Justice Committee

Offensive Behaviour at Football and Threatening Communications (Repeal) (Scotland) Bill

Written submission from Joanne McReynolds

1. Do you agree with the proposal in the Bill to repeal the 2012 Act? What are your reasons for coming to this view?

   Yes I totally agree. I feel the Act is totally unnecessary.

2. Did you support the original legislation?

   No – why should football fans be different than any other sporting fan?

3. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute offensive behaviour related to football which leads to public disorder? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 1 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

   Yes of course. There are laws like breach of the peace - these were used prior to the Act.

4. Do you have a view on the focus of section 1 of the 2012 Act, which criminalises behaviour surrounding watching, attending or travelling to or from football matches, which may not be criminalised in other settings?

   How can a law affect people who are simply watching a football match. Fans travel from all over sometimes staying overnight/weekends and can fall victim to this law with many not aware of the implications of it.

5. Do you consider that other existing provisions of criminal law are sufficient to prosecute threats made with the intent of causing a person or persons fear or alarm or inciting religious hatred? If so, could you specify the criminal law provisions? Or does repeal of section 6 risk creating a gap in the criminal law?

   Yes. There are other laws which could be used.

6. Do you have a view on the proposed transitional arrangements in the Bill: that there should be no further convictions for section 1 and 6 offences from the date on which the repeal of those offences takes effect; and that the police will cease issuing fixed penalty notices at least from the point at which the Bill is passed?

   This law should be scrapped immediately as can be seen by the public rejection to it. It singles out football fans. I was charged under this law. I have never been
in trouble in my life, a clean criminal record. This period from my arrest to the final court case has had detrimental effect on me and my family. I travelled back and forth to Scotland over an extensive period of time having to leave my family at home worrying. The expense of these trips was ridiculous. This period caused extreme emotional and financial stress to me.

The money spent policing this act could be put to budgets which are more in need of the money – education or health.

7. To what extent do you consider that the 2012 Act has assisted in tackling sectarianism?

I would not know if there has been any change to tackling sectarianism in Scotland as this law seems to have no clear lines as to why people are being arrested/charged.

Joanne McReynolds
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