

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE2250](#): Introduce a nationwide knife amnesty, lodged by Tracy Curdie

Introduction

The [petition](#) calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to call for a nationwide knife amnesty. It states that:

“The last amnesty was in 2006, two decades ago, in a country with high knife crime, especially among youths. The Government should also consider the use of safety deposit boxes to safely dispose of any weapons in areas which are known to authorities due to violent crime rates being higher.”

2006 knife amnesty

As noted in the petition, a knife amnesty was held in Scotland in 2006 (e.g. see the BBC news report [Amnesty nets thousands of knives](#), 4 July 2006).

The amnesty was coupled with a range of other measures around the same time. For example, in response to a parliamentary question on reducing knife crime, the then Minister for Justice (Cathy Jamieson MSP) said that:

“The hard-hitting campaign that I launched last week is intended to challenge the long-standing attitudes and behaviours that contribute to knife carrying in parts of Scotland. It makes it clear that everyone has a part to play if we are to rid Scotland of knife crime once and for all, and it builds on a raft of tough enforcement action, new laws and revised prosecution guidelines. That is direct and effective action against knives across the whole criminal justice system.”
([Official Report](#) 23 November 2006, col 29756)

She went on to add:

“Education is vital. We must ensure that our young people get the message that carrying knives is not clever or cool and that it does not offer them protection.”
(cols 29756 to 29757)

Scottish Government’s position

The current Scottish Government has indicated that it will consider the possibility of another knife amnesty, whilst emphasising the need for a range of measures to tackle the carrying and use of knives. In a [written response to the petition](#) (October 2026), it says that:

“The Scottish Government’s approach remains focused on the evidence-based public health model of violence prevention, including targeted interventions in communities where violence is most concentrated, working with partners to

address the underlying causes of offending and victimisation, and supporting long-term reductions in violence.

However, the Cabinet Secretary for Justice will consider such a scheme as part of an over arching violence prevention strategy if its effectiveness could be evidenced in reducing knife crime.” (page 2)

Under the heading of [Violence including knife crime](#), the Scottish Government’s website states that:

“We know the consequences of violence can be devastating to individuals, families and communities. Violence of any kind and at any level is totally unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Tackling violence including knife crime is a priority for this government.

Alongside enforcement and prosecution, the Scottish Government and its partners focus on the prevention of violence through a public health approach. This means we are drawing on the approach health professionals use to tackle disease. Public health is all about prevention – and, just as it is better to vaccinate against a disease than it is to treat the disease, it is better to prevent violence happening in the first place than to react once it has occurred.”

In May 2023, the Scottish Government published a [Violence Prevention Framework for Scotland](#). In December 2025 it published a [report on progress](#) made under the framework during 2024-25.

Impact of knife amnesties

The [Youth Endowment Fund](#) has done some work on knife amnesties:

- [Knife surrender schemes](#)
- [Weapon Amnesties](#) (August 2022).

In relation to the impact of amnesties on knife crime, the above links highlight a lack of strong evidence, with the first stating that:

“There are very few evaluations of the impact of knife surrender schemes or weapons amnesties on violent crime. There is not enough evidence to produce an overall impact rating.

Two studies suggest that knife surrender schemes may reduce weapon-related incidents during the period of the scheme and for weeks or months after, but that the effects are not sustained.

Knife surrender schemes may be more successful when they are delivered alongside other interventions, such as education that can address motivations for weapon-carrying and police initiatives that provide a deterrence effect.”

The Scottish Government’s written response to the petition refers to research done by the Youth Endowment Fund. It also points to lessons learned from work done with

organisations such as the [Scottish Violence Reduction Unit](#) and [Youth Link Scotland](#). In relation to knife amnesty schemes, it states:

“Their views supported by evidence show that while such schemes may remove some weapons from circulation in the short term, they are unlikely to result in lasting reductions in violence. They have stressed that effective violence prevention requires addressing the underlying social and environmental factors that contribute to weapon carrying.” (page 2)

Key organisations

- [No Knives, Better Lives](#)
- [Police Scotland](#)
- [Scottish Violence Reduction Unit](#)
- [https://www.sps.gov.uk/Victim Support Scotland](https://www.sps.gov.uk/Victim%20Support%20Scotland)
- [Youth Link Scotland](#)

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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.

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