

PE1947/G: Address Scotland's culture of youth violence

Petitioner written submission, 27 November 2024

You will be aware of my background as a community activist and the No1seems2care help site of which I am the founder.

I mention this as this is an important factor in the conclusion which I have reached regarding the subject of my petition.

I also must stress that I am not dependent on any Government funding or any other funding, nor do I have any political loyalties or ambitions.

So, my conclusions are completely free from funding and political influences, indeed my conclusions are based on what I see and hear from people on the ground who are directly and indirectly impacted by a culture of youth violence and crime.

In addition, my conclusions are based on life experience as I was born and bred in the north of Glasgow and I have spent 25 years as a community activist.

The culture of youth violence and crime is aggravated by the lack of consequences, deterrents and punishment.

The lack of consequences, deterrents and punishment is not in place to protect young people as it has been suggested. It's not in place because of the cost factor involved with enforcing consequences and punishment.

The suggestion that education is the way forward is simply unworkable and dangerous as many kids are not attending school regularly, in part because of bullying and violence.

Many schools are falling behind in terms of educational attainment and safety for a number of reasons, but again it's mostly down to cutbacks and a lack of funding.

The Committee has heard evidence from academics based on reported crime and other statistics.

I tried to contact the police this month regarding the potential for a significant public order incident.

I have a SPOC (Specific Point Of Contact) with Police Scotland. I also have the email address of the Area Commander, the Community Inspector and Community Sgts. I also have internal phone numbers.

I called 101 and the automated voice service advised me not to continue unless I required the police to attend at that point in time. This was once the advice given for 999 calls.

Despite all of my efforts and contacts, I couldn't get through to anyone who could help until later that afternoon at which point a senior police officer contacted me.

If this is so difficult for me, this must be a significant deterrent for members of the public. Indeed, I often hear this. Even if people do get through, there is no guarantee that the police will call out or even investigate the crime. Indeed, Police Scotland has stated that they are unlikely to investigate lower-level crimes which they believe won't have a higher level of detection.

In addition to this, even if the police do investigate and charge people with crimes, the justice system can issue NFAs (No Further Action) or the punishment doesn't make the exercise worthwhile for the victims.

Victims end up spending time giving statements to the police and precognition agents. Then they can wait over a year before having to attend a court on a number of occasions just to see the accused getting a small fine, a tag or community service for relatively serious offences.

I have heard many times that the justice process, in terms of the journey and experience, is worse than the punishment itself for both the victims and the accused.

No matter how you look at this, cutbacks in every field of service including the justice system (courts are doing deals to save money and time, policing cutbacks, access to reporting crimes more difficult, education within schools struggling due to cutbacks) are lowering the bar in terms of public confidence and safety.

I ask the Committee to use their own common sense and life experience.

We know what happens if we touch a burning fire as we have all been burnt to some level or seen the damage fire can cause. So, we know the consequences of fire, this knowledge is a deterrent. This is how consequences and deterrents work.

Does any of the Committee really believe that taking away or reducing consequences and deterrents from young people will help them?

Does any of the Committee really believe that cutbacks to policing and the justice system are really going to reduce crime and make people feel safer?

Does any of the Committee really feel that cutbacks to education are really going to help our youth in the longer term?

To conclude, the culture of youth violence and crime is aggravated by the lack of consequence, deterrents and, ultimately, punishment. All of these are lacking due to the cost behind them.

The decisions made now will impact this generation and the generations which follow. I would have more respect for the Government, no matter what party is in power, if they simply admitted that a lack of funding was inevitably going to lower the bar in every field of service and that is going to place our youth at risk and the public in more danger.

The answer is simple, more funding is required for the relevant services. The reality is that this funding is significant and unlikely to be found.

I write this with the utmost respect for the Committee. I know the Committee has spent a lot of time and effort considering this petition. I write this with a heavy heart.