

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>SPA Policing Performance Committee</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>9 March 2021</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Video Conference</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>Police Scotland Taser Capability</b>
<b>Presented By</b>	<b>ACC Mark Williams, Operational Support</b>
<b>Recommendation to Members</b>	<b>For Discussion</b>
<b>Appendix Attached</b>	<b>No</b>

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this briefing paper is to provide the Policing Performance Committee with an update on Police Scotland's Taser Capability since the introduction of Taser to non-firearms officers, known as Specially Trained Officers (STOs).

Members are invite to discuss the contents of this paper.

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1** On 27 May 2017, the Strategic Leadership Board approved an initial proposal to train and deploy 520 Specially Trained Officers (STO's) across Scotland. This proposal was approved at the SPA Board on 19 December 2017.
- 1.2** A small project team was established, which remains in place, to recruit, train and equip STO's and provide ongoing policy and compliance support in line with recommendations from the College of Policing. The first STO's were deployed on 1 June 2018 and deployed from 32 Response policing hubs across Scotland.
- 1.3** At present Police Scotland has a cadre of approximately 520 STO's. The current number of deployable STO's for Police Scotland equates to around 2% of establishment, this compares with the UK average of 20%, although Forces with an establishment over 2000 sit around 15%.
- 1.4** In 2018 the UWS secured joint funding from Scottish Institute of Police Research (SIPR) and Police Scotland to evaluate the introduction of the extended use of Tasers over the initial six months of deployment. Overall the report provides a positive picture of the STO implementation and deployment. In addition it is very positive regarding the concept of STO deployment and evidences equally positive public and staff perception of wider Taser availability.
- 1.5** In November 2019 approval was received from the Force Executive to recruit and train a further 240 STO's to stabilise the existing cadre as numbers had fallen as a result of officers lost to promotion, retirement and self/enforced withdrawal. One of the reasons for low deployment and attrition rates was the limited location of existing deployment hubs as a result approval was given for an additional 37 to be created across 13 Local Policing Divisions. The recruitment and training of new STO's and the installation of the new hubs is complete and the cadre is now stable at around 520 officers which deployment rates at around 90%.
- 1.6** A Taser Tactical Group maintains an overview and scrutiny of the cadre, this includes identifying best practice and shared learning opportunities. The Taser Monitoring Group chaired ACC Williams provides strategic overview.

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- 1.7** In March 2020, a 12 month Taser Review Project was initiated to review the current STO deployment model and to make recommendations as to a future sustainable STO deployment model.
- 1.8** The Your Safety Matters Group, is undertaking an end-to-end strategic review of all violence and abuse towards officers and staff. One of the aims of this group is to ensure all personnel are well prepared in terms of procedures, guidance and equipment. The deployment of STO's aligns directly to this work and the Executive commitment to protect our officers and staff.
- 1.9** A Taser Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment (STRA) was produced in November 2020. The information and data was drawn from various sources and identified the current threat and risk faced by conventional Police officers. The Taser STRA has unfortunately confirmed increases across key areas;
- assaults on police officers
  - officer injury
  - crimes involving bladed/pointed instruments and weapons
  - crimes of violence
  - incidents involving a disturbance
  - required use of force by police
  - incidents attended and Taser use by STO's.
- 1.10** In summary Police officers are required to operate in an increasingly dangerous and challenging environment. Access to STO's across frontline response policing roles helps manage this risk and protect the public.
- 1.11** Of particular note when considering Taser as a tactical option is the officer and subject injury rates. Analysis from 2018, provides the following:
- Baton used - 28% officer injury rate, 52% subject injury rate
  - PAVA 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)

## 2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

The table below presents current STO establishment.

Trained Officers	586
Temporary Withdrawn (TW)	54
Non-Deployable Instructors	17
Deployable Officers*	<b>515</b>

\*indicates total number of STO's who are regularly deployed operationally in that capacity

When split across the 13 local policing divisions and across a 24/7 shift pattern the current cadre is equivalent to 4 STO's per shift per division.

**2.1** On 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021, Police Scotland Strategic Leadership Board considered and thereafter approved the following recommendations presented as a result of the STO review;

- PS should continue to recruit and train additional STO's to meet current and future demands. It is recommended that a 3 year strategy be introduced to increase the STO establishment by 500 per year. This would be subject to yearly review in line with the strategic risk assessment.
- To increase the number of Taser Hubs to ensure the device can be accessed regardless of location or geography and reduce officer travel time to and from hubs.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total Div. Hubs</b>
2020/21	69
2021/22	84
2022/23	97
2023/24	110

- PS should extend STO training to Specialist Departments and allow existing STO's within relevant departments (such as road policing) to carry the device.

**2.2** Since their introduction on 1 June 2018, STO's have been deployed to 1355 incidents. During this time period, STO's have self-deployed Taser at 169 incidents whereby the officer has taken the decision to draw their Taser without having been deployed as a STO. The

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device has been used\* on 782 occasions, including 90 discharges (11.5% discharge rate per use)

\*Taser use is defined as either draw, aim, red-dot, ARC (showing electrical pulses) or discharge (firing)

- 2.3 Deployment data indicates that the devices have been very effective at convincing violent and vulnerable subjects to comply with officers. Almost two out of every three subjects have become compliant following the use of Taser. 89% of incidents where STO's have deployed Taser are safely resolved when the Taser is either, drawn, aimed, red dotted or arced.
- 2.4 In addition to PS data, a number of national reports, including NPCC reports, have been published that promote Taser being a safer tactical option than existing PPE.
- 2.5 The Taser device has been used very effectively to help keep people safe. As well as protecting people from violent individuals, the devices have been used to protect a significant number of vulnerable people from harm. A number of these incidents have received praise from the PIRC regarding Taser having potentially saved life.
- 2.6 PIRC also supported the PS introduction of Taser within their annual report 2018-19 stating that *"In the vast majority of incidents where Tasers were used by Specially Trained Officers, 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."*
- 2.7 Where the device is discharged the incident is referred to PIRC for their consideration and review.
- 2.8 **Next Steps:** It is clear that there may be a significant public and stakeholder interest in an increase in STO's. Members are invited to discuss the report, note the initial findings and provide any comment.

### 3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The total estimated cost to uplift the Taser cadre to 1,684 is £3.1m over the next 3 financial years with the majority of the costs occurring in 2023-24 due to the volume of trained Officers. Once

the uplift of 1,684 officers is achieved, the on-going/re-occurring cost per financial year will be an estimated £0.84m.

**4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** There are personnel implications. To fully resource the proposed number of Taser hubs will require a number of existing officers to volunteer for the required training and personal development required to become STO. In addition the cadre will require the dedicated training team to ensure the number of STO's is maintained and also provided with refresher training.

**5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** The review recognised political and public debate over Taser use in Scotland and the rest of the UK.

**6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

**6.1** There are reputational risks if the changes proposed are not carefully considered and communicated. There needs to be clear a governance route and relevant engagement.

**7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** There are clear social implications for improved protection of our communities and officers from violence.

**8. COMMUNITY IMPACT**

**8.1** There is evident positive community impact for improved protection of our communities and officers from violence

**9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

**9.1** There are no Equality, Diversity or Human Rights implications that have been reported since the introduction of STO's.

**10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS**

**10.1** There are no Environmental and Sustainability implications.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are invited to discuss and note the contents of this report.