

## Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1947](#): Address Scotland's culture of youth violence, lodged by Alex O'Kane

### Background

The [petition](#) seeks action to “address the disturbing culture of youth violence in Scotland”. It notes that the petitioner is the founder of the [No1seems2care](#) help group based in Glasgow, and that:

“In recent months I have received dozens of videos, images and first-hand accounts which describe a disturbing culture of youth violence in Glasgow city centre.”

### Scottish Violence Reduction Unit

The [Scottish Violence Reduction Unit](#) (SVRU), located within Police Scotland, includes people with a range of experience. It aims to provide a centre of expertise in tackling violence. Its website states that:

“Working in partnership with Police Scotland and the Scottish Government, the SVRU aims to prevent violence wherever it's found from the streets, to our classrooms, homes and workplaces.

The SVRU adopted a public health approach which treats violence as a disease. We seek to diagnose and analyse the root causes of violence in Scotland, then develop and evaluate solutions which can be scaled-up across the country.”

In 2021, the Scottish Government published a report produced by the SVRU in collaboration with the Government's Justice Analytical Services – [What Works to Prevent Youth Violence: A Summary of the Evidence](#). It provides a summary of data on levels of violence (see pages 16 to 18). This includes consideration of young people as both victims and perpetrators of violence. In relation to the effectiveness of approaches to reducing violence, the report states:

“From the evidence reviewed above it can be concluded that available interventions can prevent youth violence. Specifically, school and

education-based approaches are effective in doing so, and dating violence prevention programmes, family-focused interventions, mentoring, and community-based coalitions have shown promise within this context.” (page 46)

## **Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration**

Reporters employed by the [Scottish Children’s Reporter Administration](#) (SCRA) receive referrals for children and young people who may require compulsory measures of supervision. This can be on welfare as well as offence grounds. Reporters take decisions on whether they should be referred to Children’s Hearings.

In 2022, the SCRA published a [report on research looking at the background and offending of children aged 12 to 15 years](#).

## **Scottish Government**

Ongoing work aimed at preventing youth violence includes [No Knives, Better Lives](#) (a collaboration between the Scottish Government and YouthLink Scotland). The website notes:

“No Knives, Better Lives (NKBL) is a Scottish national programme that aims to deter young people from anti-social behaviour and carrying knives. We work in partnership with young people and practitioners to understand and address the drivers of youth violence in our community.”

In 2015, the Scottish Government published its [youth justice strategy covering the period up to 2020](#). It stated that:

“We take a child-centred, preventative approach focused on the following outcomes:

- o helping ensure communities are safe from crime and disorder
- o improving life chances for children and young people involved in or at risk of offending
- o enabling all children and young people to be confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens”.

(page 2)

Progress made under the strategy is outlined in a [report](#) published in 2021.

Also in 2021, the Scottish Government published [A Rights-Respecting Approach to Justice for Children and Young People](#). Building on the above strategy, it sets out a vision under which:

“Children, young people and their families are supported at an early stage through early intervention and preventative approaches.” (page 7)

And where:

“Support and information for victims is enhanced with work undertaken to ensure that victims are appropriately protected irrespective of the age of the person who has caused the harm or the system that deals with them.” (page 7)

**Frazer McCallum**  
**Senior Researcher**  
**14/07/22**

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

Published by the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe), an office of the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, EH99 1SP