

Petitioner submission of 28 February 2024

PE1947/E: Address Scotland's culture of youth violence

I watched the two academics giving their evidence to the Committee about youth violence and crime and as the petitioner I feel compelled to respond.

Firstly, can I stress that I mean no disrespect whatsoever towards the academics. I'm simply giving my honest response to the testimony they gave.

When I heard their evidence and their conclusions, I actually asked myself "is it me?"

This immediately gave me the feeling of "deja vu" as I recalled a disturbing chapter of my life which, in part, is well documented in the national media and books.

Years ago, I found myself raising serious concerns about a very serious situation. The police took a firm stance that there was no evidence and no concerns. The local authority took the same stance, including all of its departments. The majority of the local politicians either took the same stance or went completely silent. The media took the stance that they had to go with the official narrative from all of the above agencies and organisations. Indeed, the local authority's press office engaged in a campaign to discredit me by telling reporters that I was just a "bampot". This is important and I will come back to this.

At this point I remember thinking "is it me".

I could see a situation which involved serious criminality and the safety of children but all the agencies, organisations and officials with a responsibility, with a duty of care, were taking a different stance, they were saying the exact opposite.

My home was the subject of six firebomb attacks for raising concerns, yet I was being told that there was nothing to be concerned about. That's how blatant this was.

In 2006 there was a triple gangland shooting in broad daylight and sadly a fatality. This was the tipping point when the agencies, organisations

and local authority's positions were no longer tenable, this was the point where they could no longer claim that day was night, black was white and wrong was right.

In 2007 I completely vindicated and was formerly named in Scottish Parliament and commended for my efforts by MSPs, one said thank god for the "bampots".

I wish I could say that this made me feel better, but people had died, people had been injured, lives had been destroyed and a community had been damaged. So, I felt nothing apart from disappointment and disillusion in the decision made by those in positions of trust with a duty of care.

In reality, I believe, many of them knew what was going on but it was easier, safer and cheaper for them to ignore, discredit and try to silence the person raising the serious concerns than it was to deal with the serious concerns.

I also believe that when a narrative is formed and accepted by agencies and organisations - it then becomes difficult for them to change their direction as they caught on the tracks of the narrative they accepted.

I fear this situation is happening again with the current policy and guidance on youth violence and crime.

When I heard the two academics giving their evidence, I honestly couldn't relate to any of it. Indeed, it flies in the face of everything I'm seeing and hearing on the ground.

I am the founder of the No1seems2care help group which has over 107,000 followers and reaches between 1 million and 2 million people even 28 days. The page often reaches higher numbers. I feel I have a relatively good understanding of what's going on and how many people feel.

I understand that the academics were talking about reported crime and I believe they accepted that many crimes are not getting reported. But I struggle to understand how crime can be accurately measured if it's not being reported.

It's more difficult than ever to report a crime,

- a) there are fewer police in all areas of policing

- b) police stations are closing early or closing down completely
- c) there is often a waiting time when contacting the 101 call center
- d) even when you do get through and report, there is no guarantee that the police are going to call out
- e) even if the police investigate and charge someone, there is no guarantee that this will ever go to court
- f) even if the case does go to court, it's often a long process - I attended a court case with a victim four different times.
- g) even if there is a conviction the punishment is sometimes not worth the hassle the victims have to go through.

None of this could be described as encouraging people to report crimes. As some say "what's the point?"

Indeed, Abbie who is the face of this petition after she was brutally attacked has now become the subject of a hate campaign for going public and speaking out.

Some of the Committee met Abbie and her mother Angela in Milton. But now the hate campaign against Abbie has reached the point where her mum has decided to pack up and move to a different location. This means relocating Abbie and her brothers and sisters to a new location just to keep her safe. This is what happens when you speak out. This is why many people are not speaking out or reporting crimes.

So, I believe it's safe to say that reported crime must be at an all time low. Therefore, any statistics used by academics should be considered as statistics based on a lack of accurate data.

It is more difficult than ever to report a crime, which results in crime dropping and people feeling safer?

Does this sound right? Does this make sense? Does this ring true?

If you accept this as accurate, then it follows that the additional police officer, the additional police stations, the better access to the police and more prosecutions have actually been the cause of higher crime.

I suggest that this is a nonsense and if it continues law and order will crumble and the next generation is going to suffer. We all need discipline, deterrents and consequences. Without them there will be chaos, without them we are damaging our younger generation, we are damaging their future.

I contacted Bob Doris MSP with examples of incidents occurring in one week within half a mile radius of my home:

- busses couldn't reach the Milton bus terminus as youths were attacking the buses. The busses had to stop and drop people off on the outskirts of Milton and the police had to attend.
- a young girl was found injured on the street near the bus terminus.
- a young male was attacked by youths and kicked and stamped on. This was videoed and circulated. The video was sent to me, it was disturbing to watch.
- there was a public protest in the community with over 150 local people taking to the streets and a police officer was injured.

This is just a fraction of what's going on.

This is the reality.