



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Superintendent Gerry Corrigan  
Police Scotland

Via email only

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP  
Tel: 0131 348-5224  
Calls via RNID Typetalk:  
18001 0131 348-5224  
Email: HSCS.committee@Parliament.Scot

20 March 2024

Dear Superintendent Corrigan,

**Health, Social Care and Sport Committee Stage 1 scrutiny: Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill**

I am writing following your evidence to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee on Tuesday, 5 March 2024, as part of the Committee's Stage 1 scrutiny of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) (Scotland) Bill.

**Official Report and recordings of the session**

- The official report of the session is available on the [Committee's website](#).
- The recording of the session is available on [Scottish Parliament TV](#).

Following that session, the Committee has further considered the issue of operational management of the offences in the Bill, particularly in relation to silent prayer.

In this context, I would be grateful if you could set out in writing to what extent and in what circumstances (if at all) an individual or group of individuals engaged in silent prayer might be judged by the police to be committing an offence under the terms of the Bill. It would also be helpful if you are able to set out how you would expect officers to approach policing such cases within a safe access zone.

During your evidence, you noted that "in their report to the Procurator Fiscal Service, the police officer will probably need to describe the picture that you have illustrated—the overall circumstances, the people's location, their demeanour, how they are standing, whether there are any other signs or placards, and so on. It is about painting a picture of what the people are actually doing. I do not think that we could go down the road of asking people what they are thinking or what their thoughts are. That feels really uncomfortable. Even asking them why they are there at that point in time would probably, from a defence point of

view, mean that we are beginning to question them and trying to complete the crime, which is also fraught with difficulties. It is getting into the realms of interviewing people at the location without offering them legal advice or cautioning them, and there are some difficulties with that.”

To aid Members’ understanding, it would be useful if you could outline the processes that would be undertaken by officers to ascertain whether an individual or group’s behaviour constitutes an offence in a safe access zone, including the types of dialogue to be used in those situations.

### **Deadline for response**

To enable the Committee to continue to progress its Stage 1 scrutiny of the Bill in a timely manner, I would request that you provide this information to the Committee **no later than 5pm on Tuesday, 26 March 2024.**

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "CHaughey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned to the left of a vertical line.

Clare Haughey MSP  
Convener, Health, Social Care and Sport Committee