



POLICE BILL TACKLES KNIFE CRIME

The Police, Public Order and Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill will support the police in creating safer, daily lives for the people of Scotland, said Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson.

The bill includes measures aimed at tackling knife crime, such as doubling the maximum penalty for carrying a knife in public from two to four years.

Justice Minister Cathy Jamieson said:

“Scotland now has more than 16,000 police officers – record numbers, supported by record investment. This legislation will play an important part in ensuring that those police officers have the tools they need, and the right support, to help create safer, daily lives for the people of Scotland.

“The Bill will give the police a range of new powers for use in their day to day work such as the unconditional power of arrest if they suspect someone has been carrying a knife, and authorisation to take fingerprints out on the beat.”


She added:

“Scotland’s communities are already receiving a high standard of service from the police. This Bill will encourage the police to build on that work and support officers in doing what they do best – preventing and clearing up crime. It will also help them face the challenges of policing in a modern Scotland so that we can create safer, stronger communities for all.”

The Violence Reduction Unit has been consulted on the legislative changes.

Detective Chief Superintendent John Carnochan, head of Strathclyde Police’s Violence Reduction Unit, said:

“It’s important that people fully understand the reality of the current situation in Scotland with regards to the criminal use of knives. The police, the medical professionals and victim agencies, see the tragic consequences of violence on a daily basis. We are of the strong belief that we must act now to reduce levels of violence involving knives.



“There has already been a great deal of debate and coverage surrounding the proposals to tackle knife crime. However, I was stunned by some of the comments claiming the proposals are ‘farcical’. People have to realise that we have to take action now to make inroads into tackling the blade culture in Scotland.

“I have repeatedly said that a single solution will not solve this embedded problem, however, we have to make a start. It frustrates me when people simply say “that will never work, so let’s not bother”. It’s this type of attitude which has allowed the problem to fester over many decades.

“We have to be brave in the way we go about tackling knife crime, and legislation has a positive part to play.

“Clearly legislation won’t stop every murder, attempted murder or serious assault from taking place. However, if we can stop one family burying a teenage son and another family from visiting their young son in Barlinnie for the next 10 years, then the Scottish Executive will have made a significant difference.


“We have got to get away from the belief that if we cannot eradicate a problem completely, then there’s no point doing anything about it.

“There is no denying that kitchen knives are used in some murders - but most of these take place within the home and are the result of a domestic altercation.

“People who go out looking for conflict or who carry a weapon for fear or fashion, tend to favour the locking knife. The majority of attacks in the west of Scotland involve locking knives or a similar weapon. These can be easily concealed – it’s very rare for police to come across a youth with a steak knife taken from the kitchen drawer shoved down his trousers.

“I think it’s vitally important that we consider these proposals in context. There are many weapons which are legitimately used say for hunting and fishing – that’s why we are not advocating an outright ban. However, I believe we have to regulate possession and use.

“Access to and use of alcohol, drugs, fireworks, cigarettes and firearms are already governed and restricted by legislation. To take



a domestic flight nowadays, you need identification, we build cars that far exceed the speed limit, yet we enforce strict speed limits to ensure safety on our roads.

“I believe we need to introduce the same controls for knives. We want to limit the access which young men in particular have to non-domestic knives, such as locking knives.

“We’d like to see the introduction of some kind of identification system to prove you are over 18 years if you are buying a certain kind of knife. We would also like to see knives and weapons being withdrawn from view in shop windows, and we would like non-domestic knives to be licensed.

“I also believe that anyone convicted of using or carrying a blade should be banned from having any kind of knife in a public place. If caught, they should not be able to plead a lawful excuse of defence. I think the time is also right to consider locally relevant by-laws to ban all forms, types and lengths of knives at all times from city centres or areas with gang problems.

“Each and every action that contributes in any way to a reduction in violence must be welcomed. There is no doubt that legislation, in conjunction with a whole raft of other measures, can save lives and make the streets of Scotland safer for everyone. Those who think there is no legitimacy in this goal are out of touch and belong in another time – not 21st Century Scotland.”