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David Linden MSP
Convener
Criminal Justice Committee
Scottish Parliament

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4 November 2026

Dear Convener

Please find below, the further information we committed to provide to the Committee following the session on 7 October

Police Reform

In the session, we covered the introduction of Police Scotland. Since their creation in 2013, the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) and Police Scotland have delivered significant savings, in excess of those predicted for police and fire reform.

Audit Scotland's Best Value in Policing report (2026) reported that, since 2012-13, police reform has delivered an estimated £290 million of annual efficiency savings, compared to the previous structure of policing. This has been updated with the recent Police Scotland Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved by the SPA board on 24 September 2026, which indicates that police reform has achieved an estimated £300 million of annual efficiency savings and delivery of more than £2.5 billion of cumulative savings since its creation. This is more than double the savings target contained in the Outline Business Case (£1.1 billion).

Police Scotland continues its reform journey, with a range of programmes underway as outlined in its Three Year Business Plan. Significant to this work are plans around further digital reform and transformation of the police estate, where additional investment will be required to deliver successful outcomes and a more sustainable organisation.

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Police Scotland reserves

A query was raised about the ability of Police Scotland to hold reserves. The Scottish Police Authority is classified by His Majesty's Treasury as a Central Government body, in contrast to English and Welsh police forces which are classified to Local Government. This means there is an entirely different financial control framework in place with significant implications, particularly for reserves and borrowing.

The consolidated budgeting guidance requires all budget spend to score against departmental budgets and therefore requires appropriate budget cover to be in place. The Scottish Public Finance Manual states that public bodies should not hold "unacceptably large balances" which is the equivalent to a budget reserve. In simple terms, amounts held by public bodies form part of the overall Scottish Government financial position and cannot be viewed as an additional source of funding.

The Scottish Government's defined reserve capacity is relatively small in proportion to the overall size of the Scottish Budget, and that limited capacity is effectively required to manage the wider Scottish Government financial position.

Domestic abuse legislation

Questions were asked about the timings for the implementation of part 1 of the Domestic Abuse (Protection) (Scotland) Act 2021 (the 2021 Act). We have written to the Equalities, Human Rights and Civil Justice Committee with details of the position in respect of the 2021 Act and a copy of this letter is provided.

This explains that the 2021 Act will introduce Domestic Abuse Protection Notices (DAPNs) and Domestic Abuse Protection Orders (DAPOs), enabling police and courts to remove a suspected perpetrator from a shared home and prohibit contact with a person at risk for up to three months. The scheme is intended to provide immediate protection and breathing space for victims, while shifting responsibility for applications from victims to Police Scotland.

Implementation has been delayed due to a number of operational challenges, including the tight statutory timescales between a DAPN and a court hearing; the inability to pilot the scheme before national rollout; and associated costs; potential court capacity pressures; and difficulties in obtaining children's views in a trauma-informed way within the timescales set out in the legislation.

An Implementation Board and Operational Group were established to explore these issues. A workshop involving key partners, including Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, Police Scotland and Scottish Women's Aid, concluded in March 2025 that legislative changes would be required before implementation could proceed.

Following discussions with the then Minister for Victims and Community Safety in June 2025, a Short Life Working Group was established to develop options for legislative change. The group met five times between September 2025 and January 2026 and identified a range of proposed amendments, which will be subject to consultation shortly.

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Youth crime

The Committee asked about how transparency of decisions reached for cases involving young people could be improved in terms of whether a case goes to the Children's Hearings system or through a criminal process.

Scotland's approach to children in conflict with the law supports prevention and rehabilitation, whilst also holding them accountable for their behaviour. A range of interventions and measures are available via our proven Whole System Approach, designed to address behaviour, reduce risk, support rehabilitation and contribute to safer communities. Interventions include early and effective intervention, targeted support through programmes, restorative approaches, compulsory supervision measures through the Children's Hearings System, and where appropriate, prosecution through the courts.

For victims of crime committed by children, the jointly reported cases agreement between COPFS and Scottish Children's Reporter Administration highlights that the impact of offending on victims, and where available, the views of victims, are important considerations in decisions about how children in conflict with the law are responded to. It also requires consideration of whether prosecution may have an adverse effect on victims.

It is important that victims are informed about what is happening in a case and the consequences. The Victims' Code for Scotland establishes victims' right to receive information about the progress and outcome of their case and states that victims should be supported and informed throughout the justice process. SCRA has operated a Victim Information Service since 2006.

The Children (Care and Justice) (Scotland) Act 2024 includes provisions to strengthen support for those affected by a child's offending behaviour, to enable the development of a more accessible support service - a single point of contact for victims whether the child is being dealt with through the Whole System Approach, the criminal justice system or the children's hearings system. This aims to ensure that victims are able to access information and support more easily, helping them to understand both the process involved when a child goes through the children's hearings system and the action taken in response to the responsible child's behaviour, addressing the perception that there are no consequences when children are dealt with through the children's hearings system.

Work is progressing on the development of the single point of contact support service with Victim Support Scotland and a range of partners and it is expected that the new national service will commence in summer 2027.

Trauma-informed practice

The issue of those working in the justice system would be trained in trauma-informed practice. It is for the independent criminal justice bodies to determine what training their respective workforces require to meet their statutory obligation for victims and witnesses to be treated in a way that accords with trauma informed practice. Information on the trauma-informed training being carried out by the criminal justice bodies is provided at Annex A of our letter to the Criminal Justice Committee of 24 August as well as the COPFS letter of 26 August.

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Such training requirements will inevitably differ depending on the specific functions of the organisation; however, the Scottish Government has provided key resources to support the development of a trauma informed workforce in the Scottish criminal justice system. This includes providing over £650k funding to trauma specialists at Public Services Delivery Scotland (previously NHS Education for Scotland) to:

- Develop and support implementation of a Trauma Informed Justice Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Develop e-learning modules at trauma enhanced and trauma skilled levels, accessible to all
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework, with Justice Analytical Services and members of the Victims Taskforce Trauma Informed Workstream, to support implementation of the Knowledge and Skills Framework
- Deliver Scottish Trauma Informed Leaders Training (STILT) to justice leaders
- Develop and deliver training to members of the judiciary and legal profession
- Develop and deliver training with Police Scotland and COPFS at the trauma enhanced practice level, across evidence gathering, interpretation and presentation roles

Further details are provided under the "*Trauma-informed practice (TIP) across justice agencies"* section on pages 7 and 8 of our 24 August letter to the Committee.

How the experience of victims is measured to assess whether they have received trauma-informed support

Information on how the Scottish Government and criminal justice bodies are measuring the experience of victims - including with respect to trauma informed practice - is provided under the "*How victims' experiences and outcomes are being measured"* section on pages 9, 10 and Annex A of our 24 August letter to the Committee, as well as in the 26 August COPFS letter to the Committee.

The Trauma Informed Workstream of the Victims Taskforce is working with the Improvement Service to strengthen our approach to monitoring and evaluation and to explore options for establishing appropriate feedback mechanisms, building on those already operated by several of the criminal justice bodies.

Drug Testing Treatment Orders (DTTOs)

The aim of DTTOs is to reduce or eliminate an individual's dependency or propensity to use drugs and thereby achieve reductions in drug-related offending. Orders last between 6 months and 3 years and combine drug treatment and a regular testing regime with regular court reviews. In 2024-25, 230 DTTOs were imposed - a 20% decrease on the previous year and lowest for a decade.

The independent Sentencing and Penal Policy Commission noted that falling numbers of DTTOs are due to various reasons including health service capacity issues, changing drug trends, and ongoing challenges with successful completion rates, with not all participants achieving sustained recovery or reduced offending. In addition, some local areas choose CPOs with particular requirements instead of DTTOs so they are not universally available across Scotland.

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Work is therefore underway to develop a package of policy options to enhance and strengthen community-based sentences. This includes consideration of whether DTTOs remain an appropriate and effective disposal for addressing substance-related offending.

We hope this information is helpful to the Committee.

NEIL GRAY **KIRSTEN OSWALD**

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