



Chief Constable

Audrey Nicoll MSP
Convener, Criminal Justice Committee

By Email: justice.committee@parliament.scot

4 October 2024

Dear Convener

Following on from my evidence session at the Criminal Justice Committee on 11 September 2024, and in reply to the questions asked by the Committee, please find the following responses.

Police Scotland to provide the date when body worn videos cameras will be issued to police officers.

The introduction of Body Worn Video is a priority for Police Scotland, and we are working to introduce it as soon as possible. The decision on how and when to rollout body-worn video is an operational one with oversight provided by the Scottish Police Authority.

Together with my senior colleagues an update was provided to the SPA Board on 22 August, assuring the Authority that progress is being driven at pace given the complexities of the programme. They highlighted their expectation that the devices will begin to be deployed on roll-out from Spring 2025 for the first tranche of over 10,000 officers and staff. This will be followed by a coordinated, sequenced roll-out thereafter for all other relevant officers and staff. As you are aware, I informed the Criminal Justice Committee on 11 September that I would update the Committee on specific timings when I am able to do so.

Police Scotland to provide information on their experience of the increase in violent behaviour of under-18s and any limitations on dealing with this.

Violence is a cross-cutting issue that can take many different forms and have a profound and lasting effect on individuals, families, and communities. It disrupts social cohesion, hinders economic progress, and perpetuates cycles of trauma and retaliation.

Police Scotland is committed to ensuring that everyone lives free from violence. We recognise this aspiration requires a multifaceted approach across a wide range of statutory and third sector partners. Police Scotland is actively committed to collaboration, applying place-based interventions, policy and legislation, education and awareness, and support for victims and perpetrators.

Children and Young People are an important part of the communities Police Scotland serve. Understanding the data, trends and insights into violence involving children and young people supports our ability to make a positive difference.

There were 13,695 violent crimes recorded last year where a young person was identified as an accused, the majority (63.2%) were common assaults and a further 31.7% were for threatening or abusive behaviour. These two crime types account for 19 out of 20 violent crimes where a young person has been identified as in conflict with the law.

Youth violence and antisocial behaviour are complex issues shaped by a variety of social, psychological, and environmental factors. Addressing these issues requires an understanding of the underlying causes, broader societal issues, and individual challenges that young people may face.

In addressing this challenge Police Scotland has focussed on children and young people through a prevention lens, working with partners to support early intervention with an approach that seeks to recognise and mitigate these identified societal impacts. For example, the Public Health Approach to Learning (PHAL) aims to improve health and wellbeing and reduce attainment inequality among school-aged children and young people through collaborative action to support schools in Scotland.

Police Scotland's Scottish Violence Reduction Unit are in the process of creating animations relating to Stop and Search, incorporating one specifically for children and young people to demystify the process, and one for police officers to ensure a more trauma informed practice is adopted. These resources aim to further improve relationships with children and young people and police officers.

In relation to the limitations on dealing with increased violent behaviour by under-18s, Police Scotland plays a vital role in addressing youth violence but is only one aspect of a system wide approach. Police Scotland continues to collaborate and to be prevention focussed while enforcing the law and tackling offenders where this is proportionate and necessary.

Some elements such as arrest, interview and police custody are unique to policing and we have been making progress in these areas and adjusting to new legislation. Custody is rightly not deemed to be a suitable place for children and the starting position for all children in conflict with the law is that they should not be brought into custody unless in extreme circumstances and where it is absolutely necessary in order to progress the investigation and to safeguard the child, victim or public.

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Significant scrutiny is placed on the arrest of a child and where a child is to be held in custody this requires a Child Detention Certificate to be authorised by a Custody Review Inspector.

There is no specific legislation, policy or guidance that would transform youth violence. We must work in collaboration through a system wide approach that reduces poverty, instances of trauma, and improves attainment. As criminal justice and community partners we must collectively promote school and community-based programmes that keep young people from harm, while supporting families and caregivers and providing effective mental health services to young people.

I trust the above provides sufficient response to the Committee's questions.

Your sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Farrell', written in a cursive style.

Jo Farrell
Chief Constable