagement on LPP development could be improved.</p>	
	<p>13. In what ways could the reviewing of a Local Policing Plan (prior to committing to refresh/replace) be enhanced going forward?</p>	Open text
	<p>The review could be enhanced by a full outturn/output/outcome report on the previous LPP to demonstrate successes, the need for ongoing action, long-term planning and areas for improvement.</p>	
	<p>14. To what extent does Police Scotland measure progress against delivering the objectives set out in Local Police Plans?</p>	Scale 1-5 (not at all to very)
	<p>The mechanisms utilised for measuring progress against delivery of objectives are not clear.</p>	
	<p>15. How well do performance measures used help to assess whether implementation of the Local Police Plan is making a positive difference locally, and making a contribution to delivery of the LOIP?</p>	Open text
	<p>The mechanisms utilised for measuring progress against delivery of objectives are not clear.</p>	
	<p>16. In your view, does the current performance reporting provided by Police Scotland enable your role to undertake effective scrutiny and promote accountability?</p>	Yes / No / not sure
		If no, what would enable

Consultation Response – Review of Local Police Plans

Theme	Question	Answer format
	<p>Not sure. The current model facilitates reporting, but not scrutiny. The reporting process to LAs is Police led and can often be thematic based. Whilst this is helpful, it would be more relevant to have a standardised reporting structure which includes all relevant local policing elements against comparable timescales e.g. quarterly, annually, five year averages and for this to be supplemented with requested thematic based focusses.</p> <p>17. Would the development and introduction of national practical guidance / standards on local scrutiny be helpful, with the guidance/standards aligned to the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and the Community Empowerment Act (2015)?</p> <p>Yes and Yes</p>	<p>this?</p>
		<p>Yes / No / not sure</p> <p>Would your local authority like to be involved in development?</p>

Consultation Response – Body Worn Video

1. I trust Police Scotland and have confidence in the way they work.

What do you think about this?

I agree - X

I am not sure

I do not agree

2. Would you feel safer knowing that your communication with Police Scotland is being recorded by a body worn camera?

A lot safer - X

A bit safer

I would feel the same

I would not feel safe

3. I would trust Police Scotland more if they are recording communication with the public.

What do you think about this?

I agree - X

I am not sure

I do not agree

4. I would be more confident about the way Police Scotland work if they are recording communication with the public.

What do you think about this?

I agree - X

I am not sure

I do not agree

5. There should be guidance for when Body Worn Video should or should not be used.

What do you think about this?

I agree - X

I am not sure

I do not agree

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this? Write it here:

Transparency on the circumstances for the use or non-use of the use of BWV is essential both for public confidence in the system and accountability within the system.

6. Police officers, staff and special constables should decide when Body Worn Video is used or not used.

What do you think about this?

I agree

I am not sure

I do not agree - X

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this? Write it here:

Transparency on the circumstances for the use or non-use of the use of BWV is essential both for public confidence in the system and accountability within the system.

7. People should be told before Body Worn Video is used.

What do you think about this?

I agree - X

I am not sure

I do not agree

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this? Write it here:

Intentionally blank

8. Police Officers, staff and special constables should wear Body Worn Video cameras at all times when they are working.

What do you think about this?

I agree

I am not sure - X

I do not agree

Is there anything else you want to tell us about this? Write it here:

The use of BWV outwith a public facing and public contact role would significantly increase the personal data held in respect of identifiable individuals. Whilst this would increase public transparency it would also see a significant increase of personal data held and careful consideration requires to be given to the management of this additional data in respect of SAR requests.

9. Do you have any other worries about Body Worn Video?
Write your answer here:

Intentionally blank

Consultation Response - Gaelic Language Plan

1 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Police Scotland should establish a Gaelic language plan development and implementation group with representation from across the organisation?

Agree

2 What would you suggest this group could do to improve our use of Gaelic language in the future?

Gaelic should be an option offered in all communications with the public

3 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Police Scotland should increase community messaging and liaison through the medium of Gaelic? Select an option:

Agree

4 What are your suggestions about the methods of communication we can use to increase the use of Gaelic in our interactions with the public?

Gaelic should be an option offered in all communications with the public

5 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Police Scotland should seek opportunities to increase the visibility of Gaelic nationally through procurement and branding?

Agree

6 What are your suggestions about other ways we could use our policies to support the use of Gaelic language in Scotland?

Policies should support the use of Gaelic on the same basis as other spoken languages in Scotland Promoting a positive image of Gaelic

7 To what extent do you agree or disagree that Police Scotland should integrate Gaelic into a range of campaigns?

Agree

8 What are your suggestions about any future campaigns, with a focus on safety and wellbeing, which may benefit from using Gaelic language?

Any community focused campaigns on safety and wellbeing should be as inclusive as possible.

9 Is there anything you think we have missed in this draft version of our Gaelic Language Plan that you think is important?

No comment submitted

10 Anything else that you would like to tell us?

No comment submitted

Fact Sheet

TASERS

What are Tasers?

Taser is the brand name of the Conducted Energy Devices that police forces across the UK use. Tasers can be used in a number of ways to de-escalate a potentially violent or dangerous situation without excessive force.

It was a NASA researcher, Jack Cover, who in 1974 first patented the device designed to immobilise a living target without serious trauma or injury. Sometimes referred to as Conducted Energy Devices (CEDs), a Taser is designed to provide frontline officers with an ability to restrain potentially dangerous individuals without the use of excessive force.

By 1976 the first Taser device had been manufactured and by the mid-2000s they had become common-place throughout many police forces across the world.



Axon Taser device

In the UK a Conducted Energy Device/Taser is classified as a 'prohibited weapon' in Section 5 of

Purpose

The Strategic Police Plan commits to the provision of Policing for a safe, protected and resilient Scotland. This requires designing and maintaining services which meet rising and evolving demands in a constantly changing environment. To meet these demands now and in the future Scotland's police service must adapt and proportionately adopt the necessary technologies which will enable them to protect the safety and wellbeing of our communities (as outlined in the Policing Principles - Section 32 of Police and Fire Reform Act 2012).

This series of public focused and user-friendly factsheets has been developed to provide an overview of the benefits of emerging technology and upcoming developments within policing, the policies that will govern them, and the ethical, privacy and human rights implications.

the Firearms Act 1968 and it is an offence for any member of the public to possess or use such a weapon. Police officers whilst acting in their capacity as such, are exempt from the requirements of the legislation.

Tasers have been used in the UK by police forces since 2004¹. Research suggests that when a Taser is drawn by frontline officers there is an 85% compliance rate, with no need to discharge the device².

Why are Tasers used in policing?

When confronting potentially dangerous or violent individuals, frontline police officers have a duty to minimise the risk of injury or death to the individual themselves, the immediate community, and other officers.

Use-of-force options can vary from verbal de-escalation methods to physical restraints or holds. If warranted, a baton may be used to protect against or restrain a potentially harmful individual.

Any use of force by an officer must be the minimum amount necessary to accomplish the lawful objective concerned³.

It is recognised that a baton may cause injury to a potentially harmful individual, another member of the public or police officer. Instead of

using a baton to control situations where the threat of violence is high, technologies such as a Taser may be used instead.



Taser device in officer belt

A Taser device can be used by an officer as a deterrent by pointing a laser beam at a dangerous individual (known as "red-dotting"). This is often enough to de-escalate a situation. On the occasion when red-dotting does not resolve an issue, the Taser can be discharged with one of two functions: 'fired' or 'drive stun'. When a Taser is fired, this means that the trigger is squeezed and the cartridge is deployed from a distance.

By contrast, drive stun is when the Taser is applied by hand directly to somebody in close quarters who is displaying serious threats of violence. Both approaches can be used to control a situation whilst minimising injury and harm. Tasers are one of several tactical options that can be used when dealing with an incident that has the potential for conflict.

¹ <https://www.humberside.police.uk/taser>

² Kroll, M.W., Brave, M.A., Pratt, H.M.O. et al. Benefits, Risks, and Myths of TASER® Handheld Electrical Weapons. Hum Factors

Mech Eng Def Saf 3, 7 (2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s41314-019-0021-9>

³ <https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/fxhkdzem/use-of-force-sop.pdf>

In Police Scotland, the carrying of Tasers is limited to that of specially trained police officers to ensure that its utilisation is proportionate, ethical, transparent, and only used as a method of harm reduction when absolutely necessary.

Police Scotland implementation and use of the technology

In 2018 Police Scotland introduced a new cadre of Specially Trained Officers (STO) who are personally qualified to use a Taser device⁴. There are approximately 520 STOs currently working within Police Scotland. In order to qualify to use a Taser, officers must undergo rigorous training (the Police Scotland CED User Course totals 24 hours, exceeding the minimum UK requirement of 18 hours contact time).



Officers in Taser training

STOs must also take part in yearly refresher training in order to continue to be issued with a Taser device.

⁴ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/312dstfc/item-6-4-tasers.pdf>

⁵

<https://library.college.police.uk/docs/appref/>

Since their introduction in June 2018, STOs have been deployed to 1,355 incidents. During this time period, Tasers have been used on 782 instances, although they have only been discharged 90 times in this period (11.5% discharge rate per use).

The University of the West of Scotland conducted a study which assessed the extended use of Tasers for STOs. The research project evaluated the first six months of Taser deployment in the latter half of 2018. The results of the study confirmed that both the public and officers were in general support of the controlled use of Tasers in Police Scotland.

Police Scotland's Taser Tactical Group maintains an overview and scrutiny of the STOs. Its aims include identifying best practice and looking for opportunities to share learning. Police Scotland also has a Taser Monitoring Group which provides strategic oversight of Taser use by frontline officers.

What safeguards are in place?

Police Scotland follows the College of Policing's Code of Practice on Armed Policing and Police use of Less Lethal Weapons⁵. This guides and informs how officers throughout the country

CCS207-CCS0120853800-001-Code-of-Practice-on-Armed-Policing.pdf

utilise Taser devices in certain scenarios.

Every time a Taser is used by a Police Scotland officer, a Use of Force report is completed to document the need for its use and enable auditing of Taser deployment. In Scotland, Tasers have been used by Armed Policing Unit since 2015. In the past six years, Tasers were discharged 25 times by the Armed Policing Unit⁶.

Assurance for citizens

Police officers are required to operate in dangerous and challenging situations when carrying out their role to protect the public. Access to STOs carrying Tasers helps to manage these risks and protect the public.

Compared to other uses of force such as PAVA spray (a safer alternative to pepper spray), baton use, or firearms; Tasers are least likely to cause long-term harm. Taser devices are mainly used to control individuals in situations where the risk of violence is high. This is done to mitigate any further harm (i.e. injury or death) to that individual, as well as protect bystanders and police officers.

Analysis undertaken by Police Scotland shows that Tasers significantly reduce officer and subject injury rate compared to conventional police defence tools:

- Baton used - 28% officer injury rate, 52% subject injury rate
- PAVA Spray used - 24% officer injury rate, 16% subject injury rate
- Taser used - 0.2% officer injury rate, 0.6% subject injury rate (2 officers and 3 subjects injured from the 620 times that Taser has been drawn)⁷

Despite the clear benefits of STOs carrying Tasers, it is recognised that there are risks associated with Taser use and these must be carefully controlled. There is some evidence to suggest that Tasers can trigger the 'weapons effect'⁸ – the psychological phenomenon in which the visual cue of a weapon in public-police interactions can lead to the increased aggression from both parties.

It is also important to recognise that in some countries there have been concerning reports of Taser over-use in relation to vulnerable and minority groups (such people with mental health issues, problem drug users, and ethnic minorities⁹).

It is vital that Taser use in Scotland is limited to specially trained police

⁶ <https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/t31gtqqx/armed-policing-quarterly-report-q4-2020-21.pdf>

⁷ <https://www.spa.police.uk/spa-media/3l2dstfc/item-6-4-tasers.pdf>

⁸ Ariel B, Lawes D, Weinborn C, Henry R, Chen K, Brants Sabo H. (2019). The "Less-Than-Lethal Weapons Effect"—Introducing

TASERs to Routine Police Operations in England and Wales: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*. 2019;46(2):280-300.

⁹ <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/uk-public-should-resist-drum-beat-calls-all-police-carry-taser>

officers; is proportionate, ethical, transparent, and is utilised only as a method of harm reduction when necessary.

In order to ensure ethical and proportionate use of Tasers the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC) investigate all Taser discharges as a matter of course. PIRC supported the operational introduction of Tasers by Police Scotland within their annual report 2018-19.

They affirmed that “in the vast majority of incidents where Tasers were used by STOs, it has allowed them to resolve incidents swiftly, increasing officer and public safety, which is very reassuring.

Moreover, our findings show a large number of occasions where officers have used Tasers in order to limit or prevent self-harming by people suffering from mental health issues, and in some cases have potentially prevented deaths.”

Looking forward

Police Scotland aim to increase the number of officers specially trained and with access to Tasers from 500 to 2000 over the next 3 years. This means that through a greater geographic distribution of Tasers more local police teams will be able to use Taser as a tactical option when police are called to control situations where the threat of violence is high.

There is currently no intention to expand beyond 2000 trained officers.

Keeping up to date

To keep up to date with our work, please keep an eye on the Scottish Police Authority’s [website](#) where you can find papers and watch livestream committee discussions, and follow us on Twitter:

@ScotPolAuth @policescotland

28 September 2021