



Meeting	Policing Performance Committee
Date	6 December 2023
Location	Video Conference
Title of Paper	Operational use of TASER Update
Presented By	ACC Gary Ritchie
Recommendation to Members	For Discussion
Appendix Attached	Appendix A - Specially Trained Officers Divisional Breakdown Appendix B - Location of Taser Hubs

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to update members on the progress of the extended roll out of Taser and uplift in Specially Trained Officers.

Members are requested to discuss the information contained within this report.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In January 2021, Senior Leadership Board approved a new operating model for Specially Trained Officers (STOs) across Scotland which would see the number of STOs be increased from the then current cadre of around 500 to around 2000 over a 3 year period. This is due to be completed by April 2024. This model was presented to the SPA Policing Performance Committee on 1st September 2021 and approved.

2. FURTHER DETAIL ON THE REPORT TOPIC

Current STO Cadre

- 2.1 Police Scotland currently has 1508 STOs. A full breakdown of STO numbers per division can be found at APPENDIX A.
- 2.2 Since the approval of the new STO operating model, 1133 new STOs have been trained and deployed. Due to officers moving posts and other factors, 472 STOs have withdrawn from the specialism. Plans are in place to train a further 500 STOs in the financial year 2023/24, training of which commenced in August 2023. A Taser Strategic Threat and Risk Assessment has been produced for 2022/23 with the 2023/24 assessment currently ongoing.
- 2.3 STOs now deploy from 113 response hubs across Scotland. The location of these hubs can be found at APPENDIX B. A further 23 hubs are due to be installed in financial year 2023/24.

STO Deployment Data

- 2.4 From their introduction in June 2018, STOs have deployed at 8438 incidents. This has resulted in 2344 uses (864 draws, 1148 aimed/red dot, 49 Arced and 283 discharges of the device). This is a 12.1% discharge rate per use. For clarity purposes, the term 'use' refers to draw, pointed, red-dot, arced and actual discharge.
- 2.5 In total, 38.9% of overall uses are "passive" uses. This is when the device has been drawn as a precaution but never aimed at a subject.
- 2.6 In terms of injuries, 20 injuries have been sustained by subjects from 283 Taser discharges. This is a 7.1% injury rate. These injuries involved superficial cuts and grazing and fractures to areas including a rib and two elbows due to unsupported falls. There have

been no Taser discharges which have caused heart failure or other cardiac issues to any persons.

Officer Safety

- 2.7 Since the introduction of STOs, 10 Officers have sustained an injury when Taser has been discharged. This is a 3.5% injury rate. This is significantly lower than when other tactical options such as baton/PAVA or physical restraint are used. Taser has a higher effectiveness rate than baton/PAVA.

Communications and Engagement

- 2.8 To support the uplift and roll out, a local and national Communications and Engagement plan was implemented. Local Policing Commanders engage with scrutiny committees and provide further detail as required around the impact of this model in their local communities. Nationally, a number of engagement and information sessions have been delivered with a number of interested parties and advocacy groups resulting in excellent feedback, which has further informed our EqHRIA.
- 2.9 A number of Advocacy groups agreed to take part in a National Taser Advisory Group (NTAG) where they review, advise and provide valuable oversight and interaction with Police Scotland and our use of Taser.
- 2.10 The key function of the Group is to act as a 'critical friend' providing advice on all aspects of Taser use by Police Scotland with regard to its impact across the wider community wellbeing and how any potential impact may be mitigated.
- 2.11 To date, a number of meetings of the NTAG have taken place which has proved valuable in informing the STO EqHRIA and provided extremely useful feedback to better inform policies and procedures and training.

Taser use on persons under 18

- 2.12 Since the introduction of Taser into Police Scotland in 2018 the device has been used (drawn or pointed) on 122 occasions and discharged on 9 occasions against those under the age of 18 years. It should be noted that although the device has been used 131 times (122 uses and 9 discharges) on persons under 18, 53 (40%) of these uses were draws only, where the device was not pointed at

the child. All 9 of these discharges were reported to the Police Investigations and Review Commissioner (PIRC). 7 of these reports resulted as 'non- investigation' as the use of the device was deemed by PIRC to be appropriate and proportionate.

The other 2 discharge referrals (one involving an 11 year old and one involving a 15 year old) are currently being investigated by PIRC.

2.13 Taser use on under 18's accounts for 5.6% of all uses and 3.2% of all discharges. Taser use on persons aged 18+ years' accounts for 94.4% of all uses and 96.8% of all discharges.

2.14 Police Scotland has no specific policy on the use of Taser involving children under the age of 18 years. Any use of Taser must meet Police Scotland's criteria for the use of force in that it must be proportionate, legal, accountable, absolutely necessary and ethical. Each use is assessed on the particular circumstances of the incident and threat being faced by the officer or public. It would be impossible during a violent and volatile situation where life could be at risk, for officers to distinguish between someone who is, for example, 16 or 18 years of age. It is vital that the threat and risk posed is the primary consideration.

2.15 The Taser X2 has been subject of rigorous independent medical testing. It is acknowledged that there is an increased risk to children and person's with a smaller stature and these increased risks are thoroughly covered within Taser training.

Ethnicity

2.16 The following table demonstrates Taser use by ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Percentage of overall uses	Ethnicity Proportions (Census 2011)
White Scottish / British	95.1%	91.8%
Any other white background	1.74%	4.2%
Asian / Pakistani / Any other Asian background	1.07%	2.7%
African / Any other black background	1.07%	1%

Any other ethnic group	0.71%	0.3%
Not stated	0.31%	N/A

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are financial implications with this paper.
- 3.2 For financial year 2023/2024 to train an additional 600 STOs and refresh the current cadre is estimated to cost £1,066,370 revenue and £115K capital. Direction on the position of the STO establishment post April 2024 is awaited.

4. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no personnel implications with this paper.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

6. REPUTATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Taser has been successfully deployed across Scotland by STOs since 2018 without reputational implications for Police Scotland.

7. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no social implications.

8. COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 8.1 The community implications are being addressed through the delivery of communication and engagement plan, engagement sessions and the implementation of the Taser Advisory Group.

9. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment (EQHRIA) is in place and will be updated on a regular basis to ensure the positions of advocacy groups and the Taser Advisory Group are noted, included and where possible mitigated.

10. ENVIRONMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no environmental implications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to discuss the information contained within this report.

Appendix A – Specially Trained Officers Divisional Breakdown

Division	Number of STOs
A – North East	84
C – Forth Valley	75
Contact Command Control	6
Corporate Services	15
Criminal Justice Services	5
D - Tayside	75
E – Edinburgh City	164
G – Greater Glasgow	225
J – The Lothians and Scottish Borders	123
K – Renfrewshire and Inverclyde	78
L – Argyll and West Dunbartonshire	58
N – Highland and Islands	111
Operational Support	77
P - Fife	67
Q - Lanarkshire	138
Specialist Crime	16
U - Ayrshire	120
V – Dumfries and Galloway	71
Total	1508

Appendix B - Location of Taser Hubs

